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Assessing AAY Scheme
Exclusions Among Tribal
Households in Andhra Pradesh

A Case Study of Alluri Sitarama Raju District

May 2024

Introduction

Adivasi communities in India represent a vibrant yet vulnerable segment of the population. Despite their rich cultural heritage and symbiotic relationship with nature, half of India's tribal people, or 65 out of a population of 129 million, live in poverty, according to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021.

Food security schemes emerge as a beacon of hope, aiming to alleviate the chronic hunger and malnutrition that disproportionately affect these communities.

The Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) scheme is a significant initiative aimed at ensuring food security for the poorer sections of society, with Tribal communities being some of the biggest beneficiaries.

Launched in 2000, the AAY scheme initially provided 25 kilograms of food grains per month to around 1 crore of the poorest households, who were unable to afford two square meals per day. The scheme was periodically expanded, covering 2.50 crore households by 2004-05. In 2013, the National Food Security Act (NFSA) was enacted which subsumed the AAY scheme under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and converted it from a welfare scheme into a legal guarantee. Currently, each household with AAY Ration Card is entitled to receive 35 kgs of food grains per month at subsidised prices. Under the NFSA, state governments are responsible to identify eligible households under TPDS.

Accordingly, the [Andhra Pradesh Food Security Rules 2017](#) identify certain significant categories that the government shall accord priority in identifying households for the AAY scheme, among which few categories are of particular interest to us as follows:

- All Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) households
- Widows or single women with no family or societal support or assured means of subsistence
- Disabled persons or persons aged 60 years or more

As of January 2024, Andhra Pradesh (AP) has around 1.5 crore Ration Cards, out of which approximately 9 lakh (6%) are AAY and 1.4 crore (94%) belong to the Priority Household (PHH)¹ Ration Cards. Whereas in the Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district, there are about 3 lakh Ration Cards comprising 61 thousand (20%) AAY and 2.4 lakh (80%) belonging to PHH Ration Cards.

¹ The other category under the NFSA where households are entitled to receive 5 kg food grains per person each in a given Ration Card. For example if a PHH Ration Card has 5 members, then the entitled food grains will be 25 kgs (5 members * 5 kgs)

Purpose and Methodology of the Report

This report aims to estimate the range of exclusions in the AAY scheme of NFSA 2013 in the ASR district and to assess the resulting estimated loss.

In nutshell the report aims to estimate the following:

- AAY exclusions among PVTG households.
- AAY exclusions among non-PVTG eligible households.
- Loss of food grains due to AAY exclusions.

1. Identifying Exclusions among PVTG Households

To estimate exclusions among PVTG households, we followed these steps:

Selected 7 Fair Price Shops (FPS) in G. Madugula and Chintapalli that cover 42 Tribal habitations in both mandals. The FPS were selected based on having both PVTG and non-PVTG households.

- Obtained details of all households with Ration Cards belonging to the 7 FPS from <https://aeapos.ap.gov.in/>. These details include the name of the head of the household and the category of each Ration Card (AAY/PHH).
- Visited all 42 habitations to identify Ration Card households belonging to PVTGs and non-PVTGs within Scheduled Tribes (STs) by talking to the heads of each habitation. Therefore, we identified 1,427 PVTG and 818 non-PVTG households.
- We considered all identified PVTG households having PHH Ration Cards as excluded under the AAY scheme, resulting in 695 excluded PVTG households.
- Validated the data by interviewing random households, both from excluded and non-excluded categories, across all 42 habitations covered by the 7 FPS.

2. Identifying Exclusions among Eligible Non-PVTG Households

- We obtained social security pensioners' details for the sampled 42 habitations as of April 2022 from <https://sspensions.ap.gov.in/SSP>. These details include the Ration Card numbers of each pensioner.
- Using the Ration Card numbers, we identified non-PVTG households residing in the 42 habitations, designating them as non-PVTG eligible households.

- Among the identified non-PVTG eligible households, those having PHH Ration Cards are considered as excluded under the AAY scheme, resulting in 136 excluded non-PVTG eligible households.

For estimating exclusions for non-PVTG eligible households, we assumed that all Tribal households receiving widow, disabled, single woman, and old age pensions (those aged 60 years or above) are eligible for the AAY scheme, aligning with the spirit of the AAY scheme guidelines.

3. Loss of Food Grains due to AAY Exclusions

The loss of food grains is calculated for all excluded PVTG and non-PVTG eligible households under the AAY scheme by measuring the gap in entitlements between what they are currently receiving with PHH Ration Cards and what they would have received if they had AAY Ration Cards.

To ensure the accuracy of our estimates, we conducted ground verifications by visiting randomly selected households. We also carried out field interviews with rights holders and officials to understand their perspectives on exclusions and the loss of food grains due to AAY exclusions.

Limitations of our findings are highlighted in the section 'Limitations of the Report' towards the end of the report.

Structure of the Report

Section 1 presents the section wise key findings of the report.

Section 2 presents the exclusions of PVTG and non-PVTG eligible households from the AAY scheme. Utilising these exclusion numbers, we have extrapolated exclusions for the ASR district.

Section 3 outlines the incurred loss of food grains for all the excluded Tribal households i.e PVTG and non-PVTG eligible households.

Section 4 presents qualitative insights from official interviews, case studies and other field observations.

Section 5 concludes the report with recommendations to implement and the limitations of the report.

1. Key Findings of the Report

- *PVTG households exclusions (Refer to Section 2)*
 - Around 49% sampled PVTG households are identified to have got excluded under the AAY scheme.
 - We also estimate that similar 49% PVTG households may have got excluded under the AAY scheme in the ASR district.

- *Non-PVTG eligible households exclusions (Refer to Section 2)*
 - Around 79% sampled non-PVTG eligible households are identified to have got excluded under the AAY scheme.
 - We also estimate that similar 79% non-PVTG eligible households may have got excluded under the AAY scheme in the ASR district.

- *Loss of entitlements (Refer to Section 3)*
 - Identified PVTG and non-PVTG eligible households across 42 habitations who got excluded under the AAY scheme are estimated to incur a loss of 16,555 kgs of food grains each month.
 - These excluded households across 42 habitations all together are estimated to incur a cost of around Rs. 5 lakh to buy additional food grains to maintain the same stock if they had AAY Ration Cards.
 - Across 42 sampled habitations, 19.4 kgs and 22.2 kgs of food grains is the average incurred loss per PVTG and Non-PVTG household respectively in each month.

- *Field observations (Refer to Section 4)*
 - Currently, officials do not have the option of issuing AAY Ration Cards to eligible households.
 - We have observed several cases where households with AAY Ration Cards were provided with PHH Ration Cards during post 2019 when Rice Cards distribution took place.
 - Lack of awareness among officials regarding the eligibility of non-PVTG eligible households for AAY scheme.
 - We have observed gaps in information systems leading to leakages and denial of entitlements to AAY Ration Card households.

2. AAY Exclusions of ST Households

This section presents exclusions among PVTGs and non-PVTG eligible households under the AAY scheme.

2.1 PVTGs vs AAY Ration Cards

49% of PVTG households are identified as excluded under the AAY scheme

PVTGs are recognized as the most vulnerable among India's Tribal communities, facing unique challenges such as declining or stagnant populations, low levels of literacy, pre-agricultural levels of technology, and economic backwardness. These groups often reside in remote and ecologically fragile areas, making them especially susceptible to external pressures. Numerous studies have highlighted the significant socio-economic disparities faced by PVTGs compared to other communities in the country.

Acknowledging this disparity, the Government of India (GoI) emphasised the inclusion of PVTGs in the AAY scheme during its initial years. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh Food Security Rules 2017 accorded priority about providing AAY Ration Cards to PVTG households.

Despite these efforts, we identified around 49% of PVTG households excluded under the AAY scheme as illustrated in Table 1. These excluded PVTG households are currently the holders of PHH Ration Cards and receive entitlements accordingly. Refer to case study 1 in the Annexure I for PVTG household exclusion.

Based on these findings, we estimate similar exclusions of around 49% may exist among PVTG households across ASR district.

Table 1: PVTG households exclusions under the AAY scheme

| Total Households | PVTG Households | Households with AAY Ration Cards | Households with PHH Ration Cards | Excluded PVTG Households in % |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2,375 | 1,427 | 732 | 695 | 49 |

2.2 Non PVTGs vs AAY Ration Cards

Around 79% of non-PVTG eligible households are identified as excluded under the AAY scheme

To identify non-PVTG eligible households, we relied on the 'YSR pension kanuka' scheme, a family-based social security program of the state government. This scheme provides a fixed

monthly amount to certain categories of households, such as widows and single women, aligning with those eligible under the AAY scheme.

Our primary data analysis reveals that a significant number of non-PVTG eligible households are excluded under the AAY scheme. As of July 2022, the total number of non-PVTG eligible households across 42 surveyed habitations is 171. Out of these households, 136 (79%) are identified as excluded under the AAY scheme, as illustrated in Table 2. These excluded non-PVTG eligible households are having the PHH Ration Cards and receiving entitlements accordingly. Refer to case study 2 in the Annexure I for non-PVTG household exclusion.

Based on these findings, we estimate similar exclusions of around 79% may exist among PVTG households across ASR district.

Table 2: Non-PVTG eligible households exclusions under the AAY scheme

| Total Households | Non PVTG Households | Non-PVTG Eligible Households | Households with AAY Ration Cards | Households with PHH Ration Cards | Excluded non-PVTG Eligible Households (%) |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 2,375 | 818 | 171 | 35 | 136 | 79 |

3. Loss of Entitlements

On average each excluded Tribal household lost about 20 kg of food grains per month

This section presents the incurred loss of food grains for all the Tribal households excluded under the AAY scheme. The method adopted to calculate loss of food grains is as follows;

For instance, consider a Tribal household eligible for AAY Ration Card possessing a PHH Ration Card with 4 members receiving 20 kgs of food grains; 5 kgs per person. Since the household is eligible under the AAY scheme, the potential quantity of food grains they would have received if they had AAY Ration Card is 35 kgs. Therefore the calculated loss will be 15 kgs (potential food grains - actual food grains). In this manner, we have calculated the loss of food grains for all the 831 Tribal households excluded under the AAY scheme.

As depicted in Table 3, excluded PVTG households and non-PVTG eligible households are estimated to incur a loss of 13,525 kgs and 3,030 kgs of food grains each month. Together, all the excluded Tribal households are at a loss of 16,555 kgs of food grains each month; to buy

these food grains, it is estimated to cost around Rs. 4.9 lakh² for all the 831 excluded Tribal households.

Table 3: Loss of food grains in kgs for all the excluded Tribal households

| | Number of Households | Current Food Grains Received with PHH Ration Cards (kg) | Potential Food Grains Received with AAY Ration Cards (kg) | Loss of Food Grains (kgs) | Average Loss per Household (kg) |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Excluded PVTG Households | 695 | 10,800 | 24,325 | 13,525 | 19.4 |
| Excluded non-PVTG Eligible Households | 136 | 1,730 | 4,760 | 3,030 | 22.2 |
| Total | 831 | 12,530 | 29,085 | 16,555 | 19.9 |

4. Field Observations

This section presents our field observations from interviewing government officials and right holders of TPDS and insights drawn from regular field work in Tribal areas, and highlights some additional issues in TPDS distribution.

- **Incorrect Issuance of Rice Cards**

Post 2019, the state government conducted an exercise to issue new Rice Cards to all the Ration Card holders in the state. During this exercise, all households with PHH and AAY Ration Cards were supposed to receive PHH and AAY Rice Cards accordingly. However, we have identified several cases where households with AAY Ration cards were mistakenly issued with PHH Rice Cards instead of AAY Rice Cards. This error has adversely affected vulnerable Tribal households, who, despite previously holding AAY Ration Cards, received PHH Rice Cards. Due to lack of accessible data, we could not estimate the full scale of this issue. Refer to Case Study 3 in Annexure I.

² We have observed that it costs Rs. 30 on average to buy 1 kg of food grains. Therefore for all the 16,555 kgs of food grains, it costs around Rs. 4.9 lakh (16,555 kgs * Rs. 30)

- ***Lack of Awareness Among Officials***

During our interviews with officials, we discovered that most were unaware that non-PVTG poor (ST) households are also eligible for the AAY scheme. Despite this, AAY Ration Cards were distributed to non-PVTG households as well, as officials mistakenly considered these households as PVTGs due to the prevalence of common surnames between the two groups.

- ***Gradual Reduction in AAY Ration Cards***

According to the [TPDS \(Control\) Order 2015](#), ‘when an Antyodaya household³ becomes ineligible due to improvement in social or economic status, death, etc., no new Antyodaya households shall be identified in that State and the total number of Antyodaya households shall be reduced to that extent.’ According to such reduction, a State may increase the coverage to such extent under the PHH category.

Due to this compliance, new AAY Ration Cards are not being distributed currently which was highlighted by officials as well. This led to a gradual shrinking of the number of AAY Ration Cards in the state, impacting vulnerable households in Tribal areas. Further, if a household splits an existing AAY Ration Card on account of marriage, the second family is provided with a PHH Ration Card even though the family is eligible for AAY Ration Card, according to the spirit of the AAY scheme. Refer to case study 4 in Annexure I.

- ***Information Gaps Among AAY Cardholders***

We also came across several cases where households were unaware that they possessed AAY Ration Cards and were unfairly given PHH Ration Card entitlements due to information gaps. Please find the detailed [report](#) prepared by LibTech India regarding information gaps and recommendations for implementation of TPDS in Tribal areas.

5. Conclusion

Several studies underscore the multifaceted vulnerability of Scheduled Tribes (STs), who are overrepresented in the spectrum of socio economic backwardness in India. Furthermore, PVTGs are identified to be even more vulnerable among STs. Despite multiple attempts in the past to improve the lives of STs and particularly PVTGs, a significant proportion of these communities continue to lead vulnerable lives, including facing low consumption of basic needs, such as food.

³ Households with AAY Ration Card

In this context, schemes such as AAY could be a critical tool in ensuring the food security of PVTG and non-PVTG households and protecting them from further vulnerability. Therefore, there must be an active engagement from the State to expand AAY scheme to all the eligible households in the ASR district.

5.1 Recommendations

1. Utilise PM JANMAN Data:

- Given that PVTG data is collected for the PM JANMAN initiative, the state government can use this data to accurately identify the number of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) households and take corrective measures to issue them AAY cards.

2. Request Additional AAY Cards:

- The state government can address the needs of the newly identified PVTG households by formally requesting the Union Government to issue additional AAY Ration Cards.
- This request should be supported by comprehensive data and justification, emphasising the urgency and the benefits of integrating these households into the AAY scheme.
- With the Union Government prioritising the reduction of scheme exclusions as one of the core objectives of PM JANMAN, the state can seize this opportunity to request additional AAY Ration Cards, especially for PVTG households.

3. Interim State Support:

- Until the Union Government responds to the request, the state government should proactively provide gap AAY entitlements to the identified PVTG households.
- The Department of Tribal Welfare (DoTW) should estimate the financial corpus required if all eligible Tribal households are provided with AAY Ration Cards. After such estimation, the DoTW should recommend the state government to provide interim support in providing AAY Ration Cards to all excluded Tribal households.
- This interim measure is viable given the relatively small number of PVTG households and non-PVTG eligible Tribal households in the state. Furthermore, it will not place a significant financial strain on the state government. This is particularly apparent given that the state government already earmarks [Rs. 5,528 crore](#) from its budget to subsidise the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in the state, with the proposed allocation representing only a small fraction of this budget.

4. Extend Process to Non-PVTG eligible Households:

- Implement a similar process for Non-PVTG eligible households. Use available data to identify eligible households that are currently excluded from the AAY scheme.
- Ensure these households receive appropriate support and entitlements to improve their food security and overall well-being.

5. Information Access:

- The state government should take steps to display the key details such as Ration Card number, beneficiary names and entitlements along with subsidised prices in public places such as Anganwadi centre, Ration depot and other places. These details should be made available in Telugu.

By adopting these measures, the state government can ensure that the most vulnerable Tribal communities receive the necessary support and entitlements under the AAY scheme, thereby enhancing their food security and reducing socio-economic disparities.

5.2 Limitations of the Report

****Purpose and Methodology of the Report:**** We have included only households with ration cards in our study, thereby excluding households without ration cards from our sample. Given the negligible exclusions in household coverage under TPDS, as observed in various studies conducted by LibTech, we believe this approach is justified.

****Section 1:**** We have estimated the exclusion of PVTG households under the AAY scheme for ASR district based on the findings from a purposive sampling of 7 FPS of G. Madugula and Chintapalli. However, the number of exclusions in these 7 FPS might not be representative across the district.

****Section 2:**** Pensioner households are considered as proxy indicators to identify the four types of households to identify AAY scheme exclusions among non-PVTG eligible households. However, we did not take into consideration households that did not register under the pension scheme, i.e., households who got excluded in the state government pension scheme.

****Section 2:**** Due to prevailing vulnerability among non-PVTG eligible households in general, we have reasonably assumed that widow and single woman households have 'no family or societal support or no assured means of subsistence' aligning with the spirit of the scheme.

About LibTech India

LibTech, also known as Liberation Technology India, is composed of engineers, social workers, and social scientists committed to enhancing public service delivery in India. Our focus areas encompass improving the implementation of various rights-based legislations such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Food Security Act (NFSA), and RTI, in addition to specific schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Kissan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN). Currently, we operate in several states across the country, collaborating with governments and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Annexure I

Annexure I presents case studies for AAY scheme exclusions for the following categories;

- *Excluded PVTG household (Case study 1)*
- *Excluded non-PVTG eligible household (Case study 2)*
- *Households with AAY Ration Cards were provided with PHH Ration cards (Case study 3)*
- *Received PHH Ration Card on account of splitting AAY Ration Card (Case study 4)*

Case study 1

Gemmeli Judungi(57) w/o late Raja Rao belongs to a Kondhu(PVTG) community and is a widow pensioner. Abandoned by her children after the death of her husband 5 years back, she lives all alone and manages her day to day life with a meagre pension of Rs. 3,000. Judungi has a PHH Ration Card, receiving 5 kgs of food grains each month.

However, she requires 25 kgs every month in total. It costs her around Rs. 600 to buy the rest 20 kgs of food grains; Rs. 30 per kg including travelling cost to the weekly market. In addition, going out of the village to buy food grains is a burden due to her old age condition. Therefore, providing AAY Ration Card to Judungi is crucial especially because of her multi faceted vulnerability caused by her health and socio economic circumstances.

Case study 2

Pagi Ramesh (39) and Pangi Mangamma (30) along with two children live in one of the interior villages of G Madugula. Ramesh used to migrate frequently to Vijayawada while Mangamma worked in MGNREGA to earn a living for their family. Having been struck in poverty, Ramesh and

Mangamma continued to struggle to manage their household. However, since Ramesh met with an accident 4 years back where he lost one of his legs, he has been mostly bed ridden.

The family currently has a PHH Ration card with 20 kgs of food grains every month. Since Mangamma is the sole breadwinner with unstable income, Ramesh's pension is being utilised for buying deficit food grains. Therefore, since the household is eligible, providing food grains under AAY scheme would relieve burden on Mangamma to some extent and ensure food security to her family.

Case study 3

Pangi Janaki (32) belongs to a PVTG (Kondhu) community residing in Chintapalli. Having lost her husband a few years back, she toils to earn for her family with two school going children by taking up manual work in and around her village. In this situation, she had some relief from holding an AAY Ration card receiving 35 kgs of food grains every month which supplemented her efforts to feed her family. However, this relief ended in 2020 when she received a PHH Rice Card with only 15 kgs of food grains as entitlements.

Attending manual work to earn meagre yet unstable income is causing hardships for the family to access sufficient food grains since 2020. In addition, Janaki faces frequent health issues impacting her income. In fact, Janaki spends an additional amount of Rs. 500 on travelling to reach the Mandal headquarters to buy additional food grains and reach back home. Therefore, Janaki being a PVTG and a widow, providing her with an AAY Ration Card is essential to ease her difficulty in ensuring food security to her family.

Case study 4

Gemmeli Tikko's family comprises her husband, one son and two daughters. Since the family belongs to a PVTG 'Poraja' community, they have had an AAY Ration Card since the past few years. Having no land to cultivate, the sustenance of the family depends on Tikko's husband who migrates frequently to Visakhapatnam to avail manual labour. In addition, MGNREGA serves as a supplement yet crucial income source for the family.

Kalyan got married in 2022 and his spouse was added to the existing AAY Ration Card. After applying for splitting the AAY Ration Card on account of marriage, Kalyan and his wife had got a PHH Ration Card in spite of being subjected to the prevailing vulnerability. In other words, Kalyan's family had not received an AAY Ration Card.