

**QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT:  
BENEFICIARY NUTRITIONAL STATUS  
AND PERFORMANCE OF ICDS  
SUPPLEMENTARY NUTRITION  
PROGRAM IN BIHAR**

Discussant

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# What the paper does?

- Evaluate the ICDS SNP across 3 districts in Bihar
- Surveyors made unannounced visits to 200 AWCs
- Strong evidence of leakage
  - More than 50% of funds do not reach beneficiaries
  - Poor nutritional quality of meals, poor attendance of staff and children, poor learning, etc,

# Paper addresses a very important and relevant question

- Bihar is an ideal case to study the effect of these programs
  - Alarming malnutrition levels (greater than all-India average)
- Mid-day meal scheme: 23 children die in Bihar
- 66 girls ill in Tamil Nadu after eating mid-day meal

# Methodology: caveats


- Evidence from 3 districts cannot be generalized.
- Descriptive ..
- Can't draw any causal implications
  - Low nutrition levels cannot be “because” of AWC performance

# Results not surprising

- Plenty of evidence of leakages in government programs (Planning Commission, 2011)

# What is surprising is ...

- ICDS running for more than 35 years !
- Still huge leakages.
- The program is not working ....



Big question: flawed design of these programs in general?



# Four fundamental issues in the design of these programs

- Incentives to the staff to perform?
- Information
  - Beneficiaries have no idea about their entitlements
- No grievance redressal for beneficiaries
- No proper framework for appointment/removal of AWC staff



# *Top-down/command control approach unlikely to work*

- Incentives for Sahayikas and Sevikas
  - Chattisgarh PDS works as ration shop agent gets a commission
- Massive information campaign to educate the beneficiaries
  - Demand pull system could be self enforcing
    - Demand from beneficiaries for monitoring
- Quick grievance redressal
- Rethink framework for appointment/removal



**THANK YOU**