

Frugal Innovation in Robin Hood Army: A Case Study For Zero Waste of Food

Management Insight
15(2) 67 - 70

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21844/mijia.15.2.8>

Ritu*

Correspondence Email: ritu@ndimdelhi.org

Abstract

"Higher economic growth has not been fully translated into higher food consumption, let alone better diets overall."

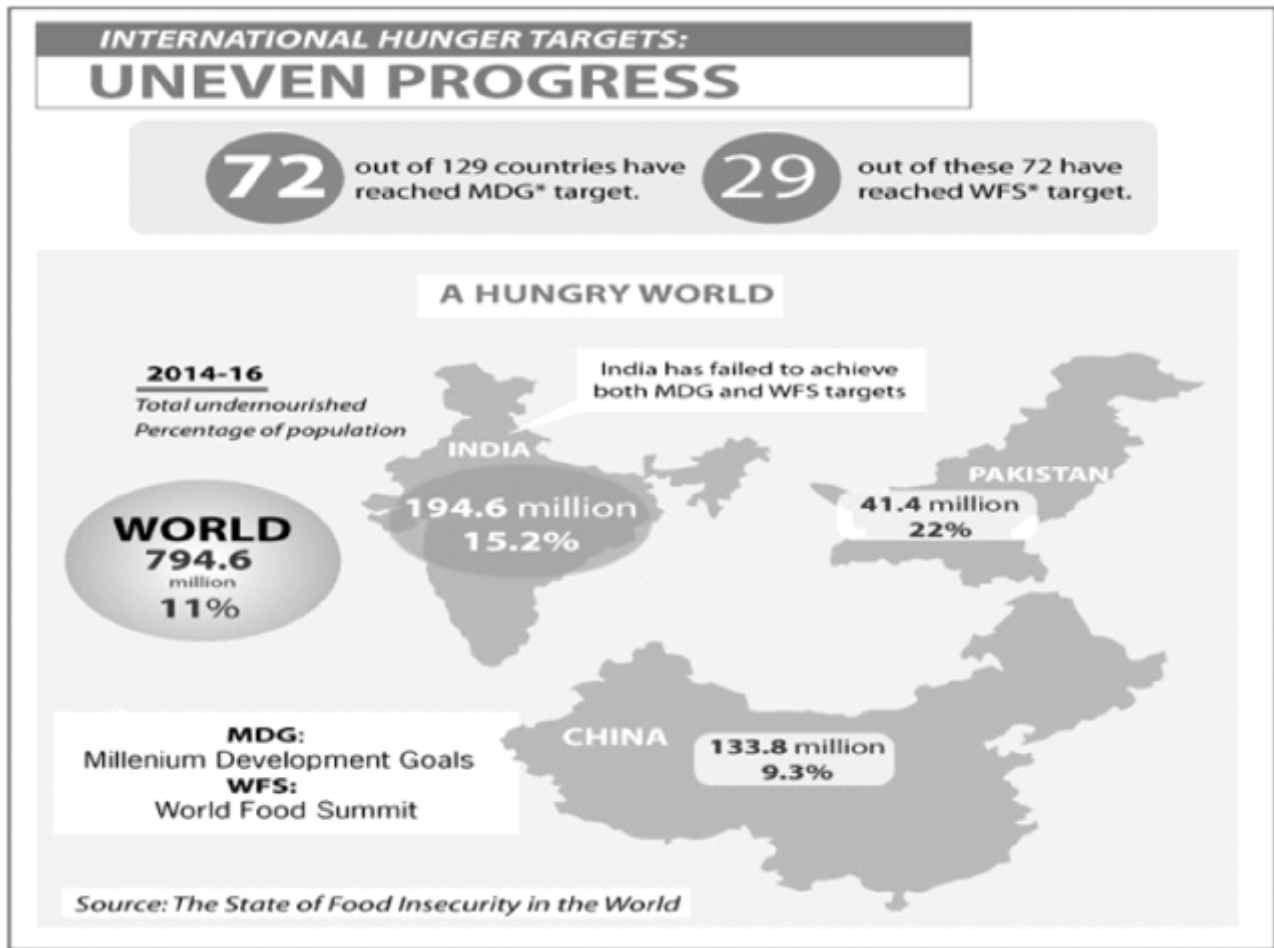
India is home to 194.6 million undernourished people, the highest in the world, according to the annual report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations .This translates into over 15 per cent of India's population, exceeding China in both absolute numbers and proportion of malnourished people in the country's population. "Higher economic growth has not been fully translated into higher food consumption, let alone better diets overall, suggesting that the poor and hungry may have failed to benefit much from overall growth," says the report The State of Food Insecurity in the World. The report suggests that this is a result of growth not being inclusive. Rural people make up a high percentage of the hungry and malnourished in developing countries, and efforts to promote growth in agriculture and the rural sector can be an important component of a strategy for promoting inclusive growth .In India, the extended food distribution programme has contributed to a positive outcome, Solution to hunger in India. Robin Hood Army(RHA), the Indian non-profit organization that serves surplus food from restaurants and weddings to the hungry, RHA was founded in Delhi in 2014 with just five people who served 150 people on their first drive. Today, RHA is operational in 158 cities across 9 countries with 40,000 active volunteers and has served 25 million people so far.

Keywords: *Robin hood army, RHA, surplus , food distribution*

Higher economic growth has not been fully translated into higher food consumption, let alone better diets overall."

India is home to 194.6 million undernourished people, the highest in the world, according to the annual report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

*Professor Marketing, New Delhi Institute of Management



This translates into over 15 per cent of India's population, exceeding China in both absolute numbers and proportion of malnourished people in the country's population. "Higher economic growth has not been fully translated into higher food consumption, let alone better diets overall, suggesting that the poor and hungry may have failed to benefit much from overall growth," says the report *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*. The report suggests that this is a result of growth not being inclusive. Rural people make up a high percentage of the hungry and malnourished in developing countries, and efforts to promote growth in agriculture and the rural sector can be an important component of a strategy for promoting inclusive growth. In India, the extended food distribution programme has contributed to a positive outcome, the FAO

says. Solution to hunger in India

Providing healthy and nutritious food to its citizens is a big liability. Successful execution of free Food scheme pertaining to new mothers and pregnant women would be a beneficiary step towards the same. It should be mandatory to not waste food and offenders must be fined. Innumerable schemes have been launched by the Central as well as State governments in India but the reality is a mess. It takes year from passing a law to its execution. Food Security bills have been promised but sadly their progress is very slow. Food is a luxury to people who cannot afford it. It is advisable to not waste food. Be humanitarian and help those in need.

In an era of resource shortages and empowered

consumers, companies must grow in a responsive and sustainable manner. India is in a unique position to harness trends like the sharing economy, maker movement, and circular economy, according to the new mantra :**Do Better With Less: Frugal Innovation for Sustainable Growth.**

Robin Hood Army(RHA), the Indian non-profit organization that serves surplus food from restaurants and weddings to the hungry, RHA was founded in Delhi in 2014 with just five people who served 150 people on their first drive. Today, RHA is operational in 158 cities across 9 countries with 40,000 active volunteers and has served 25 million people so far.

It is an interesting case study of an organization that has achieved some scale, both within India and internationally, but without any financial support. What stands Robin Hood Army (RHA) apart from similar organisations is that they do not accept any money for their services – they follow their 'golden rule' of being zero-funds. When restaurants contact the team about surplus food, the volunteers use their own vehicles to collect the food and distribute it to the hungry.

RHA also runs an academy in some cities called 'Robin Hood Academy' where they teach street children during the weekend and helps them get into schools. The organization follows a de-centralized form of working and the operations are mostly carried out through instant messaging platform WhatsApp. They do not have an office space or full-time employees; the volunteers – called 'Robins' – work during their free time. Ghose was inspired by a similar organisation called ReFood that he came across when he was living in Lisbon in 2014, while working with Zomato. Fascinated by the idea, he came back to India and started RHA with a couple of his close friends.

Tackling The Hunger Problem

According to the latest Global Hunger Index (GHI) list of 117 countries, India ranks at the 102nd position, slipping from the 95th position in 2010. The report jointly published by Concern Worldwide, an Irish aid agency, and Welthungerhilfe, a German NGO, tracks hunger and malnutrition in various countries. Globally, the number of hungry people also rose from 785 million in 2015 to 822 million in 2018 – a 5 per cent rise. There are 800 million people who suffer from hunger, which is probably one out of every nine people in the world, and in India, that's probably one fourth of the world's hungry live in India alone. What's even more disturbing is that when you crunch the numbers, 3,000 children under the age of five die every day of hunger in the country. And the almost stupid thing is that 40 percent of the food which we produce gets wasted and thrown away. So, the two fundamental problems in society and one solves for the other. When restaurants tell them they have surplus food, volunteers — who number more than 40,000 — use their own vehicles to pick and distribute the food.

Hyperlocal Operations

The operations are hyper local and mostly happen via instant messaging platform WhatsApp. The organisation doesn't have an office space or full-time employees. The 'Robins', as the volunteers are known as, do this in their spare time. The volunteers are attracted to the fact that RHA does not take money, and has a highly de-centralised form of working.

RHA Frugal Approach :

The Problem

The challenge is not a lack of food — it is making food consistently available to everyone who needs it.

Solution

The Robin Hood Army is a volunteer based, zero-funds organization that works to get surplus food from restaurants and the community to serve less fortunate people. Our local chapters are run by friends and colleagues, who hope to create a difference in their own unique way. For example, restaurants in the neighbourhood Green Park, will contribute to the homeless of the locality, through volunteers who live in Green Park. Our “Robins” are largely students and young working professionals – everyone does this in their free time. The lesser fortunate sections of society we serve include homeless families, orphanages, patients from public hospitals, and old age homes. The Robin Hood Army's ideology revolves around decentralisation. Small teams, mostly young professionals, become responsible for specific areas; they scout for local restaurants, convince them to donate surplus food, identify clusters of people in need – such as the homeless and orphanages – and carry out weekly distributions. What's happening at a grassroots level is completely driven by the locals. In Delhi and the National Capital Region alone, some 30 restaurants have been involved with the project, sometimes not only offering leftover food but cooking fresh meals for distribution.

Pioneering efforts like RHA demonstrate enormous opportunities to reduce food waste — and enhance food security worldwide. We believe that while their initiatives are making a difference, there has to be more sustainable ways to tackle widespread food poverty in south Asia. Food donations are not the solution to food wastage or poverty, [but] food redistribution can help alleviate [its] impacts. IT in an exciting time where more people want to bridge gaps in society. Through social media and through RHA volunteers, they channel this energy and create something stronger out of this. The Robin Hood Army is just the beginning. They share their experiences and stories on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, where viewers can see Robins

wearing green, going out and serving the local community. Through social media, they have been noticed by the media and platforms like TEDx talk, and now it is a strategic part of the RHA engine, which gets us 1,800+ new volunteer requests a month across the world . The future “Even though we have served 8.5 million people through a network of 16,000+ Robins — this is still barely scratching the surface of the global hunger problem. Hence, growing fast enough is always a problem,” he says. The immediate focus is growing into smaller towns across India, and expanding into Africa and Latin America, and growing the Robin Hood Academy, an initiative to enroll children living on the streets into public schools. “We have chalked out plans to grow to serve half a million people a month across 100 cities within the next year. We have a simple philosophy of '1 percent done', which basically implies that disruptive growth is the only way we can create a real solution to the hunger problem,” says Neel.

Bibliography

How The Robin Hood Army served food to five million people ...<https://www.thehindu.com › Life & Style › Food>

<https://in.linkedin.com › company › robin-hood-army>

Radjou, N. and Prabhu, J. (2015) *Frugal Innovation: How to do More with Less*. London: Profile Books.

Rao, B.C. (2013) *How Disruptive is*

Frugal? *Technology in Society* 35(1): 65–73.

Rifkin, J. (2011) *The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Schwab, K. (2017) *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Beverly Hills: Random House USA Inc.

Schumacher, E.F. (1973) *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. London: Blond and Briggs.

Scoones, I. (2009). *Livelihoods perspectives and rural development*. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 171–196.