

The Riangan of Bangladesh



Within Bangladesh the Riangan people live almost exclusively in Rangamati district of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Ethnically they relate loosely with the Tripura community, which spreads through much of the Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, through Tripura state, India, and into southern Sylhet division, which is again in Bangladesh.

The language situation among the Riangan in Bangladesh is an interesting one. There are thousands of Riangan people in Rangamati district, but only about 500 of them reportedly still speak Riangan. Most of the other Riangan people in Bangladesh now speak a form of Chakma as their mother tongue. Still, it is uncommon for Tripura and Chakma to marry each other, indicating that there is still a significant distinction between the two groups. In Bangladesh most Riangan speakers are agriculturalists, and they practice a type of farming which is often referred to as "slash and burn" farming. They live in hilly areas and farm different hillsides on a rotational basis. Their homes are generally made of bamboo and leaves, and most of their villages do not have electricity or roads leading to them.

Because of the distance to schools and the Riangan's lack of ability in Bangla the medium of education in government schools most Riangan remain fairly uneducated. The Riangan generally follow the Sonoton religion, but today a significant percentage of Riangan speakers in Bangladesh have become Christian. Because Riangan church leaders have had minimal training, Riangan Christians could benefit from a discipleship ministry. Also, the Riangan in general could benefit from evangelistic and community development missions work.

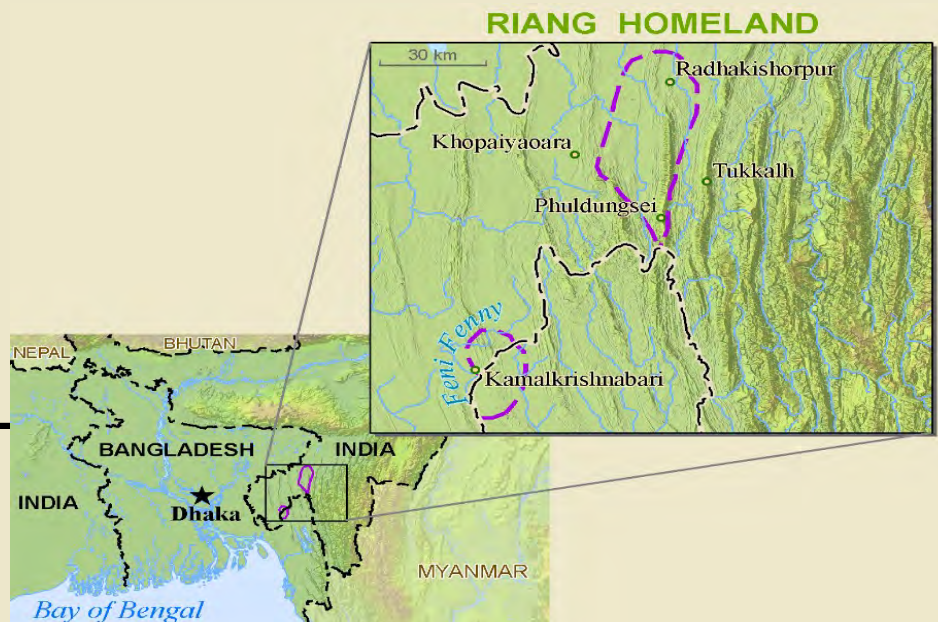
Primary Religion:
Sonoton

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
20%

Churches:
0

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
New Testament

Population (date):
500



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Number of Missionaries	The Lushai and Riang speakers live in the same general area in northern Rangamati. The Lushai have a strong history of Christianity and seem to have reached out to the Riang.
Call themselves Christian	Greater than 20%
Is The Word of God Translated?	Yes. The New Testament has been published by the Bible Society of India in Roman script.
Are Cross-Cultural Missionaries Needed?	There seems to be a need for those involved in evangelism, church planting, and education. The Usoi Tripura might also be able to effectively reach out to the Riang since they share some cultural distinctions. The Lushai could also be further encouraged and equipped to reach out to their Riang neighbors.

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Group Description

Geography and Environment

Comment

Hilly

Literacy

Comment

The literacy rate among Riang speakers is very low in both their mother tongue and in Bangla.

Economics

Occupation

Farming

Income Sources

Farming, labor

Community Development

Health Care (Quality)

Poor. Access to professional health care is limited.

Diet (Quality)

Fair

Water (Quality)

Fair. Many seem to drink spring water.

Electricity

Very, very few villages have electricity.

Social & Cultural

Identification with National Culture

Distinct

Education

Comment

It seems that today some Riang children are attending school (some gov't schools, some village-run schools) and completing an average of four or five grades.