

Entrepreneurship among Local People in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh: Profile, Constraints, Support Systems and Policy Implications

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Abstract

This article studies local entrepreneurship in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley districts of Arunachal Pradesh. It examines the social and economic background of entrepreneurs, the nature of their enterprises, their exposure to entrepreneurship development programmes, their access to government support schemes, their dependence on middlemen, and the social status given to entrepreneurship. The study is based on field data collected from 160 local entrepreneurs. The findings show that entrepreneurship in the region is still new, mostly micro-scale, and largely managed through sole proprietorship. Most entrepreneurs are first-generation business owners and depend mainly on personal savings, family support, and informal networks for finance. Although many entrepreneurs know about training programmes and government schemes, actual participation and use remain limited. Political influence, delays, weak outreach, poor institutional support, inadequate infrastructure, and limited market access are major barriers. The study also shows that entrepreneurship receives less social respect than government and professional occupations. The article argues that entrepreneurship development in the study area needs better access to finance, stronger markets, improved infrastructure, transparent scheme delivery, and regular training and mentoring.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Development; Local Entrepreneurs; Rural Enterprise; Entrepreneurship Development Programmes; Dibang Valley; Lower Dibang Valley; Micro Enterprises.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is an important way to create employment, increase income, and support local development. In rural and remote areas, it becomes even more important because regular wage employment and formal job opportunities are limited. This study focuses on local entrepreneurs in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley districts of Arunachal Pradesh. These districts have opportunities in tourism, agriculture, horticulture, livestock, handloom, handicrafts, food processing, fisheries, retail trade, and services. However, the growth of entrepreneurship is restricted by poor infrastructure, limited finance, weak market links, low business culture, and inadequate institutional support.

The study evidence shows that local enterprises in the study area are mostly micro and small in nature, and that local people have entered entrepreneurial activity relatively late. Many potential entrepreneurs

continue to prefer government employment, while business activity is often viewed as socially less prestigious.

2. Objectives of the study

The study seeks to examine the socio-economic profile of local entrepreneurs, analyze the characteristics of local enterprises, evaluate awareness and participation in entrepreneurship development programmes, assess awareness and utilization of government support schemes, determine the extent of dependence on middlemen, and understand the perceived occupational status of entrepreneurs in the study area.

3. Review of Literature

Entrepreneurship has been widely recognized as a mechanism for employment creation, income generation, resource mobilization, and balanced regional development. Classical and contemporary studies describe entrepreneurs as agents who organize resources, bear risk, introduce innovation, and respond to market opportunities (Cantillon & Higgs, 1931; Schumpeter, 1947; Drucker, 1993). In rural and backward regions, entrepreneurship assumes additional importance because it offers self-employment opportunities where formal wage employment, industrial employment, and public sector jobs are limited. Rural entrepreneurship studies emphasize that small and micro enterprises can reduce poverty, diversify livelihood sources, improve local production systems, and retain income within rural communities (Soundarapandian, 2001; Kanitkar, 2005; Lyson, 1995). These arguments are particularly relevant for Arunachal Pradesh, where geographical isolation, weak infrastructure, dispersed settlements, limited market access, and dependence on government employment have historically restricted the emergence of a strong entrepreneurial culture.

The literature on tribal, indigenous, and backward-area entrepreneurship shows that entrepreneurial behaviour is shaped not only by individual motivation but also by social structure, cultural values, education, family occupation, institutional access, and community acceptance. Studies on scheduled caste and scheduled tribe entrepreneurship suggest that education, occupational mobility, exposure to non-traditional livelihoods, and targeted government intervention can encourage entry into modern self-employment activities (Dahiwalé, 1989; Trivedi, 1991). Sadhak (1989) argues that entrepreneurship in backward areas cannot be promoted only through short-term incentives; it requires locally relevant training, institutional commitment, and social acceptance. Similarly, studies on first-generation entrepreneurs highlight that individuals from non-business backgrounds require stronger handholding, mentoring, credit facilitation, and market support than entrepreneurs from established business families (Jain, n.d.; Awasthi & Patel, 1991). These findings help explain why the growth of entrepreneurship in remote tribal regions is often slow even when local resources and market opportunities exist.

The work of local authors is especially significant for locating entrepreneurship development within the specific socio-economic conditions of Arunachal Pradesh. In their study on entrepreneurship development programmes among local entrepreneurs in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley, Linggi and Chimey (2021) found that local entrepreneurs play an important role in reshaping the socio-economic landscape of underdeveloped regions, but their growth depends on awareness, motivation, training quality, institutional outreach, and follow-up support. Their findings show that 60.6 percent of respondents were aware of EDPs, but only 43 percent attended such programmes, indicating a clear gap between awareness and active participation. Relatives and friends, District Industries Centres, and sponsoring agencies emerged as major information sources, while parents and teachers played a limited role. The study also

found that EDPs improved knowledge, confidence, and motivation, but access to funds, resources, and post-training follow-up remained weak. This evidence directly supports the argument that entrepreneurship development in the study area requires more than training; it requires a complete support ecosystem consisting of credit, mentoring, market linkage, institutional transparency, and continuous field-level guidance (Linggi & Chimey, 2021).

Further, Linggi's broader work on entrepreneurship in Arunachal Pradesh highlights that the state has considerable resource-based enterprise potential in agriculture, horticulture, livestock, fisheries, handloom, handicrafts, bamboo, tourism, food processing, and local services. However, this potential is constrained by late exposure to business practices, scarcity of local entrepreneurs, weak entrepreneurial culture, limited finance, poor transport and communication networks, inadequate institutional infrastructure, and administrative bottlenecks. The emphasis on local entrepreneurs is important because externally driven development models may not adequately address the needs, aspirations, capabilities, and limitations of tribal and rural communities. Linggi's area-based approach therefore provides a useful framework for the present study: entrepreneurship development must be rooted in local resources, local skills, local markets, and locally trusted institutions, while also connecting entrepreneurs to wider markets and formal support systems.

Entrepreneurship development programmes and government schemes constitute another important strand of the literature. EDPs are designed to develop entrepreneurial motivation, business planning ability, managerial competence, risk-taking capacity, and confidence among potential entrepreneurs (Awasthi & Patel, 1991; Mali, 1999; Banerjee & Benarji, 2012). However, several scholars caution that training by itself has limited impact unless it is linked with credit, technology, infrastructure, market access, and institutional follow-up (Lakhanpal, 1990; Sharma & Dhameja, 2002; Tiwari & Tiwari, 2007). Government programmes such as PMEGP seek to promote new micro-enterprises through credit-linked subsidy support in rural and urban areas, with implementation through KVIC, KVIBs, District Industries Centres, and banks. Recent MSME policy emphasis also highlights enterprise formalization, market access, capacity building, cluster development, and inclusion of entrepreneurs from the North Eastern Region, hill and border areas, women, scheduled tribes, and other special categories. At the same time, studies on small enterprises show that lack of collateral, delays, low awareness, bureaucratic procedures, weak scheme delivery, and political or administrative influence often reduce the actual benefit received by rural entrepreneurs (Bansal, 1991; Bhatnagar, 2008; Minniti, 2008). Thus, the literature suggests that support schemes are necessary but must be accessible, transparent, locally communicated, and accompanied by practical handholding.

A review of the existing literature reveals four major gaps that justify the present study. First, much of the entrepreneurship literature explains entrepreneurship in general economic terms, while fewer studies examine how entrepreneurship develops in remote tribal and border districts with difficult terrain and limited institutional reach. Second, although several studies discuss rural entrepreneurship and EDPs, there is limited district-level empirical evidence on how entrepreneurs in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley actually experience finance, training, scheme access, middlemen, and occupational status. Third, the social status of entrepreneurship has received less attention, even though local perceptions of respect, prestige, and occupational preference can strongly influence entrepreneurial intention among educated youth. Fourth, existing policy discussions often emphasize scheme design but pay less attention to implementation barriers such as informal networks, political influence, delayed delivery, and weak follow-up. The present study addresses these gaps by bringing together socio-economic profile, enterprise

characteristics, EDP participation, government support utilization, market dependence, and occupational perception into a single field-based analysis of local entrepreneurship in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley.

4. Methodology

The study is based on primary field data collected in 2014 from 160 local entrepreneurs in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley districts. Of the total respondents, 91 were from Lower Dibang Valley and 69 were from Dibang Valley. The study uses descriptive statistics to analyse the data. The main variables include gender, marital status, education, age, generational status, family background, ownership pattern, registration status, employment generation, enterprise income, capital requirement, sources of capital, market area, awareness and participation in entrepreneurship development programmes, awareness and use of government schemes, dependence on middlemen, and occupational status. To measure the social status of entrepreneurship, respondents ranked eight major occupations in the area on the basis of perceived respect and social standing. These rankings were converted into quantitative scores using a Likert-type scale and weighted average mean scores.

5. Findings

The profile of respondents shows that 79 percent of entrepreneurs were male and 21 percent were female. Most respondents were married, and the mean age was 38 years. A sizeable number had graduate or postgraduate education, but some respondents had no formal education or education below matriculation level. This shows uneven educational attainment among entrepreneurs. Most respondents were first-generation entrepreneurs, which means that business activity is still a new livelihood option for many local families.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Category	Attribute	Findings
1. Gender	Male	79%
	Female	21%
2. Marital Status	Dominant Status	Married
3. Age	Mean Age	38 years
4. Education	Higher level	Graduate & Postgraduate
	Lower level	Under-Matriculation & No Formal Education
5. Generation	First Generation	Large Majority

Source: Field Survey 2014.

Enterprise-level findings reveal that local businesses are mostly micro and small in scale. Sole proprietorship dominates the ownership pattern, while partnership, cooperative, and company forms are rare. Most enterprises were unregistered, suggesting weak formalization and limited engagement with official registration systems. The average number of employees per enterprise was low, reflecting the micro nature of local enterprises and the limited capacity for wage employment generation. The average annual net income from enterprises was modest, and the average capital requirement to establish an enterprise was substantial relative to local income conditions. With respect to markets, all entrepreneurs

served local markets, while fewer reached district, state, regional, or national markets. This indicates that market outreach remains narrow and enterprise expansion is constrained by geography, infrastructure, skills, and resources.

Table 2: Key Enterprise and Operational Characteristics

Enterprise Attributes	Dominant Status	Implications and Characteristics
1. Scale of Operation	Micro and Small Scale	Local businesses are highly restricted in size
2. Ownership pattern	Sole Proprietorship	Individual ownership dominates.
3. Registration Status	Unregistered	Weak formalization and minimal engagement with official systems.
4. Employment Capacity	Low	Micro-nature limits the ability to generate local wage employment
5. Final Performance	Modest Average Annual Net Income	Earnings remain limited and small in scale.
6. Source	Own Savings Dominant	There is significant reliance on informal funds. Formal financial institutions & cooperatives played a limited role.
7. Market Outreach	Strictly Local	Expansion is highly constrained by infrastructure, skills, and resources.

Source: Field Survey 2014.

The findings on entrepreneurship development programmes show that most entrepreneurs were aware of EDPs, but only 43 percent of those aware had attended such programmes. Self-motivation was the strongest factor influencing participation, followed by DIC or sponsoring agencies. EDPs were found to be moderately beneficial, particularly in providing motivation, knowledge, training inputs, information, and ideas for launching enterprises. However, post-training follow-up services appeared comparatively weaker.

Awareness of government support schemes was generally low to moderate. PMEGP was among the better-known schemes, while several other schemes were only slightly known. Relatives and friends were ranked as the most important sources of information about government schemes, followed by government or sponsoring agencies and print media. This suggests that official communication channels are not sufficiently effective and that informal networks play a major role in scheme awareness.

Table 3: Awareness, Participation, and Perceived Impact of Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs)

Attributes	Findings & Status	Key Implications and & Institutional Gaps
1. EDP Awareness & Attendance	High awareness, but low attendance	Significant drop-off between knowing about the programs and participating.
2. EDP Enablers	Driven by self-motivation and DIC	Personal drive is crucial; District Industries Centers act as key external anchors.

3. EDP & Impact Gaps	Moderately beneficial; Weak post-training follow-up	Good at initial motivation and training but lacks ongoing business support.
4. Scheme Awareness	Low to Moderate	Institutional programs remain hidden to the majority entrepreneurs.
5. Information Channels	Relatives and friends rank highest.	Informal networks drive scheme awareness.

Source: Field Survey 2014.

Only 36.25 percent of respondents had utilized government support schemes, while 63.75 percent had not. Among those who had utilized schemes, slightly more than half were satisfied. The major problems experienced in securing government support were political influence, delays, attitude of government officials, nepotism, corruption, and incidental expenses. When asked about preferred support, finance ranked first, followed by power, transportation and communication, entrepreneurship infrastructure, marketing and sales, training, technology, and expert services.

Table 4: Utilization, Satisfaction, challenges, and Preferences Regarding Government Support Schemes

Attributes	Key Findings & Statistics	Implications & Institutions Insights
1. Scheme Utilization	Utilized: 36.35%	A large majority of respondents remain excluded from government support frameworks.
	Not Utilized: 63.75%	
2. Satisfaction Level	Slightly more than half of the users were satisfied	Service delivery is moderately effectiveness for those who manage to access it.
3. Major Bottlenecks & Problems	→ Political influence → Administrative delays → Poor attitude of officials → Nepotism & corruption → Incidental expenses	Institutional barriers, corruption, and red tape heavily hinder smooth access to benefits.
4. preferred Support Rankings	Finance & infrastructure	Majority of the entrepreneurs ranked financial support & infrastructure development

Source: Field Survey 2014

The analysis of middlemen dependence indicates that local entrepreneurs rarely depended on middlemen across the surveyed factors. Dependence was slightly higher for money, materials, business ideas, and supply or distribution, but overall dependence remained low.

Table 5: Level of Dependency on Middlemen Among Local Entrepreneurs

Factor	Level of Dependence	Key Analysis & Implications
1. Overall Dependence	Low	Local entrepreneurs operate with high independence from intermediaries
2. Relatively Higher Dependence	→ Materials → Supply channel	These specific areas show minor vulnerability where external middlemen are leveraged.

	→ Money → Business ideas	
3. Structural Takeaway	Minimal reliance across most surveyed factors	Suggests direct market linkages & self-reliance,

Source: Field Survey 2014

Occupational status analysis shows that entrepreneurship was ranked lower than government and professional occupations such as IAS/APPSC officers, doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers, and agriculturists. This reflects the low social prestige attached to entrepreneurship in the study area.

Table 6: Occupational Status and Perception of Respect

Occupations	Average Score	Rank	Societal & Cultural Context
1. IAS / APPSC	5.78	1	Highest social prestige
2. Doctor	5.41	2	Highly respected professional career path
3. Teacher	4.76	3	Strong communal validation and respect
4. Engineers	4.34	4	Respected technical professional role
5. Lawyer	4.19	5	Moderate social standing and legal prestige
6. Agriculturist	4.14	6	Traditional occupation holding stable social validation
7. Entrepreneur	3.81	7	Low respect status
8. Politician	3.41	8	Lowest ranked occupation in terms of social respect.

5. Discussion

The findings show that entrepreneurship in Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley is still at an early stage. The dominance of first-generation entrepreneurs and sole proprietorship shows that local people are slowly moving towards self-employment. At the same time, the small size of enterprises, low registration, limited employment creation, narrow markets, and high dependence on informal finance show that entrepreneurship has not yet become a strong driver of regional development.

The gap between awareness and participation in entrepreneurship development programmes is important. Many entrepreneurs know about EDPs, but fewer attend them. This suggests that information alone is not enough. Training programmes must be easier to access, locally relevant, and supported by follow-up services. The low use of government schemes also shows that public support does not reach entrepreneurs equally or efficiently. The strong role of relatives and friends as information sources indicates that official communication channels need to be improved.

The social dimension of entrepreneurship is equally important. The lower occupational status of entrepreneurs indicates that entrepreneurship is not yet viewed as a highly respected livelihood. This cultural perception may discourage educated youth from pursuing business activity. Therefore, entrepreneurship development in the region must include awareness-building, entrepreneurship education, role-model promotion, and community-level recognition of successful local entrepreneurs.

6. Policy Implications:

The study suggests that entrepreneurship policies in the region should combine finance, training, infrastructure, market access, and transparent institutions. First, access to finance should be improved through easier credit, flexible collateral rules, microfinance, and cooperative-based funding. Second,

entrepreneurship development programmes should be conducted closer to remote communities and should include mentoring, credit facilitation, market support, and post-training follow-up. Third, enterprise registration should be simplified, and awareness campaigns should be organised through District Industries Centres, panchayats, educational institutions, local media, and community organisations. Fourth, transport, power, communication, storage, and market infrastructure should be strengthened so that local enterprises can move beyond small local markets. Finally, scheme implementation should be made more transparent through regular monitoring, public information sharing, and grievance redressal to reduce political influence, delays, nepotism, corruption, and extra informal costs.

7. Conclusion:

The study concludes that Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley have strong potential for entrepreneurship, but this potential is not yet fully developed. Most local entrepreneurs are first-generation business owners and run micro-scale enterprises. They face problems related to finance, infrastructure, markets, training, government support, and social recognition. Entrepreneurship development programmes and government schemes have some positive value, but their impact is reduced by low participation, weak outreach, limited follow-up, and implementation problems. The relatively low social status of entrepreneurship may also discourage educated youth from starting businesses. Therefore, entrepreneurship development in the study area requires a multi-dimensional approach that includes better finance, improved infrastructure, practical training, transparent institutions, wider market access, and stronger social recognition of entrepreneurship as a respected livelihood option.

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