

Draft

Best Practice

Home Delivery of PDS Ration in Bhiwani District

I. Best Practice: Home Delivery of PDS Ration in Bhiwani District

Introduction

After the Pan-India lockdown was announced by the Honorable Prime Minister of India, the entire country went into a frizzy. The worst affected due to the COVID-19 lockdown in the country were the poor and the marginalized. The complete closure of all activities deprived them of their daily earning wages and purchasing essentials. The government immediately realized grimness of the situation and initiated action to ensure that food and other essentials are provided to the daily-wage labourers, slum dwellers and unregistered workers, etc. It was also announced that the ration for BPL/AAY/OPH families/card holders is to be provided free of cost for the month of April 2020. The authorities of Bhiwani realized that two aspects are crucial to manage distribution of ration

- First, it needs to be distributed at the earliest possible to eliminate all hardships faced by the card-holders,
- Second, the ration needs to be delivered at the doorsteps of 1,36,809 cardholders to avoid crowds at PDS outlets during lockdown for maintaining social distance and avoid spread of the COVID-19 is avoided.

The Deputy Commissioner, Bhiwani immediately called a meeting to take stock of the situation in all its aspects. It was decided that the depot holders would hire vehicles for home delivery of ration and the cost of transportation will be borne by the administration. The target was to distribute all the entitlements of BPL/AAY/OPH card-holders (**1, 36,809**) in the district by the first week of April. The number of BPL cardholders is 48,812, with 14,008 AAY and 73,989 OPH cardholders. The task was a big challenge particularly in view of the paucity of time and lockdown restrictions.

This document gives details about the best practice adopted by Bhiwani District for home delivery of PDS ration. But before that, we need to understand why the need for home delivery arose in these shelter homes.

Need for Home Delivery of Ration

Complete restriction on movement in the wake of lockdown affected the marginalized sections such as BPL/AAY/OPH families, the daily wagers and the slum dwellers all the more, since they depend for their food grain requirements on the PDS outlets. These outlets had to be closed down to avoid overcrowding and enforce social distance as the primary safety measure. In these grave circumstances the district administration took upon itself the responsibility to make the provisions available to these vulnerable people, who included many old and physically challenged, at their doorstep.

Implementation on the Ground

Throughout the district, this exercise was carried out in the first week of April. It started delivery of food items from PDS shops to homes of roughly 90 per cent cardholders.

After getting the mandates, The District Food & Supply Controller (DFSC) called a departmental meeting inviting all field officers/ staff including the 453 depot holders and evolved a strategy and methodology to set precedence for the process of home delivery. Step-wise cadence was set for each officer/official along with depot holders to achieve the targets well before the time limit. Comprehensive Data sheets consisting of contact details, individual responsibilities, vehicle



numbers, names of helpers assigned and lists of card-holders to cover were mapped for monitoring as well as smooth distribution of ration across all the eight blocks in the district. In addition, the Gram Panchayats were requested to take up the responsibility for spreading the



information to the cardholders to stay indoors and that the ration will be delivered to their homes.

The distribution of ration was undertaken on a war footing since the entire population of BPL/AAY/ OHP had to be covered. Some of the depot holders were allowed to deploy two vehicles in case of high number of card-holders. The depot holders were asked not to wait for all the commodities to arrive for the distribution to start. They were to start the operation with the



distribution of available commodities immediately. The permissions and temporary ID cards required to commute during the lockdown were delivered to the depot holders by the field staff.

Key Implementers and Collaborators

Besides handing out clear instructions the Deputy Commissioner himself worked closely with the District Food and Supplies Controller to ensure timely and efficient delivery to the poor. The DFSC roped in officials from Food and Drug Administration Department for execution of the strategy. Field officials were instructed to work in close association with the 453 depot holders, who made the backbone of the entire scheme. Gram Panchayats were also asked to spread proper awareness about the scheme. Field officers/officials were in constant touch with the depot holders of their respective areas, reviewing the stock and working to replenish the needs and demands of the PDS shops regularly.

Resource Implications

The scheme necessitated use of transport vehicles to deliver the ration at door steps. So, the depot holders were asked to arrange different vehicles, including 2-wheelers for short distances, auto-rickshaws for large number of card-holders in a single area and tractors/trolleys where the area to be covered was very large. Two helpers per depot holder were assigned for the weighing and distribution of ration. The personnel from District Food and Supplies Controller, District Food and Supply Officers, Assistant DFSSO, Inspectors/Sub-Inspectors of Food & Civil Supplies Department and other field level staff made success of this initiative. No new person was

recruited to work and monitor this work. Volunteers were also engaged to help in the ration-delivery process who worked selflessly with no expenditure to the administration.

Outcomes

Within seven days, roughly 90 per cent of the PDS ration was delivered to the doorsteps without defeating the purpose of lockdown. The process ensured that social distancing is not violated. In the normal routine, it takes more than 25 days in a month to dispense this much of PDS quantity. As a result of these concerted efforts, the mission 'Home Delivery of Ration to all AAY/BPL/OPH families/ cardholders' could reach 75 per cent card holders within four days.

A total of 1,20,306 ration cardholders (more than 90%) were covered under this initiative. Quantities of different commodities delivered in a week stand at:

Wheat-- 2833MT

Sugar-- 43 MT

Mustard Oil -- 28021 Lt

The target given by the Government was achieved under the able leadership of Dy. Commissioner, Bhiwani. The entire record of available ration of PDS distribution is maintained online. The distribution data is visible and is reported daily to the DC office.

Lesson Learnt

- Daily morning meetings are important to synchronise target and efforts
- Personal influence of DFSC was a key factor to convince depot holders to initiate home delivery at their level
- The DFSC led his team by example himself. Teamwork and dedication in difficult situation sets example for others.
- The glitches and problems were resolved by the DFSC and field Inspector/sub-inspector were authorized to take decision in the field. The distribution of ration could be worked out on minimum the costs by motivating the depot holders to bear transportation cost as their contribution to the lockdown services to community.
- The active cooperation of distributors and their humane attitude ensured that timelines were adhered.
- With all these positives, it took just under a fortnight to stabilize the process for achieving desired results.

Conclusion

Every month, thousands of people depend upon PDS ration throughout the district. During corona disaster, there was a precarious situation because most of the poor and the daily wagers had lost their jobs temporarily and nowhere to go for their supply of ration. This urgency was

identified early and the PM's objective of 'promoting home delivery wherever possible' was achieved. Fast pace of distribution of PDS ration at homes was unprecedented in the entire state. In this tough time, this intervention could restrain undue movement, save people from starvation and prohibit the hazard of virus spread big time. That is why, it can be considered to be a 'best practice'.

Recommendations

Following steps may be taken to streamline and standardize the process:

1. Attitude of officer in charge (DFSC here in case)
2. Practical solutions to problems like using cars, e-rickshaws, carts etc. for remote areas for food distribution.
3. Daily targets, feedback, course-correction by streamlining the process
4. Proper planning and duty allocation to responsible team members for completion of work.

List of references/ source documents / persons

- Sh. Anil Kalra (DFSC, Bhiwani)
- District Administration report on home delivery of PDS ration.