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Hello,

This month's newsletter continues with the commentary on the Right to food in the context of the draft National Food Security Bill, with the second part of the article. Problematic aspects of 'food security' provided by it in relation to: security for whom?; how it will be provided i.e. the distribution system?; and what kind of security does it ensure? – is discussed.

A brief summary of the how the British General Elections panned is also provided.

A detailed report of the Lokniti Summer School on Quantitative Methods in Political Science held in collaboration with Jain University, Bengaluru in the month of May is given.

We look forward to incorporating feedback as well as your sustained support. Suggestions and comments about the newsletter may be sent to vanita.lokniti@gmail.com.

Thank you

Vanita L. Falcao

❖ The Right to Food and the National Food Security Bill (Part II)

Few issues in civil societies invoke a response as strong and unequivocal as the issue of hunger and starvation. Taking into consideration startling facts such as - 27% of the world's undernourished people live in India (World Food Programme (WFP)); 43%¹ of children under-five years (2003–2008) are moderately to severely underweight (World Health Organisation), amongst others, one would have expected the proposed National Food Security Bill (NFSB), 2010 to be a comprehensive one. It was hoped that the bill would approach the issue of food security in a holistic manner in order to address the state of 'nutritional emergency' in the country.

However, as discussed in last month's newsletter, the NFSB fell far short of these expectations. The bill merely provides for a Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) through which a fixed number of families below the poverty line would be entitled to 25 kg rice and/or wheat at Rs.3 per kg².

The proposed bill is problematic in two ways. One, it ignores the comprehensive approach advocated by the Right to Food (RTF) campaign. Such an approach is required to address the bleak situation of nutrition prevailing in the country³. Secondly, even what it does provide under the garb of 'food security' is deficient.

Rather than focusing on what the proposed bill fails to address, this article will indicate the problematic aspects of 'food security' provided by it in relation to:

- security for whom?
- how it will be provided i.e. the distribution system?
- what kind of security does it ensure?

The Right to Food – only for some?

The proposed bill entitles the specified rations only to those who fall below the poverty line. This provision negates the idea that the RTF is a basic right of all, since it is a logical extension of the fundamental right to life, Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

The bill also places a cap on the number of identified Below Poverty Line (BPL) families on the basis of poverty estimates notified by the Planning Commission of India and census data of the Registrar General of India. If a particular state government is to extend support of this kind to certain additional families in the state, it would have to do so with its own budgetary resources. This provision will serve as a deterrent to states to provide for all deserving families.

¹ WHO statistics accessed at http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_statistics.html on 8th June 2010

² The price stated is as per media reports.

³ More literature on this aspect can be accessed at the website of the Right to Food Campaign: <http://www.righttofoodindia.org>

Drawing the line - Benefits for who?

The technical issue that arises while implementing a TPDS is that of defining who is entitled to the right and who is not.

Who is poor? How does one account for changes in income and resultant effects on consumption? How should the possibility of a household sinking below the poverty line within a year or two of the evaluation be addressed? In India where incomes for a large proportion of the population are low and varying, these are very valid questions.

Currently in India the line used to distinguish the poor from the 'non-poor' is based on the income criteria. Defining the poverty line in India was first attempted in 1962 by a working group set up by the Planning Commission. This group, after taking into account the recommendations of the Nutrition Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Medical Research (1958) regarding a balanced diet⁴, concluded that calorie norms of 2400 calories in rural areas and 2100 calories in urban areas as per capita daily requirement was sufficient. Thus, it defined the poor as those who cannot meet the average energy requirements, and hence are energy deficient relative to the average norms⁵. This was then expressed as monthly per capita consumption expenditure (which has since been revised), using a state specific price index.

The drawbacks of the existent poverty lines, both urban and rural (though the urban one is considered more accurate), are many. The criticisms centre around some key points, namely - they fail to preserve the original calorie norms; they provide inadequately for health and education, cost of living adjustments (both over time and across space); and that the ratios of official urban to rural poverty lines are unrealistically large in recent years⁶ i.e. rural poverty in comparison to urban poverty is highly underestimated..

Calorie needs vary widely across age, sex, weight, height, activity patterns, climate etc, and all India calorie norms are not the best way to define minimum nutritional needs.

The Question of How - Targeted v/s Universal Public Distribution System

The demand for a universal PDS is rooted in a very real concern - the costs of targeting or targeting errors.

“In any targeted welfare programme there are two types of errors that occur due to imperfect measurement. Errors of wrong exclusion refer to the exclusion of poor or deserving households from a programme, while errors of wrong inclusion refer to the inclusion of non – eligible persons or households in a programme.

⁴ B. K and Mohanty, S.K. “Misuses of Below Poverty Line Cards and its Consequence on Chronic Poverty: A Case Study of Balesore District of Rural Orissa” accessed at <http://iussp2009.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=90302> on the 8th June 2010.

⁵ Srinivas T.N. “Poverty Lines in India: Reflections After the Patna Conference” <http://siepr.stanford.edu/publicationsprofile/953>

⁶ Himanshu. “Towards New Poverty Lines in India” accessed at <http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/himanshu.pdf> on 5th June 2010.

Universal programmes are likely to have low errors of exclusion but high errors of inclusion. ...Errors of wrong inclusion result in fiscal or financial costs. ...Errors of wrong exclusion, however, lead to welfare costs – that is, costs to individuals and society due to the inadequacy of food, malnutrition, ill health, etc.”⁷

It is in this context that advocates of the RTF made an explicit demand to the government for a universal PDS. An examination of the PDS upto 1997 (until when it was a universal programme) indicates that in places where the coverage of the PDS was more widespread in practice, it was associated with higher inclusion of the poor and lower utilisation by the rich.⁸

Food(grain) Security

Moving to the question of ‘what’, we see that the proposed bill provides just foodgrain security and not nutritional security.

The provision of 25kgs of rice or wheat, is not in accordance with the honourable Supreme Court’s interim orders (provide 35 kgs of grain per month at highly subsidised prices), or the basic demands of the RTF campaign.

The provisions do not sufficiently help to address the widespread issue of starvation and malnutrition. Prevention of hunger and malnutrition-related disease can only be appropriately addressed if the PDS provides for basic but holistic nutritional needs - pulses and cooking oil along with cereal.

The abovementioned gaps in the draft bill led to public outrage amongst the advocates of the RTF. Protests - public meetings, *dharnas*, and press conferences were held calling for the immediate revision of the bill. The main demands made were the creation of multiple entitlements and an enabling environment for promoting food production by prioritising people’s control over productive resources including land, forests and water. The Government of India has taken due cognisance of the deficiencies in the proposed bill. In the first meeting of the newly reconstituted National Advisory Council held on the 10th of June 2010, priority was given to the re-drafting of the bill⁹. It is yet to be seen whether the demands of the campaign particularly the right to food for all, is upheld or not.

⁷ M, Swaminathan. “The Dangers of Narrow Targeting: An Assesment of the Targeted Public Distribution System”. in S.M. Dev, K. Kannan and N Ramachandran (ed) ‘Towards a Food Secure India’, Institute for Human Development, Delhi, 2003. (Pg 388)

This paper also provides a comprehensive discussion on the costs of narrow targeting, which are not discussed in this article.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Hebbar, N. ‘NAC holds first meeting: Food Security Bill top priority’ Financial Express, 11th June 2010. accessed at <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/NAC-holds-first-meeting--Food-Security-Bill-top-priority/632234/> on 11th June 2010.

❖ **United Kingdom General Elections** – Divya Vaid

The General Elections in the United Kingdom held on May 6th witnessed a couple of firsts - the first hung parliament and the first coalition government in nearly four decades. The major players during this election were the two usual contenders: the Labour Party which had been in power for 13 years being led by Gordon Brown; and the Conservative Party being led by David Cameron. However, this election also saw the rise of the Liberal Democrats led by Nick Clegg.

April saw another first for a British election when a series of three televised prime-time Prime Ministerial debates were broadcast live for the first time before the election. The themes for the three debates were domestic, foreign and economic affairs respectively.

Opinion polls following the debates (especially after the first one) revealed a surprisingly large swing in favour of Nick Clegg, followed by David Cameron. Gordon Brown suffered a blow in the opinion polls following his purportedly private out-burst against a pensioner caught on a microphone. After a series of apologies, his ratings in the opinion polls did improve, but he was unable to recover completely.

The close race between the Conservatives and the Labour party, as well as the meteoric rise of Nick Clegg following the televised debates, saw the voter turnout rise to 65.1 percent (four percentage points more than 2005). The final tally of seats won and vote share is given below:-

Results of UK General Election 2010 (with changes from 2005)				
Party	Seats Won 2010	Change from 2005	Vote % 2010	Change from 2005
Conservative Party	307/650*	97	36.1	3.8
Labour Party	258/650*	-91	29	-6.2
Liberal Democratic Party	57/650*	-5	23	1

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/election2010/results/> (accessed on 2nd June 2010)
 * Total number of seats in parliament.

The Conservative party, despite registering a massive gain in seats as compared to the previous elections, was unable to garner a clear majority. Despite the highly positive response in the opinion polls the Liberal Democrats performed worse than their showing in 2005; though they did marginally improve their vote share.

Following the hung parliament at the end of the elections, a series of negotiations took place between the Liberal Democrats and both the Labour and the Conservative parties. Less than a week after the elections, Gordon Brown submitted his resignation as Prime Minister after the negotiations between his party and the Liberal Democrats failed. A coalition formed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats was sworn in soon after, with David Cameron as the Prime Minister and Nick Clegg as the Deputy Prime Minister.

All eyes are now on the coalition partners to see how they make this unusual (for the British case) situation work.

❖ **Summer School on Quantitative Methods in Political Science Research held at Jain University**



Lokniti, The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in collaboration with Jain University, Bengaluru organised a Summer School on Quantitative Methods in Political Science Research from the 14th to 24th of May 2010. This was the fourth in a series of such workshops, the first three being hosted at Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla in 2007, '08 and '09 respectively.

This year's workshop was partially funded by the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR). Besides the ICSSR, complete institutional and infrastructural support was provided by Jain University, Bangalore.

The twenty participants for the Summer School were selected in March after a rigorous process of scrutiny. They comprised of young research students and lecturers drawn from universities, colleges and research institutions from across the country. Three Lokniti state coordinators were also among the selected participants in the ten day residential

programme. The participants were from across 15 states of India including three states of the North East. The curriculum involved hands-on training in the use of quantitative methods in Political Science Research, particularly analysis using SPSS.

The core faculty for the programme comprised of scholars actively involved in survey research and quantitative analysis. The faculty was led by Pradeep Chhibber (University of California, Berkeley) and Irfan Nooruddin (Ohio State University, Columbus). Both Pradeep and Irfan are involved in political survey research and widely use quantitative techniques. They have been the core faculty for these workshops since 2007.

Other resource persons included:

- Sandeep Shastri, Pro Vice Chancellor, Jain University & National Coordinator, Lokniti Network
- Suhas Palshikar, Dept. of Political Science, Pune University and Co-Director, Lokniti
- Divya Vaid, Associate Fellow, Lokniti
- Sanjay Kumar Fellow, CSDS and Deputy Director, Lokniti
- Rahul Verma, Research Officer, Lokniti
- Reetika Sayal, PhD candidate, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore

During the course the participants were taught introductory statistics along with SPSS. The participants were then required to apply their newly acquired skills and explore a research question based on the data made available from the National Election Study (NES) of 2004. The NES is a cross-section national sample survey that studies the political behaviour, opinion and attitudes of the Indian electorate. The 2004 round had a sample size of 27,189.

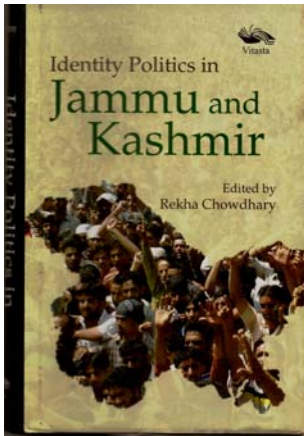
Participants largely examined question relating to factors influencing political and democratic attitudes; electoral (and more generally political) participation and voting behaviour; and opinions on the economy.

Dr G.S. Saun, Director Research Project and Research Fellowship, ICSSR was also present on the 22nd and 23rd of May in the capacity of an observer.

At the end of the workshop, participants presented their preliminary findings. Dr Chenraj Jain, Chancellor Jain University delivered the valedictory address at the workshop.

All participants are now expected to submit a short research paper within a month in order to successfully complete the course, after which certificates will be awarded.

❖ **'Identity Politics in Jammu and Kashmir' by Rekha Chowdhary**



The book highlights the internal dimensions of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. It deals with the multiple identities, multi-layered and overlapping politics of the state. While focusing on identity politics of Kashmir, which remains at the root of conflict, it goes beyond its homogenised exterior and points to various internal tensions. More importantly, it goes beyond Kashmiri identity politics and focuses on various other manifestations of identities including religious, regional and sub-regional identity politics within the state. It seeks to draw attention to the socio-cultural diversity and political divergence within Jammu and Kashmir. It talks about multiple contexts of deprivation and neglect including those defined by the categories of gender, caste and tribe.

The book is divided into five sections: Identities and Politics in Jammu and Kashmir; Religion, Identities and Inter-community Relations; Exodus and Identity Politics of Kashmiri Pandits; Identity Politics of Women and Dalits and; The Other Kashmir.

The contributors to the book include: Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal, Badri Raina, Balraj Puri, Ershad Mehmood, Krishna Misri, Lalit Gupta, Mohammad Ishaq Khan, Muhammad Ashraf Wani, Neera Chandhoke, Pramathesh Raina, PS Verma, Ravinderjit Kaur, Rekha Chowdhary, Riyaz Punjabi, Shyam Kaul, Sonam Chosjar, Vibhuti Ubbot and Yoginder Sikand.

Chowdhary, R 2010: 'Identity Politics in Jammu and Kashmir', Vitasta, Delhi.

❖ **Academic Engagements of Members of the Lokniti Network:**

Sanjay Lodha, Rajasthan

- Is a visiting fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex from 4th May to 3rd July, as a part of DRC Project on Informal Local Governance Institutions in Rural South Asia.

Sanjay Kumar, Delhi

- Lectures delivered:

- Delivered a series of six lectures on Research Methods at the Dept of Political Science, Guwahati University from the 13th -15th of May.
- Delivered a series of four lectures on Sampling, Questionnaire Design and Methods of Data collection at the Council for Social Development from the 27th-28th of May.

Dr. G. Gopa Kumar, Kerela

- Kumar, G. 'Globalization and the Plight of the Marginalised Classes in Kerala: The Case of Chengara Land Struggle' University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 2010.

Prof. Ashutosh Kumar, Punjab

- Presented a paper titled "Ideals of Developmental Governance: Imaginations and Manifestos of the Political Parties in India" at a workshop on 'Development, Democracy and Governance-Lessons and Policy Implications' held on 14th & 15th May at Kolkata. It was an initiative of the Calcutta Research Group and was funded by the Ford Foundation.
- Presented a paper on 'Assertion of Regions in India' at the Special Assistance Programme seminar on 'Emerging Centres and Peripheries in South Asia' organised by the Dept of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh on the 25th & 26th of May, 2010.
- Participated in the Board of Studies Meeting to recommend a semester based curriculum for the post-graduate course in Political Science at Kanpur University on 28th May, 2010.

Yogendra Yadav, Delhi**- Lectures delivered:**

- "Democracy and Poverty in India" at the Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark on 17th March 2010.
- "Democracy and Poverty in India" at SASSNET, University of Lund, Lund, Sweden on 18th March 2010
- "Death of Modern Indian Political Thought and its Implications for Indian Politics Today" in a seminar on India's Intellectual Traditions at Wissenschaftskolleg, Berlin, Germany on 9th April 2010
- "Political Representation in Contemporary India" at the Institute of International Studies, University of Berkeley, USA on 25th April 2010
- "What is Living and What is Dead in Ram Manohar Lohia" at the South Asia Institute, Columbia University, USA on 27th April 2010

Presentation made:

- Presented a paper "Does Ideology Matter in Indian Politics?" at a conference on Political and Cultural Expressions of Indian Democracy held from 30th April – 2nd May at South Asia Council, University of Yale, New Haven, USA
- Presented a paper "Political Representation in Contemporary India" at a conference on Sixty Years of Indian Democracy held from the 6th-9th May at Watson Institute, Brown University, USA

Rajeshwari Deshpande, Maharashtra

- Deshpande, R. 'Jagatikikarn, Lokshahi ani Garibanche Rajkaran' (Globalisation, Democracy and Politics of the Poor), in Uttam Kamble (ed), 'Jagtikikaranchi Arishte', Lokvangmaya Griha, Mumbai, 2010.
- Deshpande, R. 'Jat Asmita: Pokal Dave, Akramak Rajkaran' (Caste Identities: Hollow Claims, Aggressive Politics), Anubhav monthly, special issue to commemorate fifty years of the state of Maharashtra), pp 52-58.

Intern at Lokniti

Manjusha Madhu is on a two month internship with Lokniti, CSDS. She is currently pursuing an MA in Cultural Studies at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. She also holds a degree in print journalism from the Asian College of Journalism and has worked with the Indian Express, Delhi. Politics, media studies, films and literature are some of many areas that interest Manjusha.

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