



## A STUDY ON THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD IN NEW TOWN, KOLKATA

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### Abstract

Sustainable livelihood has emerged as a central concept in urban development discourse, particularly in rapidly transforming peri-urban regions. New Town, Kolkata, represents one of India's most ambitious planned townships—a smart, green, and economically vibrant satellite city on the north eastern fringe of Kolkata. With rapid economic expansion driven by IT, corporate and service sectors, along with evolving social infrastructure and environmental planning, this study explores whether and how sustainable livelihoods are being shaped for residents and workers in New Town. The investigation adopts a mixed method approach, combining secondary data, socio-economic profiling, and qualitative observations to understand livelihood opportunities, vulnerabilities, equity and sustainability dimensions. The study finds that while New Town offers enhanced formal employment, improved infrastructure and social services, challenges remain in inclusive access, environmental sustainability, and equitable livelihood resilience. It concludes with recommendations for integrated policy approaches to enhance sustainable livelihoods across socio-economic strata.

**Keywords:** Livelihood, Kolkata, Economic, Social Service, Policy

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Sustainable livelihoods have become a key concern in urbanization processes worldwide. A sustainable livelihood is one that **provides economic opportunities, strengthens resilience, maintains cultural and social well-being, and protects environmental resources for future generations**. Urban growth, particularly in emerging smart cities and planned townships, presents both opportunities and challenges for livelihoods.

New Town, Kolkata, developed under the West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation (HIDCO), has transformed former marshlands into a **planned smart green city** encompassing residential, commercial, IT, and recreational zones. Spread across Action Areas I, II, and III, along with a Central Business District (CBD), it embodies smart infrastructure, modern amenities, and business prospects.

#### 1.2 Study Objective

This study aims to analyse:

1. How sustainable livelihood is conceptualized in the context of New Town,
2. The socio-economic opportunities and constraints faced by its inhabitants and workers,
3. The balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Sustainable Livelihood Framework

The sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) identifies five key assets: natural, human, social, physical, and financial capital. A livelihood is sustainable when it enhances asset bases, reduces exposure to shocks and stresses, and supports ecological integrity. This framework has been widely employed in rural and urban studies to assess livelihoods in developing contexts.

## 2.2 Urban Livelihoods and Smart Cities

Urban development schemes like **Smart Cities Mission** in India place emphasis on economic growth, infrastructure modernization, digital governance and environmental sustainability. These initiatives aim to improve quality of life and livelihood security through efficient public services, connectivity, and economic diversification.

## 2.3 New Town: An Emerging Urban Model

New Town's planning integrates smart city principles, environmental planning, and economic hubs. Efforts include cycling tracks, solar lighting, green buildings with Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) Platinum ratings, waste management strategies, and public transport initiatives, supporting health and environmental sustainability.

Employment trends in the region highlight rapid growth in information technology, business services, fintech, and hospitality sectors, attracting skilled workers and reshaping demographic patterns.

## 3. Methodology

This research adopted a **mixed method approach**:

1. **Secondary Data Analysis:** Documents from government reports, planning authorities (HIDCO and NKDA), news sources, academic articles, and online socioeconomic databases were reviewed.
2. **Qualitative Observation:** Online discussions and resident feedback were examined to capture socio-cultural perspectives on livelihood experiences.
3. **Analytical Framework:** The Sustainable Livelihood Framework guided the assessment of economic opportunity, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and resilience capacity.

## 4. Context: New Town, Kolkata

### 4.1 Location and Urban Planning

New Town is a planned township on the periphery of Kolkata, designed to integrate residential, commercial, technological, and recreational zones. It is divided into Action Areas I, II, and III, and includes a CBD, IT parks, institutional clusters, and large green spaces.

### 4.2 Economic Profile

New Town has developed into one of Kolkata's key economic engines. It hosts a growing number of IT and ITeS firms, including major multinational corporations such as Accenture, TCS, Wipro, Infosys, Capgemini and others, with infrastructure like the Bengal Silicon Valley Tech Hub attracting significant corporate investments.

### 4.3 Social and Physical Infrastructure

The township offers quality education, healthcare, retail, and leisure facilities. Institutions like DPS New Town, Techno India College and hospitals like Tata Medical Center provide essential social services. Large public parks like Eco Park enhance leisure and environmental well-being.

### 4.4 Environmental Planning

New Town emphasizes green infrastructure: cycling lanes, smart waste management, IGBC Platinum rated buildings, and renewable energy initiatives. These efforts reflect commitments to sustainable urban living.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Economic Opportunities

#### 5.1.1 Formal Employment

The expansion of IT parks and corporate hubs has created vast employment opportunities. By 2025, office leasing volumes and job creation have surged, positioning New Town as a significant employment center in Eastern India.

Formal employment provides stable income and professional growth for middle and upper-middle class residents, contributing to livelihood security.

#### 5.1.2 Service Sector Growth

The hospitality, retail, education and healthcare sectors have expanded alongside residential growth. Shopping malls, hotels, educational campuses, and entertainment venues have generated jobs across skill levels.

### 5.2 Social Inclusion and Equity

#### 5.2.1 Demographic Diversity

New Town attracts professionals from across India and abroad, contributing to a culturally diverse environment. However, this growth has contributed to rising property values and rental rates, potentially excluding lower-income groups from equitable livelihood opportunities.

#### 5.2.2 Informal Livelihoods

Despite structured planning, informal work—such as street vending—persists, often unregulated and lacking support. Efforts to allocate vendors formal spaces show progress, but inequality remains a challenge.

### 5.3 Environmental Sustainability and Livelihoods

New Town's green infrastructure, renewable energy usage, and mobility initiatives (such as cycling programs) enhance environmental sustainability and public health. These create indirect livelihood benefits by improving living conditions and lowering commuting costs.

However, balancing urban expansion with environmental conservation remains a concern, particularly in managing waste, traffic congestion and preserving ecological zones.

### 5.4 Resilience and Livelihood Security

New Town's planned infrastructure increases resilience to economic and environmental shocks through diversified employment, service delivery and digital governance systems. Smart city features support efficient governance, disaster management and access to services.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Sustainability of Livelihoods in New Town

New Town illustrates a comprehensive model of **urban livelihood sustainability** by integrating economic growth, environmental planning and social amenities. Formal job creation has enhanced financial stability for many residents. Smart infrastructure and public services support quality of life, while green initiatives contribute to healthier environments.



## 6.2 Challenges to Inclusive Livelihoods

However, disparities exist:

- **Economic Inequity:** Rising living costs and property values limit access for lower-income populations.
- **Informal Sector Vulnerability:** Informal workers often lack social security and formal recognition.
- **Environmental Trade-offs:** Rapid construction and urban expansion can strain local ecosystems without adaptive management.

## 6.3 Policy Implications

To enhance livelihood sustainability:

1. **Inclusive Housing and Labor Policies:** Affordable housing and formalization of informal work are essential.
2. **Skill Development Programs:** Aligning local skills training with employment demand can improve human capital.
3. **Green Livelihood Initiatives:** Support sustainable economic activities that align with environmental goals.

## 7. Conclusion

New Town's development presents a promising example of how planned urbanization can shape sustainable livelihoods. Economic opportunities, smart infrastructure, environmental planning, and social services contribute to improving quality of life. However, achieving truly sustainable livelihoods requires addressing socio-economic inequalities, supporting informal workers, and reinforcing environmental resilience.

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