

Digital Identity and Exclusion in the Public Distribution System in India

This note explores the relationship between digital biometric ID systems and social exclusion by understanding the user experiences of the Aadhaar enabled Public Distribution System (AePDS) in India. We draw upon semi-structured qualitative interviews of beneficiaries and interactions with Fair Price Shop Owners (FPSO), local government officials, cyber café owners, and Aadhaar centre operators.

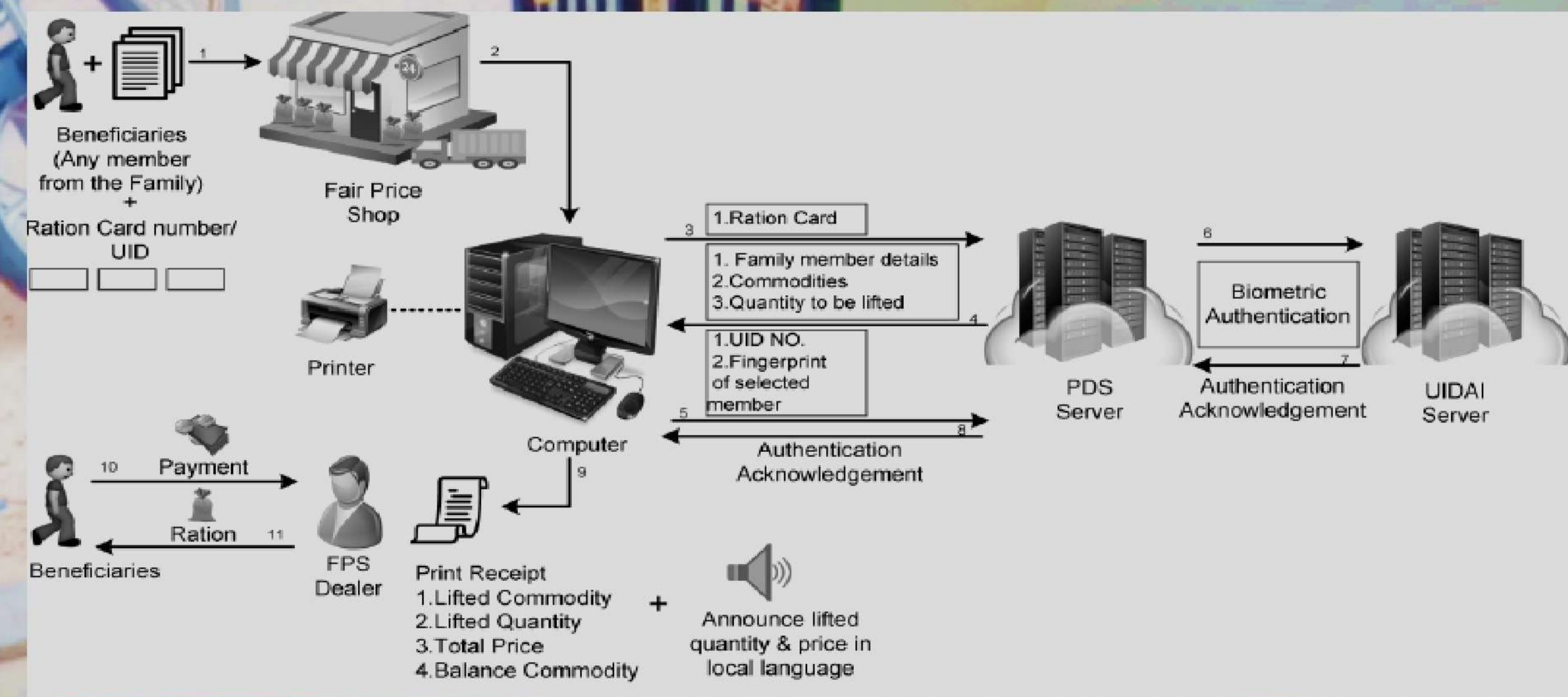


Figure 1: Automation at FPS
Source: National Informatics Centre, 2016

State	Total Beneficiaries	Male Beneficiaries	Female Beneficiaries	FPSOs
Andhra Pradesh	42	6	36	11
Karnataka	86	30	56	5
Total	128	36	92	16

Table 1: List of Respondents

Research Questions

- How people engage with (biometric) technologies in their everyday practices of accessing welfare
- What people do when technology (or parts of the technological frame) fails.

Authentication Issues

Issues in Aadhaar/RC application & linking

Quantity Fraud & Denial of Welfare

FINDINGS: EXCLUSION ERRORS

- Authentication fails despite multiple attempts or updating fingerprints
- Requiring biometric authentication is a barrier to access welfare
- Applications for linking ration card with Aadhaar processed late or not at all.
- Delayed linking led to cancelled ration cards
- Opacity around the technology and skewed power relations at the shops allow corrupt FPSOs to manipulate quantity or deny ration altogether