

DECLARATION

I, hereby, declare that I have completed my thesis entitled “*Food Security and the Role of Public Distribution System (PDS): A Case Study of Golaghat District*” under the supervision and guidance of Prof. Alok Sen of the Department of Economics, Mahatma Gandhi School of Economics and Commerce, Assam University, Silchar.

The thesis is the result of my own investigation, analysis and observation. Neither the thesis nor any part thereof has been submitted to any university or institute for any degree of diploma

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Date:

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PREFACE

As one of the most important basic necessities of human beings, access to good quality food has been human being's incessant endeavour from the earliest days of existence. Our health and nutritional status, physical and mental abilities also depend on the food we eat and how we eat it. Food production and food distribution have been key focus areas for most of the countries. Considering the importance of food for the improvement of capability as well as the existence of human being which indirectly signifies strong and prosperous world, ensuring sufficient and good quality of food for each and every human being is recognized globally from 1940s onward. Since then, the concept of food security has been defined differently by different scholars as well as policy makers. Till 1990s almost 200 definitions of it are available in publications.

Although different approaches have been made to ensure food security for every human being, still poverty, hunger and malnutrition are the common features in different countries, basically in the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. Despite the witness of tremendous growth in the world food production, more than one in seven people today still do not have access to sufficient protein and energy from diet and even more suffer from some form of micronutrient malnourishments.

Studies reveal that in India, food security as a national objective was placed on the policy agenda much earlier than in other developed and developing countries. The green revolution of 1960's was the foremost attempt to combat food security.

By the end of 1980s India achieved self-sufficiency in the food production in the national level and no longer remained a food shortage country through dramatic investments in technology, institutions and infrastructure. At present India is not only self-sufficient in grain production, but also has a substantial reserve.

Public Distribution System (PDS) is the flagship programme of the government of India to ensure food security to the individuals especially for the Below Poverty Line (BPL). Further the Government of India redefines the Universal PDS into Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in the year 1997 to provide social safety nets to

specifically the poor. Government of India has further implemented the National Food Security Act 2013 to provide food grains of 5kg per month to each and every member of identified households.

But despite these significant efforts and political commitment for ensuring food security of all the people of the Nation, India's food security scenario has remained precarious. Reviews of various studies confirm that still over 200 million of India's population is under fed and millions undernourished. About 41 percent of the world's underweight children belong to India. In India 47 percent of children less than 5 years old are underweight, 45% are stunted and 16 percent have severe malnutrition. As a fast developing country, and positioning itself to be one of the world's most powerful nations, India cannot afford to have such a vast number of food and malnourished people.

Like the national scenario, the situation of food security in Assam is almost similar. BPL Census 2002 exerts that the percentage of poverty in Assam is also very high. Even the food grain production of the state is not self-sufficient. Although different policies and programmes have been introduced by both the Central as well as State Governments for ensuring food security, the situation is still not satisfactory in Assam. High Infant Mortality rate, malnutrition etc. signify a gloomy picture of food security of Assam. Although the PDS system covers a huge population under its social safety nets, its performance is still to be questioned. Especially the state of food security of the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families is still not satisfactory.

Golaghat is one of the important districts of Upper Assam where almost 90 percent of population live in the rural area. As per the MGNREGA website 73935 families are recognized as BPL families in 2011 in Golaghat district. Although various studies have been carried out in various areas of India regarding the state of food security, not a single study has been carried out so far in the Golaghat district of Assam.

So considering the importance of food security for physical and mental abilities of the every human being, the present study investigates the state of food of the BPL households of Assam, especially in Golaghat district and assesses the performance the role of PDS in providing assistance for household food security to the BPL families.

The study also identifies the various socio economic and demographic factors of food security among the BPL households.

The study is organized in seven chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, analytical tools and data descriptions. An extensive review of existing literature has been carried out in Chapter II to identify the research gap of the study. As the flagship programme of providing social safety nets for the poor and needy people of India, a detailed account of the evolution of Public Distribution System in India and the functioning of the same in the country as well as in the state is presented in Chapter III. In Chapter IV, the socio economic profile of the Golaghat district in general and of the surveyed population in particular has been briefly explained. The state of food security of the sample BPL households has been estimated in Chapter V by the per capita calorie intake method as well as Household Dietary Diversity Scores (HDDS) methods. This chapter also analyses the various determinants of household food security status of the sample population by drawing logistic regression as well as simple regression techniques. In Chapter VI, the performance of the PDS in the study area as well as its role towards the state of food security of the BPL families of the surveyed district has been explained. The seventh and final chapter is devoted to summary of the findings, policy suggestions and concluding remarks.

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CONTENTS

	Page No.
Declaration	i
Certificate	ii
Acknowledgement	iii-iv
Preface	v-vii
Contents	viii-xiii
List of Tables	xiv-xx
List of Figures	xxi-xxii
Chapter I : Statement of the problem, Importance of the study, Conceptual Framework, Objectives, Research Questions, Methodology etc.	1-27
I.1. Statement of the Problem	2
I.2. Food Security in India	3
I.3. Importance of the Study	5
I.4. Area of the Study- Golaghat District	7
I.5. Conceptual Framework of the Study	8
I.6. Objectives of the Study	10
I.7. Research Questions	11
I.8. Methodology and Data Base	11
I.8.(A) Data Base	18
I.8.(B) Data Analysis	19
I.9. Chapter Scheme of the Study	26
I.10. Limitation of the study	27
Chapter II : Review of the existing literature and the Research Gap	28-62
II.1 Review of Literature	28
II.1. (A) Food Security Status	28
II.1. (B) Determinants of Food Security	49
II.1 (C) Public Distribution System (PDS) of India	56

II.2.	Research Gap	62
Chapter III :	Public Distribution System (PDS) of India	63-103
III. 1.(A)	History of Public Distribution System (PDS) in India	63
III.1. (B)	Rationale of Implementing Public Distribution System in India	71
III.1. (C)	Functioning of Public Distribution System	73
III. 1. (D)	Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS)	74
III. 1. (E)	Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)	76
III.1. (F)	Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)	80
III. 1 (G)	Implementation of TPDS	82
III. 1. (H)	National Food Security Act – 2013	88
III.2.	Public Distribution System in Assam	93
III.2 (A)	Targeted Public Distribution System	95
III.2. (B)	Fair Price Shops	97
III. 2. (C)	The PDS Schemes Implemented in Assam	99
III.2. (D)	The National Food Security Scheme	101
III. 2. (E)	Village Grains Banks (VGB) Scheme	102
III.2. (F)	Randhan Jyoti Scheme	102
III. 2. (G)	Aamar Dukan	102
Chapter IV :	Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of the Golaghat District of Assam in General and of the Sample Population in Particular	104-150
IV. 1. (A)	Historical background of the Golaghat District	104
IV.1. (B)	Geographical Features of the District	105
IV.1. (C)	Demographic profile of the District	106
IV. 1. (D)	Educational Status of the Golaghat District	107

IV.1. (E)	Basic Household Amenities of the Golaghat District	110
IV.1. (F)	The Workforce and Occupational Pattern	111
IV. 1. (G)	Land Use Pattern	112
IV. 1. (H)	Infrastructure Facilities in Golaghat District	113
IV. 2.	Socio Economic and Demographic profile of the sample population	116
IV.2, (A)	Religion and caste of the sample population	116
IV.2. (B)	Sex wise distribution of sample population	118
IV.2. (C)	Type of Family	119
IV. 2. (D)	Size of Family	120
IV.2. (E)	Sex of the Household Head	121
IV. 2. (F)	Income level of the sample households	122
IV. 2. (G)	Occupational Status	123
IV.2. (H)	Educational Status	126
IV.2. (I)	Land Holding and Livestock Ownership	131
IV.2. (J)	Livestock Ownership	133
IV. 2. (K)	Housing Condition	133
IV.2. (L)	Basic Facilities of Life	135
IV.2. (M)	Health Status of the Sample Households	141
IV. 2. (N)	Health Awareness of the Sample BPL Households	147
IV.2.(O)	Benefit Received by the Sample Households from the Government	148
Chapter V :	Food Security Status of the Sample BPL Households and its Determinants	151-186
V.1. (A)	Rural Urban Wise Food Security Status Based on PCCI	151
V.1. (B)	Block wise food security status	153

V.1. (C)	Food Security status of sample households having and not having BPL card	154
V.1.(D)	Analysis of food insecurity gap	155
V.1.(E)	Severity level of food insecurity Analysis	156
V.2.	Food Security Status Based on Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) of the Sample BPL Households	160
V.3.	Comparison of the Extent of Food Security of BPL Households with and without BPL cards	164
V.3.(A)	Severity level of food insecurity of households having BPL card and not having BPL cards	166
V.3.(B)	Independent Sample ‘t’ Test	168
V.4.	Comparison between Rural and Urban Households Food Security Status	169
V.5.	Determinants of Food Security	171
V.5. (A)	Descriptive Statistics	174
V.5.(B)(1)	Binary Logistic Regression Analysis	178
V.5.(B).2.	Simple Regression Model	183
Chapter VI :	Role of PDS on Household Food Security	187-225
VI.1. (A)	Distribution of Sample Households Based on Type of Ration Cards	187
VI.1.(B)	Caste wise Classification:	190
VI.1. (C)	Gender Wise Classification	190
VI.1.(D)	Education Wise Classification	191
VI.1. (E)	Occupation Wise Classification	192
VI.1.(F)	Income Level Wise Classification	193
VI.1.(G)	Distribution of Household in terms of Distance from Fair Price Shop (FPS’s)	194
VI.2.	Performance of Public Distribution System(PDS)	195

VI. 2.	Gap between Requirement and	195
(A)	Distribution of Items per Period and Gap between Market Price and FPS Price of Items	
VI.2. (B)	Item wise Gap by Quantity Distribution to Household at Rural Urban Level	200
VI.2. (C)	Item Wise Price Differentials between Open Market and FPSs at Rural Urban Level	204
VI.2.(D)	Regularity in Visiting FPS and Purchasing Item from FPS's	207
VI.2.(E)	Household Satisfaction Regarding Distribution of Rice and Kerosene through PDS	212
VI.2(F)	Response of Households regarding Price Chart at Fair Price Shop's, Receive of Money Receipt from the FPS dealer and Satisfaction towards FPS Dealer	214
VI.2.(G)	Households Complain Regarding Malfunction of PDS and its Consequence	216
VI.2.(H)	Awareness of Households Regarding Functioning of PDS	217
VI.2 (I)	Awareness about Inspection on PDS	218
VI.2 (J)	Awareness about Right to Information (RTI)	219
VI.2.(K)	Awareness about Precaution on PDS Item	220
VI.2.(L)	Awareness about the Responsibility as a Citizen	221
VI.2.(M)	Perception of Households about the Role of Panchayats/ Town Committees in PDS	221
VI.2(N)	Role of PDS on Household Food Security Status	223
VI.2(N)(i)	Descriptive Statistics	223

	VI.2.(N)(ii) Regression Analysis	224
Chapter VII	Summary of the Findings, Policy Recommendation and Concluding Remarks	226-246
	VII.1.(A) General Observation of Socio Economic and Demographic Profile of the Sample Households	226
	VII.1.(B) Food Security Status in terms of Per Capita Calorie Intake	229
	VII.1.(C) Food Security Status Based on Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)	231
	VII.1.(D) Comparison of the Extent of Food Security of BPL Households with and without BPL Card	232
	VII.1.(E) Comparison between Rural and Urban Households Food Security Status	233
	VII.1 (F) Determinants of Food Security Status of Sample BPL Households	234
	VII.1.(F)(a) Descriptive Statistics	234
	VII.1.(F)(b) Binary Logistic Regression Analysis	236
	VII.1.(F)(c) Simple Regression Model	237
	VII.1.(G) Performance of Public Distribution System (PDS)	238
	VII.1.(H) Contribution of PDS on Household Food Security Status	243
	VII.1.(H)(a) Descriptive Statistics	243
	VII.1.(H)(b) Regression Analysis	243
	VII.2. Policy Recommendation	243
	VIII.3. Conclusion	246
	Bibliography	247-266
	Annexures	267
	Appendix I : Interview Schedule for Household Survey	268-276
	Appendix II : Interview Schedule for Fair Price Shop Dealers	277-279

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page No.</u>
1. Table I.1 : Level of Food Security	22
2. Table III. 1: Committees Formed by Government of India, Pre Green Revolution Period	69
3. Table III.2 : Categorization of States According to High and Low Exclusion of BPL Families from TPDS	83
4. Table III.3 : Distribution of Cardholders among poor and non poor in some states	83
5. Table III.4 : Leakage of Ghost Cards	84
6. Table III.5 : MSP and CIP of Rice/Paddy (Rs/Kg)	85
7. Table III.6 : MSP and CIP of Wheat	86
8. Table III.7 : Overall Leakage of Food Grains across States	87
9. Table III.8 : Leakage of Food Grains at the Fair Price Shop	88
10. Table III.9 : Comparison of existing TPDS with the NFSA	92
11. Table III.10 : Quantity and Rates of Commodities Distributed Per Month Under Different Schemes in Assam 2012	95
12. Table III.11 : Quantity and Rates of Commodities Distributed Per Month under Different Schemes in Assam , 2013	96
13. Table III.12 : Action Taken Under Clauses 8 and 9 of the PDS (Control) Order 2001 from January 2006 to December 2013 in Assam	97
14. Table III.13 : District wise Fair Price Shops and AAY/BPL Card Holders in Assam 2012-2013	98
15. Table III.14 : Target and Achievement of Mukhya Mantir Anna Suraksha Yojana	101

16.	Table IV.1 : Sex Wise Distribution of Population in Golaghat District	106
17.	Table IV.2 : Rural- Urban Wise Distribution of Population in Golaghat District	106
18.	Table IV.3 : Some Demographic Indicators of Golaghat District	107
19.	Table IV.4 : Literacy Rate by Sex in Golaghat District	108
20.	Table IV.5 : Enrolment and Teacher in Lower Primary and Upper Primary School 2012-13	108
21.	Table IV.6 : Enrolment and Teacher in High, Higher Secondary School and Junior College 2012-13	109
22.	Table IV.7 : Total Households and Basic Household Amenities (in percentage) in Golaghat District as per 2011 Census	110
23.	Table IV.8 : Distribution of Main Workers and Marginal Workers in Golaghat District	111
24.	Table IV.9 : Total Area and Classification of Area in Golaghat District in 2010-11	112
25.	Table IV. 10 : Area under High Yielding Variety of Rice in Golaghat District 2012-13	113
26.	Table IV.11 : Net Area Irrigated in Golaghat District	113
27.	Table IV. 12 : Number of Villages Electrified in Golaghat District (RGGVY only)	114
28.	Table IV.13 : Category wise Length of Road in Golaghat District as on 31-03-2013	114
29.	Table IV. 14 : Number of State Govt. Hospitals, Primary Health Centres, First Referral Units, CHC's, Poly Clinic/Nursing Home and No of Diagnostics Centres in Golaghat District-2012	115
30.	Table IV. 15: Number of Beds in Different Type of Health institutions in Golaghat District – 2012	116

31.	Table IV. 16 : Distribution of Households by Religion	117
32.	Table IV. 17 : Distribution of households by caste	118
33.	Table IV. 18 : Sex wise distribution of sample BPL population	119
34.	Table IV. 19 : Distribution of households by type of family	119
35.	Table IV. 20 : Distribution of Households by size of family	121
36.	Table IV. 21 : Distribution of households by sex of the household head	122
37.	Table IV. 22 : Distribution of Households by Monthly Income	123
38.	Table IV. 23 : Distribution of Population by the Nature of Occupation	124
39.	Table IV. 24 : Distribution of household by occupation of the Household Head	125
40.	Table IV. 25 : Region Wise Education Level of the Sample Population	127
41.	Table IV. 26 : Region wise educational level of Household head	128
42.	Table IV. 27 : Sex Wise Education Level of the Household Head	130
43.	Table IV. 28 : Region wise Sample Households having Land Holding	131
44.	Table IV. 29 : Region Wise Size of Land Holding of Sample Households	131
45.	Table IV. 30 : Region Wise Rented in Land and Lease in Land	132
46.	Table IV. 31 : Region wise Households having Livestock Ownership	133
47.	Table IV. 32 : Distribution of Housing Condition in the Sample Study Area	134
48.	Table IV. 33 : Distribution of Households by Bathroom Facilities	135
49.	Table IV. 34 : Distribution of Households by Latrine Facility	137

50.	Table IV. 35 : Distribution of Households by Hygienic Condition	138
51.	Table IV. 36 : Distribution of Households by Basic Facilities	139
52.	Table IV. 37 : Distribution of Sample Households by Source and Use of Drinking Water	140
53.	Table IV. 38 : Distribution of Population by Life Birth and Existing Child:	142
54.	Table IV. 39 : Distribution of Households by Prevalence of Still death and Infant Mortality	143
55.	Table IV. 40 : Sex Wise Distribution of Death in the Sample Area during 2009-2014	144
56.	Table IV. 41 : Distribution of Death on Place of Death and Cause of Death during 2009-2014	145
57.	Table IV. 42 : Total Number of Person Fall in Illness	145
58.	Table IV. 43 : Region Wise Distribution of Diseases among Sample BPL Population	146
59.	Table IV. 44 : Knowledge about Immunization, Polio and AIDS	147
60.	Table IV. 45 : Distribution of Households by Receiving Benefit from Government	149
61.	Table V. 1 : Rural Urban wise Food security status	152
62.	Table V. 2 : Block wise Food security status	153
63.	Table V. 3 : Food Security status of households having BPL cards	154
64.	Table V. 4 : Rural /Urban wise households level of food security	157
65.	Table V. 5 : Block wise level of Food Security	158
66.	Table V. 6 : Block wise Household Dietary Diversity Score	161
67.	Table V.7 : Rural Urban Wise HDDS Score	163
68.	Table V.8 : Block Wise Food Security Status Based on HDDS	163

69.	Table V.9 : Descriptive Results of the Food Security Status of BPL Card Having and Not Having BPL Card	165
70.	Table V.10 : Level of food security of households having BPL card	166
71.	Table V.11 : Per Capita Calorie Consumption of households having BPL and not having BPL Card	168
72.	Table V.12 : Difference of Per Capita Calorie Consumption of Households having BPL Card and Not Having BPL Card	168
73.	Table V.13 : Descriptive results of Sample Rural and Urban Households	169
74.	Table V. 14 : Level of Food Security of Sample Rural and Urban Households	171
75.	Table V. 15 : Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variable	175
76.	Table V. 16 : Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Discrete Variable	177
77.	Table V. 17 : Binomial Logistic Regression Result	180
78.	Table V. 18 : Simple Regression Model Result	184
79.	Table VI.1 : Block wise Type of Card having the BPL households	188
80.	Table VI.2 : Region wise Distribution of Households having Type of Card	189
81.	Table VI.3 : Distribution of Households Type of Card by Caste	190
82.	Table VI.4 : Distribution of Type of card by Gender of the Household Head	191
83.	Table VI.5 : Distribution of Type of Card by the Education level of Household Head	192
84.	Table VI.6 : Distribution of Type of Card by Households Occupation	193

85.	Table VI.7 : Distribution of Type of Card by Households Income Level	194
86.	Table VI.8 : Distance of Location of FPS's from the Residence of sample Households	195
87.	Table VI.9 : Gap between Requirement and Distribution of Item Per Month and Gap between Market Price and PDS Price of Item	199
88.	Table VI.10 : Requirement and Distribution of Item Per Month and Gap between Requirement and Distribution Per Month	203
89.	Table VI.11 : Price Gap in Items between Fair Price	206
90.	Table VI.12 : Block wise Distribution of Households by Visiting FPS Regularly	207
91.	Table VI.13 : Block Wise Regularity in Purchasing Rice and Wheat from FPS's by Households	209
92.	Table VI.14 : Block Wise Regularity in Purchasing Sugar and Kerosene from FPS's by Households	211
93.	Table VI.15 : Satisfaction of the Households on the Distribution of	213
94.	Table VI.16 : Block Wise Households view on the Display of Price List in the FPS's	214
95.	Table VI.17 : Block Wise Households View on Receive of Money Receipt from FPS Dealer and Satisfaction on FPS dealer	215
96.	Table VI.18 : Block Wise Households Complain Regarding Malfunction of PDS and its Consequence	217
97.	Table VI.19 : Block Wise Awareness of Households about Rules and Regulations of PDS	218
98.	Table No:VI.20 Block wise Awareness of Household about Inspection on PDS	219
99.	Table VI.21 : Block Wise Awareness of Households about RTI	219
100.	Table VI.22 : Block Wise Awareness about Precautions on PDS	220

101.	Table VI.23 : Block Wise Awareness of Household about the Responsibility as a Citizen	221
102.	Table VI.24 : Block wise Perception of Households about the Role of PRI's in PDS	222
103.	Table VI.25 : Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Contribution on Household Food Security Status	223
104.	Table VI.26 : Simple Regression Result	224

LIST OF FIGURES:

	<u>Page No.</u>
1. Fig I.1 : Map of the Golaghat District	8
2. Fig I.2 : Conceptual Framework of Household Food Security Status	9
3. Fig I.3 : Conceptual Framework to Identify the Potential Variables which Influence Household Food Security Status	10
4. Fig I.4 : Sample design of rural BPL households	15
5. Fig I.5 : Sample design of urban BPL households	16
6. Fig I.6 : Sample Design for the Study	17
7. Fig III.1 : Flow Chart of PDS Commodities	74
8. Fig III.2(A): Flow Diagram of Foodgrain	94
9. Fig III.2(B): Flow Diagram of SKO	94
10. Fig III.3 : Activity Diagram of BPL/AAY	100
11. Fig IV.1 : Rural Urban wise caste of the sample population	118
12. Fig IV.2 : Rural Urban wise type of family	120
13. Fig IV.3 : Rural Urban wise sex of the household head	122
14. Fig IV.4 : Occupation of the Household Head	126
15. Fig IV.5 : Rural Urban wise Educational Level of the Household Head	129
16. Fig IV.6 : Rural Urban wise Housing Condition of the Sample Household	134
17. Fig IV.7 : Types of bathrooms of the sample household	136
18. Fig IV.8 : Latrine facility of the sample households	137
19. Fig IV.9 : Source of drinking water of sample households	140

20.	Fig IV.10 : Rural Urban wise use of drinking water of the sample households	141
21.	Fig V.1 : Rural Urban wise food security status	152
22.	Fig V.2 : Block wise food security status of the sample households	153
23.	Fig V.3 : Level of food security having type of card	154
24.	Fig V.4 : Severity level of the household food security	157
25.	Fig V.5 : Block wise severity level of household food security	159
26.	Fig V.6 : Frequency distribution of HDDS of the sample households.	162
27.	Fig V.7 : Block wise food security based on HDDS	164
28.	Fig V.8 : Severity level of food security having type of card	167
29.	Fig VI.1 : Block wise sample households type of ration card	188
30.	Fig VI.2 : Block wise households satisfaction towards FPS dealer	216