

Report on National Consultation on Livelihood

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Jointly organized by

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and

Jharkhand Wada Na Todo Abhiyan

Report Prepared by

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of

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Section I

Introduction and key Issues

The recent abrupt surge in global food prices across the board, which is plaguing majority of the people of the world, need not, and should not be perceived as a harbinger of long term upward shift in the level of food prices. However, it has generated some intense and lively debate revolving around the development of agrarian sector, in general, and the issue of food security of the marginalized and poor class, in particular. Now, even the champions of neo-liberal conservatism and free trade advocates, most notably, the World Bank (World Development Report, 2008), do not fail to realize that the path to inclusive and sustained growth coincide with the acceleration of agricultural and rural development. Market failures are being recognized with emphatic assertions and the advocates of 'Invisible Hand' fundamentalism prescribe government interventions to correct these failures. The dramatic shift in policy paradigm discourse is orchestrated, primarily, by the ever rising threats to food security of the masses across countries. In the age of pervasive global movement of goods and services across countries, a country cannot remain insulated with macroeconomic shocks emerging in the outside world. India has been insulated from the global surge in food prices.

For tackling livelihood situation in India, UPA government has passed and implementing Forest Workers Rights Act and MGNREGA and planning to enact two additional Acts namely National Food Security Bill and National Seed Bill which has been already introduced in the Parliament. National Food Security Bill talks about every family below the poverty line (BPL) will be entitled to 35kg of grains per month at a rate of Rs3 a kg. But many CSOs are demanding for universalization of this right. Similarly there is lot of controversy in this proposed national seed bill. As everybody knows that the Food Security Bill is under consideration by the EGoM. 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. In fact, the Bill manifests flawed and

non-serious approach on issues of food security, which is highly vulnerable today due to rising prices and general and rising food prices in particular. The civil society and farmers groups have been raising these concerns; however, we are not sure whether these concerns are under consideration of the EGoM or the NAC.

More urgent is the Seeds Bill 2009, which is lying in the Rajya Sabha, and is likely to be discussed as soon as the monsoon session begins. The Seeds Bill has raised consternation among the farmers in the country. The Bill intending to regulate private seed industry in the country reportedly exempts the farmers from its application. However, it has a number of provisions, which favor private seed companies rather than strengthening farmers sovereignty over the Seeds. The Bill lacks in important provisions regarding regulation of prices and royalty of seeds, protection to farmers from fake, spurious and substandard seeds, provisions for preventing Bio-piracy, and health and bio-safety measures. The amendments proposed by Sharad Pawar also completely fail to take these important aspects of seeds industry regulation in the country.

The national consultation organized by Livelihood Thematic Action Groups (TAG) of Wada Na Todo Abhiyam (WNTA) highlighted Forest Workers Rights Act, Food Security Bill and National Seed Bill and experts from various sectors put their opinion to ensure livelihood in rural India.

Section II

Revitalizing livelihood in rural India: Key issues and Challenges

Introduction

Livelihoods are not just “means of living” – but what people possess as resources from which livelihoods are obtained and their ability to use such resources. The second point in the Chambers definition refers to inter-generational sustainability as well as strength to withstand risks. A heavily market-dependent livelihood imposes risks to withstand by which, other means are necessary – either by way of risk insurance, market stability through public action or demand management. Today, all over the world, including high productivity regions such as the European Union and the United States, agriculture as a livelihood is

contingent on considerable public support, to be sustainable. In those cases, where the proportion of population in agriculture is barely 9 per cent, it is merely a matter of differential elasticity of supply and demand. In a country like India, with the major proportion of its workforce still dependent on farming and farm related activities, the issue assumes more serious dimensions. It is not just a matter of “proportions” but the sheer numbers of people involved – the millions whose means of living are increasingly becoming precarious. Livelihoods affect not just households but intra-household access to resources and claims for different members within it.

India is witnessing a series of changes since early nineties. Recently, the Sensex crossed 20,000 points and simultaneously India ranked in 94th out of 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index — behind Ethiopia. Unprecedented numbers of farmer suicides, big corporate houses entering into retail business, land allocation for Special Economic Zones, boom in information technology and IT enabled services, zero growth rates in employment, are among many such events that needs introspection.

Key Issues

This section highlighted the importance of irrigation, use of technology for better agricultural production to ensure rural livelihood in rural India. The use of pesticides and cross breeding of the Indian varieties of crops and cattle with foreign varieties is going to create havoc for traditional varieties of crops and cattle. It is pertinent to understand the importance of Indian crop, and cattle’s and to maintain the original Indian varieties instead of crossbreeding it with the foreign varieties. The serious issue in seed bill is that it supports more of multinational companies than poor farmers. India is adopting those American policies which have failed in America. The Indian government should think whether policies designed for poor farmers are actually benefitting them and should develop its own policies.

GDP of the country is increased at the cost of the marginalized sections of the society. It was suggested that the parameters for measuring GDP should be understood by all the policy makers and they should focus more on equity led growth rather than GDP led growth. India lags behind from the countries like

china in feeding its population. Food surplus is shown by keeping the population unfed or underfed. The Govt. should think about increasing the productivity of food grains in India which is now 230 million tone, whereas China is producing six times more than India. The consumption of food grains of the people should be first fulfilled and then the surplus amount can be exported.

In India two lines are required for addressing the issues of poverty and livelihood i.e. poverty and hunger line. Poverty line implies sufficient amount of food grains and hunger line is the nutritional requirement of people. Chattisgarh model (direct purchase from farmers and local distribution of the same in local areas) can be replicated in other states of India for fulfilling the requirements of food grains by increasing its production. Panchayat offices can be converted to local godowns which will lead to procurement of local production and further ensure food security of local people.

NSSO survey said that farmers of states other than Kerala and Punjab categorized below poverty line. According to World Bank report 2008, land is essential resource and farmers should be taken out of land and industries should be established i.e. land lending concept should be promoted. The report also said that Govt. promised to set up 1000 ITIs in India for farmers training. Jharkhand should be developed as agriculture state to prevent migration. Rebuilding agriculture which has decreased such as milk production, ensuring per day minimum income and replication of chattisgarh model i.e. local production and local procurement concept will improve the agricultural situation of India. It was suggested that Jharkhand should be created as a model state in terms of agricultural production and then replicated in other states.

Case study- 1

Apni kheti, apna khaad / Apna beej, apna swaad (Our own farm, our own fertiliser / Our own seeds, our own taste) -- Prakash Singh Raghuvanshi.

A farmer from Tandia village in Varanasi has a solution to India's burgeoning food crisis.

In a land where poverty, hunger, malnutrition and farmer suicides are rampant, Prakash Singh Raghuvanshi's innovation could work wonders. He has single-handedly developed a number of high yielding, nutritious and disease-resistant varieties of wheat, paddy, pigeon pea (tur dal) and mustard, which can also

withstand adverse weather changes.

Financial problems and falling crop yield prompted him to think about starting a seed bank of the best varieties of crops. It has been a relentless crusade of over five years, despite his lack of formal education, financial problems, illness, and weak eyesight to develop the best quality seeds in India.

"I believe that God has given me the power to help other farmers and help my country be self-sufficient in food grain production. Every variety I developed has a yield of 20-40 per cent more than the ones available in the market. I can challenge anyone to grow a better variety of seed beside my plot," says 50-year-old Prakash Singh, who is ushering in a unique green revolution by supplying seeds free of cost to hundreds of thousands of farmers across India.

Key highlights and basic Recommendations

- ❖ While the country's development is visible by its GDP growth rate but the major challenge is the growth of GDP at the cost of what? GDP of the country can also touch a high at the cost of poor and marginalized sections of the society.
- ❖ Instead of GDP-led growth the country should focus more on equity-led development
- ❖ It will be disastrous if we follow the American model of development while formulating policies for development of India. Instead of borrowing the ideas from different models of development India should develop its own model of agricultural growth by considering the socio-economic dynamics of the country
- ❖ Instead of strengthening the rural livelihood, the schemes like NREGS taking out the farmers from land to some other manual labourers. A model should be developed by considering the local needs and the schemes like NREGS should use for the futuristic model of development in India.
- ❖ In contrary to the growing surplus of food grains of the country the pattern of food consumption suggests that India lagged behind than the countries like China while feeding their population. We are getting the food surplus by keeping our population un-feed or under-feed.

- ❖ Instead of poverty line, two lines should be prepared to address the issues of poverty and livelihood in India.
 - Hunger line
 - Poverty line
- ❖ Government of India (GoI) should consider different successful models of development and best practices of the country and implement in other parts as well.
- ❖ For example the innovations by Chhattisgarh: direct purchase from farmers and local distribution of the same in local areas
- ❖ There is a prolonged concern over the storage of the food grains locally so the panchayat offices should be converted into go-downs
- ❖ The income of Indian farmers should be ensured by comprising with other income groups
- ❖ Traditional agricultural system should be strengthened

Section III

Transformation of rural livelihood: promises of MNREGA, basic strategies and key challenges

Though Jharkhand's income is more than Bihar but it lags behind in the sphere of development as the governmental plans and programmes for poor are not reaching them. The rich are becoming richer whereas the poor are becoming poorer. After the formation of Jharkhand not much development has taken place.

Strengthening of the food distribution system, making laws for providing livelihood for poor people, considering agriculture as the base of GDP, preparing policies for strengthening irrigation system through proper utilization, conservation and distribution of water will help in ensuring livelihood and food security in India through surplus production of food grains. It was stressed on the increase in spending on agriculture as majority of the population of India is agriculture dependent. It was further suggested that the central Govt. and national advisory council should be enriched to prepare norms for supporting agriculture system, making it technically sound and ensure that it is designed for

the poor people. It was said that expenditure should be done on the basis of planning. Country and town planning is required.

The major parts of the population in India live in rural area and are dying due to poverty and hunger but still no proper initiatives are taken by the Govt. for the development of these areas. It was further shared about Pilot test on unique identification card in MP and Jharkhand states. The concerned departments misuse the available resources in state and therefore we need to consider NREGA as a tool for achieving small as well as big goals. We should try to accept and take up challenge to make common man aware about conservation of rain water by draining it in ground water table or through rain water harvesting. Recycling and storing of rain water is one way of ensuring livelihood. One of the limitation of MNREGA is that the scheme is not implemented in a proper way, the labors are not paid for their work, and amount spend on MNREGA is very little due to less amount of financial resources available with the Govt.

We need to focus on the issue of women and children by ensuring their nutrition requirement. We also should see about the enrollment ratio/registration under MNREGA. Apart from food requirement, nutritional requirement of an individual especially pregnant women and children should be focused. We should also see whether the BPL families benefit through various schemes. The people of the village should be empowered through awareness programmes so that they come up for taking their rights and entitlements.

Rural Livelihood, role of MNREGA and issues on agricultural crises in India

When poor people of rural India are dying due to poverty and hunger, in urban India people are affected due to the massive corruption. Though schemes and programmes are designed for the poor but we need to see whether the benefits of these programmes are actually reaching them through its proper implementation. Bringing pro-farmer policies in India through lobbying is an important concern. The programmes should be farmers centric and not corporate centric. Training of farmers on traditional techniques is also important. To strengthen the traditional agricultural approach more research should be done in that area and in every district a research centre should be established.

The policy makers should adopt holistic approaches by considering all problems and consulting different stake holders in the process of policy making to address the issues of livelihood. Sources of livelihood vary from people to people and therefore we need to analyze the situation before intervening in the area and then design programme for the area. It was suggested to apply experiences of other projects in the ongoing projects.

It was further said that with relief and subsidy an individual cannot be developed but skill enhancement is also one of the important factor for development of an individual. Availability of sufficient seeds and crop-wise use of fertilizers will increase production of food grains and thereby ensure the livelihood and income of farmers. Our dependency on Govt. for livelihood is a barrier in the process of development. Bio fertilizers in cheaper prices and seed replacement technique can be utilized by farmers which is a cost effective technique. Seeds play maximum role in production of food grains therefore farmers should be encouraged to use three types of seeds such as foundation seeds, certified seeds, and breeders' seeds for increased production. The farmers should also be trained on use of techniques for preparation of various seeds.

This is needless to mention that livelihood opportunities are decreasing day by day. Therefore proper planning and changes are required so that common man will be benefitted. We need to make the people aware about right to food and to ensure this right, production of food grain is necessary. Increasing knowledge and experiences of an individual and also the confidence level and thinking in creative way will lead to change and development. Use of technologies will enable in solving the above issues.

Agriculture in the lenses of Indian farmers: Key recommendations

- ❖ A strong farmers lobby is the need of the time to negotiate with the policy makers of the country and bring pro-farmer policies in India
- ❖ Instead of corporate centric agriculture it should be farmer centric agricultural policies
- ❖ A tool should be developed to train the farmers to use the traditional techniques more effectively

- ❖ Though 37% of farming land are irrigated in India but there is a urgent need fro rain water harvesting to solve most of the agricultural problems as water is the major constraint for Indian agricultural system
- ❖ All plans and policies should be more regional and inclusive
- ❖ A holistic approach should be adopted by our policy makers by considering all problems and consulting different stake holders in the process of policy making to address the issues of livelihood
- ❖ Relief centric development can't solve the problem in long run so with these relief centric approach we should follow it up with a futuristic approach
- ❖ To strengthen the traditional agricultural approach more research should be done in that area and in every district a research centre should be established

Section IV

Seed Bill 2010: How it is going to help farmers?

Seed Bill 2010 is a spiral effect of the bill which was initiated in the year 2004 and has many loopholes which need to be corrected for the wellbeing of the farmers and ensuring livelihood in rural India. Lack of Irrigation facilities led to low production. As the 70% of population depends on agriculture we need to focus more on this area. It was shared that the use of BT technology should be prohibited as it is poisonous. The farmers don't have any have bargaining power to sale their crops and ensure their livelihood. The farmers are opting for other professions such as driver, conductor etc and are even committing suicides due to high losses from hybrid seeds.

The traditional varieties of seeds are also becoming extinct because of cross pollination. The central seed committee should be given the right of price regulation. It was suggested that the farmers should be made aware about their rights and entitlements and empowered on the agriculture related issues. The production of food grains depends on use of good variety of seed therefore agencies should be encouraged to produce breeder, certified and foundation variety of seeds.

Case Study- 2

My land, my crop and my seed

Prakash Singh has developed over 80 varieties of high yielding wheat, 25 varieties of paddy, besides pigeon peas, mustard and vegetables. As an indigenous creator of a seed bank, he has sent samples of seeds to the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Agriculture and the rice research institute in Hyderabad.

However, he has not received any help from the government yet. While he has applied for a patent for the different varieties of seeds, he has also distributed the seeds free of cost to over 20 lakh (2 million) farmers across Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Chhattishgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. "In the Sangli district of Maharashtra, some poor farmers have become rich by using only my seeds. They are now selling the seeds to other farmers in the district," Prakash says.

Food security will be ensured only with the increased production of food and for this the farmers should be made aware about their rights and entitlements on agriculture and for at least minimum amount of their livelihood. It was said that we need to think about all types of farmers such as medium, low and high level farmers while making recommendations for seed bill 2010. There should be an important role of CSOs to intervene in making development schemes, checking the available resources, and target those farmers who don't have secured livelihood instead of thinking about the multinational companies.

Though population in India is increasing rapidly but we don't have sufficient land for producing crops as per our requirement. Moreover the production of food grains in the land available is also less than expectation. According to the NSS Report, if given an opportunity 40% youths are willing to shift to other sectors other than agriculture. This is because of low production and devastating agricultural investments they are losing their interest from agriculture. Return with reference to investment in agriculture is becoming lower and lower so farmers are more willing to shift their occupation. We are having deficient amount of food grains and other products. The challenges includes increasing land area for production, improving irrigation, productivity of major crop is below national average, only 15-20% seeds given to farmers by the Govt., lack of storage facility, timely supply, increasing growth rate in order to achieve the

target, reliable agriculture resource, and ensuring proper implementation of agricultural programmes.

Case Study- 3

'Foreign companies are taking our farmers for a ride'

While many farmers have benefited from Prakash's seed bank, some big companies have cheated him by buying some of his seeds from other farmers and selling it as their brand. He does not reveal the companies' names to avoid a controversy. "Unless a patent is granted to me at the earliest, how will I protect my innovation? Even granting a patent takes years in India," he laments.

Today, India has become a hotbed for companies selling seeds. "Several companies have made agriculture a big business, looting poor farmers. They claim to sell seeds with a high yield and charge up to Rs 200 per kg but the yield is never good and the cost of conventional farming is high."

"The debt-ridden farmers fall prey to their false claims. Foreign companies are taking our farmers for a ride. We need to make them aware of the potential dangers of buying seeds from these companies. They have an ulterior motive of destroying our environment and make us diseased." "Today, we have more sales of medicines than essential food items," Prakash Singh explains. He also trains farmers in different aspects of plant breeding and farming techniques.

Case Study- 4

'Even the law of the land is against the farmers'

"Today even the law of the land is against the farmers. I cannot pack these seeds and sell. I will be caught for committing an offence while big companies can steal my product and sell, it. They go scot free."

"I met the state Agriculture Minister Chaudhari Laxmi Narayan, who in turn helped me get in touch with Chandrasekhar Krishi Vishwa Vidhayala and Acharya Narendra Dev Krishi Vishwa Vidhayala. They tested my seeds and were impressed with the results. They have given me a test report saying they got 40 per cent higher yield."

The Banasthali Vidyapith in Rajasthan, has also tested his wheat varieties. Despite a bumper yield, farmers in India hardly get a good price for their produce. Though organically grown products are sold at exorbitant rates by big companies, Prakash Singh sells his yield for Rs 15-20 a kg. Wheat from his farm is sold at Rs 12 per kg. "The traders and middlemen make all the money leaving the hapless farmers poor. I myself have taken loans all through my life," he says.

Key Recommendations

- ❖ The bill is a copy of American agricultural policies so it need to be evaluated
- ❖ Failure of contract farming
- ❖ The food park initiative of GoI needs a major revision as the question is how much inclusive it is?
- ❖ Four major questions on this bill are:
 - Issue of cross-pollination
 - Increasing role of Central seed Committee instead of Private regulation clause of this bill
 - More governmental role on seed certification and verification
 - There should be a strong punishment clause with imprisonment system against those who are violating the basic standards and failed to deliver results as promised

Section V

Issues of Adivasi and forest land in India: Life, Land and Livelihood

After 1985 20 lakh people of India were affected due to failing Govt. policies in ensuring land of tribal people. The naxal policy of Govt. of India included construction of 6 inches of road in 50 naxal affected region, availability of BSNL mobile and landline connection, remote sensing towers for monitoring the governance system etc. But it was still not clear whether these policies will enable in eliminating naxalism. To address these issues in India the definition of landlessness should be improved, on this the planning commission further replied that those who have not even 1 inch land can also be come under the rich category.

The Govt. extended the coverage of land under reserve forest for developing it into a wild life sanctuary. The people living in these areas were displaced but no arrangements were made for their rehabilitation. In the year 1961-1991, in India 1/4th population of primitive tribes has decreased. The states rich in mineral

resources such as Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, and Orissa are most affected by increasing mining in these areas. This has resulted in diversion of agricultural land for mining and shows how govt. is promoting mining.

Historical injustice has done with the forest dwellers, through the applicability and implementation of forest right act and enactment of Indian forest act even before independence. The inter-generational equity analysis is missing in the Forest Right Act.

Key highlights on the forest right act

- ❖ Failure of government in ensuring land for tribals
- ❖ The Naxal policy of GoI
 - Six inch thick road in 50 Naxal affected districts
 - BSNL mobile and land line connection in every village
 - Remote sensing tower to monitor the governance system
- ❖ The question is how these policies can help to solve the Naxal Problems in India
- ❖ Between 1961- 81 there is a growth of 26 million hector land in eastern India but at the cost of what?
- ❖ 85 lacs of tribal people displaced
- ❖ No rehabilitation yet
- ❖ Till date 200 districts are less than 5% of forest cover
- ❖ 65 districts less than 1% forest cover
- ❖ Between 1961-91: there is a decrease of 20-32 % of population in 36 tribes in India
- ❖ Missing of Inter-generational equity analysis in the Forest Right Act

Key recommendations

- ❖ Time bound settlement plan of forest right act
- ❖ Time bound settlement for customary right
- ❖ Comprehensive survey and settlement

- ❖ Realignment of revenue and forest land status
- ❖ Recognition of record of rights
- ❖ Providing land to people living in sarvajulum camps
- ❖ DNT commission report submitted to the ministry of social justice. It is the minimum land holding act for poor.
- ❖ Consultation of Tribal Advisory Council in every stage of decision making for the tribal population
- ❖ Exemption of primitive tribes from the cut-up dates made by the forest right act
- ❖ Minimum land holding scheme should be incorporated and ensured immediately

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