

Chapter 32

Food & Civil Supplies Department, Uttar Pradesh ^{*§}

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I) OVERVIEW

India's Public Distribution System (PDS) with a network of 4.78 lakh Fair Price Shops (FPS) is perhaps the largest retail system of its type in the world. Since 1951, public distribution of food grains has been retained as deliberate social policy by India with the objectives of:

- Providing food grains and other essential items to vulnerable sections of the society at reasonable (subsidized) prices,
- To put an indirect check on the open market prices of various items, and
- To attempt socialization in the matter of distribution of essential commodities.

The Food & Civil Supplies Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh is fully committed to serve the poor through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). The TPDS has evolved as a major instrument of the U.P. Government's poverty eradication programme and is intended to serve *as a safety net of the poor*, particularly the destitute and the downtrodden, and who are nutritionally at risk. The TPDS reaches out to the poorest of the poor in the farthest and far-flung corners of the State, touching the lives of almost each individual in the nearly 20 crore populace of the state.

The **TPDS in Uttar Pradesh** with a network of about **73,000 Fair Price Shops** (FPS) is perhaps the largest distribution network of its type in the entire country. It is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central & State Governments.

The department is also entrusted with the daunting task of catering to the nearly 3 crore farmers of the state, by procuring their produce of foodgrains, wheat and paddy, at the minimum support price, and thereafter, storage and maintenance of stocks.

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Civil supplies of essential commodities and controlling the spiraling prices are also the mandate of the department. The last year has been particularly tumultuous with food inflation hovering in double digits and agitating the minds of all.

The department thus serves the entire society, ensuring fair remuneration to the farmers at one end of the spectrum and low prices for the consumers at the other.

TPDS, as it stood earlier, had been widely criticized for its failure to serve the population below the poverty line due to leakages, corruption and mismanagement. Several opportunities to manipulate the system exist with widespread collusion across the supply chain. The Planning Commission had the following to say on the PDS system in its 2005 report:

“For every Rs 4 spent on the PDS, only Rs 1 reaches the poor”, and “57% of the PDS food grain does not reach the intended people”.

II) RESULT INDICATORS

1. Key Performance

a. Services (G2C, G2B, G2G and G2E) delivered using ICT ; impact in terms of time and cost of delivery of services:

Services: The IT-enabled services being provided by the Food & Civil Supplies department of UP will impact all three categories – **G2C** (BPL, Antyodya, APL card holders, farmers), **G2B** (Transport Contractors, Rice Millers, FPS Owners etc.) & **G2G** (Administrators, District Authorities, Govt. Officials). The initiatives taken to date have brought in a paradigm change in the functioning of the department. ICT is being used to provide the following services:

G2C

- Citizens and ration card holders are provided correct and timely information free-of-cost through **sms alerts** on lifting of foodgrains, sugar, kerosene oil and other essential commodities supplied through the TPDS.
- They also get to know if their FPS dealer has been suspended, and which FPS dealer will distribute their rations.
- Digitization will weed out bogus and shadow cards, enabling the deserving beneficiaries get their due.
- Social audit can be done by anyone, to check on eligibility of card holders.

- The initiatives launched seek to **empower people** residing even in the far-flung areas of the state.
- To **strengthen TPDS** and ensure better delivery to the public.
- Usher in **transparency**.
- Create a **database of all ration cards** in the state that is accessible by the citizens.
- Fixing dates for distribution of rations at FPS according to a fixed **roster**.

G2B

- The FPS dealers are at the mercy of the officials, who suspend and revoke their contract at will. Any such action is now mandated to be brought online, so that the FPS dealers will not be subject to whimsical actions.
- Then, the database of ration cards will help them provide better services.

G2G

- The database of ration cards will be used for linking with the ambitious UID project.
- Other departments, such as Rural Development, can use the exhaustive database in their own schemes.
- Make departmental **working and monitoring** more effective and efficient.
- Enhanced **record-keeping** within the department.
- Make officers and staff in the department, hitherto hesitant to computers, adopt IT and bring in **attitudinal changes**.
- Ration cards can be issued, modified, cancelled or verified through database, thus curbing fake cards as also tendency of officials to play mischief in issuing new cards.
- **Web-based Online Information System** for real time monitoring and timely decision-making.

b. Implementation coverage till date and during the year (geographical areas covered under pilot, roll-out, future plans)

The data digitization of ration cards has been undertaken in the entire state of Uttar Pradesh. Priority was accorded to digitizing 1.06 crores Antyodaya (AAY) and Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration card holders first. APL (Above Poverty Line) ration cards are also being digitized. Database of all FPS dealers has also been brought online.

BPL	6388335	746515 (11.7%)	755405 (11.8%)	1033000 (16.2%)	2893107	828249	112470	19589
AAY	3897962	467706 (12%)	438626 (11.2%)	593629 (15.2%)	1780889	544057	63825	9230
APL	1677265	88122	194089	305448	854689	209086	22846	2985
Total	11963562	1302343 (10.9%)	1388120 (11.6%)	1932077 (16.1%)	5528685	1581392	199141	31804

Creating such a huge database has not come without the woes of **duplication**.

Duplicate Records in a Geographical Unit					
Name of Family Head & Father/ Husband is same	Panchayat (Rural)	Local (Urban)	Body	FPS	Entire District
5789	250996	51599		247232	1763533

- Of the above duplicate data of 17.63 lakhs in the entire district, about 6 to 7 lakhs data will be correct. Efforts are on to de-duplicate this data.
- Enquiry forms, hitherto missing, had to be filled up de novo to obtain data.
- **Linking** this database **with UID** will provide a **ready database of over 519 lakhs individuals**.
- The project on **sms alerts** on lifting was initially launched in **2 districts, Jalaun and Bahraich, on a pilot basis**. It is now **being extended** across the state. Training of key personnel has already been done, and the base data of mobile numbers is under preparation.
- Transmission of sms has made the working of the department more **accountable and transparent**.
- Jalaun has 782 FPS, against which the no. of mobile phones registered is 10,501.

Commodities wise details of sms sent in District Jalaun							
Month (2010)	Detail of SMS			Dispatch (Grains in Qt., K. oil in lit.)			
	Generated	Sent	Failed	Wheat	Rice	Sugar	Kerosene
April	14661	14602	59	34962.24	19929.31	2987.92	1032288.00
May	16636	16632	4	39768.44	21221.96	3333.17	1019159.00
June	18982	18979	3	29700.14	19488.46	3049.32	1171341.00
July	19774	19748	26	33773.84	16406.80	2967.51	1239329.80

Similarly, in district Bahraich there are a total of 1,152 FPS and total no. of mobile phones registered is 14,874. In last 4 months, total sms generated were 86,657 of which 85,368 were sent and 1,289 failed.

- Beneficiaries and card holders are actually giving **feedback** about the sms received and the veracity.
- Information brings **empowerment** of the poorest.
- The **roster** has been implemented **across the state**.
- Ration card holders are aware of the **fixed distribution dates**, and queue up accordingly. Inspections even in remote corners have confirmed compliance of the roster, minimizing diversions.

2. Government Efficiency Improvement Initiatives

a. Time and cost efficiency improvements in the working & delivery of services
Digitization has simplified the procedure of issuance, modification and surrender of ration cards. Ration cards are renewed every 5 years. This exercise was last done in 2005, and took over a year to get through, and even then there were innumerable complaints. This time, renewal will simply be done through the database, saving effort, time and most importantly, minimize wrong-doings. Then, these cards cannot be tampered with using a whitener etc like was resorted to earlier.

Uploading orders and instructions online has simplified the procedure of communicating these orders in the field. It has resulted in saving of time, effort and costs.

Enquiry forms, hitherto missing, had to be filled up de novo to obtain data. This has led to creation of an actual database at the field level, which can be used as required. The database for any village can be easily checked online.

b. Specific innovative ideas implemented in eGov area; and their impact on services

The following **projects** were undertaken as a part of the initiative:

- **Digitization of all ration cards and making entire data accessible to public.**
- **Provide free sms alerts to ration card holders on lifting of rations.**
- **Roster: Fixed dates for lifting and distribution of rations to card holders.**
- The above innovative ideas have had a tremendous impact on services.
- Uttar Pradesh is the **first state** in the entire country to have actually created such a huge database of all ration cards. Already **119.63 lakhs ration cards** and over **95% of AAY and BPL** ration cards have been uploaded. This is a **population base of 519 lakhs**, which is more than the total population of a number of states.
- Uttar Pradesh is the most populous State in the country, having **72 Districts, 305 Tehsils, 814 Blocks and over 1 lakh Villages.** Uttar

Pradesh covers one-sixth population of the country. Given the size and magnitude of the state, this is a gigantic task that has been accomplished to date.

- This work has been achieved at an abysmally **low cost** of only about **Re 1 per card** on an average.
- The **sms** system is again the **first-of-its-kind dynamic** system in the entire country. Uttar Pradesh has 73,000+ FPS dealers in the state, and since foodgrains are lifted separately from kerosene oil, almost 15 lakh sms will be required every month. The total cost per annum will not exceed Rs 20 lakhs per annum in any case, a mere pittance against the benefits accruing and stoppage of diversion.
- The projects are **easily replicable** across the country.
- **21.6 lakhs ration cards** have been **cancelled**.
- There is a perceptible and welcome **change in attitude** in the department towards IT and computers.
- **Public perception** towards TPDS and the department has improved. Even the media and high-level committees appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court have voiced their satisfaction at these innovations.
- Beneficiaries and card holders are actually giving **feedback** about the sms received and the veracity.
- Information brings **empowerment** of the poorest.
- Ration card holders are aware of the **fixed distribution dates**, and queue up accordingly. Inspections even in remote corners have confirmed compliance of the roster, minimizing diversions.
- Transmission of sms has made the working of the department more **accountable and transparent**.
- The exercise has helped develop a **sense of ownership** and pride in the field officers and staff.

c. Services integrated with other departments

The software for the services has been prepared by NIC, and is linked to the departmental website <http://fcs.up.nic.in>. As such, it can easily be linked to other departments and their websites, which are also hosted on the NIC server.

The fields used to prepare the database are in sync with the Unique Identification (UID), and thus will be used accordingly.

Other departments like Education, Rural Development provide for special benefits to BPL card holders under various schemes. Although the applicants provide a copy of their ration card, these are often found fictitious on verification. This verification takes a long time, even weeks. If the applicant is from another district, the verification report may not be forthcoming at all.

The digitized data can now be accessed by concerned authorities to verify at the click of a button. Thus genuine beneficiaries do not have to wait endlessly.

III) ENABLER INDICATORS

1. *Department Policy & Strategy*

a. *eGov/ICT vision roadmap for department and its current status*

- Alongwith the computerization of the very core of the department – the ration card - **all offices** in the entire state are being computerized. Nearly 400 computers have been sanctioned for all offices across the state. **Broadband** connections have been approved for all offices.
- The departmental website <http://fcs.up.nic.in> is updated regularly. All orders and instructions are uploaded, to be easily downloaded in the field. This saves precious time and costs in faxing urgent instructions.
- Under mission mode, all operations right down to the godown level will also be computerized in future.
- The initiatives taken demarcate the future roadmap for the department. A **synergetic tie-up** with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is the next logical step. The UIDAI will provide duplicate detection infrastructure to the PDS program. It can also assist in the development of special tools to assist in the assessment of eligibility of applicants.
- The UID program has the specific objective of creating a unique database of residents in India and will put together the best technologies and processes for this purpose.
- UID can share the burden of PDS reform by assisting in the positive identification of unique individuals and families. This can lead to a high-quality beneficiary database without duplicate and ghost cards, improving the targeting of benefits. The efficiency improvements in the PDS system will make it one of the best-run pro-poor schemes in the country. Together, it is a **win-win** for citizens and the Government.

b. *To what extent the common infrastructure (national, state, other department; delivery channels) is being shared*

- As is clear from the future roadmap charted out by the department, the eGov / ICT initiative is being evolved in a fashion that common infrastructure can be shared at various levels.
- Linkage with the UID at the national level is of paramount importance. Then, the NIC infrastructure at the state level is being used. The servers required have been housed with the U.P. NIC unit for this purpose. Other departments like the Rural Development, Revenue and the

district administration are also involved in verification and digitization.

- The existing delivery channels under TPDS are being used to implement the processes, without any additional manpower.

c. Technology standardization policy and its implementation

The backend software used has been standardized by NIC. Common fields with UID have been adopted to enable integration. All IT-enabled services are being integrated on the departmental website.

2. Process Reengineering & Legal Reforms

a. Major front end process changes planned and current status

- The initiatives have brought forth several path-breaking process changes that will transform the way citizens view the much-maligned TPDS and the Food & Civil Supplies department.
- Digitization has **simplified the procedure of issuance, modification and surrender of ration cards**. Ration cards are renewed every 5 years. This exercise was last done in 2005, and took over a year to get through, and even then there were innumerable complaints. This time, renewal will simply be done through the database, **saving effort, time** and most importantly, **minimize wrong-doings**. Then, these cards cannot be tampered with using a whitener etc like was resorted to earlier.
- Then these ration cards can issued under digital signature to prevent tampering.
- Scanned photographs of all family members can be easily inserted.
- Paper ration cards may be replaced with smart cards in future. This opens up exciting vistas of transparency and real-time monitoring.
- Data digitization has clearly shown that nearly **38%** of all ration cards have only **1 to 3 units** registered on them. Clearly, **families split** to obtain more ration cards, as allocations by the GoI are household or card based, and not unit-linked. This clearly shows that there is a need to change the pattern of allocations.
- This issue is being agitated before the Hon. Supreme Court in a PIL regarding PDS. This will require legal changes; the digitization has clearly shown the need to have unit-linked allocations. Thus, even if allocations are reduced from the present 35 kg per month to 10 kg for 1 unit cards, 25 kg for 2-3 cards and 35 kg for 3+ cards, an estimated **additional 20% families** can be serviced in the same quantum of foodgrains.
- Earlier the FPS dealer used to distribute rations at his sweet will, but after enforcement of the roster, he can distribute only on the anointed

date. Thus, ration card holders know that they will get their allocations on that particular date, although they can go afterwards also if they so desire.

b. *Major back end process changes planned and current status*

- The departmental website is being continuously evolved to make it more meaningful and comprehensive.
- All IT-initiatives use the same master data to be on a common platform.
- The roster for lifting foodgrains from the godowns has also been fixed.
- Financial management and online monitoring of utilization of funds, to the tune of Rs 10,000 crores.
- Online monitoring of lifting from godowns. Funds (Rs 15 cr.) have been sanctioned for this purpose, wherein POS (point – of – sale) systems will be installed alongwith electronic weighing machines and computers at each godown and kerosene oil wholesaler depots.

3. *Capacity Building*

Keeping in view the skill sets needed to handle the host of issues involved, Committees have been formed at all levels for effective implementation, monitoring and sustainability of the initiatives. Nodal officers at State as well as at district level have also been nominated to handle day-to-day requirements related to successful implementation.

a. *Leadership support & visibility and current status*

The Food & Civil Supplies department is one of the oldest departments in the Government. The initiatives launched have been possible only because of the active support of the Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, and all senior officials. This has resulted in the department gaining visibility at the State as also national level in the Food Ministry.

b. *Change management strategy defined and status thereof*

- Initially there was a lot of reluctance to digitize ration card data, citing lack of staff and expertise. It took a concerted and focused effort to wear down the resistance and instill a **sense of ownership** in the field officers and staff. Once they got over the disbelief that something so daunting could actually be possible, there was a veritable competition to complete the work. The exercise has helped develop a sense of pride in the cadre.
- Then there has been a change in public perception towards the department, which has also helped carry through necessary changes.

- Personal issues related to career planning of the personnel were looked into and resolved. Promotions were done after almost 30 years in certain cadres. This enthused everyone to give their best, as a sense of loyalty towards the department was inculcated.

c. Capacity building plan and its implementation status

- Training of all field staff and officers is being done. All District Supply Officers and select Supply Inspectors have already been trained for sending sms alerts. Others will be trained in due course.
- Nearly 400 computers have been sanctioned for all departmental offices across the state. Broadband connections had been done earlier. In future, computers are planned right down to the godown level, as also laptops for each supply and marketing inspector also. Then, even wheat and paddy procurement centres will be IT-linked, a veritable revolution.
- Computer training is being imparted to the rank and file of the department.

d. Are the Program Management Teams there full time (department officials/ consultants)

- The initiatives have been undertaken in the leadership of the Principal Secretary and the Commissioner of the department. The departmental officers and staff are obviously full time, and only data entry work has been outsourced.
- The state unit of NIC is providing the back-end IT support, and thus there are no contractual consultants. A NIC team is dedicated to the department and its efforts to serve the people better.

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