



***LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND***

**MICRO-STUDY ON HUNGER &  
POVERTY AMONG  
MARGINALISED GROUPS IN  
INDIA**

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**Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, Civil Society Academy  
and Partner Organisations**

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# Preface

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The study in the context of Leave no one behind – a rare opportunity of 15 years when the whole world is conscientious about the principle and objective of leaving no one behind in our world. An integrated framework of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership with 17 goals and 169 targets are before all country leadership to collaborate on. In a world that is racing to the bottom through competition, exclusion, protectionism, violence, corruption, environmental destruction – the SDGs provide a vision and strategy.

How much of these will get integrated and translated in the political visions and practices of different countries is to be seen. Three years into the process, there is little evidence that the political decisions will take this framework into their policies and strategies. In particular the ethos and spirit of ‘leave no one behind’ in the SDGs. Even as we will have reports and debates on how well a country is progressing or not progressing on the goals and targets, there is little indication to say that countries will identify, acknowledge and track the progress of the socially excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged population groups in their country or globally. Without tracking and promoting inclusion and development of the excluded sections of their populations, SDGs have no relevance or rightful place in our development framework – nationally or globally. It is a non-starter.

Civil society concerned about the above scenario is exploring ways in which the ethos and principle of ‘leave no one behind’ can be centre-staged in the SDG dialogue, progress and reports. The task is huge, particularly when the political leadership does not wish to acknowledge or articulate exclusions and development gaps within their countries. It does not fit into the national narratives of progress we desire to present and project nationally and globally. In this context, civil society efforts to centre-stage these disadvantaged communities become critical.

The study is a preliminary and exploratory effort in this direction. The study identifies eight vulnerable population groups (among many more) and surveys their access to a fundamental national and global right to food, freedom from hunger. Study tracks accessibility of the subsidized food under the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India, one component of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) across Musahar/Manjhi (Dalit) community, Tribal community, Muslim community, Fisher community (Loktak lake), LGBTQI community, Women in sex work, Single women and Urban Poor.

The study recognises that hundreds of population groups in India are excluded and discriminated and do not enjoy their rights and are not part of the growth and development narrative in the country. These population groups need to be identified at the local governance level within the overarching national/state framework of the constitutional mandates, democratic systems and development strategies.

The specific drivers of exclusion, development barriers and constraints at both ends of the rights holders and duty bearers need to be identified and addressed. Focused relevant and adequate redress, restitution mechanisms and resources need to be allocated and utilised in full consultation with the said communities to promote equity, inclusion and participation.

This study reviews the communities’ access to the PDS provisions as one piece in monitoring how SDG Goals 1 and 2 of poverty and hunger are being addressed. Wada Na TodoAbhiyan and Civil Society Academy takes this as an opportunity to practically track the idea of leave no one behind principle. It is also an effort to build the agency of the concerned communities to Wada Na Todo.

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Welthungerhilfe

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# I. Context: Hunger amidst Plenty

Economics textbooks across schools in India have conventionally defined ‘sustainable development’ as ‘Development that meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs’. A classic corollary to this definition provided by a schoolteacher would state that resources are finite but people’s needs and wants are infinite, which makes it necessary to priorities utilization of resources for the benefit of all so as to prevent concentration of resources in the hands of few. Our textbooks still propound such meaningful and sound theories, but our steps fail miserably when it comes fulfilling them.

This is evident in the islands of prosperity that we inhabit. The very concentration of resources that we were taught to avoid, is the concentration that fuelled the needs, and limitless wants, of a few, including us, while failing to fulfill even so much as the basic needs of many others who inhabit large swathes of impoverishment. Today the same street, same traffic signal, same office, same home can be witness to the simultaneous presence of prosperity and impoverishment; basic needs unfulfilled while wants multiplied; food wastage and food insecurity, and a scenario rightly described by the Right to Food Campaign in India as – hunger amidst plenty.

While the prosperous among us become immune to ‘hunger amidst plenty’ as a reality, the impoverished around us challenge it, even as they survive its indignities. It is in this context that the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide us a national and global framework to re-commit ourselves to shaping a world in which none is left behind and all have available equitable opportunity to experience a life of all-round well-being that is critical to the dignity of the individuals and communities. At the heart of this vision is SDG 2 or ‘End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture’ and SDG 1 or ‘End poverty in all its forms everywhere’ – the fulfillment of which is affirmative of the dignity of individuals and communities who continue to be left behind. The UN has also declared 2016 to 2025 to be the decade of action on nutrition.

It is in pursuit of this commitment – freedom from hunger *for all*, such that no one is left behind – that Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA), Civil Society Academy (CSA) and partner organisations sought to undertake a micro-study on the status of hunger and poverty among eight marginalized population groups whose experiences speak to the reality of ‘hunger amidst plenty’ and our complicity in perpetuating it. The study assumes further relevance in the context of India’s Right to Food Law or National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, which promises food and nutritional security in a life-cycle approach to vulnerable populations and the Constitutional guarantee of right to life and personal liberty, of which the right to food is an indispensable part. Together with these national imperatives, the SDGs provide an opportunity to arrest the numbers of those who have remained outside the food security net.

## II. Research Objective and Methodology

This micro-study sought to examine the status of hunger and poverty, specifically the barriers to food and nutritional security faced by eight marginalized population groups—Dalits (Musahar community), Fisher community, LGBTQI community, Muslims, Tribals, Urban poor, single women and Women in sex work in specific pockets across 10 states in India. The study focuses on the availability and accessibility of the families to entitlements under the Public Distribution System (PDS); the nature of food deprivation and coping mechanisms among them. The PDS is an important government measure to address hunger and nutrition and members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and policy for the management of the food economy in the country. In its many revisions of the PDS system, more and more attention has been to reach the far-flung, hilly, remote and inaccessible areas and identify layers of disadvantaged communities including rural poor and urban poor. The NFSA recognises widespread hunger and food insecurity across the country, bringing 75 percent of the rural poor and 50 percent of the urban poor under its coverage. NFSA further maintains the need for reaching out to the poorest among the BPL families through the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). While the NFSA outlines other provisions for nutrition under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) for children below 6 years, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating mothers and Midday Meal (MDM) for school children in the 6 to 14 years age group and the provision of Rs.6000/- to women during delivery, this study does not cover them.

An important dimension of the study is to highlight marginalized groups that are at the threat of being left behind despite Constitutional mandates and provisions and spectacular national growth and development. The study recognises that identities of individuals and groups can increase their risk of discrimination and rights violations as well as exclusion from entitlements and provisions. Further, leaving no one behind is a matter of social justice and critical to creating inclusive societies and sustainable economic trajectories. Both universal policies and specific ones are necessary to address the particular disadvantages and vulnerabilities of marginalised population groups and need to work in tandem. Further attention needs to be given to women, persons with disabilities and sub-groups that are further disadvantaged and discriminated within the broader social group. The UN Women in the SDG report ‘Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, April 2018’ has reported that women face upto 11 percentage points more food insecurity than men. The report refers to caste-based identity discrimination towards Dalit women “a woman’s caste in India can increase her exposure to mortality as a result of factors like poor sanitation, inadequate water supply and health care. The average age of death for Dalit women is 14.6 years younger than for higher caste women”. Taking advantage of the global SDG initiative to ‘leave no one behind’ the study is an effort to identify and highlight the threat of leaving these marginalised groups behind in addressing hunger and nutrition.

The study is exploratory and preliminary effort to understand the experiential nature of hunger and poverty across the said vulnerable population groups who run the risk of being left behind. It is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive in identifying the vulnerable population groups that go far beyond the eight population groups studied. The groups studied have overlaps and do not follow any specific sociological framework in grouping them.

WNTA reached out to civil society member organizations (CSOs) located across 10 states to do the study, which have long-standing relationship and work among these marginalized groups. In many cases the organisations are also led by members of the same communities and have greater knowledge of the community issues. The CSOs employed a mix of questionnaire method and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and case studies to collect data from a total of 467 respondents.

This is an advocacy research study the purpose of which is to begin a dialogue on specific vulnerable marginalised groups whose context and needs should be taken into account in promoting growth and development. Further, as a piece of advocacy research, the study seeks to capacitate members of the affected communities on the provisions of the NFSA and the rights they hold as citizens. It is also an effort to bring

home the existing knowledge about hunger and malnutrition and its negative impact in the life cycle and development of their communities. WNTA and CSA along with the partners seek to expand this process with more vulnerable groups with the purpose of leaving no one behind.

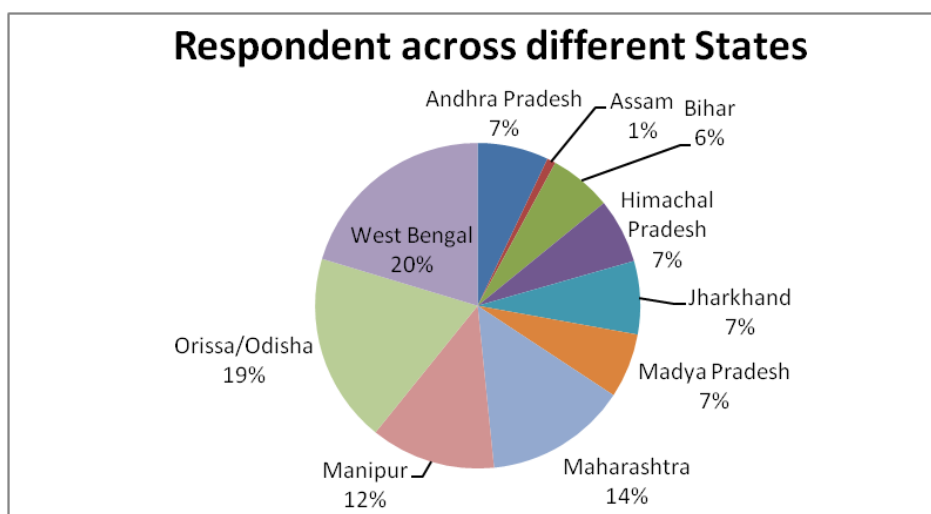
### Profile of the Respondents

The distribution of the 467 respondents across the eight population groups across the 10 states are as shown below. The eight population groups include – i) Dalits (Musahar community), ii) Fisher community in Loktak lake, iii) LGBTQI community, iv) Muslims, v) Tribals, vi) Urban Poor, vii) Single Women, and viii) Women in sex work

**Table 1: Respondents across population groups**

Row Labels	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Bihar	Himachal Pradesh	Jharkhand	Madya Pradesh	Maharashtra	Manipur	Orissa/Odisha	West Bengal	Grand Total
Commercial Sex Workers									30	30	60
Dalits (Musahars)			29								29
Fisher Folk (Loktak lake)								32			32
LGBTQI									31		31
Muslim							35			32	67
Single Women				30							30
Tribals	33				34			26			93
Urban Poor		4				30	31		27	33	125
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>467</b>

**Chart 1: Respondents across states**



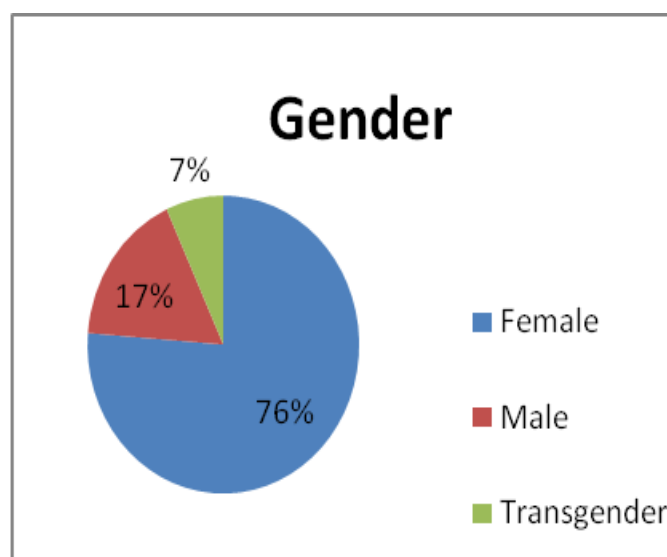
## A Micro Study on Hunger and Poverty among the Marginalized Groups in India

The distribution of respondents across the states are – i) Andhra Pradesh (7%), ii) Assam (1%), iii) Bihar (6%), iv) Himachal Pradesh (7%), v) Jharkhand (7%), vi) Madhya Pradesh (7%), vii) Maharashtra (14%), viii) Manipur (12%), ix) Odisha (19%), and x) West Bengal (20%).

**Table 2: Respondents across social groups**

Category wise social groups	General		OBCs		SC		ST		Grand Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Women in Sex Work	54	90%		0%	6	10%		0%	60	100%
Dalits		0%		0%	29	100%		0%	29	100%
Fisher Community		0%		0%	31	97%	1	3%	32	100%
LGBTQI	15	48%	8	26%	6	19%	2	6%	31	100%
Muslims	55	82%	12	18%		0%		0%	67	100%
Tribals		0%		0%		0%	93	100%	93	100%
Urban Poor	54	43%	20	16%	41	33%	10	8%	125	100%
Single Women	25	83%	1	3%	4	13%		0%	30	100%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Chart 2: Distribution of respondents across gender**



Women constituted the majority of the respondents (76%) while men were 17% and members of the LGBTQI were 7%.



A Micro Study on Hunger and Poverty among the Marginalized Groups in India

The study was facilitated by seven civil society organisations across the ten states:

***Table 3: Partner Civil Society Organisations***

<b>Population Groups</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>CSO</b>
Tribals	<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	PARA
	<b>Jharkhand</b>	LEADS INDIA
	<b>Manipur</b>	Human Rights Alert
Fishermen Community (Loktak lake)	<b>Manipur</b>	Human Rights Alert
Urban Poor	<b>Assam</b>	YUVA
	<b>Mumbai</b>	YUVA
	<b>Orissa</b>	YUVA
	<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	YUVA
LGBT	<b>Orissa</b>	YUVA
Dalits (Musahar)	<b>Bihar</b>	CSEI
Single Women	<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	SUTRA
Muslims	<b>Mumbai</b>	YUVA
	<b>West Bengal</b>	Nari- O- SishuKalyan Kendra

## SECTION I

### Key Findings

#### 1. Possession of identity proof

The table below reflects that majority of respondents had at least one of the identity proofs. Out of a total of 467 respondents, 442 had Aadhaar cards, 250 had Voter ID, and 229 had Ration cards. 22 respondents (1 Dalit, 2 fisher community, 9 Muslims, 4 Tribals, and 6 urban poor) lacked any of the identity proof.

49 percent of the respondents had identity cards that provided them access to state provisions under the Public Distribution System (PDS). All the respondents in the study belong to vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the population, in effect, people eligible for provisions under the PDS system<sup>1</sup>. The poor coverage is a concern in itself. That 95 percent of the poor and vulnerable in the study possessed Aadhaar cards and only 49 percent had PDS cards raises the question whether having Aadhaar card can ensure the poor's access to state provisions, as is often argued. The high rate of owning Aadhaar cards, even as the debates on Aadhaar continues, also indicates that the marginalised are keen to gain any type of identity as access to mark their citizenship and access state benefits.

Various studies on PDS have reported high proportions of exclusion errors of the eligible populations, even up to 65 percent and inclusion errors of ineligible populations to 25 percent<sup>2</sup>. The low coverage of only 49 percent of the respondents results in their poor access to food provisions and correspondingly high vulnerability to hunger and nutrition. Some had no identity proofs, denying them any government services or provisions.

**Table 4: Proof of identity among respondents**

Population Groups	Identity Proof				Total respondents groups wise
	Aadhar card	Voter ID	Ration card	No Identity Card	
Women in Sex Work	60	31	53		60
Dalits (Musahars)	29	28	23	1	29
Fisher Community (Loktak lake)	30	10		2	32
LGBTQI	31	27	6		31
Muslims	56	43	33	9	67
Single Women	30	18	18		30
Tribals	89	28	38	4	93
Urban Poor	117	65	58	6	125
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>467</b>

#### 2. Poor educational levels

50 percent of the respondents were not literate, of which 43percent were female. Women also reported lower literacy levels across all groups. 23 percent of the total respondents were educated up to the primary level, while only 1.9 % of the total was graduates. 73% of the respondents were non-literate/primary level, reflecting very poor level of meaningful education and hence negligible opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Annexure 1 lists the eligibility criteria under the BPL and AAY categories

<sup>2</sup>SakshiBalani, Functioning of the Public Distribution System: An analytical report, PRS Legislative Research, 2013

**Table 5: Status of education among respondents**

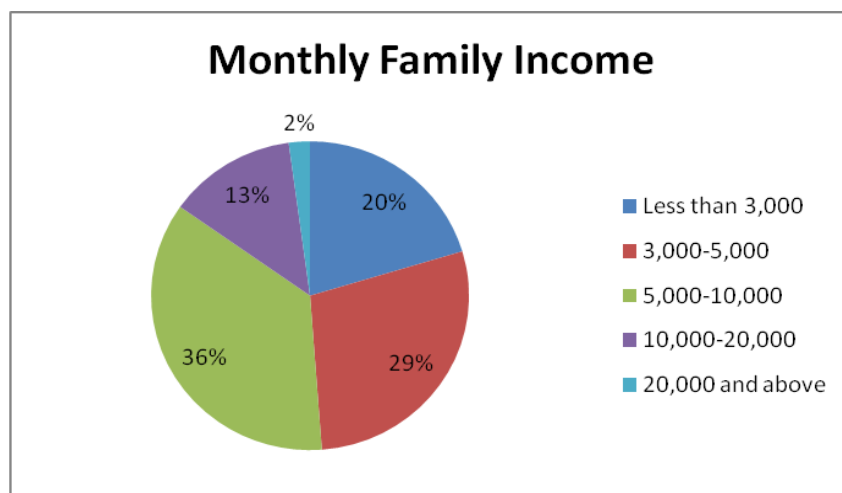
Gender wise education	Post Graduate	Graduate	Up to Higher Secondary	Up to secondary	Up to Primary	Not literate	Grand Total
<b>Female</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>8.99%</b>	<b>9.21%</b>	<b>14.99%</b>	<b>43.04%</b>	<b>76.23%</b>
Women in sex Work	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	0.64%	0.86%	11.13%	12.85%
Dalits (Musahars)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.43%	2.57%	3.00%
Fisher Community (Loktak lake)	0.00%	0.00%	0.43%	0.21%	0.00%	1.93%	2.57%
Muslims	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	3.64%	4.93%	5.57%	14.35%
Single Women	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	1.71%	1.28%	3.21%	6.42%
Tribals	0.00%	0.00%	7.28%	1.07%	0.86%	6.42%	15.63%
Urban Poor	0.00%	0.00%	0.64%	1.93%	6.64%	12.21%	21.41%
<b>Male</b>	<b>0.21%</b>	<b>0.43%</b>	<b>1.28%</b>	<b>1.50%</b>	<b>6.42%</b>	<b>7.07%</b>	<b>16.92%</b>
Dalits (Mushars)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.28%	1.93%	3.21%
Fisher Community (Loktak lake)	0.00%	0.43%	0.64%	0.64%	1.28%	1.28%	4.28%
Tribals	0.21%	0.00%	0.43%	0.64%	0.86%	2.14%	4.28%
Urban Poor	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	0.21%	3.00%	1.71%	5.14%
<b>Transgender</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>1.50%</b>	<b>0.86%</b>	<b>2.78%</b>	<b>1.50%</b>	<b>0.21%</b>	<b>6.85%</b>
LGBTQI	0.00%	1.50%	0.86%	2.78%	1.50%	0.00%	6.64%
Urban Poor	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.21%	0.21%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>0.21%</b>	<b>1.93%</b>	<b>11.13%</b>	<b>13.49%</b>	<b>22.91%</b>	<b>50.32%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

These low educational levels impacted their awareness about their rights, their poor participation in decision making, poor confidence to address violations, the nature of their occupation, the income they earned, the respect and dignity they enjoyed and the quantity and quality of food they ate.

### 3. Low-income levels

The family income levels of the respondents show high levels of poverty among the groups. 20 percent have income less than Rs. 3000/month; 29 percent of the total respondents have income of Rs.3000- 5000/month; 36 percent of the total respondent have income in the range of Rs.5000-10,000/month; 13% fall into the income group of Rs.10,000-20,000/month and finally 2 percent of the respondents have family income more than Rs.20,000/month.

**Chart 3: Monthly family income of the respondents**



#### 4. High degree of dependency on earning members

On an average, there were fewer earning members and more number of dependents among the respondent groups. This included children who were not in the income earning category, elders, members who were ill or had disability and members who could not find employment. The average dependency ratio among the respondents is 5:2, which means one earning member for every 5 members in the family.

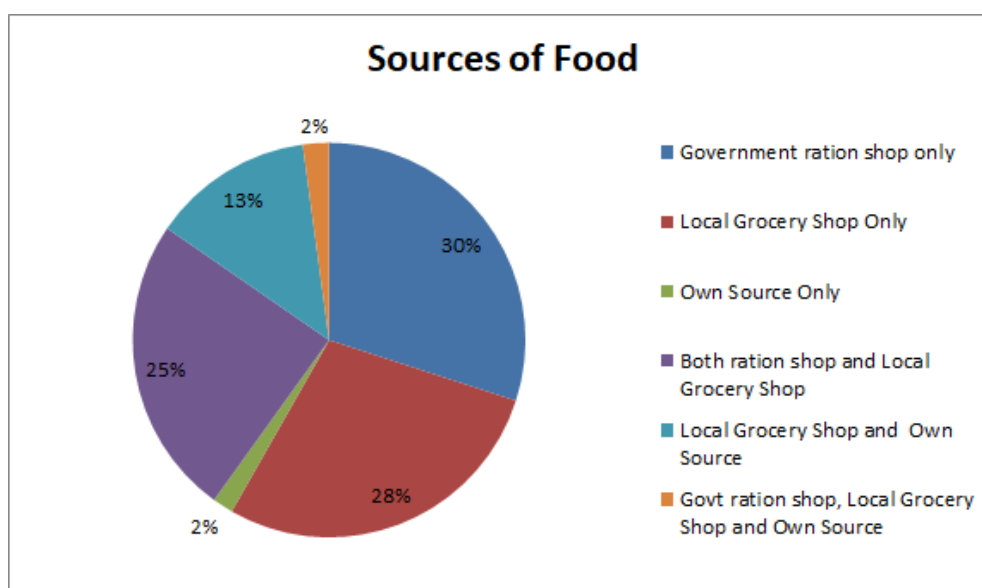
**Table 6: Dependency to earning member in the families**

Population Group	Average no. of members in family	Average no of earning members in family	Dependency ration to earning members
Women in sex work	5	1	5:1
Dalits (Musahars)	5	1	5:1
Fisher Community (Loktak lake)	3	1	3:1
LGBTQI	4	1	4:1
Muslims	5	1	5:1
Single Women	6	2	6:2
Tribals	6	2	6:2
Urban Poor	6	2	6:2
<b>Average</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5:2</b>

#### 5. Sources of food

Overall, the respondents showed high level of dependency on government provisioning of food, a reflection of their difficulty to access adequate food at market prices. 57 percent of the respondents depended wholly or partially on the PDS food provisions. 29 percent were wholly dependent upon the PDS food provisions, while 25 percent accessed food from both the PDS and local grocery shop. Only 2 percent had any independent source of food. Despite being vulnerable population groups eligible under the NFSA for PDS, 28 percent, more than a fourth depended wholly upon the commercial market based grocery shop for their food grains, which is highly volatile and exploitative too.

**Chart 4: Sources of food**



**Table 7: Sources of food across population groups**

Population Groups	Government ration shop only	Local Grocery Shop Only	Own Source Only	Both ration shop and Local Grocery Shop	Local Grocery Shop and Own Source	Govt/Local/Own Source	Totals
Women in sex work	13	26	1	15	5		60
Dalits (Musahar community)		16	1	3	9		29
Fisher Folk (Loktak lake)	7	14		3	8		32
LGBTQI		12	2	8	9		31
Muslim	28	12		21	3	3	67
Tribals	22	38	3	9	21		93
Slum Dwellers	58	12	1	42	7	5	125
Single Women	12	2	0	14	0	2	30
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>467</b>

## 6. Family expenditure on food

The average monthly expenditure on the food by the marginalised groups was reported as Rs. 4310/month, or Rs.21/- (per day per head expenditure) – on an average Rs.7/person/meal. Dalit families spent Rs.22/per head per day – which works out to an average Rs.7/person/meal. Families of urban poor and single women spent Rs.19/per head per day – which works out to Rs.6/person/meal. Tribals reported the lowest expenditure of Rs.16/per-head per day, meaning Rs.5/- per meal per head. Fisher community families reported somewhat better spending Rs.11/person/meal/day; may be because they engaged in productive economy from fishing. All other population groups depended upon labour for their livelihood.

**Table 8: Average per head per day expenditure on food among respondents**

Population Group	Average monthly family expenditure on food (Rs.)	Average no of members in the family	Per day Per Head Expenditure on Food ( Rs. for all three meals)	Per head Per meal Expenditure (Rs.)
Women in sex work	4567	6	25	8
Dalits (Musahars)	4517	7	22	7
Fisher Community (Loktak lake)	3938	4	33	11
LGBTQI	4161	6	23	8
Muslims	4134	6	23	8
Single Women	4600	8	19	6
Tribals	3817	8	16	5
Urban Poor	4664	8	19	6
		Average of all the groups together (per day per head)	Average of all the groups together (per Meal per head)	
Average Rs.	4310	21	7	

These figures raise serious concerns about malnutrition in these communities. It should compel governments and citizens to ask what these groups are eating, and question the quality, quantity, diversity of food basket and nutrition in the food.

## 7. Food Shortage

In addition to the PDS food provisions under the BPL category, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) was introduced in Dec 2000 with the explicit purpose of addressing hunger. It was estimated that 5% of the population in the country sleeps without 2 square meals a day – a population group that was called as “hungry”. AAY was planned initially for one crore poorest families with wheat/rice of 25 kg/family/month. Currently it has been expanded to cover 2.5 crore families with wheat/rice of 35 kgs/family. The AAY quota under the PDS is protected under the NFSA and states allowed drawing the quota designated for AAY.

Moving forward from providing food grains under the PDS, the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 puts in place people’s right to food security. NFSA mandates 75 percent of the rural population and 50 percent of the urban population be provided 5kg/person/month food grain based on the NSS consumption data 2011-12. To enhance women’s access and empowerment, the PDS card is registered under the name of the eldest woman member of the family, aged above 18 years old. As part of the grievance redress mechanism, penalty provisions are there on officers who do not adequately respond to the grievances. Yet, a considerable portion of the respondents did not have access to full meals, all three times a day and skipped many meals, a reality of the ‘hungry population’.

***Table 9: Number and quantity of meals taken by the respondents***

Population Groups	Average of Breakfast			Average of Lunch			Average of Dinner		
	(Full)	(Partial)	(No meal)	(Full)	(Partial)	(No Meal)	(Full)	(Partial)	(No Meal)
Women in sex work	15	7	8	19	7	4	20	7	2
Dalits (Musahars)	15	8	6	18	8	5	14	12	4
Fisher Community (Loktak lake)	15	8	7	20	7	3	19	6	5
LGBTQI	14	4	12	21	7	2	21	7	2
Muslims	21	4	4	16	5	9	26	3	1
Single Women	15	4	10	12	8	10	26	2	2
Tribals	22	5	4	23	3	4	24	4	2
Urban Poor	15	8	7	16	6	8	21	6	3
<b>Averages</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

As seen from the table above, respondent population groups routinely skipped meals and experienced hunger.

## 8. Strategies adopted in coping with food shortage

Only 6 percent of the respondents reported that they did not experience food shortage in their families. Others reported that they coped up with the food shortage in various ways – 32 percent reported that they reduced the number of meals in a day, which was seen in detail in the section above. 29 percent of the respondents reported that adults reduced the quantity of food and provided food for the children, 28 percent reported that they resorted to food that were cheaper in the market. 5 percent of the respondents borrowed food from others, which is the lowest among the coping strategy adopted – may be because other families in their neighborhood were also vulnerable and they do not have adequate social interface with other population groups in society.

***Table 10: Different ways adopted by marginalized groups to cope with food shortage***

<b>Population communities</b>	<b>Borrow food from others</b>	<b>Reduce the quantity meal of adult so that children can be fed.</b>	<b>Reducing the No. of meals in day</b>	<b>Rely on Less expensive food</b>	<b>Not experience food shortage</b>	<b>Sub Total</b>
Women in sex work		19	20	15	6	60
Dalits (Musahar community)	2	5	9	12	1	29
Fisher Folk (Loktak lake)	2	9	11	8	2	32
LGBTQI		11	9	9	2	31
Muslim	3	19	28	16	1	67
Tribal	4	29	28	25	7	93
Slum Dwellers	9	37	43	32	4	125
Single Women	5	5	6	8	6	30
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>467</b>

## SECTION II

### Specific barriers faced by respondent population groups

The study clearly pointed out to the poverty, persistent hunger and malnutrition challenges among vulnerable population groups. From the above findings, we can infer that while possession of identity proof, educational levels, nature of job and income levels, responsibility of feeding many mouths as the sole earning member, availability of state food provisioning systems significantly determine a vulnerable group's day-to-day food choices. These factors seldom operate in isolation of the larger discriminatory and unequal societal context within which these groups face specific identity-based marginalisation and exclusion at the hands of citizens and duty-bearers, which leaves them behind, and denies them a life of dignity.

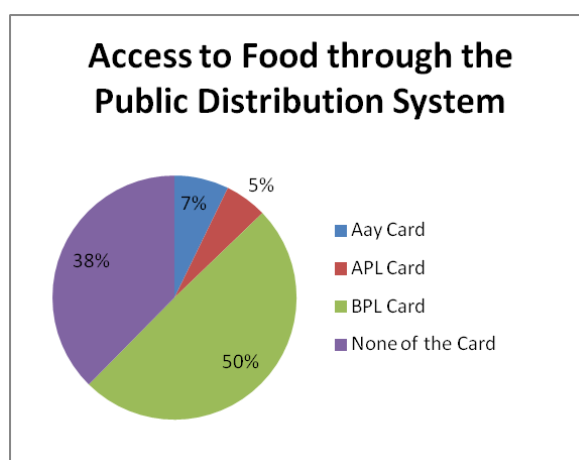
This section of the report presents glimpses of the nature of specific barriers faced by the different respondent vulnerable population groups studied:

#### 1. Urban Poor

The urban population grew from 28 percent in 2001 to 32 percent in 2014.<sup>3</sup> A large proportion of this growth is among the urban-poor. Agrarian distress and decreasing livelihood opportunities push the rural population to urban areas considered to be 'engines of economic growth'. The study covered 125 urban-poor respondents of both homeless people and those in urban slums from Gauhati, Kolkata, Mumbai, Indore and Bhubaneswar. The study used focused group discussions and case studies in addition to the survey.

**i) Access to ration cards under PDS:** The study reported 38 percent of the respondents did not have the ration card to access the provisions under the public distribution system; 50 percent possessed a Below Poverty Line (BPL) card, 5 percent an Above Poverty Line (APL) card and 7 percent an Antyodaya (AAY) card. Given that the urban-poor constitute one of the most marginalised and vulnerable sections of the population, it is of concern that 43 percent (38 percent who did not possess any type of ration card and 5 percent with APL cards) did not possess ration cards that made them access food grains provided by the government at subsidized price.

***Chart 5 – Access to ration cards under the Public Distribution System***



<sup>3</sup> Urbanisation in India: Facts and Issues; Insights, October 2014.

<http://www.insightsonindia.com/2014/10/29/urbanization-in-india-facts-and-issues/> downloaded 28.3.2018



The 38 percent respondents who did not have the PDS card reported the worst situation of food insecurity. The lack of identity proof is a major hindrance to the urban poor in accessing government provisions including the PDS.

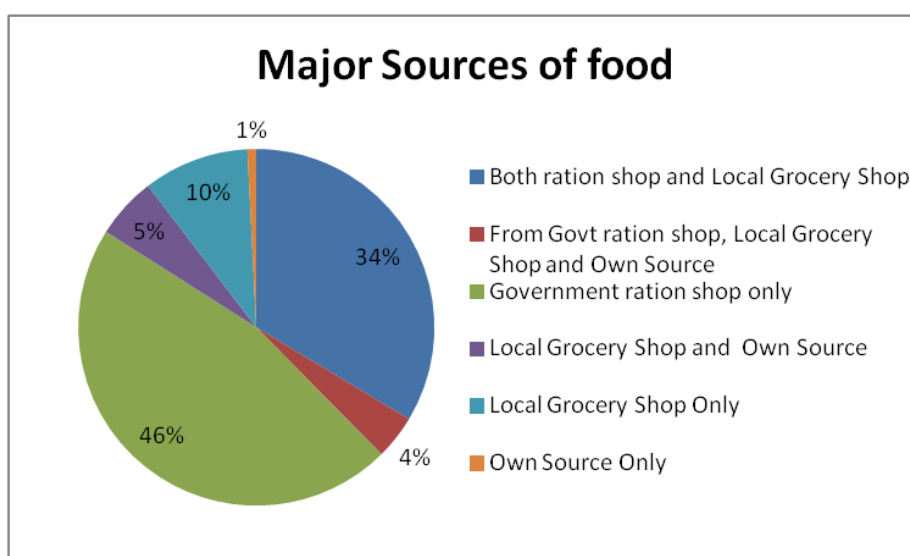
*Kumari Behra, 52 years old, unable to bear her husband's torture migrated from Ganjam district to Bhubaneswar. She now lives with her daughter and son-in-law in SitaramNausahi slum and works as a domestic worker along with her daughter who is also a domestic worker. Having migrated to the city, she has not been able to get any identity proof documents – no Aadhaar card, no voter ID card, no ration card and she cannot access the rations or any of the government provisions.*

The food grain and kerosene from the PDS was very important and 46 percent that depended wholly on the ration shops for availing their food supply.

*Mamta Samantrai, Mumbai explained how access to the BPL card under the PDS made a difference to her life in many ways: "Earlier I used to cook on wood- which was difficult. Now I get 5 litres of kerosene just for Rs 100/- Earlier I could barely get one litre for that cost. I also get 5 kg of rice for Rs 10/- where earlier I used to spend about Rs 160/- in the open market. Earlier we used to work like dogs, only to spend it all on food. Now we can also eat vegetables and daal.*

**ii) Major sources of food:** 46 percent of the respondents depended wholly on the government PDS for their food needs while 10 percent had to depend wholly on the local grocery shop for their food needs. Many who accessed the government PDS food grains additionally supplemented food needs from the local grocery shop. Very small proportion (4 percent) had any access to independent sources of food grains where they had some of the food needs supplied from their native villages.

**Chart 6– Major Sources of food**

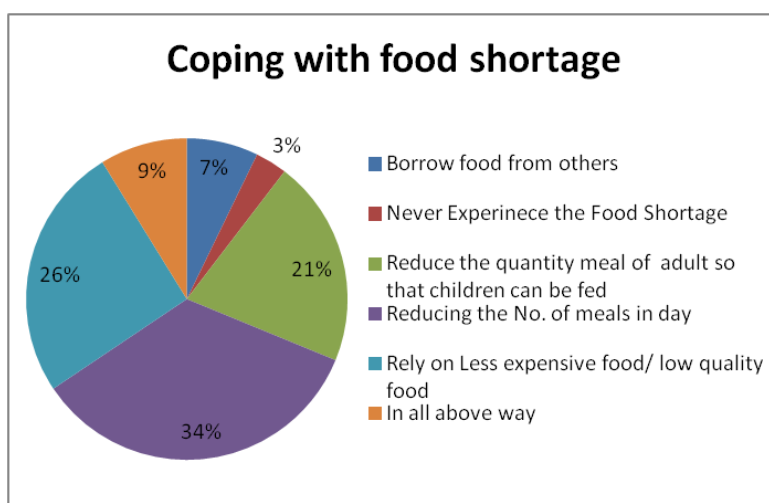


The following data shows they spent considerable part of their income for accessing food and may yet be having poor quality and inadequate quantity of food.

- Hasina Begum’s family, Gauhati, spent Rs.5000/month on food for 6 people in the family out of the family income of Rs.10, 000/month.
- MamataSamantrai, Mumbai, spent Rs.2000/month out of her income of Rs.6000/- on food for the family of four.
- Marimuthu, Mumbai who lives alone spends Rs.3000/month out of his income of Rs.5000/month on food. He has been diagnosed with tuberculosis and finds it unable to work regularly. His monthly medicines cost him Rs.2000/-
- KumariBehera, Bhuvaneswar, who lives with her daughter and son-in-law, spends Rs.1500-2000/month on food.

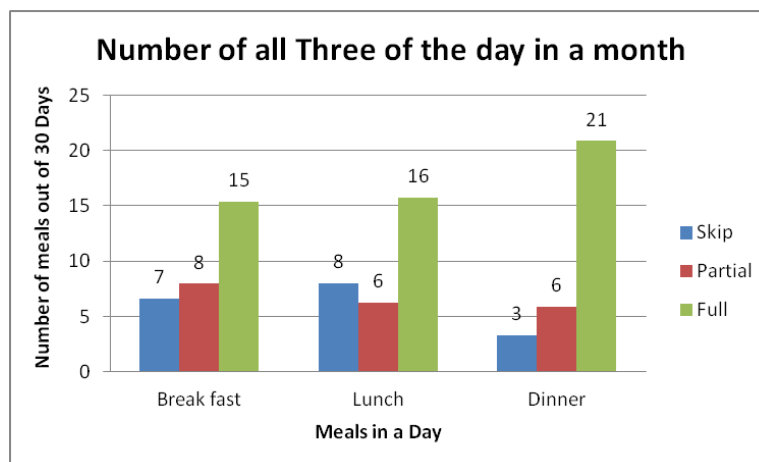
**iii) Food Shortage and Coping with food shortage:** The study pointed out to urban poor families spending average Rs.4556/-family on food, averaging Rs. 20/head/day reflecting the extremely poor nature of food and nutrition. By and large, food consisted of roti, rice and vegetables. Occasionally some of the families afforded fish, meat.

**Chart 7 – Coping with food shortage:** Negligible families reported not having experienced food shortages (3 percent). The majority used various means to cope up with food shortages. 34 percent cut the number of meals in a day and 26 percent relied on less expensive/low quality meals. For half the month, many of them skipped their breakfast/lunch or had partial lunch/breakfast and consumed a full meal only at dinner time. The nature of their work also led to them skipping meals. Women, who work as domestic workers left homes early mornings without proper breakfast, worked till later afternoon and got back to have the evening meal, which became their substantive meal. Those who worked as municipality workers in the city also kept similar work hours, denying them time for proper meals.



*Anita Kharate is 26 years old and has returned to her native home in Indore with her two children after her husband left her. She has taken to rag picking as an occupation. She leaves early morning with just a tea, has only tea or biscuits through the day. It is 4 pm when she returns home and has her meal of roti, rice and vegetables/dal. She makes some additional income doing cleaning work in hotels, cleaning work in weddings, carrying baraat lamps in weddings etc. ‘It still is difficult to meet the family needs’*

***Table 10–No of respondents having full meals in a month on average***



Single women in the urban areas face many additional challenges in surviving and meeting food needs of the children and family. Case studies included women who were living alone not able to bear the domestic violence, deserted women or where the men were no more. This left women at various stages of their lives from 26 years to 70 years alone to fend for their children or for themselves as single women.

*Mamata has lived in Mumbai for the past twenty years. She lost her husband five years ago when he fell from the flyover where he was employed as a construction worker. She is left to take care of her adolescent daughter and two young sons and her aged mother. She works as a sweeper in the BMC on contract basis and earns Rs.6000/month. She spends Rs.2000/- on food for the family. Her children are studying in the municipal school and have their noon meal through the mid-day meals programme. She complained that the MDM food is of poor quality. She often skips breakfast and lunch working from early morning till 4 pm. Her first meal often is around 5 pm after coming back from work and after a wash.*

The absence of decent work opportunities, many of them were living a hand-to-mouth existence and suffered from chronic malnutrition. The precarious nature of their food and hunger situations was evident in instances like ill-health and accidents. People like Ahalyabai Mohite from Mumbai reported how demolitions and evictions, in the name of city-beautification or development projects destroyed all their belongings including the food items in the home. They also braved the stark inequalities of fast-paced, tech-driven city life that is seldom inclusive of their concerns.

## **2. Women engaged in sex work**

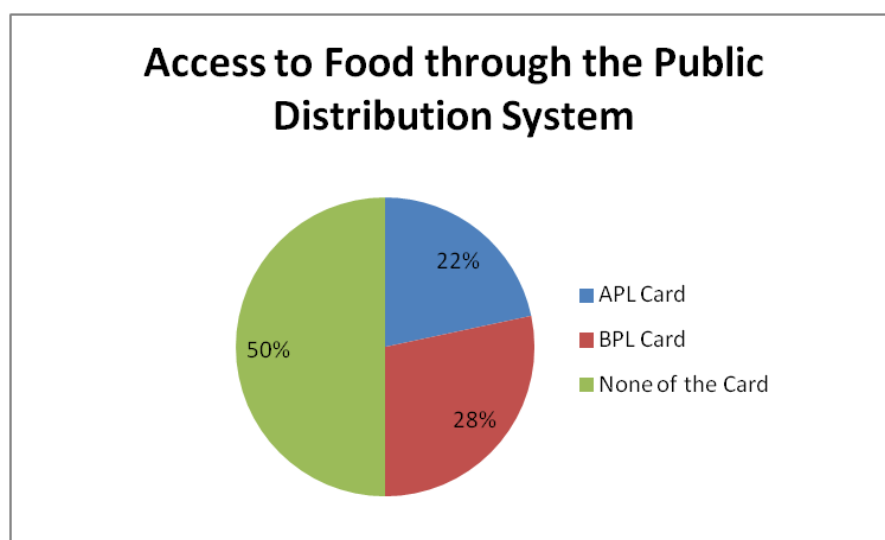
There are more than 800,000 women sex workers reported in India, though unofficially the numbers are far greater. The study covered 60 respondents across Mumbai, Bhubaneswar and Kolkata. Young girls are victims of trafficking, having been lured away by boyfriends/acquaintances and then sold in brothels in the bigger towns and cities in India. Many other women have entered sex work in search of better life and livelihood. Extreme poverty, early widowhood, lack of support from parental and marital families, lack of education and skills has been some of the reasons for people to enter sex work.

*Shabnam: “I don’t enjoy this life and would rather do some other work with dignity. I experience a lot of mental and physical harm in my current profession. I am also worried about my daughter and what she will think about me when she grows up. I know the older I get my income will dwindle which will lead to food insecurity and might ruin my family”.*

*Shanti is 56 years old and lives in a slum in Bhubaneswar. She was forced to leave the house along with her young daughter after her husband died. Her aim in life was to ensure good education for her daughter and that she should be brought up in a safe and healthy environment. She enrolled her in a boarding school run by an ashram. To pay the annual school fees and to survive Shanti entered in to sex work and continues to do so till date. She kept her daughter away from her during her growing-up years and got her married. Shanti is not in touch with her daughter after the marriage. As she has become older, she finds it difficult to sustain herself today.*

**i) Access to ration cards under the PDS:** 50 percent of the respondents did not have PDS cards to access grains at subsidized rate from the PDS. 28 percent had access to Below Poverty Line (BPL) card and 22 percent to Above Poverty Line (APL) card. The case studies reflected the extreme vulnerability of the women who take up sex work.

**Chart 8– Access to food through the Public Distribution System**

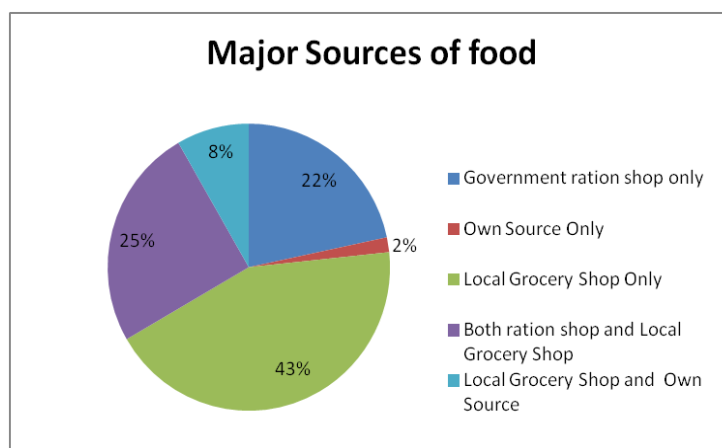


**ii) Major sources of food:** Many of them, 43 percent relied on the local grocery shop for their food needs. Purchasing food from the grocery shop at prices higher than the subsidised rations meant that sex workers experienced food shortage several times a month. The regular diet for most of them include wheat, rice, vegetables and pulses which they buy from the local grocery shops, ration shops and street vendors. Usually the monthly expenses on food ranged between Rs. 1500-Rs. 2000. Many women in sex work are unable to earn enough regularly to ensure their food needs. They reported greater vulnerability as they grew older.

One of the main barriers to food security is the social stigma associated with the nature of work and the discrimination that accrues both at the level of state and society. They face difficulties accessing health care, housing, subsidised food etc. They do not have access to any of the social protection programmes of the government or have any of the government issued identity proofs that are required to access government social security schemes. They don't have Aadhar card, voter ID card, BPL card, ration card, antodaya card. Nor do they have access to old age/widow pension scheme, health care, water and sanitation or housing that the government provides to the poor in India.

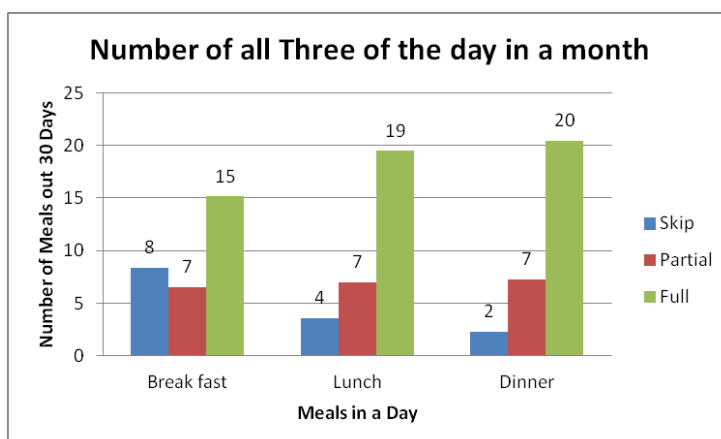
In the absence of sex work being legalised in India, these respondents remained excluded from social security benefits extended to other unorganized sector workers and invisibilised them as citizens with associate rights and entitlements.

**Chart 9– Major sources of food**

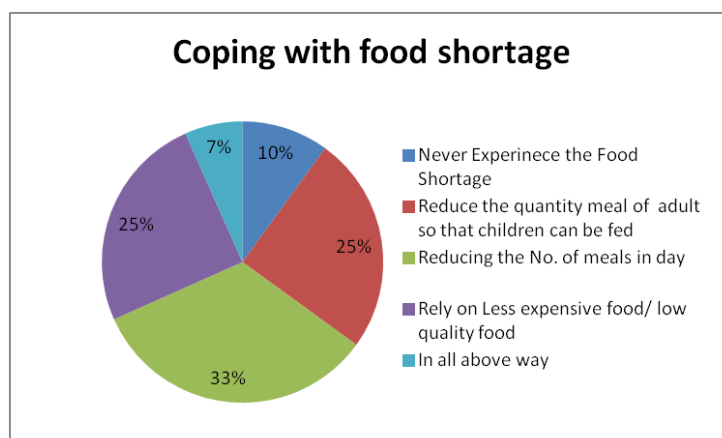


As breadwinners who had other mouths to feed, 33 percent of them reported reducing their own intake of meals per day, often skipping breakfast and lunch so that their children could eat, and relied on low quality, less expensive food. This made them and their dependents more vulnerable to food and nutritional insecurity.

**Table 11–No of respondents having full meals in a month on average**



**Chart 10– Coping with food shortage**



The Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1956, the main statute dealing with sex work in India does not criminalise prostitution and women in sex-work, but mostly punishes acts by third parties facilitating

prostitution. It is important to note that the Supreme Court of India has observed that sex workers are entitled to a right to life and must be accorded the protection guaranteed to every citizen. Respondents reported their inability to bring their family identity proofs as many of them no longer remained in touch with their families. A Supreme Court panel in 2011 recommended that central government and Election Commission issue voter ID cards and relax verification requirements, and state governments and local institutions issue ration cards to sex workers.<sup>4</sup> This recommendation needs to be implemented at the national, state, district and sub-district level. There needs to a comprehensive approach in realizing human rights of sex workers including their right to food and nutrition security.

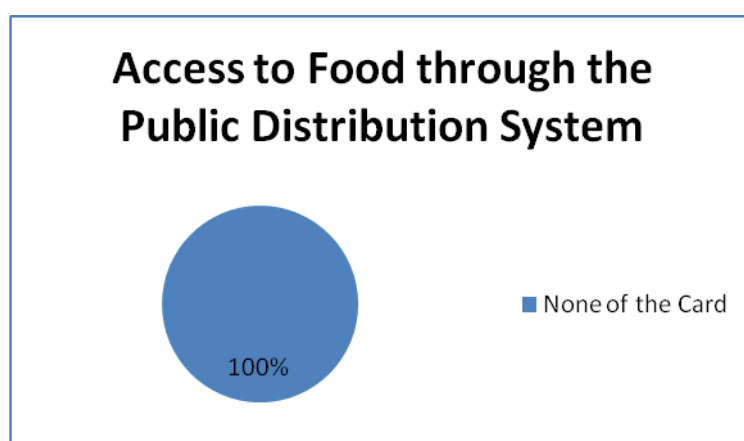
### 3. Fisher Community in Loktak Lake, Manipur

The study covered 32 families of the fishing communities, from the Loktak Lake in Manipur state. It reviews how state ‘punishes’ citizens and are denied basic rights and services when they do not fall in line with state plans for development. In this case, the fisher-community who live and have their livelihood in the Loktaklake is protesting the state plans to promote tourism in the Loktak lake displacing them.

The Loktak Lake is the largest fresh water lake in the North East. It is famous for the ‘*phumdis*’ which are large masses of vegetation, soil and other organic matter that become floating platforms on the water. They floating platforms are strong enough for people to build their small huts/houses on them. Some of the *phumdis* are large in size, even upto 15 sq. miles. The *Keibul Lamjao National Park*, the only floating national park in the world is located in Loktak Lake. Fisher communities live here since generations. The government in order to make this into a tourism spot has been trying to displace the fisher communities. There have been instances of the state authorities destroying and even burning up some of the *phumdis* in an effort to displace them. There is also a strong protest movement of the people against the state processes. In the face of this stand-off between the government and the fisher community, they are denied access the PDS food that they should normally be eligible for.

**i) Access to ration cards under the PDS:** Of the 32 fishermen interviewed, nobody had the AAY/BPL/APL card through which they could access government entitlements. Noteworthy is that fact that 31/32 fishermen belonged to SC category and their exclusion from the state food provisioning system starkly reiterates the exclusion of Dalit respondents from the PDS. In addition to being able to catch fish in the lake and sell them, they depended on the local grocery shop and other own sources for their food needs.

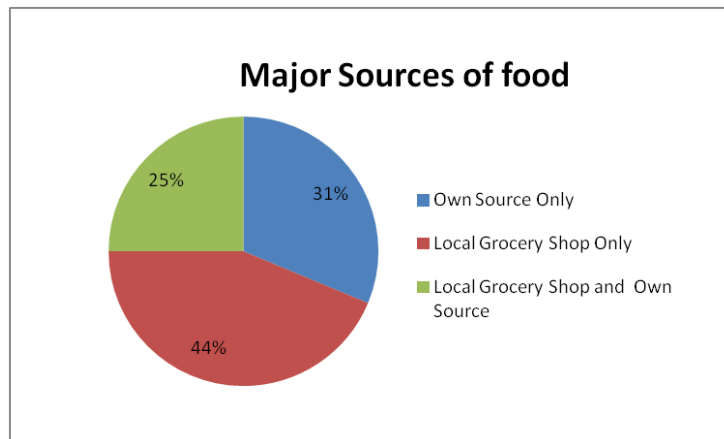
#### Chart 11– Access to food through the Public Distribution System



**ii)Major source of food:** Not having ration cards, they depended upon the local market and also own sources for food needs. Being engaged in the productive work of fishing, a third of the respondents reported they depended on their own sources for food needs.

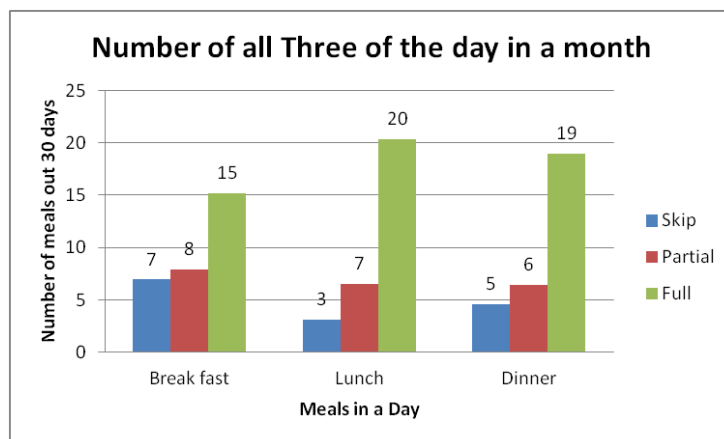
<sup>4</sup>Interim orders, Sex Workers Rehabilitation Case, Supreme Court of India, 16 September 2011, Law Resource India, from Status of Sex Workers in India, a chapter submitted as part of National Alliance of Women’s Organisation (NAWO).

**Chart 12 – Major sources of food**

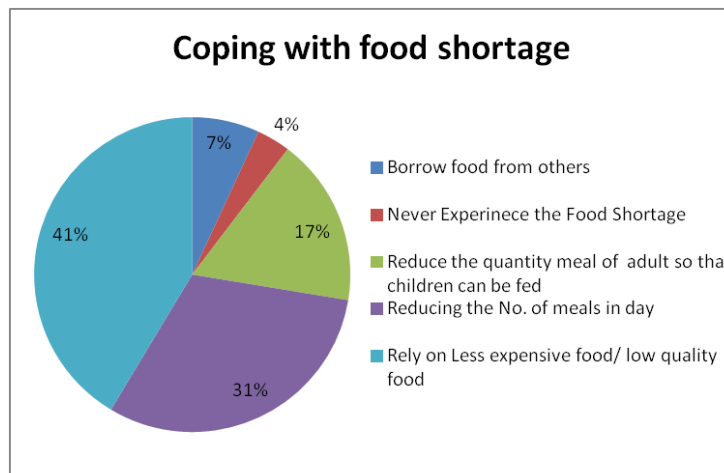


**iii) Food shortage and coping mechanisms:** Only 4% of the respondents did not experience food shortage and had access to food throughout the year. The others coped with the food shortage by reducing the number of meals, skipping meals, resorting to cheaper food and borrowing from others as seen in the table and chart below.

**Table 12–No of respondents having full meals in a month on average**



**Chart 13– Coping with food shortage**



Interestingly, two of the fisher community members had an average annual income of Rs.20,000/- and more; showing that the potential for earning a decent livelihood from the loktak lake. It needs to be recognized that the income from fishing is seasonal and irregular, which requires a realistic planning between the people and the state. It is a pity that the state is focused on the tourism income than the livelihood of the citizens concerned or even building synergy between state and the people in the development plans.

#### 4. Dalits (Mushar/Manjhi community)

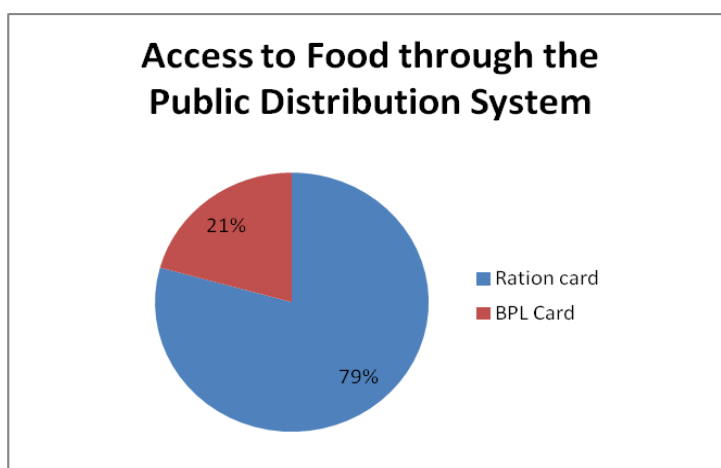
The Dalit respondents in the study belonged to the Musahar community in Dhanurva block in Patna district, Bihar. The Musahars (derogatively called ‘rat eaters’) are one of the most disadvantaged among the Dalit communities and are discriminated by the Dalit communities too. The study is an attempt to highlight how some of the more vulnerable communities get invisibilised within broader categories of the scheduled caste. The study highlights the need to give focused attention to the rights and services to each of the vulnerable population groups in their complex context.

The Musahars/Manjhi communities rarely have house-sites and live on village common land or on landlord’s land, thus lacking basic documents for their identity. They lose out on almost all entitlements of the government. They are also low on education, being as low as 9-10 percent literacy, are depended on casual and migrant work. A few of the young people have now begun to complete school education and join higher education. The government of Bihar has initiated special development programme called ‘Mahadalit Vikas’.

**i) Access to ration cards under the PDS:** Given the extreme multiple vulnerability of the population, they would qualify for AAY cards that provides 35 kgs of grain to the family in a month. However, only 21 percent had AAY cards. 79 percent had the BPL cards.

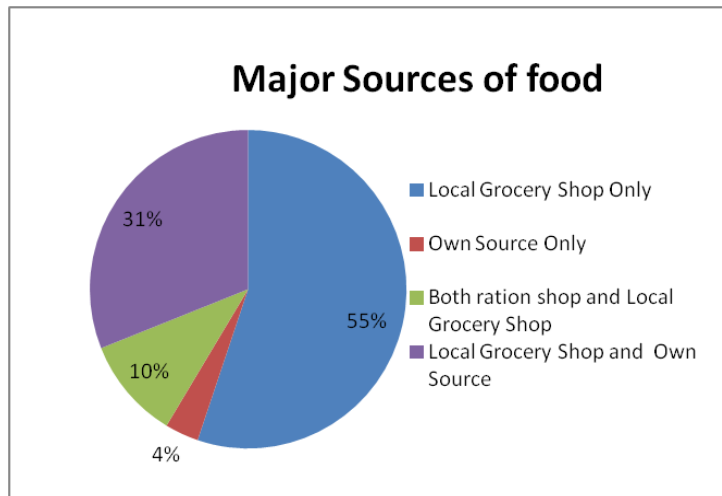
55 percent of them relied on the local grocery shop for all their food needs and 31 percent relied on their own source in addition to the grocery shop.

***Chart 14 – Access to food through the Public Distribution System***

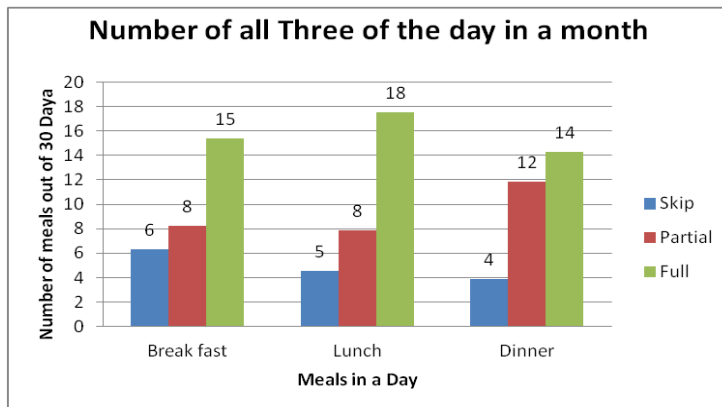




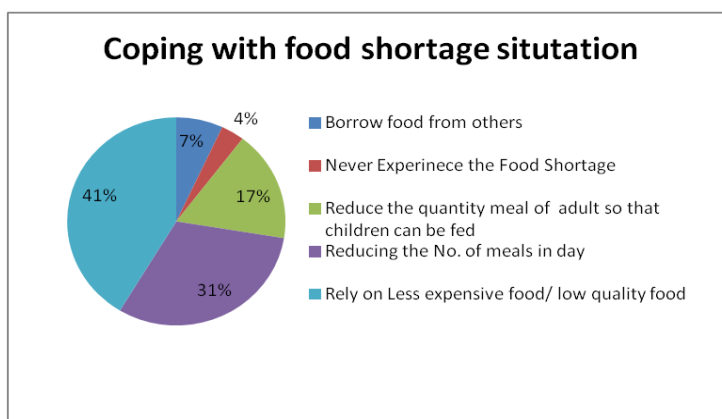
**Chart 15– Major sources of food**



**Table 12 –No of respondents having full meals in a month on average**



**Chart 16– Coping with food shortage**



*The case of Bigan Manjhi is typical of the majority of the Musahar families in Bihar. Bigan lives in a hut with his wife and seven children. About 15 days a month, on average he gets wage labour in agriculture and earns Rs.150-250/day. On other days he goes to the nearby town and finds construction work for about , earning Rs.300-400/day.*

*November and December are lean seasons and there is no work and many days they reduce food to one meal a day. To make ends meet, he has leased out a plot of land from the landlord and does agriculture. The term, however, is to pay back half the produce to the land lord even though he puts in all the inputs and labour. The local panchayat has not made efforts to extend MGNREGA to the tola. A few times when they worked in the MGNREGA, they were not paid the wages and hence people do not wish to take up the work. On an average the family earns about Rs.6000/-month.*

*The family has a BPL card, but the ration shop gives rations for only six months at intervals of two to three months. They do not get regular and full sanctioned quantity of wheat and rice. The ration from the PDS is not enough and they purchase food grains from the local grocery shop. The Food intake (regular diet) of the family includes wheat, rice, vegetables and pulses sometimes. Wheat and Rice is mostly managed by ration shop and production from the field but they have to buy spices, biscuits, Pulses and Cooking oil from local market costing around Rs 1500-2000 per month.*

*The children go to the local government school, but teaching is not regular and mid-day meal is also not regular – children are also not regular. Services of the ICDS, PHC are negligible. Owing to poor nutrition and lack of basic facilities, children often fall ill. The family takes loan from the landlords for any emergency at the interest rate of Rs.10/100/month.*

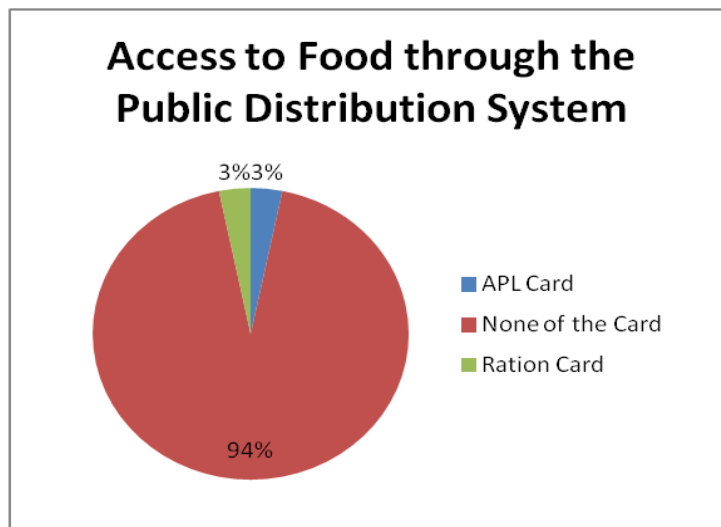
*Interestingly the food grains they get as wages in agriculture also finds its way back to the landlords when they repay their loans in kind through the food grains! Just as this, the Musahar families are in a state of inter-generational poverty, poor nutrition, poor education and health from which despite the government provisions, there does not seem a way out.*

## 5. LGBTQI Members

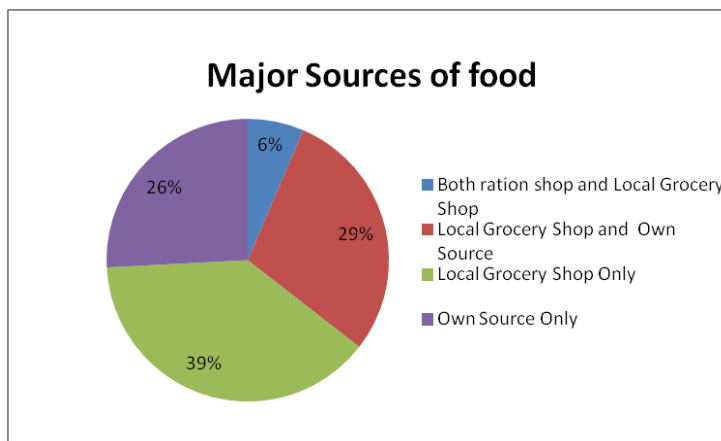
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender(LGBT)respondents found themselves at the receiving end of harsh gender identity-related discrimination at home and in society at large. In a predominantly hetero-sexual normative society that understands only male-female gender binaries and associated social conduct, the sexual and personal preferences of LGBT individuals and groups – in matters of love, same-sex relationships, personality and behaviour – are perceived at odds with what is socially acceptable. They often experience rejection, ill-treatment, violence and displacement at the home, in school as well as on the work front, which leads to a situation of poverty, joblessness, hunger and malnutrition.

**i)Access to ration cards under the PDS:** The degree of social exclusion and discrimination is reflected in their poor access to the ration cards. 94 percent of the respondents did not have access to any cards and the remaining had access to BPL and APL cards. One would also imagine they face discrimination and harassment to access the food grains even when they have the ration cards. They are dependent almost wholly on the market and in some cases may have their own additional sources for accessing food.

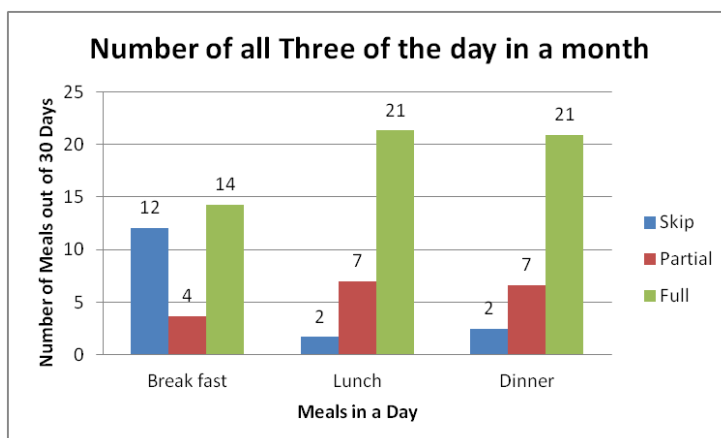
**Chart 17– Access to food through the Public Distribution System**



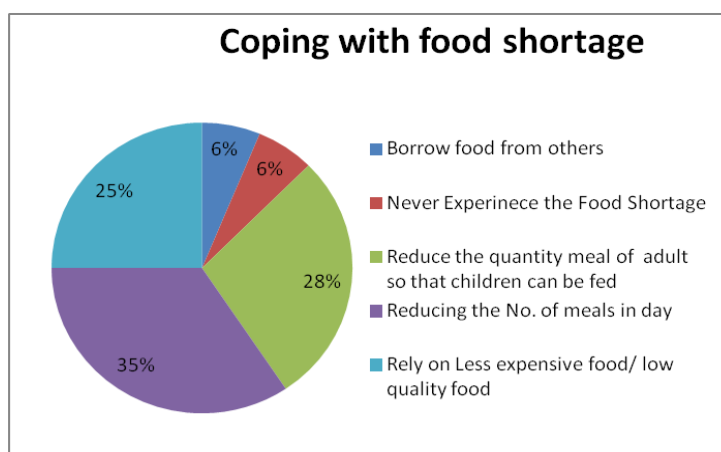
**Chart 18– Major sources of food**



**Table 13–No of respondents having full meals in a month on average**



***Chart 19– Coping with food shortage***



Like the other population groups in the study, the majority experience food shortage and cope with different measures. Skipping food is common in addition to other coping mechanisms. A small 6 percent of respondents reported that they have not experienced food shortage.

## 6. Tribals

Adivasi (tribals) in India constitute 8.6 % (about 104 million people) as per 2011 census spread across various states to larger and smaller population proportions. Adivasis are not a homogenous group -more than 200 tribal groups with over 100 languages, 75 of them (about 3 million people) are categorized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs- earlier primitive tribal groups). They are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in India - displaying any one of the three characteristics (Dhebar Commission, 1960-61) –i) pre-agricultural system of existence including hunting and gathering, ii) zero or negative population growth, iii) extremely low level of literacy. Hence the Adivasi population of India needs specialized, focused and contextual attention to ensure they get their rights and services.

The study covered 93 tribal respondents from Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Manipur. 30 respondents in Andhra Pradesh belonged to the PVTG community.

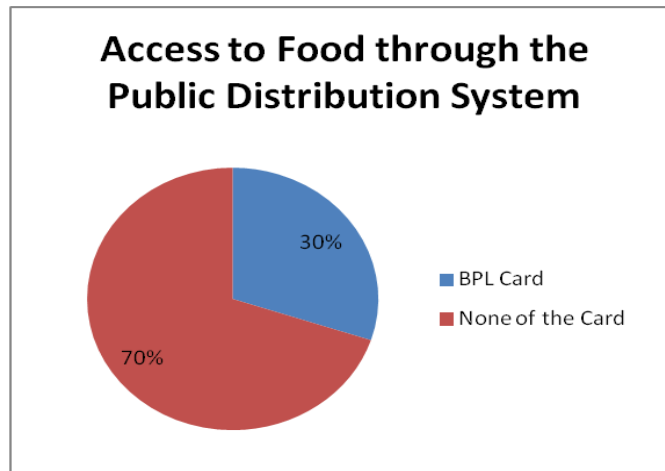
*Kondhutribe is one of the PVTG living in interior parts of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. They are dependent on rain-fed agriculture and the food supply through the PDS for their food needs. The 30 families studied have the BPL cards and reported getting 30 kgs of rice and dhal. Rice, ragi, dhal and vegetables constitute the main diet. Being primarily rice eating communities, the rice from the PDS does not meet the monthly needs and they depend on the local grocery shop. Each family spends about Rs.500-700/month for food items from the Rs.1000-2000/month income. One has to question what kind of food and nutrition do they get through this poor expenditure on food.*

*Lack of literacy and lack of transportation from the interior villages prevent their getting better education or other employment. Their access to other government services and provisions is negligible owing to poor implementation and lack of information; gaps in accessing. Even as they have access to forest produce and some land, harassment from forest officials and lack of government investment in improving their agricultural practices and necessary training and related infrastructures continues to keep them among India's most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections. Ill-health is a major problem.*

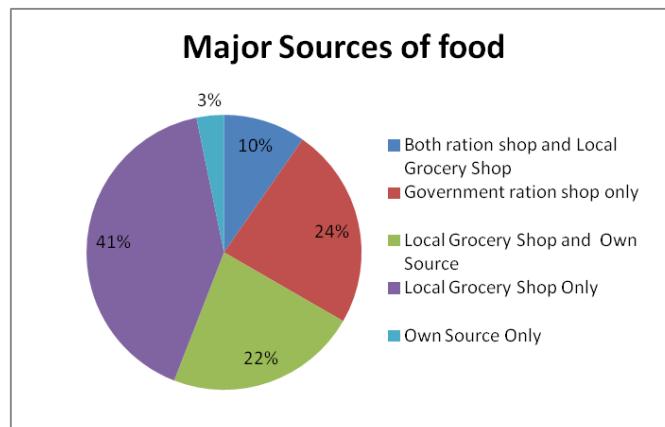
**i) Access to ration cards under the PDS and major sources of food:** Of the 93 tribals interviewed, 30 percent possessed a BPL card through which they could access government ration, of which 24 percent were reliant only on government ration shop for food and nutritional security. However, those receiving government rations were dissatisfied with the inadequate quantities provided. The remaining 70 percent of the total tribal respondents did not possess ration cards, the majority of the PTG members. 41 percent reported relying on grocery outlets to meet their needs, while 22 percent relied on a combination of their own source

and grocery outlets to survive. And though they indicated that their historical dependence on forests, forest products and local food growing practices was critical to their survival, their self-sustaining lifestyle clashed with the government’s increasing control over forestlands that tribal communities have traditionally occupied and cultivated. Moreover, consumption of locally grown and available foods was no guarantee of adequate nutrition among these communities, who were vulnerable to malnutrition disease and death.

**Chart 20– Access to food through the Public Distribution System**

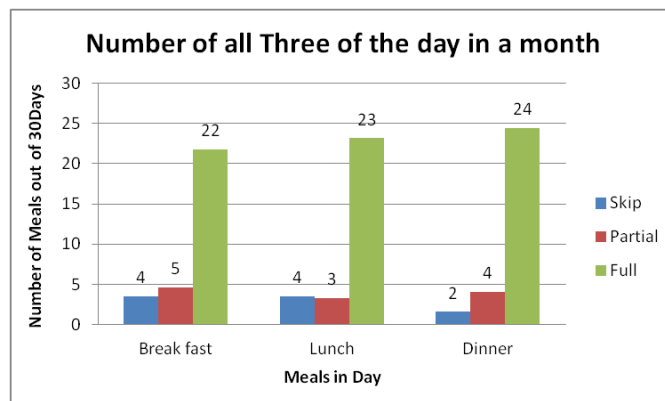


**Chart 21– Major sources of food**

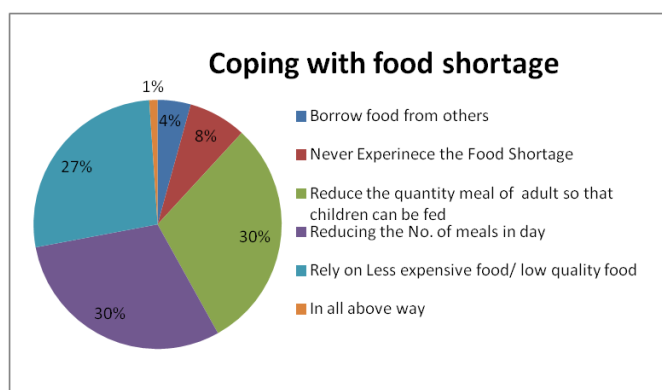


**ii) Food shortatge and coping mechanisms**

**Table 14–No of respondents having full meals in a month on average**



***Chart 22– Coping with food shortage***



While there are some schemes of the government that could supplement the food and nutrition needs of the Adivasi families – MDM, ICDS, MGNREGA, goatery shed, back yard poultry shed, shelter for cattle, Vermi compost tank, the poor implementation, lack of information and lack of access to concerned offices and duty bearers cause a huge challenge in accessing and benefiting.

*Kunwari, aged 51 years, from West Singhbhum in Jharkhand is the only earning member for a family of six members, including her husband who is ill and unable to work. Her family and the village have no access to basic amenities like healthcare, water, sanitation or education. Only one of her children goes to school that gets mid-day-meal there. The family has not accessed government scheme such as Indira Awasor Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, MGNREGA and various others.*

They also suffer from ill-health which adds burden to their family income. Drivers of health like water, sanitation is not provided nor is there access to PHCs. There is lack of awareness among the family due to lack of education, awareness and support on the how to access the government scheme and support.

*N Thambalis, Single woman with five children living in rural Manipur outside of Imphal town depends upon alcohol brewing, wage labour and occasional work under MGNREGA for sustaining her family. In 1972 she lost her family agricultural land when the Manipur government expanded the Imphal Municipal area and took over the agricultural land. They are yet to get any compensation for the same. Her children are dropouts and do not go regularly to school and hence do not avail the mid day meal provision too.*

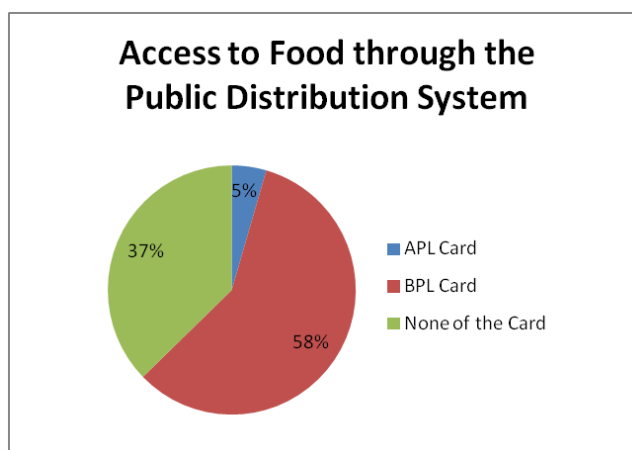
*The family has an income of Rs.5000/- month, all put together and spend about Rs.2000-3000/month on food. The Food intake (regular diet) of the family includes wheat, rice, vegetables, pulses and etc., which they buy food from local Ration shop, local grocery shop and street vendors.*

*Her 13-year-old daughter had severe stomach infection and the family resources have been highly stretched. But the lack of proper medical care in the village or vicinity remains acute and the girl's health care serious challenge.*

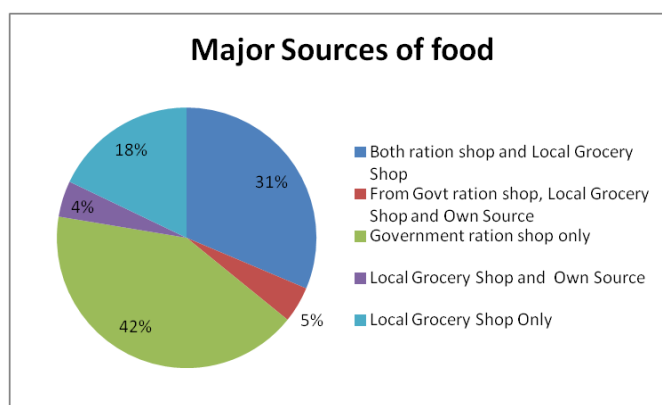
## 7. Muslims

**i) Access to ration cards under the PDS and major sources of food:** Of the 67 *Muslim* respondents, 58 percent possessed a Below Poverty Line (BPL) card and exhibited significant (42 percent) dependence on the government food provisioning system or PDS. 37 percent of them lacked a ration card and relied on local grocery shop and their own source for survival.

**Chart 23– Access to food through the Public Distribution System**

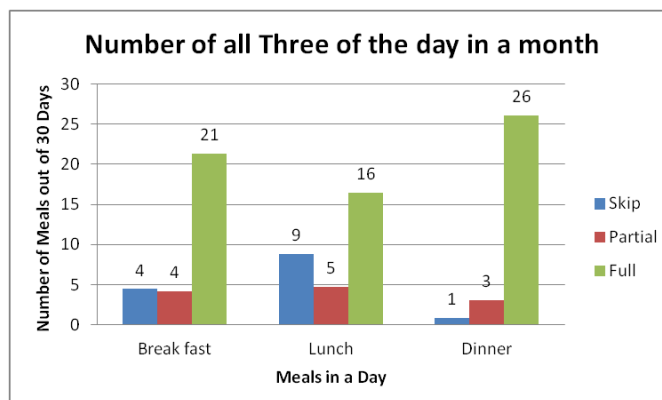


**Chart 24– Major sources of food**

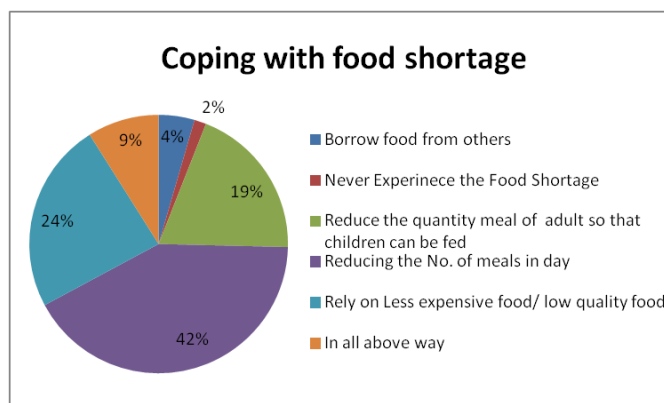


**ii) Food shortage and coping mechanisms:**

**Table 15–No of respondents having full meals in a month on average**



***Chart 25– Coping with food shortage***



## 8. Single Women

Single women are emerging as a vulnerable category across diverse population groups. Given the patriarchal system, single women experience various cultural, social and economic exclusion and discriminations. When with children or dependent elderly, they face tremendous barriers to ensure adequate food and nutrition to the family. The study covered 30 respondents from Himachal Pradesh who were part of a forum of single women in the state.

*Rahila Khan is from Himachal Pradesh. She lost her husband after a year of marriage when he succumbed to lung cancer, when she was barely 25 years old. Totally broken by the experience, she came over to her mother’s home to recuperate. Her in-laws did not accept her when she went back. She came to know about the ‘Ekal Nari Shakti Sanghatan’ and began to live in the shelter home managed by SUTRA, a local civil society organisation. She occupied herself by taking up paper bag making in the centre, earning about Rs.1200/month on average. She manages to survive as she lives in the centre. The Sanghatan is supporting her to fight a case for a living space from her in-laws.*

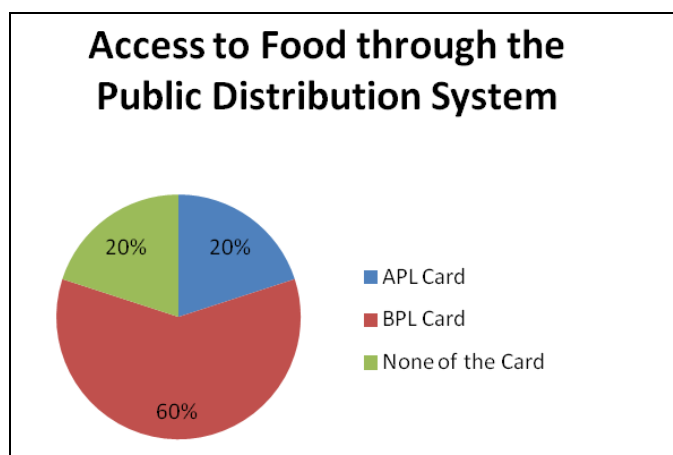
*Picking her life up, she has learnt to do typing and a part time work with SUTRA. Her own family is too poor and not informed about supporting her to fight for her rights or sustenance with her in-laws family. If she were to live on her own, her meager income of Rs.1200/- and her vulnerability to hunger and violence is huge. The sangathan provides some relief and support to her.*

*She spent considerable effort to get a ration card, which took her about two years. She said she was often turned aside as she was Muslim and single woman. Further the officers felt that she did not have responsibilities to be fulfilled and hence does not deserve a ration card.*

**i) Access to ration cards under the PDS system and major sources of food:** Single women is a recognized vulnerable category under the PDS and NFSA. However, 20 percent among them did not have ration cards while another 20 percent had APL cards. Only 60 percent of the respondents had BPL ration cards through which they could access food grains at subsidized rates. None of them had AAY cards that would have assured them 35 kgs of subsidized food grains monthly.

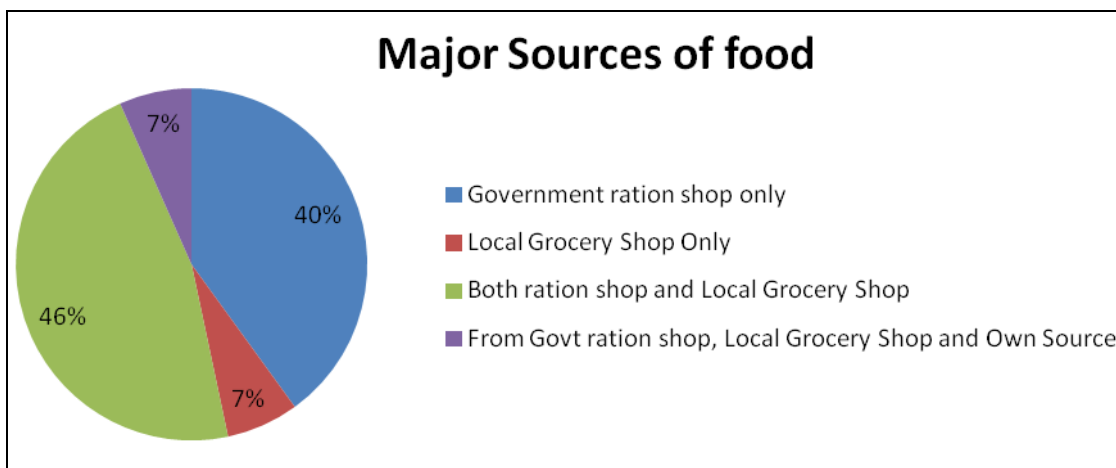


1. Table – Access to Food through the Public Distribution System



2. Table – Major Sources of food

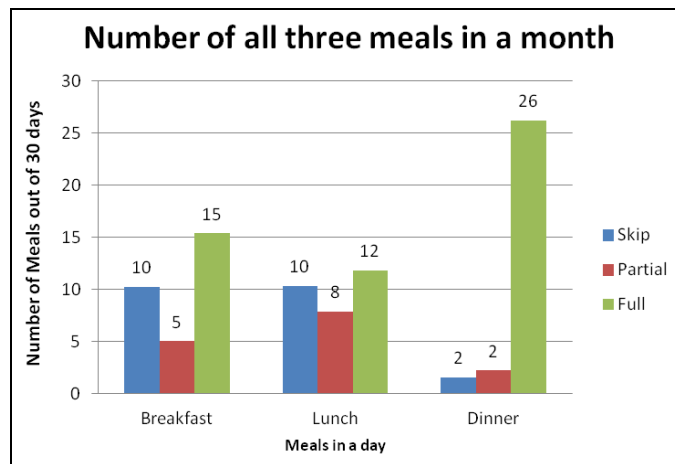
A large proportion (86 percent) depended upon the government ration shop for meeting their food needs while also accessing food from the local grocery shops. Among them 40 percent depended wholly on the government ration shops. Their ability to purchase at the local grocery was less compared to other respondent groups.



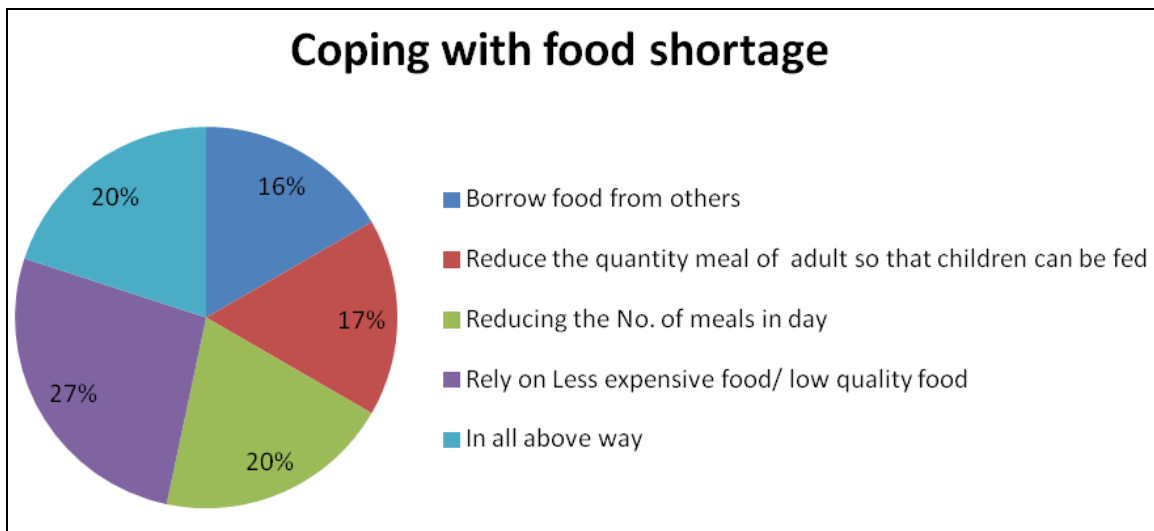
ii) Food shortage and coping mechanisms: The respondents reported skipping meals and various other mechanisms to cope with food shortage.

*Klesha Begum from Howrah is 32-years-old, her husband left her a year ago. She earns Rs. 100/day as a construction worker and lives in a rented house in the slum. She has two sons and two daughters. As she has a ration card, she accesses 25 kg rice, 15 kg atta. She spends about Rs.1000/- on vegetables and others. Her income does not meet even her basic needs and she often has to borrow from others to meet the food needs.*

3. *Table –No of respondents having full meals in a month on average*



4. *Table – Coping with food shortage*



## Section III

### Concluding reflections

The report findings suggest that mere awareness about, availability, accessibility, affordability of food is insufficient to arrest chronic hunger and poverty. A follow up consultation with the key informants in Delhi on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018 also highlighted various constraints in their accessing the PDS provisions. Corruption within the system was highlighted by respondents after respondents as a major problem. This included not including eligible members, including ineligible members, not providing the mandated quantity and quality of grains, restricting the distribution to only a few days, discriminatory behavior, negligent attitude towards the PDS rights holders –not informing any delay/asking them to come back repeated times – all of which needed to be addressed from the supply and system side. Members also discussed how their own sources of food was being destroyed with little attention on irrigation, unfavorable terms of conditions in leasing out land, gaps in government plans and programmes to support agriculture. The lack of employment, non-implementation of NREGA, non-compliance with minimum wages, migration, forced and bonded labour also pushed vulnerable communities into hunger and poor nutrition. Conflict situation in the North East added to the constraints with the constant blockades of traffic and state response in not providing PDS to ‘snuff out extremists’ thereby putting ordinary citizens and vulnerable populations into serious hunger situations. There were specific constraints of discrimination and exclusion of the women in sex work, single women and LGBTQI communities who faced the worst deprivation. Not having documents particularly for women in sex work, LGBTQI, single women and urban poor was a serious hurdle. Digitalization of cards was also a problem for many respondents who were unable to access their provisions. Hence addressing hunger and the fulfillment of SDG 2 requires informed efforts by the state and citizens to provision an enabling environment of non-discrimination and inclusion that actively overcomes the often interlinked social, economic, geographic, environmental, informational, educational, psychological barriers that together deny marginalized communities a chance to be food secure.

The following recommendations provide a decisive way forward:

***Explicit State commitment to ‘Leave No One Behind’ should become yardstick for country’s progress:*** Duty-bearers have to recognize that designing universalistic policies and legislations often exclude the most marginalized, which can be corrected if those left behind become the entry-point for development thinking. That only 50% of the most vulnerable access food provisions of the states show that it is a form of institutionalized exclusion-discrimination. India’s Constitutional obligation – to create a non-discriminatory, just social order and minimize inequities – as well as its commitment to fulfilling the SDGs necessitates that the state make an explicit commitment to ‘Leave No One Behind’ by recognizing, reaching out to and securing food and nutritional security as a priority for socially excluded groups. Such a commitment (not GDP), in letter and practice, should become the yardstick of measuring a country’s progress.

***Food provisioning alone is insufficient for eradicating hunger and malnutrition; focus on nutritional security rooted in a long-term view of food security is imperative and urgent:*** The dominant discourse on hunger and malnutrition narrowly interprets food security to mean ‘food provisioning’. The same is true for India’s right to food law or National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, which defines food security as the ‘right to receive food grains’. Though a significant step forward in the right to food discourse, the law falls short of taking a long-term view of food security, which acknowledges the interrelation of food with health and well-being, nutritious and quality food, inclusive education, clean drinking water and sanitation, decent work and sustainable agriculture. Moreover, since only wheat, rice and coarse grains are available as entitlements under the law, the law pays lip service to the idea of nutritional security since without a diverse food basket that provides a balanced diet, poor or ‘mal’ nutrition will persist stubbornly, as it does, to render our children stunted, wasted and vulnerable to diseases.

***Food sovereignty or community-led farming practices is a precondition to genuine food security:*** This would require a decisive shift in thinking towards active food production, such that a majority of excluded groups can rely on their own sources of food and where the decision and ownership of what to grow, where to grow, how to grow, how to distribute and how to share and consume lies with farming communities themselves. Implicit in this suggestion is the recognition that ensuring food security does not require complex schemes and policies, but rather simple, effective and context-sensitive, ecologically sound solutions that lie with individuals and communities engaged in self-sustaining agriculture. Such communities should be brought to the policy tables to learn from their experiences, and environmentally-friendly farming practices should be given a fillip both in urban India (through kitchen gardens; community cultivation practices; growing food on terraces at home, offices, schools, colleges) as well as rural areas.

***Prevent food wastage and promote responsible consumption among all; SDGs begin with the self:*** For the privileged classes, the mandate to popularise and implement the SDGs should begin with the self. Before we popularize them, we must deeply self-reflect on all 17 goals and ask: How am I living? Is my (and my family's) lifestyle sustainable (with regard to usage of water, energy, fuel, wastage at home and workplace, day-to-day eco-friendly conduct, food and consumption practices, non-discriminatory and inclusive mindset towards all).

Once we begin to practice before we preach, the next step would be to allow marginalized communities, not governments, to shape the SDG discourse to reflect their concerns, such that 'Leave No one Behind' is not a catchphrase *for* them, but *by* them.

***Initiate further action-research, especially study of best practices:*** Best practices across the country and globe that have effectively ensured food and nutritional security of marginalized communities should be purposively and meticulously documented. Detailed study and documentation of Amma Canteens, Langar system in Gurudwaras, soup kitchen by other religious institutions, community grain banks, start-ups to arrest food wastage and other state as well as non-state initiatives would prove educative for governments and citizens alike.

***Enhance agency of the affected communities to access rights:*** The study recognizes the need to enhance the agency of the affected communities actively. To analyse the gaps and identify equity and inclusion measures, engage with local community led organizations and build greater advocacy on the right to food and leave no one behind.

The study lays emphasis on the need to go beyond broad social groups and identify specific population groups in particular locations and address their hunger and nutrition needs. Given the extensive framework of local governance under the Panchayats and Urban local bodies, this is doable. This report is done with the hope that more research on the contextual and particular nature of hunger and nutrition across vulnerable population groups will be taken up and strategies and resources built to address them.

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## **Annexure –AAY**

The Antyodaya Anna Yojana(AAY) was put in place in 2002 identifying the severely vulnerable families from among the BPL families. Initially provision was made of 25 kgs/month/family and has been increased to 35kgs/month/family currently. From an initial outlay for one crore families, currently the coverage is expanded to 2.5 crore families.

Some of the criteria used by the government to identify families for the AAY category are:

- i) BPL households headed by widows or terminally ill persons, or disabled persons or persons aged 60 yrs and above with no assured means of subsistence or societal support.
- ii) Landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans/craftsmen (potters, tanners, weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters) in rural areas and porters, coolies, rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, handcart pullers, fruit and flower sellers, snake charmers, cobblers in urban areas and destitute in both rural and urban areas.
- iii) Households headed by widows or terminally ill persons/disabled persons/ persons aged 60 years or more with no assured means of subsistence or societal support. Single men or single women without any assured support
- iv) All primitive tribal households.



## Partner Organisations:



LEADS is working in more than 1500 villages and slums of Ranchi on Education, Child Rights, Women Empowerment, Financial Inclusion, livelihood (Skill building is a major task under livelihood support), Health, Governance, Agricultural promotion, NTFP promotion for livelihood sustainability, Convergence with Govt Schemes, etc. LEADS has network of more than 200 organisations in Jharkhand for Education, Livelihood, Governance, Budget Analysis etc.



Human Rights Alert (HRA) documents human rights situation in the North East region of India. HRA organises the victimised communities, empower them with the tools and technics of human rights and open up access to redress mechanisms for them at the local, national and international level



SUTRA has been working in Himachal Pradesh on alcoholism, domestic and social violence, land encroachment, child marriages, health, girls' education and declining sex ratios. Women's collectives were formed and various training programs were conducted to empower these groups.



Nari-O-SishuKalyan Kendra (NOSKK) is a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) working in West Bengal to empower women from socially excluded communities, especially Muslims, to understand their rights and access their entitlements in regards to health, education and employment.



Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) is a non-profit development organisation committed to enabling vulnerable groups to access their rights. YUVA encourages the formation of people's collectives that engage in the discourse on development, thereby ensuring self-determined and sustained collective action in communities. This work is complemented with advocacy and policy recommendations.



PEOPLES ACTION FOR RURAL AWAKENING is located in Rajahmundry Andhra Pradesh .The significance of PARA exists in the very name itself; PARA in Telugu is colloquial term for a spade (or shovel) which is most commonly used by the rural peasants depending on Agriculture. Our work is mainly aimed for the causes of Dalits, Coolies (Agricultural Labourers) and the marginalised poor, who constitute a major chunk of the population of the area since 1986.



The Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion (CSEI) is concerned with deepening democracy and developing our body politic by enhancing the enjoyment by excluded communities of their social, economic and cultural (SEC) rights. Three decades of rights-

based development work by CSEI members in terms of community mobilizing, networking, research and campaigning forms the impetus behind the establishment of CSEI in 2009.



## **WNTA**

The action agenda of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan is built around promoting governance accountability to the promises of the government to end poverty and social exclusion. The Constitutional Mandates, Electoral Promises and the government's commitment to global development frameworks (MDG/SDG) constitute our overarching framework. They provide a handle for campaigning efforts on specific and ongoing policy agenda at the national and global levels. Within the above, WNTA has focused on the development rights of the socially excluded and marginalized groups in the country.



## **CSA**

Civil Society Academy is a capacity building organization with particular focus on hunger and poverty. It provides space for civil society organization to enhance their capacities in organization development, leadership building, organization management and networking. CSA also undertakes/supports research studies on best practices and related publications. CSA recognizes the role of civil society organisations in promoting national development goals and objectives. On the SDG front, CSA's focus is on Goals 1 (End poverty) and 2 (Zero hunger).

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