

IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL LIVELIHOOD AND INFRASTRUCTURE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN NORTH EAST INDIA

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Abstract: The idea of three tier system of local self-government is immensely beneficial from the view point of decentralization of power as well as resource allocation from Centre to Periphery. On account lack of studies on the main theme of the paper, a modest attempt has been taken to investigate the functioning of local self-government in implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the perspective of rural economy of north eastern states of India in a time period of seven years from 2013-14 to 2019-20. The main objectives of the study are to investigate the status of mandatory 100 days wage employment of rural workers and resultant Per Capita income generation over the time period stated. Moreover, this study also aims at analyzing the status and growth rate of success stories of basic infrastructure facilities under the scheme implemented by local self-government. The findings of the study indicates that, among the north eastern states, Meghalaya occupies the most dominant position in terms of providing 100 days wage employment to rural workers. Except Assam, Mizoram and Tripura, this status is very unsatisfactory for other states. However, Assam is in the topmost position of developing highest number of rural road connectivity and Mizoram enjoys the highest level of per capita income derived from such scheme. The study concludes with relevant recommendations and policy suggestions in order to attain more development of rural north eastern states of India.

Keywords: Local Self Government, MGNREGA, Per Capita Income, Rural Infrastructure, Wage Employment

1. Introduction:

In a vast country like India, development of rural sector is a prime necessity in order to ensure sustainable development in agriculture and environment which is the lifeline of entire nation as a whole. However, in this context, private investment does not help in creation of social overhead capital for the greater benefits of rural people as the motto behind such investment is solely profit earning. Moreover, it is also not possible for central government to monitor and properly implement various schemes at the grass root level in India as Mahatma Gandhi rightly said, "True democracy can't be worked by the twenty men's sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village" (Horizon, P-519). In this background the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of India are quite significant in the context of local self-government. In the rural sector we find there is the existence of three tier Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) which is composed of district level as Zila Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat at the block level and village panchayats at the grass root level. This system of decentralized government plays an important Role in the socio-

economic development of rural India. One of the most important and crucial pilot projects of central government in India for the overall betterment of rural economy is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) passed in Indian Parliament on 5th September, 2005 and launched on 2nd February, 2006. The primary motive behind such a flagship programme throughout India is to provide 100 days of wage employment to rural households whose adult members are willing to be engaged in unskilled works in rural area. The dual objective of such scheme is to provide livelihood earning opportunities to rural poor households and to strengthen the rural infrastructure and assets.

In the implementation aspect of MGNREGA, the rural Panchayat body is the grass root institution to execute the scheme in reality. Review of some of the current relevant literatures supports the effective as well as fewer effective aspects of the scheme. Panchayati raj institutions helped in changing the traditional society and adopted the strategy of decentralization process which also ensured human rights in India (Mathew, 2003). To expand economic growth and development, decentralized planning and contribution of people are recognized as vital engine of growth for removal of poverty, raising employment rate and reducing economic inequalities (Chakraborty, 2014). MGNREGA scheme benefitted poorest households, dalits and women for poverty reduction. It also pushed up rural wage level and enhanced bargaining power of low caste workers (Carswell & Neve, 2014). MGNREGA works supported agriculture and benefitted a large number of small and marginal farmers. Out of total respondents, 90 percent in Maharashtra reported the scheme was useful (Ranaware, Kulkarni & Narayanan 2015). Some states which were found to be more effective in implementing the MGNREGA scheme compared to other states benefitted more in terms of employment generation, assets creation and raising agricultural productivity. The scheme has been found to be more beneficial for SC, STs and women along with raising the bargaining power of rural labour resulted in higher wage rate, better work environment and less exploitation (Reddy, Reddy & Bantilan, 2014). MGNREGA benefitted 22.5 percent of rural households in terms of providing wage employment for about 43 days. It has reduced poverty by 4 percent and also provided equal employment benefits for all farm sizes, household sizes and income groups. The impact of MGNREGA has been positive and effective in raising food consumption and changing dietary patterns of rural households along with provision of nutritional food security to them (Praduman & Joshi, 2013). Private wage rate has been increased, alteration of relationship between farmers and labours occurred and pattern of agriculture has been changed due to implementation of MGNREGA (Abhishek, 2001). Agricultural wage rate has been increased across Andhra Pradesh over the period 2006-07 to 2011-12 due to implementation of MGNREGA. A steep rise in agricultural wage of female reduced the male female wage gap in the state (Reddy, Reddy, Nagaraj & Bantilan, 2014). MGNREGA targeted deprivation and food insecurity in rural households in Rajasthan along with a positive effect on nutrition and wellbeing of children (Nair, Ariana, Ohuma, Gray, Staroal & Webster, 2013). MGNREGA had positive impact on sustainable livelihood, regional development, poverty alleviation, rural agricultural development and resource management (Bhattacharyya & Vauqueline, 2013). A noteworthy improvement has been found in rural area due to implementation of MGNREGA and rural local

bodies like gram Panchayat's active participation in implementing the scheme has been found to exert crucial benefit in rural sector (Sharma & Manish, 2013). MGNREGA has provided the scope for empowerment of poor who were victims of social exclusion and political marginalization. It also reduced poverty by employment and earning along with offering a platform for active participation of panchayat raj institutions (Alam, Shabbir & Alam, 2014). In Tribal areas after independence of India, local self-government has worked on a large-scale basis for the development of tribal communities (Lal, 2017). MGNREGA provided opportunity to rural Indian to earn livelihood irrespective of caste, region and residence and women also got same status in earning as per men (Pandey & Roshni, 2017). MGNREGA has improved rural infrastructure, rural assets, natural resource management and several other beneficial activities (Srinivas & Pandyaraj, 2016).

On the other side of the story, some scholars found the scheme MGNREGA as less effective in reaching its goals. This scheme has provided only 26 days of employment annually on an average and the annual per capita income earning did not exceed rupees 2000 in India (Shenbagaraj & Arockiasamy, 2013). Administrative rationing has discouraged subsequent demand for work at the household and district level and during rainfall shock, delays in wage payment mattered significantly (Narayanan, Das, Liu & Barrett, 2017). MGNREGA has no impact on social transformation of women to take part in the works of the scheme. However, the scheme has potential to empower women by offering opportunity to express their strength and workability (Sony & Jalan, 2011). But this scheme has been less effective in durable assets creation also (Carswell & Neve, 2014). Recommendations of people also reflects the less effectiveness of the scheme though of negligible percentage as 8 percent people in Maharashtra reported the MGNREGA scheme as useless (Ranaware, Das, kulkarni & Narayanan, 2015).

Having this background about the importance and significance of the scheme MGNREGA implemented at the grass root level by the local self-government, this study has been undertaken in the context of north eastern region of India. This paper begins with the introductory aspects of the issue along with review of relevant literatures with a highlight of specific objectives, the next section deals with data sources and methodology, in the next section findings and discussions are elaborated, the last section deals with conclusion and policy suggestions based on main findings followed by references.

2. Objectives of the Study:

The Specific objectives which are specifically pursued in course of the study are-

- (i) To investigate the status of 100 days wage employment work participation of rural households across North Eastern States of India.
- (ii) To examine the trend of Per Capita income generated from MGNREGA and its annual growth rate in the study area.
- (iii) To understand the achievement status and growth rate of basic infrastructure facility resulted from the scheme in the study area.

3. Data Source and Methodology:

This study is based on secondary sources of data. In order to fulfill the requirements of the objectives of the study, data has been collected from the Report of MGNREGA Public Data Portal, published by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and Basic Statistics of Panchayati Raj Institutions-2019 published by Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. However, in order to have wider outlook about the scheme, various reports and publications are studies and used in this paper wherever required.

The methodology of this paper basically composed of descriptive statistics like tabular and graphical presentations, bar diagram and trend line. Moreover, percentage annual growth rate of per capita income generated and basic infrastructure facilities resulted from MGNREGA has been calculated for a particular state in a time period t by using the following formula-

$$\text{Growth Rate} = \frac{A}{B} \times 100$$

Where, A= difference between the variables (say Per Capita Income, Number of Roads etc.) at period t and (t-1) in a state, B= the variable in (t-1) time period in that state.

4. Findings and Discussion:

(A) Status of participation of Rural Households in 100 Days Wage Employment works under MGNREGA across North Eastern States of India:

The primary mandate of MGNREGA is to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual labour. This section presents the findings of the objective related to investigation of the status of mandate work under MGNREGA during the time period 2013-14 to 2019-20 in Table 1 and figure 1(A).

Table: 1 Percentage of Rural Household Participated 100 days Work across N.E States:

Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura
2013-14	0.02	4.17	0.00	15.02	0.00	0.26	3.76	76.77
2014-15	0.01	3.53	0.02	11.23	0.00	0.00	1.13	84.08
2015-16	0.47	10.29	0.00	11.96	0.00	0.36	2.39	74.53
2016-17	0.02	4.05	0.00	30.99	20.26	0.07	3.01	41.61
2017-18	0.00	8.16	0.00	85.82	0.00	0.10	2.61	3.31
2018-19	0.10	6.53	0.01	57.27	29.09	0.00	1.66	5.33

2019-20	0.13	11.75	0.09	58.63	1.99	0.00	1.43	25.97
Average	0.11	6.93	0.02	38.70	7.33	0.11	2.28	44.51

Source: Compiled and calculated from MGNREGA Public Data Portal published by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, N.E- North East

Table 1 reveals that, Status of rural household’s participation in 100 days works under MGNREGA across north eastern states is not satisfactory. Highest Percentage of rural households in Tripura and Meghalaya has participated 100 days of work compared to other states. Rural household’s participation of the same work is very negligible for Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. However, in the states like Assam, Mizoram and Sikkim, relatively more percentages of households participated the 100 days work though their position is far lagging behind the two high performing states Tripura and Meghalaya. Thus, it can be said from the finding of the table that, local self-government of Tripura and Meghalaya are much more efficient in provision of work opportunities for earning livelihood for the rural household members but the local self-government of Manipur is the least efficient in provision of same opportunities. Table 1 is also presented in figure 1(A)

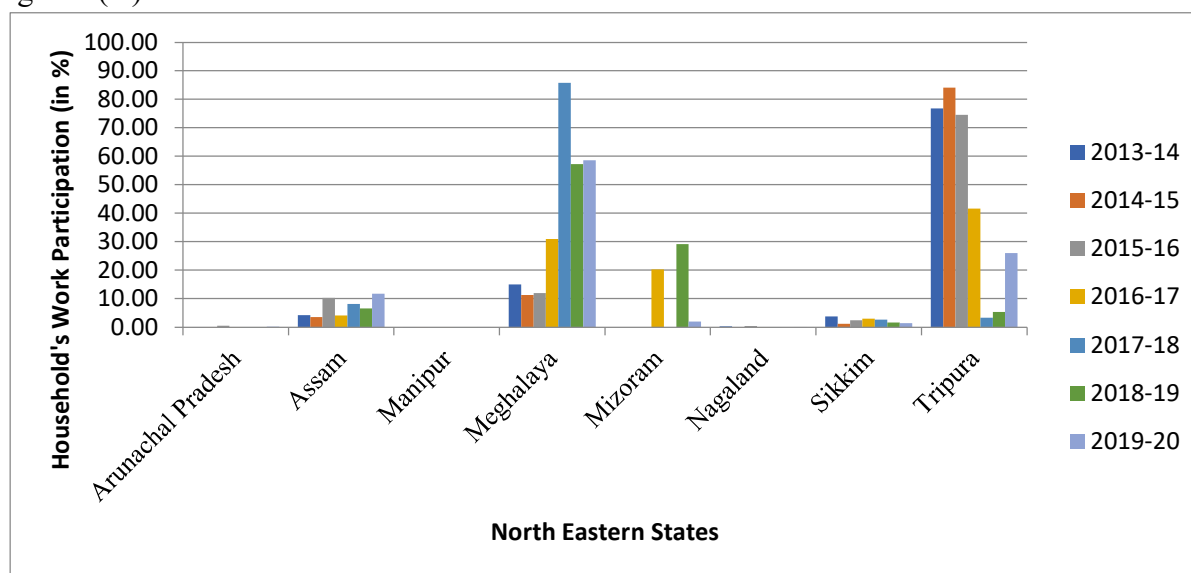


Figure: 1(A) Percentage of Rural Household Participated 100 days Work across N.E States; Source; Plotted on the basis of Table: 1

(B) Trends of Annual Per Capita Income generated from MGNREGA and its annual Growth Rate:

The basic objective of MGNREGA in rural area is to provide employment opportunities to those who are not able to engage in technical and skill-based works on account of lack of skill and efficiency. The resultant effect of such scheme creates the livelihood earning opportunities for survival and betterment of life. Table 2 and 3 as presented below focusses on the issue of annual

trend of per capita income generation and annual growth rate of the same during the period 2013-14 to 2019-20 across north eastern states of India.

Table: 2 Trends of Annual Per Capita Income Generated from MGNREGA across N.E States:

(Figure in Rupees)

Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura
2013-14	2091.09	2686.33	854.48	1018.53	8319.98	2456.77	6716.62	6023.69
2014-15	669.23	2470.45	1322.66	1111.90	2518.35	5432.65	4716.83	5969.90
2015-16	1027.62	1580.89	1150.81	1555.68	9618.40	1319.65	6673.30	9115.13
2016-17	2843.02	4745.96	2428.70	5093.09	5404.95	1135.19	8984.25	7760.05
2017-18	7249.35	3321.16	1345.20	7666.18	7670.84	3230.41	9680.77	4149.58
2018-19	8041.27	3917.51	2290.70	6254.32	20280.74	1164.94	8354.62	5639.85
2019-20	5673.47	495.27	2669.78	5681.40	18114.01	1910.68	7959.26	7174.45
Avg.	3942.15	2745.37	1723.19	4054.44	10275.32	2378.61	7583.66	6547.52

Source: Compiled and calculated from MGNREGA Public Data Portal & Basic Statistics of Panchayati Raj Institutions- 2019 published by Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchyati Raj respectively, Government of India; N.E- North East

Table 2 indicates the variation in annual per capita income generation from MGNREGA. Highest per capita Average annual income of Rs. 10275.32 has been received by rural workers of Mizoram and lowest of Rs. 1723.19 has been received by rural workers of Manipur. The per capita income receipt from the scheme is much lower for the workers of Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Although the workers of Meghalaya and Sikkim have enjoyed a good figure of per capita income from the scheme but the income figure are much lower compared to the income generated in Mizoram. Table 2 is also presented in figure 2(B).

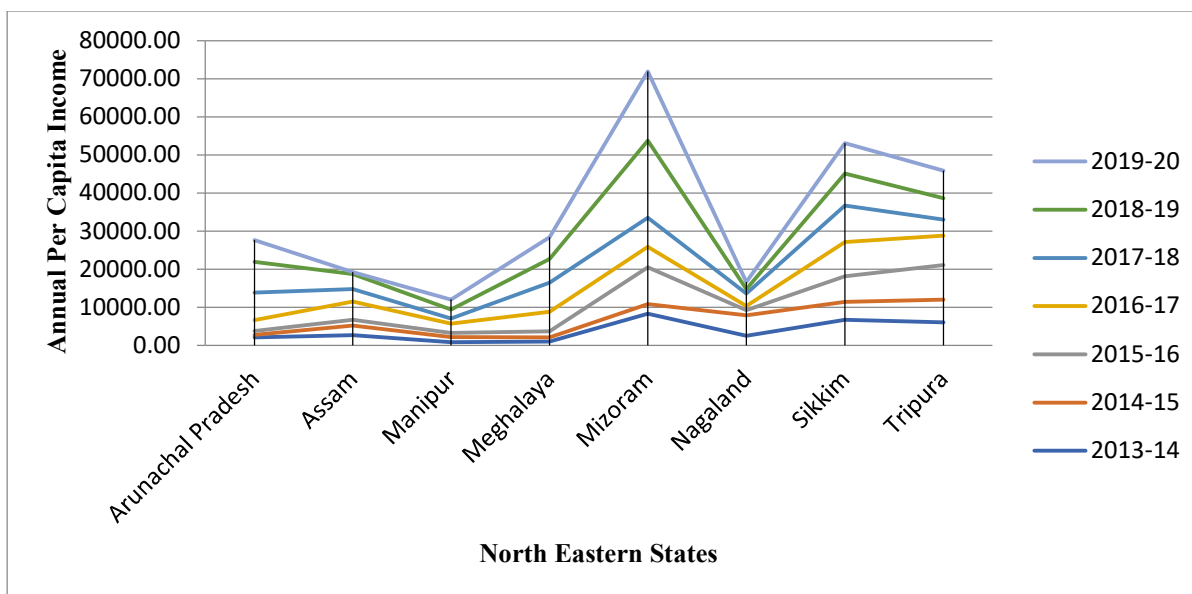


Figure: 2(B): Trend of Annual Per Capita Income (in Rs.) Generated from MGNREGA across N.E States

Source: Plotted on the basis of table: 2

Table 3 presents the annual growth rate of per capita income generated from MGNREGA during 2013-14 to 2019-20

Table: 3 Annual Growth Rate of Per Capita Income Generated from MGNREGA across N.E States:

Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura
2013-14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2014-15	-68.00	-8.04	54.79	9.17	-69.73	121.13	-29.77	-0.89
2015-16	53.55	-36.01	-12.99	39.91	281.93	-75.71	41.48	52.68
2016-17	176.66	200.21	111.04	227.39	-43.81	-13.98	34.63	-14.87
2017-18	154.99	-30.02	-44.61	50.52	41.92	184.57	7.75	-46.53
2018-19	10.92	17.96	70.29	-18.42	164.39	-63.94	-13.70	35.91
2019-20	-29.45	-87.36	16.55	-9.16	-10.68	64.02	-4.73	27.21
Avg. GR	49.78	9.46	32.51	49.90	60.67	36.02	5.94	8.92

Source: Researcher’s own calculation based on secondary sources of Data; Avg. GR- Average Growth Rate, N.E- North Eastern

Table 3 reveals that, analogous to findings of table 2, average annual growth rate of per capita income is highest in Mizoram and lowest in Sikkim. A close look at the table reveals that, Arunachal Pradesh experienced highest per capita income growth from MGNREGA in the years 2016-17 and 2017-18, Assam and Meghalaya in the year 2016-17. A hike in income growth in the year 2018-19 helped Mizoram to occupy the top performer in average per capita income growth.

Assam has experienced maximum negative growth rate in per capita income generation and Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh have experienced minimum negative growth rate in this context. In overall aspect, the average per capita income generated from MGNREGA is very unsatisfactory in Assam, Sikkim and Tripura.

(C) Achievement Status and Growth rate of Basic Infrastructure Facilities during 2013-14 to 2019-20

The dual objective of MGNREGA despite the income generation also emphasized on creation of basic and small infrastructure facilities in the rural sector of India. In the north eastern context, we have focused on the issue of rural road connectivity which is a vital infrastructure for the overall development of village economy across north eastern states of India. Table 4 and 5 deals with the year wise status of total rural road connectivity completed in the period 2013-14 to 2019-20 and its growth rate across the north eastern states of India respectively.

Table: 4 Total Number of Annual Rural Road Connectivity Completed across N.E States:

Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura
2013-14	28412	468655	84490	103219	66653	64319	21459	880085
2014-15	15046	469522	66193	81546	54448	40652	24617	987302
2015-16	22346	950225	106470	108219	69241	92042	39805	1420189
2016-17	40531	940077	125857	157591	76888	97430	42545	1253649
2017-18	24410	1504690	135456	271368	111945	57242	56547	1148495
2018-19	22924	1593125	148314	251626	123809	63239	60862	1153547
2019-20	30373	1925681	185817	286448	138437	65610	56412	1370619
Avg.	26291.71	1121711	121799.6	180002.4	91631.57	68647.71	43178.14	1173412

Source: Compiled and calculated from MGNREGA Public Data Portal & Basic Statistics of Panchayati Raj Institutions- 2019 published by Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchyati Raj respectively, Government of India; N.E- North Eastern

From table 4, it is evident that, Assam and Tripura is the out performer in achieving the highest numbers of rural road connectivity among the north eastern states. However, the status of other states except the top performing states is not satisfactory and in this context, Sikkim is the lowest performing state. On

an average in the time period 2013-14 to 2019-20, a total number of 1121711 road connectivity has been completed in Assam and a total number of 1173412 road connectivity has been completed in Tripura. Among the least performing states, the position of Meghalaya is relatively satisfactory as an average of 180002 number of road connectivity has been achieved by this state. This issue can be well understood from the year wise annual growth rate of completion of rural road connectivity across north eastern states. Table 4 is also presented in figure 3(C).

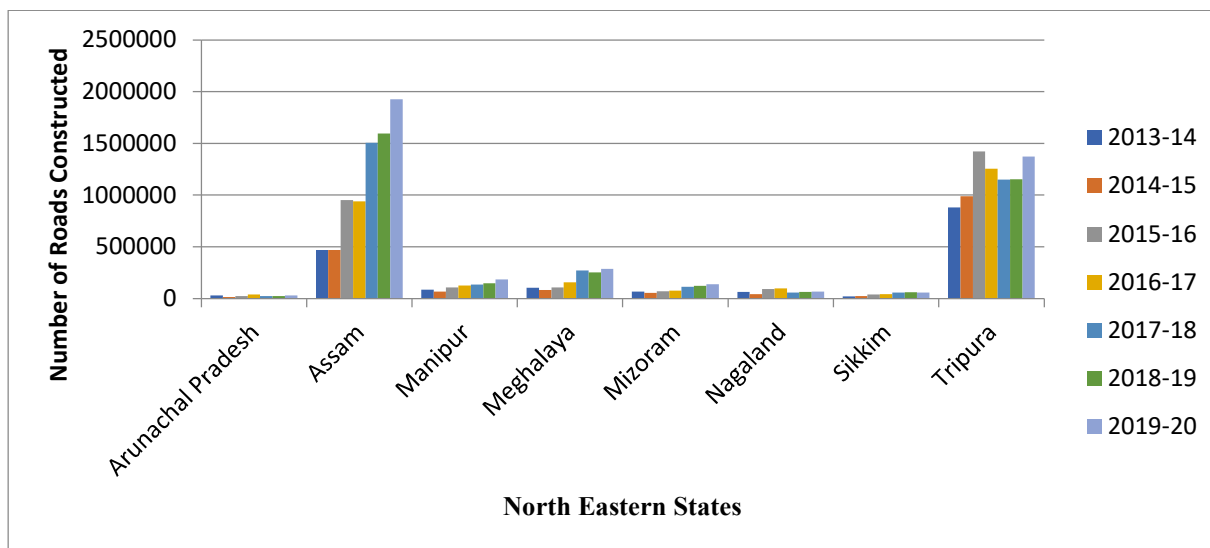


Figure 3 (C) Annual Rural Road Connectivity Completed across N.E States

Source: Plotted on the basis of table 4

Table: 5 Annual Growth Rate of Rural Road Connectivity across North Eastern States:

Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura
2013-14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2014-15	-47.0	0.2	-21.7	-21.0	-18.3	-36.8	14.7	12.2
2015-16	48.5	102.4	60.8	32.7	27.2	126.4	61.7	43.8
2016-17	81.4	-1.1	18.2	45.6	11.0	5.9	6.9	-11.7
2017-18	-39.8	60.1	7.6	72.2	45.6	-41.2	32.9	-8.4
2018-19	-6.1	5.9	9.5	-7.3	10.6	10.5	7.6	0.4
2019-20	32.5	20.9	25.3	13.8	11.8	3.7	-7.3	18.8

Avg. GR	11.6	31.4	16.6	22.7	14.7	11.4	19.4	9.2
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Source: Researcher's own calculation based on secondary sources of Data; Avg. GR- Average Growth Rate

Table 5 reveals that, although the growth rate of none of the north eastern states is satisfactory in regard to completion rural road connectivity, but the position of Assam and Meghalaya is relatively better than other states. Mizoram has maintained a steady growth rate in this context over the time period 2013-14 to 2019-20. The lowest percentage of rural connectivity growth has been achieved by Tripura. None of the north eastern states reveals the negative average annual growth rate, but Arunachal Pradesh experienced maximum negative growth rate in this aspect in three years. Interestingly, Assam achieved a very negligible growth rate in rural connectivity in the year 2014-15 but gradually it could maintain a steady growth rate over the years in this context. Thus, findings from the table clearly indicate the poor performance of MGNREGA in provision of basic infrastructure facilities across north eastern states of India.

5. Conclusion and Policy Suggestion:

From this study, it is quite clear that the performance of the mission MGNREGA is not satisfactory except some positive impacts on rural economy of North East India. Although, the three objectives of the study are quite interrelated with each other but the findings are not at all analogous and straightforward to each other objectives. The status of work participation is quite analogous to per capita earning and resultant effect on rural infrastructure creation. However, in this study, a contradictory finding reveals that, the best performing state in one aspect hardly performed best in other aspects and vice versa. It is found that, the top performer in work participated state is Tripura but per capita income generation is highest in Mizoram and average annual infrastructure growth rate is highest in Assam. Again, interestingly, Assam occupies the topmost position in completion of highest number of rural road connectivity among north eastern states but in case of 100 days work participation status and Per capita income generation, position of Assam are 4th and 6th respectively. Again, Mizoram occupies the top position among north eastern states in per capita income generation from MGNREGA but its position in Work participation and infrastructure creation are 3rd and 6th respectively. This finding indicates violation of the basic economic principle that, more work participation leads to more earning and more work performance. Thus, it can be said that, the wage rate of MGNREGA workers does not seem to be uniform and the local self-governments are not at all efficient in implementing the scheme in the north eastern region. Another crucial factor may be the work done by hired labour on contract basis and actual worker receives only a small portion of money without actually involved in such a scheme.

Policy Suggestions:

Based on the crucial findings of the study, the following suggestions are made for better policy framework in the context of north eastern region of India-

- (i) The Local self-governments in the north eastern states in collaboration with Gaon Panchayat must make aware the rural people about the Mission project MGNREGA, so that more numbers of rural unskilled and unemployed people can be able to earn their livelihood.
- (ii) A strong local self-government in the form of efficient leaders and plan maker must be there at the village level so that, the funds allocated for the scheme can be properly utilized in real sense of the term.
- (iii) Rural people must enquire about the gram sabha conducted at grass root level so that they can place their demands and complaints to higher authority in case of faulty implementation of the scheme.
- (iv) The central government must allocate more funds for the MGNREGA scheme in north eastern context and especially for low performing states like Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim among other north eastern states of India.

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