



ROLE OF MGNREGA IN RURAL EMPLOYMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF MEGHALAYA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is considered as “Silver Bullet” to eradicate the twin chronic problems of poverty and unemployment. It is one of the largest wage employment schemes in human history which provide employment of 11.56 crores people only in 2018-19. The Scheme created huge impact in the rural economy through assets creation which supports rural livelihood and strengthening daily activities of villagers. In Meghalaya, Many villages in the past never dreamt of having roads, footpaths, footbridges, community washing facilities, irrigation facilities but MGNREGA had blessed the villagers through these importance assets. Various studies found a positive impact of the Scheme on employment, income, migration, poverty reduction, gender equality; improve in standard of living and environment conservation. The basic idea of the Government through MGNREGA was to empower villagers to be self govern in term of planning, surveying, executing and monitoring infrastructural development in the community. Initially, no individual assets were created, but recently the number of individual assets surpasses other category of assets and high productivity is expected from these assets. The number of persons and households employed under the Scheme has shown a positive trajectory for the last decade.

KEYWORDS: MGNREGA, Rural Employment, Infrastructure Development, Assets, Meghalaya.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) continues to be a torch-bearer for rural development in Meghalaya (SRES, 2014-15). The Government pumped resources to the rural masses through unskilled wages by creating quality and durable assets which may strengthen rural livelihood. The Scheme was notified on September 7, 2005 and was launched in the country on February 2, 2006, but the actual implementation of the programme in Meghalaya did not commence immediately with the rest of the country. This was due to the fact that State of Meghalaya is not within the purview of Part IX of the Constitution where neither Panchayati Raj Institutions nor Local Councils or Authorities were in existence at the time when the Scheme was launched. The State Government at the initial stage had invested responsibilities through Village Employment Council (VEC), Area Employment Council (AEC), Block Employment Council (BEC) and District Employment Council (DEC). In Meghalaya, the Scheme was started in three Phases. Phase I, was started in the year 2006-

07 covering West Garo Hills and South Garo Hills Districts. Phase II, in the year 2007-08 covering East Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi and Jaintia Hills Districts and Phase III in the year 2008-09 covering West Khasi Hills and East Garo Hills Districts. Subsequently, the scheme covers all 11 District, 46 C&RD Blocks, 6,309 Villages. The State Rural Employment Society is the Nodal Agency for implementation of MGNREGA in Meghalaya.

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Seth (2015) and Kumar (2014) in their respective studies, found that MGNREGA has proving a significant employment providing scheme, raising the level of income of the people in rural areas, increase in standard of living and built productive assets to a great extent. MGNREGA Sameeksha (2006-12), found that rural employment shared 15 percent of households' income due to MGNREGA. Centre for Science and Environment Report to Ministry of Rural Development, GOI (2008), has analyzed that Assets creation under MGNREGA has increased water availability and improved access to irrigation. Feroze *et al.*, (2012) in their study found that in

Meghalaya maximum of works under MGNREGA were taken in rural connectivity followed by land development, water conservation and drought proofing related work in North Eastern Region. Panda *et al.*, (2009) made an attempt to compare the appraisal of NREGA in the State of Meghalaya and Sikkim and found that in Meghalaya men and women were paid same wage rate, creating social capital and reduction in moral hazard in rural society. Bhargava (2013), found that in Rajasthan, one-third (1/3) of wage were allocated to women beneficiaries.

2.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All assets created under MGNREGA are demand-driven associated with productivity and employability of the rural people. People demand specific assets which according to them will enhance productivity and raise their socio-economic life to some extent. This review study focuses on the role of MGNREGA in rural employment and achievement in creating infrastructure which may strengthen rural livelihood in Meghalaya.

2.3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the contribution of MGNREGA in rural employment.
2. To analyse the contribution of MGNREGA in rural infrastructural development.

2.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

The present study is based on the secondary sources. Books, journals, periodicals, project reports and official websites of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India have been consulted for the purposed of analyzing data. Simple descriptive statistics is used to analyse the available data for the purpose of the study.

3.1. BASIC OBJECTIVE AND SALIENT FEATURES OF MGNREGA:

The core objectives of the Act is to provide 100 days employment in a year to each rural household willing to do

unskilled manual work through creation of productive assets which may strengthen rural livelihood. The following are some of the salient features of the Act.

1. Adult members of rural household, willing to do unskilled work can register through the respective Village Employment Councils (VEC).
2. Job card holder may submit written application demanding work from the VEC and the latter has to provide employment within 15 days.
3. Work is provided within 5 km radius of the village. Extra wages of 10 percent are payable to meet additional transportation and expenses if works is beyond 5 KMs.
4. Wages are paid according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labour in the State and it is paid equally to both men and women.
5. At least one-third beneficiaries shall be women.
6. A 60:40 wages and material ratio is maintained.
7. Social audit is conducted every financial year at the Block level to uphold transparency and accountability of the scheme.
8. Permissible works predominantly include water and soil conservation, afforestation and land development works.

3.2. ACHIEVEMENT OF MGNREGA IN MEGHALAYA

The cumulative job cards issued by the end of 2018-19 were 5.56 lakhs with total workers of 11.35 lakhs. The total active job cards was 5.23 lakhs and the total active workers was 7.74 lakhs. The Scheme provided employment to about 0.69 percent of Schedule Caste and 92.18 percent of Schedule Tribe workers registered under the Scheme (mnregaweb4.nic.in). The category wise households is given in table 2.1

Table 3.1: Categories of households in Meghalaya

Number of Jobcards		Registered Workers					Number of Active Job Cards *	Active Workers *				
Applied for	Issued	SCs	STs	Others	Total Workers	Women		SCs	STs	Others	Total Workers	Women
29624	28954	54	69109	1099	70262	35098	28558	48	59937	954	60939	30468
29670	28888	1	43540	69	43610	26281	25749	1	28240	45	28286	19105
94462	91661	378	145195	2250	147823	89492	84270	215	98347	1357	99919	66452
38515	38397	44	97849	1301	99194	49141	38024	32	75269	974	76275	38138
56550	55415	748	109208	3667	113623	59071	50877	371	80892	2311	83574	43251
37240	36704	437	75858	2295	78590	38789	34854	181	36739	1137	38057	11375
41535	41479	1846	76026	16611	94483	49030	41065	866	47823	10367	59056	26574
22466	22310	0	42719	46	42765	22674	21580	0	30976	30	31006	15655
101139	98910	4878	159233	52124	216235	109821	96818	3496	110807	37602	151905	70342
51038	50688	217	89094	345	89656	53721	44059	117	56407	283	56807	38354
63803	62260	9	139312	182	139503	73864	56411	4	87890	108	88002	49869
566042	555666	8612	1047143	79989	1135744	606982	522265	5331	713327	55168	773826	409583

Source: mnregaweb4.nic.in

EGH: East Garo Hills, EJJ: East Jaintia Hills, EKH: Esat Khasi Hills, NGH: North Garo Hills, SGH: South Garo Hills, SWGH: South West Garo Hills, SWKH: South West Khasi Hills, WGH: West Garo Hills, WJ: West Jaintia Hills and WKH: West Khasi Hills

3.2.1: Women participation

The indigenous people of Meghalaya follow a matrilineal society and women uphold high position in the society. Interestingly, the traditional practice of the Khasis and Jaintias, did not allow women to participate in the general meeting of the village (Ka durbar Shnong) which therefore prevent women from decision making process in the administrative aspect of the village. With the implementation of MGNREGA, women get a chance to participate in village general meeting and take

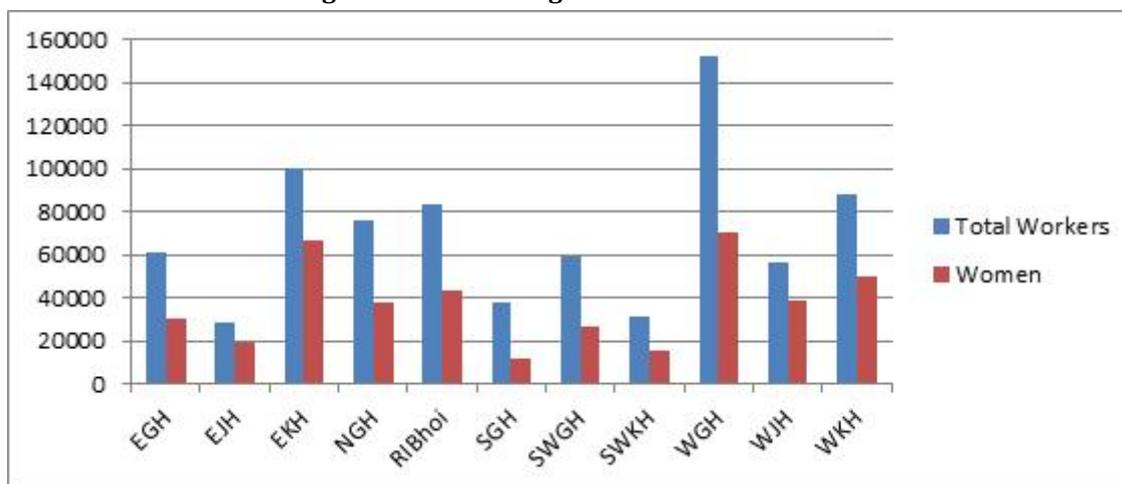
part in decision making process. The percentage of women participation in MGNREGA work was 52.92 percent. East Jaintia Hills and West Jaintia Hills recorded the highest percentage of women participation with 67.54 and 67.52 percent respectively, whereas South Garo Hills recorded the lowest percentage with only 29.88 percent of women participated in MGNREGA work. The table 3.2 below shows the percentage of women to total workers in the State.

Table: 3.2. Percentage of women to total workers

District	Total Workers	Women	% Women to total
East Garo Hills	60939	30468	49.99
East Jaintia Hills	28286	19105	67.54
East Khasi Hills	99919	66452	66.5
North Garo Hills	76275	38138	50.01
RIBhoi	83574	43251	51.75
South Garo Hills	38057	11375	29.88
South West Garo Hills	59056	26574	44.99
South West Khasi Hills	31006	15655	50.49
West Garo Hills	151905	70342	46.3
West Jaintia Hills	56807	38359	67.52
west Khasi Hills	88002	49869	56.66
Total	773826	409582	52.92

Source: mnregaweb4.nic.in and table 3.1

Diagram 1.1. Percentage of women to total workers



Source: Table 3.1

3.2.2: Total Employment generated and socio-economic characteristics of households

According to Census 2011, the total workers (main and marginal) in Meghalaya to total population was 39.96 percent, out of which 41.72 percent are cultivator, 16.73 percent agricultural labourers, 1.73 percent as workers engaged in households industry, manufacturing, processing and repairs, other workers constitute of about 39.82 percent.

MGNREGA has been the source of employment in Rural Meghalaya for more than a decade. In the last four financial years 2015-16 to 2018-19 about 1116.28 lakhs persondays was created under the scheme. For every financial year, the scheme provided employment to more than 90 percent of

rural households belongs to schedule tribe. The average days of employment provided per household has increased from 54.21 in 2015-16 to 71.97 in 2018-19. The figure shows an increase in the number of households completed 100 days of wage employment with 13.25 percent in 2015-16 to 33 percent in 2018-19. The scheme provides employment opportunity to the different-abled persons where the number has shown an increase from 258 persons in 2015-16 to 1182 in 2018-19 respectively. The table 3.3 below depicts employment generation under MGNREGA for the last five financial years.

Table: 3.3: Achievement of MGNREGA in generating rural employment.

Progress	FY 2018-2019	FY 2017-2018	FY 2016-2017	FY 2015-2016
Approved Labour Budget[In Lakhs]	350	300	200	170.39
Persondays Generated so far[In Lakhs]	342.15	291.88	282.54	199.71
SC persondays % as of total persondays	0.54	0.55	0.74	0.55
ST persondays % as of total persondays	92.78	94.51	93.63	93.55
Women Persondays out of Total (%)	50.15	46.8	44.28	42.93
Average days of employment provided per Household	71.97	68.37	68.15	54.21
Average Wage rate per day per person(Rs.)	180.92	174.95	168.95	162.87
Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment	1,60,915	1,14,987	86,492	48,785
Total Households Worked[In Lakhs]	4.75	4.27	4.15	3.68
Total Individuals Worked[In Lakhs]	6.8	5.91	5.46	5
Differently abled persons worked	1182	605	326	258

Source: mgneraweb4.nic.in

Further the number of households work under MGNREGA has increased from 3.68 lakhs in 2015-16 to 4.75 Lakhs in 2018-19. The increased in the number of households and person engaged in MGNREGA shows that the scheme is socially and economically importance to the people. Moreover, people start realizing their own role in building up country's development through participation at the grass root level.

3.2.3. Districts scenario on employment generation 2018-19

The table shows that the number of households provided employment under MGNREGA was about 98.5 percent, where 482928 households demanded work and 475388 households were provided employment only in 2018-19. Table 3.4 shows the achievement of MGNREGA in providing rural employment in Meghalaya.

Table: 3.4: Employment generation 2018-19

District	Cumulative No. of HH issued jobcards				Employment demanded		Employment Provided			No. of Families Completed 100 days (% To Households in the District)
	SCs	STs	Others	Total	Household	Persons	Household	Persons	Persondays	
EGH	23	28484	450	28957	26971	56253	26905	55762	2076459	9969 (37.05)
EJH	1	28842	45	28888	20801	21828	20344	21303	895466	229 (1.12)
EKH	198	90269	1240	91707	78441	90466	76784	87008	5707899	25207 (32.82)
NGH	16	37900	481	38397	37393	73099	37374	73067	3626594	32632 (87.31)
RB	427	53105	1888	55420	40968	67366	39933	65113	2173348	5863(14.66)
SGH	179	35488	1147	36814	32107	33490	32062	33440	2926785	19323(60.26)
SWG	783	32178	8518	41479	40891	56723	39642	55191	2998164	14250(34.84)
SWKH	0	22279	31	22310	20573	28344	20438	28023	1314348	2944 (14.40)
WGH	2111	72710	24156	98977	94220	136683	93186	134905	7265441	35981(38.62)
WJH	143	50348	207	50698	37739	49160	36609	47677	1946550	5733(15.67)
WKH	4	62181	98	62283	52824	81028	52111	78038	3284375	8784(16.85)
Total	3885	513784	38261	555930	482928	694440	475388	679527	34215429	160915 (33.8)

Source: <https://nrega.nic.in>

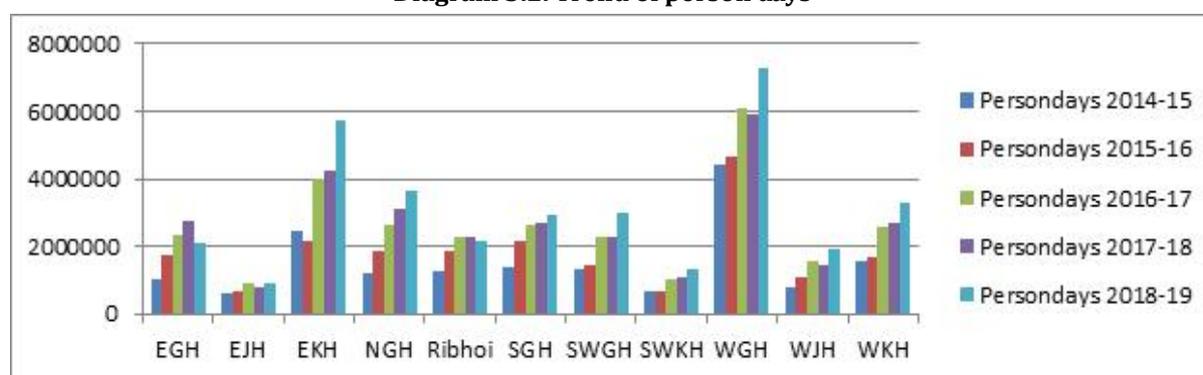
The number of person demanded work in 2018-19 was 694440 and 679527 persons were employed which account 97.85 percent achievement in term of providing employment. In term of persondays, West Garo Hills alone constitute of about 21.33 percent of persondays to the total persondays of the state whereas East Jaintia Hills recorded the lowest percentage with only 2.3 percent to the total persondays of the state. About 33.8 percent of rural households were provided 100 days of employment. North Garo Hill District recorded the highest percentage with 87.31 percent of households got 100 days employment in 2018-19, whereas East Jaintia Hills recorded the lowest with only 1.12 percent.

3.2.4. District wise Personday generated

The State has shown an increasing trend in the number of persondays generated in the different Districts under MGNREGA work. In the year 2014-15 only 16735268 persondays were generated and by the end of 2018-19 the scheme provided employment to 34215429 persondays which shows a percentage growth of 104.45 within the period of five financial years. North Garo Hills and West Jaintia Hills recorded the fastest increase in personday for the last five years which account about 200.2 and 149.1 percent growth rate, whereas East jaintia Hills District recorded the lowest. The table below shows the trend of persondays and the percentage growth rate in persondays 2014-2015 to 2018-19 in the respective District.

Table 3.5: Trend of persondays

District	Persondays 2014-15	Persondays 2015-16	Persondays 2016-17	Persondays 2017-18	Persondays 2018-19	% Growth rate 2014-15 to 2018-19
EGH	1038427	1738325	2329844	2757547	2076459	100
EJH	593501	659354	886304	764662	895466	50.8
EKH	2474490	2161785	3974842	4250550	5707899	130.6
NGH	1198206	1876489	2639716	3095597	3626594	200.2
Ri-Bhoi	1289270	1862428	2259393	2262139	2173348	68.58
SGH	1405356	2148849	2664268	2709185	2926785	108.2
SWGK	1305301	1441686	2277722	2281804	2998164	127.7
SWKH	671750	654254	1037254	1067530	1314348	95.82
WGH	4439906	4683733	6055784	5882596	7265441	63.66
WJH	781360	1085750	1558616	1441740	1946550	149.1
WKH	1537701	1657934	2570730	2674207	3284375	113.66
Total	16735268	19970587	28254473	29187557	34215429	104.45

Source: <https://nrega.nic.in>**Diagram 3.2. Trend of person days**

Source: Table 3.5

3.2.5. Physical Performance of Assets in Meghalaya

Meghalaya witnesses about 113484 numbers of assets of different categories created in 6309 villages. The total numbers of different categories of works started were 148840 but only 113484 works were completed so far which shows that only 76.25 percent of work were completed so far. Among District, East Garo Hills and South West Khasi Hills

recorded the highest performance in term of completion rate with 87.51 percent and 81.69 percent respectively. The two largest districts in term of households and active workers i.e West garo Hills and East Khasi hills recorded the lowest completion rate of about 72 percent but these two districts recorded the highest number of assets created in the State.

Table: table 3.6. Achievement in infrastructural development

District	No. of Works started	No. of Works Completed	Not Yet Completed	Work Completion Rate
EAST GARO HILLS	13312	11649	1663	87.51
East Jaintia Hills	3846	2889	957	75.12
EAST KHASI HILLS	19599	14263	5336	72.77
NORTH GARO HILLS	9603	7351	2252	76.55
RI BHOI	12493	10093	2400	80.79
SOUTH GARO HILLS	12236	9194	3042	75.14
SOUTH WEST GARO HILLS	11980	9534	2446	79.58
SOUTH WEST KHASI HILLS	8076	6597	1479	81.69
WEST GARO HILLS	33041	24060	8981	72.82
WEST JAINTIA HILLS	7150	4564	2586	63.83
WEST KHASI HILLS	17504	13290	4214	75.93
Total	148840	113484	35356	76.25

Source: <https://mnregaweb4.nic.in>

3.2.6. Category of projects completed and total amount spent

There are seventeen types of works under four categories. As per para 4 91) of schedule-1 , MGNREGA, it is mentioned that, the focus of the Scheme shall be categorized in four categories, namely category A, category B, category C and Category D. In Meghalaya, during the financial year 2018-19

the achievement of the schemes in creating categories of assets is mentioned in the table 3.7. Category B shared the highest percentage of 56.78 percent of works to the total work completed where as category D shared the highest percentage of expenditure of 70.29 percent to the total expenditure. Category C has the lowest shared both in term of assets created and corresponding expenditure.

Table 3.7: Categories of works in Meghalaya

Category of work	Type of work	Percentage of work to total Number	Percentage of expenditure to total expenditure
Category A (Public work related to National Resource Management)	Water conservation	18.26	18.04
	Watershed Management		
	Micro and Minor Irrigation		
	Renovation of traditional bodies		
	Afforestation		
	Land development		
Category B (Community Assets or Individual assets for vulnerable sections)	Improve productivity of land	56.78	11.64
	Improve livelihood through horticulture, sericulture, plantation and farm forestry		
	Development of shallow land		
	unskilled wage component for construction of PMAY		
	Promotion of livestock		
	promotion of fisheries		
Category C (Common Infrastructure including for NRLM compliant SHGs)	Promoting agricultural activity by creating durable assets such as pucca storage facilities	0.04	0.06
	common work shed for SHGs		
Category D (Rural Infrastructure)	Rural sanitation	24.65	70.29
	Road connectivity		
	play field		
	flood control and protection wall		
	Buildings for gram panchayat		
	Food grains storage structure		
	maintenance of rural public assets created under the Act		

Source: Compilation, mgnregaweb4.nic.in

In category A, water conservation and other related works constituted of about 18 percent of to the total number of works created and involved an expenditure of about 18 percent to the total expenditure. In Category B, most works were created in the individual homestead which included livestock promoting assets like cow shed, Goatery shed, piggery shed and poultry shed. Category B shared the highest percentage

of works with 56.78 percent and the shared to total expenditure was 11.64 percent. This shows that the project cost of individual works like livestock promoting assets was fixed and comparatively less compared to other assets. Table 3.8 shows the number of assets created and the corresponding expenditure during financial year 2018-19.

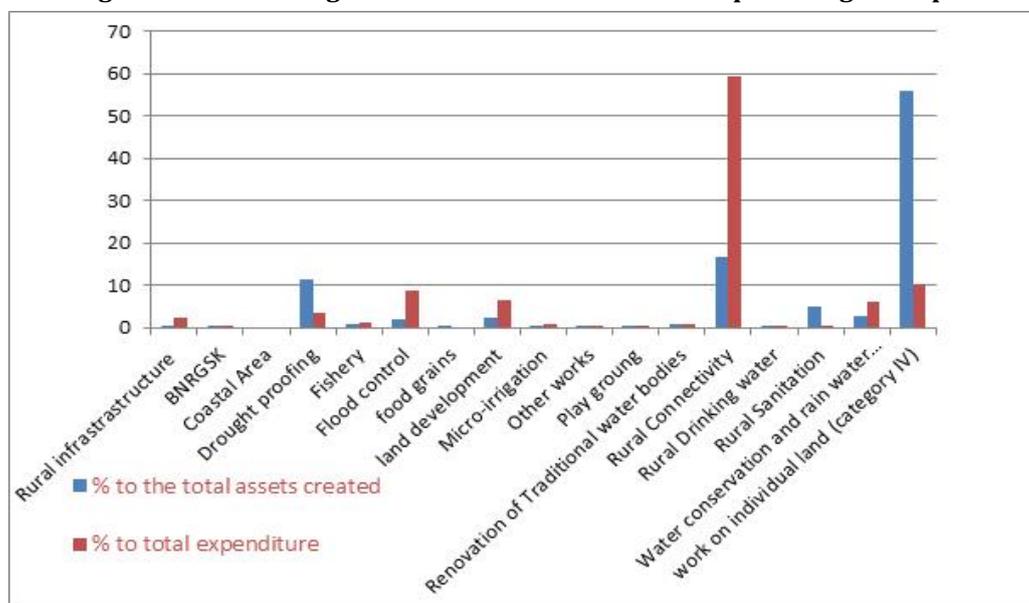
Table 3.8: Number of assets created under different categories and corresponding expenditure 2018-19

Category of assets	Number of work completed	% to the total assets created	Expenditure both for completed and ongoing projects (Rs. in Lakhs)	% to total expenditure
Rural infrastructure	45	0.27	1882.3	2.17
BNRGSK	8	0.38	54.03	0.06
Coastal Area	0	0	0.087	0
Drought proofing	1875	11.33	2995	3.46
Fishery	112	0.68	1184	1.27
Flood control	333	2.03	7700	8.81
food grains	3	0.01	0	0
land development	375	2.28	5583.1	6.46
Micro-irrigation	60	0.36	777.5	0.89
Other works	40	0.24	111.32	0.12
Play ground	76	0.46	451.63	0.42
Renovation of Traditional water bodies	120	0.73	662.63	0.67
Rural Connectivity	2748	16.76	51265	59.23
Rural Drinking water	91	0.55	406.01	0.46
Rural Sanitation	840	5.12	643.6	0.64
Water conservation and rain water harvesting	474	2.89	5415.3	6.12
Work on individual land (category IV)	9193	56.07	8964	10.27
Total	16393		88095.51	

Source: Compilation, mgnregaweb4.nic.in

Work on individual land included assets like livestock promoting assets, vermin-compost pit, Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) and contribution on Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) or construction of housing for BPL families. The State is agrarian in nature, and livestock activity is a

supplementary activity of the people. The following diagram 3.3 shows the percentage of works and percentage of expenditure of different categories of works during financial year 2018-19 in Meghalaya.

Diagram 3.3: Percentage of different assets created and percentage of expenditure

Source: Table 3.8

4.1. FINDINGS

1. In Meghalaya women participation in MGNREGA works was 52.92. East Jaintia Hills and West Jaintia Hills recorded the highest percentage of women participation with 67.54 percent and 67.52 percent respectively. These two Districts were well known with richness in coal mine and limestone; therefore, men workforce may be more in mining and other activities.

2. The State was inhabited by indigenous tribes of Khasis, Jaintia and Garos with about 92.18 percent of Schedule Tribe were engaged in MGNREGA works.
3. The average day employment per households increased from 54.21 percent in 2015-16 to 71.97 percent in 2018-19.
4. The number of households completed 100 days was improved from 13.25 percent in 2015-16 to 33.8 percent in 2018-19.

5. About 98.5 percent of employment was provided out of the total employment demanded.
6. East Jaintia Hills with only 1.12 percent recorded the lowest percentage of households completed 100 days employment while North Garo Hills District recorded the highest percentage with 87.31 percent of households out of the total households in the District had completed 100 days of employment in 2018-19.
7. The percentage growth rate of rural employment increased by 104.45 percent for the last five financial years with effect from 2014-15 to 2018-19.
8. The number of works or assets created so far in the District was 1.13 lakhs and the completion rate was 76.25 percent.
9. Out of total assets, 56.07 percent of assets were created in individual homestead with an expenditure of about 10.27 percent to total expenditure.
10. Rural connectivity shared only 17.76 percent to total assets created but the percentage expenditure was escalating up to 59.23 percent. This shows that the project cost was high in rural connectivity compared to other assets as its coverage was more.

4.2. SUGGESTIONS

1. MGNREGA should increase the number of mandays to about 150 days per year per households.
2. Focus should be more in productive assets for both community and individual assets.
3. Assets related to rural tourism need to be initiated for sustainable livelihood and environment conservation.

5. CONCLUSION

MGNREGA remains one of the sources of rural livelihood especially in time of distress. The creation of durable and sustainable assets has provided a benefit to many villages, a change they yearn to see for years. Footpaths, footbridges, community washing facilities, water conservation, land development, play grounds, household latrines, have been a boon for the people. However, rural connectivity is a favorite choice considering the difficult terrain and inaccessibility in the village. The Scheme empowered villagers the policy of self governance and monitoring.

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