Research Paper

Bridges of Exchange: Fostering Sustainable Cooperation and Trade across the India-Myanmar Border in the Tirap, Changlang and Longding (TCL) Region of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract
The Tirap, Changlang, and Longding (TCL) region of Arunachal Pradesh, located along India's border with Myanmar, represents one of the most critical yet understudied frontier zones for cross-border interaction in Northeast India. Owing to its strategic geography, shared ethnic linkages, and historical trading ties, the TCL region holds significant potential for fostering cross-border cooperation and economic integration.
This paper examines the nature and patterns of cross-border trade between India and Myanmar in the TCL region, it also explores how local communities sustain livelihoods through small-scale and informal border trade, often facilitated by cultural affinity and traditional trust networks across the border. The study further analyses the challenges and the policy affecting the borderland exchange activities.
By framing the TCL borderlands as 'bridges of exchange' the study highlights the potential of cross-border trade and cooperation as instruments for inclusive growth, regional stability, and sustainable livelihood development in the Indo-Myanmar border.

Keywords: Cross-border trade, Border cooperation, India-Myanmar border, Tirap, Changlang, Longding (TCL) region, Livelihood sustenance

I. Introduction

1.1. Background on the TCL Region

The Tirap, Changlang, and Longding (TCL) districts of Arunachal Pradesh constitute a strategically significant border region in India's Northeast, sharing an extensive international boundary with Myanmar. This region, characterized by rugged mountainous terrain, dense forests, and rich biodiversity, is home to diverse indigenous tribal communities including the Wancho, Tangsa, Nocte, Tutsa, and Lisu peoples. These communities have historically maintained deep cultural, social, and economic ties across the India-Myanmar border, predating the colonial demarcation of international boundaries (Gangte, 2001).

The TCL region represents both a frontier and a potential gateway in India's engagement with Southeast Asia. Geographically, Arunachal Pradesh shares approximately 520 kilometers of border with Myanmar, with the TCL districts accounting for a substantial portion of this boundary (Paduk, 2024). The region's peripheral location within India, combined with its proximity to Myanmar and beyond to Thailand and other ASEAN nations, positions it uniquely in the context of regional economic integration and cross-border cooperation (Gohain, 2024).

Historically, the area served as an important trade route connecting the Assam plains with Myanmar and beyond, with tribal communities acting as intermediaries in the exchange of goods and cultural practices (Bhattarai, 2014). However, the partition of India in 1947 and subsequent geopolitical developments transformed these traditional exchange networks, creating what has been described as a 'landlocked region' with

fractured connectivity to mainland India (Gangte, 2001). The colonial-era borders arbitrarily divided ethnic groups, creating political tensions and disrupting centuries-old patterns of movement and trade (Singh, 2023).

1.2. India-Myanmar Border Dynamics

The India-Myanmar border represents a complex geopolitical space where strategic interests, economic aspirations, and local realities intersect. India shares a 1,643-kilometer border with Myanmar, spanning four Northeastern states: Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram (Taneja et al, 2019). Unlike India's heavily militarized borders with Pakistan and China, the India-Myanmar border has historically been more porous, allowing for traditional cross-border movement by local communities (Bhattarai, 2014).

The formalization of border trade between India and Myanmar began with the signing of the Border Trade Agreement on January 21, 1994, which aimed to regulate and promote legitimate trade while addressing security concerns (Singh, 2023). The agreement initially designated specific border points for trade, including Moreh-Tamu in Manipur and later Zokhawthar-Rih in Mizoram, with provisions for expanding to additional points including those in Arunachal Pradesh. The agreement specified a list of tradable items, initially 22 commodities, later expanded to 62 by 2012, primarily consisting of agricultural products and basic consumer goods (Singh, 2023), (Soreimi, 2020).

Despite these formal frameworks, the reality of India-Myanmar border trade has been characterized by a significant gap between official policy and ground level implementation. Formal trade volumes have remained disappointingly low, with border trade accounting for only approximately 4% of total India-Myanmar trade, the majority of which occurs through sea routes (Marchang, 2018). In contrast, informal trade often involving goods from third countries such as China, Thailand, and other East Asian nations far exceeds official trade volumes (Pegu, 2022), (Shariar, 2020).

The border dynamics are further complicated by security concerns, including insurgent activities, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking (Gangte, 2001), (Singh, 2016). These security challenges have led to periodic border closures and restrictions, disrupting both formal and informal trade networks. The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 military coup in Myanmar have further exacerbated these challenges, causing significant disruptions to border trade and impacting local livelihoods (Singh, 2023).

II.   Methodology

The study relies both on primary and secondary data. But the paper majorly is based upon secondary data, and study on the trade routes, composition and listing of items are based on primary data. The primary data studies three major border villages of three different districts and list the items according to the findings recorded from the only three villages. However, the identification of routes is derived from the references taken from the three surveyed border villages.

The review of literature, reports, policy documents, journals, government publications, and other credible materials available on the web are extensively explored for analyzing the concerned topic descriptively. Through an analysis of existing literature, the research study the trends, patterns and policy implications in the study area. The study uses a descriptive analysis approach based on both secondary data and primary data source.

III.   Literature Review

3.1. Border Trade Studies in Northeast India

Academic research on India-Myanmar border trade has grown significantly over the past two decades, reflecting increased policy attention to the region. Early studies by Singh (2007) established that India's border trade with Myanmar remained insignificant compared to trade with other neighbors, highlighting structural impediments and limited economic integration (Singh, 2007). Subsequent research has focused on specific border points, particularly Moreh-Tamu in Manipur, which has received the most scholarly attention as the primary formal trading point (Marchang, 2018), (Kshetrimayum, 2010).

Studies consistently reveal a paradox: while formal trade infrastructure exists, informal trade dominates actual cross-border exchange. Pegu (2022) found that at Moreh, informal trade far outweighs formal trade, with 92% of India-Myanmar trade occurring via sea routes in 2017-18, leaving border trade economically insignificant. Similarly, research on the Zokhawthar border point in Mizoram documented that formal trade was minimal, with only three consignments recorded in 2010, while informal trade thrived due to greater profit margins, lengthy formal processes, and restricted tradable items (Soreimi, 2020).

The correlation between infrastructure development and trade performance has been a recurring theme. Singh et al. (2016) found an 89% positive correlation between infrastructural development and trade at Moreh, with respondents emphasizing the critical importance of transport, telecommunications, and power supply (Singh, 2016). However, the same study documented significant infrastructural impediments including poorly maintained highways, inadequate telecommunications, and insufficient power supply that continue to constrain trade growth (Singh, 2016).

Research has also examined the socio-economic impacts of cross-border trade on local communities. (Mody et al., 2015) found that cross-border trade in Arunachal Pradesh significantly impacted income, employment generation, acquisition of consumer durables, and standard of living, though social variables like demography, cultural changes, education, and public health experienced less change (Mody et al., 2015). This suggests that while economic benefits are tangible, the broader developmental impacts remain limited.

3.2. India's Act East Policy and Regional Connectivity

India's Look East Policy, initiated in the early 1990s and upgraded to the Act East Policy in 2014, has been the primary framework for India's engagement with Southeast Asia and the development of its Northeastern region (Pulla et al., 2020), (Suresh, 2025). The policy shift from 'Look' to 'Act' signalled a more proactive approach, emphasizing not just economic engagement but also strategic, cultural, and people-to-people connections (Chansoria, 2017).

Academic assessments of the Act East Policy's impact on Northeast India have been mixed. Barua (2020) critically examined the policy-driven development model, questioning whether connectivity constructions and infrastructure development have genuinely benefited local communities or primarily served external strategic interests (Barua, 2020). Ziipao (2018) analyzed the socio-politico-economic scene in Northeast India and how it has guided aspects of the Act East Policy, highlighting the complex relationship between national policy and regional realities (Ziipao, 2018).

Connectivity projects have been central to the Act East Policy's implementation. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, aimed at establishing seamless connectivity between South Asia and Southeast Asia, has been extensively studied. Nair (2025) examined the connectivity parameters of this proposed highway, noting its potential to reduce logistics time and costs, create new markets, and strengthen cultural exchanges, while also acknowledging significant challenges including political unrest and security issues in Myanmar (Nair, 2025).

Railway connectivity between India and Myanmar has emerged as another major initiative. Roy et al. (2023) analyzed the feasibility and implications of India-Myanmar railway connectivity, concluding that while it has potential to boost trade, tourism, and investment, significant challenges related to security concerns, financial viability, and political stability must be addressed through strong political will, effective project management, and public-private partnerships (Roy et al., 2023).

Yhome (2015) provided a comprehensive analysis of India's search for connectivity through Myanmar, emphasizing that while economic benefits are highlighted, strategic interests fundamentally drive Delhi's connectivity goals (Yhome, 2015). The study argued that how promptly India addresses structural, security, and geostrategic factors will determine its future role in the region (Yhome, 2015).

3.3. Tribal Communities and Cross-Border Exchange

The tribal communities of the TCL region have been the subject of anthropological and development studies that provide crucial context for understanding cross-border dynamics. Research on the Wancho community in Longding district has documented their unique settlement patterns, architectural traditions, and strong emotional attachment to place, reflecting how physical phenomena are inscribed with cultural meanings (Singh, 2020). The Wancho settlements integrate climatic and environmental factors with cultural institutions, values, and practices, demonstrating sophisticated indigenous knowledge systems (Singh, 2020).

Studies of the Tangsa community in Changlang district have examined the impact of modernization on traditional social structures, livelihood patterns, and cultural practices (Chujam, 2023). Lungphi et al. (2018) documented the extensive knowledge of wild edible plants and their uses among the Tangsa, highlighting the deep connection between tribal communities and their natural environment (Lungphi, 2018). Similarly, research on the Lisu tribe in the southeastern part of Namdapha National Park revealed sophisticated indigenous technical knowledge related to agriculture, horticulture, and resource utilization (Sarmah, 2006).

The role of traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) among tribal communities has been increasingly recognized. Singh et al. (2011) documented the Adi community's rich knowledge relating to biocultural resources and their role in coping with climate change and ensuring livelihood sustainability (Singh et al., 2011). The study emphasized that the future of tribal biocultural resources depends on their active role in research, planning, and policy implementation (Singh et al., 2011).

Study has also examined the impacts of development interventions on tribal communities. Ramya (2020) investigated how three tribes of Arunachal Pradesh perceive development, emphasizing the importance of understanding native perspectives in designing development programs and policies (Ramya, 2020). Sharma (2024) analyzed contemporary development discourse in Northeast India and its impact on tribal communities, highlighting tensions between state-led development models and indigenous ways of life (Sharma, 2024).

The historical practice of barter trade and cross-border exchange among tribal communities has been documented as an integral part of their economic and cultural systems (Singh 2010). However, formal trading

systems have often restricted these traditional freedoms, creating tensions between national policies and local practices (Singh, 2023).

3.4. Research Gaps

Despite the growing body of literature on India-Myanmar border trade and Northeast India's development, several significant gaps remain. First, while studies have focused extensively on the Moreh-Tamu border point in Manipur, the TCL region of Arunachal Pradesh has received comparatively less scholarly attention, despite its strategic importance and unique characteristics. Second, most existing research treats border trade primarily as an economic phenomenon, with insufficient attention to the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of cross-border exchange. Third, there is limited research that integrates tribal community perspectives with policy analysis, often resulting in top-down recommendations that may not align with local realities and aspirations. Fourth, while infrastructure deficits are widely acknowledged, there is insufficient analysis of how infrastructure development can be designed to be culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable. Finally, the impacts of recent disruptions particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and Myanmar's political instability on border trade and local communities require more systematic investigation.

This paper seeks to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the TCL region that integrates economic, social, cultural, and policy dimensions, with particular attention to the perspectives and roles of indigenous tribal communities.

IV. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Border Studies and Transnational Exchange

This research is grounded in contemporary border studies theory, which conceptualizes borders not merely as fixed lines of territorial demarcation but as dynamic spaces of interaction, negotiation, and exchange (Bhattarai, 2014). Borders are understood as social constructs that shape and are shaped by the practices of the people who live in and move across them. In the context of the India-Myanmar border, this perspective is particularly relevant given the arbitrary nature of colonial-era boundary demarcation, which divided ethnic groups and disrupted traditional exchange networks (Singh, 2023).

The concept of 'borderlands' as distinct socio-economic and cultural zones is central to understanding the TCL region. Borderlands are characterized by unique forms of social organization, economic activity, and cultural hybridity that emerge from their peripheral position between nation-states (Bhattarai, 2014). In the TCL region, tribal communities have historically navigated multiple political jurisdictions while maintaining cross-border kinship ties, trade networks, and cultural practices.

Transnational exchange theory emphasizes that cross-border flows of goods, people, ideas, and practices occur through both formal and informal channels, with informal networks often proving more resilient and adaptive than official frameworks (Singh, 2023). This theoretical lens helps explain why informal trade in the TCL region significantly exceeds formal trade despite the existence of official border trade agreements.

4.2. Sustainable Development in Peripheral Regions

The concept of sustainable development, as applied to peripheral border regions, requires balancing economic growth with social equity and environmental conservation. (Gangte, 2001) emphasized the importance of multidiscipline integration and community participation to ensure continuity of community development, arguing that public policies must facilitate local community participation and respond effectively to changes and needs

Peripheral regions face particular developmental challenges due to their geographic remoteness, limited connectivity to economic centres, and often marginalized political status within nation-states (Srikanth, 2018). However, they also possess unique assets, including natural resources, cultural diversity, and strategic location for regional cooperation (Gangte, 2001). The challenge is to leverage these assets while avoiding extractive development models that benefit external actors at the expense of local communities.

The sustainable livelihoods framework is particularly relevant for understanding how border trade and development interventions affect tribal communities in the TCL region. This framework emphasizes the multiple forms of natural, physical, human, social, and financial that households and communities draw upon to construct their livelihoods (Singh et al., 2011). Development interventions should strengthen rather than undermine these diverse livelihood strategies.

V. The TCL Region: Geographic and Socio-Cultural Context

5.1. Geographical Setting

The Tirap, Changlang, and Longding districts occupy the southeastern corner of Arunachal Pradesh, characterized by rugged mountainous terrain, dense tropical and subtropical forests, and high biodiversity. The region is part of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot, with elevations ranging from approximately 200

meters in the valleys to over 2000 meters in the higher ranges. The topography is dominated by steep hills, deep valleys, and numerous rivers and streams that flow southward into Myanmar (Sarmah, 2006).

The climate is predominantly humid subtropical to tropical, with heavy monsoon rainfall from May to September. The region's forests include tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, and deciduous types, supporting rich flora and fauna. This natural environment has shaped the traditional livelihoods of tribal communities, who practice jhum (shifting) cultivation, hunting, gathering of forest products, and increasingly settled agriculture (Sarmah, 2006), (Singh et al., 2011).

Connectivity within the region and to the rest of India remains challenging due to the difficult terrain. Road infrastructure is limited, with many areas accessible only by foot or during dry seasons. The region lacks railway connectivity, and the nearest airport is in Dibrugarh, Assam, several hours away by road (Pegu, 2022). This geographic isolation has historically marginalized the region economically and politically while also preserving traditional cultures and ecosystems.

5.2. Tribal Communities of TCL Region

The TCL region is home to diverse tribal communities, each with distinct languages, cultural practices, and social organizations. The major tribes include: Wancho, Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa, Singpho, Lisu/Yobin and other sub-communities.

These communities share commonalities, including historical practice of animistic religions (though many have converted to Christianity or Buddhism), clan-based social organization, and traditional governance systems. However, each maintains distinct identity and cultural practices. The total population of the TCL region is relatively small but ethnically diverse, with significant implications for governance, development planning, and cross-border relations.

5.3. Historical Cross-Border Linkages

The tribal communities of the TCL region have maintained cross-border connections with related ethnic groups in Myanmar for centuries, predating the establishment of modern nation-states. These connections encompass kinship ties, trade networks, cultural exchanges, and shared religious practices (Singh, 2023). The India-Myanmar border in this region cuts across ethnic homelands, with Wancho, Tangsa, Nocte, and other communities having populations on both sides of the international boundary.

Historically, trade between the Assam plains and Tibet flourished through what is now Arunachal Pradesh, with tribal communities acting as intermediaries and bartering goods (Bhattarai, 2014). Traditional trade involved forest products, agricultural goods, handloom textiles, and other locally produced items. The barter system was integral to tribal economic and cultural systems, facilitating not only exchange of goods but also social relationships and cultural practices (Singh 2010).

The colonial period brought significant changes with the demarcation of the India-Burma (Myanmar) border, though the remoteness of the region meant that traditional practices continued with limited interference. The 1962 Indo-China War and subsequent militarization of India's northeastern borders severely restricted cross-border movements, disrupting traditional exchange patterns (Bhattarai, 2014). However, sporadic and clandestine contacts, including trade in both legal and illegal goods, have persisted (Bhattarai, 2014).

The India-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement of 1994 represented an attempt to formalize and regulate these traditional exchanges within a modern state framework (Singh, 2023). However, the formal system has often been experienced by local communities as restrictive, limiting the items that can be traded and imposing bureaucratic procedures that are alien to traditional practices (Singh, 2023). This tension between formal frameworks and traditional practices remains a central challenge in border management.

VI. Current Trade Between TCL Region and Myanmar

Formal trade infrastructure in the TCL region remains underdeveloped compared to other border points. While Moreh in Manipur has an established Land Customs Station with supporting infrastructure, border points in Arunachal Pradesh have received less investment (Marchang, 2018).

Pangsau Pass: Located in Changlang district, Pangsau Pass has historical significance as part of the Stilwell Road (Ledo Road) constructed during World War II to connect India with China through Myanmar. Cross-border movement has been allowed at Pangsau, though formal trade infrastructure remains limited almost to none (Lwin, 2013). The pass has potential for development as a major trade and tourism gateway, but requires significant infrastructure investment.

Supporting Infrastructure: Infrastructure gaps include inadequate roads, limited telecommunications, insufficient power supply, lack of warehousing facilities, and absence of quality testing laboratories (Singh, 2016). These deficits significantly constrain trade volumes and increase transaction costs.

Institutional Mechanisms: Various government agencies are needed to be involved in border trade management, including customs, immigration, border security forces, and state trade departments. However, coordination

among these agencies is often poor, leading to bureaucratic delays and inconsistent implementation of policies (Singh, 2016). Moreover, the frequent policy changes impact the border activities immensely which creates hindrance in smooth regular exchange routine.

Nature of Trade: The cross-border trade through TCL region is basically 'Informal' in nature. As it deals with subsistence good majorly agricultural produce, grocery items and low-cost items, it follows no standard recording on traded commodities. Moreover, as the communities on either side of the border have close familial links with each other, they follow the traditional exchange as it was done through ages.

Informal Trade Networks: Informal trade across the India-Myanmar border in the TCL region significantly exceeds formal trade, driven by multiple factors like familial link, traditional and cultural affinity. Informal trade networks are built on kinship ties, ethnic connections, and long-standing relationships across the border (Singh, 2023). Local traders, often from tribal communities, maintain these networks, which provide flexibility and trust-based transactions that formal systems cannot replicate.The lack of formal documentation makes it difficult to assess actual trade volumes and patterns.

Items of trade: Most cross-border trade items include domestic, low-cost and traditional items. It is because communities of both sides of the border share close social relationship and familial connections with each other. To actually record the items of trade, three major border villages, one each from three districts of Tirap, Changlang, and Longding for a field-based investigation was selected and the survey was conducted. Items that are traded on the basis of poll were recorded. To record the items, three villages, one from each district was selected i.e., Noglo (Tirap), Konsa (Longding), and Nampong (Changlang). It was found that overall, trade was mainly dominated by agro-based and livestock products, along with essential food items, traditional goods, and basic household commodities. These trade patterns reflect the livelihood needs of local communities and their dependence on cross-border exchanges for daily necessities.

In Noglo village, the main agro-based products included cardamom, ginger, coffee, local rice, black pepper, and chilli. The food and consumable items commonly traded are biscuits, salt, sugar, cold drinks, noodles, and mustard oil. Traditional goods such as gongs and other cultural artifacts and ornaments also form an important part of trade, while clothing represents the major household item exchanged.

Konsa village in Longding,   shows a simpler trade structure, with soybean and chicken meat as the main agro-based and livestock products. Food and consumables include biscuits, salt, sugar, and noodles. Traditional goods such as gongs, artifacts, knives, and machetes highlight the importance of local craftsmanship and cultural tools. Household items traded in Konsa mainly consist of clothes, slippers, soap, cosmetics, and batteries, indicating demand for basic daily-use products.

In Nampong (Changlang district), trade is more diversified. Agro-based and livestock products include cardamom, ginger, coffee, hen, piglet, and eggs. The range of food and consumables is broader, including biscuits, canned curry, canned fish, fermented fish, salt, sugar, cooking oil, cold drinks, chocolates, chips, and noodles. Traditional clothes and local machetes represent cultural and functional goods, while household and other items such as petrol, diesel, utensils, notebooks, and cosmetics indicate stronger market linkages and higher commercial activity.

Therefore, all three villages are livestock and agro-based goods and consistent flow of food and necessities. Because they represent cultural customs and everyday practical needs, traditional products, ornaments and tools still have a big impact. Nampong recorded variety of traded goods among the three, underscoring its comparatively better cross-border connections and market access.

VII.   Analysis of Challenges and Barriers
7.1. Infrastructure Deficits
Infrastructure deficits represent the most fundamental barrier to developing sustainable border trade in the TCL region.

Road Connectivity: The region suffers from inadequate road infrastructure, with many areas connected only by single, poorly maintained highways (Singh, 2016). During monsoon seasons, roads become impassable, disrupting trade and isolating communities. The mountainous terrain makes road construction expensive and technically challenging. The absence of all-weather roads significantly increases transportation costs and limits the types of goods that can be traded (Bhattarai, 2014).

Telecommunications: Telecommunication systems are inadequate, with poor mobile network availability on mountainous routes (Singh, 2016). This hampers business communication, financial transactions, and trade activities coordination. In today's digital era, lack of reliable telecommunication is a vital gap for any activity.

Power Supply: Insufficient and unreliable power supply constrains economic activities, including processing, storage, and value addition to traded goods (Singh, 2016). Despite the state's hydropower potential, the border villages of TCL region remain underserved by the power grid.

Border Infrastructure: Specific border trade infrastructure is lacking or inadequate. Lack of integrated check posts with modern equipment, warehousing facilities, quality testing laboratories, and banking services (Pegu, 2022) should be addressed.

Connectivity to Markets: The border connectivity to both major markets in India and Myanmar remains poor. This limits the economic viability and diversity of trade, as transportation costs to reach consumers can exceed the value of goods (Srikanth, 2018).

7.2. Policy and Regulatory Constraints

Policy and regulatory frameworks, while intended to facilitate and regulate trade, often create barriers in practice. Lack of permanent pass, unregulated movements, checks on security (insurgency issue), and most importantly the focus of infrastructure development in the border region has practically caused hindrance in creating formal channels for trade across the border.

VIII.   Opportunities for Sustainable Cooperation

8.1. India's Act East Policy Framework

India's Act East Policy, upgraded from the Look East Policy in 2014, provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing engagement with Southeast Asia and developing the Northeast region (Pulla et al., 2020). The policy stresses not only economic integration but also strategic, cultural, and people-to-people connections, offering multiple opportunities for the TCL region. The Act East Policy has raised the Northeast region from a peripheral area to a strategic gateway for India's engagement with ASEAN and East Asia (Chansoria, 2017). This move in perspective generates opportunities for increased policy attention and resource allocation to the TCL region. The policy framework also embraces provisions for increasing border trade, simplifying procedures, and developing border infrastructure (Pegu, 2022). Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the Northeast.

8.2. Cultural and People-to-People Exchange

Beyond economic benefits, enhanced cross-border trade offers opportunities for cultural exchange and strengthening people-to-people ties. The tribal communities of the TCL region have ethnic and kinship ties with populations in Myanmar. Facilitating cross-border movement for cultural events, family visits, and traditional exchanges strengthen these bonds.

Cultural festivals, traditional crafts, and indigenous knowledge systems can attract tourists and researchers, provide economic benefits while also support cultural preservation.

Indigenous communities on both sides of the border possess valuable traditional knowledge related to agriculture, medicine, and environmental management (Sarmah, 2006), (Singh et al., 2011). Space for sharing and preserving this knowledge can benefit both communities and contribute to sustainable development.

IX.   Conclusion

Tirap, Changlang, and Longding (TCL) region holds substantial potential for advancing cross-border cooperation and sustainable development along the Indo-Myanmar frontier. Rooted in shared ethnic ties, cultural affinity, and historical trade networks, cross-border exchanges continue to sustain local livelihoods despite policy, infrastructural, and regulatory challenges. Strengthening institutional support, improving connectivity, and adopting inclusive border trade policies can transform the TCL borderlands into dynamic zones of economic integration, regional stability, and sustainable livelihood enhancement. A collaborative and community-centered approach is essential to harness the region's strategic advantages while ensuring equitable and sustainable development for border populations.

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