

AUDIT FINDINGS

Chapter 4 Identification of targeted beneficiaries

4.1 Survey, investigation and identification

In April 1997, model guidelines for Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) comprising all the components, right from identification of beneficiaries to distribution and monitoring was circulated by the GOI for adoption by the State Government. Although the guideline envisaged identification of beneficiaries by involving Gram Panchayats (Rural) and Nagarpalikas (Urban), actual identification was done by Block Development Officers (Rural) and Circle Officers (Urban).

The total number of families in the State in 1995, as estimated by the Central Government, was 46.64 lakh and the number of BPL families as per the Expert Committee constituted by them was shown to be 40.86 *per cent* of the total families in the State. Accordingly, the number of BPL families in Assam was worked out to 19.06 lakh (1995) whereas poverty ratio as per poverty estimates of the Planning Commission was 36.15 *per cent* in 1993-94 and 26.11 *per cent* in 1999-2000.

The State Government conducted a survey through Panchayat and Rural Development Department (P&RD) in 1998-99 where 20.28 lakh BPL families were identified in rural areas alone. Besides, BPL census was again conducted in 2007 by P&RD and 16.83 lakh BPL families were identified. These data were, however not adopted by the department. In the exit conference the department stated (October 2010) that estimation made by the Expert Committee (1995) in respect of BPL families was adopted by the Government as a policy decision but did not offer any comment about changed population statistics in subsequent years. Information furnished by FCS&CA Department in respect of identification of beneficiaries during 2005-10 was as under:

Table - 1

(In lakh)

| Year | Total no. of household | Total APL families | Total BPL families | Total AAY families | Total AAY+BPL families |
|---------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 2005-06 | 58.71 | 39.78 | 14.76 | 4.17 | 18.93 |
| 2006-07 | 60.21 | 41.18 | 13.45 | 5.58 | 19.03 |
| 2007-08 | 61.00 | 41.98 | 11.98 | 7.04 | 19.02 |
| 2008-09 | 62.00 | 42.94 | 12.02 | 7.04 | 19.06 |
| 2009-10 | 63.00 | 43.94 | 12.02 | 7.04 | 19.06 |

Source: Data furnished by the Director, FCS&CA, Assam

Against the estimation of the Expert Committee of the Central Government in 1995 of the existence of 19.06 lakh BPL and AAY families, the State Government could identify 18.93 lakh till 2005-06 and ultimately 19.06 lakh in September 2007. This figure continued till March 2010 despite increased population and likely changes in

category of families with increased per capita income and consequential reduction of poverty ratio as per poverty estimates of Planning Commission from 36.15 *per cent* in 1993-94 to 26.10 *per cent* in 1999-2000.

AAY, conceived (December 2000) to serve poorest of the poor with ₹3 per kg subsidized rice had an initial target of 15.33 *per cent* of the BPL population. Subsequently, it was revised by the GOI to 38 *per cent* of BPL population from 2005-06. Year-wise number of families identified during 2005-10 is shown in table above.

The estimation and identification including categorisation was done on population statistics of 1995 and that too without proper survey and consequently did not reflect the number of AAY and BPL families accurately during the subsequent years. The growth of population was reflected only in the number of APL families which increased from 27.58 lakh in 1995 to 43.94 lakh in 2010.

4.2 Review of Households

As per provisions of PDS (Control) Order, 2001, the State Government was required to get the lists of BPL and Antodaya families reviewed every year for the purpose of deletion of ineligible families and inclusion of eligible families. Records of the Director revealed that the review of households was conducted in 21 districts through special drive in the year 2009-10 only, and 11,714 APL, 4,589 BPL and 1,344 AAY cards were eliminated in addition to normal cancellation of 12,164 cards during 2007-10 on account of shifting of family and surrender of ration cards. Thus, had the reviews been carried out once in each year, drawal of food commodities against these ineligible/bogus cards (detected during 2009-10) for years together prior to 2009-10 could have been avoided.

In essence, new eligible beneficiaries due to population increase remained outside the purview of PDS and on the other hand ineligible beneficiaries continued to get benefits over the years.

Recommendations

The State Government should conduct survey each year to ascertain the actual position of households/ beneficiaries in the State.

The State Government should ensure proper identification of BPL and AAY beneficiaries.

The State Government should review the actual need of foodgrain to be provided to APL population.