

# Human Development and North East India: A Critical Analysis

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**Abstract** - Relying solely on per capita income (PCI) for assessing poverty and development is limited. To address this, the Human Development Index (HDI) was introduced by the UNDP. Unlike PCI, HDI offers a broader view of development, encompassing factors beyond income. This article focuses on evaluating human development in North Eastern states across four time points: 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011. It aims to understand regional disparities and assess the equity pillar of development. The study examines key dimensions of well-being: longevity, education, and command over resources. By considering these factors, a comprehensive understanding of human development can be achieved. The HDI provides a more nuanced perspective than PCI, reflecting the diverse aspects of human well-being.

**Key words:** Human development, North Eastern states, Human development indicators.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article has given emphasis on the achievements in diverse parameters of human development in the states of Northeast. Moreover, an attempt has also been made to determine the variability of human development parameters in different regions to examine the requisites of equity pillar of development in human face.

## II. OBJECTIVES

To analyze our objective this article has made a deliberate attempt to showcase the exact scenario of human development in the North Eastern states during four different time periods viz., 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

## III. ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

The HDI in present context consists of three indicators – infant death rate, literacy rate and prescribed education to capture educational attainment and net per capita SDP for economic attainment. The dimensional indices for the year 1981 have been estimated and reported in table 1 to reveal the significant differences in human development across North Eastern states. Arunachal Pradesh has observed the least HDI value (0.208) and Nagaland with the highest value (0.473) topped in HDI ranking followed by Manipur and Mizoram in attainment of human development performance.

The top four ranks go to the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya, that perform better on health, education and economic outcomes (dimension score more than region average), are also the states with higher HDI, though Manipur scored less than region average in economic attainment (Standard of Living Index). Manipur topped in health and education attainment, but its poor performance in economic attainment placed the state in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in overall HDI value. Moreover, taking the average score of each dimension index table 1 depicts that except health index, for education and economic attainment index the regions average score are lying below the national average which keeps the HDI score low for the region (0.332) than national average (0.344). Arunachal Pradesh attains the last position in HDI ranking with least achievement in both health (0.241) and education (0.245) indices along with poor attainment in income index (0.152) which is marginally higher than the lowest value of 0.148 (Tripura).

Table 1: HDI Ranking in 1981 for North-Eastern States

State	IMI	EAI	SLI	HDI	Rank
Arunachal Pradesh	.241	.245	.152	.208	8
Assam	.444	.387	.251	.351	5

Manipur	.856	.514	.217	.457	2
Meghalaya	.549	.356	.260	.371	4
Mizoram	.522	.444	.239	.381	3
Nagaland	.620	.476	.359	.473	1
Sikkim	.235	.341	.239	.268	6
Tripura	.215	.481	.148	.248	7
NE Region	.412	.395	.224	.332	
India	.314	.427	.303	.344	

**Source:** National HDI Report 1981, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Table 2: HDI Ranking in 1991 for North-Eastern States

State	IMI	EAI	SLI	HDI	Rank
Arunachal Pradesh	.471	.460	.408	.445	5
Assam	.464	.541	.321	.432	7
Manipur	.882	.644	.312	.562	3
Meghalaya	.542	.442	.332	.430	8
Mizoram	.718	.711	.371	.575	2
Nagaland	.732	.657	.515	.629	1
Sikkim	.673	.574	.382	.529	4
Tripura	.529	.636	.257	.442	6
NE region	.611	.576	.355	.500	
India	.562	.549	.422	.507	

**Source:** National HDI Report 1991, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Table 2 depicts that North Eastern region as a whole has scored a HDI value 0.500 which is marginally lower than all India average (i.e., 0.507) and the region shows medium human development in 1991 which is definitely an improvement over 1981. During 1991, HDI value has varied from the lowest score of 0.430 for Meghalaya to the highest score of 0.629 for Nagaland. Interestingly, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur (the three top ranked states during 1981) and Sikkim has achieved HDI value more than both region average and national average in 1991 (Panda, 2010). Nagaland has topped the list with the best achievement in economic attainment i.e., SLI score of 0.515, and with impressive results in educational and health front. Meghalaya, the 4th ranked state in 1981, has slipped down to last position in HDI ranking as a result of least achievement in education index and so also poor performance in other two indices during 1991. Though, in 1991 North East region joined the membership of medium human development category taking four states in the list, yet the best performer state having shortfall of about 37 percent while the poorest state having shortfall of about 57 percent as per HDI is concerned. Thus,

for the other states, the shortfall in HDI ranges between 37 to 57 percent which seems disturbing in both regional as well as national perspective.

In table 3, The North Eastern regions surpass the national average in terms of EAI and HAI, as well as in HDI value, despite exhibiting a weak performance in SLI score with a significant shortfall of around 60 percent in 2001. According to Table 3, it is evident that health and education achievements play a more crucial role in determining the overall human development level in these states than economic attainment. Across all eight states, health achievement takes the lead, followed by educational achievement, in influencing the HDI level. There is a substantial deficit in the economic index in all states, requiring immediate attention. The findings of the National HDI Report 2001 support these observations. State-wise indices for 1993-94 and 2004-05 indicate that the health dimension surpasses both educational and economic performances during these periods..

Table 3: HDI Ranking in 2001 for North-Eastern States

State	IMI	EAI	SLI	HDI	Rank
Arunachal Pradesh	.810	.617	.414	.591	6
Assam	.588	.576	.419	.521	8
Manipur	.934	.719	.377	.633	3
Meghalaya	.699	.666	.421	.581	7
Mizoram	.941	.804	.450	.698	1
Nagaland	.816	.642	.500	.640	2
Sikkim	.790	.702	.436	.623	4
Tripura	.810	.732	.379	.608	5
NE Region	.791	.679	.423	.610	
India	.633	.665	.503	.596	

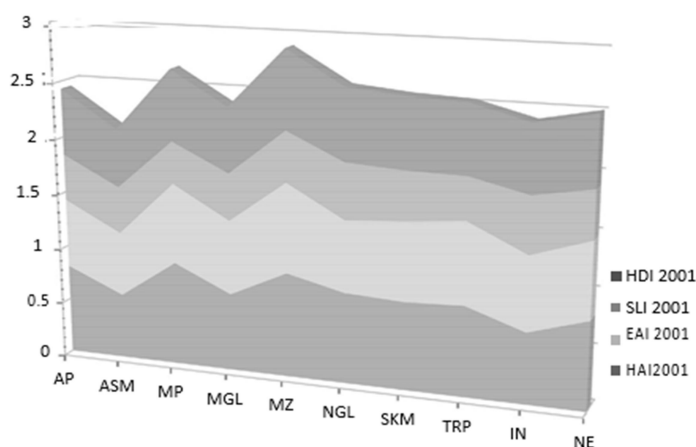
**Source:** National HDI Report 2001, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Table 4 reveals that Sikkim achieved the highest HDI value of 0.810 in 2011, surpassing the threshold for high levels of human development. Sikkim holds the 3rd position in economic achievement, indicating that its economic performance is the driving force behind its top position in the HDI ranking. Similarly, Tripura's commendable performance in non-income indicators of human development secured the state the 2nd rank.

Conversely, Assam has consistently been the least successful participant in the pursuit of human development in recent decades. In 2011, it registered the lowest overall HDI score of 0.606, and unfortunately, Assam ranked lowest in all three attainment indices, revealing substantial shortcomings in each dimension that require immediate attention.

Despite the northeast region making strides in human development levels in 2011 compared to previous decades, its achievements remain consistently lower than the national average, with significant disparities among states. As a result, this analysis supports the assertion that the status of human development is notably low in the northeastern region, marked by wide disparities among states.

Chart 1: Contributions of Individual Indices to HDI



Source: Based on Table 3

Table 4: HDI Ranking in 2011 for North-Eastern States

State	IMI	EAI	SLI	HDI	Rank
Arunachal Pradesh	.856	.675	.638	.717	6
Assam	.705	.702	.450	.606	8
Manipur	.993	.807	.478	.726	5
Meghalaya	.725	.735	.624	.693	7
Mizoram	.843	.868	.631	.773	3
Nagaland	.928	.685	.668	.752	4
Sikkim	.895	.827	.719	.810	1
Tripura	.875	.871	.636	.786	2
NE Region	.847	.768	.599	.730	
India	.777	.797	.698	.756	

Source: National HDI Report 2011, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Table 5 examines the comparative trends in human development achievement from 1981 to 2011. In 2011, all North Eastern states demonstrated better results in human development compared to the preceding three decades, as illustrated in Chart 2. During 1981, the North Eastern states all recorded low Human Development Index (HDI) values. However, over the years, the HDI value for the region has experienced a significant increase, albeit with notable differences among the states.

In 2011, the region achieved a moderate HDI score of 0.730, slightly below the national average. Sikkim, as the sole exception, falls into the high human development category with an HDI value of 0.810, representing a shortfall of approximately 20 percent. The remaining North Eastern states are classified under the medium human development group, with Assam being the least achiever, boasting an HDI value higher than 0.6 but with a shortfall of about 40 percent.

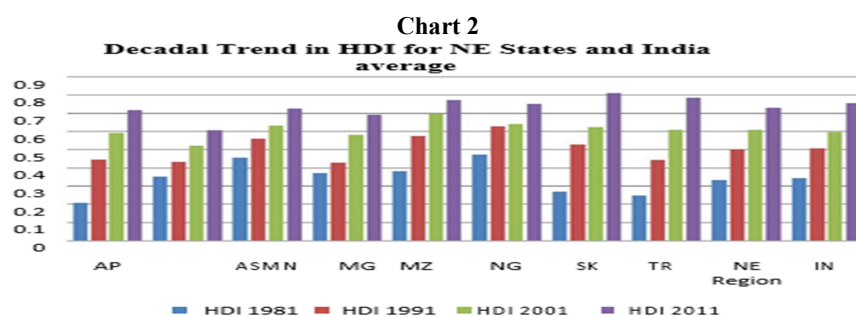
The HDI for the North East region witnessed a 50 percent increase between 1981 and 1991, rising from 0.332 to 0.500. From 1991 to 2001, it experienced a 22 percent increase, followed by a 19.67 percent rise from 2001 to 2011, reaching an HDI of 0.610 and 0.730, respectively. Consequently, the North Eastern region recorded an

average annual percentage increase of approximately 3 percent over the four decades. Overall, the human development performance of the North Eastern states has notably improved over the years, as reflected in the considerable surge in the region's HDI values.

Table 5: Trend in Human Development Index for North-Eastern States (1981- 2011)

State	HDI 1981	HDI 1991	HDI 2001	HDI 2011
Arunachal Pradesh(AP)	.208	.445	.591	.717
Assam(AS)	.351	.432	.521	.606
Manipur(MN)	.457	.562	.633	.726
Meghalaya(MG)	.371	.430	.581	.693
Mizoram(MZ)	.381	.575	.698	.773
Nagaland(NG)	.473	.629	.640	.752
Sikkim(SK)	.268	.529	.623	.810
Tripura(TR)	.248	.442	.608	.786
NE Region	.332	.500	.610	.730
India(IN)	.344	.507	.596	.756

Source: National HDI Report 1981,1991, & 2001, Planning Commission, New Delhi.



Source: Based on data in Table 5

Table 6 shows that uneven human development in North Eastern region is reasonably significant. The HDI score of each state for four different years have segregated the region into two separate groups. One group comprises the states scoring higher than the region's average HDI score and the other group scores lower than the region's average score. Till 1991 the gap between maximum and minimum value of HDI and so also standard deviation value has been wider for the states having higher HDI value than North Eastern region's average. The low standard deviation value for the states having lower HDI, reveals that the human development level in these states is, by and large, very close to one another, while for the states having higher HDI than region average, human development attainment is relatively much dispersed or scattered across the states. However, the situation gets changed during last two decades. Larger standard deviation value for states having lower HDI than that of North Eastern region's score during 2011 implies higher inequality for those states. Thus, it supports our hypothesis of wide disparities that exists in human development attainment across North Eastern States. One notable trend is that disparity across the states having higher HDI have been gradually declining, whereas, the

rest group witnesses increasing variability as reflected in standard deviation values for the years 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Table 6: Inequality Measurement with lower and higher HDI than the North East Average

Year	State	Mean	SD	Maximum	Minimum
1	2	3	4	5	6
1981	States (5) having higher HDI than that of NE region average	0.400	0.054	0.473	0.351
	States (3) having lower HDI than that of NE region average	0.241	0.031	0.264	0.208
1991	States (4) having higher HDI than that of NE region average	0.572	0.042	0.629	0.529
	States (4) having lower HDI than that of NE region average	0.430	0.0067	0.446	0.430
2001	States (4) having higher HDI than that of NE region average	0.649	0.034	0.700	0.624
	States (4) having lower HDI than that of NE region average	0.575	0.038	0.610	0.521
2011	States (4) having higher HDI than that of NE region average	0.780	0.024	0.810	0.752
	States (4) having lower HDI than that of NE region average	0.684	0.055	0.727	0.607

Source: Author's own estimation

### III. CONCLUSION

It is noted that the region has made limited progress in terms of human development. Overall, there has been improvement in human development performance across the North Eastern States over the years. However, despite recent advancements compared to previous decades, the region consistently lags behind the national average in terms of human development achievement. The region's development experience has been characterized by a combination of varied outcomes and uneven progress. The notable disparities in human development across states are evident in the attainment of human development and its associated indicators..

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