

Four districts come under 'geography of hunger'

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Four districts of the State, Kandhamal, Malkangiri, Gajapati and Rayagada, have come under the 'geography of hunger'. The four districts require urgent and sustained attention. Similarly, Kandhamal, Gajapati, Rayagada and Nabarangpur are found to be 'extremely insecure' in terms of Food Security Index.

This startling figure found place in the newly launched Food Security Atlas of Rural Orissa. This report is prepared by the Institute of Human Development on behalf of the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP).

Releasing the atlas in the Utkal University Campus on Saturday, Planning Commission member Abhijeet Sen said during the last decade because of

the sustained effort, the economic condition of KBK area has been improved. However, other districts slips into the poverty zone, he added.

It has been found that every 11th child in the State dies before reaching the age of five. Orissa is one of the five States in the country where under-five mortality is higher than 90 per 1000 live births.

Under five mortality is alarming high in the State. Except Mayurbhanj and Jharsuguda, all the districts in the State have under-five mortality higher than 100 per 1000 live births.

Kandhamal, Gajapati, Rayagada and Malkangiri have under five mortality higher than 160 with more than half on their children being underweight. Similarly, 46 per cent of

children under three in the State are underweight, 40 per cent are stunted while 20 per cent children are wasted.

More than five million suffer from calorie under-nourishment. Protein consumption in the State is as low as 48 gm which compares poorly with the national average of 57 grams. More than 15 million people in rural Orissa live below the official poverty line, constituting 47 per cent of State's rural population which is higher than any other State.

Agricultural productivity in the State in general is very low, with only the coastal districts having higher productivity due to higher irrigation. Rural connectivity is very poor in Kandhamal, Malkangiri, Koraput, Gajapati, Rayagada

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and Boudh. More than 2/3rd of their villages don't have access to paved roads.

People in Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Malkangiri have the lowest access to food. They spend less than Rs 250 person per month on consumption, which is below the national expenditure level.

The poor literacy among rural females (less than 20 per cent) adds to food insecurity. Wages rate for rural casual labour is very low in the State and is further lower (below Rs 30) in the northern districts, which is less than half of the national minimum wages.

Less than half of the population in the State has access to primary health facilities. The situation is still worse in most of the northern districts and in the southern districts of Rayagada, Malakangiri, Kandhamal and Gajapati where less than 20 per cent of the population have access to primary health cares. Every 3rd rural household in the State does not have access to safe drinking water exposing them to water borne disease, Cholera and diarrhoea are rampant in such districts.

Among others WFP representative and Country Director for India Mihoko Tamamura, Chief Secretary Ajit Kumar Tripathy, Secretary, Food and Civil Supply RK Sharma, Secretary, Women and Child Development Mona Sharma, Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University Dr Binayak Rath, eminent social activist Prof Radhamohan and others spoke on the occasion.

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