

Minutes

Steering Committee Meeting

Right to Food Campaign

Bhopal

2 and 3 July 2011

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About forty of us representing our national networks, state campaigns and the State Secretariat, along with a few experts, participated in the steering committee meeting of the Right to Food Campaign which took place on the 2nd and the 3rd of July, 2011. More than eleven state representatives, seven organisational and individual members participated. This meeting was called so that a detailed planning could be undertaken to save the PDS along with planning a comprehensive strategy on issues like the BPL Census 2011 methodology and the poverty caps issue along with the various drafts of the National Food Security Act. We were very pleased that the two new national networks that have joined the steering committee since last year's national convention in Rourkela, the Rashtriya Vikalang Manch and the Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan were well represented.

The meeting took place at AICUF Ashram in Bhopal. It started at 10:30am with a round of introductions. Kavita discussed the objectives of the meeting which was to examine the attack that was happening on the PDS and to strategise on how to forcefully put the Campaign's demand of universal PDS in the emerging context. She also criticised the Planning Commission's poverty line and talked about the Campaign's protest on 23 May 2011. She also talked about the export of rabi crop in India despite hunger in the country. She briefly talked about the PDS survey which took place in nine Indian states in May and June 2011. She then discussed the programme for the two days. The main outcome of the workshop was to arrive at a plan of action for the Campaign on the PDS, which would include looking at all production, procurement, storage and distribution issues. Since the BPL Census 2011 methodology for rural areas was out and the survey was already underway and it was a fiasco, it was felt that it was important to discuss it and plan a national campaign against it. Issues related to the NFSA and the Supreme Court were also to be shared and have a plan.

1. Sessions

1.1 Attack on the PDS

Presentation by Ulka Mahajan

The first session examined the various means by which PDS was being attacked. It was stated that the PDS has been functioning since 1960s. There were three objectives of the PDS. PDS was not just to give cheap grains to the poor. It was also to give support price to farmers and to create buffer stock which a government needs for emergency. is a need to rotate the buffer stock amongst people and not just store it. It was also supposed to be the tool for stabilisation of prices. We need to understand why the government is trying to dismantle the PDS. The Government wants to move away from the market. Government can control prices if it has control over the market. Because of the PDS, the government procures grain at MSP. To remove the government from the market, there is a need to dismantle the PDS. Targeted PDS was also an attempt to reduce the scope of PDS. As it was not possible to dismantle the PDS in one step, making the PDS targeted was one step towards dismantling it. By removing the APL from the PDS, influential people's stake is removed from the PDS. The government gave the rationale that the middle class does not need the PDS, only the poor need it. Current protests against the PDS are much less compared to when the PDS was universal.

Now corruption in PDS is being cited as the reason for shutting it down and replacing it with cash transfers. The other ways in which the distribution system of the PDS is being attacked consist of

- 1. reducing the entitlement per household,**

2. **Poverty caps and dividing up the poor into APL and BPL, reducing the number of beneficiaries particularly the vocal class, so protests finishes.**
3. **Increasing the price of the APL equivalent to the market prices thus reducing the incentive of the APL to buy subsidised food.**
4. **Replacing wheat grains with flour.**
5. **Exports of grain, thus reducing food stocks and giving the argument that there is not enough food available**
6. **Replacing PDS with cash transfers, which is the most destructive step towards finishing the PDS.**

It was also stated that the last issue of replacing PDS with cash transfers will affect the entire production, procurement, and storage system and those affected most will be the farmers as the government will not procure grain, the farmers will not get their MSP which is the biggest incentive at the moment for the farmers to grow cereals. Farmers will also be left to the market to sell their grains, which they may have to do with cheap prices and so will the consumer to buy them. It is very important for the government to intervene in the market to ensure that poor people get affordable food. In such a situation the food prices will not have any stability. Food inflation will be higher. Godowns will not be required, FCI in the long run will be left as a completely skeletal system and it will be end of food security of the nation in the long run. The lobby behind this were several economists and planners including World Bank and IMF. It was interesting to know that more than forty economists from all over the world wrote a letter to Sonia Gandhi telling that she must not provide grain but cash.

Our present demand was to get the Government to incentivise food production and to put pressure on the Government to procure grains from all states rather than just the five states from where it was being done. It was felt that there was an urgent need to decentralise procurement and decentralised storage. Apart from wheat and rice, coarse grains and pulses should also be procured.

The demand for Universal PDS with unit entitlements of 14kgs per adult unit cereal and 7 kg per unit child along with pulses, oil and sugar was part of the larger demand that Education, health, right to food, right to work and social security should be universalised. There is a Rs 100 crore subsidy for manufacturing alcohol. Government is giving subsidy worth 5 lakh crores a year to industrialists but is not willing to spend 1 lakh crore and more a year to ensure the country's food security.

Following this background there was a detailed presentation on the issue of cash transfer:

1.2 Cash transfers

1.2.1 Presentation by Biraj Patnaik

The paper on Cash Transfers prepared by Dipa was presented. (see attachment)

Biraj also gave a larger international picture in order to understand why cash transfers should be opposed. He said that there was nothing wrong with the government giving rich people's money to the poor. In many schemes such as old age pensions, pensions for the disabled, widows' pension, cash is provided. RTFC has supported all such the cash transfer schemes. We are even fighting to increase the amount given in these pensions and to make pensions universal.

There are direct cash transfer and conditional cash transfers (CCTs). CCTs have been successful in Latin American countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. In conditional cash transfers, cash transfer is contingent upon certain requirements, such as sending children to schools, getting health check-ups for women etc. The experience has been that CCTs have been successful in reducing poverty in many countries in Latin America, especially in Brazil. CCTs in Latin America have significant budgetary outlays. But they are also supplemented by in-kind transfers like school meals, public provisioning of quality health care, crèches and maternity entitlements for children under five etc. Looking at the experience of these countries, governments of other countries, including India have wanted to emulate cash transfers. However, there are certain significant differences between these Latin American countries and India. These differences are -

- Urbanisation is significantly more in Latin America, and upto 80 per cent of the population in some countries. Markets are in place. Urbanisation has taken place.
- Greater gender equity in Latin America as compared to South Asia.
- Education and health care systems are in place with schools and health care centres. Large amount of money has already been spent in putting these systems in place. The developmental model of these countries, many of which are nascent democracies is very different than in India where the rights discourse is deepened more than in Latin American countries. Rights cannot and should not be conditional. The fungibility of cash in a gender inequitable context like India will bring with it a larger set of problems. Second, unlike in South America, the supply side in education and health is either non-existent or has been allowed to wither away over the two decades of neo-liberalism. Even if people have money but there are no health centres, how will the money ensure health care? All Indian governments after 1992 have followed the neo liberal policy in which delivery of services is the responsibility of the market and not the government.

In addition to this, Biraj then specified the many dangers of cash transfers, especially in the PDS

- India is one of the few countries where government is doing so little for farmers. The government is now going to give fertiliser subsidy in cash. Every half an hour a farmer commits suicide. The only thing that government does is procurement of grain at MSP. It distributes this grain through the PDS. If the government does not distribute grain, it will not procure as well which will have a very adverse affect on agriculture. Even after distributing close to 50 million metric tonnes in the PDS and for other schemes, the
- Gender inequality – Women generally control food in the house while men control the money.
- Inflation - If the cash transferred is not indexed to inflation, people will be able to buy less with the cash given to them after inflation. Government is saying that it will index the cash to inflation, but do you think it will do this every month? Minimum wage is denied in NREGA. Old age pensions have not been increased commensurately with inflation in the past twenty five years. Nor have the budgetary provisioning for mid day meals and SNP in ICDS.
- Government is unable to accurately identify the poor. 46 per cent undeserving people in BPL list and 50 per cent deserving poor not in BPL list – NSSO data.
- It is easy to say that distributing cash is easier than distributing grain. But there will be more corruption when cash is distributed. It is easier to spot corruption in PDS than in cash transfers. Government's reply – bank account transfer. Many grameen banks have been closed. Financial inclusion – government is talking about this. When we don't have a proper banking system, when every family does not have a bank account, how can

we talk about cash transfers? When government is not giving pension on time, how will it give cash transfer in place of PDS on time?

- The right to food has three components –
 1. Access – either you grow food or have the money to buy it
 2. Availability
 3. Absorption

Cash transfers may at best help with the access dimension. 90per cent procured grain comes from 6 states. Most Indian states are not food sufficient. What is the guarantee that enough grain will be available in the market?

- Lack of transparency and accountability of private entities.

There is a need to oppose cash transfers on a large scale in such a manner that it is visible. Many economists want cash transfers including the country's PM and Montek Singh Alhuwalia. The lobby for cash transfers is very strong.

Yet, the Right to Food Campaign is unequal to the task of resisting it and protesting. We have lost our fire. Many other types of protests are much more visible. A significant reason for this is the support that the media and middle class provides to such protests. Maybe our enthusiasm is going down and our campaign has lost steam and direction over 11 years. In the case of people's movements like the one against POSCO or even against Vedanta, they have been able to resist without the support of the mainstream media. The RTFC has come a long way, but we need to seriously introspect on what has gone wrong over the years. Why are we not able to mobilise the people and public opinion on an issue that is so central to their lives?

He went into details to share how the worst impact of this would be for the farmers who would be left without any MSP, forced to sell their produce to private companies at any price, which may also lead to distress sale, as the Government would not need their grains. He made a strong pitch for collaboration with farmers lobby in order to save the farmer and the consumer.

Finally he shared the Delhi pilot project on cash transfer. In Delhi a full fledged survey on cash transfers was underway led by SEWA. And it had almost become a process of silencing any other voice which questioned cash transfer. When some groups went into those basits of Delhi where SEWA were carrying out survey and talked to them SEWA made a big issue of it reported it to the CM and the CM Sheila Dikshit herself called a meeting and scolded the activists from Parivartan and CFAR who had gone there. She even threw them out of the meeting when they said that they had a right to go there. When SEWA was accused of not being transparent they called a meeting where the head of SEWA also shut up one very senior activist from CFAR when she questioned the selection of only those households for the survey of SEWA who had a house of their own, following which everybody staged a walk out.

1.2.2 Group discussion

Ashok – How has the government come up with a figure of Rs 1000/month for cash transfers?

Dipa – even we have questioned this figure. There are plans of starting pilots in other states as well such as Uttar Pradesh. Many people who support the campaign and are against cash transfers, are saying that pilots should not be opposed.

Dithhi – In ILO convention regarding domestic workers, SEWA was the only trade union which opposed the convention and supported the Government of India. SEWA supposedly ‘convinced’ the Government of India to sign the convention. Let’s not have a convention but a recommendation so that it is not binding. SEWA is going as agents of the Government. They will try and negotiate between the civil society and the government.

Ashok - All trade unions opposed the social security Act which came out in 2008 except SEWA. There is a need for us to be aware.

Ulka – In many rural areas PDS is the only shop nearby. Other markets are very far. It is difficult to fight against cash transfers. During the time of universal PDS, when people did not get ration, they would protest in large numbers as people who had some voice also had a stake in PDS. No matter how many leakages there are in PDS today, there are ways of monitoring the PDS. But once ration is distributed in the open market, there is no way of monitoring it. When the government’s intentions are to stop the PDS and replace it with cash transfers, we should oppose the pilots, as the government will ensure that the pilots show that people want cash transfers.

Manas – Government officials are saying that as many facilities are linked with BPL, people have an incentive of getting in the BPL list. Once cash transfers get linked to BPL, people’s incentive of getting in the BPL list will only increase. Kaushik Basu and Ashok Gulati have said that FCI should not procure any more. If FCI want more warehouses, it should hire private warehouses. There is move towards putting the storage infrastructure in the hands of private players. The BPL census questionnaire shows that there is an intention of excluding farmers from the BPL list. As long as a low price alternative is available, it creates a hindrance for the market. Hence, the intention of cash transfers is to destroy this cheap alternative. South America has had a very violent past of suppressing protestors. This might happen in India as well.

Dithhi – Cash transfers are not restricted to PDS. Cash transfers will lead to injection of a large amount of money in the economy which will cause inflation.

Ashok – There are two aspects of price. First, increase in prices is most on food items. In the past five years in India, there has been consistent inflation in food. PDS has provided relief from this inflation and has also helped in controlling inflation. Inflation hampers development.

Kavita – Nitish Kumar is bringing cash transfers in education.

Manas – Cash transfer is part of a larger design, PDS is only a part of it. The day cash transfers are introduced, prices will increase.

Balram – We need to understand the consequences of trends such as cigarette companies selling branded atta, rice etc. At no cost should we move away from our demand of universal PDS.

Sumitra – even I feel that the strength of the Campaign is decreasing and there is a need to strategise about future plan of action.

Ashok – it is more difficult to dismantle the PDS than to dismantle the system of cash transfers. We also need to discuss how the Campaign should be strengthened.

Ulka – Regarding strategy, we need to identify stakeholders. We should meet farmers groups. Government employees’ unions should also be included as they run the risk of unemployment if cash transfers are introduced. Ration shop dealers and self-help groups distributing running ration should also be included

Kavita – We also need to address the quantity of grain being provided in PDS. Mill owners will be against the Campaign who want wheat in PDS to be provided as atta.

1.3 Food stocks, exports and Justice Wadhwa

1.3.1 Presentation by Biraj Patnaik

We requested the Supreme Court to distribute grains in godowns amongst the poor. We had 3-4 main demands.

- Population projections of 2001 are being utilised in 2011. As a result 7 crore people are excluded from PDS. We want data of Census 2011 to be used.
- The government gave a list of people who should be included in the BPL. However, it also put a cap on the number of people in the BPL list. We demanded lifting of this cap.
- In 150 poorest districts, 80-90 per cent people are BPL. We wanted universalisation of PDS in these districts.

SC said that under the leadership of Justice Wadhwa, there will be a committee which will have a representative of PUCL and the SC commissioners. There were meetings between RTFC members and Justice Wadhwa. Justice Wadhwa refused for universalisation in these 150 districts. We need to decide how to deal with the Wadhwa Committee. The list of 150 poorest districts which the Planning Commission gave to Justice Wadhwa was very flawed. We got a list which we agree with approved by Justice Wadhwa. There is so much grain that the government is not procuring which is forcing farmers to commit suicide. Some RTFC members met KV Thomas. Thomas is against export but Finance and commerce Ministry is forcing for exports. Now we are told that 30 lakh metric tonnes will be exported. Montek has also given his approval. Sharad Pawar is asking for greater export. The Campaign's stance is that till hunger and malnutrition are eradicated from the country, grains should not be exported. FCI is also against export. It is saying that export will be at a rate which will be even lower than the rate at which grain is sold to the BPL in PDS. There is no scope of increase in stocks. Government is talking about giving people 6 months' ration in PDS in advance. There is also talk about setting fire to rotting grains. I have a few suggestions:

Court says that there should be a PUCL representative in the Wadhwa Committee. PUCL should formally write to Wadhwa about this.

There was talk about monitoring in these 150 districts. The Campaign told Justice Wadhwa that we will give a list of organisations that will monitor grain distribution in these 150 districts.

There should be records of starvation deaths in these 150 districts. I have starvation report from district Paschim Medinipur in West Bengal. There is a need to contact NGOs, trade unions, sangathans in these 150 districts to find out about starvation deaths. Maybe we will now need to protest.

1.3.2 Group discussion

Kavita – In court Colin said that if in these two months there is any starvation death in any of these 150 districts, then we will all be responsible as we were unable to come to a conclusion. We have written to letters to Justice Wadhwa and have met him twice. Even Dr Saxena has urged Justice Wadhwa to universalise in the 150 poorest districts. We have a hearing on 8 August 2011 where we should tell the court that Justice Wadhwa has not fulfilled

his responsibility. A team from the Campaign should go to Delhi. We can give another letter to Justice Wadhwa but that might be a waste of time. There should be a norm per person, such as 10kg/person. Government of India has 8 crore tonnes of grains. Parliament is starting from 1 August. Because of corruption, Parliament might get adjourned soon. We should go to the court and put pressure on the government. Starvation death is not the only indicator of hunger. 11 per cent people in a study in Rajasthan have said that they eat only once a day. 30 per cent people have said that they eat two meals a day, but with difficulty.

Sidharth - Can the Commissioners give an affidavit in the court?

Dipa – There is a need to urgently put pressure on state governments to off take the grain allotted.

Kavita – There has been tremendous improvement in PDS in Jharkhand.

Balram - Many people come out in support for protests about PDS. Recently a dharna took place in Ranchi as people had not been getting ration for two months.

Lakshman Singh Munia - On the one hand grains are rotting in godowns but on the other hand the government has decreased the entitlement under PDS. Poor people will not be able to buy 6 month's grain at one go.

Kavita – We need to go back to the system of grain banks, community storage.

From JADS - In Badwani the amount of grain being distributed in the PDS is less than what is ordered. PDS dealers are saying that less grain is coming from the godowns. Some people who have protested have got their full quote of 35kg/month.

- There used to be very good storage systems at household and community levels. Maybe there is a need to revive such systems. A lot of grain is not kept under cover.

Kavita – Court is reopening from 4 August 2011 and we have our hearing on 8 August 2011. Petitioner should write to court. Biraj – The problem is that grains are kept with the government instead of being distributed amongst the population. Our emphasis should not be the storage of grain.

Manas – We are not giving importance to storage because grain should be with people and not in godowns. But the government is encouraging the private sector to construct storage infrastructure which the FCI can hire. We need storage space with FCI for FCI to be in a position to control the market.

Sachin – It has been about a year since the system of extra allotment.

1.4 BPL Census 2011

1.4.1 Presentation by Manas Ranjan (see attached note)

The BPL census of 2002 was opposed by the Campaign. We opposed the questionnaires. The government said that the questionnaire is very robust. There were many inclusion and exclusion errors in the BPL list prepared on the basis of the 2002 BPL census. So, what is the guarantee that the BPL census of 11 is accurate? After BPL Census 2002 NC Saxena Committee was formed to guide the government regarding BPL. Saxena Committee says 50 per cent people in India are poor. Then came the Tendulkar Committee which says that 41.8 per cent of India's

population is poor BPL. In Orissa Saxena Committee says 85 per cent and Tendulkar Committee says 61 per cent are poor.

The BPL Census was started on June 30th from Tripura along with the caste census being carried out by the Registrar General Census. The BPL census methodology this time consists of 13 exclusion criteria, 5 inclusion criteria and 7 deprivation indicators. Exclusion criteria take priority over inclusion criteria.

If a woman says she is a separate household, the enumerator will have to take that into account.

The BPL survey will be conducted through a tablet computer which is a large cell phone sized touch screen computer. Even ASHA workers are conducting these surveys. They will be accompanied by people who can operate these tablets. Many such people will visit villages for the first time. After the survey is over, the family head will give his/her consent that the information recorded is correct and sign or put his/her thumb impression. There are instructions that apart from the surveyor, tablet operator and the respondent household, no other person is allowed to be present at the survey.

The poverty criteria are such that many deserving poor will get excluded from the BPL List. Fishermen will get left out from the BPL survey as the guidelines say fishermen with mechanised boats will not be included in the BPL list. Even though fishermen may be landless, when they say they do their own work, they will be excluded on that ground. Farmers will also get less points. BPL census 2011 guidelines say that if a family is Christian or Muslim, it cannot be considered a dalit. Single women if they have a son who is above 16 years of age, will not get a point for being single. This means that the Census recognises children who are 16 and 17 years of age as adults. If a person is sleeping in a kitchen, stable, or a room used for keeping a loom, such rooms will be considered habitable. Results from trial runs of the BPL 2011 survey show that many deserving people, especially those who are doing some work of their own, will get excluded from the BPL list.

He also shared the dates of the survey as planned for every state (see attachment)

1.4.2 Group discussion

Praveen – Exclusion of households which have a disabled person but also a non-disabled adult is very serious. A lot of money has to be spent on people who are seriously disabled. 7 per cent of India's population is disabled. World Bank and WHO have said that 15 per cent of the world's population, i.e. about 1 billion people are disabled. The Rashtriya Viklang Manch has demanded that even parents and guardians of disabled persons should be included in the BPL list as they have to incur extra costs to take care of the disabled persons they are looking after.

Arundhati – Even states are not very happy with the BPL census and are quite confused about it. There is no way of verifying claims of not having assets such as vehicles. The census is also a logistical nightmare. There is no disagreement about the absurdity of the BPL survey. Is there any possibility of stopping this survey?

Gangabhai – Clever people may be able to lie and get their household included in the BPL list. But actually deserving and honest people who have more than one room in their house will get excluded from the BPL list.

Jean – The methodology can be improved e.g. automatic inclusion of the disabled, increasing the threshold from one room to two rooms. But the entire approach to the BPL survey is wrong. When there was talk of central survey, there was talk of using the census machinery for authenticity. But now the census machinery is not being used. Caste census will now happen with the BPL census which too will suffer. Many states had made a list based on their own parameters which would have brought more people under the BPL list.

Should we go to the Supreme Court? It would be good to get a stay. But the stay of 2002 has not been very useful. BPL survey has started in Tripura. It would be a good idea to go to Tripura and see what is happening. There should be a big protest, maybe in Delhi. We should also talk with state governments, requesting them to oppose the survey. The BPL list should be delinked with the NFSB.

Biraj – We also have to stress on certain inclusions. Some things are feasible, such as the issue of SC ST, disabled. Violation of SC should be highlighted.

Madhuri – I felt that one thing which we need to remind ourselves is that government will always want to decrease the proportion of the poor. We should never assume that the government will be convinced to increase the proportion of the poor. Many people become poor because of illness. Even if the stay might not be very useful, we should still take it. The time gained with the stay should be used for protesting. Most of our sathis in the sangathan will get excluded from the BPL list.

Ashok – We should have a press conference tomorrow in which we should critique the BPL survey. We should go to the Supreme Court as soon as possible. The attacks should also be from the specific perspectives of the disabled, single women etc.

Manas – Trial runs started in 19 areas in Orissa. When people were told about the inclusion and exclusion criteria, they were very angry. So, it seems that large number of people will come together to oppose the BPL survey.

Jean – If single women, disabled are automatically included in the BPL list, the number of BPL that will emerge will not be reconciled with poverty estimates.

Sudha - What should be our focus?

Kavita – Our demands of universality regarding food security, health etc will continue. But when events such as BPL surveys come, we as a Campaign have to take a stand. It is the Campaign's responsibility to highlight the farce of the BPL census. We also need to talk about quotas.

Sudha - We are confused about whether we should boycott the BPL survey or cooperate with it.

Kavita – Even if we boycott the survey, it will not prevent the survey from taking place. If we want to take a stay on the BPL census, we will have to act soon. We should aim at taking a stay before the census comes to Chhattisgarh. Earlier our stay was based on Manas's trial runs in Rajasthan, Jean's critique of the BPL census as an economist and Colin's court craft. Montek Singh Alhwalia told us that some more people may get included in the PDS but the poverty line of the country will be brought down from 37 per cent (according to Tendulkar Committee) to 30-32 per cent.

Siddharth - There is a high chance that we will lose as this is a policy matter. I suggest the Campaign should not go to the Supreme Court but should go to high courts instead.

Biraj – Even if we lose, there is nothing at stake, unlike the matter of universalisation. No existing policy can be diluted without the permission of the SC.

Siddharth – I am not convinced that the Campaign does not have much to lose if the order is not in its favour.

Madhuri – Our entire energy should not be spent on getting a stay from court. I don't think high court in MP will listen about this. But we should still try.

Ulka – on the one hand we agree that the entire policy framework aims at statistically reducing the number of poor. We need to politicise this issue and plan a strategy for doing this. Why aren't the parties in the Opposition raising the issue of the BPL line and the BPL survey? We need to meet political parties and ask them about their stand regarding the BPL line and the BPL survey.

Kavita – We should do this before or during the Parliament session.

Ulka - Better than doing symbolic protests, we should plan for a large protest.

Ashok – I agree with Ulka but the fight in the court should continue and we have the time to go to the court.

Dipa – We should not have great expectation from the court and we should do what Ulka has suggested. We should spend our energies on trying to take this issue to the people. We need to try and delink the BPL line with food security.

Arundhati – I feel that we should try and go to the High court. As some states are unhappy, we should make use of this. NAPM is planning to sit in front of the Parliament from 8-12 August.

Jean – I feel we should think carefully before going to the court. We need to think about the risk. The experience of 2002 stay was not very positive. We will not get a solution in the SC. Timing is also of importance – whether we should directly go to the SC or after some public mobilisation. I do not agree that there is no risk. We run the risk of delaying the food security Act and the caste census is also at stake. We need to carefully think about our demands.

Madhuri – We do not have time right now. We need to come up with a strategy in which we can buy time.

- We can raise this issue in the SC, Parliament and Vidhan Sabha.

Raj Kishore – We did a survey in Kalahandi and Koraput. Orissa has introduced Rs2/kg rice. There are many families which should come in AYY category but are absent from all lists. There was survey in one district in Orissa by government where government employees are in the BPL list.

Manas – I feel that there is a huge difference between 2002 and 2011. In 2002 we were not as strong as we are now. Our understanding was also limited. Wherever we are going, we are getting a very good response from people. We have to fight, mobilise people and bring this issue forward. Some state government employees are also opposing the BPL survey, even if not openly.

Balram – I agree with Madhuri that we need to buy time to plan for a large mobilisation. The issue of BPL is an important state issue.

Kavita – We will have to work at all levels. But it is a very difficult fight. Jean had written on the methodology as well as the quotas. The Dates of the survey are very important to circulate to all at the earliest.

1.5 National Food Security Bill

1.5.1 Presentation by Dipa

There is no change in the NAC framework. The NFSB has certain special provisions regarding children and mothers such as ICDS, maternity entitlements (not linked to BPL) and mid-day meals. There are also provisions for cooked meals in urban areas. One section of the Act is on grievance redressal – what people can do if they are not getting their entitlements under the Act.

1.5.2 Group Discussion

Biraj - PM did an informal meeting with the media in which he said that the draft which the PMO has approved has the following difference from the NAC bill

- General category to get 15kg/month every month as opposed to 20kg/month
- 75 per cent as opposed to 90 per cent of the rural population to be covered under PDS
- Instead of allocating grains for ICDS and MDM, states to get cash

Jean – There is a government draft which not many have seen which is very different from the NAC draft. I don't know the relation between these two drafts. We need to find out more about the government draft.

Kavita – Cash transfers will come in the government draft.

Dipa – Vishwanath said that although he opposes cash transfers, it will be there in the government draft.

Madhuri – We need to revisit the Campaign's draft of the National Food Security Act before and even after the government's draft comes out. When the government draft comes out we should be able to highlight the huge gap between the Campaign and the government draft. We need to establish a benchmark which will allow us to measure the government. We are not talking about our draft because we are expecting the government to adopt it. We need to highlight how fertile land is being used for setting up factories.

From JADS – there should be grain storage at panchayat level as well.

Lali – expired packaged food items are supplied at the anganwadis.

Kavita – All our press notes have included our demands. After Rourkela, state level activities have taken place in MP, Rajasthan and Gujarat. In Delhi it is not possible to have more than 3-4 events a year. The debate between various movements should also come in the public domain. There needs to be an honest assessment of Campaign activities in states and plan to strengthen state campaigns. Even though there is division in UP, there were two meetings in UP. In Rajasthan there used to be meetings once every two months which has now become once a month.

Dithhi – It does not make sense to have state level meetings if people cannot come. You should do pilot runs to motivate people at the local level. Let's begin with organisations that work at the ground because various ground level organisations do not know what is happening.

Ashok – The Campaign is a little stuck with only doing advocacy at the national and state levels in some places. We even expanded the steering group. Will a Campaign’s critique of the final NAC draft be prepared? The NAC draft does not ensure food security.

Kavita – PDS should be the focus, that is the reason why this meeting is held.

Madhuri – It is difficult to plan action without the government draft.

1.6 Children’s right to food

Dipa - In 200 districts where malnutrition is most severe, there is talk of reforming the ICDS such as introducing a second anganwadi worker, convergence with health, sanitation and drinking water. All these are there in the PM’s plan. Like we intervened in the Wadhwa Committee, we should have a monitoring process for this as well. Need to discuss what all is being given as food in ICDS. There are contractors in many areas. We have prepared a note on how the ASHA and anganwadi worker should work together towards the elimination of malnutrition. Will circulate in Hindi. We would like to have a convention on Children’s Right to Food. The last convention was five years ago. Since then many issues have come up.

Vandana - A very small proportion of women are able to enjoy maternity benefits. In Tamil Nadu there is a scheme where women get Rs 1000 for 6 months after delivery of a child. From Rs 6000, finally Rs 4000 will be given. Government is trying to put various conditions on this such as immunisation and breastfeeding. When some women are getting maternity benefits unconditionally, why should there be conditions for other women? We are also demanding crèches. Women who work are unable to take as much care of children as is required. In the 12th five year plan there is plan of reforming the ICDS in 200 districts. We do not know which districts these are. Anganwadis have not been able to reach to children below 3 years of age. We are saying that anganwadis give food to children who are disabled, malnourished etc. We need to push for a facility of anganwadi cum crèche. There are various irregularities in what is being given to children in ICDS. There is a huge budget allocation for food in ICDS. Hence private companies are vying for tenders to provide food in ICDS. But we are saying that local women are equally capable of cooking nutritious food. While we oppose packaged food, shutting packaged food where anganwadis are not providing anything else is also dangerous.

2. Feedback from the states and thematic groups

This session was very important as people felt that each state could share with the other regarding mobilisations, strategies of work and also the challenges faced by each group.

2.1 Assam

We have a state level committee which has about 30 organisations affiliated with it. We took up the issues of NREGA, PDS and agriculture. Farmers are not being able to sell their produce. We had a dharna in front of the FCI. Some people filing RTI applications are facing harassment. Akhil Gogoi was associated with us who was arrested. Anybody who protests more runs a high risk of getting arrested. There is a government channel in Assam which is

free for people in the villages. Through this channel, the government is saying that Akhil Gogoi has links with the Maoists and ULFA.

2.2 Chhattisgarh

Even before the Right to Food Campaign started, there was struggle on the issue of right to food in Chhattisgarh. At the ground level till the Campaign is not strengthened, it will not be strengthened at the upper levels. Salwa Judum and displacement are some of the issues of Chhattisgarh. Networks working on the issue of right to food and health are working together. Groups working on forest rights have also come together with groups working on the right to food. Some large sangathans are not with us. Last year there was a study on NREGA in Chhattisgarh. There was a jan sunwai which was attended by government officials as well.

2.3 Delhi

Dipa - The Delhi RTFC has come together this year only. It has come together mainly on the issue of PDS and opposition of cash transfers. It consists of about 30-40 groups. Most national networks of the Right to Food Campaign's steering group have offices in Delhi. We would have liked members of these networks in Delhi to join the Delhi RTFC but apart from NFIW, we have not really been able to achieve this. We have not been able to discuss the Act yet.

The Delhi Right to Food Campaign has conducted a survey of about 4000 households in slums and resettlement colonies to find out their preference between ration and cash. Currently data entry is taking place.

SEWA is conducting a pilot study of about a 100 households in Raghbir Nagar in Delhi to study people's preference between cash and food. There are various problems with this pilot. Raghbir Nagar is a resettlement colony which is not inhabited by the poorest. Many people in Raghbir Nagar are not even utilising their PDS entitlements. The pilot is being conducted with only those who are willing to take cash instead of PDS.

SEWA organised a meeting to discuss this pilot study which was attended by many Delhi RTFC members. But the Delhi RTFC members questioned the methodology of the pilot because of which members of SEWA spoke rudely with them and one person was even asked to 'shut up'. As a result, the Delhi RTFC members walked out of the meeting. A letter was sent to SEWA condemning its behaviour.

SEWA finds it objectionable if other organisations work in the areas it is working in. There was disagreement between SEWA and another organisation which led to the Delhi chief minister Sheila Dixit calling a meeting. In this meeting Sheila Dixit spoke rudely with members of the Delhi RTFC and even told two people to leave the meeting. It is very clear who the government supports. UNDP and UNICEF are also supporting conditional cash transfers. Since last month kerosene has decreased from 22l to 10l for BPL and stopped for APL. We are planning some activity based on the survey findings.

Baljeet - NFIW surveyed 1250 households. SEWA said that those who have BPL cards have homes and regular incomes and hence should not get ration cards. NFIW said that the BPL families they surveyed did not have their own houses. Only 1 per cent of people in the survey have said that they want cash in place of PDS. Most respondents who want cash are men. PM's press advisor is Renana Jhebwala's husband. In Delhi on 6-7 July 2011 there was going to be a workshop on cash transfers. Biraj proposed a protest at this workshop. But SEWA got to know about this plan and cancelled the workshop. SEWA wanted this workshop in the NAC office. Now this workshop is going to take place at a confidential venue.

2.4 Gujarat

Many NGOs and sangathans have come together. Packaged food is being distributed in anganwadis. There has been some dialogue with the government. We have tried to join hands with groups working on land rights. 426 people have sent postcards to Sonia Gandhi about the issue of APL-BPL.

2.5 Jharkhand

It is difficult to say whether the Campaign has been strengthened or weakened. Some people who used to lead the Campaign at state level are now not doing this, for some reason or the other. In Palamau there was a PDS march and raids were also conducted. There were enquiries on some people. During Vidhan Sabha elections, PDS was an important election issue. Congress declared Rs2/kg grain and after that BJP declared Re1/kg grain. Free grain for adim jan jati.

We are planning on strengthening the Campaign on ICDS. Panchayat elections took place after 32 years. A big problem in NREGA is the involvement of middlemen which we are not being able to eliminate. Currently middlemen are involved in withdrawal of money from bank accounts. Withdrawal slips have to be verified which is being done by middlemen at some places. Another problem in NREGA is that workers are not getting their wages on time. Now we feel scared to even complain for the fear of the government stooping labourers' wages.

One good thing is the emergence of insurance.

2.6 Karnataka

Ration shops do not always open, there are problems of quantity and quality. Maximum entitlement is 23kg/month instead of 35kg/month. Ration is given on unit basis. Packaged food powder is given in ICDS. We have done press conferences on this issue. We have got lab testing done of this food powder which showed that the powder is not very nutritious. We had a state level workshop on 2 and 3 June 2011 regarding cash transfers and other issues. People are not very aware of the NFSB. On 10 June 2011 Montek Singh Alhwalia was to visit Karnataka. About 600 people staged a dharna. We spoke to Montek Singh Alhwalia about the Planning Commission's poverty line and cash transfers and gave him dabbas containing things that can be bought at the poverty line. In our state level meeting it was decided that we need to strengthen our campaign. At district level to strengthen our network, we are planning to constitute district committees.

2.7 Madhya Pradesh

Madhuri - It is very unclear who all are there in MP RTFC. But the NGOs affiliated with ActionAid have been told that the MP RTFC is ActionAid's. Another problem is that MP's jan sangathans said that the right to food is not a basic issue. There was to be a meeting in Bhopal in July which has been postponed. Once the government draft of the NFSB comes out, it will be easier to have a discussion on that. In March 2011 it was decided to have a programme on 1 May 2011.

Sachin – MP RTFC has a history which is affecting the current MP RTFC. In the middle there was a plan for restructuring the MP RTFC. One complaint was that the campaign is very centralised. In March there was a

programme on agriculture, GM crops. Madhuri, Biraj and I were involved in this. Farmer groups were also a part of this programme. There have been several public hearings on issues related to the right to food. There is talk of introducing coupons in PDS in Madhya Pradesh. Entitlements in PDS keep changing every month which creates many problems.

2.8 Maharashtra

Ulka - On 30 May 2011 we opposed the Planning Commission's poverty line. Our strategy has always been to agitate at block, district and state levels. We are always thinking of how to increase our strength and scope. Many people are eager to join Anna Adhikar Abhiyan. There are many mass organisations in Maharashtra. Movement for Justice and Peace joined about a year and a half ago. They are carrying out a Maharashtra-wide campaign about PDS. There are many groups that are working individually and also as a part of the Right to Food Campaign in Maharashtra. We can see the strength of the Maharashtra Right to Food campaign growing.

We conducted a jan sunwai in the presence of the Maharashtra Minister of Food and Civil Supplies. Anna Hazare was also present in this jan sunwai. This minister is from our constituency. Tribal women challenged this minister. Jan sunwai is providing people with the strength to question those in power.

Pandu Ram Chavan - We work in 21 districts of Maharashtra. We had a two day Campaign on PDS. We surveyed 105 villages. We prepared a flyer on Supreme Court Orders and our demands. Enquiry has started against miscreants. Some ration shops have been closed. We have district coordinators who try and help people. We also work on the issue of land rights.

2.9 Orissa

After August 2010 there was one big event – dharna in front of FCI. There are many groups which are active at district and block levels. Three months ago a dal scam was unearthed. In about 10 districts there were surveys regarding Right to Food schemes. There is talk of a state level convention. There has not been a proper dialogue on the right to food with groups opposing POSCO and Vedanta. We are hoping that more people will join the Orissa Right to Food campaign.

In six districts of Orissa, the government has stopped NREGA funding as an enquiry is going on about irregularities in NREGA. This will set a very bad precedence. Theft is done by somebody but NREGA workers suffer in this. After tala khola Abhiyan, we have not done anything really. People were already quite interested about the NREGA. Now they are also getting interested about BPL. Farmers feel that NREGA and sale of rice at Rs 2/kg hampers their interests.

2.10 Rajasthan

The base of the Campaign consists predominantly of NGOs and not trade unions and farmers groups. There is a need to broaden the Campaign base. There was a huge dharna when the government reduced entitlements in the PDS. 10 lakh people have been added in Rajasthan's BPL list. Tala todo abhiyan took place in many places. Many meetings and activities have been taking place but we have been unable to increase the entitlement of 25kg grain per month to 35kg grain per month. We have been successful regarding pensions. It is now Rs 750/month. We

have also addressed some issues regarding ICDS. We tried holding a meeting with all the political parties but members of only CPI and BSP came for the meeting. Earlier we used to have meetings once in every 2-3 months but now we are trying to have meetings every month. There has not been any talk of a state level convention.

Kisan Swaraj Yatra went through 10-12 districts of Rajasthan. Rajasthan's agriculture is being corporatized by Monsanto. Large scale mining is taking place in Aravallis. Civil liberties are being curtailed. Cement factories are coming up. On 27 July 2011 we are holding a convention on displacement. Linkages between the right to food and forest rights Act have not been established yet.

Many groups have united over the issue of ration. Farmers and anti-displacement groups have also given their support to the issue of ration. Earnest and Young was asked to provide IT and non-IT solutions to PDS reforms. The Rajasthan RTFC has also come up with solutions for PDS reforms.

The Rajasthan campaign Rozi Roti Abhiyan Rajasthan and the Advisor to the Commissioner conducted a state level survey to assess the PDS functioning in the state of Rajasthan. The survey was conducted in the month of June 2011 in Jaipur both urban and rural; Kota; Bikaner; Dungarpur; Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Rajsamand, Barmer, Banswara, Bara, Ajmer and Jaisalmer, Naguar. Data for only seven districts had been tabulated and the preliminary findings on the data related to 952 families 48 localities/villages covered showed that at least one or the other person in atleast 11.6 families in the State went to sleep hungry due to lack of food and thirty percent said that they did not have enough food. **The Conclusions were:**

PDS Ration is very important: A large number of families reported that PDS ration is either extremely important or important. PDS provides food security to mass of the people especially the TPDS households. The importance of the PDS is obvious if we look at the socio-economic conditions of the sample population, especially in relation to their food intake.

Impact of the changes made in the PDS one year ago: (a) Positive: ensures availability of food grain; there is also improved behaviour of the ration shopkeeper; rate is less (b) No change: in the quality (c) Negative impact: Less quantity; shops do not open regularly .

There is overall dissatisfaction with the present way in which the PDS functions: "Not satisfied because quantity given is less". 79.91% respondents out of 851 reported that they are not satisfied with the items and quantity given under the present ration scheme. On an average the demand is for 50 kg of cereals. In addition there is strong demand from several areas for supply of pulses and edible oil as well.

In a related question most of the families reported buying cereals from the market. Within BPL families, large number of families reported purchasing cereals from the market. This is despite the fact in rural Rajasthan landlessness is quite low.

People want universalisation: "The poor are deprived of BPL status. Hence the poor are not getting the ration". In response to a specific question 71% (N=900) percent respondents said that to ensure ration to poor the PDS facility should be available to everyone. Due to the fact that everyone is not getting ration is a situation disadvantageous for the poor. 51.34% out of 781 respondents said that it affects the poor if Govt does not provide ration to everyone.

People say no to "cash" and "flour": There is emphatic no to 'cash' payment in place of wheat as well as 'flour' in place of grain.

2.11 Uttar Pradesh

Although no representative of UP RTFC was present in the meeting, it was discussed that this year two meetings of the UP RTFC have taken place and a committee has been constituted. NAPM, NTUI and NFFPFW have held several programmes in UP under their respective banners. On 8 July 2011 NAPM is planning dharnas in many districts of UP to protest for a comprehensive food security act, Planning Commission's poverty line and inflation.

3. PDS Survey 2011

3.1 Presentation by Reetika and Jean

We surveyed 9 states – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh (pilot), Jharkhand, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. There are plans of conducting the survey in Kerala as well. The thinking that PDS does not work is wrong. It is not as if corruption is not there. We asked not only what people get in PDS but also what they would prefer between ration and cash. In Orissa theft has come down a lot. There has been a huge turn around in UP. The trend of improvement has been consolidated since 2007-08. In Tamil Nadu everybody is getting 20kg rice. But theft in wheat is still there. In UP wheat and rice are being provided. Quality is still a problem. For instance, in Pali in Rajasthan people said that a lot of stones were found in the grains. Situation of Bihar is exceptionally bad. At one place in Bihar, people had got ration only thrice in the last 12 months. Situation in Jharkhand is also not very good. Here the ration shop dealers were giving less grain but were making the entries in the ration card honestly. There is greater theft in sugar, kerosene and pulses as compared to wheat and rice, maybe because people are paying more attention to wheat and rice as compared to other commodities. There is incomplete ration card distribution in many places, especially Orissa and UP.

Many states have almost universal PDS such as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where pulses and oil are given. In Himachal dals and oil are given depending on the family size. The campaign needs to highlight that its demand for oil and pulses is not unrealistic – these commodities are already being provided in certain places.

Most people said they will buy coarse grain if they are available in the PDS.

Coupon system is present in Bihar and dealers have found a way of cheating in this as well. Dealers open ration shops every second month, give ration for only one month but take coupons for two months.

Regarding cash transfers, Bihar is an exception. People's bank accounts have not opened in Bihar. Everywhere else majority said they want ration instead of cash. In places where the ration is better, greater proportion of people prefer ration. Reasons for preference for ration include remoteness of banks and markets, fear that money will get spent on other things, not necessarily wrong things such as alcohol, but also on medicines, clothes, meeting demands of children etc. Many people associated food security with the PDS.

People who preferred cash said that they will be able to buy better quality grain with money. They also cited corruption in PDS as a reason for wanting cash. Some people who preferred cash were those who grew their own food.

It is very important to change the public discourse that the PDS does not work. There is a need to counter the Nitish Kumar lobby. Nitish Kumar is all for cash transfers and is selling the idea of cash transfers to other CMs. He is propagating Montek Singh Alhwalia's ideology.

3.2 Group Discussion

Jean – There is the problem of bad BPL lists which have very high rates of exclusion. The reason for improvement in PDS is because of high inflation in market rates of ration. This has increased people's stake in the PDS because of which state governments are showing more interest. PDS gives political parties mileage. While many state governments are trying to move towards near universalisation, the central government is moving towards targeting.

Ashok - In Rajasthan we did a study on PDS in June. Many households are ST. We wanted to study the relation between ration shop dealers and customers and find out about people's perceptions regarding cash transfers. A very small proportion of respondents wanted cash. Dissipation of money was cited as reason for not wanting cash. Money can get lost. We tried to find out about hunger. We asked people about their consumption of dals, milk and vegetables in the last week. Only 50 per cent families said they had oil every day. About 90 per cent did not have fruits in the last week. 2/3rd families said PDS is very important for them.

Madhuri – On the one hand we are afraid to highlight corruption in schemes such as PDS and those under NREGA as we are afraid that the government will shut these schemes. But at the same time, there is a need to address corruption in these schemes and find ways of reducing it.

Dithhi – Food coupons have come in MP and Bihar. The finance minister said that we will introduce food coupons in PDS. A tender was floated. Two companies made bids. Sudexo will issue meal passes which people will take to the PDS shop. Initially people will go to the fair price shop but later they will be told to go to the open market to get ration in exchange of the meal passes. We need to go to the ground and oppose these meal passes. Sudexo is a world-wide company which employs under waged employees. There is world-wide anti-Sudexo Campaign.

Ashok – Later on smart cards will come which people will be able to take to large super markets such as Reliance.

Kavita – What is emerging is a trend towards corporatisation of health, education and food.

Dipa - IDF has conducted the survey in Delhi. In MP the pilot will not stop ration but will just give cash to see how people use it. From the experience of plumpy nut, we have learnt that we need to have a comprehensive outlook.

From Chaupal - Bid for smart cards in Raipur is under way.

4. PDS Action Plan

4.1 Proposals by Jean

- Campaign should undertake one year programme at all levels on the PDS
- Reflect the impact of the campaign in the last one year. For instance, the dabba campaign outside the Planning Commission has had a nationwide impact.
- Universal PDS is being supported by many others including some economists
- Campaign has also not followed up on its decisions like meetings MPs, MLAs and chief ministers
- Link the dishonesty related to the BPL Census with issues of universal PDS, comprehensive food security act and cash transfers.
- Jharkhand RTFC gave the slogan of 'anaj doh jawab doh'.
- Protest outside the Parliament.

- People can reach till blocks. So we should have action at block-level. There are godowns at blocks, and we can do protests such as 'tala todo'. There can be block level discussions on rotting grains, cash transfers etc.
- At the village level there can be social audits of PDS shops
- At state level, delegations can meet CMs. Reetika has drafted a letter which groups can take with them when they go to meet CMs. Tell CMs that central government is planning to destroy the PDS. Many state governments are opposing cash transfers and the BPL census.
- At national level there should be a demonstration. Lobbying work should be strengthened. Meeting finance ministry, food ministry. How do we do continuous lobbying?
- Today we should think what we can do. Just like we did a call for action for mid-day meals, we should give a similar call for action for PDS and plan for activities for the next one year.
- We need to plan for a tool kit.
- All state campaigns should conduct state meetings.

4.2 Comments on the proposals for PDS Action Plan

Arundhati – NAPM is sitting in front of the Parliament from 3-5 August 2011. We would like the RTFC to be a part of this. We will focus on displacement, land, food, BPL, cash transfers and urban displacement.

Praveen – Protest in all the states should be on the same date. Media is not very interested in this issue any more.

Vandana – The Campaign needs to issue a statement on the BPL methodology. The Campaign needs to decide how to intervene in the issue of BPL census.

Jean – The decisions were to try and get a stay, a large coalition can be formed on this issue as it is of interest to many. In areas where the BPL census has started, we should go and see how the census is being conducted.

- At many places talas were broken. 5000 people participated in a rally and gave a memorandum. 6500 names were included in the BPL list. Government is planning to introduce poisonous food items, GM crops. We need to protest against this as well.
- State level public action on one day all over the country

Madhuri – I also agree with state level action as it is difficult for everybody to reach Delhi. If we get to know when the government draft is coming out, we should plan a big protest after the draft comes out. Regarding the Census, keeping in mind the weather, we will have to plan our action. We should collect case studies of people who have been excluded from the PDS.

What is the Campaign? There are many issues regarding what is the Campaign. We need to engage in dialogue with farmers group, trade unions, urban poor etc. Many people who have tremendous potential are not included in the Campaign. If we can establish the link that attack on PDS is also an attack on farming, many more people will join the campaign. If we are unable to do this, we will be restricting ourselves to NGOs.

Reetika – Photographs of families who should be in the BPL census but have been excluded should become postcards and along with their details should be sent to the PM.

Rajesh – begin today

Rakesh – I am remembering the NREGA yatra. Can we do something like that again? There is a need to involve many groups which are being left out. Holding workshops with media persons interested in the issue. Not using press conferences all the time. What was there before the RTFC? There are many groups, such as vendors who also need to be engaged with.

Raj Kishore – There are many families excluded from the PDS, such as primitive tribal groups in Orissa. Can there be any efforts for such people?

Gangabhai – Many deserving people who were excluded from the last BPL list were hopeful of getting included in the new BPL list. But in fact many people who currently have a BPL card will lose it in the new BPL survey. We should work at panchayat level, get gram panchayats to pass resolutions. Dharnas and rallies should be more at the block level. Those who have been excluded from the BPL list will come for such protests in large numbers.

Arundhati – State level public action on cash transfers and BPL. The former is long term. Land, agriculture and PDS need to be taken together in the States. NFFWFP, NTUI, AILA, BKU, AIPWA, AIDWA and NAPM are planning to do a convention in September/October. 8 July 2011 – protest in 13 districts against cash transfers in various parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Dipa – We should plan dates, Action Week or Action Day. Dabbas should be given. We should have a media group because our outreach to the media has not been very strong. Now is a good time to explore AIDWA's engagement in the Campaign. How do we reach out to more people?

Vandana – Can we talk a little more concretely. What can we do to strengthen the Campaign? We also need to spell out the responsibility of the secretariat and the steering group. There are some friends who would like to be a part of the Campaign. Holding meetings to sort out issues. I am willing to meet AIDWA to bring them in the Campaign.

Dhiti – We have not been able to incorporate many of our affiliates in the RTFC. We can take initiatives in states on RTF issues such as cash transfers, PDS and bring in all kinds of people. If we can have issue based meetings. I will send a list of states with dates.

Ashok – A Campaign statement should be issued after today's meeting on BPL census and exports. Issue based teams and timelines should be decided. We can get a very large list of stakeholders. We should decide in which areas mock BPL surveys should take place. All state campaigns should take guidance from PDS in Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh to draw proposals for universalisation.

Balram – Fix a timeline from village to national (Delhi). Make it an issue of the gram sabha of 15 August. Take out an appeal /letter to the gram sabhas on the BPL and cash transfer issue. Meeting with MLAs and MPs like we did when PRIs elections were not happening. Let us write to the PM, CM and the President, the kind of speech he/she should make with regard to these issues. The Campaign slows down when there is no event. The Campaign functions on the strength of only a few people.

Sumitra

- There is a need for small and marginal farmers to join the Campaign.
- Begin a dialogue with the BPL excluded groups
- Gram sabha is where the BPL lists are passed so we must make it an issue in the gram sabhas. Make it an item on the agenda. This will have an impact at the State level too.
- Fishing communities, Salt Pan workers will be excluded in this survey.

Baljeet

- There should be an awareness Campaign at national level like the NREGA yatra.

Madhuri (from Chhattisgarh)

- The expanded coverage has also excluded many people who we need to get in. We will mobilise this group and try getting them in.
- The State may try to mobilise people for cash transfers.
- Work with the Left political parties, adivasi Maha Sabha, Gondwana

Lali

- On 27-28 July 2011 national level meeting of Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan where I will share issues of Right to Food.
- ENSS will carry out a BPL survey trial amongst single women

Jyoti (Rashtryia Viklang Manch)

- Rashtriya Viklang Manch would like to carry a postcard campaign.
- Will do the BPL trials with disabled people in the States.
- Can bring 1000 people to the State level rally.

Praveen

- Will give the list of the State people of the Rashtriya Viklang Manch to the RTFC secretariat. Contact us on email or them directly on the phone.
- Mass awareness needs to be done on the BPL issue. Articles in newspapers
- Mobile technology is a successful device for contacting the public including persons with disabilities.
- Women's rights movements have failed to look at women with disabilities.
- People's take on the issue of disabled children beyond the food entitlement. The cost of bringing up a dalit or adivasi child is higher.

Manas

- Can we prepare a note which can be distributed amongst farmer groups? Farmers in Orissa oppose Rs2/kg rice and NREGA.
- Talking to different interest groups on BPL census such as fishermen, people with disabilities. People with only one functional eye are not considered disabled. Dalit muslims and Dalit Christians are also not considered as Dalits in the BPL census.
- Rourkela convention mailing list is a large group. This list can be used for state meetings. Even if state campaigns have not been strengthened, people who came for the convention can be invited for the state meetings.

Chandan

- PIL on the BPL census
- Interaction with media persons

Sudha (From Karnataka Right to Food Campaign)

- Low awareness level regarding BPL census and cash transfer at village level. We want to increase the level of this awareness
- Awareness through gram sabhas.
- Joint rally with AWWs and others
- Making a memorandum and giving it to District Collector and CM
- Trying to interact with the media

Harsingh Bhai Jamre from JADS

- Gram sabha should be the platform where enumeration happens as well as the finalisation of lists should take place

Sachin Jain

- Bus yatra / yatra through the States
- The BPL discourse must begin at the local level as local issues can then be connected.
- Dialogue on this with MPs and MLAs.
- Perspective papers in English and Hindi should be published. Need to work on this in a focussed manner.
- Since there are technical issues involved can we do trainings on this. Like CCTs, flour, BPL survey. These are very complex issues. It requires capacity building for which trainings are required.
- Begin with a national training. I and one another person to take responsibility for this.
- Malnutrition and children's issues are the basis of our work, but direct intervention with them always gets marginalised.

Ankita

- On behalf of the secretariat, I would like to request that those who have access to email should reply on emails as the secretariat ends up spending a lot of time on making calls
- State campaigns should mail photographs, memoranda, reports to the secretariat so that we can circulate it on RTF updates and upload them on the website.
- Most of our documents are there on the website. There is a need to strengthen the Hindi section.

Arundhati

There is a need to prepare a parcha which is written in simple language can be circulated

Reetika

On 2 June 2011 there was a letter by 40 eminent economists who were talking about universal entitlement and cash transfer. Maybe Campaign members must write to these economists about the PDS not being as leaky as it is made out to be.

Madhuri

It is debatable how leaky the PDS is. Maybe we can compare the corruption in PDS with other types of corruption. With the Government now coming upfront to destroy whatever little of agriculture support and food support that it was providing, by bringing in issues like cash transfer, it was important for the right to food campaign to talk about the perspective and discuss it threadbare. Politically we need to fight these issues by taking these discussions to the people. We do not go beyond courts and other lobbying. We need to take on the issue of imperialism through the issue of cash transfers. World Bank talked of shutting the PDS 15 years ago. She felt that our Even our survey and reports too need to keep that perspective while analysing our ground reports. we needed to develop a fresh vision on how we planned to take on this new assault. We need to first articulate our vision. We need to talk about the policies affecting food and the politics behind these policies. The Campaign needs to take up issues such as GM food.

Jean

We need to make time for the issues raised by Madhuri but this session is for suggesting concrete plans of action for the next few months.

Madhuri

What we speak in meetings, rallies is an important aspect of the Action Plan.

Balram

The tone of the last two days has not been different from what Madhuri is suggesting the Campaign should do. We have talked about how to strengthen and broaden the Campaign. Despite various flaws in the Campaign, the Campaign has to be given credit for giving all its constituents the freedom to carry out whatever action they want to do at whatever levels.

Ashok – let us understand that there are very different kinds of participants in the Campaign. We are located in a broader political context. We are working more at the national level, with media but not much at the ground level.

Kavita – I would like to request all to take a few responsibilities. There is full agreement about the ‘baymaani’ being done in the name of the BPL survey. Madhuri should write about this. Now we are talking about farmers, universal PDS, corporatisation of agriculture. Is it possible for the Campaign to sit with NAPM on 8, 9, 10 August 2011? Under whose name would the dharna take place? Can we have a joint planning meeting for 8, 9, 10 August 2011?

Madhuri – Those who will not be able to reach Delhi, can they sit in their states?

5. Decisions taken

5.1 Regarding distribution of grain in the 150 poorest districts

- Write an application to the court
- Write a letter to Justice Wadhwa
- Collect information about starvation deaths in the 150 districts and file them in the Supreme Court
- Monitoring with State governments on lifting grains allotted to them and its distribution in the districts.

5.2 Regarding BPL Census 2011

- Campaign to issue a statement on the BPL Census 2011
- Try to get a stay on BPL Census 2011
- Visit areas where the BPL Census has started, such as Tripura and gather information about how the Census is being conducted
- Conduct mock BPL surveys to find out about the types of deserving poor that will get excluded from the BPL list (preferably by July). Document case studies of such families that will get excluded from the BPL list. This will require training.
- Postcard campaign to the PM and CMs comprising of photographs and other details of deserving families excluded from the BPL list.
- Manas will write the draft note on the BPL Census for the Campaign by 7 July 2011 and Ashokji will send a brief parcha in hindi.

5.3 Regarding the PDS Action Plan

- Campaign should undertake a one year programme at all levels on the PDS
- As people can reach till blocks, there should be block-level action. There are godowns at blocks, and we can do protests such as 'tala todo'. There can be block level discussions on rotting grains, cash transfers etc.
- At the village level there can be social audits of PDS shops
- At state level, delegations to meet CMs and MPs. Reetika has drafted a letter which groups can take with them when they go to meet CMs. Secretariat to circulate this letter in Hindi and English
- At national level there should be a demonstration. Lobbying work should be strengthened. Meeting finance ministry, food ministry. How do we do continuous lobbying?
- Just like we did a call for action for mid-day meals, we should give a similar call for action for PDS.
- All state campaigns should conduct state meetings.
- On 3, 4 and 5 August 2011 –NAPM will sit on dharna in front of Parliament for issues regarding urban and rural displacement, land, BPL Census, cash transfers and PDS in which the Right to Food Campaign will also participate. Need to write a parcha for this
- 8-15 August 2011 Action Week at State, district and block levels
- Making BPL lists an issue to be discussed in the gram sabhas. To get all gram sabhas to reject the BPL survey.
- Tala kholo abhiyan at block level
- A yatra, maybe in the form of a bus yatra like the one that happened for NREGA
- Postcard campaign on PDS to PM and CMs - what should be the vocabulary of the Campaign?
- Dabba campaign to agitate against the Planning Commission's poverty line
- Booklet containing material on cash transfers, analysis of BPL and ICDS reforms
- Primer on PDS – Manas and Anuradha
- Parchas on ration – Manas, Ulka and Jean/Reetika
- Parcha on BPL census – Ashok Khandelwal
- Kavita Kurughanti, Madhuri, Dhiti, Radha Holla to write a perspective piece on corporatisation in food
- A media committee of the Campaign should be constituted
- 25 November 2011 rally to the Parliament
- Delegations to meet different groups, such as farmers groups, trade unions, AIDWA

- LECTURES AT THE NATIONAL AND STATE AND DISTRICT LEVEL ON The theme of ATTACK ON FARMERS, AGRICULTURE AND The PDS. So that the linkages can be exposed

5.4 Regarding National Food Security Act

It was felt that as soon as the Government draft would be out there should be a meeting and statement. This should also be connected to the protest outside the Parliament from 3rd to 5th August, 2011 as well as between 8th to 15th August in action at village, block, State level.

Appendix 1 List of participants

S. No.	Name	Organisation
1.	Lali Devi Dhakar	Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan
2.	Vandana Prasad	JSA / PHRN
3.	Arundhati Dhuru	NAPM
4.	Ulka Mahajan	NAPM
5.	Baljeet	NFIW
6.	Kumud Singh	NFIW, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
7.	Dithhi	NTUI
8.	Kavita Srivastava	PUCL
9.	Narendra Rathore	Madhya Pradesh Viklang manch, Khandawa
10.	Ravindra Rathore	Madhya Pradesh Viklang manch, Khandawa
11.	Kailash Septa	Madhya Pradesh Viklang manch, Khandawa
12.	Jean Drèze	Allahabad University
13.	Chandan	Right to Food Campaign, Assam / People's Rights Forum
14.	Madhuri Shukla	Right to Food Campaign, Chhattisgarh
15.	Gangaram Paikara	Right to Food Campaign, Chhattisgarh
16.	Sumitra Thakkar	Right to Food Campaign, Gujarat / Anandi
17.	Volvi Rajesh Bhaif	Right to Food Campaign, Gujarat / ASSA Gujarat
18.	Balram	Right to Food Campaign, Jharkhand
19.	Narasimhappa TV	Right to Food Campaign, Karnataka
20.	Pushpalatta M	Right to Food Campaign, Karnataka / DBM Karnataka
21.	Sachin Jain	Advisor Madhya Pradesh
22.	Amruta Paradkar	Right to Food Campaign, Maharashtra
23.	PN Chavan	Right to Food Campaign, Maharashtra
24.	Ashok Khandelwal	Advisor, Rajasthan
25.	Rajkishor Mishra	Advisor Campaign, Odisha / Odisha Khadya Adhikar Abhiyan
26.	Manas Ranjan	Right to Food Campaign, Odisha / Odisha Khadya Adhikar Abhiyan
27.	Harsingh Jamray	Jagrat Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Badwani
28.	Magan Mujalday	Jagrat Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Badwani
29.	Valsingh Sastay Nimbi	Jagrat Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Badwani
30.	Madhuri	Jagrat Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Badwani / NTUI
31.	Lakshman Singh Munia	Lok Jagriti Manch / Sampark Madhya Pradesh, Jhabua
32.	Siddharth	Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
33.	Rakesh	Madhya Pradesh
34.	Reetika Khera	IIT Delhi
35.	Dipa Sinha	JNU
36.	Biraj Patnaik	Supreme Court Commissioners Office
37.	Mohseen	Right to Food Campaign Secretariat
38.	Ankita	Right to Food Campaign Secretariat
39.	Praveen	Rashtriya Vikalang Manch, N Delhi

