

6 Social Protection and Human Development

6.1 Social Protection as a Social Priority

This section seeks to examine the nature and extent of social protection that the people of Tripura enjoy and its impact on human development achievements in the state. At the risk of simplifying a complex issue, it is possible to identify two rival approaches to achieving human development. First, one can take a view that the primary responsibility for enhancing one's core capabilities and wellbeing lies with the individual, and the family. It depends on their individuated choice and effort, provided their 'negative freedom' (that is to say, freedom from any external restraint) is ensured. Second, on the contrary, it is possible to begin with the premise that for an individual to enjoy their basic freedom, there have to exist social conditions that enable them to do so. In short, the actualization of individual freedom is contingent upon social commitment (Sen 1999). Put another way, it is not enough to ensure negative 'freedom from' restraints but also at once it is essential to make available, through optimal social support, the positive 'freedom to' cultivate basic human capabilities.

Negative freedom is not an absence of freedom but only a guarantee that nobody will restrain an individual from enjoying their rights. For example, the negative freedom to take a walk in a park will only entail the absence of, say, any physical barriers or a bunch of goons that may come in the way of walking freely. If we stretch our imagination a little more, we, however, would realize that these absences may not suffice to enable *all* to enjoy as simple an activity as taking an evening stroll, especially those who need to deal with a variety of physical and other challenges, unless some positive conditions are ensured in order to equip them to do so. For instance, a ramp has to be constructed for those who cannot climb stairs that often constitute the entrance to a park; for those who are visually impaired, appropriate measures have also to be taken to make sure that the background conditions are conducive to their taking a walk. In other words, individual freedom is contingent upon not only 'hands-off' conditions but crucially on 'hands-on' arrangements carefully made through social commitment and effort. It is in this sense that individual freedom is a positive freedom and that human development is a social enterprise, realizable through public action.

Precisely, it is the agency and effort of the individual, fortified with social solidarity and security, that facilitate human development. This collective obligation approach to human development shapes our understanding of the concept of rights as well. To put it briefly, the evolution of the notion of rights from civil rights (e.g., the right to life) to political rights (e.g., the right to vote) to the more recent variant of social and economic rights (e.g., the right to elementary education, the right to livelihood, the right to information, etc.) suggests how the connotation of rights has expanded over centuries to include an element of social welfare. Importantly, the rights-based understanding of social protection allows us to focus on what people deserve as entitlements – as humans deserving of equal dignity – rather than charity done to a dole-dependent clientele.

Social protection, so understood, is a critical ‘conversion factor’ between potential and actual human development (Dreze and Sen 2013). In the scholarly literature, there are of course contentious debates about what forms such protection should take in order to be most effective and equitable. For example, income redistribution and income support in the form of (conditional or unconditional) cash or kind transfer are some of the modes that protection typically takes in different country settings. In India and its states the Public Distribution System (PDS), pension schemes, nutritional support schemes at ICDS centers, school meal programmes and housing schemes constitute some of the specific schemes that fall under the remit of social assurance programmes. Another important variant of social support, inspired by the notion of economic rights, is a kind of a publicly provided employment guarantee. The MGNREGS – recently introduced in all parts of rural India – is one such scheme that recognizes people’s livelihood security as a social priority. The philosophical underpinnings of such social assurance claims and benefits entail broader notions of human security understood in terms of right to food, work and decent housing which are realizable through collective arrangements.

Social protection, Poverty and Inequality

The criticality of social protection becomes all the more prominent in a situation of widespread poverty and entrenched social inequality evident in many parts of the country. Since both poverty and inequality are primarily structurally produced and socially determined, the responsibility for offsetting their detrimental effects on capability promotion and protection lies not simply at the door of the individual but also with the collective conscience and action of the entire society. The rights-based social provisions, therefore, are

also an effective poverty alleviation measure. Following this line of reasoning, we begin our analysis of social security/protection measures in Tripura by delineating, although briefly, the picture of poverty in Tripura and how it has changed over time. The measurement of poverty is of course an issue that is fraught with both theoretical and methodological conundrums. At the risk of simplifying the discussion a bit, we distinguish between two major approaches toward conceptualizing poverty – first, the standard approach to look at poverty in income or monetary terms; second, to put forth a broader notion of human poverty, understood as multi-dimensional deprivations of core human capabilities (Alkire and Seth 2013)¹. We draw on both these perspectives to map the poverty scenario in Tripura (in comparison to a few selected Indian states). With this background scenario, we outline the (political and policy) contours of social protection in the state. In general, there has been a reduction over time in both monetary poverty as well as multidimensional poverty in most states of India including Tripura, although the extent of that decline varies widely across the national universe. We need to remember, however, that there are a number of mutually incongruous estimates of income poverty.

Also of interest are issues of the depth (the proportion of people who are particularly badly deprived in certain indicators) and intensity of poverty (people who suffer deprivations in more indicators at once). Moreover, some population sub-groups within the same state suffer more than others under the scourge of poverty. Again, there seems to be an intra-state spatial dimension of poverty in the sense that some regions are peopled with more poverty-stricken people as compared to other parts of the state. Tripura had multidimensional poverty Head Count of more than 55 percent in 1999 which got reduced by a little over 9 percentage points in 2006 (estimates of multidimensional poverty are a bit dated, because information required to calculate these measures are not available for a later period).

The available income poverty estimates, disaggregated along axes of caste groups and regions within the state of Tripura are old; however, they may still provide some useful pointers for a closer scrutiny of social and regional patterns of the burden of poverty. For example, the ST category appears to suffer from a disproportionate weight of poverty (Table 6.2). Again, using the lens of regional differentiation in the incidence of poverty, one notices a clear advantage of the West Tripura region in this respect, perhaps indicative of a legacy of

¹ The multidimensional poverty index and multidimensional head count ratio developed by Alkire and Seth (2013) include ten indicators grouped under three dimensions of education, health and standard of living. These are used to ascertain the incidence, depth and intensity of poverty.

policy advantages. Moreover, there seems to be a coupling of regional and social biases as far as poverty is concerned; the region with the lowest burden of poverty is also the area that has the highest concentration of relatively non-poor non-ST population. This broad-brush picture of the poverty situation in Tripura raises the next obvious question of the kind and extent of social protection schemes that the Government of Tripura has put in place to mitigate the effects of poverty and inequality and by how much. In more concrete terms, we discuss four social protection schemes in the state, namely, the Public Distribution System (PDS), the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and other housing schemes, the pension scheme and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Table 6.1 Multi-Dimensional Poverty in selected Indian States

	Monetary Poverty (% of people below poverty line) according to Tendulkar Committee report			Multi-dimensional poverty			
	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	Multi-dimensional poverty head count (%)		Deeply and Intensely Poor (%)	
				1999	2006	1999	2006
Assam	34.4	37.9	32.0	65.7	54.9	20.8	11.8
Bihar	54.4	53.5	33.7	76.1	72.0	36.1	30.0
Gujarat	31.8	23.0	16.6	45.9	36.0	17.0	8.7
Manipur	38.0	47.1	36.9	44.6	32.4	9.6	4.2
Sikkim	31.1	13.1	8.2	36.1	28.9	6.7	3.6
Tamil Nadu	28.9	17.1	11.3	42.8	26.4	7.7	3.0
Tripura	40.6	17.4	14.0	55.5	46.6	15.5	9.2
India	37.2	29.8	21.9	56.8	48.5	19.3	13.9

Source:GoI, Planning Commission 2012& 2013; Alkire and Seth 2013

Table 6.2 Poverty head count in rural Tripura by Social Groups and Regions

Social Groups		Regions	
ST	35.3	West Tripura	10.6
SC	15.6	North Tripura	22.3
General	17.7	South Tripura	26.2
Non-ST	17.1	Other Districts	24.3

Source: Himanshu, No date.

6.2 The Public Distribution System in Tripura

Tripura is a food deficit state. Also, in terms of per capita State Domestic Product, Tripura occupies an unenviable position among the states in the Indian Union. To ensure food security in the state is, therefore, a major human development goal here – a goal that can be realized through not just a healthy market economy but a complementary, well-functioning public distribution system.

In Tripura, the PDS seems to function as a near-universal programme, as it covers a little over 96 percent of the total population, described in the official documents as the ‘rationing population’. As in the case of other states, the Centre allocates grains to states in accordance with the proportion of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families (Antyodaya families included) fixed until recently by the Planning Commission, Government of India. The State, in addition, includes within the ambit of its PDS coverage ad-hoc BPL families (further classified into those living in poorer and other districts) and offers them household and per capita entitlements that are more or less similar to those availed by the BPL and Antyodaya (AAY) families, both in terms of entitlement amounts and issue prices. The understanding is that the targeted PDS leads to the exclusion of several poor households. This expansion of the coverage of BPL households on the part of the state contributes to the near-universalization of its PDS. ~~How the state manages to meet up with the resultant increase in grain requirements seems to be met up is an issue that deserves greater scrutiny. by additional subsidy contribution by the state government and additional allocation from the central government.~~

In states like Tamil Nadu which also runs a near-universal PDS, a combination of measures are followed, including a reduction in per household entitlements, purchase of additional grains required, and so on. In Tripura, the ad-hoc BPL families are provided rice out of monthly APL allocation and a quantity of special allocation from the GoI. Since Tripura is a deficit state in terms of rice production, the State is not in a position to augment centrally allocated rice through what is known as “state pool” contributions. Though extra commitment of resources by the state government does not appear feasible, the State runs a PDS that is expansive and quasi-universal. In this context, it is significant to mention here, with quite a bit of concern, that the PDS control order recently issued by the central government aims to roll back the coverage of the Antyodaya programme that has proven to be ‘...a lifeline for many widows, elderly persons, and other vulnerable groups’ in the country (Dreze 2015). This will also mean that eventually there will be a single category of ‘priority households’ with the

entitlement of 5 kg of subsidized foodgrains per person per month, leading to a loss of entitlement for the poorest of the poor among the small households in the country.

With this disheartening possibility as a backdrop, we take stock of the coverage of PDS in the state of Tripura at present (in terms of the number and type of ration cards), in comparison to its coverage in 2005.

Table 6.3: The PDS Coverage and its Institutional Capacity: Ration Cards and Ration Shops in Tripura

Year	Number and Type of Ration Cards				Ration shops and their clientele		
	Total No. of ration cards	APL cards%	BPL Cards%	AAV cards%	Total number of Shops	Average number of cards per shop	Average Population per shop
2005	725445	59.3	31.3	9.4	1446	509	2212
2014	962689	52.5	35.7*	12.3	1786	539	2213

*BPL plus ad-hoc BPL cards.

Source: Tripura HDR 2007, and Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Tripura, Government of Tripura.

The PDS coverage in the state has two promising features. First, over the period under consideration, the PDS has retained its quasi-universal character. Second, since BPL and AAY cards are fixed by the central government, the state tends to both expand its PDS coverage as well as offer higher ‘household entitlements’ to a larger number of poorer families by including ad-hoc BPL cards within its ambit. We also map the institutional capacity of the state over time to ascertain how effectively the services under the scheme get delivered, by presenting details about the number of fair price shops and the average population they are supposed to serve. The total number of shops has increased and consequently even with an increase in the number of ‘rationing population’, the average population per shop remained more or less the same between 2005 and 2014.

A district-wise distribution of the different types of cards gives an implicit idea about the geography of poverty within the state and about how the state strives to respond to such intra-state variations through an equitable inter-regional distribution of BPL, AAY and APL cards. For example, since West Tripura is in a position of relative prosperity, about 60 percent of the

distributed cards come under the category of APL cards. In contrast, in districts like Dhalai, Gomati, Khowai and North Tripura, there is a noticeably higher proportion of BPL and Antyodaya cards in tune with the comparatively higher level of poverty and disadvantage that the people of these areas experience.

Table 6.4: District-wise distribution of ration cards (in percent) in Tripura

Districts	APL	BPL	Ad-hoc BPL	Antyodayay
West Tripura	62.8	10.4	20.4	6.3
Sipahijala	52.4	18.9	17.7	10.9
Khowai	48.4	21.9	15.9	13.7
Unokoti	50.6	17.3	22.8	10.0
North Tripura	48.9	20.5	18.0	12.6
Dhalai	48.9	24.9	9.3	16.9
South Tripura	47.1	22.7	15.7	14.1
Gomoti	46.3	25.5	12.2	15.9

Source: Director, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Tripura, Government of Tripura

Again, the distribution of ration cards of different categories across various socio-economic groups sheds light on whether the vulnerable social groups get adequate coverage under the PDS. Although this by itself is not enough to ascertain whether PDS purchase of foodgrains across different socio-economic groups is equitable, it certainly provides a basic idea.

Table 6.5: Distribution of ration cards across differently vulnerable social groups (in per cent) in Tripura

Social Category	APL	BPL	Ad-hoc BPL	Antyodaya	Not Registered	Do Not Know	Total
SC	41.08	34.46	13.37	4.58	6.14	0.36	100
ST	38.26	37.63	4.74	12.96	6.41	0	100
OBC	48.82	24.82	12.06	8.27	5.44	0.59	100
Other	45.11	22.98	18.44	7.46	6	0	100
Total	42.76	30.49	11.6	8.91	6.06	0.19	100

Source: Pratichi Household Survey 2015

The PDS coverage in the state appears to be equity-enhancing in the sense that the socially vulnerable groups in the state, especially ST households, are included in comparatively larger proportions as BPL, ad-hoc BPL and Antyodaya families, deserving of higher quantum of ‘household entitlements’. This is also true for SC households in general. The survey data on the proportion of BPL, ad-hoc BPL and Antyodaya cards taken together (51 percent) indicate a slightly higher share as compared to the official data presented in Table 6.3, whereas the share of APL cards in the total, as per the survey, is appreciably lower than the corresponding figure as per the official record. These anomalies admitted, the overall distribution of PDS claims and benefits across divergent social groups, as evident from the survey data, seems to be consistent with the varying degrees of vulnerability that these groups suffer from and hence is equity-preserving.

The inclusivity of PDS transfers may be further looked at from a different angle, by asking what proportion of the routinely classified vulnerable socio-economic groups possesses BPL or Anyodaya cards that give them maximum entitlements under the PDS (Table 6.6). Swaminathan (2008) follows this line of enquiry for India and its states, drawing on NSS data for 2004-05. To get a temporal comparison for Tripura in particular, we attempt a similar exercise using the survey data. The figures look promising for both the reference periods in the sense that a sizable proportion of the vulnerable groups are included as either BPL or Antyodaya households; furthermore. the drift of inclusivity to reach out to the poorest of the poor has continued over time. Between 2004 and 2014, a significant proportion of marginal groups such as SCs and STs have continued to get maximum PDS benefits. The proportion of agricultural laborer households possessing BPL or Antyodaya cards seems, however, to have declined over this period by ten percentage points. This requires a deeper scrutiny of the comparability of NSS and survey data as well as of the ground reality itself.

Table 6.6: PDS entitlements for vulnerable groups in Tripura

2004-5#	2014-15##

Proportion of SC HHs with BPL or Antyodaya cards	45.4	Proportion of SC HHs with BPL or Antyodaya cards	46.4*	Proportion of agricultural & non-agricultural labourer HHs with BPL or Antyodaya cards	56.2*	Proportion of HHs in lowest quintile of per capital annual income with BPL or Antyodaya cards	58.3*
Proportion of agricultural labourer HHs with BPL or Antyodaya cards	66.6	Proportion of ST HHs with BPL or Antyodaya cards	56.1*				

Note: * does not include HHs possessing ad-hoc BPL cards.

Source: # Swaminathan2008; ## Pratiche Household Survey.

Importantly, in Tripura, average monthly per capita PDS purchase of rice, as gleaned from our survey conducted in 2014-15, is 6.8 kg; this is slightly higher than average per capita monthly offtake of rice of approximately 6.3 kg, as calculated from official data for 2014. Clearly, there is a need for deeper probing of this issue. Still, that the average PDS purchase of rice in Tripura is comparatively high is not just a matter of data anomalies. The figure for rural India as a whole, during 2011-12 as reported in the NSS, is much lower at 1kg per month. In Tripura, however, the corresponding average, according to the same NSS data, is 5.16 kg for 2011-12. Our data pertain to a more recent reference period that may partly account for the higher estimate. The general trend, however, is encouraging. Tripura, therefore, can be included in the league of the ‘functioning’ states, as far as the PDS is concerned (see Khera 2011). It also needs a mention here that unlike a few other states in India, no major reductions in per household entitlements from 2007 onwards are noticeable in Tripura.

Moreover, per-capita monthly purchase of PDS rice by different categories of cardholders is in line with the stipulated norms vis-à-vis (differentiated) entitlements of families tuned in turn to different degrees of their vulnerability. There seems, thus, to be quite a bit of consistency between what the entitlement norms suggest and what obtains in practice. More elaborately, across the districts of Tripura as well as for the state as a whole, per capita purchase of rice by BPL and Antyodaya families, and by ad-hoc BPL families, is expectedly higher than that by APL families (Table 6.7). This suggests that **the PDS transfers in Tripura are relatively free from ‘exclusion errors’ and also that both ‘target efficiency’ (accurately identifying the most deserving families) and ‘transfer efficiency’ (accurately transferring the expected quantum of benefits) are attained with some degree of satisfaction.** In the state as a whole, too, per-capita PDS transfer of rice to members of BPL and Antyodaya families is

higher than that for members of ad-hoc BPL and APL households; in particular, the difference with the APL families is clear. In Dhalai district, PDS transfer of rice to poorer families is particularly high, suggesting both a high incidence of poverty in these areas as well as a working PDS geared to mitigate its effects.

Table 6.7: Monthly per-capita purchase of PDS rice (kg.) by different categories of cardholders

Districts	APL	BPL	Ad-hoc BPL	Antyodayay
West Tripura	4.8	7.9	7.6	12.7
Sipahijala	5.0	8.3	6.3	7.6
Khowai	5.2	8.6	5.9	7.6
Unokoti	5.3	8.2	4.8	7.4
North Tripura	5.0	9.5	4.5	7.8
Dhalai	5.4	9.4	8.2	8.1
South Tripura	5.0	7.9	5.6	8.5
Gomoti	4.8	8.9	6.7	10.5
Tripura	5.0	8.6	5.9	8.4

Source: Pratichi Household Survey 2015

How do trends in offtake and purchase of PDS rice relate to each other in Tripura? In other words, is the PDS in the state fraught with problems of diversions? Diversion or leakage of PDS foodgrains is a thorny issue, sometimes for real reasons but often due to a widespread lack of faith in any system called ‘public’. Khera (2011) presents a fine analysis of diversion of PDS grains in the major states of India and demonstrates that the PDS is not ‘uniformly defunct’ across all parts of the country. On the contrary, there is significant variation in the performance of the said scheme, measured in terms of the proportion of foodgrains that fails to reach beneficiary households, due in particular to the illegal sale of PDS grains on the open market. Her analysis suggests that within the Indian Union there are indeed a number of “functioning” states in which diversion of PDS grains is not a major concern. Also, there are a few “reforming” states that have been trying with some success to reduce the erstwhile high levels of diversion. There are, of course, some “languishing” states that do not record any reduction over time in the existing high levels of diversion. The fact of such wide variability in the performance of the PDS offers strong reasons to investigate not only what fails to work, but also what does. Is diversion in PDS grains a concern in the state of Tripura? Methodologically, to estimate such diversions, Khera (2011) has compared data on ‘offtake’ of grains by state governments from the Food Corporation of India with data on household/per capita purchase from PDS shops, collected by the NSS consumption expenditure surveys. The difference between offtake and purchase is taken as an estimate of

grain that is diverted. Here, a brief exercise along these lines is attempted. We compare the data on monthly offtake/lifting of rice by the State in 2010 (obtained from the concerned department) and compare this with the monthly PDS purchase of rice in Tripura in 2011-12, available from the NSS survey. It is noted by Khera that at the all India level, 47 percent of the rice is diverted. In Tripura, the situation appears to be much more heartening in this respect. Using the NSS data on PDS purchase of rice, we find that the gap between offtake of rice and PDS purchase of rice in 2011-12 is roughly in the order of 14 percent. So, the leakage of PDS foodgrains is relatively small in Tripura, comparatively speaking.

We finally revert to the question raised at the beginning of this section about treating social protection as a measure to reduce poverty. Drawing on NSS data, Dreze and Khera (2013) persuasively argue that the PDS is making a significant contribution to poverty reduction in rural India. In their estimates, the index of rural poverty in 2009-10 was about 18 percent lower than it would have been without PDS transfers at the all-India level, and 40 to 50 percent lower in Chhatishgarh and Tamil Nadu. Since a similar analysis for the state of Tripura is not easy to come by, we draw on our survey data for the purpose of a similar exercise, though by using a few, and somewhat crude, proxy measures.

Contribution of PDS rice towards meeting the monthly per capita requirement of consumption of rice is one proxy measure to ascertain to what extent PDS transfers cause to mitigate the effect of poverty. Expectedly and importantly, in the state as a whole, PDS rice constitutes a starkly higher proportion of total consumption of rice among the members of BPL and Antyodaya households as compared to those belonging to APL and (to a lesser extent for) ad-hoc BPL families. This pattern consistently holds in all the districts of Tripura. In a district like Dhalai, the gap between the APL and BPL families is particularly stark when measured in terms of their respective dependence on PDS rice. This clearly implies that the poorer families depend to a large extent on the PDS to meet their food requirements. To put it differently, the incidence of poverty would have been much higher in Tripura and its districts without PDS transfers. Hence, it is possible to conclude that the PDS, as it is run in the state of Tripura, contributes to poverty reduction.

Table 6.8: Share of PDS rice in per-capita monthly consumption of rice in Tripura (in per cent)

Districts	APL member	BPL member	Ad-hoc BPL member	Antyodayay member
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West Tripura	34.8	60.9	57.4	83.3
Sipahijala	42.0	60.2	50.7	59.6
Khowai	44.2	61.3	50.4	63.8
Unokoti	38.1	57.0	40.0	48.3
North Tripura	44.6	75.3	40.8	54.2
Dhalai	44.0	64.9	63.5	64.2
South Tripura	42.7	59.8	41.1	67.6
Gomoti	39.4	65.0	55.1	89.7
Tripura	41.0	63.2	46.8	63.2

Source: Pratichi Household Survey 2015

6.3 Social Pension

In contrast to the concept of family pension for the retired workers/employees, Social Pension as a social security measure for the old age people was introduced by the Central government in 1995 under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP). Initially, although only aged people with poor economic background were brought within the fold of social security pension, widows and disabled persons were later included in this programme (GoI, MoRD2007 and 2012). However, there are many states in India that introduced various types of social security pensions in their jurisdiction prior to the advent of the NSAP. For example, Tamil Nadu introduced a pension scheme as a measure of providing social security for aged persons in 1962. The scheme was extended to destitute widows in 1975 (Prasad 1995). Kerala introduced a pension scheme for agricultural workers in 1960 for providing them some social support once they attain the age of 60 (Gulati 1990). Tripura too belongs to this league of states. Tripura introduced its first social security pension scheme in 1978 when it started to provide social pension for aged people (GoT, Department of Social Welfare and Social Education, no date). The state, like a few other provincial governments, is also a co-contributor to the pension schemes under NSAP. As old age social pension, a person of BPL status in the age group of 60-79 years receives Rs 500 per month in Tripura; the contribution of the state government in this case is Rs300. There were only six states in India, viz. Tamil Nadu, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana that were ahead of Tripura in 2011-12 in terms of state contribution for a pensioner enlisted under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS). Tripura and Sikkim were at the top among the northeastern states in 2011-12 in this regard (see Table6.9). With respect to the Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS), almost the same pattern of state contribution becomes

apparent. Only a handful of states including Sikkim contributed more than Tripura towards widow pension. However, with respect to the contribution of the state for a pensioner enrolled under the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS), there were many states in India that were ahead of Tripura in 2011-12. Even in case of IGNDPS, within the league of northeastern states there was no state except Sikkim that contributed more for a disabled pensioner than Tripura.² Notably, Tripura has left behind many states, including Kerala, in terms of state contribution for a pensioner enlisted under any of the pension schemes of NSAP (see Table6.9). Thus, Tripura appears to have taken a leading role in extending support to its marginalized people through social pensions for quite some time.

Table6.9. Monthly contribution of State government (in Rs) in 2011-12 for a pensioner enrolled under the pension schemes of National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

Serial No.	State	IGNOAPS	IGNWPS	IGNDPS
01	Andhra Pradesh	NIL	NIL	300
02	Bihar	NIL	NIL	NIL
03	Chhattisgarh	100	NIL	NIL
04	Goa	800	800	800
05	Gujarat	200		300
06	Haryana	300 (below 70 years) 500 (above 70 years)	550	350
07	Himachal Pradesh	130	130	130
08	Jammu & Kashmir	125	200	
09	Jharkhand	200	200	
10	Karnataka	200	200	800
11	Kerala	50	120	160

² The contribution of Assam was not available.

12	Madhya Pradesh	75	75	75
13	Maharashtra	400	400	400
14	Odisha	NIL	NIL	NIL
15	Punjab	250	250	250
16	Rajasthan	300 (below 75 years) 550 (above 75 years)	300	300
17	Tamil Nadu	800	800	800
18	Uttar Pradesh	100	100	100
19	Uttarakhand	200	200	400
20	West Bengal	200	200	200
21	Arunachal Pradesh	NIL	NIL	NIL
22	Assam	50		
23	Manipur	NIL	NIL	NIL
24	Meghalaya	50	NIL	NIL
25	Mizoram	50	NIL	50
26	Nagaland	100		100
27	Sikkim	200	300	300
28	Tripura	200	200	200

Source: GoI, MoRD2012

The role of the State government in providing social security to the people through social pensions can be further illustrated through a number of social pension schemes in Tripura that are exclusively funded by the State government. These pension schemes are mainly intended to extend coverage of social pensions to those who are not included under the NSAP. For example, drawing on its own fund, the State government introduced a pension scheme in 2012 for unmarried women in the BPL category to provide some support when they attain the age of 45 years. Similarly, visually impaired people, who do not come under the coverage of IGNDPS due to their APL status, are provided Rs 500 per month since 2012. Currently, there are 22 social pension schemes in Tripura that are exclusively funded by the State government (see Table6.10).³ Literature suggests that there are states that have failed to translate their

³ Although the Directorate of Social Welfare and Social Education, Government of Tripura, defines two social security schemes viz. Tripura Incentive to Girl Child (BPL) and Un-employment Allowance for 100 percent Blind (BPL and APL) as Social Pension Schemes, it has not been discussed here for definitional ambiguities.

paper commitments to expand coverage of social pensions into actual practice.⁴ Encouragingly, however, 33 percent of the total beneficiaries in Tripura (90,844 in absolute number), as per the record of the Directorate of Social Welfare and Social Education, Government of Tripura, were receiving social pensions under various pension schemes introduced and sponsored by the State government. This proactive role of the State government holds much promise for furthering its human development goals. We can point out in this context that some of the State government-initiated schemes, however, indicate proliferation, replication, and duplication of schemes that defy easy rationalization. For example, the re-introduction in 2008 of the disability pension scheme started originally in 1980, with minor modifications in the eligibility criteria, implies avoidable proliferation of schemes, which also opens up a possibility of non-compliance and non-implementation of several such programmes (see Table6.10).

⁴ For an illuminating analysis of the performance of some states in covering the targeted people see, Dutta, Howes, Murgai (2010) and Bhattacharya et al.(2015).

Table6.10. State Govt. funded social pension schemes currently in place in Tripura (as on August, 2015)

Sl. No.	Name of Pension Scheme	Year of Introduction	Eligibility Criteria	Pension (per month) for a beneficiary (Rs)	No. of beneficiaries
01	60% Disability (BPL)	2008	BPL household, 60% disability, age 10 years or more	400	4,763
02	Tripura Rickshaw-puller (BPL)	2009	BPL household, rickshaw-puller, age 55 years or more	500	457
03	Tripura Cobbler (BPL)	2009	BPL household, cobbler by profession, age 55 years or more	500	60
04	Widow and Deserted (BPL)	2006	BPL household, widow or deserted by husband, age 18-59 years	500	56,182
05	Bidi Shramik (BPL)	2000	BPL household, age 55-65 years	500	155
6	Blind & Handicap Pension (BPL)	1980	BPL household, 40% disability, age 18 years or more	500	4531
7	Widow State Pension Scheme - 1952	2012	BPL household, widow, age 40-59 years	500	1952
8	Allowance for 100% Blind (BPL)	2006	BPL household, 100% blind, age 10 years or more	1000	747
9	Pension to 80% & above Disable person of APL families	2012	APL household, 80% disability, age 10 years or more	500	1829
10	Pension to Persons who lost 100% Eyesight of APL families	2012	APL household, 100% blind, age 10 years or more	700	490
11	Pension to Unmarried Women of the Age 45 Years & above of BPL Families	2012	BPL household, unmarried, age 45 years or more	500	1463
12	Motor Shramik	2012	BPL household, motor	500	391

	Pension (BPL)		shramik at least for 10 years, age 55 years or more		
13	Laundry Workers (BPL)	2012	BPL household, laundry worker at least for 10 years, age 55 years or more	500	289
14	Barber Workers (BPL)	2012	BPL household, barber by profession at least for 10 years, age 55 years or more	500	409
15	Handloom Workers (BPL)	2012	BPL household, handloom worker at least for 10 years, age 55 years or more	500	726
16	Fishermen (BPL)	2012	BPL household, fisherman by profession at least for 10 years, age 55 years or more	500	1151
17	State Old Age Pension (BPL)	2012	BPL household, age 55 years or more	500	8828
18	Deserted Women (APL) New	2013	APL household, woman deserted by husband, age 18-59 years	500	2034
19	New Social Pension Scheme for Person Living with HIV	2015	Any person having AIDS	500	887
20	New Social Pension Scheme for Grade-II Deformed Leprosy Patients	2015	Any person having leprosy	500	61
21	New Social Pension Scheme for Transgender	2015	Any person identified as transgender	500	55
22	New Social Pension Scheme for	2015	BPL household, female domestic worker at least for 5 years, age 18 years or more	350	3384

Source: Directorate of Social Welfare and Social Education, Government of Tripura

Although there is a possibility of non-compliance due to overlapping of some pension schemes in Tripura, it is apt to mention that the digitalization of the data base of beneficiaries reduces the chances of non-compliance. Furthermore, the principal mode of disbursement of pension is found to be through bank accounts in Tripura that also ensures transparency. It is

true that the banking mode of payment alone cannot prevent the leakage in social pensions⁵ but it certainly helps to make the government system transparent. Tripura has set an example, along with Meghalaya in the NorthEast, in disbursing the social pensions through bank account. As per the records of the Ministry of Rural Development, 88 percent of NSAP beneficiaries were receiving their pensions through bank accounts in Tripura in 2014-15. The corresponding figure for Meghalaya is 71 percent for the same year. Other northeastern states were mainly pursuing the mode of cash payment till 2014-15.⁶ States like Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have made bank transaction universal or near universal (see table-A.6.1 in Appendix tables).

To complement the discussion and analysis in the foregoing section, we turn briefly to discuss the findings culled from our primary household survey that focused only on old age and widow pensions that were received by the people under any scheme. We found that 43 percent of the population ageing 60 and above (irrespective of their gender and marital status) was receiving pension in Tripura. The corresponding proportion for widows (40 years and above) was 53 percent. With respect to targeting, the performance of Tripura is quite reasonable. We found that 61 percent of the aged people, belonging to the category of BPL/Antyodaya (irrespective of their gender and marital status) were receiving pension in Tripura at the time of our survey. The corresponding proportion of those falling under ad-hoc BPL and APL category were 38 and 25 percent respectively. As far as widows who had completed 40 years of their age and featuring under the category of BPL/Antyodaya are concerned, the proportion receiving pensions in our survey was much more impressive at 79 per cent (see Table6.11). The corresponding proportion for widows featuring under ad-hoc BPL and APL category were 60 and 28 percent respectively. However, the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) conducted in 2011-12 does not portray such a promising picture for Tripura. As per IHDS data, 47 percent of the aged people who had completed 60 years of age, under the category of BPL/Antyodaya/Annapurna (irrespective of their gender and marital status) were receiving either old age or widow pension in Tripura. With respect to widows of same category (BPL/Antyodaya/ Annapurna) and featuring in the age group of 40 years or more, the proportion receiving pension was 55 percent. It is important to note that these figures were anyhow higher than the corresponding figures for the whole country – 36

⁵Bhattacharya et al.(2015) found a strong presence of the middleman in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in the banking mode of payment that entailed payment of a small part of the pension to the middleman in many cases as service fee.

⁶Bihar, Haryana, Odissa and Punjab seem to follow the same practice.

percent for the aged people and 44 percent for the widows – and a state like Gujarat was far behind Tripura in this regard (7 percent for aged people and 11 percent for widows) None of the remaining northeastern States was found to perform better than Tripura in this survey.⁷

Table6.11. Distribution of old age persons and widows receiving pensions in Tripura by type of their ration card (in percent)

Type of ration card	Old age persons (60 years or more)			Widows (40 years or more)		
	No. of total persons	No. of persons receiving pension	Percent receiving pension	No. of total persons	No. of persons receiving pension	Percent receiving pension
B.P.L./Antyodaya	224	136	60.7	84	66	78.6
Adhoc B.P.L.	37	14	37.8	20	12	60.0
A.P.L.	217	54	24.9	87	24	27.6
Not registered	5	3	60.0	5	2	40.0
Do not know	3	2	66.7	2	1	50.0
Total	486	209	43.0	198	105	53.0

Source: Pratichi Household Survey 2015

Looking at different income quintiles, we find that the proportion of old age people receiving pensions (irrespective of their gender and marital status) ranged from 52 to 29 percent across different income groups. While the proportion of old age people receiving pensions was 52 percent for the poorest quintile, it was 29 percent for the richest quintile (see Table6.12). It reaffirms the progressivity of the pension schemes. As far as pension for the widows is concerned, the corresponding proportions for the lowest and highest quintile were found to be 78 and 30 percent respectively, which again indicates progressivity (see Table6.12). However, this inverse relationship between income and social assistance is not strictly linear; for example, in case of widow pensions, the proportion of beneficiaries (46 percent) from lower middle class status was found to be lower than that from middle and upper middle class

⁷ A person was categorized as BPL/Antyodaya/Annapurna for analysis of IHDS data if any person of that household had the ration card of such categories.

background (61 and 51 percent respectively, see Table6.12).⁸ As far as the inclusion and exclusion quotient of pension schemes is considered, we find considerable inclusiveness of the schemes meant for aged people and widows. A sizable proportion of beneficiaries belong to upper income classes; 29 percent of aged people and 30 percent of widows belonging to the highest income quintile were found to be receiving pension in Tripura (see Table6.12).

Table6.12. Distribution of old age persons and widows receiving pensions in Tripura by their income quintile (in percent)

Income quintile	Old age persons (60 years or more)			Widows (40 years or more)		
	No. of total persons	No. of persons receiving pension	Percent receiving pension	No. of total persons	No. of persons receiving pension	Percent receiving pension
Lowest	97	50	51.5	40	31	77.5
Lower middle	100	50	50.0	41	19	46.3
Middle	95	40	42.1	38	23	60.5
Upper middle	97	41	42.3	41	21	51.2
Highest	96	28	29.2	37	11	29.7
Total	486	209	43.0	198	105	53.0

Source: Pratiche Household Survey 2015

With respect to the distribution of old age and widow pensions among various social categories, although the STs were found to be benefitting the most from the social pension schemes, the social groups other than SCs, STs and OBCs were also found to be benefitting in a considerable proportion. Particularly in case of widows, ‘other’ social groups were found to be receiving pension in a high proportion and it is considerably close to what obtains in the case of SCs. While the proportion of SC widows receiving pensions was 55 percent at the time of our survey, the corresponding figure for ‘other’ social groups was 47 percent (see Table-A.6.2 in Appendix tables). Thus, the scheme appears to be sensitive to the reality of gender deprivation across social groups and classes that one observes in most parts of the country.

⁸ For a discussion on progressivity of social pension schemes see, Dutta, Howes, Murgai (2010) and Bhattacharya et al.(2015).

The performance of Tripura with respect to social assistance to vulnerable sections of society in the form of social pensions is positive and constructive. Several scholars have argued that although social pensions are very little in amount, they have considerable impact on the lives of vulnerable population.⁹ Dreze(2013) has persuasively argued that the social pension, despite its paltry amount, provides a chance to enjoy small comforts in the lives of elderly people — ‘relieving their pain with some medicine, getting their sandals repaired, winning the affection of their grand-children with the odd sweet, or simply avoiding hunger’. And to provide this small comfort for the disadvantaged sections of society, the Government of Tripura appears to be doing well, =undoubtedly with some limitations that need to be addressed.

6.4 Housing

The problem of housing shortage was a serious issue in Tripura even a decade ago. Drawing on the data of Census 2001, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd. (HUDCO) identified 221,916 households in Tripura (34 percent of total households) that were facing housing shortage in 2001. This figure was 198,047 for rural Tripura which constituted 37 percent of the total rural households. It is to be noted here that HUDCO did not include serviceable temporary houses in this calculation of housing shortage(GoT, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department, 2009).If we add the serviceable temporary houses to this shortage the figure will be much higher. While looking into the census data on the type of houses, we find that 51 percent of the rural households in Tripura were living in temporary houses (serviceable and non-serviceable both) in 2001. That is, the problem of housing shortage was more serious in 2001 in Tripura than it appeared from the estimation of HUDCO.¹⁰ However, the proportion of temporary houses was found to fall from 51 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2011 in rural areas of Tripura. In other words, the proportion of temporary houses was reduced, remarkably, by 35 percent point in a decade, while the corresponding rate for the country as a whole was 7 percent point for the same period. The proportion of households in rural India living in temporary houses declined to 16 percent in 2011 from 23 percent in 2001. This suggests that the state of Tripura that was far behind the country average in 2001 in terms of temporary houses did manage to reach the level of country average in 2011. Of course there were many

⁹ For an incisive analysis on the impact of social pension on the lives of people, see Gupta (2013) and Chopra, Pudduserry(2014).

¹⁰The Working Group on Rural Housing for 11th Five Year Plan considered all temporary houses in rural areas to calculate housing shortage in India. See, GoI, MoRD (2011).

states in India that had a lower proportion of temporary houses than that in Tripura in 2011, but all the northeastern states except Sikkim were behind Tripura in this regard (see Table 6.13). It is to be kept in mind here that although the proportion of temporary houses was considerably higher in Mizoram than in Tripura, the proportion of permanent houses was much higher in Mizoram than in Tripura.

Table 6.13: State-wise distribution of households (in percent) by type of houses in rural India in 2011

State Name	Permanent	Semi-Permanent	Temporary			Unclassifiable
			Total	Serviceable	Non-Serviceable	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Goa	77.57	20.75	1.19	0.54	0.65	0.49
Himachal Pradesh	75.00	23.31	1.51	1.10	0.41	0.19
Gujarat	61.75	35.97	2.09	0.90	1.19	0.20
Kerala	79.24	16.04	3.22	1.36	1.86	1.51
Punjab	85.76	10.22	3.35	2.69	0.66	0.67
Haryana	70.89	24.70	4.00	3.31	0.69	0.41
Uttarakhand	89.60	6.05	4.06	2.12	1.94	0.29
Maharashtra	53.38	38.90	6.76	4.13	2.62	0.96
Jammu & Kashmir	54.25	36.43	7.55	6.90	0.65	1.76
Karnataka	55.12	36.37	7.84	4.80	3.04	0.67
Chhattisgarh	21.14	70.71	7.98	7.18	0.80	0.17
Sikkim	33.22	56.87	8.20	2.92	5.28	1.71
Madhya Pradesh	33.40	55.60	10.51	8.38	2.12	0.49
Jharkhand	25.99	60.21	13.55	12.19	1.36	0.26
Andhra Pradesh	65.95	18.90	14.16	8.33	5.83	0.99
Rajasthan	64.77	19.75	14.72	11.77	2.95	0.77
Tripura	9.31	74.20	16.18	3.93	12.25	0.31
West Bengal	36.03	44.15	19.25	12.80	6.45	0.57
Tamil Nadu	60.27	19.12	19.90	15.08	4.82	0.71
Uttar Pradesh	59.22	18.11	19.91	14.22	5.69	2.75
Meghalaya	21.49	57.00	20.50	2.57	17.93	1.01
Manipur	6.97	70.60	22.13	12.34	9.79	0.30
Assam	21.07	54.82	23.45	0.99	22.45	0.67

Nagaland	11.75	63.61	24.16	1.88	22.28	0.48
Bihar	45.04	23.95	30.34	8.03	22.31	0.67
Mizoram	43.33	23.36	31.49	0.20	31.28	1.83
Odisha	36.69	28.10	34.97	29.64	5.33	0.24
Arunachal Pradesh	11.57	28.77	56.25	4.04	52.21	3.41
India	51.37	31.49	16.17	9.68	6.49	0.98

Source: Census of India, 2011

However, the National Sample Survey shows a more positive housing scenario in Tripura roughly during the same period as compared to the one that springs out of Census findings. According to the 69th round of NSS, only 6 percent households in rural areas of Tripura were found to be living in temporary houses in 2012 (GoI, MoSPI, National Sample Survey Office 2014). Our field survey suggests a more encouraging situation than what emerges from the observations of NSS. Only a few houses in our survey (one percent of the total rural households) were found to be of temporary nature. Admittedly, the size of our sample was small. Most of the houses in Tripura were found to be of semi-pucca type made of mud or unburnt brick wall with tin roof. Various government schemes for housing have had to do with this progress in Tripura. According to our survey, 34 percent of total rural households benefitted from one or more types of government-sponsored housing schemes that are in place in the state. A majority of these houses were reportedly built under Indira Awas Yojana (46 percent, see Table 6.14), a Central government sponsored housing scheme targeted towards the marginalized people. This scheme that was launched in 1985 as a sub scheme of Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme was made into an independent scheme in 1996 to support the disadvantaged people in constructing their houses (GoI, MoRD 2013). A considerable proportion of households (22 percent) reportedly built their houses with the help of a State government housing scheme, namely, the Tripura State Government Housing Scheme [TSGHS]. This scheme, operating since 2013-14, was launched to provide housing assistance for those BPL families that were left out from Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).

Table 6.14: Distribution of rural households in Tripura by type of Housing schemes they benefitted from

Name of Housing Scheme	No. of households benefitted	Percent of households benefitted
Indira Awaas Yojana	112	46.3

Tripura State Govt. Housing Scheme	53	21.9
No mention	77	31.8
All	242	100.0

Source: PraticiHousehold survey 2015

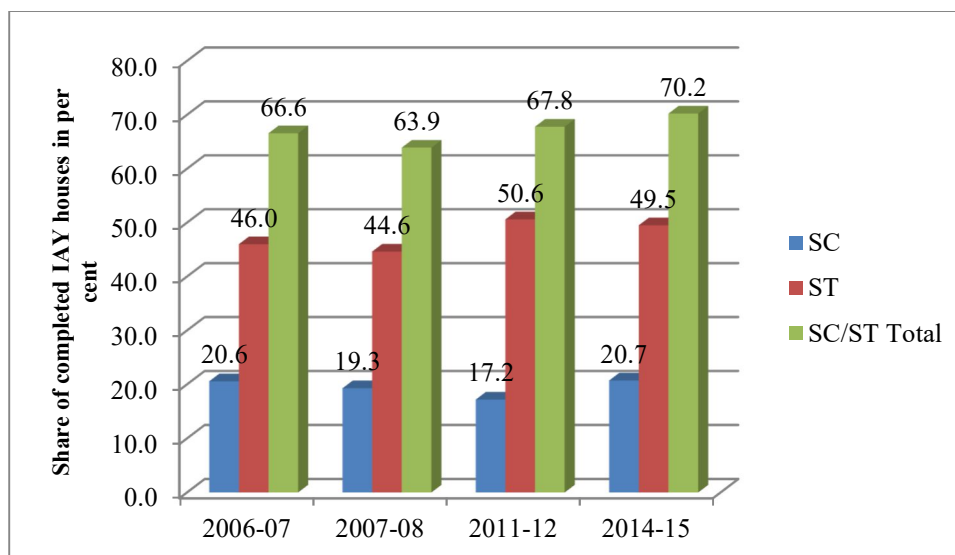
It is important to note that a large section of the respondents in our survey (32 percent) could not identify the specific scheme under which their houses were built (presented in the head of ‘No mention’ in Table6.14). For example, Sachin Dev Barma (name changed), a middle aged non-agricultural labour of Kalaibadi revenue village in Jampuijala Block, reported that the government assistance for the construction of his house was received through the political party that was in power at the time of our survey, but he was unaware of the housing scheme in question. This was the case with a sizeable number of our respondents who mentioned, not the scheme under question, but the political party that assisted them to avail of the housing scheme benefit. Our data suffer from this limitation.

Although a majority of the beneficiaries built their houses, as per our survey, under the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), the rate of physical progress of it was found to be dissatisfactory in Tripura in some selected years before 2014-15.¹¹ However, this trend seems to have been reversed in 2014-15. Given the target of 9621 IAY houses, 36 percent of the target was achieved by Tripura in 2006-07, the corresponding target and achievement were found to be 9550 and 241 percent respectively for the year of 2014-15 (see Table6.15). The number of houses completed in 2014-15 was much higher (23,056) than the target set for that financial year (9550). It indicates that a large number of houses that had been sanctioned prior to that year were completed in 2014-15. From Table6.15, we see that there were 11,012 ‘houses under construction’ in Tripura in 2011-12 that could not be completed in that year though it was sanctioned in 2011-12 and prior to 2011-12. A similar case might have happened in the 2013-14 as well. However, the physical progress found in 2014-15 (more than cent percent) shows that Tripura is now moving ahead at an accelerated pace to solve its housing problems. The introduction of the Tripura State Government Housing Scheme (TSGHS) in 2013-14 attests to this policy resolve. According to the figures provided by the Department of Rural Development, Government of Tripura, there were 105000 BPL families in the State that needed housing assistance in 2013. **Since the housing assistance expected from the Central**

¹¹Data is not available in public domain for all years before 2014-15.

government would not be sufficient to cover all these BPL families, the State government set an independent target of providing housing assistance to 44617 BPL families through TSGHS in the rural and urban areas by 2017-18. By 2014-15, reportedly 41 percent of this target was fulfilled. Thus, it is evident that meeting the housing needs of its people is a political priority for the government in Tripura. Comparatively speaking, however, Sikkim stands ahead of Tripura as far as its performance with respect to IAY is concerned (see able6.15). Looking at the distribution of IAY houses across social groups in selected years, we find that more than 60 per cent of the completed IAY houses belonged to SCs and STs in Tripura. The proportion of SC and ST houses completed in a year was the highest for 2014-15 (70 percent taken together, see Figure6.1). The proportion of completed houses for STs was more than double the proportion of completed houses for the SCs for the selected years. Our field survey, however, presents a slightly different picture. Although the combined share of SC and ST households benefitting from IAY scheme was 62 percent according to our survey, the proportion of ST beneficiary households was less than double the proportion of SC beneficiary households (see Table6.3 in Appendix). Notably, the share of religious minority households benefitting from IAY scheme was 25 percent as per our survey.

Figure 6.1: Share of completed IAY houses among SCs and STS (in percent) for selected years in Tripura



Source: GoI, MoRD 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2015.

Table 6.15: State-wise physical achievement of Indira Awaas Yojana in northeastern states of India for selected years

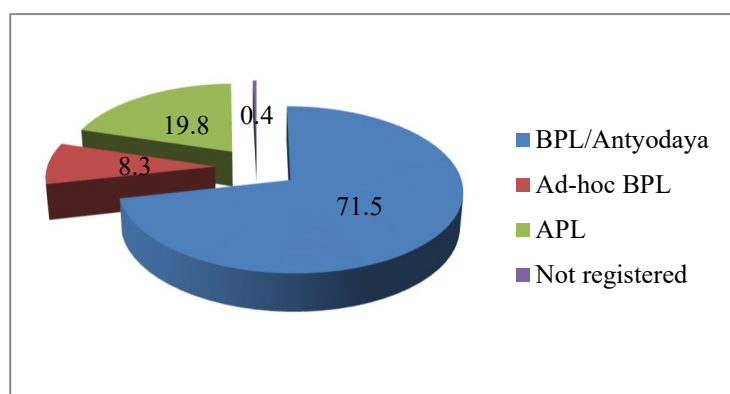
Name of State	2006-07			2007-08			2011-12			2014-15		
	Annual Target	Houses under construction	Target achieved (%)	Annual Target	Houses under construction	Target achieved (%)	Annual Target	Houses under construction	Target achieved (%)	Annual Target	Houses under construction	Target achieved (%)
Arunachal Pradesh	4939	241	30.51	6765	295	54.68	7548	284	14.33	2017	117	5.45
Assam	109214	40103	64.47	149593	50180	59.27	166913	95025	49.89	183171	239557	54.43
ManiPur	4287	@	@	5872	760	11.58	6552	2937	29.18	4658	2262	26.79
Meghalaya	7467	1842	16.75	10228	1068	16.41	11412	11444	31.70	8433	10723	119.48
Mizoram	1591	0	73.85	2180	0	46.61	2432	506	88.94	1293	166	21.35
Nagaland	4941	0	122.36	6768	1197	83.16	7552	0	107.03	1480	218	75.27
Sikkim	945	416	96.40	1294	290	82.15	1444	0	117.73	1834	1524	83.86
Tripura	9621	0	35.92	13178	0	9.49	14704	11012	25.31	9550	29960	241.42

@ Data not available

Source: GoI, MoRD 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2015.

Again, looking at the distribution of households that benefitted from any of the government schemes for housing in rural areas of Tripura, we find from our survey that 72 percent of households benefitting from government housing schemes belonged to either BPL or Antyodaya category (see Figure 6.2). However, it is a matter of concern that among the beneficiaries, APL households were found to have received 20 percent of the government housing assistance in rural areas of Tripura. More importantly, 17 percent of those APL households were found to belong to the top income quintile (based on per capita income) in our survey. The d-hoc BPL households that constituted 11 percent of the total households in our survey received 8 percent of the housing benefits.

Figure 6.2: Share of different Ration Card holding rural households (in percent) benefitted from any of the government housing schemes in Tripura



Source: Pratichi Household Survey 2015

Inter-district comparison of survey data shows that the rural areas of Gomoti district benefitted the most (17 percent) from government housing schemes while the district of West Tripura benefitted the least (8 percent) from these schemes (see Table A.6.5 in Appendix). Official data for the last three years, provided by the Department of Rural Development, Government of Tripura, suggest that after the formation of new districts, Dhalai has benefitted the most from both the IAY and TSGHS schemes. Comparing the TTAADC areas with the non-TTAADC areas, we find in our survey that the households residing in TTAADC areas benefitted more than their counterparts in non-TTAADC areas, indicating ethno-spatial equity in the distribution of housing assistance. While the share of households benefitting from government assistance was

57 percent for TTAADC areas, it was 43 percent for non-TTAADC areas (see TableA.6.6 in Appendix).

This report has addressed the issue of housing primarily in the rural areas of the state, to a relative neglect of the urban areas. However a brief mention may be made of the three important housing schemes that pertained to urban Tripura. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) [PMAY (U)] has been launched with assistance of Rs. 1.66 lakh per dwelling unit for Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) component and under this scheme 42896 dwelling units have been approved. Again, under Rajiv Awas Yojna construction of 2017 dwelling units has been sanctioned in four Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), namely Kumarghat, Khohwai, Amarpur and Sabroom. Also under Tripura State Government Housing Scheme (TSGHS) construction of 1500 dwelling units in ULBs is funded.

Overall, there exists a political and policy consciousness in the state that to meet people's housing needs, it is essential to have public housing schemes. Equally importantly, their optimal functioning needs to be ensured. On both these counts, the performance of the state shows much promise, although some of the inclusion errors that are evident in allotting houses under various government housing schemes in Tripura need to be addressed.

6.5 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

The widespread poverty of employment in the country and youth unemployment in particular raises a fundamental question about the role of social support in expanding employment. The increasing pro-growth economic discourse of course strongly advocates austerity in public spending and aggressively questions the logic of a socially protected right to work. Commenting on the seminal contributions of Keynes towards understanding social and economic consequences of public expenditure, Sen (2015), however, compellingly argues that public expenditure will likely perform better at increasing employment given the prevalence of idle labour. Following the arguments presented in Dreze and Sen (2013) in favor of the state-supported employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) as an effective social response to the widespread poverty of work that often disable people from cultivating their core capabilities, we examine here the vim and vigor of the scheme in the state of Tripura, measured in terms of the number of person days created, its effect on rural wages, and so on. As Dreze and Sen elaborate,

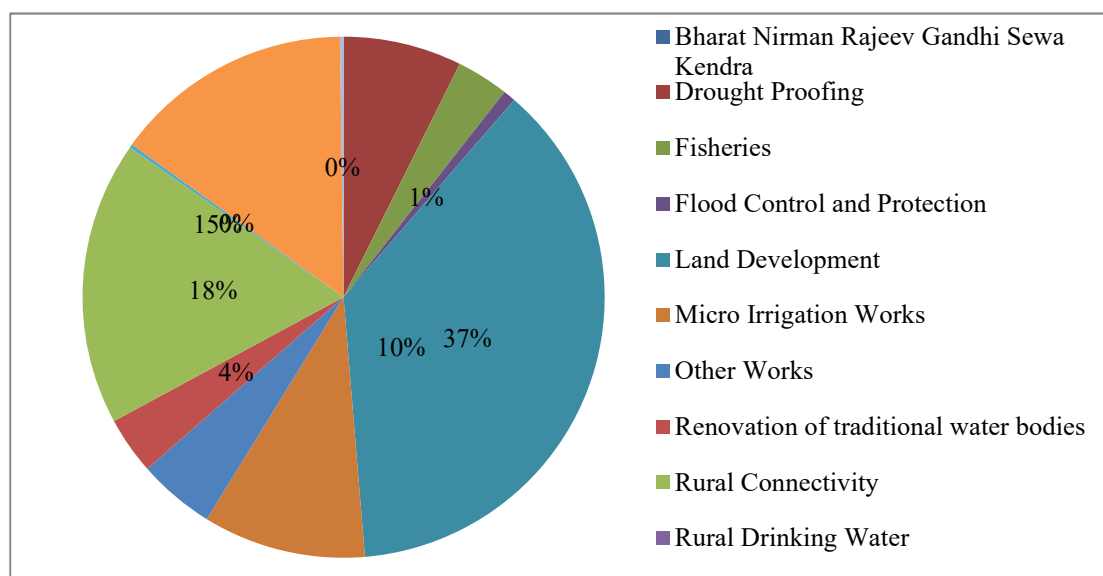
the scheme entails not only the right to work but also stipulates worker benefits – laying down a minimum wage, timely payment of wage, and workplace conditions. In other words, the scheme speaks to the difficulties that indigent people deal with on a regular basis – dearth of work, meager wages, irregular flow of meager income and the lack of decent conditions of work. Furthermore, the potential of the scheme to ‘empower rural women by enabling them to work outside the house, earn their own income, have their own bank account, learn to defend their rights’ can be hardly exaggerated. Again, at a time when under growing informalization of work the isolation of rural workers is increasing and their opportunity to organize collectively is fast receding, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) can also be ‘seen as an organizational opportunity for rural workers’. The NREGA, in short, may be viewed both as a poverty alleviation measure and as a vehicle to facilitate social and political empowerment. It may be mentioned here that data on rural wages for several years indicate that in Tripura (along with a few states like Gujarat), rural wages appear to remain unchanged over a period of time. This makes it imperative to ascertain whether any differences are noticeable in these terms in the pre- and post-NREGA period in Tripura. In this connection, it can further be mentioned that a recent OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) study asserts that the NREGA ‘...plays an important role in reducing short-term poverty and [ensuring] employment and income throughout the year for rural labourers’ (Sampath 2016).

With unemployment being one of the major problems plaguing modern Tripura which ranks third highest in unemployment figures in the entire country (126/1000 persons unemployed (GoI, MoLE, Labour Bureau, no date), the state’s role in responding to the people’s ‘right to work’ is of tremendous significance. As per Economic Review of Tripura 2013-14, by providing an average of 88 mandays of work per household, the state has retained its position for the seventh year of being the highest provider of average employment through the NREGA scheme. The report also states that 99 percent of the households who demanded work have had their demands met (GoT, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department, no date). At the same time, this figure can be interpreted in several ways that vary from the high responsiveness and efficiency narrative. Bhowmik(2013) in his study on NREGA in Tripura describes the process of provision of work as largely supply-oriented, where if certain projects are under way, then workers within proximity are called for. A more recent study by Mathur and Bolla (2016) provides an inter-state comparison of MGNREGS performance, focusing on the

three indicators of average days of employment per household, percentage wages paid within 15 days, and the work completion rate. According to the findings of this study, Tripura tops the list of the states under review, with respect to a combined performance score. Tripura is recorded to have generated about 95 days of employment per household, and has the work completion rate of above 80 percent (Mathur and Bolla 2016).

Along with job creation, asset creation is also an important plan of the programme. In the last year, most of the expenditure and work was directed at projects focusing on land development (37percent), water conservation and harvesting (15percent) and rural connectivity (18percent) (Figure6.3). This prioritization of attacking water insecurity (a nationwide challenge for agriculture) and poor rural connectivity (a particularly harsh problem for Tripura), showed a commitment towards building both individual as well as durable public assets.

Figure 6.3: Distribution of work by type under NREGA (2014-15)



Source: GoI, MoRD1, no date

Work completion rate in the state has consistently been far higher than average and in the financial year of 2014-15 the nation wide average was 31percent while Tripura’s was

90percent(GoT, Rural Development Department, no date). While relative to other states, Tripura’s work completion rate last year was impressive; it is also the case that the state’s performance has slightly dipped compared to previous years, which for the last three years had been above 94percent. In 2014-15, after Mizoram and Manipur, Tripura has had the least delays (31percent cases) in payment beyond the stipulated 15 days (GoI, MoRD2, no date), in spite of media coverage of incidents of late payment in certain GP’s (*The Telegraph* 2015).

Reducing rural poverty is a goal of the scheme to be achieved not only by directly providing wages but also by increasing the bargaining power of agricultural labor so that the general agricultural wage rate rises and exploitation diminishes. **Government data shows that notified wage rate in the state in spite of having increased over the years, has consistently been lower than national average.** The MGNREGA Sameeksha showed that in 2011-12 across states, Tripura had the absolutely lowest notified wage (Rs 118) but average wage was seen to be higher than 12 states, implying that in Tripura the efficiency is greater than many states in spite of limited budgetary allocation. In terms of growth of rural wages, growth across the years has been comparable to states like Bihar, UP and Maharashtra, where though the rate was among the least in 2006, it grew noticeably in five years (GoI, MoRD 2012a).

Table 6.16: State-wise wage revision of NREGA

State	MGNREGA wage of Financial Year				MGNREGA wage (Revision in effect from 1/4/2012)	Minimum Agricultural Wage (2012)
	2006-7	2007-8	2009-10	2010-11 & 11-12		
AndhraPradesh	80	80	100	121	137	168
ArunachalPradesh	55–57	65–67	80	118	124	135–154
Assam	66	76.35	100	130	136	100.42
Bihar	68	77	100	120	122	120
Chhattisgarh	62.63	62.63	100	122	132	114
Gujarat	50	50	100	124	134	100
Haryana	99.21	135	141.02	179	191	173.19
HimachalPradesh	75	75	100	120–150	126–157	120–150
JammuandKashmir	70	70	100	121	131	110
Jharkhand	76.68	76.68	99	120	122	127

Karnataka	69	74	100	125	155	145.58
Kerala	125	125	125	150	164	200
MadhyaPradesh	63	85	100	122	132	124
Maharashtra	47	66–72	100	127	145	100
Manipur	72.4	81.4	81.4	126	144	122.1
Meghalaya	70	70	100	117	128	100
Mizoram	91	91	110	129	136	170
Nagaland	66	100	100	118	124	–
Odisha	55	70	90	125	126	90
Punjab	93– 105	93– 105	100–105	153	166	153.8
Rajasthan	73	73	100	119	133	135
Sikkim	85	85	100	118	124	100
TamilNadu	80	80	100	119	132	100
Tripura	60	60	100	118	124	100
UttarPradesh	58	58	100	120	125	100
Uttarakhand	73	73	100	120	125	121.65

Source: GoI, MoRD 2012a

With regard to representation within the NREGA labor force, Tripura's performance is commendable as the government's data suggests that 14 and 33 percent of the workers are from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories respectively (GoI, MoRD2, No date) who correspondingly formed 18 and 32 percent of the total state population in 2011 Census. Our primary survey substantiates the argument of inclusion by showing that out of 798 participants receiving remuneration as NREGA workers, 81 percent workers were members of SC/ST/OBC category. With regard to gender parity within the workforce, the percentage of women person days has been growing up to nearly 50 percent in 2015-16 (GoI, MoRD2, no date), yet it still falls below the national average of 55 percent (GoI, MoRD3, no date).

Table 6.17: Social category-wise mean days of work and payment received under NREGA in Tripura

Social category	Days of work done		Number of persons reported	Days of remuneration received		
	Mean	Std. Dev.		Mean	Std. Dev.	Number of persons reported

SC	57.5	28.7	153	37.6	28.7	175
ST	63.3	34.2	297	46.9	32.5	309
OBC	65.4	31.2	145	49.5	35.2	160
Other	62.9	28.1	139	47.7	30.3	154
Total	62.4	31.5	734	45.6	32.1	798

Source:Pratichi Household Survey 2015

NREGA being a community monitored programme, social audits are crucial to its lively functioning and as checks against corruption and inefficiency that allegedly routinely hinders state social benefit schemes. Unfortunately, they were seen to be robustly occurring only in the districts of Khowai and South Tripura and were nearly absent in the other districts (GoI, MoRD4, no date).

A district-wise comparison across parameters reveals that work completion rate ranges from 76 percent to 91 percent with Sepahijala and Dhalai occupying those extreme positions with the other districts clustered in the 85 percent region. West Tripura appears to have an explicit problem with delays in wage payment with only 39.3 percent wages having been paid in the stipulated 15days. With regard to generation of persondays, Sepahijala appears to have witnessed a dramatic growth in 2014-15, compared to other districts.

Table 6.18: District-wise comparison of performance of NREGA in 2014-15

District	% of PersonDays Generated against last year performance	Average person days per HH	% of HHs Completed 100 days	% of Work with Convergence	Work Completion Rate	% of SC/ST HH provided employment against registered SC/ST	% of wage paid with-in 15 days
Sepahijala	277.62	56.7	3	1	76	93	58.22
South Tripura	235.56	66.06	2	3	83	93	70.4
West Tripura	198.91	51.28	1	0	86	94	39.3
Khowai	170.26	49.65	0	0	83	91	74.71

Unakoti	169.25	42.24	2	0	84	88	56.91
Gomati	164.95	47.81	1	2	85	93	60.53
Dhalai	142.46	59.58	2	1	91	95	82.99
North Tripura	122.19	37.86	1	19	84	85	76.05

Source:GoI, MoRD4, No date

6.6 Concluding Remarks: Enhancing positive freedom through Social Protection

The progress we find in Tripura in the area of social protection schemes is an important substantiation of the commitment of the state to promote the process of capability building in the state. Of course, there are states that are comparable with Tripura with respect to social protection schemes, but the consistency found in the effort of the state in implementing the schemes certainly indicates its conviction towards the goal of human development. The quasi-universal character of the Public Distribution System with low leakage of foodgrains, wider coverage of the Social Pensions Schemes with considerable targeting efficiency, remarkable progress in meeting the problem of housing shortage with limited error of inclusion and the promising scenario of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme show the political priority of the state towards facilitating the process of positive freedom there. Inclusivity – the most sensitive aspect of development – is found to be achieved for all the social security measures discussed in this section. Of course, there are weaknesses in the implementation of these schemes but it has never overridden the objectives of the schemes. For example, low wage rate is a serious concern for the MGNREGA in Tripura but it does not diminish its success in providing work under MGNREGA. Thus, Tripura can certainly be an example for the progressive implementation of social security measures that promotes the process of human development.