

An insight of the Rural development of India in the march towards Vikshit Bharat@2047: A case study of Assam

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Abstract

India is to celebrate her hundred years of independence in 2047 with a mission to transform herself into a developed nation as envisioned in Vikshit Bharat@2047. This endeavour must be all-inclusive in nature. The development process should encompass all the regions, parts, sectors, classes and sections of the country and society. As per Census of India 2011, 68.8 per cent of the Indian population is rural. So, rural development is a matter of serious concern. Besides, Indian union made up of 28 states and 8 union territories. The north eastern region of India has been lagging behind in the march of development. Assam is demographically the largest state and therefore may be considered as a representative of this region. In Assam 86.02% of the total state population is rural. It is hence prudent to develop an insight of the status of rural development in the state of Assam of Indian Union. This study is based on secondary data that has been collated from reliable government publications, reports and reports of international agencies. This paper would provide a comprehensive understanding of the status rural development in Assam as a representative state of North East India and focus on the areas that need attention and policy decisions.

Key words: Rural Development, Vikshit Bharat, Assam, Literacy, Infant Mortality rate, Sex Ratio

Introduction

India in order to celebrate the hundred years of independence has a coveted vision of “Vikshit Bharat@2047”. At this juncture India is recognized as one of the fastest growing economies. The mission to transform India into a developed economy involves the need of an inclusive model of growth. The growth that India envisions should encompass all regions, spheres, sections and sectors. India cannot afford to neglect any of her regions. India has a huge rural base. The rural population constitute nearly 68.8 per cent of the total population as per census of India, 2011. Carrying the rural population along with is essential as well as challenging. Moreover, India is demographically one of the largest countries of the world. The India Union consists of 28 states and 8 union territories. The north eastern region of India comprising of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, have been lagging behind in economic progress. Amongst these eight states, Assam with 3.12 crores of population is demographically the largest state. Hence, Assam may be considered as the best representative of the north-eastern India that represents nearly 68 per cent of the population of the entire region of north east India. India has to take care of twin issues. First, Rural Development. Second, Development of the North-eastern region along with rest of India. This provides an apt case for study that takes into consideration the study of the rural development of Assam as a representative of the north-eastern region of India.

Literature Review

Rural development is of vital significance for any nation in order to ascertain overall development. In an effort to have a comprehensive perception of the importance of rural development for a country an elaborate review of literature was undertaken. Few of such significant studies have been cited here.

Zhan, Xuesong (et al.) 2024 in their study entitled “Assessment of rural sustainable development and analysis and prediction of obstacles and coupled coordinated development: A case study of Zaozhuang City” made a systematic evaluation of the progress in Zaozhuang City with reference to sustainable development and the identifying the issues of unsustainability in the demonstration area. They have tried to analyse the crux of rural sustainable development and to comprehend the heterogeneity in rural development. Their findings reflect that the city of Zaozhuang has attained certain results that promote sustainable development yet there is a need to deepen its reform and innovation in some major areas like energy, ecological protection etc.

Li, H.; He, H.; Zhang, J. (2022) in their paper entitled “Study on Rural Development Evaluation and Drivers of Sustainable Development: Evidence from the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region of China” have initially constructed a rural development evaluation index system and thereafter analyzed the changes in the level and pattern of development in the rural areas of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei from the period from 2009 to 2020. The study focused on five different aspects that includes prosperous industry development, eco-friendly development, civilized countryside development, effective governance development, and affluent living development. The study further explored the changes in the comprehensive rural development level and development pattern. The data sources include a number of statistical yearbooks. This paper integrates methods of traditional economics and machine learning methods to comprehend the changes in the level and pattern of rural development. The study reveals that development level of rural areas in the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei region has improved. But there are still cases of unbalanced and insufficient development within the region.

Pandey, H, and Agarwal V.K. (2022) in their paper entitled “A Study on Development Schemes of Rural India” have examined the impact of government development schemes on rural development. The schemes taken into consideration are Pradhanmantri Awas Yojana Grameen scheme (PMAY-G), Pradhanmantri Gram Sadak Yojana scheme (PMGSY), The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA). The study was based on secondary data and limited to a time period of a decade.

N.P. Singade (2025) in his paper entitled “Research Study on the Impact of Rural Development Programmes on the Growth of the Indian Economy”. The study is based secondary data and discusses the impact of programmes like MGNREGA, PMGSY, and NRLM.

Rao. S.P. (2019) in his paper entitled, “Rural Development Schemes in India – A Study” studies the government programmes like Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yoiana Gramin (PMAY-G) for housing, Pradhan Manthi Gram Sadak Yoiana (PMGSY) for roads and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for employment generation based on secondary data.

Bidawat J.S. (2023) in the paper entitled “Impact of Government Schemes on Rural Development in India” has examined the various programmes targeted to ameliorate backwardness, poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic problems. The paper examines the outlays for different programmes.

Research Gap

The literature review explicates that there are very few studies on rural development focused on a particular Indian state. Moreover, there is a paucity of studies especially on Assam in the context of rural development. Keeping in sight the aforesaid research gaps the following objectives have been framed for the present study.

Objectives

1. To understand the scenario of rural population of Assam vis-à-vis India.

2. To explore the status and readiness of rural development in Assam
3. To examine the preparedness of implementation of programmes related to rural development

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collated from government reports and Census reports, international agencies. The study is analytical and explorative in nature

Observations and Findings

Rural population in India and Assam: An understanding

As per the Census of India 2011, the percentage rural population of India is 68.84 per cent and the percentage of rural population in Assam is 85.90 per cent as shown in Table 1. A sizeable population of Assam are of rural background.

	INDIA	%	ASSAM	%
Total Population	1,21,01,93,422		3,12,05,576	
Rural Population	83,30,87,662	68.84	2,68,07,034	85.90
Urban Population	37,71,05,760	31.16	43,98,542	14.10
Source: Computation from Census of India, 2011				

In 2011, a total number 54,20,877 households inhabited in 25,372 villages in Assam. The density of population in rural Assam was 347 as compared to the national rural average of 279 as shown in Table 2.

Name	Total/ Rural	Number of villages		Number of households	Area (In sq. km)	Populatio n per sq. km.
		Inhabite d	Uninhabite d			
INDIA	Total	5,97,608	43,324	24,95,01,663	3,287,469.0 0	382
INDIA	Rural	5,97,608	43,324	16,86,12,897	3,101,473.9 7	279
ASSAM	Total	25,372	1,023	64,06,471	78,438.00	398
ASSAM	Rural	25,372	1,023	54,20,877	77,178.12	347
Source: Census of India, 2011						

The rural Assam included 77,178.12 square km area which supports the entire rural population of Assam.

Distribution of Rural population in India and Assam according to size of the villages

It is interesting to observe the percentage-wise distribution of population in villages of various population size with respect to the total rural population as per census of India 2011. The maximum rural population of Assam is concentrated in villages with population size “2000-4,999” followed by villages of the population size of “1000-1999”.

	Percentage of population living in villages of population size						
	Less than 200	200-499	500-999	1,000-1,999	2,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000 and above
INDIA	0.98	4.76	12.39	23.69	34.64	14.86	8.68
ASSAM	1.73	7.18	16.41	30.06	36.07	7.23	1.31

Source: Census of India report

Status of Rural Development in Assam

In order to comprehend the status of rural development in Assam, the present study has identified certain parameters to gauge the level of development in rural Assam.

(a)Literacy

Literacy is a significant parameter that portrays the socio-cultural status of a society. As per Census 2011, the literacy rate in Assam (72.19) is below the national average (74.04). As shown in Table 4, the female literacy rate in rural areas in Assam is far below the national average for rural female literacy. It is a retarding factor that affects the literacy rate as a whole.

	INDIA	ASSAM
Literacy Rate (%)	74.04	72.19
Literacy Rate (%) (Rural)	67.77	69.34
Literacy Rate (%) (Urban)	84.11	88.47
Male Literacy Rate (%)	82.14	77.85
Male Literacy Rate (Rural)	77.15	75.4
Male Literacy Rate (Urban)	88.76	91.8
Female Literacy Rate (%)	65.46	66.27
Female Literacy Rate (Rural)	57.93	63
Female Literacy Rate (Urban)	79.11	84.9

Source: Census of India reports

(b) Sex Ratio

The Female-Male ratio (number of females per thousand male) reflects the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of a state. It is an important parameter to gauge the gender balance of the specific population concerned. As shown in Table 5, sex ratio in Assam is better than the Indian average. The rural Assam reflects a healthier sex ratio than the rural national average.

	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
ASSAM	960	946	958
INDIA	949	929	943

(c) Infant Mortality Rate

Infant Mortality Rate, IMR (number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births) is an appropriate reflector of healthcare standard, maternal health. In India, Assam has a comparatively high IMR which is higher in the rural areas as reflected in Table 6.

Total	54
Rural	56
Urban	32
Source: World bank data	

(d) Labour force Participation

Labour force Participation is crucial economic indicator reflecting economic engagement of people in productive economic activities. Table 7, depicts a conducive scenario for Assam as compared to Indian average. The labour force participation of rural Assam reflects a better position than the urban counterpart.

	ASSAM		INDIA	
	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN
Total	68.5	55.8	63.7	52
Female	52.8	31.5	47.6	28
Male	83.8	80	80.2	78.6
Source: Economic Survey of Assam, 2024-25				

(e) Per capita Income

Per capita income of Assam as reflected in Table 8, is low as compared to the national average calculated both at current and constant prices.

	Current Prices		Constant Prices (2011-12)	
	ASSAM	INDIA	ASSAM	INDIA
2024-2025	1,54,222	2,00,162	81,127	1,12,358
Source: Economic Survey of Assam ,2024-25				

But, according to the report of Times of India, based on NABARD Survey and as shown in Table 9. Average monthly household income of rural Assam is higher as compared to the national average.

ASSAM	8880
INDIA	8059
Source: TOI NABARD Survey	

(f) Impact and Achievements of Government programmes targeted towards rural development

This study analyses the functioning of certain government programmes targeted towards rural development.

(ii) Training performance of State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development (SIPRD)

Year	No. of Courses Targeted	No. of Participants Targeted	No. of Courses Conducted	No. of Participants Covered
2023-24	7431	322815	7237	354627
Source: Economic Survey				

The state of Assam has performed significantly well in area of training performance of State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development (SIPRD). This can be observed from Table 11, that the number of participants covered in 2023-24 were more than the target.

(iii) Mahatma Gandhi NREGA

State	Percentage of Households completed
ASSAM	1%

INDIA	7%
Source: State Performance Report, 2025, Ministry of Rural development, Government of India	

Table 12, shows that in Assam just 1 per cent of the households completed 100 days of work in financial year 2024-25 as compared to the national average of 7 per cent.

(iv) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Table 13: Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) status of Implementation as on 31.03.2025									
	Sanctioned			Completed			Balance		
	No. of Roads	Road Length	No. of Bridge	No of Roads	Road Length	No. of Bridge	No. of Roads	Road Length	No. of Bridge
ASSAM	654	4247	69	516	31	3530	138	38	701
Source: State Performance Report, 2025, Ministry of Rural development, Government of India									

The status of the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has been reflected in Table 13. The state of Assam could not complete the sanctioned targets in terms of number of roads and bridges.

Policy prescriptions

The following are few humble suggestions that have emanated from the analysis carried in this study.

- (i) To take measures to reduce the gap of facilities available to the urban and rural population. This may include more educational institutions in rural areas.
- (ii) To focus on improving the female literacy among the rural population. The policy should be target oriented and specially for the female population.
- (iii) The health care initiatives should be widened. More emphasis should be to provide the best available medical facilities to the rural population.
- (iv) Female participation in job has to be encouraged.
- (v) The state should try to complete all the targets of the various developmental programmes in scheduled timeframe.

Conclusion

The state of Assam has immense potential but there is long way to go before the coveted goal of Vikshit Bharat@2047 is accomplished. The state should focus on enhancing the literacy rate with special emphasis on the female population of rural areas. The gender ratio is better, yet the state should endeavour to further improve the sex ratio. Significant effort is required in the realm of health care and the state has to strive a lot to improve the condition of infant mortality rate. Similarly, the state has to take initiatives to ensure a high standard of living and healthcare in general. Labour force participation needs to be encouraged. Higher female participation in work should be promoted. The state should take serious efforts to meet the targets set by the various government programmes in order to ensure higher development in the rural areas and thereby ensure timely accomplishment of the coveted goal of a Vikshit Bharat by 2047.

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