

## **Food Security: Time to Act!**

*Hunger Amidst Plenty: Will you tolerate it?*

Do you know that one Indian child dies every minute of nutrition-related causes?

Meanwhile, 60 million tonnes of grain are lying idle in FCI godowns. If all these sacks of grain were piled on top of one another, the pile would reach up to the moon!

### *National Food Security Act: Beyond Cheap Promises*

The UPA-2 government has promised a National Food Security Act that will ensure “food security for all”. However, the draft prepared by an Empowered Group of Ministers is a non-starter—what it promises (25 kgs of grain per month at Rs 3/kg for BPL households) is not very different from what is there already. What is required is a comprehensive food security act, including:

- A universal Public Distribution System (PDS), with every family entitled to 35 kgs of grain at Rs 3/kg, along with pulses and edible oil.
- Community kitchens and feeding centres for people who remain vulnerable to hunger.
- Social assistance pensions for vulnerable groups, such as single women, the elderly, and disabled persons.
- Universal entitlement to all ICDS services (nutrition, health and pre-school education) for all children under six years.
- Hot, cooked, nutritious midday meals for all children in primary and upper-primary schools.
- Maternity entitlements for pregnant and lactating women.

### **Did You Know?**

1. One Indian child dies of hunger-related causes every minute.
2. More than 60 million tonnes of grain are lying idle in FCI godowns – more than one quintal per family below the poverty line.
3. About 28% of this grain is lying in the open, and without adequate cover, much of it is rotting.
4. “Tax revenue foregone” on account of tax exemptions was more than Rs 500,000 crores in the last financial year (2009-10).
5. The Central Government spends about twice as much on defence (2.2% of GDP) as on health and food security (1.2%)?

6. The proportion of underweight children is higher in India (close to 50%) than in any other country in the world except Nepal.
7. For children aged 4-6 years, average intake is only 16% of Recommended Daily Allowance for Vitamin A, 35% for iron and 45% for calcium.
8. The latest National Family Health Survey found that more than 60% of children below 2 years had not consumed any milk the night before.
9. Half of the poorest rural households do not have a BPL card.
10. In Bihar, 95% of rural BPL households do not get any grain from the Public Distribution System (PDS). Tamil Nadu, by contrast, has a well-functioning “universal” PDS, with everyone getting not only grain but also 10 other commodities.

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