RAY – MINDU

A REPORT

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INTRODUCTION:

Ray- Mindu (Latitude: 27^0 17’58.80’’ North, Longitude: 88^0 34’ 29.80’’ East) is a village located 21 Km away from Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, nestled between the world renowned monasteries, namely, Rumtek Monastery and Lingdum Monastery and amidst a diverse flora and fauna. It comprises of 102 homes and has a population of 603 people. An interesting fact about these twin villages is that the village folk are all Buddhist Lepcha. This is very rare in Sikkim in this day and age.

The people here lead a simple life. The main occupation is farming. Their main agricultural produce is rice, maize, millet and cardamom. They also have land devoted for production of a range of green vegetables like, pumpkins, lady fingers, cabbage, brinjal, etc,.

The people here are friendly, helpful, spiritual and are not spoilt by the greed for materialistic pleasures. A visitor feels welcomed and is showered by their infinite warmth and hospitality. With various places to visit and breath-taking views makes the stay in the village a truly pleasurable experience.

OBSERVATIONS:

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION:

The proximity to the capital city Gangtok (21 Km) makes it very easy for domestic as well as for foreign tourists to visit Ray Mindu. Moreover, the view of Gangtok from the Ray view point is breath taking, specially in the evening. It is just 10 Km from Rumtek Monastery and Lingdum Monastery is 6 Km away. A trek of 20 Km can cover the Teenjure mountains and the nearby waterfalls. The trek makes you come very close to nature and makes you understand the importance of preservation of these forests with the threat of global warming everywhere.

A VIEW OF GANGTOK

TECHNOLOGY:

There is no telephone connection, not taking into account a few people carrying mobile phones. There are televisions but do not have cable connections. A few homes have Direct To Home connections. However, there is internet connection (via satellite) and a couple of computers are available at the community information centre. There is a sub- research centre for HIV/AIDS. Electricity is available in all homes.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE

VILLAGE SUSTAINENCE:

The people here rely on their agricultural produce for their sustainence. They produce enough to live comfortably and even have a little to sell. They mainly sell excess green vegetables and cattle to make some extra money. There is no saving at the end of the year.
Some of the people own taxis, some of them are Government servants and a few own petty shops. Talking about the provision of basic necessities, there is a fair price shop available. People mainly rely on firewood to cook food. Houses near the road have L.P.G. stove.

PADDY FIELDS

SPIRITUALITY:

The Lepcha people have been successful in preserving their spiritual thread for centuries and it is true for Ray-Mindu village. The people are devout Buddhists and prayer and meditation is a way of life for them. The festivals Nambaen and Tendong Lho Rum Fhat are celebrated in true Buddhist style where a combination of song, dance and meditation elevate the soul and bring it closer to God.

Religious Alters:

CULTURE:

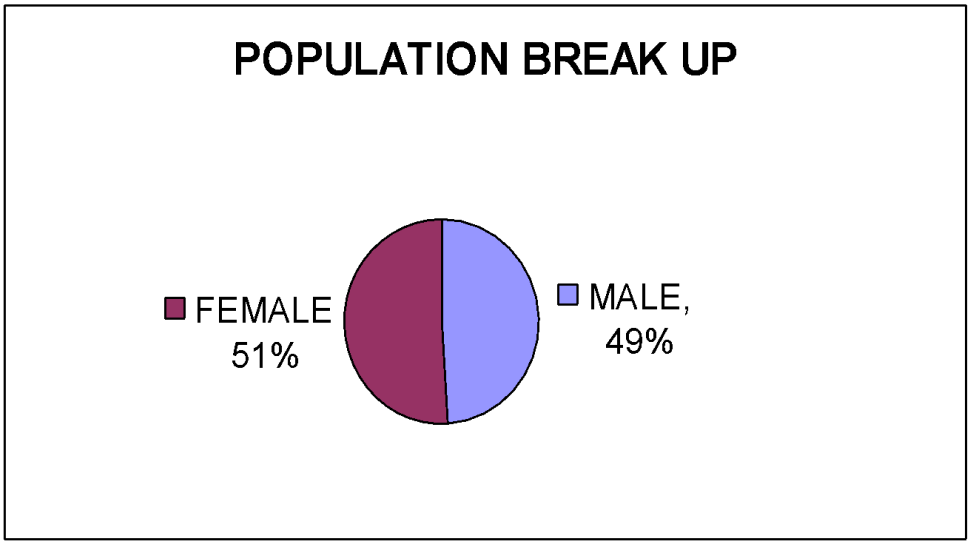
Along with the religion, the culture and traditions are too well preserved and are a daily part of their lives. From paddy sowing songs, Rong dance and sipping on the Tongba (fermented millet) we can visit the experience the way of living of our fore fathers. It's, with no exaggeration, a journey to the past.

RONG DANCE

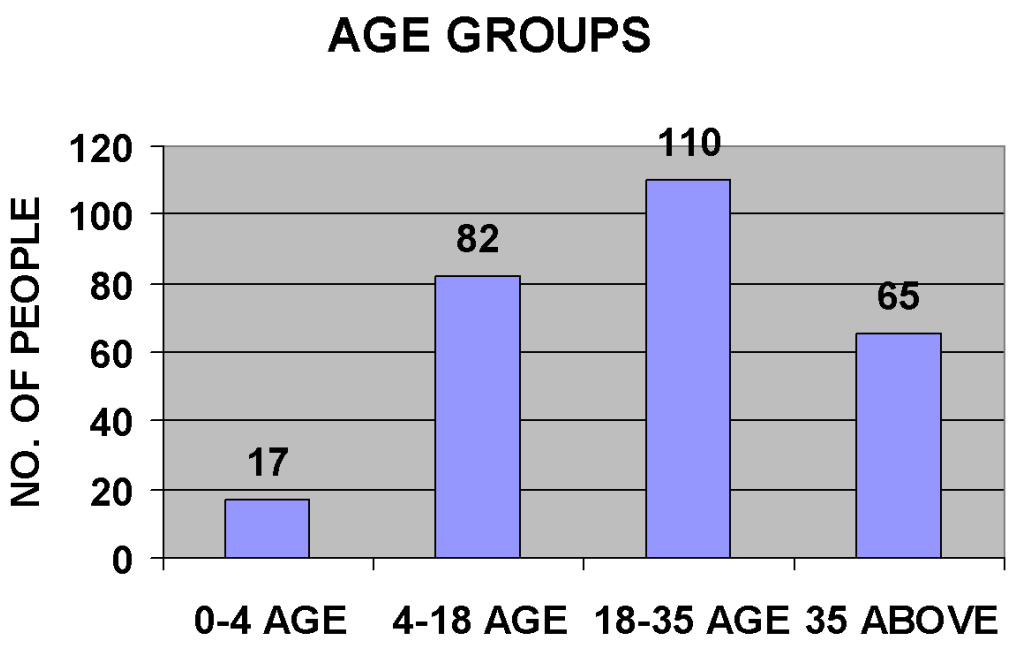
VILLAGE LOGISTICS (SURVEYED HOUSEHOLDS) :

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS SURVEYED: 49
TOTAL VILLAGE POPULATION: 603
TOTAL POPULATION OF SURVEYED HOUSEHOLDS: 274

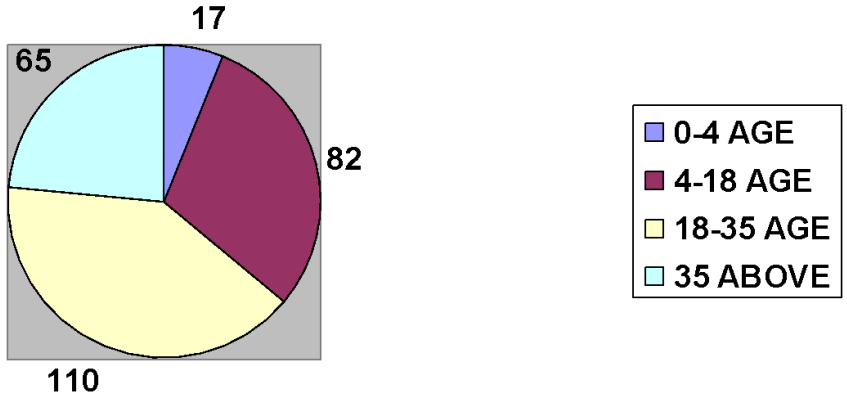
Based on this basic data, various logistics for ecotourism and it's sustenance have been deduced.



1.)



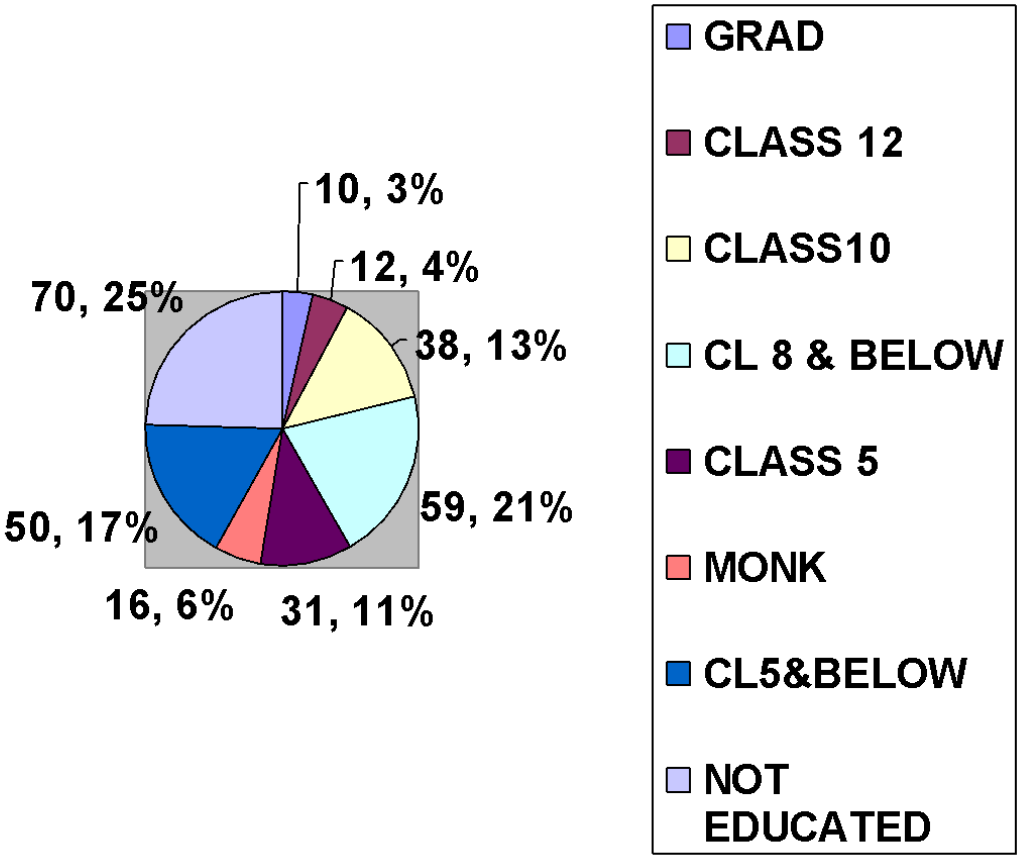
The PIE diagram illustration for the same is:



- We can observe that the age groups (4-18) and (18-35) form the majority and through this we can deduce that there is availability of young man power.

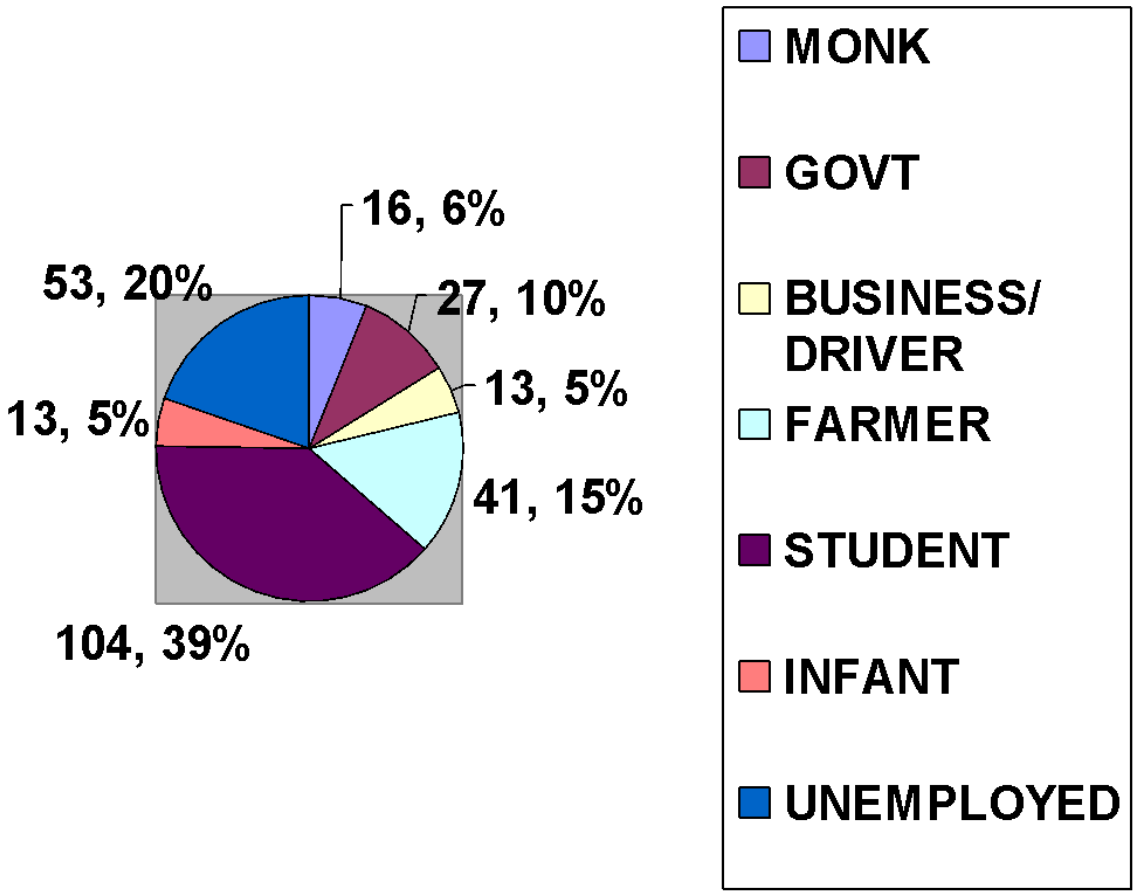
2.)

EDUCATION:



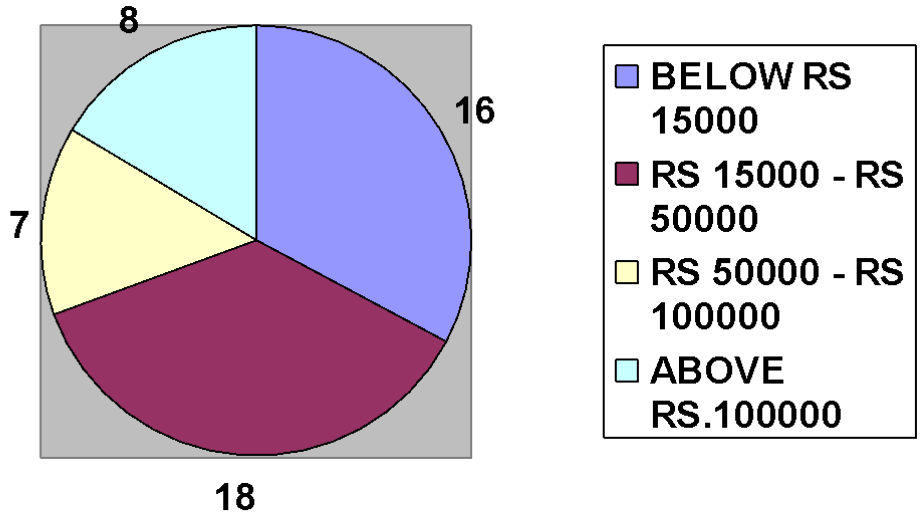
- The uneducated are mostly in above 35 years bracket.
- The class 5, class 8 and below bracket constitute mainly of students currently studying. Therefore, the ratio of educated people is bound to rise in a 5 to 10 year period.
- With more educated people in years to come, eco-tourism once introduced to the village will result in it's sustenance.

EMPLOYMENT:



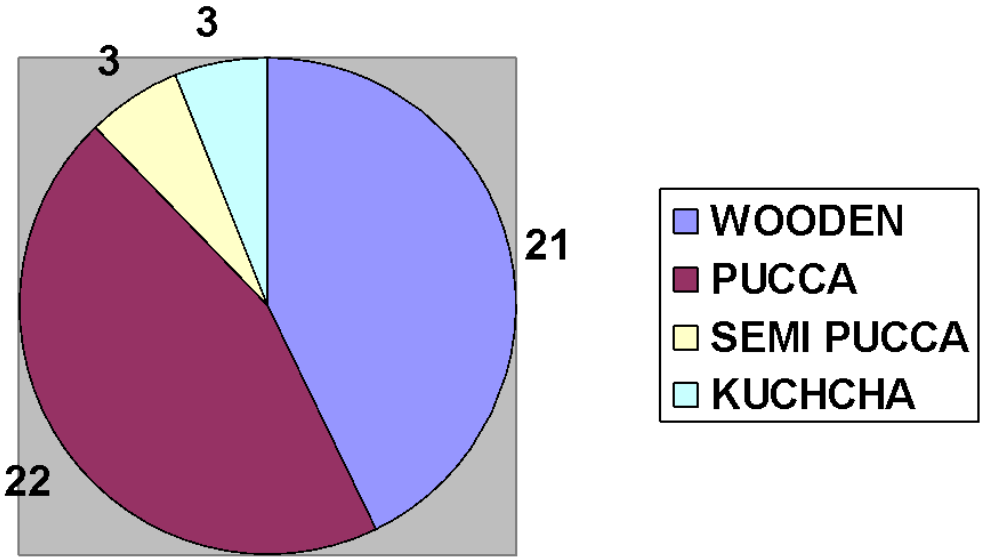
- We can observe that majority of surveyed households have students, which translates to skilled man power in the future.
- The unemployed bracket mainly consists of house wives.
- We would like to point out that six graduates and an S.S.C (class 12 pass) students are unemployed.

3.) INCOME GROUPS (HOUSEHOLD PER ANNUM):



- People in the below Rs. 15000 bracket are mainly farmers and have houses located away from the road. They sustain themselves by consuming what they grow and earn by selling chicken, goats, cows and excess green vegetables.
- People in the below Rs. 1,00,000 bracket are farmers too but have atleast one person in their family as a Government employee or as a taxi driver. Their houses are near the road and some may own petty business.
- People in the above Rs. 1,00,000 bracket have members of their family in the Government as well as own farms which gives them a ready supply of food and other basic necessities.

4.) **HOUSE TYPE:**



- The type of house a family owns is interconnected with their total family income.
- All the pucca houses are near the road.
- Houses which are semi-pucca, wooden and kuchcha are scattered all around the village.

DEGREE OF COMPATIBILITY OF RAY-MINDU TO ANNEXURE 1 OF NABARD NORMS

- All the people in the village belong to the Buddhist Lepcha community which comes under the Scheduled Tribes category.
- Their already exists a self help group (U.P.O.S.) in this village and this self help group is present in eight other villages which train young men and women to acquire skills in producing indigenous handicrafts, in driving, as mechanics and other such activities.
- The village unity is highly commendable and it's active participation in Gram Sabha meetings shows that the village is active and thirsts to see their village develop.
- There is scope for developing cluster activity with NABARD interventions.
- Their exists export market potential for its handicrafts, organic green vegetables and cardamom as well as for the national market.
- The USP of this cluster is 1) International Centre for Kagyu sect of Buddhism is 7 Km away. 2) Fambong Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Skill development through master craftsmen/ instituitional experts is possible and can be arranged either in the village community hall or in Gangtok.
- The support of U.P.O.S. is available. However, the participation of state government is required.
- The employment levels are low but the growth potential of the twin villages is immense.
- The area of operation of the cluster is compact and well defined.
- Sources of raw material are available in the village as well as nearby villages and towns like Ranka (6 Km), Rumtek (7 Km), Ranipool (10 Km) and Gangtok (21 Km).
- The cluster activity of **ECOTOURISM** can comply with statuary legal provisions on envoirmental pollution and related hazards.
- The cluster has not been adopted by any other agency for intervention.

- The intervention would definitely raise the income level of the artisans as well as the entire village folk for a better standard of living.
- There is scope for replication impact on nearby villages.
- The cluster is pro poor.
- The cluster believes in collective production and collective marketing.

SUGGESTIONS:

Based on the three day survey of Ray- Mindu village conducted on the 17th, 18th and 19th of July, 2007. My survey team and I have drawn the following suggestions that could be discussed while laying down the direct action plan as per NABARD norms.

The village people need to be trained to host people coming from within the country and abroad and their sensitivities regarding drinking, food habits and hygiene (room & toilet).

Training is required to increase fluency in English and Hindi.

Training in preparation of continental cuisines is much needed.

Trekking trails need to be identified and separated based on what the tourist would like to see and the age group they would fall under.

Training is required in garbage management at homes as well as on trekking routes.

Televisions are available but very few houses have D.T.H. and no cable connection. Moreover, there is no telephone connection available in the village. Improvements are a must in this aspect.