



STATE FOOD COMMISSION JHARKHAND

**“A STUDY ON
Present Status of Vigilance
Committee at Block and Panchayat/Ward Level
with reference to the
National Food Security Act”.**

INTERNSHIP REPORT

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*“There are people in the world so hungry, that God
cannot appear to them except in the form of bread”
Mahatma Gandhi*

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Abstract: Based on the field visit of some blocks, villages, and Wards (Urban) of Gumla and Ranchi districts, this paper looks on the present status and the challenges to constitute the “Vigilance Committee” at Panchayat/Ward Level and Block Level with reference to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. This paper also examines the notification by the Jharkhand Government to constitute the “Vigilance Committee” and make some possible changes to form the “Vigilance Committee (VCs)”. There is always a common problem of ‘Awareness’, this paper also looks and suggests some possibility to overcome on this problem.

Key Words: Vigilance Committee; National Food Security Act 2013; Targeted Public Distribution System; District Grievance Redressal Officer; Public Distribution System; Fair Price Shop

Abbreviation Used: NFSA – National Food Security Act
DGRO – District Grievance Redressal Officer
VCs – Vigilance Committees
TPDS – Targeted Public Distribution System
FPS – Fair Price Shop
AAY – Antyodaya Anna Yojana
BDO – Block Development Officer
BSO – Block Supply Officer
MO – Marketing Officer
MLA – Member of Legislative Assembly
MP – Member of Parliament
SC – Scheduled Caste
ST – Scheduled Tribes
BEEO – Block Elementary Education Officer
ANM – Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wife
AWW – Anganwadi Worker
ASHA – Accredited Social Health Activist
PDS – Public Distribution System
P.H. – Priority Household
DM – District Magistrate
CDPO – Child Development Project Officer
CO – Circle Officer
BMO – Block Medical Officer
ORT – Oral Rehydration Therapy

Introduction:

As passed by the Parliament, Government has notified the National Food Security Act, 2013 on 10th September, 2013 with the objective to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity. “The Act provides for coverage of up to 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized food grains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), thus covering about two-thirds of the population. The eligible persons are entitled to receive 5 Kgs of food grains per person per month at subsidised prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per Kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains. The existing AAY households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, will continue to receive 35 Kgs of food grains per household per month” (Department of Food & Public Distribution).

The Act also has a special focus on the nutritional support to women and children. Besides meal to pregnant women and lactating mothers during pregnancy and six months after the child birth, such women are also being entitled to receive maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000. Children up to 14 years of age are entitled to nutritious meals as per the prescribed nutritional standards. In case of non-supply of entitled food grains or meals, the beneficiaries will receive food security allowance. The Act also contains provisions for setting up of grievance redressal mechanism at the District and State levels. Separate provisions have also been made in the Act for ensuring transparency and accountability.

“State Food Commission” is constituted under Section 16 of the National Food Security Act, 2013 for the purpose of monitoring and review of implementation of the Act. It is an Internal Grievance Redressal Mechanism. The Commission gives advice to the State Government, their agencies, autonomous bodies as well as non-governmental organizations involved in delivery of relevant services, for the effective implementation of food and nutrition related schemes, to enable individuals to fully access their entitlements specified in this Act. The Commission hear appeals against

orders of the District Grievance Redressal Officer and prepare annual reports which shall be laid before the State Legislature by the State Government. To ensure transparency and proper functioning of all the schemes under this Act, there is a provision to constitute the Vigilance Committee under section 29 at different level i.e. State, District, Block, Ward (Urban), and Panchayat.

The Targeted Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2015 has been notified on 20.03.2015 in supersession of the PDS (C) Order, 2001 under section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and in consonance with the NFSA, 2013. The TPDS (C) Order, 2015 prescribes various provisions on the VCs for supervision and monitoring of the TPDS by the State Government. These are:

- Clause 2(p) of the Order defines the VC as a committee constituted to regularly supervise the functioning of TPDS in the State;
- Clause 11 (4) provides that the State Government shall set up VCs for the TPDS at the State, District, Block and FPS levels as per NFSA's provisions to perform functions as specified in the said Act.
- Clause 11 (5) provides that the meetings of the VCs shall be held at least once every quarter at all levels and the date and periodicity of the meeting shall be notified by the State Governments and given wide publicity.
- Clause 11(7) provides that the number of meetings held by the VCs shall be displayed on the State web portal and the action taken on issues discussed in meetings of VCs shall be reviewed in the next meeting.
- Clause 7(4) provides that the designated authority shall ensure that one copy of the allocation order made to the FPS is delivered to the local authority, VCs, and any other body nominated by the State Government for monitoring the functioning of the FPS.
- Clause 8(5) provides that the monthly certificate shall be given by the FPS owner and two or more persons as may be authorised by the State Government such as head of the local authority, Executive Officer, Secretary of the local authority, members from the VCs, women's self-help group among others.

Reflection on Field Visit:

Vigilance Committees with reference to NFSA has been constituted at almost all Block level, but the Committee is not so functional and there is lack of meetings. This could be one of the reason that why is the committee not functional. As per the notification there is a provision to organize meeting every quarter. The Committee in Kanke Block has been constituted before two years but the *Prakhand Pramukh* (which is the chairman of the committee at Block Level and responsible to organize the meeting) even did not know that the committee is there. Than how we can expect the function of the committee.

Vigilance Committee at Panchayat/ward level has not been constituted since now except Kanke Block. But the committee at Panchayat level is only for name sake. An interesting thing which I found in Banari Panchayat of Bishunpur Block that there is an informal committee at FPS level who use to monitor the food items and non-food items distributed under Ration Shop. The committee is comprising with four members and all the members are among the beneficiaries. PDS licensees of that very Panchayat use to take signature from the committee when if they (licensees) did not get all the allotted food items and non-food items and distribute what they get.

I organized a meeting with four dealers and ask some suggestions to form the “Vigilance Committee” to get their ideas. The main outcome of the meeting is that, they (dealers) believe that as the number of members will increase, corruption by members will also increase. He also said that they may threat or demand more food grains because they have the authority to file a complaint against the dealers to the DGRO.

The “Vigilance Committee” at Bishunpur (Block level) organized meeting only once since it was constituted. I talked to ‘*Prakhand Pramukh*’ and asked why the meeting is not organizing at least once in a quarter as per the notification. And his answer was like ‘Arrow in the air’. Even he had some complaints from the beneficiaries about the violation of provisions, but he did not write complaint to the DGRO, he just orally talked to the senior officials.

When I talked to the beneficiaries, they claimed to get less amount of food-grains as it should be. For example, if one family has six members as the Ration Card shows and has P.H. Card then the family should get 30kg of food-grains as per the notification but in fact they get only 27 to 28kg of food-grains (narrated by respondents).

One of the Anganwadi Center in Gurdari Panchayat of Bishunpur Block, was not functional for one month as on 29-05-2018. Guardians of beneficiaries' children claimed that, the Sevika generally use to open Center once in a week and serve Khichadi only. When I meet to the Sevika of that Kendra she just silenced and said repeatedly that it will open tomorrow onwards. With the Silence of Sevika, we can understand that there was no reason for the closure of Center.

Now I am moving towards the constitution of Vigilance Committee as per the Government of Jharkhand notification.

The Work and Liability of Vigilance Committee at Block Level (by notification):

(i) Regular supervision for the implementation of all the schemes under the NFSA, 2013

(ii) To inform, in writing, to the DGRO, for violation of any of the provisions

(iii) To inform, in writing, to the DGRO, for malpractice or misappropriation of funds.

(iv) To supervise the distribution among consumers at block level of PDS shops, to make available of food grains, kerosene oil, etc., at determined quantity and price.

(v) The Chairman of the committee will be responsible for organizing the meeting of the committee.

The Work and Liability of Vigilance Committee at Ward Level of Urban Body Areas & Panchayat Level (by notification):

(i) Regular supervision for the implementation of all the schemes under the NFSA, 2013

(ii) To inform, in writing, to the DGRO, for violation of any of the provisions

(iii) To inform, in writing, to the DGRO, for malpractice or misappropriation of funds.

(iv) To supervise the upturn and distribution of food grains, kerosene oil, etc., among consumers which are distributed through PDS shops at Ward/Panchayat level.

(v) To make available of food grains, kerosene oil, etc., at determined quantity and price.

(vi) The Coordinator of the committee will be responsible for organizing the meeting of the committee.

(vii) Make available to the coordinator of the standing committee for information related to the upturn and distribution of food grains, kerosene oil, etc., by the shopkeepers of the public distribution system.

As mentioned above, the work and liability of committee, if it works accordingly then I think, no one beneficiaries would face any problem to get their allotted food and non-food items. But when the committee is not formed, we would be wrong to expect to carry such work and liability from the committee. As we discussed above there is no Vigilance Committee constituted since now at Panchayat Level.

As per the notification by Jharkhand Government, following are procedure to constitute Vigilance Committee: -

Block Level Vigilance Committee:

Block Chief – Chairman

BDO - Member Secretary

BSO/MO – Member

Chairman of City Council/ Nagar Panchayat – Member

Deputy Head of Block and all members of Panchayat Samiti – Member

Regional MLA & MP – Member

6 persons nominated by DM (1 from SC, ST, Woman each mend*) - Member

1 helpless/destitute person nominated by DM – Member

2 FPS Dealer nominated by DM – Member

Panchayat Level Vigilance Committee:

Mukhiya – Convener/Coordinator

Sarpanch – Member

Defeated Mukhiya from closest vote – Member

Defeated Sarpanch from closest vote – Member

All Wards Member – Member

All Panch – Member

6 persons nominated by DM (1 from SC, ST, Woman each mend*) - Member

1 helpless/destitute person nominated by DM – Member

In the absence of Mukhiya, Deputy Chief would be Convener/coordinator - Member

Ward (Urban) Level Vigilance Committee:

Ward Councilor of municipal Corporation/City council/Nagar Panchayat – Member

Defeated Ward Councilor from closest vote – member

6 persons nominated by DM (1 from SC, ST, Woman each mend*) - Member

1 helpless/destitute person nominated by DM - Member

If we look at the members of committee at all level, I think there is something missing. I am saying this because as the people get subsidized food and non-food items from FPS and women and children get their nutritional support from Anganwadi Centers and Schools respectively but there is lack of member from Anganwadi department/centers and schools at the all level of committee. Because you can make your system even stronger in the up until the bottom level mechanism will not be strong, we cannot expect proper implementation of any schemes. Keeping these things in mind, we need to make some changes in the process of making the committee.

Following are the possible way to re-constitute the Vigilance Committee: -

Block Level Vigilance Committee

The composition of the committee is as follows:

Person	Numbers	Position in the Committee
Block Chief	1	Chairman
BDO	1	Member Secretary
BSO/MO	1	Member
Chairman of City Council/	1	Member

Nagar Panchayat		
Deputy Head of Block and all members of Panchayat Samiti	1 & variables in member of Panchayat Samiti	Member
Regional MLA & MP	2	Member
6 persons nominated by BDO (1 from SC, ST, Woman each mend*)	6	Member
1 helpless/destitute person nominated by BDO	1	Member
2 FPS Dealer nominated by BDO (on rotation of 6 months)	2	Member
CDPO	1	Member
BEEO	1	Co-member Secretary
Block Medical Officer	1	Member
CO	1	Member

Panchayat Level Vigilance Committee

The composition of the committee is as follows:

Person	Numbers	Position in the committee
Mukhiya	1	Convener/Coordinator
Sarpanch	1	Member
Defeated Mukhiya from closest vote	1	Member
Defeated Sarpanch from closest vote	1	Member
All Wards Member		Member
All Panch		Member
6 persons nominated by Mukhiya through Gram Sabha (1 from SC, ST, Woman each and 1 from all three section of beneficiaries)	6	Member
1 helpless/destitute person	1	Member

nominated by Mukhiya		
In the absence of Mukhiya, Deputy Chief would be Convener/coordinator	1	Member
2 FPS Dealer nominated by Mukhiya (on rotation of 6 months; if other than 2)	2	Member
ANM	1	Member
1 Anganwadi Sevika (on rotation of 6 months)	1	Member
1 Headmaster/their representative (on rotation of 6 months, if other than 2 schools)	1	Member

Ward (Urban) Level Vigilance Committee

The composition of the committee is as follows:

Person	Numbers	Position in the committee
Ward Councillor of municipal Corporation/City council/Nagar Panchayat	1	Convener/Coordinator
Defeated Ward Councillor from closest vote	1	Member
6 persons nominated by Ward Councillor through Ward Sabha (1 from SC, ST, Woman each and 1 from all three section of beneficiaries)	6	Member
1 helpless/destitute person nominated by Ward Councillor	1	Member
2 FPS Dealer nominated by Mukhiya (on rotation of 6 months; if other than 2)	2	Member
1 Anganwadi Sevika (on rotation of 6 months)	1	Member
1 Headmaster/their representative (on rotation	1	Member

of 6 months, if other than 2 schools)		
ANM	1	Member

The reasons for adding the following members at the different level of committee: -

Mukhiya – The reasons to adding Mukhiya at the block level committee is that they can directly raise their issues of his/her panchayat in front of officials and the interaction between officials & people’s representative will also help them to be aware and will come to know about what is happening in another panchayat.

CDPO – He/she is responsible to provide overall guidance for implementation of the scheme which is meant for child development and as we know Anganwadi is a type of rural mother and child care centre. It is a programme to combat child hunger and malnutrition. So, I think CDPO should be there as a member to know about what is happening at the ground level and then he/she will able to make improvement.

BEEO – The respective officer is overall charge of Elementary, Secondary, and Mass education and for growth and smooth management of schools in their jurisdiction. And the mid-day meal is running in the primary and middle schools. So, the BEEO is responsible to look into the smooth running of mid-day meal. So, in the committee I think he/she will be there as a member.

Block Medical Officer (BMO) – “He/She is actively involved his health team in the effective implementation of the Nutrition Programmes and administration of Vitamin ‘A’ an iron & Folic Acid Tablets and coordinate with ICDS. He/she is also responsible for the training of all health personnel like ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers, Dais and others who are involved in health care regarding ORT (Oral Rehydration Therapy) Programme”.

As there is the involvement of BMOs in Anganwadi, he/she should be there in the committee as a member.

Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wife (ANM) – “ANMs are expected to be multi-purpose health workers. ANM related work includes maternal and child health along with family planning services, health and nutrition education, efforts for maintaining environmental sanitation, immunisation for the control of communicable diseases, treatment of minor injuries, and first aid in emergencies and disasters.

With the Anganwadi Worker (AWW), the ANM acts as a resource person for the training of ASHAs”.

Awareness:

The awareness about the Panchayat, Ward, and Block level vigilance committee is very low among the people in the villages. As such, they are not contacting any one even if they have a problem with PDS or Mid-day Meal or Anganwadi. Another factor is that, the card holders feel that if they complain, they may not even get the items they usually get. So, they are content with what they get and do not complain as I mentioned the example of *Prakhand Pramukh* of Bishunpur Block.

Suggestions

Mukhiya and Ward Parshad will ensure installation of hoardings, wall paintings, etc. in Panchayat Bhawan and Community Hall respectively. It will create awareness among the people about the Panchayat level vigilance committee.

BDOs will ensure installation of hoardings, wall paintings, etc. in public offices for consumer awareness likewise the hoardings of Swachhta Abhiyan then it will sure create awareness among the people about the Block level vigilance committee.

Training of vigilance committee members on their duties and responsibilities.

Supervise the ration distribution for the quality and quantity.

Attend the meetings regularly.

Committee members should visit the PDS shop, School, and Anganwadi Centre at least once a week.

Discuss problems with the card holders.

Ensure that the registers of committee are properly maintained.

Develop friendly attitude with the people and respond to their problems positively.

Committee members should be educated.

Select right candidates for the committee.

Display the help line number prominently in front of the PDS shop.

Educate the people about the use of consumer help line.

Keep the complaint box at a prominent place in the shop.

Conclusion:

Awareness on the vigilance committee is found to be very low among all the three (Block, Ward, Panchayat) level. Awareness has a direct correlation to the use and effectiveness of the grievance redress mechanism and hence the efficient implementation of all the schemes. Transparency is the underpinning single factor in any public programme or project that would make it work – for everyone. It also builds towards greater awareness, accessibility and usage thereby enhancing efficiency in implementation. Accessibility and accountability are the central pillars around which good implementation is built on. Transparency and informed participation comes to naught if they do not yield results; or in this case, redressal of grievances. The primary accountability lies with the government. Low levels of accountability at every level – Vigilance Committee meeting is not regularly held. No welfare programme can succeed without people's participation and monitoring. After all it is for them. So, as I discussed, "Vigilance Committee" should be functional at all level.

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