

Forests and implications  
of  
climate change  
in  
Arunachal Pradesh  
Bamang Tago  
Arunachal Citizens Rights



The natural resources management and control over resources are identified as a critical concern faced by the indigenous and tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and throughout the North East states as a whole.

Arunachal Pradesh is a Indigenous tribal state with 26 major tribes and many more sub tribes so as the other states too.

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- Population of over a million
- Population density of 14 persons/sq km
- 79.25% is rural and 20.75% is urban
- 64.2% belong to Scheduled Tribes
- There exists a rich cultural heritage of traditional governance following traditional rights, customs and social mores and entitlements.

- 91% of the reported land utilised is covered by forests
- 5.15 million ha or 61.55% is recorded forest area
- 61.05% is community and private owned
- 20.46% is Reserved Forests and 18.49% is protected forests
- According to State of Forest Report 2009, 67,353 sq km or 80.43% of the total geographical area is forest cover
- 20,858 sq km is very dense forest, 31,556 sq km moderately dense forest and 14,939 sq km of open forest
- New assessment shows a loss of 119 sq km of forest cover
- Forest Survey of India assessment terms community and privately owned forests as 'unclassed forests' with no legal status

Arunachal Pradesh is not included in the list of scheduled Areas, PESA (Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled Areas) Acts, 1996 or autonomous/ District Councils not enacted in the state and is not covered by special provisions of Indian Constitution like that of Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikim etc,

People traditionally enjoy ownership and management rights to natural resources covering rivers, mountains, land and forest.

These traditional rights are not codified into legal entitlements

Example: Land Acquisition Act, 1894, the Indian Forest Act, 1821, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Assam, Forest Regulation, 1891, Forest Conservation Act 1980, National forest policy, 1988, Environmental Impact Assessment Notification-2006, Environment Protection Act, 1986 including Arunachal Pradesh Land Records and Resettlement Act, 2000, Arunachal Pradesh water Resources Regulatory Act, 2006, etc;



- Drained by six major rivers – Subansiri, Lohit, Dibang, Siang, Kameng and Tirap.  
Tawangchu drains the district of Tawang
- The Indian Government & the Arunachal Government eye the hydro power potential of these six river basins and has turned the State into a proposed power house of India
- Till date a staggering 137 MOAs/MoUs( As on 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov, 2010) have been signed with both public and private sector developers with a capacity of more than 58,000 MW
- The Lower Subansiri (2000 MW), Kameng I (1120 MW), Pare (110 MW) are under construction
- Ranganadi Stage I Hydro Electric Project of 405 MW the first large hydro in Arunachal

- The rich forests and biodiversity of Arunachal is subjected to growing anthropogenic and biotic pressure and huge infrastructural development projects
- At a time when the global community is calling for to stop deforestation to halt climate change
- Deforestation contributes to between 15% to 25% of the greenhouse gases
- On the other hand forests such as that of Arunachal with rich biodiversity can act as rich carbon sinks





- The HEPs under construction – Lower Subansiri will submerge and deforest 4000 ha, Kameng will deforest close to 800 ha.
- Deforestation figure for Middle Siang project is 2800 ha and it is a staggering 5,500 ha for Dibang Multipurpose project.
- Proposed projects with capacities varying between 500 MW to 11,000 MW are going to destroy at least 50,000 to 60,000 ha of precious forests and biodiversity
- One French-Canadian joint venture involved in oil prospecting in Changlang and Tirap districts have applied to the MoEF for a forest clearance of 56,000 ha at one go!

- Deforestation and diversion at such a massive scale will have huge implications for Arunachal Pradesh – its climate, its forest based communities and biodiversity and hill eco system
- Both shifting and wet rice cultivation will be impacted which may lead to food insecurity
- Forest based livelihood will be impacted
- During the rains, landslides and landslips, leading to disruption of road links will impact major district towns. This year Anini and villages around are facing terrible food and essential commodities crises – almost a calamity
- Major changes in geomorphology may invite major disasters

- Moreover, such massive diversion and deforestation will happen on community owned lands.
- The compensation in terms of Net Present Value (NPV) goes to the government and that is now being paid to forest department for plantation
- But communities who have protected and generated these forests for generations do not get anything




- Forest department which has nothing to do with these community forests are instead being paid a part of the NPV leading to thousand of crores of rupees
- Not only do communities enjoy traditional and customary rights over these forests, the forests are part of their culture and tradition, basis for identity, existence and livelihood.

- It is obvious that due to massive deforestation the communities in Arunachal will suffer irreversible impacts – climatic and geographic, cultural and livelihood
- The communities who have protected and conserved their forests and ecology are the ones who will suffer immense consequences
- But, they do not have a voice in the planning and execution of such massive infrastructure projects
- They do not enjoy any legal support to exert their rights over their forests
- That void could have been met by the recently enacted Forest Rights Act 2006

- The Forests Rights Act empowers the communities to protect and conserve their own forests
- Forests cannot be diverted without settling rights and express consent of the communities
- Forest Rights Act can still play a major role in stopping this massive deforestation
- In halting impacts of climate change



- The Communities need the Forest Rights Act for their survival
  - But, due to restriction of land ceiling limits under Chapter III, part-II says, **“Where the Forest rights recognized and vested by sub-section (I) are in respect of land mentioned in clause (a) of the sub section 3 such land shall be under the occupation of an individual or family or community on the date of commencement of this Act and shall be restricted to the area under actual occupation and shall in no case exceed an area of four hectares”** for which communities in Arunachal Pradesh, yet to accept FRA for implementation
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# Community collective rights





# THANK YOU

**LAND, FOREST AND RIVER  
IS OUR BIRTH RIGHT.  
-ACR**

