

## **RURAL ENTREPRENEURS IN WEST GARO HILLS, MEGHALAYA: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS**

**Dr. Mriganka Chakraborty\*   Dr. Mridul Barman\*\*   Dr. Amit Kundu\*\*\***

*\*Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Don Bosco College, Tura, Meghalaya.*

*\*\*Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Tura Christian College, Tura, Meghalaya.*

*\*\*\*Associate Professor, Department of Management, NEHU, Tura Campus, Tura, Meghalaya.*

### **Abstract**

*Rural entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic development in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The district is rich in natural resources and has a vibrant culture that provides a foundation for diverse entrepreneurial activities. This strategic analysis examines the opportunities, challenges, and support systems that shape the landscape for rural entrepreneurs in the region. The present study aims to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs in Dalu region of Meghalaya. This strategic analysis, complemented by a survey of select entrepreneurs, provides a comprehensive overview of the rural entrepreneurial ecosystem in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. For this study, all 90 units who are presently actively involved in the entrepreneurial activities, were purposefully chosen. Pretested schedules were given to the respondents in order to get information about their perceptions of their SWOC (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges). Data was gathered through in-person interviews using a well-planned and pre-tested interview schedule.*

*Rankings of the items for the pertinent strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges have been determined using the Rank Based Quotient (RBQ) technique. A strategic approach to nurturing this sector must involve a multi-pronged effort: strengthening existing support systems, enhancing physical infrastructure, providing targeted skill development, and fostering market linkages. By strategically leveraging its unique strengths and addressing its weaknesses, West Garo Hills can further unlock the potential of its rural entrepreneurs, leading to sustainable economic growth and improved livelihoods for its people.*

**Keywords:** *SWOC Analysis, Entrepreneurs, Rural Entrepreneurship, Strategic Planning, Dalu Region.*

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneur is a person one always tries to explore the opportunities adopts the change as well as responds to it. An entrepreneur is a person who tries to maximize profit by innovation. Entrepreneurship is the activity of an entrepreneur who starts a new business activity by undertaking risk and adopting initiative and creates valuable assets for providing value to the customer.

Rural entrepreneurship refers to process of initiating the process of initiating businesses activities mainly focusing on rural areas, through the use of locally available resources, skills, and opportunities to foster the economic development and expand economic activities within the rural communities. It is essentially the process of creating new project in rural regions so that income and employment may be generated by utilizing local assets including agriculture, handicrafts as well as potentiality of tourism. Rural entrepreneurship conjures diversified meanings to different persons. Entrepreneurship emerging in rural areas and establishing industrial units in the rural areas refers to rural entrepreneurship i.e. rural entrepreneurship implies rural industrialisation (Khanka, 2009). Some of the justifications for rural entrepreneurship in the rural areas is justified on many counts, like, it creates large-scale employment opportunities in the rural sector as most of the rural industries are in the nature of labour intensive, it

also assists in the improvement of the per capita income of rural people which reduces the gaps and disparities in income of rural and urban people, it also promotes balanced regional growth in the economy, it creates an opportunity for rural educated youth to promote it as a source of livelihood, it can reduce poverty, growth of slums, pollution in cities and ignorance of people, etc. (Raul, 1978).

### **Some of the vital points on rural entrepreneurship are**

1. Focusses on the readily available resources in the local areas.
2. Generation of employment opportunities for the upliftment of the life of the people residing in the rural areas.
3. Some of the examples of rural entrepreneurial activities are honey production, handicrafts, dairy farming, piggyery, poultry, culinary tourism, etc.
4. Some of the challenges and obstacles faced by rural entrepreneurs are problems of finance, deficiency in market knowledge, infrastructure bottlenecks, lack of skilled workforce,

### **SWOC Analysis**

SWOC analysis is a strategic planning tool that assists in identifying an organisation's strength, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. This analysis is useful for evaluating an organisation, person, unit or activity. SWOC analysis is a strategic planning tool which is utilized to explore external and internal factors which reflects success as well as growth. Firms use SWOC analysis to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of their firm, products, and competition. SWOC analysis is very much pertinent to SWOT analysis. In SWOT analysis strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are evaluated. In SWOC focus is on threats rather than on challenges. The two are similar but they do have their differences, that is why firms may choose to use SWOC or SWOT.

### **Performing a SWOC analysis involves the following**

1. A diverse team formation.
2. Listing of factors and brainstorming.
3. Organize the key factors.
4. Examination of internal factors.
5. Evaluation of external factors.
6. Developing strategic actions.
7. Device and track the changes.
8. Frequent Assessment and appraisal.

### **Dalu- A Brief Profile**

Dalu is a Block situated on the western part of West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya and it is bounded by the South Garo Hills district on the South, Zikzak block to the north-west and north, Gambegre block of the District on the south-east and the eastern side, western part is surrounded by the Bangladesh. There are around 188 villages covered under the block. The average literacy rate in urban area is 70.6% and the sex ratio of Dalu Block is 978. The Block is spread over an area of 597 Sq. km and according to the census conducted in 2011 Dalu Block of West Garo Hills district has a total population of 54,095 as per the Census 2011. Out of which 27,351 are males while 26,744 are females. In 2011 there were a total 10,169 families residing in Dalu Block. In 2011 there were a total 10,169 families residing in Dalu Block. Total number of literates in the area as per 2011 census was 31,546 persons out of which 17,041 and 14,505 were male and female literates respectively. The Dalu block is identified as one of the backward blocks of the district. As per the records, there are total 173 registered enterprises in the Dalu block area. (District Statistical Office, Tura, West Garo Hills).

## Literature Review

A number of Studies have conducted on the rural entrepreneurs and their problems. A few studies in the recent times are reflected for introspection in the following paragraphs:

Saxena, S. (2012) examines the problems faced by rural entrepreneurs. He mentioned that development of rural entrepreneurs will give an impetus to the economic development of the country. He also identified various ways by which the rural entrepreneurship can be promoted.

Korsgaard, Muller and Tanvig (2015) identified two ideal types are developed, viz., entrepreneurship in the rural and rural entrepreneurship. Both types contribute to local development, the latter holds the probability for an optimized use of the resources in the rural area and these ventures are unlikely to relocate even if economic rationality would suggest it.

Escher, E. et.al. (2017) examined newly started small businesses that are within three or four years of age or less, and evaluated the factors that might have an impact on their success or failure.

Pongener and Sharma (2018) found fisheries enterprise plays a sustainable role in Indian agriculture not only generating high income in the rural areas, but also is very much significant in earning their livelihood along with securing nutritional securities. They found that fisheries play a significant role in food production sector, agricultural exports and involvement of large number of people for different activities in the sector. Kavinila and Murugan (2019) undertook a SWOC analysis among the 120 rural youth individually, the respondents were asked to rank their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as perceived by them using the statistical tool of RBQ (Rank Based quotient) method. It has been found in the study that large sections of the youth population untrained and less educated and less contact with extension agencies and lack of proper guidance are ranked foremost weaknesses of the sample data.

Asokhan and Elakkiya (2022) examines the strength, weakness, opportunity and challenges of the agri-business as perceived by the agri-entrepreneurs. For this study, three districts namely, Namakkal, Madurai and Salem districts has been selected based on highest number of agri entrepreneurs.

## Objectives of the Study

The current study aims to evaluate the SWOC analysis, or strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, of the entrepreneurial endeavors carried out by the rural entrepreneurs in the Dalu region of the West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the socio-economic backdrop of the entrepreneurs in Dalu region of the West Garo Hills district, Meghalaya.
2. To comprehend the major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges faced by rural business owners to build appropriate plans that would support the growth of entrepreneurship in the mentioned area.

## Methodology and Data Collection

The study was conducted in Dalu Block area (prominent villages selected on the basis entrepreneurial activities: Barengapara, Chaipani, Purakhasisa, Joshipara, Machangpani and Kherapara) of the West Garo Hills District, Meghalaya. As per the records, there are total 173 registered enterprises in the Dalu block area. The number of entrepreneurs operating in the research area was determined by a survey. Ninety businesses could be found. Purposively, all 90 units, or roughly 52% of the total registered enterprises in the Dalu block, were chosen for the current investigation. In course of running of the enterprise, the entrepreneurs would have identified or come across several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Therefore, data pertaining to the perception of the respondents relating to

strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and Challenges were obtained through pretested schedules distributed among them. A properly-structured and pre - tested interview schedule was administered for the collection of data by personal interview. In the formulation of research methodology for SWOC, a list of 24 items (strengths-6, weaknesses-6, opportunities-6, and challenges-6) was prepared after reviewing the relevant researches conducted in SWOC on different dimensions and also on holding discussion with different experts. An interview schedule was prepared to excavate the SWOC parameters of the rural entrepreneurs. The responses of the selected entrepreneurs under each parameter were listed. Further, the respondents were asked to rank the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as perceived by them. The higher the rating in percent for strength, weakness, opportunity and challenges, the higher it was regarded on the list of strength, weakness, opportunity and challenges and so on.

**Categories of Entrepreneurial Activities:** The researchers have identified following categories of entrepreneurial activities:

**Table 2 : Categories of Entrepreneurial Activities and Units Surveyed**

Sl No	Categories of Enterprises	Units
1	Bakery.	04
2	Iron & Steel Fabrication	06
3	Sweets and Confectioneries	12
4	Hotels & Restaurants	08
5	Saloons	09
6	Beauty Parlour	06
7	Vehicle Repairing	12
8	Tailoring	10
9	Piggery	04
10	Poultry	07
11	Chips Making (Banana and Sweet Potato).	09
12	Carpentry	03

Source: Compilation of primary survey data

### Analysis of the Data

Rank based quotient: Rank Based Quotient (RBQ) is a method used to assist in identifying the problems, arranging the problems and understanding the problems and thereby forwarding the solutions. It is a part of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodology. The ranks attributed for different SWOC parameters and the frequency of rural entrepreneurs ranked has been utilised for the calculation of Rank Based Quotient (RBQ) (Sabarathnam, 1988 & Pravin, 2001). It is identified as a scientific method used to determine the relative importance of various constraints through an arbitrary scoring system. (Nisha and Vimalraj Kumar, 2019)

The formula for the calculation of RBQ is as follows.

$$RBQ = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (F_i)(n+1-i)}{Nn} \times 100$$

where,  $F_i$  = frequency of entrepreneurs for the  $i$ th rank and parameters of SWOC

$N$  = number of Entrepreneurs;  $n$  = number of ranks.

## Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

In the following table the detailed profile of the respondents taken for study is depicted

**Table 2: Profile of Respondents**

Particulars		Overall	
		No	%
Age	Below 30	19	21.11
	30-50	51	60.00
	50-70	16	17.77
	70 and above	4	4.44
Income (in ₹)	Less than 30,000	05	5.55
	30,000-60,000	15	16.66
	60,000-90,000	29	32.22
	90,000-1,20,000	19	21.11
	Above 1,20,000	12	13.33
Educational qualifications	Less than Matric	17	18.88
	Matriculate	25	27.77
	Higher Secondary	36	40.00
	Graduate	9	10
	Post Graduate	3	3.33
Marital Status	Married	83	92.22
	Unmarried	7	7.77
Sex	Male	29	22.23
	Female	61	67.77

Source: Primary Data.

The table2 shows that 60 percent of the entrepreneurs were in the age group of 30 to 50 years. This was followed by 21.11 percent of the entrepreneurs in the age group of less than 30 years and 17.77 percent in the age group of 50 to 70 years. The percentage of entrepreneurs in the age group of more than 70 years was 4.44 percent which was considered very insignificant.

The table 2 also showed that less than 6 percent of the entrepreneur's families had an annual income of less than ₹ 30,000 while 16.66 percent had an annual income between ₹ 30,000 and ₹ 60,000. 32.22 percent had an annual income between ₹ 60,000 and ₹ 90,000. But only 21.11 percent had an annual income between ₹ 90,000 - ₹ 1,20,000 and only 13.33 percent have an annual income of above ₹ 1,20,000.

It is often being considered that education, entrepreneurship and economic progress are inter-related issues. Education assists in personality development, behavioural transformation and skill formation of an individual (Chakraborty, 1997). The system of formal education also holds a great significance in moulding and shaping an individual's career. Hence, it was decided to explore the educational level of entrepreneurs in the study area. It was observed from the above table that the most of the respondents, i.e. 40 percent, had been found to be up to higher secondary level. Only 3.33 percent has been found to have completed post graduate level. As far as the marital status is considered, it is evident that 92.22



percent of the respondents were married. Female entrepreneurs are found to less than the male counterpart. Hence, it is inferred that as compared to females, males have more risk-taking capabilities.

### Strength of Entrepreneurs

Strengths can be considered as more intangible. For example, an entrepreneur has records of better customer service via positive reviews online, this is a strength he/she can apply to his/her advantage. Strengths can be documented through statistics, customer service reviews, etc. Strengths are also termed as internal attributes that assist the organization in realizing its objectives. In other words, these are internal traits of a firm, particularly in comparison with that of its competitors. In table 3 the strengths perceived by the respondents of the enterprises in the study area are shown.

**Table 3: Score and Rating per Entrepreneur in Respect of Strengths**

Items of Strength	Order of Ranks					RBQ	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5		
Availability of Natural/Local Resources	29	28	13	11	9	72.66	2
Importance of Weekly Haats	25	30	15	12	8	71.55	3
Available Labour Supply	30	19	18	13	10	70.22	4
Good family support	23	20	17	16	14	64.88	6
Existence of Local Demand	35	30	12	9	4	78.44	1
Self-Motivation	26	24	15	13	12	68.66	5

Source: Compiled on the basis of Primary Data.

It can be observed from table 3 that the existence of local demand was ranked as the major strength required for the success of an enterprise with a rating of 78.44 percent. Availability of Natural/Local Resources was considered by the respondent as one of the significant strengths (Rank 2). Importance of Weekly Haats was also believed by the entrepreneurs as a major strength (Rank 3). Available Labour Supply was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the strengths perceived by the respondents. Entrepreneurs felt that self-motivation (Rank 5) as one of the key strengths for undertaking entrepreneurial activity. The entrepreneurs also considered good family support as 6<sup>th</sup> ranked strength which provides required support for their activities.

### Weaknesses of the Entrepreneurs

Some of the weaknesses that jumble the business activities in the study area were placed before the entrepreneurs and they were asked to respond as to the extent of applicability of these weaknesses in their cases. Their responses are evident in the table 4.

**Table 4: Score and Rating per Entrepreneur in Respect of Weaknesses**

Items of Weaknesses	Order of Ranks					RBQ	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5		
Lack of Managerial Skill	28	27	20	8	7	73.55	3
Lack of Idea of Business	21	18	16	17	18	61.55	5
Existence of Traditional approach	22	15	20	16	17	62.00	4
Considerate and not Determined	19	18	19	16	15	60.22	6
Intricate procedure for obtaining License	32	31	20	5	2	79.11	1
Fluctuated seasonal prices	31	28	18	7	6	75.77	2

Source: Compiled on the basis of Primary Data.

The entrepreneurs expressed their worries over the existence of the system which involves complex procedure for obtaining business licenses. (Rank 1). Their trepidation for fluctuation in price due to seasonal changes was also important (Rank 2). The entrepreneurs reported that they had no institution for imparting managerial skills to the entrepreneurs (Rank 3). Existence of Traditional approach in their perceptions was also considered by them as a key weakness (Rank 4). Lack of business ideas are also proved to be another weakness (Rank 5). Entrepreneurs also agreed that as they were deficient in business ideas they could not execute their plans accurately (Rank 6).

### Opportunities of the Entrepreneurs

Opportunities refer to positive external factors that could provide an enterprise a competitive advantage. It is also considered as a favourable situation in an organisation's environment. The various existing opportunities were listed and then the entrepreneurs were asked to rank the significance of the opportunity to their entrepreneurial career by conveying whether it was of great importance (ref table 5). Dalu being situated in the border area and hence the entrepreneurs considered the potential place of international trade as a major opportunity (Rank 1).

Value addition is considered next important opportunity due to availability local raw materials like oranges, tapioca, banana, turmeric, cashew nut, areca nut, forest resources, mineral resources, etc (Rank 2). As employment generation can lead to economic progress and hence more employment generation was also considered as one of the major strengths (Rank 3). Floriculture, Fruits and vegetables sector holds an important opportunity for the local entrepreneurs in the area was also found to be next in the list (Rank 4). Presence of Entrepreneurial development agencies can be fruitful for the entrepreneurs and they considered it as an opportunity for promotion of entrepreneurial activities (Rank 5). Dalu is situated on Indo-Bangladesh border and efforts are being initiated by the appropriate authorities to develop this place as an international market and hence the respondents perceived as potential area international trade collaboration as well as due to similarity in socio cultural practices in the region there may be regional trade collaboration. (Rank 6).

**Table 5: Score and Rating per Entrepreneur in respect of Opportunities**

Items of Opportunities	Order of Ranks					RBQ	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5		
Potential Place of International Trade	35	24	21	7	3	78.00	1
Floriculture, Fruits and vegetables sector	24	19	17	22	8	66.44	4
Possibility for Trade Collaboration	22	15	14	19	20	60.00	6
Entrepreneurial Developing Agencies	21	20	22	17	10	65.55	5
Value addition	26	32	20	8	4	75.11	2
More employment generation	33	23	15	11	8	73.77	3

Source: Compiled on the basis of Primary Data.

### Challenges to Entrepreneurs

Under SWOC analysis, challenges refer to the external factors that an enterprise/ organization might encounter. These are alike to threats in a traditional SWOT analysis. But challenges are thought of more upbeat and opportunity-focused perspective. These are referred to those obstacles which can be overwhelmed with strategic planning and action. The challenges that were usually associated with entrepreneurs were listed out and the entrepreneurs were asked to indicate the extent of severity of the challenges. The result is presented in table 6.

**Table 6: Score and Rating per Entrepreneur in Respect of Challenges**

Items of Challenges	Order of Ranks					RBQ	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5		
Adverse social Activities and natural disaster	18	20	15	20	17	60.44	6
Limited Time Period for the Daily Trading Activity	21	22	25	8	14	66.22	5
Increased cost of Transportation and Problem of Communication	36	23	21	6	4	78.00	1
Inadequate Government policies	31	29	10	15	5	74.66	2
Lack Financial Assistance/Loan	29	22	18	9	12	70.44	3
Lack of Advanced Technologies	26	19	17	15	13	66.67	4

Source: Compiled on the basis of Primary Data.

Dalu is a rural area which is situated far away from the district head quarter Tura. The meagre condition of the connecting crisscross roads and frequent landslide during rainy season are impeding the growth of trading activity in the area. Hence, the Increased cost of Transportation and Problem of Communication were considered as the major challenges by the respondents (Rank 1). Lack of Government policies to encourage entrepreneurial activities in the region is perceived as an major challenges by the respondents (Rank 2). Lack of financial assistance or complex procedures for obtaining financial assistance comes next in the order (Rank 3). Lack of Technology in the study area also proves to be one of the major challenges encountered in the study area (Rank 4). The respondents reported that they had to close their shops on weekdays at 6 p.m. in the evening therefore restricting the time of trading activity(Rank 5). Adverse social Activities and natural disaster were also identified as major challenge for rural entrepreneurs (Rank 6).

### Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are:

1. Out of the 90 respondents surveyed, it was found that most of the respondents, around 60 percent of the entrepreneurs were in the age group of 30 to 50 years. This was followed by 21.11 percent of the entrepreneurs in the age group of less than 30 years. There were less than 5% who were more than 70 years of age.
2. It was also found that most of the respondents were in the annual income bracket of ₹ 60,000 to ₹ 90,000. A meagre percent percentage of respondents were having an annual income of above ₹ 1,20,000.
3. As regards the educational qualification, it was found from the study that the most of the respondents, i.e. 40 percent, had been 12<sup>th</sup> pass. Again, only 3.33 percent of the sample respondents were post graduate.
4. Regarding the marital status, it was found that 92.22 percent of the respondents were married.
5. As far as strengths are concerned, the existence of local demand was ranked as the major strength required for the success of an enterprise with a rating of 78.44 percent, followed by Availability of Natural/Local Resources.
6. Again, regarding the weaknesses as perceived by the entrepreneurs, they were mostly concerned over the complex procedure for obtaining the business licenses.
7. Regarding the opportunities, the respondents perceived that Dalu being situated in the international border area and as a consequence the entrepreneurs considered the potential place of international trade as a major opportunity followed by possibility of value addition.



8. In terms of challenges, the Increased cost of Transportation and Problem of Communication were considered as the major challenge by the respondents followed by Lack of Government policies to encourage entrepreneurial activities in the region.
9. Traditionally, Meghalaya practises the system of matriliney in which land and assets are passed down from mother to daughter. But, the study area is found to be dominated by male entrepreneurs.

## Conclusion

After a thorough analysis of the study area, it has been observed that the scenario of entrepreneurship is not encouraging. Entrepreneurs in the rural economy, assume a very crucial function in triggering the factors of production. This ensures the economic development of any region as a whole. Since there is lack of entrepreneurial training facilities in the study area, it is adversely affecting the growth of entrepreneurs. This ultimately reducing economic activities in the region. Following suggestions are hereby forwarded for the development of the scenario of entrepreneurship in the region: Based on the study, it has been found that entrepreneurship is still at its infant stage. So, the government has to come forward to assist the budding entrepreneurs in this region by means of creating awareness programmes, training programmes, etc. Special assistance and incentive schemes from the state government are also crucial.

On the basis of findings, serious steps should be taken for developing need-based policies and programmes in which people residing in the rural areas actively contribute for the development of their villages. Rural youth are ready to adopt new ideas and technologies where youth could be the ideal catalyst to change the poor image of persons involved in the entrepreneurial activities.

The only road which connects the district headquarter Tura with Dalu has been in a dilapidated condition, the condition worsens during the rainy season. Since the road communication in the study area is not all satisfactory, the efforts must be initiated to improve the road conditions at the earliest. In this context, the Government can think of developing the Tura-Dalu Road for ease of transportation.

Efforts must also be made in the context of proper utilisation of locally available resources. Moreover, steps must also be initiated to upheave the social and economic status of rural people. Therefore, suitable finance and other facilities must be brought within the reach of those people. The loan sanction procedures need to be simplified in the region and fast sanctions of loans and advances is vital. Provisions for micro-loans and subsidies through dedicated rural schemes like MUDRA loans will go a long in providing initial finance for the startups. Moreover, establishing more microfinance institutions with flexible repayment options matching with the rural needs can ultimately enable access to venture capital.

It also recommended that entrepreneurial development agencies should conduct need-based training programmes for the existing entrepreneurs as well as prospective entrepreneurs to improve their managerial efficiency. Collaboration of rural youth with educational institutions and NGOs operating in the region can be fruitful for delivering targeted training programs.

The region has the potentiality of international trade being located near the Indo-Bangladesh border, a fresh new business culture together with professional management needs to be introduced in the budding market context and to suck up the jolt of ingoing into the age of more competition from the age of less competition.

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