Sustainable Livelihoods in Practice: An Empirical Exploration from Northeast India

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Abstract
This study investigates sustainable livelihoods in the rural community of New Chungliyimti, which is located in Nagaland, Northeast India, on the boundary between Tuensang and Mokokchung. Employing the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it investigates how adaptive behaviours, traditional knowledge, and the use of natural resources help communities remain resilient in the face of environmental and socioeconomic difficulties. The study evaluates demography, income patterns, and a variety of livelihood activities, including shifting agriculture, horticulture, livestock rearing, beekeeping, handicrafts, and the use of non-timber forest products. It is based on fieldwork conducted in February 2025 with 62 respondents. One important tactic for managing ecological risks and seasonal revenue swings is livelihood diversification. Gender inclusion and sustainability are promoted via community-led initiatives including social forestry, vermicomposting, and collaborative financial decision-making. However, problems including poor infrastructure, limited tool access, deteriorating soil, and weak financial systems continue to exist. Women's engagement is restricted by structural hurdles, even in the face of small gender income differences. The potential for sustainable growth based on the ecological and social assets of the village is highlighted by local suggestions for modern farming, improved market access, and inclusive governance.
Keywords: *Sustainable Livelihoods, Livelihood Diversification, Traditional Knowledge, Community Resilience, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

I. Introduction

In the face of increasing economic and environmental uncertainty, Nagaland's New Chungliyimti village offers a powerful example of a rural community attempting to achieve sustainability in the face of structural obstacles. Despite having abundant natural resources and a strong foundation in traditional ecological knowledge, the community faces significant problems that impede sustainable development. Low productivity, diminished quality of life, fewer job and income prospects, and restricted market access are some of the most urgent issues. The vulnerability of the community is increased by these elements taken together, which makes it challenging to establish steady employment and raise socioeconomic well-being.

Despite national initiatives to support green jobs, skill development, and agriculture as means of fostering sustainable development, isolated areas like New Chungliyimti frequently continue to receive inadequate attention. Existing disparities are made worse by a lack of infrastructure, shifting cultivation's effect on soil fertility, and a lack of exposure to contemporary sustainable techniques. In addition to raising local residents' standard of living, removing these obstacles is crucial to guaranteeing inclusive and context-specific rural development plans. This study emphasises the necessity of focused initiatives that fill important knowledge, infrastructure, and policy implementation gaps while leveraging local strengths.

II. Review Of Literature

Diverse viewpoints on sustainable livelihoods are presented in the literature review. With a focus on participatory techniques and the importance of diverse tactics including resettlement and higher farm output, Scoones (1998) proposed a basic framework that identifies the key natural, human, social, and technological assets required for sustainability. Studies by Sati (2008), Kurein (2013), Kapur (2019), and Sridhara et al. (2022) all emphasise the importance of agriculture and how climate variability, inadequate infrastructure, and conventional farming methods impede sustainability. Modernising agriculture, embracing commercial production, and enacting legislative changes are among the recommendations. Despite land limits, Sati et al.

(2014) demonstrated how horticulture in Chinese villages promoted sustainability through high literacy and effective infrastructure utilisation. Additionally, livelihoods based on forests were found to be important. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as bay leaf and broom grass, have economic promise, but commercialisation is constrained by a lack of government backing and insufficient infrastructure, according to Kharmyndai (2013) and Verma (2019). In order to reduce poverty and maintain sustainability, a number of studies, such as those by Israr et al. (2017), Sajid et al. (2018), and Pawar (2023), stressed diversification into non-farming enterprises like livestock, fisheries, and small businesses. Skills training and institutional support were suggested as remedies for the identified constraints, which included poor health, climatic difficulties, and limited financial access. Abbay et al. (2019) and Matiwane & Matiwane (2019), who highlighted social capital and inclusion as pathways to resilience, found that social networks and status were significant in livelihood sustainability. Lastly, broader livelihood frameworks across areas were examined by Su et al. (2021), Gai et al. (2020), and Vashishta et al. (2022). These studies highlight how crucial it is to incorporate social, financial, and physical capital into policymaking while also taking vulnerability into account. These reviews promoted asset-based, integrated, and participatory approaches to improve the sustainability of rural livelihoods.

Research Overview
Objectives of the Study
1. To analyze the various sustainable livelihood activities practiced in the study area.
2. To study the impact of livelihood practices on the income and economic stability of the households in the study area.
3. To identify the constraints hindering sustainable livelihood and suggest policy measures.

Research Questions
1. Are the livelihood activities practiced in the study area fulfilling the sustainable development goals?
2. What are the various constraints faced by the respondents in carrying out the livelihood activities?

Research Hypothesis
Hypothesis 1:
H : There is no significant association between gender and monthly income from livelihood activities.
H : There is a significant association between gender and monthly income from livelihood activities.

Hypothesis 2:
Ho: There is no significant difference in the monthly income of male and female respondents.
H : There is a significant difference in the monthly income of male and female respondents.

III. Research Methodology
The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in an empirical manner. Structured interviews and questionnaires were used to collect primary data, and books, journals, and articles were used to collect secondary data. Key trends and inequalities were highlighted using tables and statistical techniques like chi-square, descriptive statistics, and Mann-Whitney U tests.

Demographic and Economic Profile of Households and their Livelihood Strategies
Table No.1: Demographic Indicators of the respondents

	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	62	0					
Age	62	0	2.90	3	0.74	1	4
Marital Status	62	0	1.58	1	1.10	1	4
Educational Status	62	0	2.35	3	0.85	1	4
Occupation	62	0	1.8	1	1.68	1	6

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table 1 reflects the demographic profile of 62 respondents. The majority are married (mode = 1), between the ages of 40 and 60 (mean = 2.90, mode = 3), and primarily have a secondary education (mode = 3). Although there is variety, farming is the most common occupation (mode = 1). The majority of the respondents are middle-aged, have a moderate level of education, and work primarily in agriculture.

Table No.2: Household Income and Livelihood Indicators

	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Monthly Income of the Household	62	0	2.45	2	0.80	1	4

Monthly income from livelihood activities	62	0	2.58	2	1.10	1	6

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table 2 indicates that the majority of households make between ₹10,000 and ₹20,000 (mean = 2.45, mode = 2), with considerable variation reaching ₹30,000. The range of revenue from livelihood activities is slightly greater, with the majority falling between ₹5,000 and 10,000 (mean = 2.58, mode = 2). The vast majority of respondents, both from general and livelihood-specific sources, report modest but steady income levels overall.

Gender-Based Differences in Monthly Income among Respondents.

Table No.3: Descriptive Statistics

Male	N	Valid	42
		Missing	0
		Mean	2.38
		Median	2.00
		Skewness	.718
		Std. Error of Skewness	.365
		Kurtosis	.100
		Std. Error of Kurtosis	.717
Female	N	Valid	20
		Missing	0
		Mean	2.60
		Median	3.00
		Skewness	-.355
		Std. Error of Skewness	.512
		Kurtosis	-.065
		Std. Error of Kurtosis	.992

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table No.4: Monthly Income of the Respondents

Gender of the Respondents		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male Valid	Below 5000	3	7.1	7.1	7.1
	5000-10000	25	59.5	59.5	66.7
	10000-15000	9	21.4	21.4	88.1
	15000-20000	5	11.9	11.9	100.0
	Total	**42**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Female Valid	Below 5000	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
	5000-10000	6	30.0	30.0	40.0
	10000-15000	10	50.0	50.0	90.0
	15000-20000	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	**20**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table No.5: Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Gender of the Respondents	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Monthly Income of the Respondents	Male	42	29.60	1243.00
	Female	20	35.50	710.00
	Total	**62**		

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table No.6: Test Statistics[a]

	Monthly Income of the Respondents
Mann-Whitney U	340.000
Wilcoxon W	1243.000
Z	-1.311
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.190

a.   Grouping Variable: Gender of the Respondents

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

To evaluate gender-based income disparities, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. The mean income for men was 2.38 (median 2.00), whereas the mean income for women was slightly higher at 2.60 (median 3.00). There were more low-earners in the male income distribution (0.718), and more high-earners in

the female income distribution (-0.355). Frequency information confirms this: 59.5% of men make between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000, whilst 50% of women make between ₹10,000 and ₹15,000.

However, since p > 0.05, the test results (U = 340.000, Z = −1.311, p = 0.190) do not indicate a statistically significant difference. The mean rank was higher for females (35.50 vs. 29.60), but the difference is not statistically significant. Overall, there is little evidence in the data to imply that gender has a major impact on sample income levels.

Livelihood Impacts on Income, Economic Stability, and SDG Alignment
Table No.7: Gender Equality and Economic Participation Indicators

	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Livelihood Opportunities for Women	62	0					
Financial Decision by Women	62	0	1.03	1	0.25	1	3
Household Budget Management	62	0					
Equal Access to Resources and Farmlands	62	0					
Reduce Income Inequality	62	0					

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table 7 emphasises economic engagement and gender equality. Strong agency is indicated by the fact that the majority of women participate in financial decisions (mean = 1.03). Women share or manage the majority of the household finances. Equal access to resources and livelihood possibilities seem to be generally accessible. Despite various degrees of agreement reflecting different experiences across households, responses point to progress in reducing income disparity.

Association between gender and monthly income from livelihood activities.
Table No.8: Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Monthly Income From Livelihood Activities	62	100.0%	0	.0%	62	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table No.9: Gender * Monthly Income From Livelihood Activities Cross tabulation

		Monthly Income From Livelihood Activities						
		Below 5,000	5000-10000	10000-15000	15000-20000	Above 20000	No earnings	Total
Gender 1	Count Expected Count	3 4.1	24 20.3	11 10.8	2 4.1	1 1.4	1 1.4	42 42.0
2	Count Expected Count	3 1.9	6 9.7	5 5.2	4 1.9	1 .6	1 .6	20 20.0
Total	Count Expected Count	6 6.0	30 30.0	16 16.0	6 6.0	2 2.0	2 2.0	62 62.0

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table No.10: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.762[a]	5	.239
Likelihood Ratio	6.571	5	.255
N of Valid Cases	62		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .65.
Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

To investigate the connection between gender and monthly income, a chi-square test was employed. The likelihood ratio test (χ^2 = 6.571, p = 0.255) confirmed the results, which indicated no significant correlation (χ^2 = 6.762, p = 0.239). This implies that the distribution of wealth is not greatly influenced by gender. However, 66.7% of projected cell counts were below 5, which violates important assumptions, limiting the test's trustworthiness.

Small, non-significant differences are shown by cross-tabulation; for example, more men (N = 24) than anticipated (N = 20.3) made between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000, while fewer women (N = 6) than anticipated (N = 9.7) did the same. The observed and expected counts were almost identical in the ₹10,000–₹15,000 range. These variations are negligible and do not point to a gender-based income gap that is statistically significant.

Table No.11: Livelihood Support and Infrastructure Conditions

	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Food from Traditional Agriculture Activities	62	0					
Health Problems Due to Livelihood Activities	62	0					
Credit Facility	62	0	1.56	1	0.66	1	4
Condition of Infrastructure	62	0	1.88	2	0.36	1	3
Sufficient Access to Resources for Livelihood	62	0					
Financial Difficulties	62	0					

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025; Analyzed using SPSS

Table 1 shows the Infrastructure and livelihood support. Infrastructure is assessed as low to medium (mean = 1.88), and SHGs are the main source of credit (mean = 1.56). Traditional agriculture is still important, however there have been reports of health problems related to subsistence activities. Different households have different financial limits and resource availability, which highlights both current difficulties and support systems.

Table No.12: Market Access and Resource Utilization Indicators

	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Markets Nearby	62	0					
Products Transportation	62	0	3.53	4	0.93	2	5
Fair Price	62	0					
Judicious Use of Resources	62	0					
Agricultural Waste	62	0	1.67	1	0.84	1	4

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 12 shows restricted market access and transportation issues. Reliance is suggested by the fact that most respondents (mean = 3.53) utilise middlemen to move products. The question of fair pricing remains. While some people are good at using resources, others are not. Composting and reuse are also emphasised, however burning is the main technique for managing agricultural waste (mean = 1.67). These patterns highlight shortcomings in infrastructure and sustainable practices.

Table No.13: Stable Income Indicators

	Stable Income Indicators	Percentage (%)
Stable Income Indicators	Credit Facilities	6.45%
	Upgraded Method of Farming	95.16%
	Improved Marketing Infrastructure	93.55%
	Diversified Sources of Income	83.87%
	Job Opportunities in Govt. Sector	19.35%
	Others	4.84%
Financial Difficulties	Yes	64.5
	No	33.9
	Somehow	1.6

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 13 demonstrates that most respondents credit consistent income to enhanced farming methods (95.16%) and stronger marketing infrastructure (93.55%). Diversified income sources (83.87%) also play a vital role. Only 19.35%, nevertheless, depend on government employment. Despite advances, 64.5% of households still experience financial challenges, indicating continued economic instability.

Challenges to Livelihood Sustainability and Policy Responses

Table No.14: Challenges in Practice of Livelihood

	Problems	Percentage
Table 5.1: Challenges in Practice of Livelihood	Lack of Agricultural Equipment	87.10%
	Lack of Storage Facilities	24.19%
	Lack of Knowledge	45.16%
	Lack of Skill Training	56.45%
	Insufficient Credit Facilities	43.55%
	Poor Management of Shared Resources	0%
	Regulatory Challenges	0%
	Lack of Market	85.48%
	Lack of Public Transport	59.68%
	Poor Road Connectivity	0%
	Low Payment for Services	19.35%
	High Transportation Cost	50%
	None	8.06%
	Others	8.06%

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 14 highlights the main livelihood issues that respondents encountered. Lack of agricultural equipment (87.10%), restricted market access (85.48%), and insufficient skill training (56.45%) are the main problems. Productivity is further hampered by high transportation costs (50%) and a lack of public transportation (59.68%). It's interesting to note that no worries regarding shared resource management, road connectivity, or regulatory challenges were raised, suggesting that local infrastructure is adequate.

Table No.15: Infrastructure Problems

	Items	Percentage (%)
Perceived Livelihood Constraints	Low Productivity	83.87%
	Reduced Quality of Life	77.42%
	Lower Employment Opportunities	85.48%
	Lower Income Opportunities	87.10%
	Not Directly Applicable	6.45%
Survey Response Levels	Poor	12.9%
	Average	85.5%
	Good	1.6%
	Very Good	0.0%
	Total	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 15 shows the main livelihood restrictions related to infrastructure. Low productivity (83.87%), decreased employment (85.48%), and decreased income (87.10%) were cited by respondents as the main problems. Also affected is quality of life (77.42%). The majority of participants gave the infrastructure an average rating of 85.5%, with only a small percentage rating it as good (1.6%) or poor (12.9%), indicating a moderate level of contentment with the facilities already in place.

Table No.16: Effects of Climate Change on Livelihoods

Climate Change Effect	Percentage (%)
Inadequate Rainfall	79.03%
Pest Attack	80.65%
Deforestation	80.65%
Soil Degradation	24.19%
Disease Spread in Livestock	75.81%
Retarded Growth of Livestock	17.74%
None	11.29%

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 16 highlights the impact of climate change on livelihoods. The most frequently cited problems are pest assaults and deforestation (80.65%), followed by livestock disease transmission (75.81%) and insufficient rainfall (79.03%). Delays in cattle growth (17.74%) and soil deterioration (24.19%) were less frequent. The fact that just 11.29% said they had no influence suggests that climate-related issues are pervasive.

Table No.17: Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

Strategies for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth	Percentage (%)
Skill Development	45.16%
	100%

Inclusive Decision Making	
Diversified Livelihood Opportunities	95.16%
Sustainable Agriculture	95.16%
Improved Infrastructure	98.39%
Share Tools for Production	9.68%
Cooperate in Selling Products Together	22.58%
Accessibility to Schemes and Programs	67.74%
Effective Governance and Leadership	75.81%

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 17 lists significant strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth. Priorities include sustainable agriculture (95.16%), better infrastructure (98.39%), and inclusive decision-making (100%). Access to schemes (67.74%) and skill development (45.16%) are also prioritised. Shared tools (9.68%) and community marketing (22.58%) receive less attention.

Table No.18: Suggestions

	Items	Percentage (%)
Suggestions for Government	Schemes	87.10%
	Awareness Programs	90.32%
	Skill Training	79.03%
	Financial Assistance	96.77%
Suggestions for the community	Improve Farming Technique	100.00%
	Avail Vocational Training	1.61%
	Community Projects	3.23%
	Support Local Businesses	32.26%
	Develop Community-Based Tourism	4.84%
	Others	8.06%

Source: Field Survey, February, 2025

Table 18 outlines important recommendations for enhancing livelihoods. The government is strongly advised to provide financial support (96.77%), awareness campaigns (90.32%), and programs (87.10%). Improving farming methods (100%) is the community's main priority. Less attention was paid to other recommendations, such as assisting small firms (32.26%) and providing vocational training (1.61%).

IV. Conclusion

At the intersection of traditional knowledge, diverse livelihoods, and community strength, New Chungliyimti is a prime example of rural resilience. The hamlet, which has its roots in agriculture and is enhanced by crafts, forest resources, and adaptive techniques, is still dealing with issues including insufficient infrastructure, climate-related hazards, and land shortages. However, it has a significant alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals through its proactive approach to sustainability, gender justice, and environmental stewardship. Through targeted assistance in the areas of education, market accessibility, and job creation, New Chungliyimti might become a paradigm for inclusive, human-centered, and ecologically responsible rural development.

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