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

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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