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Malnutrition – A Business Opportunity for State Cooperative Dairy Federations (SCDFs)

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ABSTRACT

Under-nutrition has been a biggest problem in developing countries since 20th century. High economic growth never solved this problem, in fact fruits of the growth never reached to downtrodden people. Malnutrition affects human resource quality and its productivity; in turn it affects economic growth also. Despite of government schemes the problem remained the same. It requires an integrated approach to solve the problem. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one such approach in which corporate houses recognize and try to contribute to overcome the social problems. In India 23 state cooperative dairy federations are controlled by state governments. Instead of spending huge amounts on some schemes if governments mind to provide subsidized nutritional milk and milk products through the network of the state cooperative federations it would control under-nutrition to certain extent.

Keywords : Malnutrition, CSR, Government, State Cooperative Dairy Federations

INTRODUCTION

"The problem of malnutrition is a matter of national shame", "Despite impressive growth in our G.D.P., the level of under-nutrition in the country is unacceptably high" (Manmohan Singh). The prevalence of underweight children under five years of age in the developing countries was 46.5% in 1970. Nearly 50% of children under 5 in the India were underweight, suffering from malnutrition and nearly 60% are stunted (HungaMa Report). The report, by Naandi foundation a group of non-governmental organisations, conducted the Hunger and Malnutrition Survey, surveyed and monitored 73,000 households over 100,000 children and talk to 74,000 mothers in 112 districts across 9 states in the country from October 2010 to February 2011. UNICEF' (United Nations Children's Fund)'s latest data say 33% of the world's malnourished children younger than 3 lives in India, a rate worse than sub-Saharan Africa. India's maternal mortality rates in rural areas are among the highest in the world. Child malnutrition is an appropriate poverty indicator (Sununtar S 2005) it is obviously true that 50% of Indian population lies below poverty line. Some of these findings are not new. India ranked 67 among 84 countries on the 2010 Global Hunger Index, behind many sub-Saharan countries. Indian policy makers admit that access to food remains a challenge for vast sections of the population despite several government programs which include the world's largest free, school-meal program. Reducing these unacceptably high numbers remains a tremendous challenge to public policy. Developing countries have made great strides in reducing child mal nutrition over the past few decades. The high levels of hunger have prompted the government to introduce an ambitious Food Security Bill which promises cheaper food grains to 66% of the country's population. At the end of 2011, the government tabled a landmark bill aimed at guaranteeing cheap food for more than 50% of the country's population. Indian lawmakers are in heated debate over the costs and social benefits of broadly expanding the country's subsidized food program.

Malnutrition: When a person is not getting enough food or not getting the right sort of food, malnutrition is just around the corner. Even if people get enough to eat, they will become malnourished if the food they eat does not provide the proper amounts of micronutrients - vitamins and minerals - to meet daily nutritional requirements. Malnutrition is the largest single contributor to disease, according to the UN's Standing

Committee on Nutrition (SCN). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), malnutrition is the gravest single threat to global public health. Malnutrition at an early age leads to reduced physical and mental development during childhood. Stunting, for example, affects more than 147 million pre-schoolers in developing countries, according to SCN's World Nutrition Situation 5th report. Iodine deficiency, the same report shows, is the world's greatest single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Under-nutrition affects school performance and studies have shown it often leads to a lower income as an adult. It also causes women to give birth to low birth-weight babies. The article focuses more on the under-nutrition aspect of malnutrition, rather than over-nutrition. Sub-nutrition occurs when an individual does not consume enough food. It may exist if the person has a poor diet that gives them the wrong balance of basic food groups. The causes of child malnutrition are complex, multidimensional, and inter related. However main reason is poverty.

ORIGIN OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

India is challenging the difficulties in reducing poverty and hunger among its 1.2 billion people, despite healthy economic growth over the last decade. India's economy has boomed, with growth over the last few years averaging about 8%, but the country's development indicators continue to be extremely bad. Malnutrition levels are especially high in India's poorest and most heavily populated states. The extensive food subsidy program that India already operates allocates grain and kerosene to the poor. However, Government could not rely solely on some schemes like the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) - India's largest nutritional programme - to tackle malnutrition. There is need for a more integrated approach towards tackling hunger in the country. One of the important approaches is through corporate social responsibility (CSR). Every business firm, whether Government undertaking or Private Firm, must recognize their social responsibility and contribute to overcome social evils. Through their social responsibility firms can also find a business opportunity. Since Milk is a good source of calcium milk consumption can reduce malnutrition to some extent. Here is the business opportunity for state cooperative dairy federations (SCDFs) to expand their business rural segment. Since the urban market growth is almost stagnant. The entry of private Dairies in urban market posed the competition. SCDFs have to enter into rural segment before the Private Dairies

entering into it. SCDFs can use their existing network to market its processed packed milk. SCDFs can solve their market problem in solving social problem. Malnutrition levels are especially high in rural India, in India's poorest and most heavily populated states. There are 23 state cooperative dairy federations are located in different parts of the country in order to facilitate the production, distribution and sale of milk and milk products. If Government would mind to make use of these dairy federations it can provide milk to every village children at subsidized price. So that malnutrition can be controlled to some extent. Since Rural women working in agricultural and other labor activities most of the time away from the home she may not find enough time to feed her children if SCDFs come out with bottle milk with nutrition flavor at low price it helps to feed rural children.

Poverty and food prices: Poverty and food prices are the obvious reasons for under-nutrition in developing countries. It is not that sufficient food is not available but people are unaffordable to have the food. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has estimated that 80% of malnourished children living in the developing world live in countries that produce food surpluses. The economist Amartya Sen observed that, in recent decades, food crisis has always a problem of food distribution and poverty, as there has been sufficient food to feed the whole population of the world. He states that malnutrition and food crises were more related to problems of food distribution and purchasing power.

STATE COOPERATIVE DAIRY FEDERATIONS

India has become the world's No. 1 milk producing country; the annual rate of growth in milk production in India is between 5 to 6%, against the world's at 1%. In 2010-11, India produced 121 million tonne of milk, which is close to 17% of global milk production. During the year, dairy cooperatives collected 9.6 million tonnes of milk, a growth of around 1% over last year. Liquid milk marketing by cooperatives increased by around 4% over the previous year and was about 8.2 million tonne in 2010-11. Presently, more than 80% of milk produced is flowing into the unorganized sector, which requires proper channelization. The steep rise in the growth pattern has been attributed to a sustained expansion in domestic demand. India's annual milk production has more than trebled in the last 30 years. This rapid growth and modernization is largely credited to the contribution of dairy cooperatives. NDDB has also announced that the first phase of the National Dairy Plan (NDP) will be implemented in early 2012. NDP is a scientifically planned multi-state initiative proposed with a 15 year horizon with an estimated investment of around Rs 17,300 crore aimed at increasing domestic milk production.

In India 23 SCDFs are located in different parts of the country in order to facilitate the production, distribution and sale of milk and milk products. India has more than 1 lakh organized primary village dairy cooperatives at present with an aggregate membership of 1.1 crore producers. These primaries are federated into 170 district cooperative milk unions. In the Indian context of poverty and malnutrition, milk has a special role to play for its many nutritional advantages. Since the demand in the urban market is rapidly increasing all the dairies focus only on urban customers, increasingly affluent middle class. With so many newcomers entering this industry, competition is becoming tougher day by day. Of course the market is large enough for many to carve out their niche. However, the private dairies also focus only on urban market this leads the state cooperative dairies to think of market diversification into

rural market in the future because potential market for state cooperative dairies also lies at the bottom of the pyramid. The addition of infant foods, geriatric foods and nutritionals will be the better opportunities for the state cooperative dairies. State cooperative dairies established with mission to satisfy the taste and nutritional requirements of the customers and to see that every citizen becomes healthy by consuming good quality of milk. However, it is very unfortunate that state cooperative dairies totally ignored the rural consumers. There are people who suffer from under-nutrition who really need nutritional milk and milk products in rural market. If state cooperative dairies develop and distribute nutritional milk and milk products to rural consumers in small quantity for example 250ml packed milk at subsidized price, it is possible to reduce malnutrition to some extent. SCDFs can use their distribution network to market specially developed nutritional milk and milk products and they can also make use Public Distribution System, Midday Meal Scheme in Primary and High schools, Grama Panchayat Offices at villages and rural retail outlets.

SCHEMES FOR DAIRY DEVELOPMENT FROM GOI

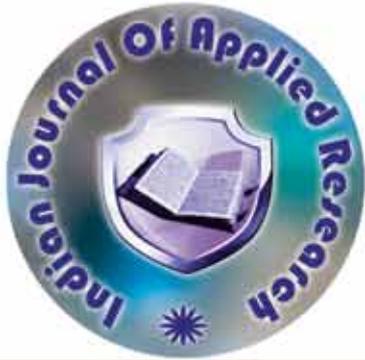
Government of India had been implementing various dairy development schemes since 1993-94 and is presently implementing Centrally Sponsored schemes "Intensive Dairy Development Programme", "Strengthening Infrastructure of Quality & Clean Milk Production", Central Sector schemes "Assistance to Cooperatives" & "Dairy/Poultry Venture Capital Fund" with focused objectives. Government is also envisaging implementing a scheme "National Project for Cattle and Buffalo Breeding" for genetic improvement of cattle and buffalo to increase the productivity. Government is also examining launching of a National Dairy Plan with an outlay of more than Rs 17000 crores spread for over a period of 15 years to enhance average incremental production of milk from 2.5 million tones to 5 million tones annually. This is being envisaged through increasing productivity, expanding infrastructure for procurement, processing, marketing and quality assurance. Simultaneously the Government has launched a new scheme called Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) with a massive investment of Rs 25,000 crore for the next 4 to 5 years to promote agriculture and allied sectors. Since SCDFs are well supported by government by spending public money SCDFs must think of contributing to the social problem like under-nutrition. SCDFs have to develop nutritional milk and milk products and market through their strong distribution network to rural people and to the people come under Below Poverty line at subsidized price to overcome under-nutrition problem in India.

CONCLUSION

The study makes the policymakers/Government to think about making appropriate policy in association with state cooperative dairy federations. It makes the state cooperative dairy federations to make mind to understand rural segment, to develop a suitable product and to design appropriate marketing strategies. The study helps the rural people to access good quality milk at right time regularly at subsidized price, in the process overcome malnutrition problem. Millions of rural people living in India are below poverty line and they are not getting quality food especially the rural children suffering from under-nutrition are not accessible to milk. Rural consumers are not affordable to buy packed nutritional milk at market price. Therefore the government intervention requires for proper channelization of milk and milk products through state cooperative dairies at subsidized price.

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