

Policy Report

No. 22

The Politics and Governance of Social Policies in Delhi: Comparing Cash and In-kind Transfers

O. Grace Ngullie



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for

Politics and Public Policy

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The Politics and Governance of Social Policies in Delhi: Comparing Cash and In-kind Transfers

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(February – May, 2018)



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Glossary of Acronyms

AAP	:	Aam Aadmi Party
AAY	:	Antyodaya Anna Yojana
BJP	:	Bharatiya Janata Party
CT	:	Cash Transfer
CSG	:	Child Support Grant
DAY	:	Dilli Annashree Yojna
DBT	:	Direct Benefit Transfer
DFSCA	:	Department of Food, Supplies, and Consumer Affairs
E-POS	:	Electronic- Point of Sale
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
FPS	:	Fair Price Shops
GRC	:	Gender Resource Centre
GRM	:	Grievance Redressal Mechanism
ICT	:	Information and Communication Technology
INC	:	Indian National Congress
MC	:	Mission Convergence
MGNREGS	:	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NFSA	:	National Food Security Act
PDS	:	Public Distribution System
PHH	:	Priority Households
RO	:	Ration Office
SHGs	:	Self Help Groups
SSS	:	Samajik Suvidha Sangam
UPA	:	United Progressive Alliance

ABSTRACT

The study acknowledges the potential contribution of social policies towards attaining a sustainable and inclusive human and social capital transformation as also social integration. Yet, exclusion errors, especially involving ineffective targeting methods, insensitive service providers, and poor public services, including the apathy of political representatives, tend to exacerbate social tensions in the community, affecting the well-being of citizens with the attendant risk of social disintegration. This study highlights the decisive role of politics and governance in Delhi and its contribution towards reaping the prospective benefits of food security programmes through service delivery mechanisms of cash and in-kind transfers. It especially captures the narratives of those beneficiaries who benefited earlier from Cash Transfers programme known as Dilli Annashree Yojana and are now benefitting from the Public Distribution System under the National Food Security Programme. Resting on a two-fold attempt, the study gives the citizens' perspective on service delivery of cash and in-kind transfers and examines the household's access to food, education, and healthcare

while evaluating the social relationships, including the nature of relationships they have with the service providers and political representatives. The study stresses the significance of psychosocial dimensions and advocates including them in the planning, implementation and evaluation of socio-economic welfare programmes.

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I. The Transformative Potential of Social Policies

Welfare states bet on social policies to tackle varying levels of social risks. The Global South is drawing significant attention in the development of innovative social policies seeking to address poverty, inequality, and social and economic exclusion (Saad-Filho 2016; Yi, Dugarova and Koechlein 2013). In recent times, this global southern revolution has been attributed largely to the implementation of Cash Transfer (CT) policies and programmes in the region¹ (Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme 2010). Ushering in a trend of human capital to social capital transformation, CTs aid in poverty reduction and enhance human capital such as education, healthcare and nutrition, besides strengthening social relationships in the community and psychological well-being of people, which has an impact on societal integration (Pavanello et al. 2016; Samuels and Stavropoulou 2016; Attah et al. 2016; Molyneux, Jones and Samuels 2016). Studies show improvement among children's performance in school, self-confidence, relationships with teachers

1. In the case of India, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is often cited as an equivalent to a CT programme since it guarantees Work for Money or Cash for Work, where it pays wage for unskilled labour and infrastructure related activities.

and classmates, thus making their lives meaningful; beneficiaries have also been able to gain self-respect, widen social networking and participation, socialise through family gatherings, religious engagements and other social events besides getting empowered through improved decision-making ability (Attah, et al. 2016; Molyneux, Jones and Samuels 2016). In South Africa, the Child Support Grant (CSG) addresses psychological barriers among children by meeting 'basic symbolic needs' such as right shoes and clean uniforms, proper hairstyle and better food for lunch that makes them feel socially acceptable in schools (Adato, Devereux and Sebates-Wheeler 2016).

Conversely, factors such as ineffective targeting in social policies, and people's own lack of knowledge about eligibility for programmes, selection criteria, and rightful entitlements, create social tensions, understood as intra-community tensions, both amongst those excluded-eligible beneficiaries and between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (Pavanello et al. 2016; Attah et al. 2016). Such social tensions affect the psychosocial well-being of individuals, with the attendant risk of social disintegration. Cash benefits of low size also may not fully address the socio-psychological constraints of the poor as observed during the administration of the CSG in South Africa. In an in-kind transfers programme like the Public Distribution System

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(PDS) in India, the researcher had observed much social tension amongst beneficiaries due to corruption, black-marketing and insensitivity of service providers at the food distribution level in Delhi, affecting their psychosocial well-being (Ngullie 2017). Succinctly expressed, beneficiaries wish to be treated with respect and dignity (Jones et al. 2016). Studies show that disrespectful attitude towards beneficiaries by programme officials brings them shame and humiliation, inducing low self-esteem and threatening their participation in the programmes; on the other hand, positive relations between beneficiaries and service providers have an impact on people's psychological well-being, improving social relationships, and leading to social integration (Pavanello, et al. 2016; Samuels and Stavropoulou 2016).

This study stands on the premise that social policies are proven to enhance human well-being and strengthen social cohesion in a community; yet, complexities such as exclusion errors, especially as a result of ineffective targeting methods, insensitive service providers and poor public services, including the apathy of political representatives, tend to exacerbate social tensions in the community, affecting the well-being of citizens with the attendant risk of social disintegration. This study probes these factors with an aim to contribute to scholarly and policy debates on the psychosocial

dimensions in the planning, implementation and evaluation of socio-economic welfare programmes.

It is significant to note that India is one of the major players in the global south that place social welfare in a framework of human rights, institutional settings and constitutional obligations; yet, transformational politics, social welfare governance and transformational implementation are also decisive factors for social policies to be inclusive and sustainable (Stetter and Yi 2017). The central question this study, therefore, poses is this: Do social policies in India particularly enhance the potential for sustainable and inclusive human and social capital transformation and what is their impact on social integration?

II. The Context of the Study

On December 15, 2012, the chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), Sonia Gandhi, officially launched a food security programme in Delhi known as the Dilli Annashree Yojna (DAY). The ruling party in Delhi at the time was the Indian National Congress (INC) led by its Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit. The intention of the programme, as announced, was to provide Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to those poor and vulnerable households who were excluded from the ambit of the PDS due to a cap on the number of beneficiaries fixed by the Centre², even though these households equally deserved to receive ration entitlement. The programme was projected to cover two lakh poor households with a provision of a monthly cash entitlement of Rs. 600³ to be transferred directly to the bank account of the women heads of the family. Internally, the Congress pushed the idea of “giving money to the poor”

2. Delhi had 7.5 lakh BPL families but the Planning Commission fixed 4.09 lakh as the maximum limit of BPL households to receive ration card under PDS (*The Hindu*, 19 December 2012).

3. Rs. 600 was considered as the near cash equivalent of the food subsidy that PDS household were receiving as per the market value and government's subsidy expenditure on the commodities (Chowdhary 2013-2014).

as a handy political slogan to be used in the 2013 assembly elections; however, officially, the Congress projected it as a ‘social initiative for the welfare of the people’ (*NDTV*, 12 December 2012). The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on the other hand, complained to the Election Commission that the ruling party was using the scheme to ‘lure voters’ (*Ibid.*). The then Finance Minister, P. Chidamabaram, placed the CT programme in perspective with the remark that ‘Elections will come and elections will go. Governments will come and governments will go. Parties will come and parties will go. But look at it through the eyes of the people of this country’ (*The Hindu*, 20 November 2012).

As it turned out, the Delhi State Legislative Assembly Election held in December 2013 threw up a fractured verdict with the Congress coming third behind the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The BJP secured 32 seats to the AAP’s 28 in a house of 70. Arvind Kejriwal, the leader of the AAP, decided he would not form a government with either the BJP or the Congress. The AAP eventually formed a minority government with the support of the Congress that, however, lasted only for 49 days with Chief Minister Kejriwal resigning on February 14, 2014, citing his inability to introduce the Jan Lokpal Bill

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(Anti-corruption bill)⁴ in the Assembly. This led to the imposition of President's rule and there was no government in Delhi for a year.

In the State Legislative Assembly Election held in February 2015, the AAP came back to power in Delhi with an absolute majority seizing 67 of 70 seats. The AAP rode to power on the plank of empowering and uplifting the common man. To no one's surprise, therefore, ending corruption was the top promise in its election manifesto. Towards this end, point 60 in its 70-Point Action Plan, titled 'Controlling Price Rise', stated:

Our government will use its full strength to stop black market operations, hoarding and speculative trading to curb the rising prices of vegetables, fruits and other essential commodities. Ration shops and the public distribution system will be corruption-free and shield the Aam Aadmi from rising costs.

Prior to the above-mentioned State elections in Delhi, the major turning point for food policy at the national level was the passage of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 by the UPA Government. Delhi was one of the first states in India to implement the Act w.e.f 1st September 2013. The Act, under Section 12, directed the states to undertake reforms in PDS. Among them, door-step

4. The formation of the AAP resulted from a popular anti-corruption movement that sought to establish a strong and effective Lokpal.

delivery of foodgrains to the outlets; use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and end-to-end computerization to ensure transparent record of transactions and to check diversions; use of biometric Aadhaar for unique identification and appropriate targeting of beneficiaries; preferential allotments to public bodies such as Panchayat, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Co-operatives to run the Fair Price Shops (FPS); and introduction of schemes like CTs for food security. Pursuant to these directives, the Delhi government has initiated some reforms in the governance of food policy.

According to the Department of Food, Supplies and Consumer Affairs (DFSCA) Delhi, as on April 2018, the automation of FPSs using electronic-Point of Sale (e-POS) devices and Aadhaar-seeding for unique identification and proper targeting of food distribution was the topmost priority of the State government in implementing the Act (Meena 2018). The e-POS device makes use of the beneficiaries' biometric data such as fingerprints or iris scan along with their Aadhaar numbers to verify and match with the official record of the beneficiaries and this transaction can be monitored online. According to the DFSCA, this biometric device is linked to the electronic weighing machine to ensure that beneficiaries receive the entitled

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ration. Bharat Electronics is the state's service provider for installing POS devices at the FPS (See images below).



Biometric Reading Machine and
Iris Scan device at Jai Mata Store
FPS, Kirari, Delhi.



Weighing Machine at Jaikisan MP
Society, Kirari, Delhi.

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (April 13, 2018).

Although Aadhaar is not compulsory, the DFSCA has claimed 99 per cent Aadhaar-seeding in Delhi's Public Distribution System with minimal failure of verification at the FPS level, that is, only 2 per cent in January 2018 and 1.25 per cent in February 2018 (*ibid.*). It also reported that rations are made available "offline" to those whose verification fails or even to those who do not possess an Aadhaar card provided they can produce the valid ration card with photos attached as an identity proof to corroborate the identities of persons availing

the ration. Student beneficiaries can produce documents such as school ID card, election card or electricity bill (Ibid).

The present Delhi government has also introduced a FPS Portability Scheme, which gives beneficiaries the choice to collect ration from any of the city's FPSs. This, the DFSCA has claimed, has ended the restriction on beneficiaries to collect ration only from their designated shops. Alongside, it has hiked the commission given to FPS dealers to end the incidence of corruption in PDS. In January 2018, Delhi became the first State in the country to initiate an almost 300 per cent increase in the margin money of the FPS dealers. As the Delhi Food and Supplies Minister Imran Hussain announced, this hike was from Rs. 70 per quintal to Rs. 200 per quintal (1 quintal is equal to 100 kilograms) for wheat and rice, and from Rs. 10 per quintal to Rs. 200 per quintal for sugar. Earlier the FPS dealers earned 70 paisa per kg of wheat or rice sold; they would now earn Rs. 2 per kg of wheat/rice/sugar sold. This effort was taken by factoring in the wages, profit-making and overall maintenance of the shops. Both the central and the State government, on a fifty per cent shared basis, provide the commission to the FPS dealers.

The NFSA 2013 has provisioned for an increase in the coverage of beneficiaries in the existing PDS, that is, 50 per cent of urban

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population and 75 per cent of rural population. The NFSA has two categories of beneficiaries: Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Households (PHH): number of households covered in crore is 2.5 for AAY and 16.1 (approx) for PHH (Government of India 2017). Foodgrains entitlement per family for AAY households is 35 Kg and for PHH, it is 5 Kg per person. Both AAY and PHH pay the same price for the foodgrains, that is, Rice at Rs.3/kg and wheat at Rs.2/kg. Erstwhile PDS had three main categories of beneficiaries: AAY, Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL); households coverage in crore was 2.5 for AAY, 4.02 for BPL, and 11.52 for APL (Ibid). Erstwhile PDS entitled every family 35 kg of foodgrains for both AAY and BPL categories; AAY had to pay Rs.3/kg for rice and Rs. 2/kg for wheat; BPL had to pay Rs.5.65/kg for rice and Rs.4.15/kg for wheat; APL category had to pay Rs.8.30/kg for rice and Rs.6.10/kg for wheat, depending on the availability of foodgrains (Ibid).

As per the NFSA, with regard to Delhi, the central government announced that it would provide food subsidy to a maximum limit of 73 lakh persons (Government of NCT of Delhi 2014). This directive provided an opportunity to enrol those deserving poor families who were excluded from the PDS, for instance in this study- the beneficiaries of DAY. According to the Programme Officer of the

Mission Convergence (MC)⁵, the Delhi government terminated DAY after a year of its implementation; moreover, since the NFSA took effect from September 2013 in Delhi, it intended to shift these beneficiaries to the PDS as they had already met the eligibility criteria⁶. Besides, the Congress government in Delhi, which initiated the CT programme, was voted out in December 2013 polls; it led to ending the tenure of former CM Shiela Dikshit as Arvind Kejriwal, the current CM from AAP took power. DAY features in the ‘Social Sector Service Delivery: Good Practices Resource Book 2015’ claiming to have benefitted more than one lakh poor families in Delhi (NITI Aayog and UNDP 2015). Currently, registration of new beneficiaries including DAY beneficiaries in the PDS is an ongoing process in Delhi.

The purpose of this study is to capture the narratives of those who benefited earlier from DAY and are now benefitting from PDS under the National Food Security Programme. The study is a two-fold attempt: to give the citizens’ perspective on service delivery and examine the household’s access to food, education and healthcare

5. MC, also known as Samajik Suvidha Sangam (SSS), was the chief implementing partner-agency for DAY. It is a State level registered body institutionalised through Public-Private-Community-Partnerships launched by the Delhi government in 2008 to facilitate delivery of government welfare services to the people.

6. The eligibility criteria are households having an annual income of less than one lakh, those who are geographically and socially vulnerable such as transgender, single women, disabled, homeless, casual workers, among others.

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while evaluating their social relationships, including the nature of relationships they have with the service providers and political representatives. PDS and DAY are suitable for a comparative analysis, as the end goal of both is to give food security to the people, the former through a delivery mechanism of an in-kind transfer and the latter in the form of a CT. The DFSCA of Delhi implemented both these programme.

III. Methodology of the Research

The DFSCA implements the National Food Security Programme across 9 District Offices (DO) and 70 Circle Offices (CO) in Delhi. Each DO administers several COs. For some years now, the Northwest Delhi District, specifically the Kirari CO under this DO, has had the maximum concentration of eligible PDS households recorded in the National Food Security Delhi's website. The site chosen for the empirical study is, therefore, Kirari Circle in the Northwest Delhi DO. The chosen field was considered ideal because it had the maximum concentration of poor households in Delhi. The field study was conducted during March and April 2018.

To begin with, the researcher identified the recipient households⁷ of the previous DAY scheme that are currently registered in the PDS programme and interviewed 60 households through a set of semi-structured questions. All these 60 households earlier received CT from DAY and are now receiving food subsidy through the PDS; these households have gained experience in both the schemes and were able

7. The Mission Convergence Delhi provided the names, contact details and residence addresses of DAY beneficiaries in February 2015.

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to provide perspectives on cash and in-kind transfers. It is to be noted that all these 60 households possess Aadhaar card, which was mandatory to receive CT in DAY. Four Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) representing 24 households were conducted amongst PDS beneficiaries irrespective of whether or not they received CT through DAY earlier. This study was conducted in Prem Nagar I in Kirari Circle, Delhi covering areas of Street 4, Khubran Park, Street 7 H Block, and Station Block Street 17. These FGDs were a significant part of the study as they gave additional insights into the current implementation of the NFSA. The discussion captured exclusion of family members from ration cards, people's narratives and experiences of ration shop events, knowledge and awareness about the programme, and their understanding of the current implementation of Aadhaar and the biometric system in the PDS. It also provided an understanding of households' priorities related to food, education, and healthcare and the existing social relationships amongst themselves and the nature of relationships with the service providers and the political representatives.

The researcher studied the responses of participants to three Fair Price Shops (FPSs) in the locality where they collected rations from, along with interviews with these FPS dealers. These three FPSs are Jaikisan MP Society FPS 4815, Jai Mata Store FPS 8426, and Balaji Store FPS

8078 in the Kirari CO of North West district in Delhi. The researcher also conducted an interview with the Principal Secretary-cum-Commissioner, Head of Department, Food Supplies & Consumer Affairs Dept., New Delhi to understand how the NFSA operated. In addition, the researcher revisited the empirical data⁸ that provided a comparison between the PDS and DAY in Delhi from her PhD thesis (Ngullie 2017).

8. The data captures households' employment, income and nature of expenditure on food and non-food items. It examines households' access to food, education, healthcare, clothing, and sanitation care including women's decision-making role at the household level. It provides a comparative analysis of the welfare schemes' coverage of beneficiaries, quality and utility of services, governance and accountability mechanisms, people perspectives on the service delivery mechanisms of cash and in-kind transfers to test the effectiveness of these policies.

IV. Observation through the Images: The Field Site

Kirari Circle, North West Delhi

The Green Line Delhi Metro takes one to Kirari Circle region in North West Delhi. On reaching Nangloi Metro Station, one can walk or take an e-rickshaw to reach several localities in this region. This research covers areas of Prem Nagar I, Prem Nagar II, Prem Nagar III, and Sultanpuri within Kirari.

Lack of sanitation is very evident in this locality. The look and feel of the landscape is very unpleasant with dirt and wastes strewn about in the open spaces, flies swarming in open drainages, and a persistent foul-odor pervading the atmosphere.



Open space area near Nangloi Railway Station, Kirari, Delhi
Source: Author's photography during the field visit (9th March 2018).



Waste-clogged drains in Prem Nagar, Kirari, Delhi

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (9th March, 2018)

The vast majority of people in the areas mentioned above live amid dirt and filth in homes close to waste-clogged drains. Although many households live in pucca settlements, open drainages run close to almost all buildings.



Waste and dirt-clogged drains in Prem Nagar, Kirari, Delhi

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (9th March, 2018).

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Lack of access to clean drinking water is a major problem in this locality. The shortage of clean drinking water causes severe stress to households' members, especially women, who endure the adversity with helplessness. The underground water pumps they rely on are not usable for drinking but come handy for other purposes such as washing clothes, bathing and cleaning.

For the poorer amongst the poor, even water for bathing seems to be unattainable as can be seen from this picture of children plunging into accumulated wastewater on the roads. These children live nearby in a slum region.



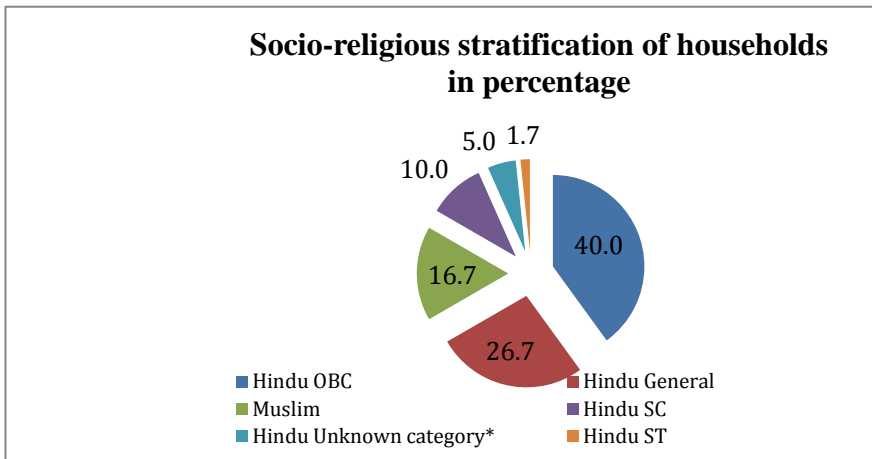
Children bathing on the road in Kirari, Delhi

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (20th March, 2018)

V. Findings of the Study

Socio-religious stratification of households

Out of 60 households interviewed, 40 per cent belong to Hindu OBC category, 26.67 per cent to Hindu-General category, 16.67 per cent to the Muslim community, 10 per cent to Hindu-SC category and 1.6 per cent to Hindu-ST Category. Five per cent fall in the Hindu-unknown category.



* Households do not know which caste category they belong to

Source: Author's calculation of primary data

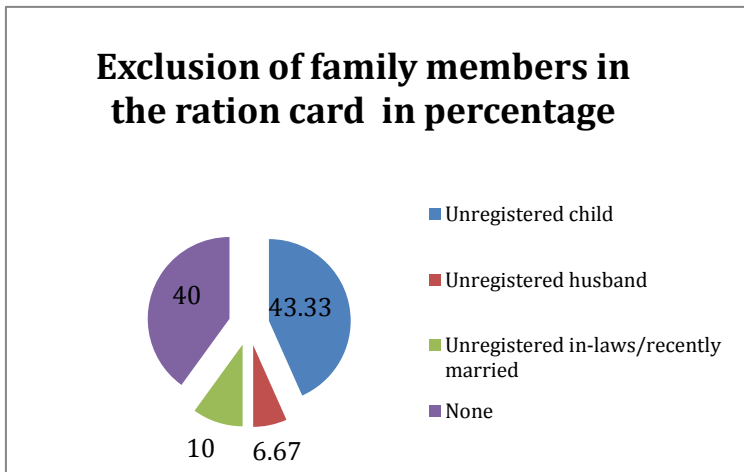
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Further, 61.67 per cent are female respondents, 35 per cent are male, and 3.33 per cent consist of both male and female respondents. Female here represents the wife/mother and Male represents the husband/father in a family. The four FGDs represent 24 households: Group 1 represents eight households, Group 2 represents five households, Group 3 represents five households, and Group 4 represents six households.

i. **The Current Implementation of The National Food Security Act in Delhi**

The majority of the households had some family members excluded from the ration card

Three types of family members were excluded from the ration card, namely unregistered children, unregistered in-laws and unregistered husbands. Altogether, 60 per cent of households had one or more family members excluded from the ration card. Consequently, only 40 per cent of households had all members of the family listed on the ration card with full access to food entitlement. If we break down the



Source: Author's calculation of primary data

exclusion component, unregistered children formed the highest at 43.33 per cent followed by, 10 per cent unregistered in-laws, especially

recently married females, and 6.67 per cent unregistered husband for unexplained reasons.

Amongst the group respondents too, a majority of households had members excluded from the family's ration card: 4/8 households in Group 1, 5/5 households in Group 2, 3/5 households in Group 3, and 4/6 households in Group 4 had some family members missing from the ration card. For instance, one of the households in Group 4 had 3/7 members excluded from the ration card.

All the beneficiaries are buying ration through Aadhaar linked e-POS device with some interruptions in the process

Beneficiaries referred to the e-POS appreciatively as the 'online' system saying it has eased the process of buying grain. Most of the households i.e. 93.33 per cent were able to buy ration through the e-POS device although many encountered some interruptions associated with internet connectivity, POS machine faults and some difficulty with fingerprint detection. Fingerprint detection was the main problem with the remaining 6.67 per cent of households leading to grain purchase failures. In many cases, the families used another family member's fingerprint. For instance, in one of the households, the fingerprints of parents aged 57 and 59 were not detected and so they relied on their children's fingerprint to collect the ration. All the households reported



e-POS device at Jai Mata Store FPS, Kirari, Delhi.

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (9th March 2018)

that the FPS dealer insisted on the production of the Aadhaar card, which most of them did not complain about.

Fair Price Shops are usually open until 2 p.m between the first and the 20th of each month

According to the beneficiaries, prior to the 'online' system, the shops used to be closed after the 10th day of every month and would shut down by 1 p.m on the days they were opened for sale. Subsequent to the 'online' system, the FPSs usually remained open between the first and the 20th of every month and closed at 2 p.m on these days. Based on this, 95 per cent of households reported regularity of ration off-take

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NOTICE BOARD
 FPS No. 8426
 NAME OF LICENCE: VIJAY KUMAR
 DATE: 20/03/18
 M/S **JAI MATA STORE**
 ADD. D-11 PREM NAGAR, I DELHI

SCHEM	TOTAL CARD	WHEAT	RICE	SUGAR
RAY				
BPL(FRS)		2.00 (25 KG PC)	3.00 (10 KG PC)	15.50 (6 KG PC)
FRAC(FRS)		2.00 (4 KG PC)	3.00 (1 KG PC)	15.50 (6 KG PC)
OPEN STOCK		2.00 (4 KG PC)	3.00 (1 KG PC)	
RAY				
BPL(FRS)				
FRAC(FRS)				

CIRCLE No. 09 KIRARI TEL. No.
 A/C (N/W) SHALIMAR BAGH TEL. No.
 FPS HOLDER CON. No.
 OPENING TIME 9 AM TO 1 PM * 3 PM TO 7 PM
MONDAY CLOSED (SIG. HOLDER)

Notice Board: Jai Mata Store FPS, Kirari, Delhi

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (9th March 2018)

at FPS and the remaining 5 per cent said it was irregular. The actual timings listed on the notice board are 9 a.m to 1 p.m and 3 p.m to 7 p.m.

The group respondents also reported that before the 'online' system, they used to frequent the FPS but were often told to come back the next day or some other day. The dealer denied them ration after the 10th of every month on the plea that he had run out of stock. The positive changes, they believed, were due to the 'online' system.

Aadhaar linked e-POS enable authentic identification of beneficiaries, says FPS dealers

The FPS dealers in Kirari (Jaikisan MP Society FPS no. 4815; Jai Mata Store FPS no. 8426; and Balaji Store FPS no. 8078) pointed out that Aadhaar linked e-POS device has eased their tension and simplified the service delivery process. According to them, its use has reduced the crowds in the shop, easing the earlier issues of having to tend to long queues due to the difficulty in authenticating beneficiary identities on the ration card; the biometric system enables them to use iris scan in the event of any difficulty in the fingerprint detection; it enables them to exercise accountability. According to them, they themselves have to undergo biometric identification in order to take their individual share of allocation.

Beneficiaries are moderately aware of the National Food Security Programme

Group 1, 2 and 3 respondents reported that Aadhaar card and Electricity Bill are necessary to obtain a ration card. One respondent said that ineligible households are those earning more than Rs. 80,000 per annum; another respondent said that households earning between Rs 30,000 to 50,000 per month are not eligible; respondents also said that households that consume more than one or 2 kw electricity per month and households with a member or members holding a

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government job are not eligible. Given that 4/5 households in Group 2 live in rented houses, these respondents stated that producing the landlord's signature and the neighbour's signature as a proof was also necessary to obtain a ration card. Respondents from group 4 were not aware of the eligibility criteria to obtain a ration card. All the respondents were aware of the legal price and quantity of their ration entitlement.

Most of the beneficiaries pay the legal price as per the NFSA

An estimated 96.67 per cent of households were paying the legal price, that is, 4 Kg of Wheat at Rs.2/Kg and 1 Kg of Rice at Rs.3/Kg per person. One respondent was simply not sure about the quantity and price of ration entitlement and another respondent could not tell the details, as it was her father-in-law who usually purchases the ration.

Conflicting responses regarding whether beneficiaries receive the full entitlement

Of the individually interviewed households, 96.67 per cent reported that they collected 5 kg of foodgrains per member. However, most of the group respondents reported that they did not receive the ration as per their legal entitlement. Many respondents said that on reaching home they found that the ration dealer had given them less than the entitled amount. Some respondents reported that if they sent their

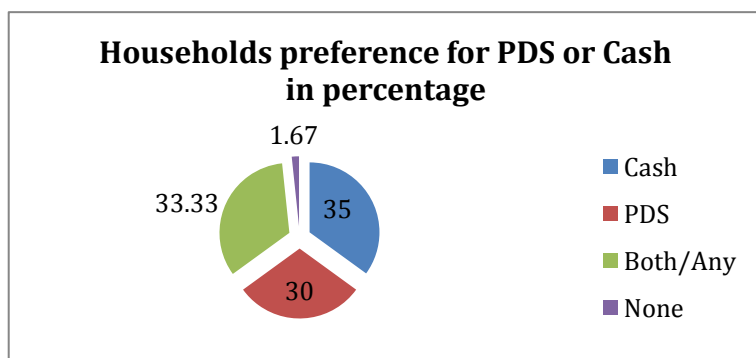
children to collect ration, the dealer did not give the full entitlement or eliminated one person's entitlement; some respondents reported that, overall, they got half or 1 kg less than their entitlement. In cases where they got the full entitlement, after cleaning the foodgrains, they found the quantity declining by 500-700 grams or a few hundred grams, which, according to them, was reasonable. One of the respondents admitted that she did not receive the rice part of her entitlement. Some felt that the FPS dealer could be tampering with the weighing machine but when they sought clarification or complained, they found the dealer reacting in anger and outrightly denying their complaints.

Most of the beneficiaries are satisfied with the quality of food grains

Of those interviewed, 81.67 per cent were satisfied with the quality of foodgrains; 8.33 per cent could not comment on the quality of ration; 3 per cent disliked the quality of ration; another 3 per cent found the ration quality average saying it was sometimes good and sometimes bad. Similarly, the majority of the group respondents were satisfied with the quality of ration while some found the grain to be of poor quality and unclean.

Rationale for the Preference of Cash or Food

Thirty-five per cent of households preferred CT to food subsidy while 30 per cent preferred PDS. Another 33.33 per cent had no particular preference between cash and food and 1.67 per cent preferred neither cash nor food; one male respondent said he was against subsidy or freebies mainly because the most deserving people did not generally get it. He said these subsidies and freebies were best dismantled because they did not reach the intended poor.



Source: Author's calculation of primary data

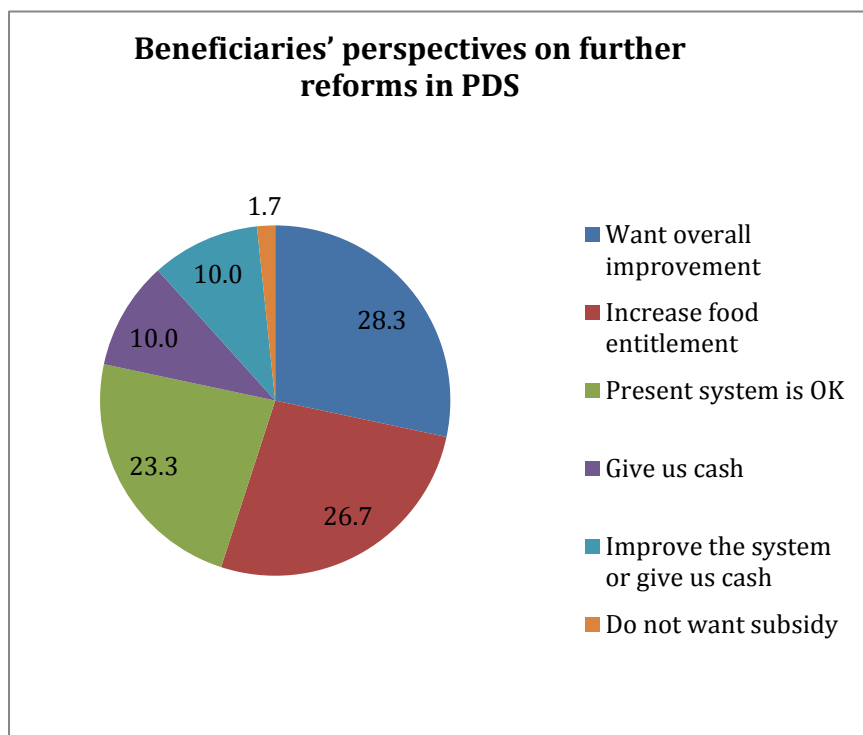
The preference for cash was mostly due to faulty PDS. The reasons cited were exclusion of some family members from the ration card, obstacles in accessibility due to lack of time, distance to FPS, long waits in queue, and poor quality of service providers, poor quality of ration

and inadequate foodgrains and corruption in the dispensing of grains. The preference for CTs was also due to the convenience of withdrawing money anytime and the multiple utility of cash that enabled them to buy things as per their needs and buy more food including good quality food for the family. They also found cash more reliable and useful as ration entitlement was not enough. Households that prefer PDS attributed their reasons to assurance of foodgrains supply and access to subsidised ration. They also feared that cash could be misused. Those who preferred both/any found both CTs and PDS indispensable.

In the FGDs, only Group 1 respondents preferred Cash to food. Group 2, 3 and 4 opted for PDS for reasons of food security, access to subsidised food, and fear of misuse of money. Households preferring PDS expressed satisfaction with their ability to collect ration any day of a month after the introduction of the 'online' system. Earlier, they had difficulty when the ration shops opened only for a few days in a month. It was clear from observation that households that are better off prefer cash to food. Group 1 respondents on Street 4 seemed better off in terms of their housing and settlement area compared to households living in Khubran Park, Street 7 H Block, and Station Block Street 17 in Kirari. For the poorer/poorest amongst the poor, PDS remains indispensable for their livelihood.

Beneficiaries' perspectives on further reforms in PDS

The majority of the households' want reforms in PDS mostly with respect to an increase in entitlement. Overall, they want increase in food entitlement, inclusion of all members and assured supply, well-behaved service provider, complaint redressal facility, daily access to FPS, and provision of other items like pulses.

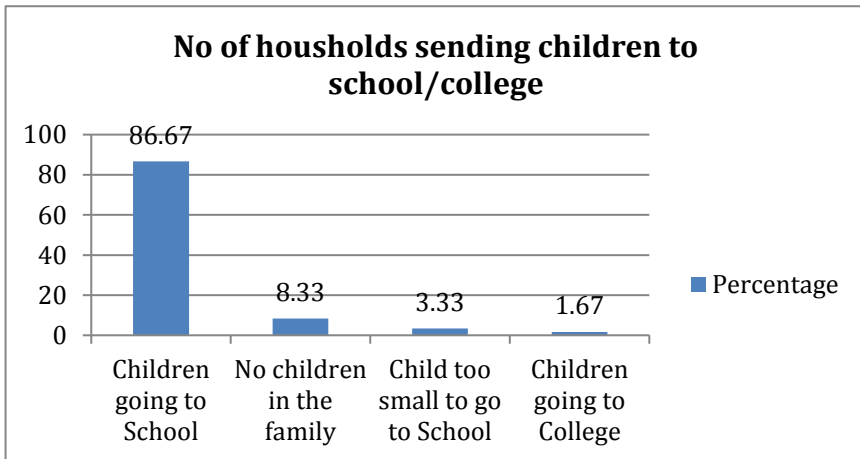


Source: Author's calculation of primary data

ii. The Impact of Cash Transfers And In-Kind Transfers on Food, Education And Healthcare

Most of the households send children to school/college

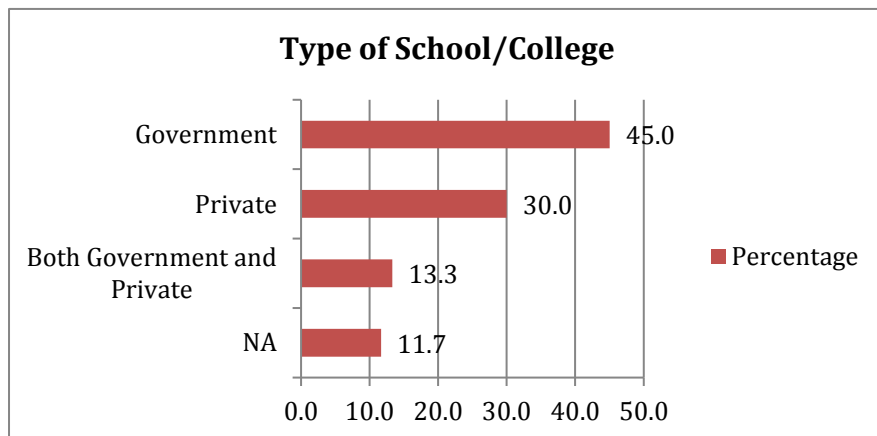
Of those interviewed, 86.67 per cent sent their children to school, 1.67 per cent had children going to college, and the rest had no children in the family or had a child too small to send to school.



Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Amongst those households who sent their children to school/college, 45 per cent sent their children to government institution, 30 per cent to private institution, and 12 per cent sent some children to private and some to government schools.

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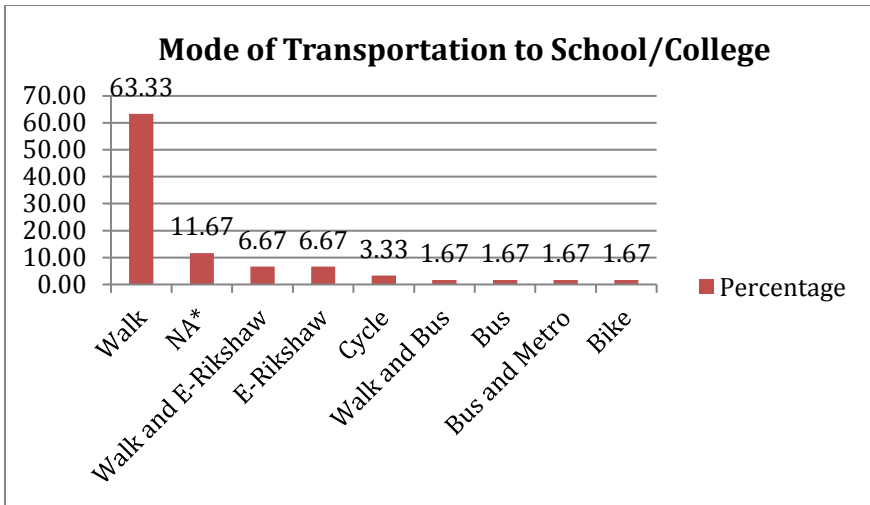


NA* Children too small to go to school; no children in the family

Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Majority of the Children walk to School

It was found that 63.33 per cent of children walked to school. Among those who took a transport, E-rickshaw was the most preferred mode followed by bus. Usually, children travelling by e-rickshaw and bus to school spent around Rs. 20-30 per person per day.



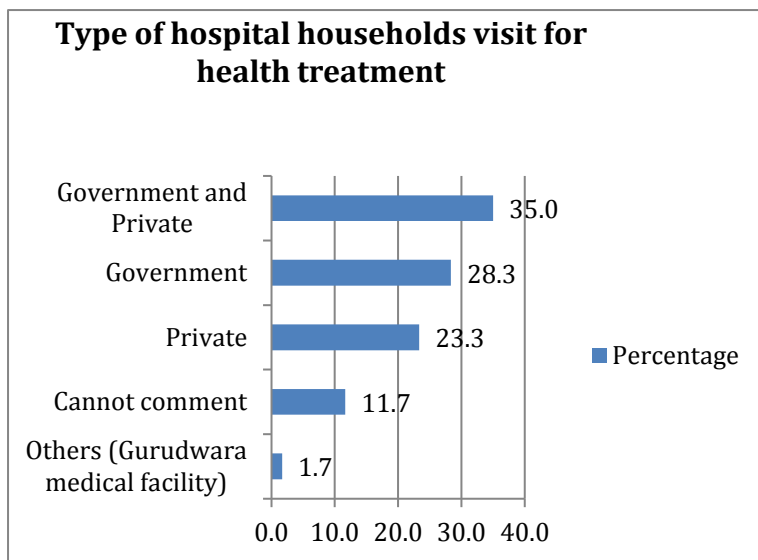
NA* Children too small to go to school; no children in the family

Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Majority of the household members fell sick recently

In March 2018, households were asked whether any member/s had fallen sick recently. At one point, 58.33 per cent of family members had a major sickness, 20 per cent escaped being sick, and the remaining 21.67 per cent could not comment on it. For treatment, 28.33 per cent of households visited government hospital, 23.33 per cent went to private hospital, and 35 per cent got treatment in both government and private hospital. One household got health treatment from a Gurudwara health facility and the rest did not comment, as they had not visited a hospital in a long time.

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Source: Author's calculation of primary data

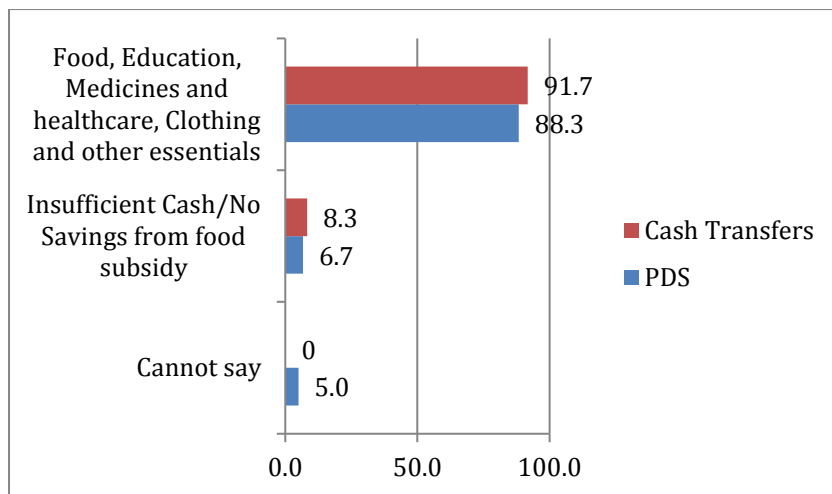
The majority of the households walked or took e-rickshaw to go to the hospital. Depending on the distances travelled, e-rickshaw travel costs were around 30-60 rupees, Metro between 40-80 rupees, bus between 40-50 rupees and auto between 150-200 rupees. In times of normal sickness, they usually went to private health care facilities to avoid the rush in government hospitals.

Households spend CTs and savings from Food Subsidy on Food, Education and Healthcare

Food, education, and healthcare are equally important for everyone. Likewise, these were found to be huge priorities for the households

surveyed. In view of the fact that PDS provides food grains at a subsidised rate i.e. wheat at Rs 2 per kg and rice at Rs.3 per kg, households were asked whether they were able to save and how they prioritised their expenditure on food, education and healthcare. Of the households interviewed, 88.33 per cent were able to save some money because of the low expenses on subsidised food; 6.67 per cent could not save; 5 per cent could not understand the questions and therefore did not comment on whether or not access to subsidised food enabled them to put aside money for other expenses. Those who could save spent the savings on food, education, healthcare and other essentials. Similarly, 91.67 per cent of beneficiaries spent the cash from DAY on food, followed by education, healthcare, and clothing; 8.33 per cent found the CTs insufficient. A comparison of expenditure on essentials, that is, food, education, healthcare and clothing by households who were earlier on the rolls of DAY but have subsequently shifted to PDS showed that they spent more of the CT from DAY on essentials compared to what they spent at present from PDS savings. Some found cash savings insufficient to spend on all the essentials.

Comparison of household expenses between PDS (subsidy savings) and CTs (in percentage)

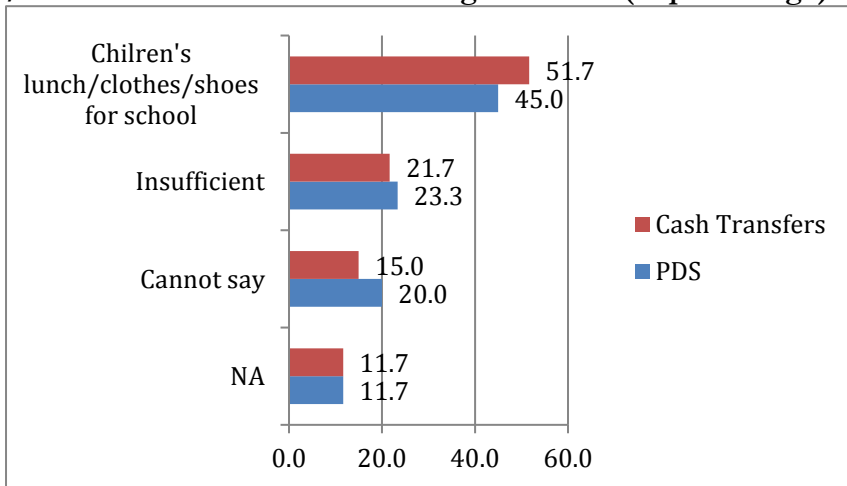


Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Households were asked whether they utilised the CT from DAY and savings from PDS on children's needs such as lunch, clothes, shoes for school. With PDS savings, 45 per cent were able to spend on these essentials, 23.3 per cent were unable to spend on them, and 20 per cent of households could not comment. With CTs from DAY, 51.67 per cent were able to spend on these needs, 21.67 per cent found the cash insufficient and 15 per cent could not comment. A few parents were able to understand that investing in their children improved their behaviour in school, including improving class attendance on gaining confidence to go to school. "What makes my children happy makes

me happy too”, one mother said. One of the women respondents utilised the cash from DAY to set up a beauty parlour, which became a source of income generation for her family, eventually aiding in supporting her children's education and healthcare. Comparatively, more households spent on children's needs from the CT than from the savings from PDS.

Comparison of household expenses on children's lunch/clothes/shoes for school from PDS savings and CTs (in percentage)



NA* Children too small to go to school; no children in the family

Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Cash for Uniforms and Mid-Day Meal and understanding Children's psychosocial wellbeing

Households were asked whether their children feel embarrassed to go to school when they do not wear decent uniforms, shoes or carry good lunch. Of total households, 23.33 per cent reported that children refused or felt embarrassed to go to school when such needs are not fulfilled. In some cases, children refused to go to school due to the distance and, sometimes, they refused to go to school for no reasons. Some parents said such behaviour was common. A majority of households, i.e. 56.67 per cent, reported that their children attended school without such issues. Some of the children did complain but did not refuse to go to school or ask for new clothes and shoes. Some parents could not comment on children's refusal to attend school but expressed an understanding that their children feel bad and humiliated when they do not wear good clothes and shoes or carry good lunch.

Some parents reported that the school/government gives cash for uniform so it was not necessary to keep a separate budget for uniform. The researcher learnt that the government was providing Rs. 1100 annually for uniform in some cases and Rs. 1700 in some other cases to purchase uniform and books. As for mid-day meal in the school, 38.33 per cent of households reported that their children benefitted from it; 16.67 per cent did not benefit from it; the remaining 45 per

cent could not comment as they sent their children to private schools, were still to send their children to school, or had no children in the family. While some parents reported that the mid-day meal encouraged their children to go to school and improved their attendance, some could not comment on it. They were also unable to say to if their children faced stigmatisation of any kind in school. Some children did not like the quality of the mid-day meal and therefore carried home cooked lunch. In some instances, the parents themselves did not allow their children to have the mid-day meal due to its poor quality.

iii. Social Relationships Amongst Beneficiaries and Their Relationship With The Service Providers And Political Representatives

Historical exclusion of households from welfare schemes and its impact on people's psychosocial wellbeing

Of households interviewed, 78 per cent had at one time been excluded from government welfare programmes. This exclusion mostly took place before they received cash from DAY and while they had no access to PDS. Respondents were asked to explain their feelings about being excluded from welfare programmes, which benefitted others. Most of them reported to have experienced helplessness, anxiety, and discrimination because of such exclusion and despised other beneficiaries having access to ration entitlement, especially in the case of PDS. To a certain extent, some had developed resentment or anger towards the FPS dealer, village representative, political constituency representative, and the government. One male respondent was very critical of the unfairness of the system and felt the Central government was to be blamed, especially after hearing from the local MLA that PDS is a Central government policy. Another respondent had to bribe the FPS dealer Rs. 500 twice but the effort was in vain and it took four years of struggle for him to obtain a ration card. Another got his ration card after three years despite giving Rs. 1500 to an agent. Some did not

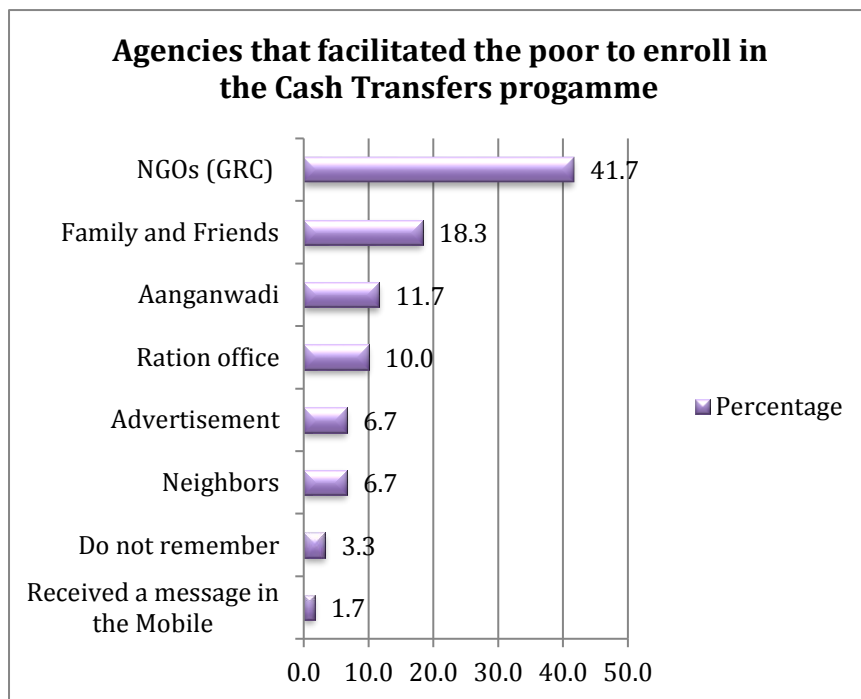
express any disappointment, hoping to get the ration card someday. For a few, it did not matter whether they had ration entitlement or not.

Agencies that facilitated households to enrol in the Dilli Annashree Yojana (DAY)

The NGOs from Gender Resource Centre⁹ (GRC) directly identified and guided 41.67 per cent of the surveyed households to enrol in DAY. Of the rest, 18.33 per cent applied for the scheme with the help of family and friends; another 11.67 per cent enrolled through an Aanganwadi; 10 per cent through the Ration Office; 6.67 per cent enrolled with the help of their neighbours; another 6.67 per cent enrolled for the programme on seeing advertisements in the newspapers and TV.

9. Gender Resource Centre (GRC) or Suvidha Kendra is an institutional arrangement comprising government departments/agencies and NGOs. These agencies work in collaboration to facilitate the implementation of government schemes in Delhi. GRC aims to empower women, especially the underprivileged section in a society, socially, economically and legally (Government of NCT of Delhi, n.d.).

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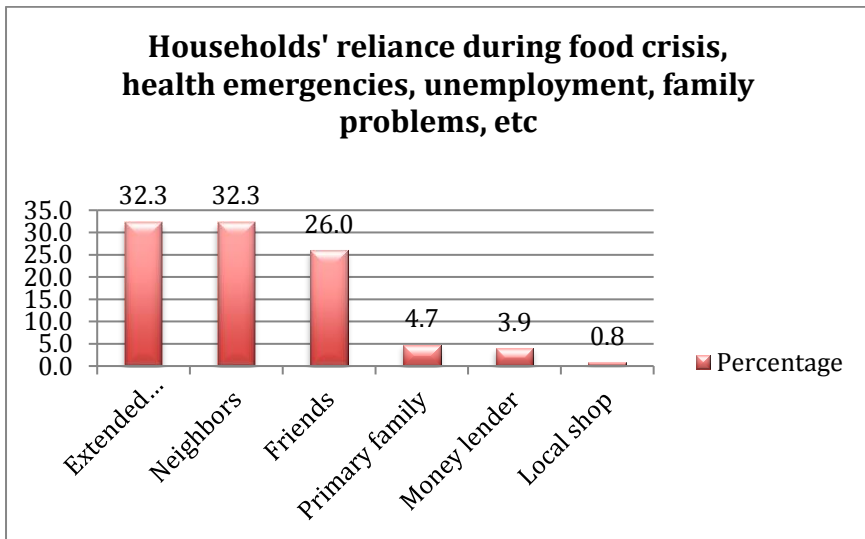
Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Cash Transfers facilitate social gatherings through meal sharing

Sixty per cent of DAY households were able to arrange social gatherings amongst family and friends for a meal from the money they received, although few households pointed out the insufficiency of the cash amount. Twenty-three per cent found the cash too minimal to arrange such gatherings and 10 per cent could not comment on it.

Significance of social relationships during food crisis, health emergencies, unemployment, and family problems

Households largely rely on extended family, neighbours and friends during a food crisis, health emergencies, unemployment, family problems, etc.



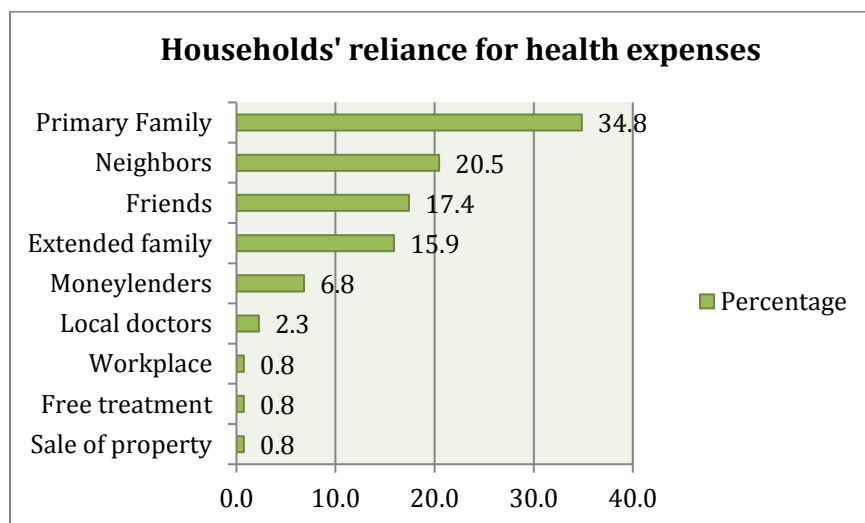
Source: Author's calculation of primary data

The group respondents also pointed out that families, friends and neighbours usually support each other in times of financial need and other assistance. One of the women respondents light-heartedly said that since neighbours live in close proximity, they could not escape each other. Sometimes, their support may not be monetary in nature

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but offered in terms of sharing their problems amongst themselves. In times of need, the neighbourhood shopkeeper also advanced them money and other commodities on credit.

During health emergencies, households sought support from their primary family, and then neighbours, friends, and extended family. A few households relied on moneylenders to meet health expenses. Doctors in the neighbourhood also were of help when immediate treatment was required or in case of an emergency. In both situations, neighbourhood doctors deferred accepting their fee.



Source: Author's calculation of primary data

Mixed responses concerning beneficiaries' relationship with the Service Providers

The response of beneficiaries varied depending on the type of research method adopted for the study. Most of the individually interviewed households had no complaint against the FPS dealer. Group respondents more freely expressed their grievances against the service provider. Of those individually interviewed, 81.67 per cent did not report any complaints against the service provider and 18.33 per cent did. Among the listed complaints: the dealer giving less than the entitled ration or the ration turning out to be one or half kg less than the full entitlement, when measured at home; the dealer misbehaving with the women, of him being rude, causing them to experience shame and humiliation at the FPS and discouraging them from collecting ration from the shop; the dealer asking for Aadhaar and other documents every month. Some respondents expressed helplessness saying they were forced to buy salt costing around Rs 10-18 when they went to collect their monthly quota of ration; one woman said that whether she took the salt or not, she paid Rs. 10 and even its quality was poor. The dealer also gave them items like salt and soap instead of paying them the balance. These issues negatively affected their relationship with the FPS dealer. Some respondents, however,

reported that salt was not compulsorily offloaded but they could take it if they wanted to.

One noticeable comment of the respondents was that things had generally improved after the 'online' system. According to them, prior to the online system, the dealer often short-changed them by giving lesser ration but now things had improved. They recounted recurring experiences of tension and anger towards the FPS and its dealer before the introduction of the biometric system. Some households reported frustration in dealing with the FPS, especially with respect to redressal of grievances relating to the non-registering of family members. Repeated visits to the FPS proved futile as no help was rendered whether or not the dealer was present nor did they believe that anyone would help them.

Lack of positive relationship between the people and the political representatives

All the respondents, whether from the individually interviewed households or the FGD, vote in local/State elections. Of the 60 individually interviewed households, 88.33 per cent were aware of the identities of the political representatives in their area, 8.33 per cent were not and 3.33 per cent were confused about the area representatives. When people say that they seek help from their area

representatives, it means that they go to these leaders solely to get signatures and stamps on their documents. Using this definition, 76.67 per cent sought help from the area political representatives and 23.33 per cent did not. They rarely approached these leaders for any other assistance. A few said they had tried to draw the attention of the local representative to the drainage problem in their area; following this, some steps were taken for cleaning the drains though the problem was never fully or permanently addressed. Some reported that drainage and sanitation drive took place once in a year but after cleaning, the authorities left the drains open and the residents themselves had to go around closing them. Some respondents complained that though the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was responsible for sanitation and drainage issues, they did not perform their duty; the political representatives too were not helpful and stayed away from community issues, remaining deaf to societal needs. In short, respondents found their political representatives ineffective. One of the respondents expressed frustration and even labelled the MLA a thief. The respondent pointed out that the MLA and the MCD representative were from different parties and neither was supportive. A few reported that the previous MLA was helpful; one respondent said that residents had no expectation from the current MLA and did not rely on him to

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solve any of their problems. The current MLA is from the AAP and the municipal representative is from the BJP.

VI. The Transformative Potential of Social Policies

Discussions of the Findings

The National Food Security Act 2013 was designed to be a milestone in lessening the misery of the poor and the food insecure. It confers the legal right to every eligible person to receive 5 kg of foodgrains per month at the highly subsidised rates of rupees 3, 2 and 1 for Rice, Wheat and Coarse grains respectively. The law earned appreciation in the context of marking a shift to an ‘individual-based approach’ from a ‘family-based approach’ to deliver food entitlement (NFSA 2013). Yet, in Delhi, one of the warning signs in the current implementation of the NFSA, as this study points out, is the ‘individual-based exclusion’ of members from the family ration card. As pointed out in the research findings, the three types of individual-based exclusion of members are of unregistered children, unregistered in-laws and unregistered husbands. This is alarming because 60 per cent of households are affected by such cases of exclusion, and, even worse, the majority of the exclusions are of unregistered children. The finding of this research relates mainly to the exclusion of some family members from the household ration card at the registration level. Other researchers have pointed to the exclusion

of household members from the ration card in Delhi because of their failure to produce the Aadhar card (Nayak and Nehra 2017; Shagun and Priya 2016).

The Ration Office (RO), which is responsible for the registration of new members in the ration card, does not provide these households any particular reasons as to why some family members are excluded. As already mentioned, Nayak and Nehra (2017) attributed the exclusion of some household members to their inability to produce the Aadhaar card. In the current finding, not having an Aadhaar card is not the reason for the exclusion. Household respondents interviewed by this researcher pointed out that Aadhaar card and electricity bill are prerequisites to get a ration card. Even at the delivery point, the FPS dealer insists on producing the Aadhaar card to receive the ration entitlement. The respondents said that in many cases, it had been six months or even a year since the households had submitted the required documents in the RO for the registration of the excluded members. Despite this, the names were still to be registered. According to the group respondents, inclusion of new members in the RO is without charge but the whole process is complicated and even frequent visits to the office, entailing waste of work hours and money spent on travel, did not resolve the problem. The FPS dealer would direct them to go

to the RO but in the end, they would themselves negotiate with the households, charging Rs 200-500 for registration of new members in the ration card. One of the women respondents recounted that the FPS dealer charged a few hundred rupees to add a new name in the ration card but in the end failed to do so and when she asked for a refund, he did return the money.

The NFSA 2013 holds out the promise of universalising the PDS (with maximum limit) to ensure food entitlement to 75per cent of the rural population and 50per cent of the urban population. The Union Government fixes the State-wise number of people entitled to get the foodgrains and it is the State Government's responsibility to identify the beneficiaries as per the eligibility criteria and distribute the foodgrains. As per the NFSA provision, the maximum allocation for Delhi is 72, 78, 995 persons with regard to beneficiaries' coverage in PDS and the government has reached this threshold (Meena 2018). As per Census 2011, 97.50 percentage of Delhi population lives in urban area; the total population, as on March 2011, was 167.88 lakh (Economic Survey of Delhi 2017-18). According to this estimate, urban population in Delhi is 163.68 lakh and its 50per cent is 81.84 lakh. By this calculation, the coverage, given that the maximum allocation is stipulated to be 72, 78, 995 persons, would not even account for 50 per cent of urban population in Delhi. It is an indication

that the Act, which confers legal right to food to an eligible beneficiary, is unable to ensure food access to every deserving person due to the provisions of maximum limit bound by the Act itself. Others have pointed out the contradiction inherent in this provision of the Act, which requires the States to implement a Right to Food programme by setting a cap on the beneficiaries to be covered (Nayak and Nehra 2017). For instance, directing the Delhi government to implement a “Right to Food” programme with a specification that only 72, 78, 995 beneficiaries in Delhi can exercise this right, is problematic as there are still many eligible households who are excluded or members that are denied the same. Besides, as mentioned above, the prescribed number is less than even the 50 per cent urban population defined in the Act. A “Right to food” programme should ensure coverage of all eligible households. In this respect, a model State like Tamil Nadu that implements a universal PDS is a good case in point, which helps in avoiding targeting errors (Sakshi 2013). PDS performance in Tamil Nadu has a record of ease of access to food, reliability, usage and overall satisfaction of users (Chand 2006). In addition, strong political will and people’s participation, such as in Kerala and Chattisgarh, are significant examples to improve the implementation of PDS (Swaminathan 2000; Krishnamurthy, Pathania and Tandon 2014).

Initially, the reforms in PDS appeared to be geared towards ensuring that ‘the sole purpose of Aadhaar was to enable direct transfer of subsidy’ to the user (Nawn 2012, 197). In due course, the government utilised the biometric based Aadhaar number as a means to authenticate identification-related problems, eliminate bogus identities, and prove the identity of the formerly excluded beneficiaries to include them in the existing welfare programmes (Chowdhary 2013-2014). As far as authentic verification is concerned, the FPS dealers in Delhi believe that credit for this must go to the Aadhaar biometric system as no other customer can take another’s entitlement, and hence there is less forgery and impersonation. As the FPS dealer at Jaikisan MP Society in Kirari Circle, Delhi pointed out,

Before the introduction of Aadhaar, it was difficult to determine whether those who came to collect the ration were the actual beneficiaries or not. If someone has migrated elsewhere or out of Delhi and has transferred the ration card to somebody else, identification of the registered beneficiary could not be determined, creating confusion and probable diversion.

Delhi is largely a migrant population and there is a possibility that some previous ration cardholders have returned to their permanent homes; as there are many who do not come to collect their ration and their

details are still on record, the government uses Aadhaar to verify the authenticity of the beneficiaries (Meena 2018). The DFSCA in Delhi reported that it utilises Aadhaar seeding to eliminate bogus identities and include previously excluded individuals and households; it reported that the e-POS system had aided in detecting four lakh households that did not turn up to collect ration in early 2018. In January and February 2018, the DFSCA reportedly saved around 16 per cent of ration from the many households that did not turn up to collect the ration, which could be utilised to distribute to the new beneficiaries, such as the 70,000 added in January 2018¹⁰ (Ibid.). However, this elimination practice using Aadhaar is questionable; some have reported that cancellation of ration cards for not linking them to Aadhaar has led to large-scale exclusions denying the poor their rightful entitlements, even leading to starvation deaths; the BJP led Narendra Modi government is criticised for labelling this exclusion-exercise as elimination of ‘bogus’ identities (Bhardwaj and Johri 2018). All this suggests that the use of technology via Aadhaar linked e-POS

10. According to the DFSCA, it aims to verify ineligible ration cardholders and delete those that are no longer eligible or are ghost beneficiaries, creating space for the excluded eligible members; this means that the deletion of one ineligible person enables the addition of another new eligible beneficiary. At the time of this study, the DFSCA reported that it is analysing the data of March 2018 to conduct a survey to test the authenticity of ineligible or migrated ration cardholders, and to examine and eliminate them from the system.

devices can at best serve to deal with identity fraud such as a multiple record of the same individual in the beneficiaries list (Ibid.). This has to be reinforced by a food delivery architecture consisting of putting in place a strong anti-corruption legislation such as the Lokpal, taking measures to implement grievance redress and social audit to ensure access to legal entitlements (Ibid.)

At the distribution level, in Delhi, FPS dealers are using the Aadhaar linked e-POS device to authenticate the beneficiaries before supplying them their quota of foodgrains. However, it is a fact that the process is not smooth as many of them encounter some interruptions associated with internet connectivity, POS machine, and fingerprint detection. Yet most of them reported that they are buying grains successfully using these technology tools. The FPS dealers alternatively make use of iris scan when they encounter glitches such as fingerprint detection in the POS device. The FPS dealers interviewed in this study possessed the biometric reading machine and the iris scan device at the FPSs. Beneficiaries believe that this 'online' system has improved the behaviour of the FPS dealers and their tensions have lessened as things are now more satisfactory compared to the manual distribution of foodgrains in the past.

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Tragically, many food insecure households and individuals in Delhi are waiting and wishing to be included in the PDS that ensures their ‘Right to Food’ while the government fine-tunes its elimination-inclusion strategy. The role of Aadhaar is to authenticate a registered user or an already-identified beneficiary (National Informatics Centre 2015). The limitation of technology, in the case of Biometric and Aadhaar, is its inability to identify the unregistered poor or homeless poor as it can only verify the authenticity of a user. It cannot address an exclusion error caused by ineffective targeting methods. Exclusion of the poor because of the failure to identify them will almost certainly exacerbate social tensions and divide society. The homeless poor and those living in slum areas that are highly food insecure, and are excluded from the food entitlement, are indicators of serious social risks.



Ration card of a beneficiary living in a slum region near Nangloi Railway Station, Kirari, Delhi

Source: Author's photography during the field visit (20th March 2018)

The interviewed households and group participants in this study lived in homes with verifiable addresses. On the other hand, a general enquiry about PDS conducted in a slum area in the research site threw doubts about whether or not these people possessed valid ration cards and if they had assured access to food entitlement. The researcher found instances where the cardholder's name had faded and there was neither a photo attached nor the address reflected in the card (See images). The location was a slum region near Nangloi Railway Station, Kirari, Delhi, and the residents suggested that the FPS dealers were indifferent to whether or not they had the necessary details.

The actual identification of beneficiaries is a very complicated process that demands the role of many agencies, including the government, along with a sound methodology (Nawn 2012). Moreover, the lack of awareness amongst the poor is very well known; hence, the role played by institutional networks and implementing facilitators becomes critical in enabling the poor to enrol and benefit from the welfare programmes. Governance is, hence, the network of relationships wherein several agencies participate to make things work for the collective good. Public-Private-Partnerships and civil society institutions make collective efforts to solve general societal problems (Mathur 2013). Mission Convergence Delhi, the chief implementing

agency of DAY adopted Public-Private-Community-Partnerships as a major reform in governance (Sharma 2013-2014). The Delhi government called this the ‘push’ model approach where Community Mobilisers, forming a part of the NGOs/GRCs, conducted field-level verification of genuine beneficiaries and ‘proactively reached out to the beneficiaries’ for enrolment and generation of awareness (Chowdhary 2013-2014). This is substantiated in the findings of this study as NGOs from GRCs largely contributed to identifying and aiding the poor to enrol for DAY. Such effort is appreciated especially in the context of identifying the poor who were excluded from the PDS and enrolling them in an alternative welfare programme.

Public-Private partnerships are often hailed as the best way forward but the main concern is whether the role and functions of partnerships are built on transparency and accountability (Mathur 2013). For social programmes to be properly rolled out and implemented there need to be robust accountability mechanisms to address service delivery problems. However, this has been found to be deficient. For example, “direct delivery of benefits” may not mean “direct delivery of full entitlement”, whether cash or in-kind transfers. Without an effective Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM), it may not be possible to guard against malpractices such as a FPS dealer forcing a beneficiary to sign on the record that he has delivered the full amount while the

amount dispensed is less. In both PDS and DAY, weak GRM was observable. Beneficiaries were not aware of DAY's toll free number 1800-110-841 and PDS Ration's Helpline number 1967¹¹. PDS beneficiaries were left helpless and distressed with black-marketing and inefficiencies at the food distribution level; DAY beneficiaries were left wondering whom to address their grievances regarding payment related issues (Ngullie 2017).

The Delhi government has named the Public Grievance Commission in Delhi as its State Food Commission and has designated all the Additional District Magistrates of the Revenue department of Government of Delhi as District Grievance Redressal Officers (Meena 2018). According to the DFSCA, people can approach these officers directly, and an order or complaint given in respect to this is binding and must result in action. As for social audit, the DFSCA has prepared the proposal and sent it to the central government for the approval of the guidelines (Ibid.). The government has made efforts to send text messages to the registered mobile numbers of beneficiaries and has displayed information about the Helpline numbers at the FPS.

11. The Helpline Toll free number 1967 addresses five complaints such as, non-opening of shops, denial of ration, less weight, misbehavior, and charging more money. Agents working towards this are supposed to address these complaints within two hours of receipt (Meena 2018).

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However, being unlettered, beneficiaries find it difficult to make sense of even their most important official documents such as Aadhaar Card, Ration Card, Electricity Bill, etc, which prevents them from effectively exercising their rights and utilising the public services. Moreover, even if they are aware of the Helpline numbers, the poor might fear to make a complaint against the FPS dealer. For instance, it was not clear to this researcher if the beneficiaries were actually receiving the “entitled” amount. There was a conflict in the response between the individually interviewed households and group respondents: the group participants tended to air their grievances collectively about not receiving the full entitlement whereas the individual respondents reported that they collect the entitled amount. Some group respondents also reported the misbehaviour of the FPS dealers whereas most of the individual respondents did not. The same tendency was observed in the researcher’s previous project: when participants with common problems spoke as a group, they felt secure to raise their voice freely as against the feeling of vulnerability and being targeted as an individual respondent (Ngullie 2017).

As far as people’s preference between food and cash is concerned, those with previous experience with CTs seemed inclined towards it; the better off amongst the PDS households were inclined towards CTs; the lower strata of the poor households inclined towards PDS.

Similar findings have been established in other studies (Baksy, Jaggi and Gupta 2013; Davala, et al. 2015; Sewa Bharat 2012). Among those with experience of CTs, a majority preferred cash and similarly a majority of those who had experience with food subsidy preferred PDS (Ngullie 2017). PDS beneficiaries choosing food subsidy over CTs despite black-marketing and misbehaviour of the FPS dealers suggested that they probably feared a new system that they had not tried yet, that is, CT (Ibid.). It appears that the people's attitude is one of 'we adapt to what is known, and have an anxiety about what is not'(Davala, et al. 2015, 196). In this context, there was a possibility that PDS respondents may get positively inclined towards cash if they experienced CT and the same in reverse may be true for DAY respondents with respect to food subsidy if they experienced PDS.

Luckily enough, the respondents in this study are those who have had experience with CTs earlier through DAY and are currently receiving food subsidy under the PDS. The beneficiaries were able to provide their perspectives based on their experience with both types of service delivery mechanism. Comparatively speaking, preference for cash was slightly higher than food with 35 per cent preferring cash, 30 per cent preferring PDS, and the remaining 33.33 per cent having equal preference for cash or food. However, beneficiaries hesitated to make a definite choice especially with regard to CTs, as they appeared fearful

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of losing what they already had, that is, PDS. Similar observations were made in the CTs pilot project in Delhi where some participants dropped out of the programme fearing cancellation of their ration cards- the document that establishes their identity and allows access to several public services (Sewa Bharat 2012). Besides, for some, it took many years of struggle to possess one finally. Nonetheless, the common trend observed with people's choice for CTs was largely because of faulty PDS. The faults beneficiaries saw in PDS were the following: exclusion of some eligible beneficiaries, inadequate food entitlement, time and distance to the FPS and waiting in queue for hours. Those who preferred food found PDS assuring and favoured the larger concept of subsidy. Those that wanted reforms in PDS were mostly putting up with the present system in the hope of an increase in entitlement.

On the matter of inadequate entitlement, raising it is the prerogative of the government. In this case, the central government has the standing authority to decide on matters relating to increase in food entitlement as PDS is a central government policy and the role of the State is to implement it as per the NFSA 2013. Likewise, if the central government gives direction to increase the amount, the role of the State would be to distribute the increased amount. Nonetheless, there is no bar set on the State government to increase its own contribution

to ration entitlement if it so desired. The Delhi government, however, has not taken any such decision yet (Meena 2018). It is obvious that a subsidy of 5 kg of foodgrains per person and Rs. 600 for one family is not sufficient to fulfil monthly food requirements. The food entitlement from PDS itself lasts only about 10 days in a month, according to the beneficiaries. Nonetheless, these benefits remain indispensable for the poor.

Social policies such as food subsidies and CTs have a positive impact on human and social capital. These programmes are undoubtedly supportive towards the beneficiary households' expenses on food and nutritional needs, education and healthcare. CT and savings from access to food subsidy aid households to arrange better lunch, clothes and shoes for children, which in turn are felt to have a beneficial effect on children's behaviour, school attendance and relationships in school. CTs encourage women to arrange social gathering through meals for friends and families. Similar schemes in the form of Mid-Day Meal in the school and Cash for Uniforms provided by the government have significantly boosted children's educational attainment and psychosocial wellbeing.

Social relationships amongst beneficiaries, manifested through the aid and support of families, friends, and neighbours in times of food

scarcity, health emergencies and other crises, significantly contribute to the wellbeing of these beneficiaries. This social network also plays a vital role in enabling dissemination of information and awareness amongst beneficiaries, especially concerning access to welfare benefits. These social relationships have 'value' and remain valuable to the beneficiaries and indeed the strength and reliability of these social ties positively impact both their physical health and subjective wellbeing (Helliwell and Putnam 2004). Moreover, the impact of social capital is significant in view of the State's limitation in effectively reaching out to the poor and the limited role of NGOs; the poor primarily depend on their informal networks (Narayan, et al. 2000). It has also been observed that low level of social capital is linked to prolonged welfare dependency and food insecurity (Henderson and Tickamyer 2008 in Narayan et al. 2000).

Water and sanitation are the main drivers of public health and 'there exist a direct relationship between water, sanitation, health, nutrition and human wellbeing' (Alok 2010, 3-4). The first thing anyone would notice in Kirari, Delhi is the open spaces chaos and open clogged drainage with flies swarming about the residents and their homes. Lack of access to clean drinking water has been a major household problem for many years. Therefore, it was not surprising that a majority of household members had fallen sick in the months before and at the

time of this study. Once in a long while, some beneficiaries approach the area political representatives, especially the MLA and the Municipal representative, but they do not find them helpful in addressing community issues such as sanitation problems. People's relationship with their political representatives is distant and impersonal and the role of these leaders is limited to signing and stamping documents, that too occasionally and only for some people. There is a lack of trust between the people and the political leaders.

As the purpose of this study was to capture beneficiaries' perspectives of CT and in-kind transfers, the researcher interviewed only those households that responded positively to whether they had received cash through DAY before, and whether they now have access to the PDS; households that participated in only one of the two programmes were omitted. This also means that all the interviewed households possess ration cards and Aadhaar cards; it was mandatory for DAY beneficiaries to produce Aadhaar number to receive CT through DAY. Therefore, the study does not include responses of eligible-excluded households who do not have ration cards and Aadhaar cards; it also does not include those previous DAY beneficiaries who are yet to register in the PDS. This study, however, notes with concern the special vulnerabilities of all those households that have no verifiable house addresses, leading to their possessing unreliable ration cards,

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apart from those who do not have access to legal food entitlement on account of not having a Ration card or Aadhaar card. It becomes the bounden duty of those in power, especially at the Centre, to address the food insecurity of this precariously placed group.

VII. Concluding Remarks and Policy Recommendations

Arvind Kejriwal, the present Chief Minister of Delhi, had pointed out that ‘Any political change is impossible without reforms’ (Kejriwal 2012, 105). He argued that a ‘corrupted system’ is a ‘wrong system’ and this system does not allow ‘good character building’, in special reference to the very low commission that the FPS dealers earn, and hence urged an increase in the commission towards greater ‘character building’ (ibid.). This idea translated into practice in January 2018, with a 300 per cent hike in the FPS dealers’ commission in Delhi. Earlier, the FPS dealers used to earn only 70 paisa for every kilogram of foodgrains sold which resulted in huge black-marketing and corruption at the FPS level¹². Following this hike, the FPS dealers are relieved and happy as they are earning Rs.2 for every kilogram of foodgrains and consequently their current

12. The researcher had conducted an empirical research in early 2015 documenting huge black-marketing at the FPS level where majority of the beneficiaries bought ration many times higher than the legal price. 57.5 percent of PDS households paid higher than the legal price set by the NFSA. Some households even paid Rs. 15 per kilogram for wheat and Rs. 22 per kilogram for rice to the FPS dealers. The researcher specially observed that the PDS beneficiaries were much more psychologically disturbed by the dealers’ misbehavior and impolite attitude towards them (Ngullie 2017).

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monthly income is in the range of Rs. 30,000 to 40,000. The increase in the margin money has encouraged the FPS dealers to be friendly towards the beneficiaries; it has in fact made them eager and competitive to attract customers in order to earn profit from the stock of allotted foodgrains. Another simultaneous reform initiated by the State government is the FPS portability scheme, which gives a choice to the beneficiaries to collect ration from any FPS in the city. It has expanded the beneficiary's choice to go to another dealer when one refuses ration or behaves badly or if ration is unavailable in a particular shop. These factors have created an atmosphere of competition amongst the FPSs to improve their services and relationships with the beneficiaries. The FPS dealers and even many beneficiaries support the new reforms related to commission increase, FPS portability and computerisation of PDS with technology tools such as Aadhaar linked e-POS device. Notable developments of the PDS in Delhi are therefore, improvement in the service delivery, decrease in corruption especially in reference to black-marketing at the delivery point, and improvement in the relationship of beneficiaries and the FPS dealers.

At the implementation stage, black-marketing has reduced but corruption continues in the form of giving less than the full-entitled amount of food to the beneficiaries, which needs further examination in the case of Delhi. One way to correct this would be to give pre-

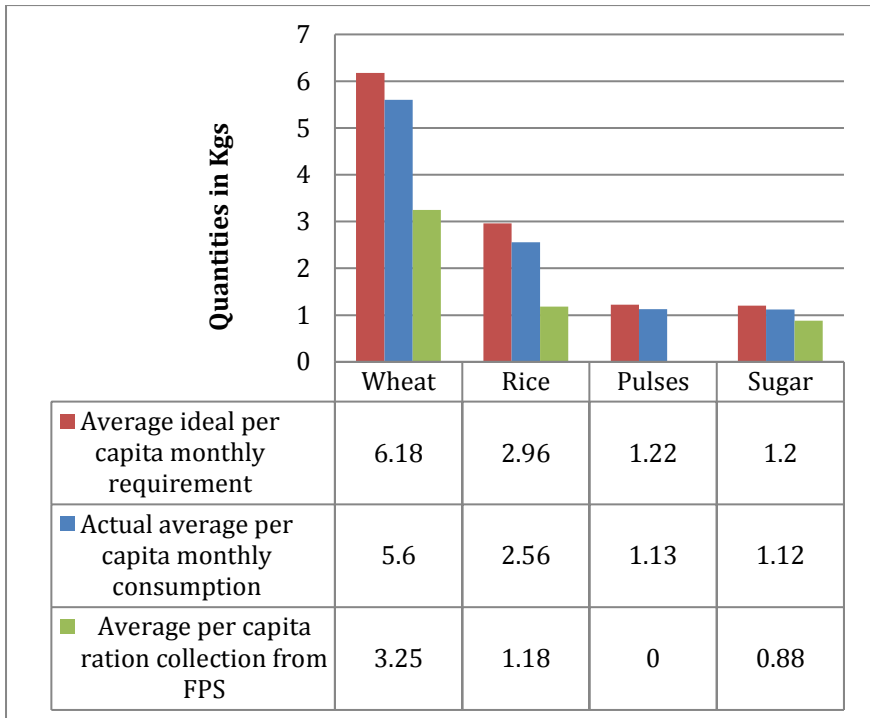
packaged foodgrains commensurate with the off-take from the FPS; for example, in Delhi, beneficiaries usually collect 4 kilograms of wheat and 1 kilogram of rice. Some years ago, the government toyed with the idea of packing 5 kg of foodgrains to distribute to the PDS beneficiaries with the intent to plug leakages and promote consumption of safe food (*The Economic Times*, October 14, 2013). This step can also speed-up the delivery process and minimise the queue in the FPS as beneficiaries find it problematic waiting in line for hours sometimes.

The government can also promote awareness and encourage women's agency through the licensing of FPS to women collectives and Self Help Groups (SHGs) as per the NFSA. It is to be noted that SHGs in Chhattisgarh run 2458 FPSs (*The Pioneer* 15 June 2015) and the total FPSs in Delhi is 2187 (National Food Security Delhi website n.d.). FPS managed by women's SHGs can curb corruption at the food distribution level and empower women in a patriarchal society (Welthungerhilfe India 2017). Moreover, the interactions will strengthen their existing social relationships in the community that serve as a safety net in times of food crises and health emergencies.

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The most sought-after reform in PDS by the current beneficiaries is an increase in their food entitlement. Although the DFSCA has communicated that there are no immediate plans to increase the entitlement, keeping in mind the objective of the NFSA, 2013, to ensure ‘access to adequate quantity’ of food, it is necessary to examine the scope for increasing the current quota to ensure adequate amount of food entitlement towards improving the wellbeing of the people. Moreover, adequate food entitlement would improve the household’s expenses on priorities such as education and healthcare. Based on the inputs of beneficiaries, the ideal monthly food requirements for an individual are 6.18 kg of wheat and 2.96 kg of rice (See the chart below). This ideal requirement is the amount of food items they would consume if they had more financial strength. This study noted the items of wheat, rice and sugar as these are major components of food subsidies that PDS distributes and pulses, which, to an extent, serve the purpose of providing nutritional content.

PDS households' Actual consumption and Ideal requirement of food items and off-take from FPS in 2015



Source: As per Field Survey conducted by the researcher during February 2015 to April 2015 (Ngullie 2017)

The study cannot be complete without pointing out the apathy of the political class towards community issues, especially the lack of sanitation in Kirari-Delhi. The AAP government has been raising its concerns about provision of clean drinking water to all its citizens in Delhi. In fact, providing 'Water as a Right' is one of its goals along with 'Better Waste Management' practices. In reference to water

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subsidy, the Finance Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia, in his Budget Speech 2018-2019 claimed that ‘we were the first to provide free and clean drinking water to residents of Delhi’ with ‘the monthly limit of 20 kilolitres per household’ encouraging water conservation. The political leaders in Kirari, Delhi, belonging to AAP in the Legislative Assembly and BJP in the Municipal Corporation, need to ensure that such promises are fulfilled, and initiatives undertaken so that people do not continue to live in unhealthy surroundings made worse by lack of access to clean drinking water and piped water connections. These factors all contribute to and exacerbate food insecurity. Moreover, as public leaders, political representatives should develop empathy for people and live in harmony and sync with the community.

In order to verify a largely-held belief that giving cash to the poor would lead to wasteful expenditure, the researcher had previously conducted a survey to capture households’ consumption of non-essentials such as tobacco and alcohol. Out of 80 households surveyed in four districts (North East, North West, West, and South West) in Delhi in 2015, an overall 17.5 per cent of households from DAY and 12.5 per cent from PDS were found to consume alcohol and tobacco (Ngullie 2017). On breaking up the consumption of these non-essentials, 7.5per cent of PDS households and 2.5per cent of DAY

households consumed both alcohol and tobacco; 3 per cent of PDS households and 12.5 per cent of DAY households consumed only tobacco; 2.5 per cent from both PDS and DAY households equally consumed only alcohol. This could mean that PDS households consumed more alcohol than DAY households did and DAY households consumed more tobacco than PDS households did. The study could not establish a direct co-relation between CT and this wasteful expenditure. It is possible that indulgence in the consumption of alcohol and tobacco has no direct relation with the method of service delivery- cash or in-kind transfers of welfare schemes (Ibid.). Yet, such potentially hazardous indulgences could indicate a state of food insecurity; according to one study, the use of tobacco is more rampant in those poor households that are food insecure and that, there is a direct relation between food insecurity and use of tobacco (Babu et al. 2014). Such wasteful expenditure also points towards disparate gendered expenditure in the households as it is mainly men who indulge in these expenses (Ngullie 2017).

To conclude, this study testifies to the people's preference for CTs over food subsidy although the difference is marginal and many are willing to support reforms in PDS. It is clear that CT is viewed as an alternative and dependable solution to deliver welfare benefits to the

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people. Considering the positive impact cash surplus has on children's psychosocial wellbeing, it is also crucial that the government fervently monitor and examine the implementation of the cash for uniforms and books scheme for children alongside delivering good quality of mid-day meals so that children are able to utilize the services valuably. These social policies improve the access of households to food and nutritional security, education and healthcare and contribute to improving social relationships and psychological wellbeing.

However, complexities persist in PDS with problems such as the exclusion of eligible beneficiaries, delivery of less than the full-entitled quantity of food etc. Corruption has not been rooted out. There is need for proactive accountability of the system, which needs to be more responsive to the people. The transformative potential of social policies in India is undeniable. However, for this potential to be fully realised, these policies would need to be backed by a strong political will and effective governance leading to inclusive human and social capital transformation and social integration.

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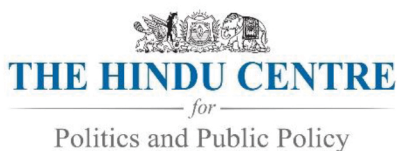


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