The Riang of Bangladesh

Within Bangladesh the Riang 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 Riang in Bangladesh is an interesting one. There are thousands of Riang people in Rangamati district, but only about 500 of them reportedly still speak Riang. Most of the other Riang 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 Riang 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 Riang’s lack of ability in Bangla the medium of education in government schools most Riang remain fairly uneducated. The Riang generally follow the Sonaton religion, but today a significant percentage of Riang speakers in Bangladesh have become Christian. Because Riang church leaders have had minimal training, Riang Christians could benefit from a discipleship ministry. Also, the Riang in general could benefit from evangelistic and community development missions work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Have They Heard The Gospel?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Missionaries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call themselves Christian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is The Word of God Translated?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are Cross-Cultural Missionaries Needed?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Riang of Bangladesh

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.