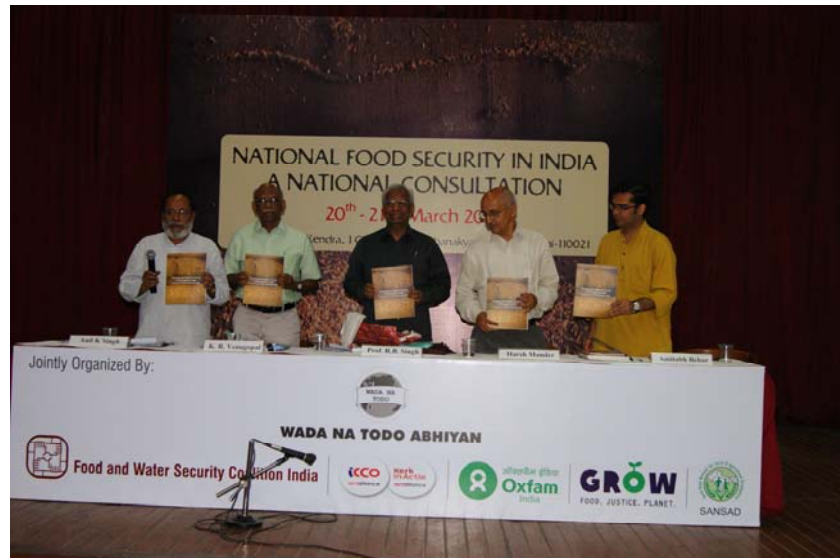


National Food Security in India A National Consultation



20th-21st March 2012
Vishwa Yuva Kendra, 1 Circular Road, Chanakyapuri,
New Delhi- 110012

Organized by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, Oxfam India, Food & Water Security Coalition, ICCO & SANSAD

Executive Summary

The national consultation on the National Food Security Bill was held in Delhi on the 20th and 21st of March, at the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Chanakyapuri. With academics and civil society and political representatives coming together from more than 28 states in India, the national consultation was a coming together of diverse perspectives on the proposed Food Security Bill, currently being tabled before the Standing Committee on Food in the parliament.

Organized by the Livelihood Thematic Action Group of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan along with Food and Water Security Coalition India and Oxfam India, the process of holding in-depth discussions on the Food Security Bill was initiated with the regional consultations that were held across the country, culminating with the national level meeting in the capital.

Rational Behind Series of Consultations on National Food Security Bill

In June 2009, the Government of India announced for a comprehensive legislation to be enacted as “The National Food Security Act” which will focus on the right to food. Currently the bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Bill has been drafted without any wider consultation with important stakeholders



and suffers from a number of shortcomings including minimal reach, reduced entitlements, lack of commitment to vulnerable groups, and intends to do away with double subsidy provided on the TDPS by various states, to name a few. The consultative processes arose out of the pressing need to present the concerns of various regarding food security to diverse stakeholders in a comprehensive manner. These various discussions were an attempt to lead to a common understanding so that a collective civil society force could emerge for advocacy with government.

Objectives of the Consultative Process

- Educate, sensitize, motivate and mobilize people at large
- Develop and publish critiques of the food security bill.

- To emphasize on various thematic covered under the rubric of the Bill to emphasize the need for special focus its particular aspects that look at provisions of food security, issues of food security in terms of the marginal voices in the country, budgetary and implementation models proposed in the Bill and so on to ensure that the Bill meets the mandate of Last Mile Delivery and Citizens' Engagement.
- Develop a Charter of Demands and recommendations that could help in improving the Bill at hand.
- Advocacy with Government and other policy makers in the interest of common people

Summary of Regional Consultations

Regional consultations were held across five zones of the country over an intensive two month period.

Region/ Host States	Participating States	Date of Regional Consultation
East Zone: Patna	Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa and Chattisgarh	30th-31st January 2012
West Zone: Ahmedabad	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra	7th-8th February 2012
South Zone: Anantpur	Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu	17th- 18th February 2012
North Zone Dehradun	HP, J&K, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Uttarakhand	1st -2nd March,2012
North East Zone: Guwahati	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Agartala and Nagaland	4th-5th March, 2012

Civil society actors, academics along with political representatives were brought together to deliberate on various key themes with relation to food security issues in India. Some of the thematic were:

1. **State Perspectives on Food Security-** State wise analysis and evaluation of food security issues, past and present, on the basis of existing food schemes, infrastructure, implementation and grassroots reality
2. **Food Security and the issue of livelihoods-** This was an attempt to highlight the condition of working class populations in the country, both in organized as well as unorganized sectors. Discussions on the conditions of the landless, small and marginal farmers as well as smaller artisan/craft sectors were also critical in assessing how far the Bill in its present form, was able to address their needs.
3. **Marginal Voices:** Special sessions focusing on the condition of women, Dalits, Adivasi communities, religious minorities, people afflicted with HIV/AIDS and other social groups on the peripheries of development discourse, helped in prioritizing and mainstreaming their needs vis-a-vis food security.
4. **Agrarian Reforms:** Discussions on food security remain incomplete without emphasizing the need to strengthen agrarian reforms and its related economic model. Various state voices thus projected the need to include agricultural reforms under the main body of the Bill as well.
5. **Respecting Food Sovereignty:** The experts also argued for the need to recognize and encompass the food and agricultural diversity in the country keeping in mind the cultural intake habits of the country. Thus, encouraging local productions, procurement and distribution of food under the Bill was felt as an important step in this direction, something that the Bill overlooks in its current form.

All the regional consultations culminated with the participants formulating a set of recommendations aimed at making the Bill a stronger and people-sensitive legislation which could help resolve food insecurity issues in a comprehensive manner. All the recommendations made in these zonal consultations came together to create a charter of demands for consideration of political stakeholders, in the national consultation held in New Delhi.

National Consultation the National Food Security Bill

On March 20th and 21st, 2012, a mixed group of social activists, grassroots communities like farmers, scholars and expert voices on food security issues as well as political representatives of a few political parties converged at the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra to discuss the food insecurity in the country and suggest measures to improve and expand the scope of the current draft Bill.

The key note speech for the occasion was delivered by **Harsh Mander** from Center for Equity Studies and Member, National Advisory Council. Mr Mander, himself having been involved in formulation of the Bill as an NAC member shared that the current introduction of the draft Bill before the standing committee, was a very important moment, and thus the national consultation was a very significant and timely intervention. The whole world was looking at a paradigm that propagated development through private investment alone. This proposed legislation was thus

a way of reminding the government of their responsibility towards poorest of the poor in the country. He felt that it was time that food security remains not just a moral but a constitutional responsibility of the State. He spoke about the efforts of the NAC in preparing a draft bill on the issue, and added that despite these attempts, the Bill presented by the government was extremely weak and diluted. Presenting the various arguments around the Bill, he spoke of some contentious points such as whether the Bill should be targeted or universal in its approach; should the Central government have the right to pass such a law as food and agriculture related issues came under State subjects; the Right to Food Campaign have had different point of view such as whether the law is at all a food security law or not as it does not, in its current shape, talk about food production issues at all and so on.

Chief Guest address was delivered by **Prof. RB Singh** of National Academy of Sciences (and former Director Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi and Former Dy. Director, FAO) who felt that the biggest need in the country was provision of food for everyone as $\frac{1}{4}$ of the malnourished people in India could be found in the country. The big question facing us today, he felt, were how to make India self reliant in terms of its food output and distribution in a scenario where of the 186 million malnourished kids in world, 40% belonged to India.

Other eminent speakers like **K.R Venugopal**, Retd. IAS and former Secretary, PMO, **J. John** of Center for Education and Communication, **Anindo Banerjee** of Praxis, **Anjali Bharadwaj** of Satark Nagrik Sangathan, **Subhash Mendhapurkar** of SUTRA, to name a few, also looked at the Bill from various perspectives of livelihoods, implementation strategies and lessons that could be derived from other government schemes such as the ICDS or National Rural Health Mission, MNREGA and so on. Perspective of marginalized groups such as women, religious minorities, disabled persons, Dalits as well as children, and the need to make the Bill inclusive of their concerns were also put forth by independent activist **Shoma KP**, **Prof. Javed Ali** of Delhi University, **Praveen Kumar** of VSO, **Paul Divaker**, NCDHR and **Razia Issmail** of Indian Alliance for Child Rights.

Budgetary allocation for the Bill was discussed by **Javed** of Center for Budget and Accountability to throw light on the fact that government's claim of lack of finances or food grain stock to universalize the Bill were half baked arguments that could be refuted by tweaking its current leniency towards corporate subsidies in the country. **Kumaran**, of Oxfam India discussed the mechanisms that would be required for implementation and monitoring, if the food security law was realized. He critiqued the proposed structure in the draft Bill, stating that all responsibilities seemed to have been allocated to the states alone and many 'deliberate subversions' had been made in the legislation that needed intensive scrutiny. Sharing from other global experiences of fighting hunger, Barbara Ekwall, the Global Coordinator of FAO, emphasized the fact that "right to food" must be seen from the perspective of a human rights and that the solutions could thus never be "technical" alone. The governments had to take on a proactive, human rights approach to address issues of food insecurity.

Political representatives **Rajneet Prasad**, Member of Parliament (Rashtriya Junta Dal) and Member of the Standing Committee on Food, **Mr. Ram Kirpal Yadav**, Member of Parliament (Rashtriya Junta Dal) and **Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar**, Member of Parliament (Congress) were also present to share and respond to civil society's concerns regarding the proposed Bill. The fact that India was unable to tackle basic issues of food insecurity after 65 years of its independence, they felt, was something to be ashamed of for those in power. Mr Aiyar also emphasized the need to work closely with gram panchayats in execution of the Bill, as this would insure transparency and accountability in the system at the very grassroots level. They promised their support in taking forward the concerns expressed in the consultation to the suitable authorities as well.

Civil Society's Charter Of Demands

- The Bill should be universal and not targeted.
- It should adopt a 'rights based approach' and not remain restricted to a mere 'entitlement'.
- As per ICMR figures, every person must be entitled 14 kgs of food grains in a month rather than the current stipulated amount of 7 kgs/per person/month for priority households and 3 kgs/per person/ month for general category households.
- The Bill must call for nutritional security and not just provision of food, to people. Thus local procurement, storage and distribution must be stressed on in the Bill, keeping the regional food diversity of the country in mind.
- The Bill must also ensure that pulses, oil, vegetables, meat, sugar and fuel are also provided to households under its aegis.
- Prioritize the need for agrarian reform and make it incumbent on the governments to focus/ invest on increasing/improving agricultural production, procurement and distribution networks. Currently government's intention vise a vise support/promotion of agriculture is merely encompassed in Schedule III of the Bill. One must ensure that the Schedule is made a part of the main body of the Bill so that governments can be made accountable to it, and it does not remain at the level of mere political 'intention'
- The ambit of 'Special Groups' must be expanded to include single women, denotified tribes, persons with disabilities, HIV/AIDS infected people, adolescent youth and old people who all faced food insecurities in various ways.
- Have budget allocations for awareness generation around the Act so that people became familiar with it when it would be executed.
- Concentrate on the infrastructure that would be required to implement the Bill effectively, which was currently not mentioned in the draft at all.
- Cash transfers in lieu of food should not be allowed.
- Biggest flaw in the Bill was "Clause 52' which diluted all responsibility of the government to provide food for its citizens in the most food insecure

situations like drought, war or any such 'act of God' must be removed as it defeated the purpose of the such a legislation in the first place.

Day 1
20th March, 2012

10.00 a.m.- 12 a.m

Plenary Session: Beyond National Food Security Bill: Question of Food Security in India

Speakers: Anil K Singh, K.R Venugopal, Harsh Mander & Professor R.B Singh. Chaired by Amitabh Behar, National Foundation for India

1. Welcome, Introduction/ Salient Features of the National Food Security Bill, Anil K Singh, SANSAD:

Welcoming all the participants, Mr Anil K Singh spoke about rationale and process behind organizing regional consultations across India on the proposed National Food Security Bill that is currently before the standing committee in the Parliament. The national consultation was an attempt to bring together all the state perspectives that had emerged through zonal meetings, while at the same time, an attempt to elicit views of experts from diverse arenas on the exiting gaps and future challenges regarding implementation of such an important legislation. Considering that the Bill would cover about 70 crore of India's population, thus being the biggest social welfare measure in the world, Anil Singh emphasized the need to analyze and propose positive recommendations to make the Bill effective and beneficial for all. Some of the key points of the Bill were-



- The Bill talked about covering 50% urban and 75% rural population, of which only 28% of urban and 46% of rural population would be considered as being ' Priority Households'. The rest would be classified as 'General Households'. Provision of 7 kgs of food grains per person for 'Priority Households' and 3 kgs for the 'General Households', was an amount that was inadequate to meet the nutritional needs of people. The positives in the proposed Bill were the provisions made for pregnant and lactating mothers; 'Special Groups' implying the homeless and destitute; guarantee of food during disaster or calamity and for starving populations (as identified by the State). The fact that the Bill also made it mandatory for women to be considered 'Head of Households' was a step towards women empowerment. Installation of Vigilant Committees and use of ICT to create transparency and accountability in the system were also appreciable. It's incumbent on the State to provide food allowance in case it is unable to procure food supply for its subjects.
- However, though the Bill hinted at the need to promote and safeguard the interests of the agricultural sector in the country, the intention is merely a part of an annexure in the Bill and thus not binding on the

government in any way. A recent statement given by the Agricultural Minister, Sharad Pawar, that it was impossible to implement the National Food Security Bill was also worrying.

- The Bill must adopt a universal rather than a targeted approach to food security. However, currently the growth in population/per year is marginally more as compared to the growth in food grain production. Population of the country is growing at 1.76% per year as compared to food grain production which is increasing at 1.58% per year. Thus it is crucial for the government to pay more attention to increasing yield and introduce agrarian reforms if the rate of India's food grain production can be at par with its population growth.
- Cash transfers were also a point of concern as money could easily translate itself to wastage rather than food security.
- It is crucial that at least 4% of the GDP is reserved for the agricultural sector for us to ensure long term food security of the country in the real sense of the word. .
- Malnourishment is a serious concern for the country where 48% children below the age of 5 are found to be undernourished. 42.5% children below 5 years were underweight; 70% children below 5 were anemic and 52% women also suffered from anemia. Thus it is important that the Bill also addresses the nutritional needs of people by including protein rich diets of pulses, meat, fish, milk, ghee and so on for it to be a holistic intervention
- Insuring good infrastructure for storage was also an important factor and one that must be recognized by the Bill. Currently, the states are able to lift only about 2/3rd of the grains from central godowns because of lack of adequate storage facilities. This must be rectified in the light of building sustainable efforts to ensure food security in the country.
- Grabbing fertile agricultural land for industries and other large development projects must be stopped. Only barren lands must be transferred for industrialization and other related activities.

Anil Singh felt that instead of the government focusing its resources on other activities like building roads (25 kms. of national highways is being built every day as per Central government's claim), attention needed to be given to constructing food grain godowns, improving the linkages between farmers and agricultural markets and overhauling the distribution system as well.

2. **Keynote Address by Harsh Mander, Center for Equity Studies & Member, NAC:** Mr Mander pointed out to the long process of deliberations and discussions that the Bill had undergone before reaching the Standing Committee. He pointed to the fact that even the highest judicial body in the



country- the Supreme Court of India, had agreed that food schemes cannot be merely 'program/scheme' centric in their implementation but must be treated as the 'right' of citizens of India. Thus ensuring nutritional and food security to the people was a moral responsibility of the government. The Supreme Court instructed appointment of Food Commissioners in the country to look after all existing food schemes. The Congress government's manifesto also gave promises to implement the National Food Security Bill. But despite this, the proposed draft was a diluted version of what could be seen as providing food security to the country. He highlighted the various debates/ arguments around the proposed Bill- the diverse opinions of academics, social activists, policy makers and political representatives. Some of these were;

- The demand for universal versus targeted implementation of the Bill. The Right to Food Campaign, a comprehensive nationwide effort of academics, activists and grassroots organizations to address food security issues, and left parties wanted universalization of the Bill. Others felt that given the scarce resources, only those who are most in need should come under the Bill. But doubts about how the 'targeted population' will be identified, what the selection procedures would entail, and whether these would exclude rather than include the ones in need- complicated the arguments further.
- Whether the Central government should have the right to pass such a law since food and agriculture related issues are state subjects, under the Constitution. This was an important point of consideration since some Chief Ministers like that of Tamil Nadu had already raised objection to federal takeover of state subjects. Would this law imply infringement of state subjects by the Centre?
- The 'Right to Food Campaign', also had different point of view. They felt that to achieve sustainable and long term food security in the country, the Bill must also address agriculture production issues as well by providing legal guarantees on agrarian reforms. However, some argued, that to implement such diverse laws under one legislation would make it cumbersome and non-implementable in practical terms. Thus the law could ensure just about public provisioning of food for people who are food insecure, and nothing more than that.
- There was also much discussion around the proposed cash transfers in the Bill, where many felt that introducing monetary elements instead of food, could dilute the purpose of such a legislation.
- Stakeholders were also demanding that nutritional aspects of the food being supplied under the Bill must be strengthened. Adequate food does not mean that people can tackle starvation. Issues of sanitation, lack of nutritious food, bad drinking water conditions- all these also lead to malnourishment and thus must be covered under the ambit of the proposed Bill.

- The onus on Aganwadis as important nodes for food distribution especially for women and children were also under a scanner, given their past performance record, particularly in far flung areas where some of the most vulnerable groups resided.
- Some of the other contentious issues were whether to include packaged food in the legislation as well or only focus on cooked meals? Doubts about on ground implementation of the law and the infrastructure required to do so, were also surfacing. What should be the redressal mechanisms and whether the body elected for such processes should be selected or elected also remained points of concern. Who can be held responsible if the food does not reach the populations was also a very complicated question. Financial implications of implementing such a large legislation were being raised as well, especially from the political lobbies who claimed they did not have the wherewithal to implement such legislation. Mr Mander concluded by saying that the time had come for all of us to think of starvation in our country, in a serious and a committed manner and therefore ensure that all the arguments are weighed carefully in the favor of introducing a strong, effective food security law in the country.

3. **Chief Guest Address by Prof. RB Singh, National Academy of Sciences:** Former Director Indian Agricultural Research Institute & Former Deputy Director, FAO, Mr. R B Singh said that the biggest need of the country in the present was 'food for everyone'. The most malnourished people in the world belonged to India. 1/4th malnourished populations resided in India and addressing their basic food requirements must be high priority on any government's development agenda. The way for India's progress depended on its agriculture. However, over the last decades, the income of farmers had not increased; land and water resources were fast decreasing and the irony was that the country never needed an accelerated agricultural production to feed its starving populations than now.



Thus there was a need to increase agricultural output both through scientific innovations, sustainable policies and steady investments. Systemic failures in provision of food to people needed to be addressed urgently. Given this, the basis of legislation like the National Food Security bill must be to make the country self-reliant in food production. The big question

was how to achieve this given that we did not produce enough, farmers were not getting decent prices for their produce and consumer interests were at the mercy of larger, fluctuations in the world market. It was important to create a balance between all these factors to meet the requirements of 230-

250 million people in the country who were under BPL and facing starvation threats. Mothers and children needed special attention. Thus the Bill must focus on how to reach these targeted groups. Of the 186 million malnourished children in world, 40% belonged to India. Of the 600 million farmers in the country, 60% of them were marginal cultivators facing huge food crisis themselves. The expenditure on creating food secure condition should therefore be seen as an investment into the healthy future of the country.

4. **Overview and Critique of the Food Security Bill by KR Venugopal, Retd. IAS, Former Secretary, PMO:**

Mr. Venugopal pointed to the various shortcomings in the proposed law, while also pointing out the need to engage with it a holistic manner, despite its current inadequacies. The proposed law requires many reforms, he felt, and that unless those were made the law would bind to fail. Citing instances, he pointed to the Schedule III of the draft bill which spoke about the need for reforms in the agricultural sector. Mr. Venugopal pointed out that the Schedule must also specifically mention dry land agricultural reforms that would ensure food availability and production in these areas. In a sense, this approach would be a call for the 'second green revolution' in the country, while keeping the mistakes and lessons of the Green Revolution in mind. Coarse grains and millers needed to be promoted. The current problem with the PDS was not just its limited, targeted approach. Mr. Venugopal expressed the need to work towards an autonomous PDS system, which would lay emphasis on local grain procurement, storage and distribution to the needy populations. The current PDS model had a huge dependence on only certain kind of food types that could be procured from limited number of states, creating an imbalance in the agricultural production and consumption of food. Thus this legislation must specifically state dry land agriculture as a priority and should include a specific chapter on this theme in the Bill. Secondly, Mr. Venugopal felt that though the Bill claimed to be espousing a lifecycle approach to food security, its error was in a misinterpreting an Aganwadi, the central node of distribution of food for women and children, as a child care center. The reality was that an Aganwadi under ICDS program only worked four and half hours a day and thus could not be seen as being the only port of call for women and children, under the legislation. Children from 0-3 years did not access the Aganwadis, and neither were these centers equipped to handle that age bracket. Thus the Bill must talk about children's crèche instead, which could target the food security needs of children of all ages.



Adopting such strategies, keeping the existing loopholes in mind and the requirements of people across ages, would be adopting a rights based approach to addressing food insecurity in the country and not just a

tokenistic gesture that it currently seemed to be. The fact that the law noted that in cases of large scale disasters, war and any such event, it would not be incumbent on the government to meet the food security needs of the country defeated the very purpose for which such legislation was being formulated, and therefore this condition must be deleted from the proposed draft. Cash transfer in lieu of food should also not be allowed as this diverted attention from food to non-food items and did not take into consideration the Food Price Index and other related global factors of rise in food items. Mr Venugopal also pointed out that specified quantity of food grains provision per person/ per month in the draft was inadequate and must be increased to meet nutritional needs of people in a proper manner. Given the fact that coarse grain production in the country was going through a decline because of lack of proper support policies around it, provision of Jowar, Raagi etc at the cost of 1 Rs/kg was also unacceptable as it was against the interest of thousands of small and marginal farmers in rain fed areas whose livelihoods would be threatened. The Bill must also have strong accountability measures so that defaulters could be taken to task.

5. Comments from the Open House

- Doorstep delivery of food grains must be mentioned in the Bill. It needed to be strengthened and scrutinized closely to ensure that no corruption was taking place at any stage of delivery.
- The proposed Bill must be seen holistically as a call to action to bring about certain other fundamental reforms in related arena of agriculture, livelihoods, natural resource management and investment in innovative technologies that could help eliminate food crisis in the country.
- As per ICMR standards, the food grain provision to each individual must be increased from the current 7 kgs/person/month to 14 kgs/person/month for adequate and nutritious food security conditions to be achieved in the country.



Release of the publication on National Food Security Bill- *Shaping the Right to Food: A dialogue on National Food Security Bill*

12.30 p.m – 1.30 p.m

Session 2: People's Perspective on Food Security Bill- Regional Overview

Speakers: K.N Tiwari, Dinesh Kumar, Madhukar, Dutta Patil & Dibyajyoti Saikia.
Chaired by Paul Divakar, NCDHR



1. **North Zone:** KN Tiwari, from Disha Social Organization summarized the key points that emerged in the North Zone consultation in Dehradun on 1st and 2nd March 2012. Participating states included members from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, New Delhi, Punjab and

Uttarakhand. Some of the recommendations from the states were:

- The National Food Security Bill must be universal in its reach.
 - Food provision under the Act must be increased to 15 kgs of food grain per person/per month
 - Pulses, oil, sugar, coarse grains like Jowar, Bajra, Macca and so on should be included in the food provision.
 - The definition of Special Groups must be expanded to include single women, people with disabilities, adolescents, migrants and old people as well as they all faced food insecurity issues.
 - Clause 52 that spoke took away government's responsibility to provide food to people in cases of extreme disaster, war and the likes, should be removed completely.
 - Identification of starving populations, something that the states were supposed to do under the Act, must be complete within 6 months of the Act's implementation with the help of NGOs and gram panchayat.
 - Concentration on agrarian and land reforms must be a priority to ensure long term food security conditions in the country. The Schedule 3 that spoke about these aspects in the Bill should therefore be part of the main body of the Bill.
 - Decentralized procurement processes must be incorporated in implementation of the Act so that regional food diversity and sovereignty of communities is respected.
 - Diversion of fertile land for industrialization or other large development purposes must be checked under the legislation.
 - Efforts to promote traditional farming techniques and more R&D in agricultural sector would also help ensure long term food security in the country.
2. **South Zone:** Dinesh Kumar of Earth 360 Eco Ventures spoke about addressing the nutritional and food security needs through innovative approaches. He stressed on the importance of creating strong political will at

the level of governance, to create food security in the country. He also emphasized the need to rethink the role that civil society could play in this struggle. It was important to ensure that the ration under the Act reaches the right people, because giving food away at subsidized prices is also national crime, given the condition of farmers in the country. Thus subsidized food should go to the right people—good quality food at affordable price, and not necessarily throw away price. No sustainable system could run on unsustainable model of giving low priced food, which in turn would adversely impact the farming communities.



Dinesh Kumar also shared how the kind of food that was being propagated under the PDS like varieties of paddy rice were a leading cause of diabetes. Speaking on the issue of coarse grains as being a part of the food allocations under the proposed Bill, he added that we needed to pay attention to coarse grain production and procurement processes as well for such plan to work in practical terms. Where will the coarse grains be grown? Who will procure them? These were important things to consider for, if we look at the available data, it shows not that not even half of coarse grain produce has been procured in the past by the government. Thus ways of ensuring a corruption free, sustainable procurement and distribution system at a price that is reasonable, were important systems to work on for food security to be a reality in the country. Extreme lowering of food grain price could significantly harm the small and marginal agricultural producers in the country. Dinesh also warned against extreme subsidized pricing as lessons from past experiences showed that in such scenarios, food was being siphoned off for animal feed, given its cheap and easy availability.

3. **East Zone:** Madhukar, a senior Journalist with National Daily 'Prabhat Khabar' said that though all agreed that food security was an essential issue for the country, the manner in which the proposed Bill was attempting to address it was suspect. It was important to strengthen the agrarian sector by providing impetus to initiatives in organic farming, coarse grain agriculture and incentivizing small and marginal farmers. However the current reality was that in all the mineral rich states, fertile land was being diverted for industries. Corruption had seeped in to all layers of society, and only by making people self-reliant and introducing strong accountability measures in systems of governance, could we achieve any positive growth. Currently, farmers were unable to determine the rate or price at which their produce would be marketed— the sole responsibility of this lies on the State. If farmers had their own godowns, they would have the freedom to sell their produce



whenever they chose to and prices most suited to them. Madhukar also critiqued the proposed Bill by pointing out that it remained confined to merely providing food to the people, and was silent on nutritional aspects. Pulses, sugar, oil and so on should be added in the food provisions being stipulated. Marginalized groups- people with disabilities, sex workers, and primitive tribes should get 100% coverage under Bill. One of the biggest questions was regarding the actual implementation of the Bill. Local procurement must be encouraged to check leakages and siphoning off of food grains. States should be encouraged to develop their own agriculture policies that were suited to their farmers and agricultural conditions. Awareness generation should also be a part of the Bill so that enough people know what the Bill entails and ways of accessing it.

4. **West Zone:** Datta Patil, Yuva Rural, Nagpur, presented the recommendations that emerged from the west zone consultation.



- The Bill should espouse a Rights- based approach in its formulation and implementation and not work within the charity framework that it seemed to be confined to currently.
 - Existing food schemes in the country should not be merged with this legislation and remain active and operational in their own constituency.
 - People must be entitled to 14 kgs of food grains per person/ month.
 - The Bill implied too many centralized processes at every stage. It should be decentralized in its structure allowing for gram panchayats involvement in procurement and monitoring.
 - Creating local godowns and enhancing food storage capacity at local level must be prioritized under the Bill as well.
 - Ready to eat food should not be allowed to become part of the legislation in any way. Instead SHGs and local cooperative bodies must be encouraged to participate in various capacities.
 - Schedule III which spoke about agrarian reforms must be incorporated in the main body of the Bill and framers must be incentivized.
 - The Bill must expand the definition of 'nutrition' to include pulses, sugar, cooking oil, milk, eggs and so on- all the food intakes that make for healthy and balanced diets.
 - Clause 52 of the proposed draft must be removed.
5. **North East:** Dibyajyoti Saikia, Guwahati, Assam reiterated the need to get quality and nutritious food under the Act. Adding on, he felt that that provision of clean, drinking water should also be made a part of the legislation and often unsanitary conditions and non-potable water posed



more serious threat and further heightened the conditions of food insecurity. Given the regional and cultural diversity of the country, he felt that the Bill must look at local production, procurement and distribution systems in a serious way. Especially in the

case of the North East where most of the food came from outside the region, localized systems would help the farmers and other sectors related to agriculture as well. . Apart from women and children, people who were victims of violence should be included as a special category in the Bill as they too suffered from the worst food insecure conditions. Since the entire North East region was a sensitive seismic zone, special attention must also be reserved for earthquake or flood prone victims in the Act. Provisions must be made for local monitoring and vigilance, so that the guilty can be brought to book by the people. These mechanisms should also be locally accessible to people so that they could seek easy and quick redressal.

6. Comments from the Open House

- The house agreed with the recommendations that had emerged from regional consultative process, particularly with regard to bolstering the agrarian sector.
- The Bill seemed to only look at those children who had regular access to Aganwadis. The house felt that provisions must be made for out- of- school/ children who could not attend Aganwadis, for various reasons.

2.30 p.m- 4 p.m _____

Session 3: Food Sovereignty and Livelihoods

Speaker: J John. Chaired by Biraj Patnaik, Principal Advisor to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court of India on the National Food Security Bill

1. Biraj Patnaik, pointed out that the issue of food sovereignty had emerged for the first time through the introduction of the Bill. Another positive factor that had surfaced was the inclusion of coarse grains in the PDS. However, despite these good facts, the Bill was completely silent on some real issues such as the need for agrarian reforms for long term food security conditions to prevail. How would the food be procured? For instance, for coarse grains to effectively work through the PDS, we required a procurement of 40 million metric tonnes of such grains. But how would this level of production happen? Did the government have the capacity to procure the adequate food grain amount required to provide for all? The Bill is silent on these issues. Only the intention of the government has been made explicit without explaining any of the functional aspects required to make the Act a success. Currently, 70% farmers in the county were buying food from the market, dependent on the market. In the dry land agricultural areas of coarse grain, in the last 20 years

government's investment had witnessed an alarming decreasing. The emphasize on increasing rice and wheat production had led to messing up of the land structure in diverse regions- forced irrigation, flattening of land etc. had left little scope for dry-land agriculture to prosper. So while on the one hand the government was keen on including nutri millets in the PDS but was quite about how this would be realized given that coarse grain agriculture was a non-priority area for the government. Our policies were more directed towards export of food rather than build food security conditions from within. In this context, food sovereignty issues posed big questions on what kind of procurement measures will be adopted under the legislation. Biraj Patnaik pointed out that even after 60 years of independence, the entire country remained heavily dependent on food from merely two states- Punjab and Haryana. Why were decentralize procurement measures never adopted by the governments?



Food sovereignty was also important to consider since it was deeply linked to the cultural diversity of the country where different communities preferred to consume their own food type. Despite this, except 9 states in the country, no other states have decentralized procurement processes in place. For instance only 11% of Bihar's grains are procured by the state, and in Bengal, even less than 8% is picked up by the state. Rest of the food either all goes to private sector or goes out of the country. All this happens only because local procurement measures have not been put in place. Chattisgarh has set a good example on this front, but other states are not able to follow up or learn from this. Biraj Patnaik concluded by saying that giving preference to centralized procurement processes ultimately also led to benefits being restricted to big farmers alone at the cost of small and marginal ones, of which we had plenty in the country. Thus this model of food procurement and distribution was extremely lop-sided and must be rectified.

- 2. Food Sovereignty and the Industrial Worker- Organized Sector:** J John, Center for Education and Communication, New Delhi, spoke about the fact that food security is the big issue for everyone, irrespective of where they come from. It is also important to concentrate on the nutritive value of food as well. There cannot be access to food without protection to food. Food security was a serious concern for many in the country- the landless people in rural areas; small trades like basket makers, weavers, small farmers and so on. Some people who may not have land but have the capacity to work on someone else's land- they also need food security for themselves. Because often even if there is food, people cannot access it. J John drew attention to how we understand the practice of 'work' in general and the benefits accruing to it which impact our food security conditions. There is a vicious

cycle of starvation for those who despite engaging in productive activities were not being able to secure their food needs. It was thus important to keep such marginal populations in mind while formulating a national legislation on food security. Every society, J John pointed out, could be divided into agriculture, manufacture and service sectors. The dependence of European countries on agriculture was less than 5% and most of their GDP comprised of service sector economy. But in India, despite having more concentration on services, most of our people were dependent on agriculture, and the industrial sector had not grown beyond a point. India, though largely agrarian dependent, its GDP saw large contribution from the service sector. It was said that our economy is growing but not in terms of generating more employment. Thus India was witnessing a jobless growth.



The organized sector growth had been in the negative in India. Growth has been seen in informal segment of work alone. Thus, in a sense employment growth was happening only in 'informal ways' in the country. Regular employment is less than 3% and the other options were only casual labor or self-employment (more than 50% in India were self-employed). However, the latter section has no labor entitlements or work rights. In times of globalization, division of labor is changing drastically. The wages are going down, creating huge food security issues for large sections of the population. More than 40% of urban labor is below BPL. How can we give them food security? J John pointed out that one way to answer the dilemma was to give the workers good wages and also social security- a condition that should be universal for all. Recognizing the workers right to organize themselves and bargain for better conditions for them, would also help in strengthening their position and in the long run, resolving their food insecurity issues.

3. Comments from Open House

- The House felt that though the food security legislation was a must in the country, its shape and form should be different than the one proposed in the draft.
- Sanitation and hygiene and safe drinking water should be included in the Bill as they all helped in absorption of food and in creating food secure conditions in an indirect way.
- Monitoring mechanisms must be strong and fool-proof and due attention must be given to these.
- Larger questions facing the country were about how to generate enough livelihood security in both urban and rural areas.

4:00 p.m- 5:30 p.m

Session 4 : Food Security in the context of National Food Security Bill

Speakers: Paulomee Mistry, Anindo Banerjee, Anjali Bharadwaj, Subhash Mendhapurkar. Chaired by Biraj Swain, Oxfam India

1. Biraj Swain of Oxfam India and a co-host of the consultative process said that though the National Food Security Bill was a good beginning, the concern was about making it strong and effective. Food security is not just about grain security but also nutritional security as well. India's averages were worse than Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus the need was to build both backward and forward linkages. 70% of India's farmers were net buyers of food. The time has come to prioritize grassroots issues and reclaim agrarian sector in a major way to create food nutritional and security of the country. Thus linkages between minimum wages, employment and food, scenario are all important to discuss.



2. **MNREGA:** Paulomee Mistry of Disha, Ahmadabad spoke about how MNREGA had fared ever since its inception. MNREGA has been a historical legislation that seeks to meet the immediate poverty needs and create community assets. If MNREGA is honestly implemented, it can bring positive changes in rural economy and the labour market. Positive impact of MNREGA have been that it has given dignity to the labour force; expanded the purchasing power of people and thus helped resolve to an extent, extreme hunger issues of families. However there have been many constraints as well such as:



- Major constraint in the implementation of MNREGA is a delay in wage payment to beneficiaries.
- Apart from this big farmers are against MNREGA as they are not getting labourers on time
- The people are unable to receive work despite demanding it. Forms are not available at village level.
- Regular wages according to the legal provisions are not being paid
- There are no work site facilities available according to law
- Women workers are considered as assistants to the male workers
- Despite of having worked for only 3 to 4 weeks, the fake payment of 10-12 weeks are shown in the job cards

- Though the people have not worked their wages are shown in the bank accounts and each such worker is given merely Rs 200/- and the remaining wages are taken by the Sarpanch/ village headman



3. National Rural Livelihood Mission:

Anindo Banerjee, Praxis, India spoke about how National Rural Livelihood Mission or NRLM was a very topical issue. A huge amount of World Bank aid is coming in and much is written about these programs making them to be success stories. Government has taken loan from the World Bank

to the tune of 1,170 million dollars. However, at this stage one could only talk about the design of NRLM as it had not yet reached grassroots levels. It is being implemented in 100 districts of 12 states covering a population of 420 lakh people. SHG models are the main delivery node for this program. However the assumption behind this is that “repeated doze of credit is essential for poor household”. This is the governing principle behind the approach. Thus the question why such an approach has been adopted. Isn't there any sustainable way out of this cycle of poverty that creating another vicious cycle of debts and credits? Though the NRLM claims transparency and accountability of big financial institutions but it doesn't say much on how this can be achieved. Neither is it a “rights- based” program, nor entitlement based. It is a five year program. It seems that it has been conceptualized on the basis that public institutions do not have the capacity to develop rural programs. Thus the onus of removing poverty has been taken on by the program. PRIs have not been included at any stage. On the other hand, mission management units have been made which are cost intensive. The budget of the program is 1300 crores. Though there are hardly any budgetary allocations for governance and accountability. The entire model is top heavy. No housing, identity, work, social audit issues have been spoken about in the program. Anindo Banerjee concluded by saying that civil society needs to look at this program closely to see what shape it takes.

- ### 4. Public Distribution System:
- Anjali Bharadwaj, Satark Nagrik Sangathan and Dilli Rozi Roti Abhiyan shared the experience of the Public Distribution System or PDS functioning in Delhi. Biggest problem in the system was that of that of exclusion of people who should be entitled to it. 70% people in Delhi stay in slum or slum like situations. Challenge in



Delhi is to prove whether you are below or above BPL so that you can accordingly claim a ration card suited to the category. What constitutes a BPL

category was itself a matter of grave debate. How could families be expected to survive on Rs 2,200 in the city and thus not considered to be outside the purview of BPL league? Given this absence of clarity about the BPL ballpark, how could one talk of creating food security situations in the country? Between the years 1997-2007, no BPL cards were issued in Delhi. Along with this was the problem of corruption in the PDS. The quota for issuing yellow BPL cards in Delhi was for 4.5 lakh families, but given the Corruption surrounding ration card deliveries, the city had yet not crossed the 3.5 lakhs families yet. Lack of transparency was a big reason for this corruption in the PDS. Right to Information law was used to look at stock and sale register copies under PDS. Stock ration registers revealed that ration was reaching the shops though people still did not seem to be getting the food provisions. This implied that the registers had been faked. Grievance redressal mechanisms were also not worth mentioning. Thus there was a need for entire overhauling of the system for food to reach the populations that were severely in need of it

5. Integrated Child Development Scheme: Subhash Mendhapurkar, SUTRA,

spoke about the fact that despite having only 13% children in the country between 0-6 years, we were still unable to solve severe malnutrition problem facing them, which was a matter of shame. India has had Integrated Child Development Scheme or ICDS since 1975 and the program was



universalized in 2008-09. It is the single largest program aimed at addressing health, nutrition and development needs of young children, pregnant and nursing mothers. According to 2011 census, India has 158.7 million children between the ages of 0 to 6 years. ICDS targets for the end of 2012 were 1.4 million Anganwadis. If each of Centre was to cover 20 to 25 children, it would aim to reach out to only 30-35 million children, which means only 20-22% coverage. The data on Nutritional status of children clearly defines the gap of what is needed to address the issue and how little is actually being done to achieve positive results. The Food Security Bill had failed to address the key issues with regard to children and put a lot of onus on only the Anganwadis for resolving all related issues, which was an inadequate and half-hearted measure. Some of the challenges facing the ICDS program, as also recognized by the Planning Commission were:

- Delayed expansion and no financial resources matching the need (Rs 400 crores allocated in 2012-13 budget against the demand of Rs.1,060 crores)
- Improved quality of delivery
- Improved supply chain and commodity management (about 60 per cent of the food component resources assigned to the ICDS goes

missing en route to its mandated utilization and its target beneficiaries)

- Inadequate availability of space for Anganwadi centers (only about 50% centers run in its own premises)
- Quality and number of human resources for meeting diverse needs for service provision with improved quality (there are 22 tasks a AW worker has to perform)
- Inadequate focus on under 3s- Perceived as Feeding Centers operated through overburdened and underpaid AWW
- Community Engagement and participation are virtually non-existent, often leading to lower demand for services
- Till now, right to nutrition and food for children is not intrinsic value of community

6. Comments from the Open House

- Grievance redressal system under the legislation seemed to be too centralized. Panchayats should be centrally involved in monitoring and grievance redressal as well.
- Single window redressal mechanisms must be encouraged under the law so as to cut down on corruption and delay in redressal delivery processes.

Day 2
22nd March, 2012

10.00 a.m.- 11.30 a.m.

Session 1: Marginal Voices on Food Security

Speakers: Shoma KP, Prof. Ali Javed, Razia Issmail Abassi, Paul Divaker & Praveen Kumar Jha. Chaired by Dutta Patil, Yuva Rural



1. **Women:** Soma KP an Independent Development Consultant and Activist put forth the point that women's voices might be marginal but their contribution in all walks of life was extremely significant though often passed unnoticed. Women are the primary producers and providers of food but are the most likely to be deprived and marginalized in the provision of food and related entitlements.

Women's invisible roles in agriculture include sowing, weeding, applying fertilizers and pesticides, harvesting and threshing the crops etc. Their contribution to secondary crop production, such as legumes and vegetables, is even greater. From the point of view of the Bill, the recognition of women as the holders of Head of Household status in ration cards is a positive measure as it begins to recognize the role of the women in the household. Wage during pregnancy was also a positive inclusion. However, there were some lacunae in the legislation as well. Intra-household consumption is

gender differentiated and the targeted approach adopted is problematic. Patterns of gender discrimination prevalent will deprive girls and women of nutritive foods. Women are thus likely to be more malnourished but receive less attention. Shortages deny women other opportunities as they are compelled to perform roles of foraging and gathering for longer hours and denied education etc. Loss of entitlement within households leads to denial of women's rights in land and resources as the first point of adjustment. Thus making women heads of households without giving them substantive rights may instrumentalize their role as well. Studies show women get less to eat in households and consume less nutritious food. The Bill does not recognize these intra household inequities.

Also destitute, homeless, outside the realm of household or other kinds of single women seem to have been left outside the realm of the Bill. Also the proposed service delivery model is not empowering as it follows a centralized delivery structure controlled by center, in which women's participation would be negligible. The Bill also ignores community based structures for food sovereignty such as sharing, seed and grain banks etc. The speaker concluded by saying that there was need for an explicit recognition of women as farmers, specifically women as small and marginal farmers and their contribution to making food available in majority of households. We must also recognize women's rights and entitlements—as producers and processors and custodians of knowledge about food and health for sustainable lives and livelihoods. Thus we need to incorporate women's roles as equal citizens and producers, decentralize and engender the decision making, monitoring, vigilance frameworks and work on enhancing access and accountability

2. **Religious Minorities:** Prof. Ali Javed, Delhi University felt that the state of Muslims in the country is not very good. The condition of Muslim community be it the *Zardozi* workers in Uttar Pradesh or the slim dwellers in the city, was not a priority for the ruling governments. Political parties did not understand these issues well, or even if they did, their own vested interest came in the way of positive action for the community. Parties played electoral games with Muslim communities. Government interventions should therefore prioritize the need to focus on improving the conditions of these communities. The National Food Security Bill also did not seem to concentrate on the agenda of minority communities and must therefore be rectified.
3. **Dalits:** Paul Divaker, NCDHR, spoke about the need to bolster the Bill as it was very weak in its current form. Religious minorities, person with disability, sexuality minorities were all areas that had been left out by the Bill. Another concern was intentional exclusion of marginal communities like Dalits from the policy framework. Food Security is about creating access to food stock in crisis and disaster situations that should include circumstances

within which the Dalit were forced to operate given the social bias against them like - social boycott and exclusion. Creating a good quality of access was also important- access to protected, safe water and sanitation were a case in point that were left out under the proposed draft. We must look at these in the Act as well. Universality versus targeted approach- there was a lot of argument around this. Though finances were being allocated for welfare of Dalits, but these were not reaching them .Only a few benefited from such interventions and thus there was a need to universalize the Bill in principle. Even in areas of management and implementation Dalits automatically get discriminated against and this should be taken in to consideration as well in formulating the legislation. Location, ownership and distribution systems are going largely going to determine people's access to the Act. Thus there need to be clear management guidelines on how inclusion will be strengthened. Grievance redressal mechanism is also a major aspect.

The Dalit activists had put in 15 recommendations before the standing committee and hoped that these would be considered for the betterment of marginal populations in the country. Some of these were- a clear process should be followed in the selection of beneficiaries; ownership and location of PDS shops in case of discriminated community; special measures to be provided in cases of social boycott and disaster; maternal benefits for marginal communities to be enhanced;. National and state food commissions should be set up; the need to have coordination between state disaster management and national disaster management authorities to ensure that food security is there in such situations and penalties for corruption/defaulting should be severe and the vigilant committees to be formed should ensure wider representation from all aspects of society.

- 4. Food Security and Children:** Razia Ismail Abbasi, Indian Alliance for Child Rights in every issue under discussion, the issues of children were implicit though unrecognized by adults. The Bill is silent on the condition of destitute children. The clear categories of beneficiaries left large margins for errors- for instance if one was (and as is often the case in reality) various things at the same time- a woman, a pregnant woman who is also a destitute and son on, where will one be categorized as per the proposed Bill? Girl children need proper nutrition between 9-11 years- that's their growth spurt- but the Bill did not lay any emphasis on this fact despite claiming to adopt a life cycle approach. Most care was needed in the initial phases of a child's life. Also one never seemed to pay attention to needs of boy children assuming that there condition was better than girls. However this was not the case in poorest of the poor households. Thus, there is a problem in the intention and design of this Bill which overlooks all these factual details. There is a lot of corruption in the ICDS and making Aganwadis



the only port of call for women and children. But was the food being provided for merely being measured in terms of its volume or also its nutritional content? According to a study conducted by NHRC in Orissa, 60% of food siphoned to Aganwadis was getting lost to corrupt practices. The Bill did not speak of safeguards against such practices. The most marginalized were the homeless, migrants and out of school children for whom no provisions had been made under the legislation. We can see that the condition of children is not good one does not need figures to assert this. Investment in children is like investing in the foundation of one's country. Causes of death of children included- bad water, malnutrition, and basic lack of hygiene and so on. The Bill seemed to have ignored these seemingly minor things. Thus it needed modifications for it to become a human rights based law and we must work towards it accordingly.

5. **Disability and Access to Food:** Praveen Kumar, VSO said that we have to understand that the disabled people are also a part of the other social groups in the country. People with disabilities should not be treated as a separate category. One would obviously find disabled people among the most marginalized sections as well- women, Dalits, SC/ST populations and so on.



And even though they are a part of the larger community, they have been structurally excluded from rest of the society. There are 60 crore people with disabilities in India, 60% of which are from marginalized contexts and communities. Thus the recommendations for the draft bill were

to rectify the definition of 'disabled' used in the draft which was based on narrow and flawed 'Persons with the Disability Act of 1995'. This act only recognizes 7 kinds of disabilities and the Bill must consider many more within its aegis. Also situations where a family had many disabled members but does not fall under the stipulated income category to be targeted under the Bill, should be looked into because such families had to bear expensive medical costs even though they may notionally seem better off than most others. Thus every individual with disability should be seen as a unit in himself/herself. Though there is talk of discrimination in Chapter 2 of the Bill, it does not talk about discrimination against disabled people. Also pregnant women with disabilities should be paid special attention and have another node of access to the law than Aganwadis alone, which might be difficult for them to reach. Cash transfers in lieu of food should not be allowed and grievance mechanisms should be stronger and include sign languages and other accessible languages through which people with disability could communicate their complaints.

6. Comments from the Open House

- Minority communities get identity documents easily and this should be looked into so that they do not fall outside the purview of the food security legislation.
- Grievance redressal should also include strong penalty and compensation measures
- Given government policies of promoting Genetically Modified seeds, large scale corporatization, siphoning off of agricultural land for developmental agenda, how could food security be achieved in reality? Thus these measures must be relooked at in the perspective of the Bill as well.
- “Energy Dense Food” and “Ready to Eat Meals” need to be thought through carefully as these might lead to creating contradictory health and well-being conditions in the country, in contrast to the intent of the legislation.

12.00 p.m - 1.30 p.m

Session 2: Governance and the Food Security Bill

Speakers: Javed & Kumaran. Chaired by Dr Gyana Prakashan

1. **Budgetary Allocation:** Javed from Center for Budget Governance and Accountability said that the development indicators of the country show that we need to implement the food security act soon. Global hunger index report highlights that India’s hunger and malnutrition conditions are even worse than Sub Sahara Africa. Women and children are most vulnerable victims of malnourishment. Anemia is high in women and children and we have not done much to address these issues. The Bill should be universal in approach as a part of a welfare state strategy. We will only get wheat and rice under the proposed Bill. According to the 2011 census, 24 crore families will come under this act (at the rate of 5 members each Household). Even though the food was being given at subsidized rates, the amount to be provided should not be less than 35 kgs per person/per month. How much resource would the government need to make the Bill universal? 115 million tonnes of food stock of rice, wheat and millet will be required. Money required to be spent to make the Bill universal would come to 5800 crore. Given the current state, an additional of one lakh ten thousand crore would be required to make the Bill universally applicable. Where will this money come from? Government gives five lakh crores worth of tax subsidy (by exempting various taxes like customs and excise duty etc.) to corporates so that they create employment and income generation for the nation. But in practical terms, this was not happening either. Thus the government should reclaim this money. However political interests and lack



of intent was preventing the government from doing so, thus making the excuse that universalizing the Bill was outside its financial capacity.

2. Mechanisms for Implementation and Monitoring: Kumaran from Oxfam India, said that we must keep in mind that we are still debating entitlements under the Bill only. In terms of implementation, everything was left on state governments alone, under the legislation. There was a trap in this in terms of monitoring and accountability and therefore a need to look into the technical aspects of the Bill as well. We must ensure that this Act does not fail given how critical it is for the country. We must take lessons in implementation from our past experiences. There are many deliberate subversions in the draft bill such as: BPL identification is loaded with too many problems; Cash transfers in lieu of food are also a negative step; Including ICDS as the only node of disbursement for women and children is also a very myopic approach. Viability of Fair Price Shops has not been paid attention to either. Who will implement the food security schemes- the bodies that have profit making motives or others, was also not clear. The government must spend on implementation aspects to make food security a reality. Thus political will was very important to execute the Bill. The proposed implementation structure also put too much onus on the already overburdened ICDS program. The government's proposed plan seemed unsatisfactory as well where instead of speeding up things it seemed to imply postponing of issues instead. For instance, families falling under the General Categories will get grains only when state governments implement the PDS reforms. This however was not time bound in any way. Also larger questions like where would the food come from for creating food security conditions in the country were also left unanswered. The Bill must have an additional chapter that focuses on long term nutritional security as well and must provide a blue print as to how to achieve this. Last mile assertion of food rights should be strongly incorporated in the Bill as well. Certain positive steps that could be adopted were-



- Information must be provided about the passing of the Act and what it contains. If there is a delay in implementation there should be built in accountability measures for that as well.
- Equitable delivery system must be set up to provide accessibility for marginalized groups.
- The current timings of Aganwadi were restricted as of now. These should be extended so that more working women can avail of its services.
- The Bill must bring about a pro-people system to transfer power to the last mile so that populations in the remotest of areas could avail the services.

- Local procurement of food from local groups etc. could also curb chances of corporate takeovers. Procurement model should also be built on last mile delivery to benefit small farmers and cultivators in rain-fed areas.
- People centric monitoring mechanisms should also be introduced to bring in transparency and accountability in the system.
- Grievance redressal mechanisms, compensations and protection of the complainant should also be ensured under the legislation.

3. Comments from the Open House

- Local procurement of food grains must be made part of the Bill.
- Fair Price Shops are also faced with many problems which should be kept in mind as well as these would help in identifying the current distribution gaps and how to overcome them.
- The grievance redressal system was too longwinded and should be speeded up.

2.00 p.m- 4.00 p.m

Session 3: Consolidating Session- Charter of Civil Society Demands

Speaker: Anil K Singh, SANSAD

1. Consolidation of Proceedings and Presentation of Civil Society

Recommendations: Anil K Singh presented the charter of demands that had emerged through the country wide consultative process.

- The Bill should be universal and not targeted.
- It should adopt a 'rights based approach' and not remain restricted to a mere 'entitlement'.
- As per ICMR figures, every person must be entitled 14 kgs of food grains in a month rather than the current stipulated amount of 7 kgs/per person/ month for priority households and 3 kgs/per person/ month for general category households.
- The Bill must call for nutritional security and not just provision of food, to people. Thus local procurement, storage and distribution must be stressed on in the Bill, keeping the regional food diversity of the country in mind.
- The Bill must also ensure that pulses, oil, vegetables, meat, sugar and fuel are also provided to households under its aegis.
- Prioritize the need for agrarian reform and make it incumbent on the governments to focus/ invest on increasing/improving agricultural production, procurement and distribution networks. Currently government's intention vise a vise support/promotion of agriculture is merely encompassed in Schedule III of the Bill. One must ensure that the Schedule is made a part of the main body of the Bill so that

governments can be made accountable to it, and it does not remain at the level of mere political 'intention'

- The ambit of 'Special Groups' must be expanded to include single women, denotified tribes, persons with disabilities, HIV/AIDS infected people, adolescent youth and old people who all faced food insecurities in various ways.
- Have budget allocations for awareness generation around the Act so that people became familiar with it when it would be executed.
- Concentrate on the infrastructure that would be required to implement the Bill effectively, which was currently not mentioned in the draft at all.
- Cash transfers in lieu of food should not be allowed.
- Biggest flaw in the Bill was "Clause 52' which diluted all responsibility of the government to provide food for its citizens in the most food insecure situations like drought, war or any such 'act of God' must be removed as it defeated the purpose of the such a legislation in the first place.

Session 2: Responses of Political Parties

Speakers: Rajneet Prasad (Member of Parliament, Rashtriya Janta Dal), Ram Kirpal Yadav (Member of Parliament, Rashtriya Janta Dal), Barbara Ekwall (Global Coordinator, FAO), Mani Shankar Aiyer (Member of Parliament, Congress). Chaired by Anil K Singh

1. Rajneet Prasad, Member of Parliament (Rashtriya Janta Dal) and Member of Standing Committee on Food said that it was a shame that after 65 years of India's independence and we were still talking about food security. We must think about not just food but how were we producing it as well. For instance, the heavy use of fertilizers had turned many a fertile land, fallow. GM foods were being promoted. These were all very worrying signs. India was plagued with starvation deaths while food grains rotted away in the godwons. The situation in the country therefore called for strong and effective food security measures to be adopted.
2. **Mr. Ram Kirpal Yadav, Member of Parliament (Rashtriya Janta Dal)** added that though the Bill was a good beginning, we were far from realizing the intention behind it, given the deteriorating condition of farmers in the country. Recent reports point out that though the economic growth rate of the country has increased but yet more than 50 lakh people fell under the BPL. We talk about growth rate and many big terms, but all these things are removed from the common man. Labour and farmer suicides, starvation deaths are a bad sign for the country. Why is so much food going waste? We thus have to improve systems, help farmers, build infrastructure and focus on agricultural production. He promised to carry forward civil society concerns regarding food security to the related authorities.

3. **Barbara Ekwall, the Global Coordinator of FAO shared international experience of food security in the world. She emphasized that solutions to food security could not be merely technical.** The human rights discourse plays a huge role in its realization. Promoting human rights through capacity development and awareness is also important so that people could stand up for themselves. Countries which do have means to provide food should ask for international aid. International covenants on food rights of people stated the obligations of the State to respect the people's right to food. They also instructed the states to not pursue actions that might have negative impact on people's right to food. Thus it was incumbent on states to facilitate the right to food by creating positive programmatic, legislative and political environment in the country that allowed people to get food through their own means, with dignity. Food aid programs should also be adopted in extreme conditions but only as the last resort.

Political will is important to achieve food secure conditions, as seen in the case of Brazil. Civil society organizations also have an important role to play at national and international arena. One of their strengths is that they represent the interests of marginalized groups, and also monitor grassroots realities, bringing them to decision makers. Brazil is a good example of this. Mozambique is also developing its right to food law but there it was initiated by the government itself. The speaker concluded by suggesting that one could work on right to food at different levels- adopting legislative, policy or grassroots approaches. Right to food could also be seen as a tool, a frame through which to look at other development issues such as natural resource management and so on. Right to Food is often considered a big burden by governments but Brazil has shown that promoting this right makes sense economically as well. Decision makers do not see that the **cost of hunger** is tremendous for any society.

4. Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha (Congress) said that there are many facets to food security. The National Food Security Bill will achieve its intended goal when food reaches the neediest in the country. Till we reach last mile, all expenditure and other infrastructural inputs in the Bill would turn to waste. Till now last mile delivery of schemes had not been satisfactory. Corruption and heavy bureaucratic procedures came in the way of accountable and transparent operation of schemes. The Panchayati Raj Institutions were one way of ensuring community participation and people's monitoring of programs. They provided the poor the space to question if last mile delivery is not done. However, the proposed Bill did not mention as to who could be brought to the book for the failure of last mile delivery.
5. Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks by Anil K Singh