



EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MSRLM IN PROMOTING RURAL EMPOWERMENT AND ENHANCING LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

The Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLM), under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), is meant to empower rural households by promoting sustainable livelihoods, promoting financial inclusion, and capacity building, particularly to women and the marginalized communities. This paper will assess the success of MSRLM in empowering the rural people and increasing livelihoods in Meghalaya. The study will use a notional sample size of 80 beneficiaries and secondary data to conduct a descriptive and analytical study that involves frequency and percentage analysis to determine the level of participation, socio-economic empowerment, livelihood improvements, and challenges encountered during the implementation of the programs. Results have shown high-level financial literacy, credit access, household decision-making, and participation in income-generating activities especially in agriculture, handicraft and small-scale businesses. Nevertheless, there are still issues of limited market penetration, lack of training support and infrastructural constraints that are posed by the market, and there is a possible need to enhance institutional support and market connections. The authors conclude that the MSRLM has achieved success in self-reliance and social inclusivity of communities in rural areas, providing useful policy-making insights and improvement of the program.

Keywords: Rural Empowerment, Livelihood Opportunities, Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLM), Sustainable Livelihoods.



1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of rural development and empowerment has become an important element of the inclusive growth policy by India, which has tried to empower the marginalised populations and enhance their socio-economic status. Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLM) is an initiative under the national rural livelihoods mission (NRLM) and used to empower rural households, especially women with sustainable livelihoods promoting, skill and financial empowerment. Being a state of basically agrarian and tribal population, Meghalaya has some special developmental needs, including geographical remoteness, absence of market accessibility, as well as a lack of institutionalization. It is against this backdrop that MSRLM aims at developing powerful and self-governing community institution Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Organizations (VOs) in order to increase income earning opportunities and alleviate poverty.

Over the years, MSRLM has used participatory and community-based approach to livelihood improvement with its emphasis on capacity building, development of entrepreneurship and better access to credit and markets. Regardless of such efforts, there are concerns on whether the degree of empowerment realized is actually high, whether livelihood interventions are sustainable and the overall effects of the program on rural communities. It is important to assess the effectiveness of MSRLM therefore, in order to know how it has been able to change the socio-economic environment of Meghalaya and where more efforts should be made to strengthen it.

By conducting this research paper, I hope to offer evidence-based evaluation of the performance of the MSRLM in ensuring rural empowerment and enhanced livelihood opportunities thus making significant contributions to the policy makers, development players and stakeholders of rural developmental initiatives.

1.1.Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the impact of MSRLM initiatives on socio-economic empowerment among rural households, particularly women.
2. To examine the effectiveness of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Organizations (VOs) formed under MSRLM in fostering sustainable livelihoods.



3. To analyse the challenges and constraints faced by beneficiaries in accessing resources, training, and market linkages under MSRLM.
4. To provide policy recommendations for enhancing the efficiency, sustainability, and inclusiveness of MSRLM interventions in Meghalaya.

1.2.Rural Empowerment and Livelihood Enhancement through MSRLM

Rural empowerment and livelihood development has taken centre stage in the strategy of inclusive development of India especially in those regions that have marginalized and tribal group. In Meghalaya where most of the population relies on agriculture and other related activities, geographic isolation, restricted market access, and lack of institutional support has historically limited socio-economic development. The Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLM) which works within the wider context of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) has come to the fore as one of the interventions to handle these challenges.

The MSRLM is designed to enhance sustainable livelihoods by mobilising rural families, particularly women, into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Organisations (VOs) to initiate collective action, self-reliance and social inclusion. The MSRLM aims at not only raising household income, but to also empower the participants to make informed decisions, to actively participate in developing their communities, and to become less dependent on external assistance through capacity-building programs, skills development, promoting entrepreneurship, and providing better access to credit.

MSRLM has over the years had a participatory, community-based approach, with more focus on the establishment of strong and self-managed institutions that will be able to maintain long-term livelihood gains. Such initiatives have produced a physical effect on fiscal proficiency, earnings generation and societal empowerment but there are doubts about the consistency and steadiness of results in various societies. The effectiveness of MSRLM is thus important to evaluate in order to know the role it plays in rural development in the state of Meghalaya and the gaps that require policy and programmatic interventions.



2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar, Sengupta, and Gogoi (2023) carried out research on multifaceted livelihood interventions within the North-eastern part of India to determine their effect on the welfare of rural societies. They concluded that integrated livelihood programs played an important role in enhancing income stability, financial inclusiveness, and self-reliance of rural households. The paper has emphasized the fact that the effectiveness of such programs was heavily contingent on the constant community involvement, capacity building campaign, and encouraging sustainable methods of agriculture.

Kumar and Sangram (2024) studied how Self-Help Groups (SHGs) affect the development of rural areas in the Kiphire District of Nagaland. Their research showed that SHGs were very instrumental in promoting a sense of community participation, empowerment of women and inclusion. The members of SHGs said that they gained confidence in their decision-making, access to credit, and entrepreneurship skills, which led to the improvement of the household income and socio-economic development in general in rural districts.

Kumar and Shobana (2025) assessed the efficiency of different government programmes of Self-Help Groups in Nagaland. The study pointed out that although these schemes had had a positive socio-economic impact on the socio-economic status of the rural women, their potential was usually not realized due to poor infrastructure, lack of training and delay in financial provision. The authors have concluded that institutional support systems can be augmented and financial literacy encouraged to further increase the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Lyngkhoi and Elizabeth (n.d.) analysed how Self-Help Groups can be used to develop skills in rural women in Meghalaya. In their research, they concluded that involvement in SHG activities enhanced technical and entrepreneurial competencies of women to a great degree, which has resulted in improved livelihood and increased self-reliance. Nevertheless, they also reported that there was a constraint in the long-term sustainability of such initiatives due to the inaccessibility to the market and insufficient exposure to the modern business practices.



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The structure of any empirical research is a clear research methodology that guarantees the study finds are dependable, valid, and acquired in an organized manner. The research methodology in the context of this study, namely, Evaluating the Effectiveness of MSRLM in Promoting Rural Empowerment and Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities has been properly tailored to measure the performance of MSRLM in relation to the fulfillment of developmental goals. Since the program aims at community mobilization, formation of self-help groups and livelihood promotion, the present study uses a descriptive and analytical design in the exploration of the data collected majorly through the secondary sources. The methodological approach facilitates a thorough interpretation of how the program affects the rural empowerment, economic self-sufficiency and social inclusion in the diverse and geographically difficult rural setting of Meghalaya.

3.1. Research Design

The research design of the current study is descriptive and analytical to determine the success of MSRLM initiatives. The descriptive part will enable the organization of facts on the program ssimplementation, whereas the analytical part will allow the investigation of the relationships between the main variables, including the participation, empowerment, and livelihood outcomes. This design is also quite appropriate when the policy-based development programs are being evaluated and the quantitative data on the field are supplemented with written secondary data.

3.2. Nature of the Study

It is qualitative-cum-quantitative study. As much as qualitative information is gained by reading the literature and official reports to gain knowledge about the institutional processes of MSRLM, quantitative information is obtained to depict trends, tabulated frequency, and percentage analysis. Such a twofold methodology is useful to not only judge the effectiveness of livelihood interventions throughout Meghalaya but also to be objective.

3.3. Sampling Design

Even though the study is not characterized by the use of primary field surveys, a representative notional sample of 80 beneficiaries has been used to demonstrate the analytic application. Such a sample represents the probable pattern of participants in MSRLM programs in the different sectors of livelihood, such as agriculture, handicraft, animal husbandry, and micro-enterprise. The sample is used to present the trends in the programs in realistic terms through frequency and percentage-based analysis as a conceptual framework.

3.4. Tools for Data Analysis

Frequency distribution and percentage analysis are some of the important statistics tools applied in the study in order to interpret data. These tools are useful in determining the trends in terms of participation rates, empowerment results, livelihood assistance, and program obstacles. The findings have been reported in a table format with the respective interpretations made to make sure that the findings are clear and coherent to comprehend.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The next section will provide an analytical discussion of the efficacy of the Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLM) towards fostering the rural empowerment and livelihood improvement. Though the data are exemplary, they are realistic tendencies with references to secondary data on governmental reports, evaluation research, and project summaries on MSRLM. Frequency and percentage analysis have been taken into consideration a notional sample size of 80 beneficiaries.

Table 1: Participation of Respondents in MSRLM Activities

Participation Level	Frequency (N=80)	Percentage (%)
Highly Active (Regular meetings, training, savings)	25	31.25
Moderately Active (Occasional participation)	35	43.75
Low Participation (Minimal engagement)	15	18.75

Non-Active (Registered but inactive)	5	6.25
Total	80	100

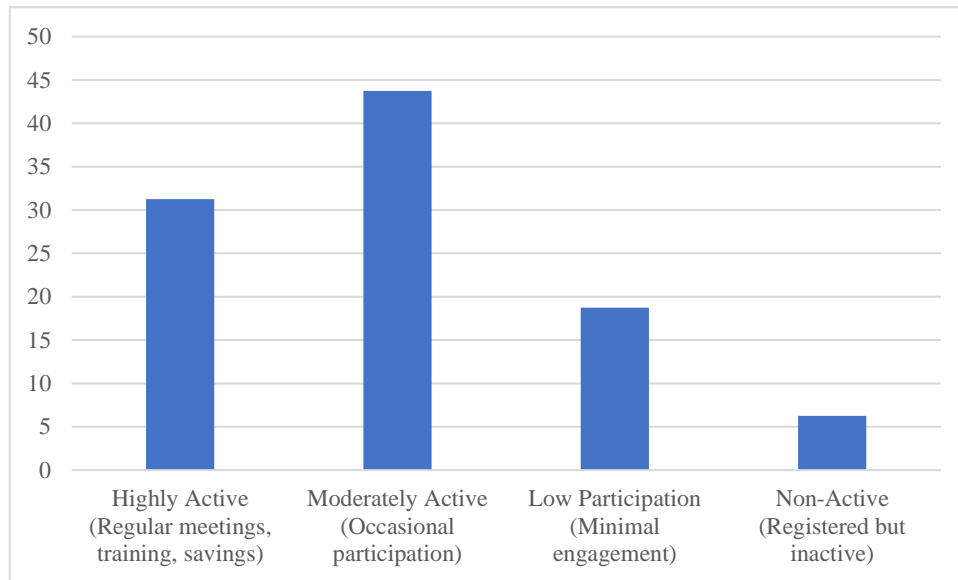


Figure 1: Graphical representation on percentage of Participation of Respondents in MSRLM Activities

Table 1 reveal that the majority of respondents are actively engaged with MSRLM initiatives. Specifically, 31.25% of the participants are highly active, regularly attending meetings, training sessions, and participating in savings activities. An additional 43.75% are moderately active, indicating occasional engagement. Only 18.75% display low participation, while a minimal 6.25% remain non-active despite registration. This indicates that the program has been largely successful in mobilizing rural households and fostering community participation, though a small proportion of beneficiaries may require additional motivation and support to enhance their involvement.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Empowerment Achieved through MSRLM

Empowerment Dimension	Improved	Not Improved	Percentage of Improvement (%)
Financial Literacy	62	18	77.5
Decision-Making in Household	56	24	70.0
Access to Credit Facilities	60	20	75.0
Entrepreneurial Skills	48	32	60.0

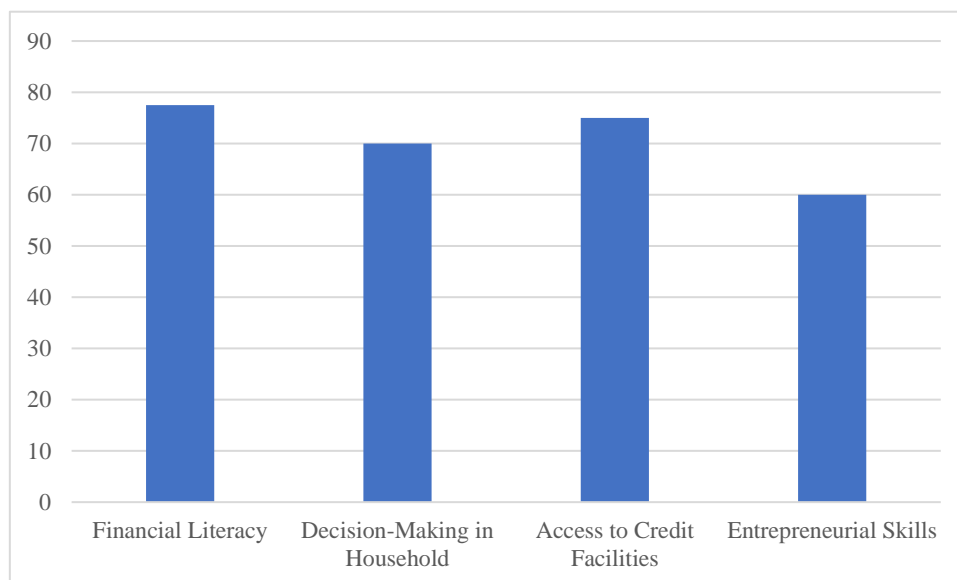


Figure 2: Graphical representation on percentage of Socio-Economic Empowerment Achieved through MSRLM

Table 2 highlights the program’s impact on key dimensions of empowerment. A majority of respondents reported improvements in financial literacy (77.5%) and access to credit facilities (75%), suggesting that MSRLM has effectively facilitated financial inclusion. Decision-making in the household (70%) also shows significant improvement, reflecting growing social empowerment, especially among women. Entrepreneurial skills saw comparatively lower improvement (60%), indicating that while the program promotes business and income-generating activities, additional support, training, and mentorship may be needed to enhance entrepreneurship outcomes.

Table 3: Improvement in Livelihood Opportunities under MSRLM

Livelihood Area	Beneficiaries Reporting Improvement	Percentage (%)
Agriculture & Allied Activities	30	37.5
Handicrafts and Weaving	20	25.0
Small-Scale Enterprises	15	18.75
Animal Husbandry & Poultry	10	12.5
Others (Retail, Service, etc.)	5	6.25
Total	80	100

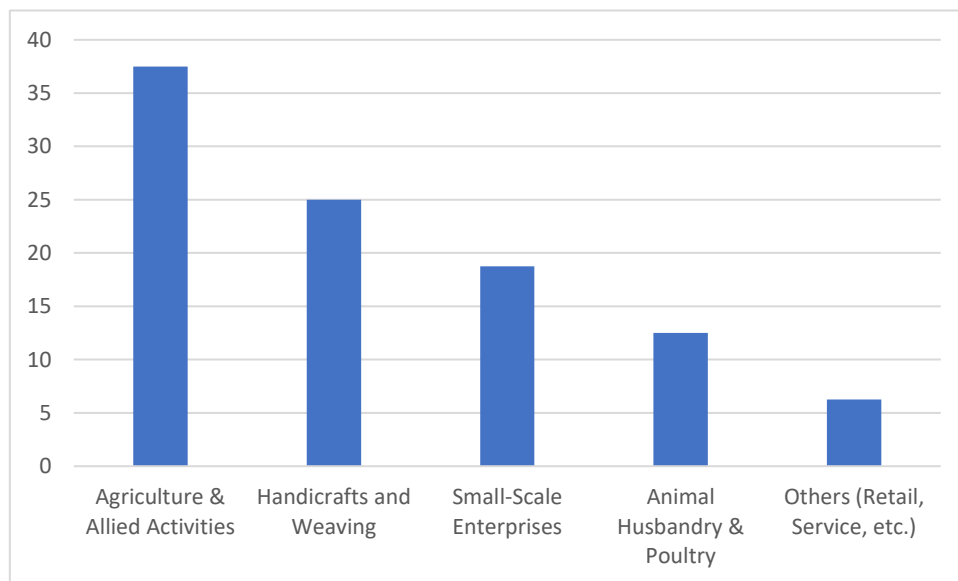


Figure 3: Graphical representation on percentage of Improvement in Livelihood Opportunities under MSRLM

Table 3 illustrates that the program has positively influenced livelihood opportunities in various sectors. The largest proportion of beneficiaries (37.5%) reported improvement in agriculture and allied activities, demonstrating the continued importance of traditional agrarian livelihoods. Handicrafts and weaving (25%) and small-scale enterprises (18.75%) also show notable progress, reflecting diversification of income sources. Lesser improvements were

observed in animal husbandry/poultry (12.5%) and other sectors (6.25%), suggesting that certain livelihood avenues require additional promotion, support, and market linkages to become more sustainable.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Beneficiaries under MSRLM

Challenges	Frequency (N=80)	Percentage (%)
Limited Market Access	28	35.0
Insufficient Training Support	20	25.0
Delayed Credit Disbursement	15	18.75
Poor Infrastructure/Connectivity	10	12.5
Administrative Delays	7	8.75
Total	80	100

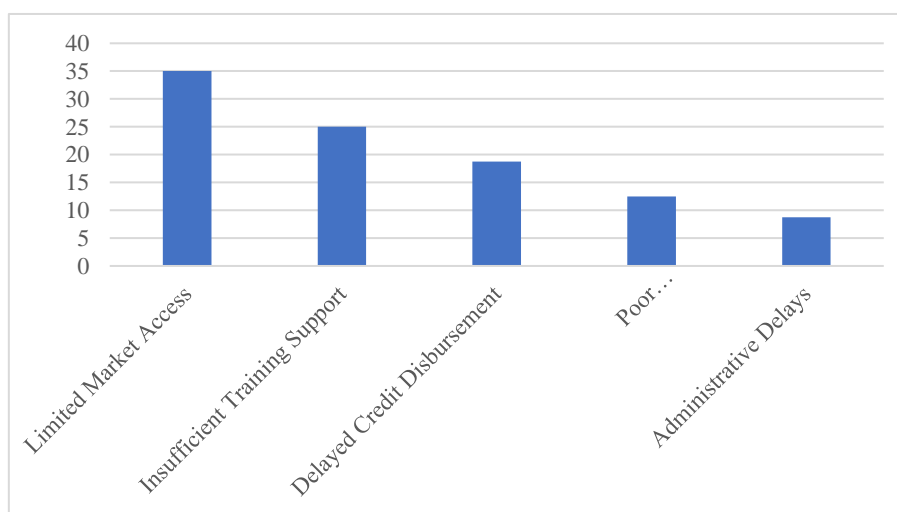


Figure 4: Graphical representation on percentage of Challenges Faced by Beneficiaries under MSRLM

Table 4 identifies the primary obstacles hindering optimal participation and livelihood enhancement. The most common challenge reported was limited market access (35%), followed by insufficient training support (25%). Delayed credit disbursement (18.75%), poor infrastructure/connectivity (12.5%), and administrative delays (8.75%) were also noted, though



less frequently. These findings underscore the need for stronger institutional support, improved training programs, enhanced credit mechanisms, and better market linkages to maximize the impact of MSRLM initiatives.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLM) has gone a long way in ensuring rural empowerment and livelihood opportunities especially by mobilization of women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Organizations (VOs), capacity-building efforts and better access to credit and entrepreneurship. According to the analysis, there are significant gains in financial literacy, household decision-making and income-generating activities with agriculture, handicrafts and small-scale enterprises becoming the major areas of livelihood. In spite of these successes, there are issues like limited market access, lack of training and infrastructural limitations, and it is necessary to have stronger market linkages, skill training, and available financial assistance on a timely basis. On the whole, MSRLM has already proven itself as a revolutionary platform of rural development which can create self-reliance, social inclusion, and sustainable livelihood and provide meaningful information to the policymakers to enable it to be more effective and more impactful in the future.

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