

Performance of Public Distribution System in Mizoram

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Abstract- Around 5.27 lakhs Fair Price Shops are functional across the country as on 27th March 2018 and about 1,247 Fair Price Shops are operating in the state of Mizoram. In Mizoram, a small state in North Eastern Region, there is a system where public were informed through public address system in localities to draw their entitlement of rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene oil with the ration card from fair price shops within specified time. Households having Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards are issued 8 kgs or rice per beneficiaries at the rate of 5kgs @ Rs. 3 per kg and 3 kgs @ Rs.15 per kg. Over 80% of the respondents in Mizoram were satisfied with the services rendered by their fair price shop. Nearly 68% of the respondents in Mizoram felt that Public Distribution System (PDS) is successful in providing safety net to the poor. Over 70% of the respondents in Mizoram did not want to replace PDS to cash transfer. However, it is also observed that the system of supervision and vigilance is not found effective in Mizoram. In addition, there is no rational method of identification of the beneficiaries which resulted in the issue of ration cards to many families leading to the inclusion error in the state. The government must put required efforts to make the system of supervision and vigilance effective and efficient in order to prevent the leakages.

Keywords: *Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Below Poverty Line, Beneficiaries Fair Price Shops, Public Distribution System, Ration Card.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The origin of Public Distribution System (PDS) can be traced back to the period of Second World War in India as evident from the works of Jacob (1999); Choudhari (2003); Rao (2007); Parmod Kumar (2010) and Chivate (2014). This war had created scarcity of essential goods and as a result, there was rapid rise in the price of all commodities in general and agriculture produces, in particular. In order to combat this rapid rise in prices of commodities, a Food and Price Control Department was established in December 1942 under the British Rule. In the year, 1943, the Bengal famine¹ broke out which wiped out more than three million people mainly due to erratic distribution of food supplies. However, policies kept changing with the decontrol announced in December 1947 (after attaining Independence on August 15, 1947), reintroduction of controls in September 1948, shift to decontrol during 1952-1954 and recourse to controls in 1957.

The Govt. of India (GoI) established the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in 1965 as the agency responsible for implementing procurement public distribution operations. Pathania (2005) observed that since the year 1967-68, the Fair Price Shops (FPS) scheme was popularly known "Public Distribution System" in government policy documents.

In India, Public Distribution System is operated under the joint responsibility of Central and State/UT governments. The responsibility of procurement, allocation and transportation of foodgrains to the designated depots of FCI lies with the Central government while the State/UT governments are responsible for identification of beneficiaries, allocation and distribution of foodgrains within the state, issuance of ration cards, supervision and monitoring of functioning of Fair Price Shops etc. There are around 5.27 lakhs Fair Price Shops functional across the country as on 27th March 2018.

In Mizoram, a small state in North Eastern Region, there is a system where public were informed through public address system in localities to draw their entitlement of rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene oil with the ration card from fair price shops within specified time. Households having Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards are issued 8 kgs per beneficiaries at the rate of 5kgs @ Rs. 3 per kg and 3 kgs @ Rs.15 per kg. 5 kgs is the central scheme and 3 kgs is the state scheme. Households having Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cards are issued 35 kgs of rice at the rate of Rs.3 per kg and Above Poverty Line (APL) or Non-NFSA (National Food Security Act) card holders are entitled to draw 8kgs per beneficiaries at the rate of Rs.15 per kg. And there are around 1,247 Fair Price Shops in the state.

Mizoram has experienced certain irregularities in management of public distribution system such as leakages in PDS and issue of bogus ration cards. The State

government had been procuring rice for BPL category of people at the rate of Rs.5.65 which is given to the FPS at Rs.6 and the consumers get it at Rs.6.15, prior to the implementation of NFSA which came into effect from 1st March 2016. Similarly, for APL category of people the government had been procuring rice at the rate of Rs 8.30 which is given to the FPS at Rs 9.30 and the consumers get it at the rate of Rs 9.50 and for AAY category of people the consumers get it at Rs.3 prior to the implementation of NFSA.

The Directorate of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS & CA) is to look after PDS in the state of Mizoram on the principle of 'No profit No loss' so that the maximum benefit can be given to the general public by recovering from them only cost price of the food stuff and incidental charges incurred for the purpose. The concerned department formed State Level Vigilance Committee under the chairmanship of Joint Director (Admn.) with officers and officials who regularly visit and check the Public Distribution Centres (PDCs) and other centres. In addition, the Village Level Committees have been constituted at all supply centres to supervise and monitor the functioning of the centres as well as fair price shops.

Under the supervision of the Director, FCS&CA department, the Enforcement squad is constituted to enforce the Essential Commodities Act and to tackle the diversion of PDS items. Supply check gates are also being in operation at the main route of PDS items at two places so as to minimise diversion. However, according to the Economic Survey 2014-15, the cost of leakages due to excess allocation of rice was Rs.15 crore in Mizoram³.

The main responsibility of FCS & CA department is, therefore, implementation of PDS now known as TPDS in Mizoram. The scheme is being implemented through the District Civil Supplies Officers (DCSOs) in each of eight districts and sub-divisional food and civil supplies officers (SDF& CSOs) in the sub-divisions. At present (2017), there were nine district officers and one sub-divisional office in the state.

The Government of Mizoram (GoM) declared various places and villages as stocking centers of foodstuffs purchased from FCI. Government godowns are divided into (a) Principal Distribution Centres (presently there are 9 PDCs), (b) Sub- Distribution Centres (presently there are 18 SDCs) and (c) Fed Centres (presently there are 93 Fed Centres).

II. MIZORAM

Mizoram, one of the districts of Assam till 1973, is a mountainous region which became the 23rd State of the Indian Union in February 1987 (Fig.1.2). It is one of the states of North East India (NEI) with Aizawl as its capital. The name is derived from Mi (People), Zo (Belonging to the people of Mizoram/Lushai Hills) and Ram (Land). Thus, Mizoram implies "land of the hill people". It shares borders with Tripura, Assam and Manipur (see Fig. 1.1). It also has a total of 722 km boundary with Myanmar and Bangladesh. According to Statistical Handbook 2014, Mizoram has a total population of 10,97,206 in which males consist of 5, 55,339 and females consist of 5, 41,867. It is the second least populous state in the country.

Mizoram covers an area of approximately 21,081 square kilometers and about 91% of the state is forested. It has eight districts and three autonomous districts. Mizoram has great natural beauty with endless variety of landscape where almost all kinds of tropical trees and plants thrive in Mizoram. It has a pleasant climate and is generally cool in summer and not very cold in winter. During summer, the temperature varies between 20°C to 29°C and in winter, it varies between 11°C to 21°C.

The entire area is under the direct influence of monsoon and the average rainfall is 254 cm per annum. The state is in a region where cyclones and landslides can cause weather-related emergencies. According to India Meteorological Department, Mizoram lies in seismic zone V as with other northeastern states of India which means the state has the highest risk of earthquakes relative to other parts of India.

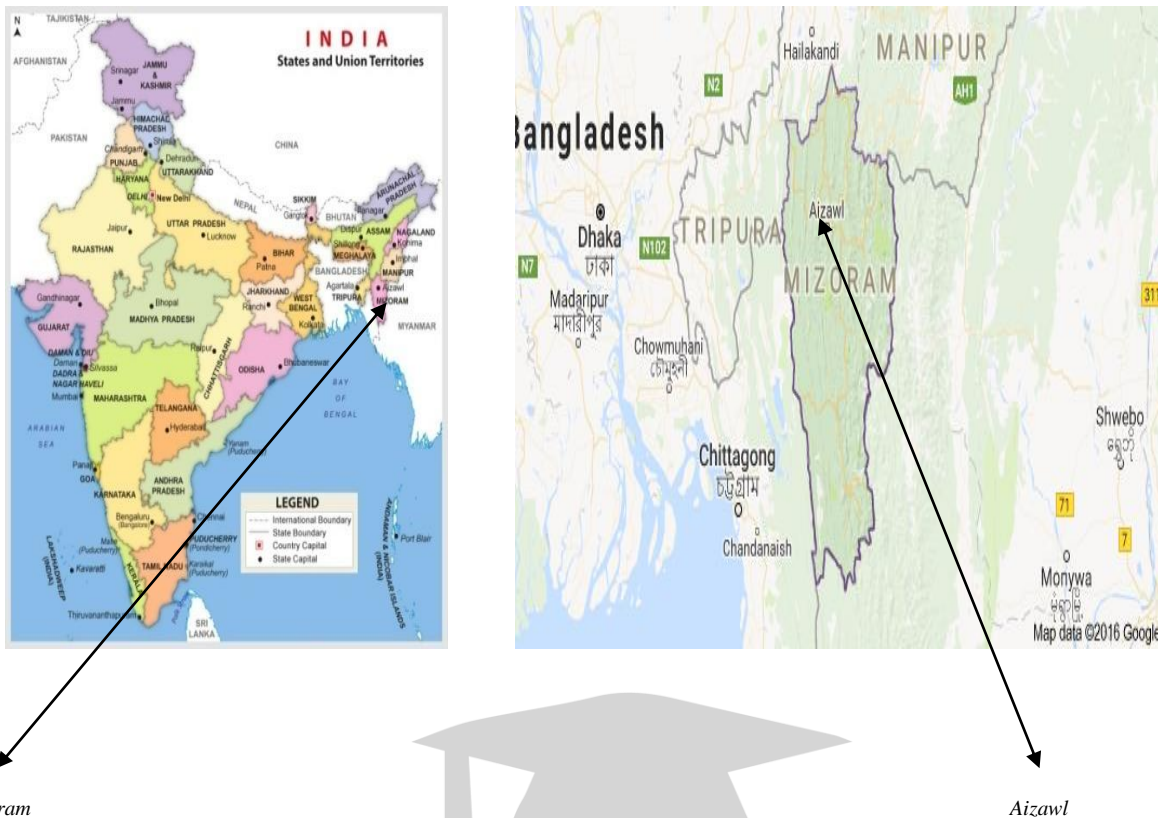


Fig 1: Maps of India & Mizoram

Mizo is the official language and the most widely used language for verbal interactions while English is important for education, administration and governance. The Duhlian dialect, also known as the Lusei was the first language of Mizoram and has come to be known as the Mizo language. The language is mixed with other dialects like Hmar, Mara, Lai, Thadou, Paite and Gange etc.

Mizoram lags behind in terms of economic development in comparison to the rest of the country. Small scale and cottage industries play an important role in its current economy. According to Statistical Handbook 2014, the per capita income at current prices during 2009-2010 was Rs.53,624 and Gross State Domestic Product at current prices during 2011-2012 was Rs.6,88,975 lakhs. According to the Economic Survey, the per capita income of Mizoram witnessed 11.2% at Rs. 95,317 in 2015-2016 from Rs.85,695 in 2014-2015. During the year 2015-16, the state GDP at current prices Rs.10,315.17 crores and it was estimated to increase to Rs.13,277.78. Lack of transport infrastructure is one of the major drawbacks. Other problems faced by the state include shortage of electricity, capital, telecommunications and the export market access.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A few important studies in respect of functioning of PDS in different states of India have been reviewed here under –

Das (1987) studied organization and management of PDS in a district of Andhra Pradesh. The study found that timely and smooth supplies of the product were far from satisfactory. The quotas were neither supplied in time and

they were not planned properly. The sudden arrival and uncertainties about the quantity introduce an element of hastiness resulting in long queues and tensions in the distribution.

Bhandari (2002) studied PDS in Rajasthan state. He said that in spite of many weaknesses and problems infesting in the public distribution system, a big majority (80% of the respondents) both from the rural and urban areas preferred that the public distribution system should continue with extended and improved facilities.

Majumder (2004) in his study on PDS in Allahabad district of U.P found that in almost all villages, rice and wheat were not made available to the households owning ration cards. Even when these items arrived to the Fair Price Shops a single day in each month was fixed for distribution that the income poor (BPL) were deprived.

Ananda (2008) in his thesis entitled, “State response to food security: A study of the Public Distribution System in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh” observed that the main weakness found out in the PDS was its inability to reach the poor effectively. There were other problems, like faulty weights used by the shop owners to give less quantity.

Alamu R. (2011) found that PDS is working quite successfully in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has a universal PDS where all households are entitled to food rations, including upto 20 kg of rice per month.

Masiero & Prakash (2015) observed that leakages remain a major issue in the Karnataka PDS, which was estimated at 46.4% of the off take in 2011-12. However, computerization of PDS was started in 2005 as a direct response to leakage.

Dreze et al. (2015) mentioned that Bihar’s PDS has been one of the worst in India for a long time.

The government of Bihar had initiated a system of tracking coupons that made it harder, in principle, for dealers to sell PDS grain in the open market.

Lalropuii (2017) studied Management of PDS in Chhattisgarh and Mizoram. The study made an attempt to compare the performances of PDS in both the state by evaluating the perceptions of PDS customers. She also studied the administrative practices of PDS in both the states.

Lalropuii and Kumar (2018) highlighted the customer perceptions towards the managerial practices of PDS in Chhattisgarh and Mizoram. They found that both the state governments need to relook into the criteria set for identifying entitled beneficiaries of PDS. The government of Mizoram especially needs to strengthen its PDS system so that only targeted beneficiaries would get the intended benefits.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to highlight the performance of Public Distribution System in Mizoram from the perspectives of the customers.

V. HYPOTHESES

This study also makes an attempt to test the following hypotheses.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between type of the respondents and their responses to the statement that PDS is successful in providing safety net to the poor.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between genders of the respondents and their satisfaction on the performance of Fair Price Shops in the state.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A total number of 150 households were surveyed using purposive sampling method by administering a structured schedule meant for the beneficiaries of PDS in select states. For the purpose of conducting the survey, the respondents were chosen from the capital city of Aizawl (Mizoram). Out of 150 selected households, 120 were selected from BPL category and the remaining 30 from APL category. In addition, among the beneficiaries belonging to BPL category, the poorest of the poor, come under the scheme of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).

The proportion of BPL and AAY was in the ratio of 77 and 23 (as this is the ratio of total existing number of BPL and AAY card holders) in the country. Hence, the numbers of the respondents are BPL: 92, AAY: 28 and APL: 30, totaling to 150. The study is undertaken before implementation of National Food Security Act (NFSA) in the state.

The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation Co-efficient.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

GENDER

The details of gender of the respondents (head of the family) in Chhattisgarh and Mizoram are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of the respondents

State	No. of respondents			Total
	Parameters	Male	Female	
Mizoram	No. of families	99	51	150
	Percentage	66	34	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that out of 150 households, 66% of the respondents were male heads of the family.

TYPE OF RATION CARDS

Table 2 shows the type of ration cards possessed by the respondents in Mizoram

Table 2: Type of ration cards possessed by the respondents

State	No. of respondents				Total
	Parameters	AAY	BPL	Others (APL)	
Mizoram	No. of families	28	92	30	150
	Percentage	18.7	61.3	20	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that over 60% of the respondents have BPL cards and 20% of the respondents have APL cards while about 19% of the respondents have AAY cards.

NO.OF DAYS FAIR PRICE SHOPS ARE OPENED

It is attempted to find out the number of days the fair price shops were opened in a month as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: How many days does your shop remain open in a month?

State	No. of respondents						Total
	Parameters	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	Any other response	
Mizoram	No. of families	15	74	-	47	14	150
	Percentage	10	49.3	-	31.3	9.3	100

Source: Field Survey

Nearly 50% of the respondents stated that the ration shops were opened only three days a month according to the convenience of the dealers. 31.3% of the respondents in Mizoram stated that the ration shops were opened 5 days throughout the month. Mizoram being a small state in terms of population, considering the existence of a good number of ration shops, in field study, it is observed that the customers were quite satisfied with the number of working days as they were not facing serious difficulty in getting their ration.

SATISFACTION OF PERFORMANCE OF FAIR PRICE SHOP BY HOUSEHOLD OF THE RESPONDENT

The respondents were asked whether they are satisfied with the overall performance of fair price shops as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Are you satisfied with the performance of fair price shop?

State	No. of respondents			Total	
	Parameters	Yes	No		Can't say
Mizoram	No. of families	133	10	7	150
	Percentage	88.7	6.7	4.7	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that nearly 89% of the respondents in Mizoram were happy with the performance of fair price shop and only about 7% of the respondents in Mizoram were not happy with the performance of ration shops.

HAVE THE RESPONDENTS FILED ANY COMPLAIN BEFORE REGARDING THE SERVICE OF THE FPS?

It is attempted to find out whether the respondents have filed any complaint regarding the services of the FPS as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Have you filed any complaint before regarding the service of the FPS?

State	No. of respondents				Total	
	Parameters	Yes	No	Can't say		No answer
Mizoram	No. of families	4	129	15	2	150
	Percentage	2.7	86	10	1.3	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that 86% of the respondents in Mizoram have never filed any complaint relating to the services of FPS. This finding corroborates with the overall satisfaction of the respondents in both the states (88.7% of the respondents in Mizoram) as shown in Table 4.

LOCATION OF FAIR PRICE SHOP

It is attempted to know the response of the respondents to the statement “Location of fair price shops is convenient” by using Likert’s five point rating scale as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Location of fair price shop is convenient

State	No. of respondents					Total
	Parameters	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	

Mizoram	No. of families	-	5	13	127	5	150
	Percentage	-	3.3	8.7	84.7	3.3	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that 88% of the respondents in Mizoram agreed with the statement, “Location of their fair price shop is convenient.”

WORKING HOURS OF FPS

The responses to the statement “Working hours of the FPS is convenient” by the respondents of the two select states are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Working hours of FPS is convenient

State	Parameters	No. of respondents					Total
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Mizoram	No. of families	-	3	13	133	1	150
	Percentage	-	2	8.7	88.7	0.7	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that in respect of the working hours of FPS, over 88% of the respondents in Mizoram stated the working hours of the fair price shops were quite convenient for them.

WORKING DAYS OF FPS

It is further attempted to know if the working days of FPS are convenient for the respondents of both the select states as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Working days of FPS is convenient

State	Parameters	No. of respondents					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Mizoram	No. of families	-	2	11	137	-	150
	Percentage	-	1.3	7.3	91.3	0	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that in case of working days of FPS, in Mizoram, over 91% of the respondents were satisfied with the working days of FPS while about 8% of the respondents expressed no definite opinion.

ADEQUATE PRIOR INFORMATION PROVIDED

It is attempted to know the response to the statement “Adequate prior information is provided to the beneficiaries” as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Adequate prior information is provided

State	Parameters	No. of respondents					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Mizoram	No. of families	-	1	18	121	10	150
	Percentage	-	0.7	12	80.7	6.7	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that around 90% of the respondents were happy about the adequate prior information provided by FPS regarding the supply of items under PDS from the ration shop.

SERVICE OF FPS

Table 10 shows the satisfaction level of the respondents on the services rendered by the fair price shops in Chhattisgarh and Mizoram.

Table 10: Services rendered by FPS is good

State	Parameters	No. of respondents					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	

Mizoram	No. of families	-	2	26	119	3	150
	Percentage	0	1.3	17.3	79.3	2	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that over 80% of the respondents in Mizoram were satisfied with the services rendered by their fair price shop. 17.3 % of the respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the services of the fair price shop.

PDS AS SAFTEY NET TO THE POOR

Table 11: PDS is successful in providing safety net to poor people

State	Parameters	No. of respondents					Total
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Mizoram	No. of families	-	1	48	90	11	150
	Percentage	0	0.7	32	60	7.3	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that nearly 68% of the respondents in Mizoram felt that PDS is successful in providing safety net to the poor.

CASH TRANSFER AS A BETTER OPTION

It is further attempted to know the opinion of the respondents on whether cash transfer is a better option than PDS on a five point rating scale as shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Cash transfer is a better option than PDS

State	Parameters	No. of respondents					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Mizoram	No. of families	2	2	36	105	5	150
	Percentage	1.3	1.3	24	70	3.3	100

Source: Field Survey

The table shows that over 70% of the respondents in Mizoram did not want to replace PDS to cash transfer.

HYPOTHESIS I

H_{01} : There is no significant correlation between type of the respondents and their responses to the statement that PDS is successful in providing safety net to the poor

Table 13: Pearson Correlation test on H_{01}

		Type of Ration Card of the Respondents	Successfulness of PDS in providing safety net to poor people
Type of Ration Card of the Respondents	Pearson Correlation	1	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.924
	N	150	150
Successfulness of PDS in providing safety net to poor people	Pearson Correlation	-.008	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.924	
	N	150	150

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.13 shows that the value of p is > 0.05 (i.e .924) implying the results that there is no significant relationship between the type of ration cards of the household and their perceptions on successfulness of PDS in providing safety net to the poor.

HYPOTHESIS II

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between genders of the respondents and their satisfaction on the performance of Fair Price Shops in the state.

Table 14: Pearson Correlation test on H_{02}

		Gender of the Respondents	Satisfaction of Performance of fair price shop
Gender of the Respondents	Pearson Correlation	1	-.123
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.135
	N	150	150

Satisfaction of Performance of fair price shop	Pearson Correlation	-.123	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.135	
	N	150	150

Source: Field Survey

Table 14 shows that the value of p is > 0.05 (i.e .135) implying the results that there is no significant relationship between gender of the respondents and their satisfaction on the performance of Fair Price Shops.

VIII. MAJOR FINDINGS

- Out of 150 households, 66% of the respondents were male heads of the family
- Over 60% of the respondents have BPL cards and 20% of the respondents have APL cards while about 19% of the respondents have AAY cards.
- Nearly 50% of the respondents stated that the ration shops were opened only three days a month according to the convenience of the dealers.
- Nearly 89% of the respondents in Mizoram and only about 7% of the respondents in Mizoram were not happy with the performance of ration shops.
- 86% of the respondents in Mizoram have never filed any complaint relating to the services of FPS.
- 88% of the respondents in Mizoram agreed with the statement, “Location of their fair price shop is convenient.”
- Over 88% of the respondents in Mizoram stated the working hours of the fair price shops were quite convenient for them.
- Over 91% of the respondents were satisfied with the working days of FPS while about 8% of the respondents expressed no definite opinion.
- 90% of the respondents were happy about the adequate prior information provided by FPS regarding the supply of items under PDS from the ration shop.
- Over 80% of the respondents in Mizoram were satisfied with the services rendered by their fair price shop. 17.3 % of the respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the services of the fair price shop.
- Nearly 68% of the respondents in Mizoram felt that PDS is successful in providing safety net to the poor.
- Over 70% of the respondents in Mizoram did not want to replace PDS to cash transfer.
- There is no significant relationship between the type of ration cards of the household and their perceptions on successfulness of PDS in providing safety net to the poor.
- There is no significant relationship between gender of the respondents and their satisfaction on the performance of Fair Price Shops.

IX. CONCLUSION

The studies (e.g. Parmod Kumar, 2010) indicate that the performance of PDS in terms of providing food to the poor was quite satisfactory in Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. However, the PDS performed below average in providing food to the poor in Assam and its performance was completely unsatisfactory in case of Bihar. In

Mizoram, nearly 89% of the respondents were satisfied with the performance of the fair price shops. 86% of the respondents never filed a complaint. Regarding the location of FPS, 88% of the respondents felt convenient in reaching the shop. Over 70% of the respondents did not want to replace the existing system of distribution of commodities with cash transfer system thus indicating the continued dependency of the vulnerable sections of the society on the supply of essential commodities under PDS.

However, it is observed that the system of supervision and vigilance is not found effective in Mizoram. In addition, there is no rational method of identification of the beneficiaries which resulted in the issue of ration cards to many families leading to the inclusion error in the state. It is also observed during the study that the PDS in Mizoram has been widely criticized on the ground of issue of many bogus cards. Therefore, the state government of Mizoram must make concerted efforts to strengthen its PDS so that only the targeted households would get the intended benefits. Also, the government must put required efforts to make the system of supervision and vigilance effective and efficient in order to prevent the leakages. Lastly, since the overall findings exhibit the satisfactory performance of PDS in the state, the government must be encouraged to strengthen the concern department for the best implementation of PDS in the country.

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