

# A Comparative Analysis of the Livelihood Conditions of the Rubber Growers of Scheduled Tribe Community and Muslim Community: A Case from the State of Assam, India

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## Abstract

Rubber plantation has played an important role in providing permanent settlement based livelihoods to the hill dwelling, shifting cultivation-dependent Tribal communities in North-East India. Success of Rubber plantation based livelihoods among Tribal communities have encouraged several non-Tribal communities to follow the suit. This paper aims to make a comparative assessment of the socioeconomic status of the Tribal and the Muslim Rubber growers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Rubber producing state of North-East India, viz., Assam. The paper broadly follows Department for International Development 's (DFID) Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to do the comparative impact analysis of Rubber plantation on the growers of the two chosen communities. 24 variables are used under 5 capital/asset indicators (physical, human, natural, financial and social). These indicators together constitute Sustainable Livelihood index (SLI) for each of the two communities in consideration. The values of each of the five capital indicators along with the SLI values for the STs and the Muslims reflect the comparative well-being status of the growers belonging to these two communities. The SLF reveals that ST Rubber growers performs better in all the capital indicators and the SLI compared to the Muslim growers reflecting better economic status of the former community. The factors contributing to the existing livelihood conditions of the two selected communities, better or worse, are identified in the paper and subsequently recommendations have been made for furthering the benefits of growing a successful cash crop like Rubber.

**Keywords:** Asset pentagon; Livelihood Capital; Rubber plantation; Socioeconomic status; Sustainable Livelihood Framework.