



## Socio-Economic Condition of Rubber Plantation Workers- A Synoptic Study

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### Abstract:

*This present study entitled 'A study on the Socio-Economic condition of Rubber Plantation workers of Diphu, Karbi Anglong district of Assam' is undertaken with the objective to throw light on the lives of the plantation workers. Rubber Plantation is a highly lucrative and profitable business and is mostly privately owned. This research work intends to study the condition i.e. the socio-economic condition of the plantation workers in Diphu where the rubber plantation business is flourishing over the last two decades due to its nature. It is a matter of great concern to study the fact whether the workers are able to gain a part of the fruits of the business or not. This knowledge can only be gained by studying the socio-economic of the workers.*

*The present study is undertaken with the following objectives:*

- *To Collect Socio-economic data of workers in the rubber plantation with a view to study the problem faced by them in their working, living and social condition and the extent of the welfare amenities available to them.*

**Key words:** Plantation; unskilled labour; labour welfare; etc

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. MEANING OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION

Socio-generally means society, social and it refers to any number of demographic and social conditions such as the age structure, racial composition, sex ratio, marriages and so on.

Economic refers to the economic conditions such as income, unemployment, rates and so on.

Socio-economic condition refers to an individual level of income, wealth, education and prestige. It consists of the cultivated behaviors of their daily life activities like how they live and earns education, hospitality, wages and salaries, role of family, ethical issue, social responsibility of business.

The basic objectives of this research on the socio-economic condition of rubber plantation worker is to gather idea and their problem faced by them and to improve their standard of living,



education, provide adequate amount of salary and wages, rent and accommodation.

## 1.2. DEFINITION OF PLANTATION

The term 'Plantation' has been defined under the Plantation Labour Act 1951 to include any plantation to which the Act, whether wholly or in parts applies and includes offices, hospital dispensaries, school or other premises used for any other purpose connected with such plantation. Section 1(14) of the Act applies to any land or intends to be used for growing tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom which measure 5hectare or more and in which fifteen or more persons are employed or were employed on any draft of the proceeding 12 month.

## 1.3. WORKERS:

Workers mean a person (including any member of the medical staff) employed in a plantation for hired or reward, whether directly or through any agency, to do any work skilled, unskilled, manual or clerical but does not include:

- (i) A Medical officer employed in the plantation
- (ii) Any person employed in the plantation primarily in a managerial capacity or
- (iii) Any person temporarily employed in the plantation in any work relating to the construction, development or maintenance of building, road, bridge or canals.

## 1.3. EMPLOYER:

When use in relationship to plantation, it means the person who has the ultimate control over the affairs of the plantation and where the affairs of any plantation are entrusted to any person (whether called a managing agent, manager, superintendent or by any other name) such person shall be deemed to be the employer in relation to that plantation.

## 1.4. ABOUT PLANTATION RUBBER

Rubber plays an important role in the industrial and economic development of a country. Rubber plantation provide the principal raw material required for manufacturing of around 35,000 rubber product ranging from toy balloons to tyres of giant moving equipment.

India ranks third in production fourth in the consumption of natural rubber in the world. Rubber Plantations are spread over 5.9 lakh hectares in 16 states. Rubber is primarily grown in Kerela and adjoining Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, the traditional growing areas of the country. Besides these, rubber is also grown in the North-Eastern state like Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Manipur.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In any research project it is essential to understand what has already been done in the specific topic that the researcher chooses and what has been done in the wider subject area of that topic. A Literature review is a text written by someone to consider the critical point of current knowledge including substantive finding as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. Literature reviews are secondary sources, and as such, do not report any



new or original experimental work. Also, a review of literature can be interpreted as a review of an abstract accomplishment.

1. A. Mahalakshmi, Assistant professor, Bharthiar University Art and Science College, Dec 2012 (IJSETR) volume 1, in her study on the Socio-economic status of women employees in tea plantation industries found out that no. of women workers are facing many problem in the tea plantation. Since women workers are engaged more than the male workers. The study is basically focus on their living condition, wages earning and socio-security benefit. The important factor for their development and the problem faced by the employees are also identified.
2. T.V USHADEVI and V.N JAYACHANDRAN (2001) A Project of Kerela Research Programme on Local Level Development (KRPLLD) Centre for Research Studies Thiruvanthapuram. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RUBBER TAPPERS IN THE SMALL HOLDING SECTOR. The study basically focused on the tapper's workers. The study found that tapper work is not an easy work as it requires skill and is labour intensive for the good health of the rubber tree and maintaining the longevity of its production period.
3. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INFORMAL CONDITIONS OF THE PLANTATION LABOURERS OF INDIA LABOUREROF INDIA AND SRI LANKA. By Neelam Choudhary and Deeksha Tayal. The study focuses on the

section of plantation labourers, who are directly employed by the employer are and contract workers. The study also suggest the effectiveness of any formalization strategy would require collective involvement and social dialogue among all the key players in the plantation sector.

4. Government of India (1980) Labour Bureau Ministry of Labour Socio-economic condition of women workers in plantation action. In this study the Government of India focused on the plantation sectors of the labour economical life.

### 3. RESEARCH GAP:

From the above literatures it is known that many researchers have been done regarding socio-economic condition of plantation workers in different geographical areas. The research gap in this study is that no such study has been done in the geographical area where this study has been undertaken. So the survey has conducted among the rubber plantation firm of Diphu, Karbi Anglong of Assam.

### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research enquiry is undertaken with the following objectives with the hope that a new stock of knowledge may be created with the study undertaken:

- To Collect Socio-economic data of workers in the rubber plantation with a view to study the problem faced by them in their working, living and social



condition and the extent of the welfare amenities available to them.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. PROFILE OF THE RUBBER PLANTATION FIRM OF DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT ASSAM

Plantation crops like rubbers are high value crops of great economic importance and provide huge employment opportunity. Suitable land and also agro climatic condition provide favorable environment for rubber plantation.

Expansion of cultivation, which is one of the reasons for stepping up rubber production on a sustainable basis taking place mainly in non-traditional areas. Diphu is one of such non-traditional areas identified by Rubber Board of India. There is a growing popularity of rubber cultivation in the area. Rubber plantation offer ways for generating additional revenue for the growers.

The beneficiaries under the various scheme of rubber board may also avail of long term financial bank loans in order to supplement the financial and other assistance granted by the Board as well as to acquire financial liquidity for undertaking the plantation operation. The Board will in such instance provide the required technical support to the bank concerned extending finance.

It is gathered from the concerned people that rubber cultivation is highly income generating if managed properly. The small scale cultivators or a grower of rubber is

emerging in the district. The implication of this development on firm will be significant. There are of course, several inherent problems of small scale cultivation of rubber like capital lock up due to long gestation period, capital intensive, nature of production systems, processing and marketing problems.

In Diphu, Rubber plantations are very popular and the growers are very much interested in cultivating such crops. The land is climatic in nature which is suitable for rubber plantation. The study reveals three unit level of plantation firm. Out of 15 plantations firm, three unit level of plantation firm has been selected for the study. The firms are privately owned in Diphu.

Out of that unit level is M/S Rongmili Rubber which is located near Matipung 5km distance away from Diphu town. It was established in the year 1990 by Harold Engti a resident of Rongmili, Diphu. At present there are 311 numbers of workers.

Another firm is taken from M/S Tungjang Rubber Estate established in the year 1987 by Mr. Gajendra Timung. The firm is located at Diphu-Lumding road 5km distance from the Diphu town. There are 52 nos of workers.

And the third firm is M/S Babu Teron Rubber firm established in the year 1996 located at Diphu Lumding road 5km from the main town. No. of worker are only 12.

The information collected on the no. of unit allowing all the data are collected in the table all the three unit of firm together.



## 5.2. RESEACH DESIGN

The research design for this study is descriptive in nature. Descriptive researches are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristic of a particular individual, or of a group. A descriptive research design can be either quantitative or qualitative. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describes events and then organizing, tabulation, depiction and describing the data collection (Glass and Hopkin, 1984). It includes survey and fact finding.

Here the detailed study of the Socio- Economic Condition of Rubber Plantation workers of Diphu, Karbi Anglong district is done. The information is collected with the help of an unbiased non disguised and structured questionnaire consisting of close-ended question and field survey.

## 5.3. SAMPLE DESIGN

Simple random sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a population in such a

### 5.3.3. SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size includes all the workers belonging from the three unit level of the plantation

Unit	Name of the firm	Year of establishment	Total Numbers of Workers	% of total workers
A.	M/S Rongmili Rubber	1990	311	82.93
B.	M/S Tungjang Rubber estate	1987	52	13.87
C.	M/S Babu Teron firm	1996	12	3.2
			375	100.00

firms selected for the study. The table has given below:

Source: Field work.

way that each and every unit or item of the population has the equal chance of being included in the sample.

Two stages of sampling design were adopted for the survey. In the first stage of sampling, the sample size of the unit level or employer level schedule has been determined.

In the second stages, sample worker level schedule have been canvassed.

### 5.3.1. UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY

The Universe of the study contains of the 15 registered rubber plantation firms in Diphu where an approximately 1500 numbers of worker are engaged in the plantation work.

### 5.3.2. SAMPLE UNITS

Out of the 15 numbers of plantation firms, three of the units had permitted the researcher to interact with their employees and as such these three numbers of firms forms the sample units for the study.





## 5.4. QUESTIONNAIRE CANVASSED

(i) Two specially designed schedules were canvassed for the purpose of this survey. The unit level questionnaire was canvassed to capture the working condition of workers. A unit level questionnaire was designed to collect data for the unit as a whole on important parameters, like year of establishment, types of ownership, mode of payment wages and earning of the manual workers, leave and holidays, daily hour of work, sex-wise employment of workers in the plantation, trade union, welfare amenities available to workers, social security and benefit.

(ii) The worker level schedule is designed to collect the data on living condition of women workers employed in the plantation. The schedule was designed to capture the important aspects like migration, status caste, demographic particular (age profile, marital status, education qualification etc.), Wages and earning total income and saving indebtedness, medical expenditure etc.

## 5.5. DATA COLLECTION

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

### TABLE PART A. EMPLOYER UNIT LEVEL

Table 4.1 UNIT A

Sl.No	Variables	Particulars
1.	Name of the firm	M/S Rongmili Rubber Plantation
2.	Year of establishment	1990
3.	Type of ownership	Privately owned
4.	Mode of employment	Both i.e. permanent and casual

Data has collected both by Primary and Secondary sources.

**Primary data:** Primary data has been collected through a structured, unbiased and non disguised questionnaire which consisted of field survey all the workers from different firm gave their relevant information during the survey.

**Secondary data:** Secondary data has been collected through books, websites and journals based on the relevant topics of the research work.

## 5.6.LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In course of conducting the survey the researcher faced difficulty in establishing communication linkage with the workers because most of the tribal workers in interior areas are not fluent in any language other than their mother tongue. As a result, the researcher has taken the help of university students belonging to Karbi Community and they were engaged by the researcher for facilitating collection of information.



5.	Wages paid	Monthly basis
6.	No. of leaves granted to a permanent worker in a year	52 days
7.	Hours of the works in the unit	7 hours
8.	No. of workers	Male 270 Female 41
9.	Facilities	Water facilities Drinking water facilities First Aid boxes Rest shelter Medical facilities Education facilities Maternity benefit Accident benefit

Source: Field work

**TABLE4.2 UNIT B**

SL.No	Variables	Particulars
1.	Name of the firm	M/S Tungjang Rubber estate
2.	Year of establishment	1987
3.	Type of ownership	Privately owned
4.	Mode of employment	Both i.e. permanent and casual
5.	Wages paid	Monthly basis
6.	No. of leaves granted to a permanent worker in a year	No leave
7.	Hours of the works in the unit	8 hours
8.	No. of workers	Male 36 Female 16



9	Facilities	Water facilities Drinking water facilities First Aid boxes Rest shelter Medical facilities Education facilities Accident benefit
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Source: Field work

**TABLE 4.3 UNIT C**

SL.No	Variables	Particulars
1.	Name of the firm	M/S Babu Teron
2.	Year of establishment	1996
3.	Type of ownership	Privately owned
4.	Mode of employment	Both i.e. permanent and casual
5.	Wages paid	Rs.150 on daily basis
6.	No. of leaves granted to a permanent worker in a year	1 month
7.	Hours of the works in the unit	8 hours
8.	No. of workers	Male 9 Female 3
9.	Facilities	Water facilities Drinking water facilities First Aid boxes Rest shelter

Source: Field work

## 7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results of the field survey lend us to the following finding:

- In course of field survey, it is noticed that the worker chosen in 3 sample plantations have absorbed 100% tribal workers from the same locality, who all

belong to ST population in the study area.

- Around 63.3% of the workers belonged to the age group of 25-35 years whereas 20% of the workers belonged to the age group of 15-25 years.





- Around 36.67% of the workers have never had the opportunity for any formal education whereas about 58.33% of the workers had attended school but couldn't pass out.
- It has also been found out that mostly the males are engaged in the plantation works here in Diphu which constitutes about 68.33% of the total population. Whereas the rest constitutes the female workers.
- 72% of the workers were found to be married and the rest 28% were unmarried. Further, it was also found out that around 30% of the workers interrogated had 4-6 dependent family members, 33% had 2-4 dependents and 30% of them had 1-2 dependents.
- Around 63.33% of the workers were found to be permanent employees of the rubber plantations whereas 36.7% of the workers were employed casually.
- With regards to the annual earning of the workers, it was discovered that 40% of them have an annual earnings in between Rs.20,000-Rs.40,000 per annum and 33.33% of the workers earned Rs.40,000-Rs.60,000 per annum, which constituted mostly the permanent workers. On the other hand 21.7% of the workers were found to earn below Rs. 20,0000 per annum. This group mostly belonged to the casual workers. Furthermore, this group may be getting engaged as hired wage workers for contract jobs or seasonal jobs, etc.
- The Researcher also made his best attempt to get hold of the information with regards to the total household income of the plantation workers. However, in this regards, most of the workers were found to be suspicious over declaring the total household income. The Researcher in this regards could roughly gather the fact that around 66.7% of the worker's household had an annual income below Rs.50,000 whereas 33.33% disclosed that they had an annual income in between Rs.50,000- Rs.1,00,000.
- Only 16.75% of the workers were found to have a savings bank account in Diphu, the rest 83.35% were indifferent towards the idea of having any bank account at all.
- Most of the workers revealed that they had an annual savings ranging from Rs.10,000 to Rs.20,000 at their respective bank accounts.
- Our study also reveals that banking habits, banking services flourished & multiplied in the tribal society with the growth of plantation activities. It appears that there is a positive correlation between banking services & plantation activities. It does ensures that major plantation activities on the other hand promote financial inclusion in Karbi Anglong district



comparatively much better than the other districts of the state.

- 68.33% of the workers reported that they were paid their wages on a monthly basis, this section of workers constituted the permanent workers of the plantation. Whereas another 13.33% and 18.34% reported that they were paid their remunerations on daily and weekly basis respectively.
- However, almost 51.75% of the workers were dissatisfied with the amount of wages structure being paid to them. 41.7% were found to be satisfied with their wages from the plantation. But another 6.6% were unable to undecided on the satisfaction level.
- It was quite evident from the field study that the workers were highly satisfied with the working hours since 87% of the workers responded in positive when enquired about their satisfaction with regards to the time they have to spend on the plantation.
- Again 71.7% of the workers were also in favour of the recess that they are provided in the working hours by the plantation management but another 25% shared that they were not happy with rest intervals that they are provided with.
- Only 65% of the workers responded that they were provided with sick pay leaves whereas the rest 35% shared that they were not provided any kind of sick leaves with pay.
- Around 66.7% of the workers responded that they were provided medical benefits by the employer but within certain ceilings on monetary benefits. Usually there family members were not considered in the scheme. Further, the amount provided is usually very meager. Another 33.33% were not provided any such facility at all. It may be because of the fact that they were casual in nature. The casual workers constituting 33.33% of the workforce are excluded under the scheme.
- Usually the workers are required to perform their duties in the open and as such the requirement of Rest Shelter facilities is necessitated. However, the Researcher found out that around 8.3% of the sample respondents said they were not provided with any such facilities. The plantation workers are generally exposed to heat, sun rays, rain and gifts of Mother Nature because of the nature of works involved in open fields. As a result, work facilities under a shed or a thatch is not possible accounting to such worker's grievances.
- Only 26.7% of the workers responded that they were provided with the canteen facilities of which only a few were found to be satisfied with the food items served in the canteens. However, the majority of the workers responded



that they were not provided with any such facilities.

- Around 65% of the workers shared that they were provided with housing facilities. The workers are usually provided shelters within the plantation in temporary dwellings. The conditions of the kutccha houses are dilapidated with no electricity facility.
- From the study it was found out that around 61.7% of the workers responded that their employers provided educational facilities to their children. On enquiring further, it was found out that the employers usually provides a lump sum amount on yearly basis to the workers for getting their children admitted to the schools and for the purchase of books and other materials.
- None of the employers are found to be providing their workers with insurance benefits.
- Though the chances of accidents are quite rare in the rubber plantations but all the sample populations responded that their employers bestowed them with accident benefits.
- Around 60% of the women workers responded that their employers were providing them with the maternity benefits which included 6 months period with half the pay rates. Most of the other responded in negative mainly because of the fact that they fall in the category of casual workers.

- Finally the workers were asked to provide their overall viewpoints with regards to the welfare facilities they were receiving from their employers. It was found out that 40% of the workers were very highly satisfied with all the facilities provided by their employers. On the other hand, 48.3% of the employees were found to be moderately satisfied. However no workers were found to be highly dissatisfied. Only a mere 3.3% of the workers were found to be dissatisfied.

## 8. CONCLUSION

An in depth analysis and study is conducted to find the Socio-Economic Condition of Rubber Plantation worker in Diphu. Among the three selected units, the questions were framed to understand about living condition, employment status earning wages and benefits from the workers view, the researcher gathered in depth status of both the men and women employees in the rubber plantation. The nature of work is very hard. They are engaged in 8-10 hours of work. Most of the employees have no other tasks leaving apart the plantation work. The region surrounding still remains underdeveloped so the employees have no other sources of employment to improve their lifestyle. The present wage structure is not adequate to run their family. They are leading life in poor condition and also not able to provide proper education facilities to their children. Only things they appreciates is that they have free water facilities, accidental benefit, maternity benefit, rest shelter facilities, education facilities with which overall they are moderately satisfied as a whole.



Women tappers represent only a small percent of total sample tapper. Generally, they are forced to enter the field of tapping because of financial crisis of concerned families. They do not have any job satisfaction, because it is difficult to manage in tapping, collecting latex as well as left with household chores. Therefore they hardly have life.

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