

BALIPARA FOUNDATION

Assam • India

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arungo Village, Koronu Circle, Lower Dibang Valley District



EASTERN HIMALAYAN
NATURENOMICS™ FORUM

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

UNDERSTANDING ARUNGO

Arungo village is located in Koronu circle of Lower Dibang Valley district in Arunachal Pradesh, India. It is situated 23km away from Roing, which is both district & sub-district headquarter of Arungo village. According to Census 2011 information the location code or village code of Arungo village is 266349.

Population

Arungo has a total population of 148 people, out of which male population is 74 while female population is 74. Literacy rate of Arungo village is 48.65% out of which 55.41% males and 41.89% females are literate. There are about 34 households in Arungo village.

Koronu is nearest town to Arungo village for all major economic activities.

Biodiversity

The Lower Dibang Valley is known for its abundant and rich biodiversity. Some of the known species of trees and plants found in the region are Hollock (*Terminalia, myriocarpa*), Khokan (*Duabanga grandiflora*), Mekai, Simul, Titachampa (*Michalia Champaca*) and Gamari (*Gmelina arborea*). The bamboo of the variety *Dendrocalamus Hamiltonii* is found in abundance. *Dendrobium densiflorum*, *Vanda cristata*, and *Cymbidium erythraeum* are a few noteworthy orchid species found in the region. Some notable fern species found in the region include *Adiantum venustum*, *Asplenium nidus*, and *Diplazium esculentum*.

Lower Dibang Valley is also known for its rich collection of medicinal plants. Species like *Aconitum ferox* (Indian aconite), *Picrorhiza kurroa* (Kutki), and *Taxus wallichiana* (Himalayan yew) have medicinal properties and are used in traditional herbal remedies. Various species of pine trees like *Pinus Kesiya* and *Pinus Merkusi* contribute to the region's scenic beauty and play a crucial role in stabilizing the soil.

The tropical forests of the region are also home to many valued species of birds and animals like Hoolock gibbons, elephants, squirrel, red panda, musk deer, leopard, orange bellied Himalayan squirrel, wild boar, Himalayan black bear, barking deer, snow leopard, sun bear and the famous Mishmi Takin.

Many threatened species like, the tragopan blythii, pangolin (ant eater), salamander, tiger, porcupines, hooting monkey, wild buffalo, wild goats and many unidentified species are found in this region. Birds of various colours and sizes are also found here including some species of migratory birds.

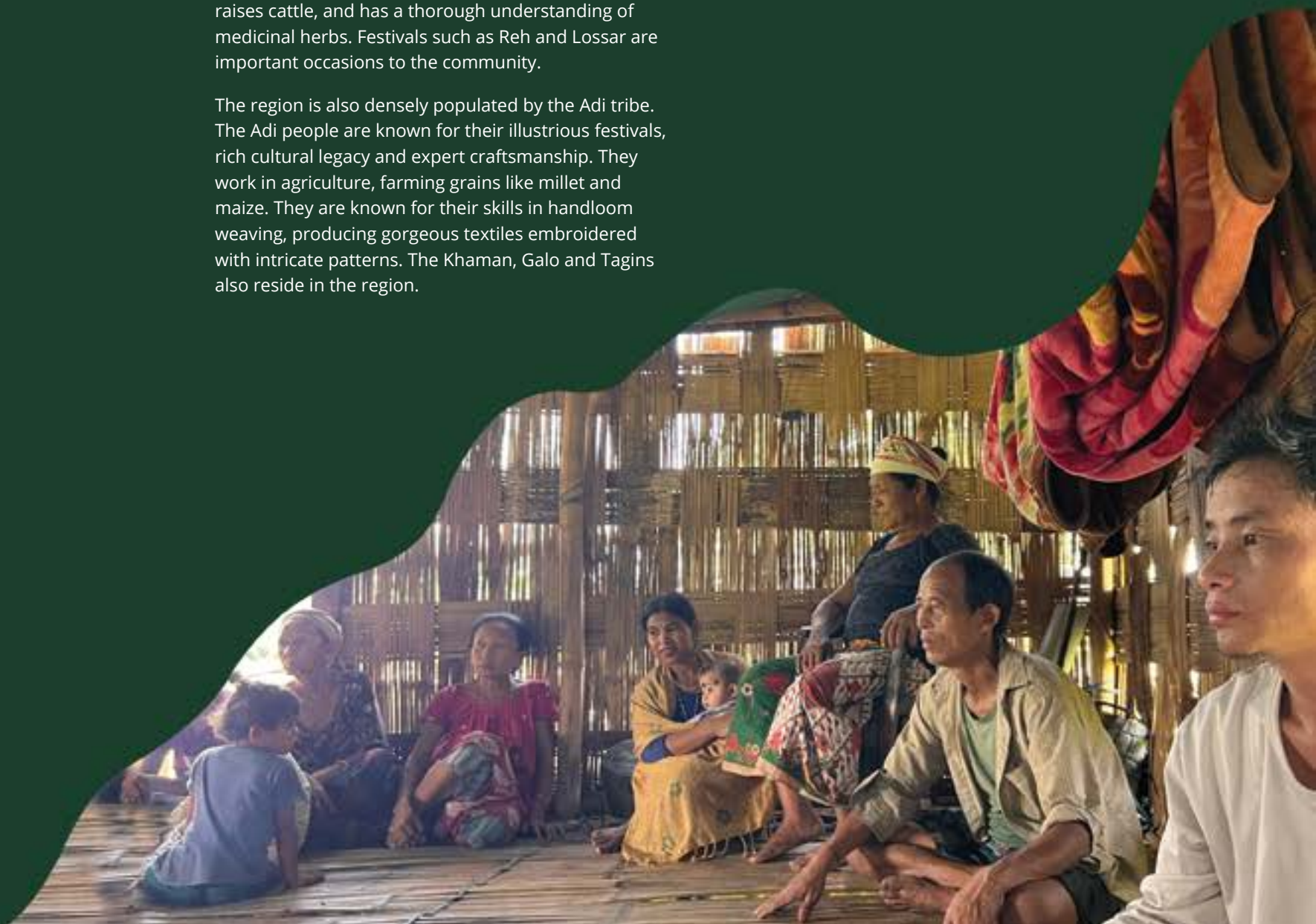
Indigenous communities in the region

In Arungo village, the Idu Mishmi tribe makes up the majority of the population. One of the largest indigenous communities in the region is the Idu Mishmis, who share a deep-rooted connection with their natural environment. They have their own distinct language, culture and traditions that are unique to their community. The Idu Mishmi tribe cultivates crops, raises cattle, and has a thorough understanding of medicinal herbs. Festivals such as Reh and Lossar are important occasions to the community.

The region is also densely populated by the Adi tribe. The Adi people are known for their illustrious festivals, rich cultural legacy and expert craftsmanship. They work in agriculture, farming grains like millet and maize. They are known for their skills in handloom weaving, producing gorgeous textiles embroidered with intricate patterns. The Khaman, Galo and Tagins also reside in the region.

Rural Economy

Agriculture is the most important source of income and sustenance for the indigenous communities of the Lower Dibang Valley. The traditional farming methods and indigenous knowledge passed down through generations contribute to the agricultural productivity of the region. Major crops grown in the village are maize, potatoes, sugarcane, palm, mustard, rice and local fruits and vegetables.



RURAL FUTURES INDEX SURVEY

In-depth socio-economic profiling of Arungo Village

The Balipara Foundation undertook an in-depth survey to gather on-ground data, carefully selecting a representative sample for a controlled group study. The purpose of it is to capture key indicators that illustrate the profound relationship between nature and the economic and cultural sustenance of the indigenous and rural communities.

Through a series of Focus Group Discussions, the survey aimed to examine the evolving dynamics of the community's relationship with nature, including changes in attitudes and the well-being of indigenous farmers and local forest authorities. The study also delved into the interconnectedness of social, economic, and cultural well-being with the ecological aspects, thereby encompassing the overall human satisfaction and well-being of Arungo village.

Socio-political context

Arungo village is located in the Koruno Circle of the Lower Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh. It is a small village, located close to Roing, which is both district and sub-district headquarter of Arungo. There are about 34 households in the village. The literacy rate of Arungo is 48.65%.

The village is typically led by a local governing body or council. This governing body comprises of respected community members or elders who have earned the trust and respect of the villagers through their wisdom, experience and contribution to the community. Arungo village's democratic structure places a strong emphasis on participation and inclusion of all. Through community meetings, consultations and discussions, villagers, regardless of gender or age, often have the chance to express their views and participate in decision-making processes. This participatory approach allows for a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among the villagers.

While the traditional political system is significant in Arungo village, it also coexists and overlaps with the greater local, regional, and national administration of Arunachal Pradesh. The state government has a role in helping the village with services, infrastructure and assistance, but the traditional political system still plays a significant role in the community's governing practices.

Language and Dialect

Arungo village is inhabited by Idu Mishmis and Adis along with a small percentage of other tribal groups. The Idu Mishmi tribe, one of the largest indigenous populations in the area, speaks the Mishmi language. It is believed to be one of the primary languages spoken in the Lower Dibang Valley. The name "Adi" refers to a number of dialects that are spoken by different Adi sub-tribes in the area. These dialects include Padam, Pasi, Minyong and Karko.

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DISCUSSANT TOPICS AND KEY FINDINGS

Income and Livelihood

It has been noted that the livelihood and income of around 80% of the village labour is based on agriculture and related activities. 10% or so of the local communities' work in associated occupations like weaving and fishing. While just a large portion of the workforce is employed in these occupations, the small number of them work in sales and other business-related jobs. Women make up around 40% of the village's labour and work in handicrafts, agriculture and animal husbandry.

Relationship with nature

The indigenous communities of Arungo village share an intricate relationship with their forests and natural assets. To meet their requirements on a daily basis, they rely on a variety of natural resources. To name a few, they channel water from the springs to their cultivable fields, gather firewood and timber, fruits, vegetables and mushrooms, as well as medicinal plants and herbs from the forest.

Deforestation patterns

The villagers of Arungo traditionally practice the slash and burn/shifting cultivation for agricultural and allied activities. This has led to destruction of major portion of forested lands. Every household in the region own large plots of land, of which forests have been cleared for making profits from timber and cash crops cultivation. The consequences of this are clearly visible on the ground with soil nutrient degradation, groundwater depletion, biodiversity loss and holistic health issue of communities and animals dependent on those forests. A significant observation has been made in the Kesa hamlet of Roing, where the hoolock gibbons have lost their home to the large deforestation taking place in the region.



Agriculture and allied practises

The livelihood of Arungo village relies entirely on agricultural and related activities. Agriculture serves as the primary occupation for the local communities, with a focus on cultivating crops such as paddy, maize, potato, pulses, vegetables, chillies, palm, and mustard. Furthermore, animal husbandry and livestock rearing significantly contribute to their economic sustenance. The villagers also engage collectively in poultry farming, fishing, piggery and cattle rearing.

To market their agricultural produce, the villagers either sell their goods through the markets in Roing town or directly to a few vendors who visit the village. This is the customary method through which the villagers conduct their business and distribute their products.

Climatic conditions of the region

The village of Arungo experiences a wide range of agroclimatic conditions due to its strategic geographical position in the Eastern Himalayas. The varying temperatures result in diverse climatic patterns, which in turn support the growth of a wide variety of crops, vegetables and fruits within the village.

Therefore, it becomes crucial to establish agricultural intervention models that are tailored to the specific climate and location of the village. These models should be developed based on thorough research assessments to optimize the productivity of agricultural crops and maximize yields.

Climate Vulnerabilities

The climate-induced changes have significantly altered the rainfall patterns, leading to notable shifts in the intensity and frequency of rainfall. For instance, the farmers revealed that due to the irregularity in rainfall, mustard yields of the year have been extremely minimal. Such variability and unpredictability of rainfall have adversely affected small-scale farmers, diminishing the productivity of their crops and directly impacting their yearly earnings derived from agricultural yields.

Transport and communication

Roing and Tinsukia are linked, with the Brahmaputra acting as a primary conduit between them. The recently inaugurated Dhola-Sadiya bridge (Dr. Bhupen Hazarika setu) over the Brahmaputra river has made the route to Roing much easier. There are two possible routes from Tezu to Chowkham-Namsai, both of which are all-season road linkages. One is the bridge over the Lohit River near Parshuram Kund, and the other is the bridge at Alubari Ghat across the same Lohit River in Chowkham. A ferry-boat journey from Tinsukia to Roing takes about three hours.



Community Case Story

Anoko Mega, the recipient of the 2022 Rewilding Grant, is a passionate conservationist working as a youth coordinator at an esteemed organization in Roing. His dedication to preserving the environment is exemplified by his extraordinary advocacy for the protection of hoolock gibbons. Anoko's profound connection with these gibbons has led him to consider them a part of his own family. During our interactions, Anoko revealed the devastating impact of deforestation in the Lower Dibang Valley, which has left the gibbons homeless and struggling to find sustenance. However, with the generous support of the Balipara Foundation, Anoko is resolute in his mission to create a green corridor, offering a pathway to reclaim the gibbons' lives and reconnect their fragmented habitats. Anoko's ambitions extend beyond conservation; he also possesses a keen interest in agriculture and has ingenious ideas to execute his plans regarding the same.

Anoko envisions implementing agroforestry practices in the region, utilizing suitable crops that complement the natural ecosystem. His primary goal is to ensure that the forests remain untouched and continue to thrive while simultaneously promoting sustainable agricultural practices. By integrating agroforestry into the landscape, Anoko aims to restore harmony to the land, providing the gibbons with a revitalized habitat that meets their nutritional and environmental needs.

Anoko's knack for farming and his innovative ideas align perfectly with his commitment to sustainable agriculture. He recognizes the importance of preserving the natural habitat while creating agricultural practices that benefit both humans and wildlife. Through the implementation of sustainable farming techniques, Anoko aims to strike a balance between food production and environmental conservation.



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