

41 Villages

1200 Youth

50 Schools

8 Food Festivals

230 Food Communities

8 Food Networks

62 Partner Countries



nesfas

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 2017

Northeast Slow
Food and Agro biodiversity
Society

Envisioning a future where indigenous
foods and rural livelihoods are
determined by a strong bond between
people, plate and culture.

Year of Agroecology

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The strength of NESFAS is the communities it has mobilized

NESFAS was an idea that germinated from a seed planted by two international organisations; the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (The Indigenous Partnership / TIP) and Slow Food International. Together the two organisations influence the rights and responsibilities towards good, clean and fair food practices, while reaffirming the importance of the age-old role of Indigenous Peoples as the guardians of agrobiodiversity, cultural identity, their rights to food sovereignty and food security. In being so, they also are the connecting links to their significant heritage and practices in these changing times. Phrang Roy, head of The Indigenous Partnership (TIP), being from the North East, saw an opportunity in directing the attention of the world to this Biodiversity hotspot and initiated the first local food festival in Shillong in 2010. TIP thus added Meghalaya to its repertoire of indigenous food festivals that it had held in Mongolia, Kenya, Tajikistan and Northern Thailand. The Shillong Festival came to be called Mei-Ramew Festival which in Khasi means Mother Earth - a local translation of Terra Madre in Italian. The Indigenous Partnership worked with the Government of Meghalaya and Slow Food to bring to Shillong the Indigenous Terra Madre 2015. NESFAS was created in 2012 to realise this ambition and after the event's success continues to stand today as a platform where the experience of the past, mentors the strengths of the present, to meet the needs of the future. To this end, NESFAS endeavors to join hands and converge its activities with other like-minded individuals, institutions, government, other NGOs, etc., for the overall benefit, conservation and development of the indigenous communities in the North East of India.



In the last few years, 41 communities came forward to be associated very closely with NESFAS. Their proactive attitude towards promotion and preservation of local agrobiodiversity and involvement in NESFAS initiatives like school gardens and biodiversity walks, agrobiodiversity networks, food festivals, livelihood initiatives, traditional knowledge documentation and studies on wellbeing, Matriarchy and Women's role in Nutrition amongst others is commendable. These communities together came forward to join NESFAS as co-hosts of ITM 2015 and continue to work with NESFAS till date.

MEGHALAYA : LOCATION OF PARTNERS VILLAGES

EAST KHASI HILLS

1-Laitsohpliah, 2-Laitthemlangseh, 3-Dewlieh
4-Nongtraw, 5-Wahsohra, 6-Laitumiong, 7-Pyrda,
8-Mustoh, 9-Tmar, 10-Mawhiang, 11-Nongwah,
12-Rangshangkham, 41- Perkseh.

SOUTH WEST KHASI HILLS

13-Nongnah, Nongbah, 14-Nongnah, Nongkdait,
15-Nongnah, Nongktieh.

WEST KHASI HILLS

20-Dombah, 21-Nongriangka, 22-Pyndengmawlieh,
23-Porksai, 24-Nongmawlong, 25-Thawkhong,

26-Lang-shonthiang, 27-Nongmawlai, 28-Nongjaiaw.

WEST JAINTIA HILLS

16- Mulieh, 17-Mulum, 18-Moosakhia, 19-Samanong.

RI-BHOI

29- Sohliya, 30-Khweng, 31- Khlieh Umstem,
32- Thadnongjiah, 33- Liarsluid, 34-Madanritiang.

EAST GARO HILLS

35- Daribokgre.

WEST GARO HILLS

36-Chandigre, 37-Sasatgre, 38-Wakringtonggre, 39-Ganol
Songma, 40-Rangwakamgre.

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2010

2010: Carlo Petrini, Slow Food Founder, visits Meghalaya.
Impressed by the agrobiodiversity and the people's close connection to their land, Petrini proposes an international event to be held here.

2011

2011: The 2nd Mei-Ramew Festival takes place.
This gathering became the point at which NESFAS was conceived as an idea that went on to become a reality in 2012.

2012

2012: NESFAS is born.
Agrobiodiversity networks and activities sprout at the grassroots level via NESFAS initiatives.

2013

2013: The NESFAS team expands.
The year-end sees 12 full-time staff members become a part of NESFAS and the launch of new initiatives.

2014

2014: International Mei-Ramew (IMR), groundwork for 2015.
Networks and activities multiply. Staff learns new Participatory Techniques for Agrobiodiversity management.

2015

2015: Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM/IMR) 2015.
41 villages join hands with NESFAS to host the ITM in November 2015. 62 Countries, 230 Indigenous Food communities converge in Meghalaya for the event.

2016

2016: A new direction.
NESFAS adopts Agroecology as a tool to address the needs of its communities. This includes taking the learnings from ITM2015 forward in a systemised way.

The Indigenous Terra Madre 2015 (ITM 2015) that took place in Shillong, Meghalaya, North East India from 3rd to 7th November 2015 was a phenomenal event and as one magazine named it: “a rock show of agrobiodiversity”. It was attended by 606 delegates representing 62 countries and 169 indigenous communities from the seven indigenous regions of the world. The event included the inauguration; plenary and thematic sessions; taste workshops of insects, fermented food, wild edibles and millet; butchery training; public campus programmes (including a film festival, photo exhibit, musical performance and speakers series); field visits to nine host villages, and a public closing ceremony and food festival held at the Sacred Groves of Mawphlang. The closing food festival gathered more than 70,000 rural and urban people. The event was greatly informed by the close collaboration of 41 co-hosting villages in the preceding three-year planning period.

ITM 2015 showcased and reaffirmed indigenous traditional knowledge, culture performances and sustainable practices that have historically contributed to the resilience of diverse indigenous food systems. The beauty of its success was that it was essentially planned and directed by an indigenous leadership which demonstrated that indigenous communities can set positive examples for promoting sustainable food systems where wellbeing comes not from the accumulation of wealth but from our connectedness with each other. The event also served as a platform for these 169 food communities to engage with scientists and policy makers on the future of food. We had no idea that ITM 2015 would create such a strong local response. It of course created financial, management and logistic challenges like the massive traffic congestion of all roads leading to Mawphlang. There were many spotlights and many lessons learned by NESFAS and The Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP) at ITM 2015. The most important lesson was: a complex international gathering can be conceptualised, implemented and accomplished from the “ground up” by a small team of relatively young indigenous professionals, backed by co-hosting rural communities and a smaller group of dedicated non-indigenous allies. Inclusive partnerships with the local Christian, Sikh and other communities were key to the success of ITM 2015 and for the people of Meghalaya. ITM 2015 became a model for citizen-state partnerships for promoting indigenous

food systems and their agroecology approaches. In spite of all the attention and it being a benchmark one sad lesson that we must frankly state is that despite this phenomenal success in November 2015 and beyond, both NESFAS and TIP had practically no financial support for continuing the 2016 follow-up program as agreed with the 169 indigenous communities through The Shillong Declaration. This led us to the question of sustainability of local initiatives as a real challenge that indigenous bodies such as NESFAS and TIP will continue to face. So this Annual Report 2016 - 17 is the diary of NESFAS cutting the frills to focus on an approach where with less, we set out to do more, directed by the outcomes of the ITM 2015.

A leaner team meant more footwork to achieve a year of continued engagement with the partner communities to keep the momentum going. The young NESFAS team focused on the target areas outlined as the way forward by the communities’ needs as against wants and strategically defined the areas of work to localise the initiatives. Yes there were festivals, but smaller ones, focused mainly to strengthen the network between villages and the surrounding urban areas. Yes, there were trainings and workshops, but they were limited to have a direct impact on the co-hosting villages through initiatives such as trainings on agroecology, to support global and local studies and livelihood betterment for the farmers like the PGS (Participatory Guarantee Scheme) system. There were of course some new initiatives, but they were to address immediate needs of the community like governance, livelihood options and habitat development. All these aimed to scale up all that we gained from ITM 2015, which was unfortunately not a possibility with the resource crunch. And there was also a lot of internal work, of consolidating, organising and documenting the road to ITM 2015.

While we are proud of this “less” effort we can’t help but imagine the impact with the “more” we could have made and with that imagination and innovation, we as a movement for indigenous peoples, must address the long-term measures for sustainable funding and progress.

Good luck to one and all.

- Phrang Roy, Chairperson NESFAS



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Mr. Simorin Marbaniang
Custodian Farmer and
Beekeeper, Lyngngam,
West Khasi Hills



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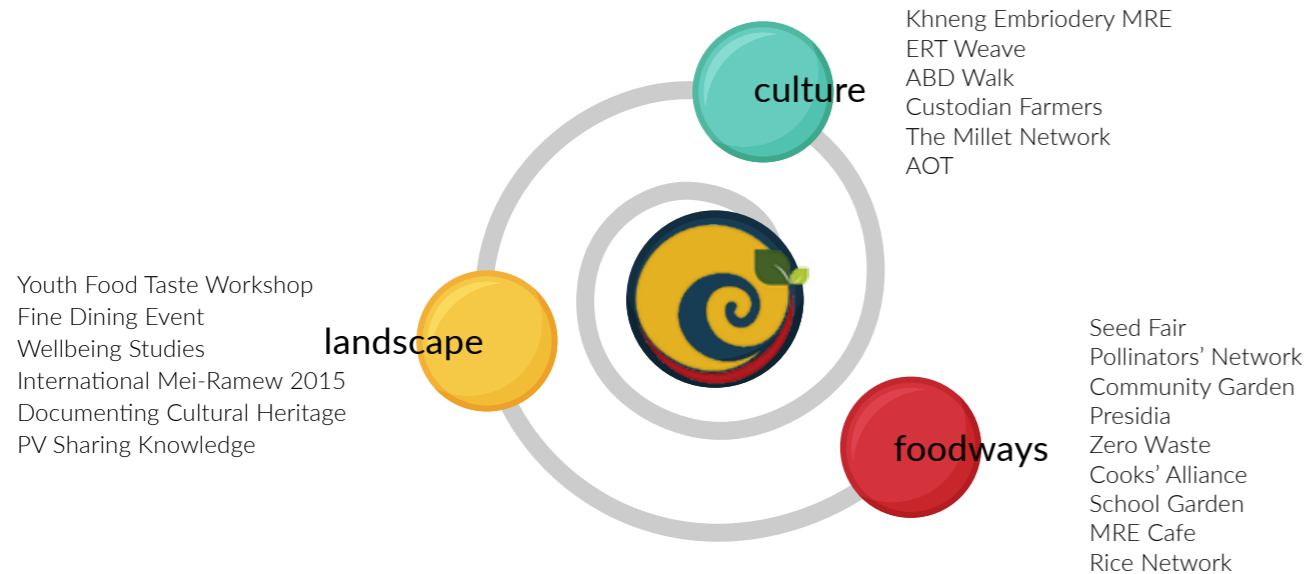
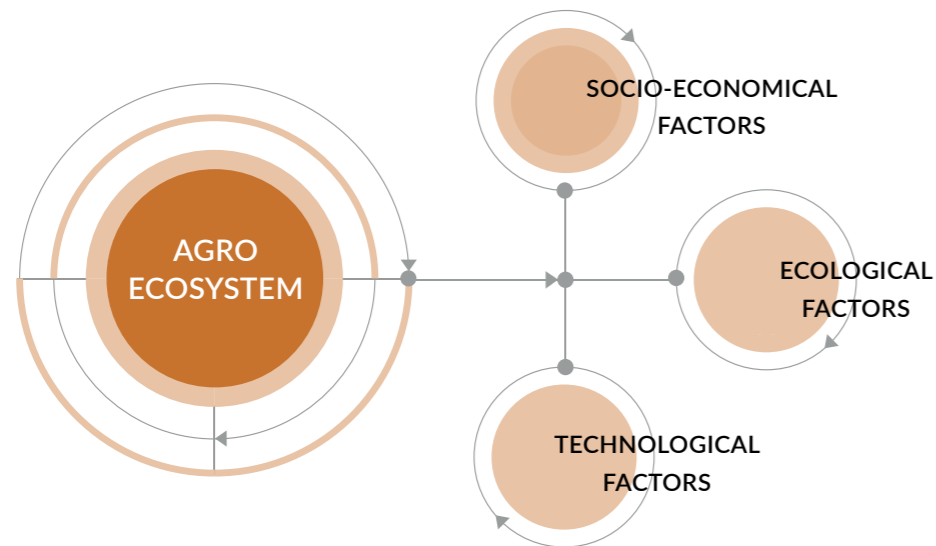
Ms. Patricia Mukhim
Editor, Shillong
Times; Journalist and
promoter of local food



“We hope this Annual Report will be a small and humble contribution to engage a new generation of supporters and help them cultivate successful social movements on their own or with like-minded partners like us.”

NESFAS FRAMEWORK & UNITS

The work of NESFAS revolves around the foodways and the landscape it comes from. These are then bound by the culture that has harvested these lands creating a heritage of stories, songs, arts, crafts and most importantly food and flavours. The team of NESFAS divide their work into units which address these aspects and orchestrate a focused approach with their works overlapping and learning from each others experiences and outcomes.



The year 2016-17 saw NESFAS adopt agroecology as a framework tool. Simply put, it is the application of ecology to the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems. ITM 2015 discussed how the world was on the verge of losing much of its cultural and biological diversity along with relevant knowledge of sustainable food systems. Participating food communities from across the world agreed on the need to help indigenous peoples recover their confidence in their traditional knowledge. The sheer fact that biodiversity hotspots across the world coincide with indigenous habitats should establish their stand. NESFAS thus aimed to develop an understanding of how agrosystems work in relation to a community's social fabric and local organizations. This framework offers a window of understanding soil, pest management at agronomy, social, health, sanitary, nutritional, livelihood, environmental and cultural

aspects and provides NESFAS, a guiding framework to engage with communities to create, use and transmit knowledge to future generations.

Livelihood & Innovations

Under Livelihood Initiatives, NESFAS supports the generation of local economies that are tied to and respect agrobiodiversity. It aims to connect both producers and consumers in healthy and culturally enriching ways. It is always on the look-out for useful livelihood innovations to be shared with local communities for their consideration to enhance their capabilities like the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) (Organic Certification for farmers), Farmer Markets and Mei Ramew brand development for Cafes, Weaves, Festivals, Eco-Tourism and Agro-based handi/building craft.

NESFAS TEAM

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Carl. O Rangad, Vice-Chairman-Operations



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Evangelene Synrem
Office Secretary



Amribornson
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Housekeeping



Jessica Rani
Housekeeping

Wankyrshan Warshong, Gardener
Arm Kharbuki, Gardener
Jennifer Suchiang, Intern
Aseem Madhur, Intern

Communications Unit

The Communications Unit acts as the mouthpiece of NESFAS and at the same time works on all documentation. The actions of this unit links the world's perception of the organization and the communities it services. The team aims to truly translate "local voices, global audiences" by sharing grassroots stories that could shape mindsets and play a role in advocating the organization's focus on agroecology. NESFAS hopes to start changing the narrative of mainstream thinking by using the agroecological footprints through networking with various organisations committed to sustainable solutions. The Participatory Video program is an intrinsic part of the communications agenda which arms community youth to capture their story.

Administration and Finance Unit

The Administration and Finance unit is responsible to provide support to the other units for the planning and execution of all the activities. It monitors and evaluates all the activities of NESFAS to ensure smooth and positive outcome through disciplined management. It drives the cultural and work values of a sensitive indigenous organization that is also a center of excellence in providing services to all those who share its guiding principles of decency, decorum and discipline.

Habitat & Infrastructure Development

Habitat and Infrastructure Development is an experimental unit that aims to address sustainable rural planning and development within the framework of conservation of natural resources, recycling of by-products, revival and promotion of relevant traditional knowledge and appropriate modern techniques. They aim to sensitise communities to aesthetics, passive and active solar harvesting, rainwater harvesting, waste management and by-product energy management and more to be integrated into a sustainable land-use plan and offer livelihood opportunities through innovations.

Rural Development Initiatives

Under the Rural Development Initiatives Unit, NESFAS plays the role of a facilitator which creates a sense of ownership, accountability and responsibility within and between communities and with other stakeholders. This unit aims to address the Agrobiodiversity Networks for Millet, Pollinators, Shifting Cultivation and the Cooks' Alliance. It promotes Youth & Education initiatives like School Garden, Agrobiodiversity Walk, Workshops/ Seminars / Conferences and Indigenous Internships. The Participatory Research Advocacy and Actions for mapping of biodiversity and Ark of taste. They use local events such as Seed fair/Diversity Fair, Mei-Ramew Day (Mother Earth Day) and Eat-ins.

EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS

Rathindra Roy: Thought, Learning & Change Facilitator
Francisco Rosado May: Agroecology Consultant
Ajay Nayak: Habitat Development & Communications Consultant
Anna Louise Meynell: Eri Weave Consultant

The NESFAS Agrobiodiversity Networks

Food is the connecting factor between the consumers and producers, and the many people who play their role in its transformation from the seed to the plant, then from the plate to the palate. Its cultural and economic significance is undeniable and hence it lies at the centre of all NESFAS activities. The Agrobiodiversity Networks are built around this significance and encompass everyone on either sides of the supply and demand line, to connect like-minded people with each other. These networks lay emphasis on involving communities and individuals in dialogues to understand their roles as stakeholders in the bid to make a positive impact on food choices that are based on sustainability.

The Millet Network

One of NESFAS's first networks, the Millet Network was born out of interactions with a small cluster of communities in the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya in 2010. Once a major part of their food systems, concerns were raised about Krai's (millet) declining relevance in the communities' dietary habits, especially with the younger generation having no taste for millet. Over the last six years NESFAS has worked with some champions of the Millet Network to revive the cultivation of the grain.

Indigenous Rice Network

Rice being the staple food of all North-East Indian communities, it did not come as a surprise that today in Jaintia Hills itself, at least 100 indigenous varieties of rice could be found. NESFAS recognises the potential of local rice to enhance nutritional security and market independence for local communities. The network encourages the maintenance of diversity which is in danger of disappearing due to popular varieties of high yielding types flooding the markets.

Shifting Cultivation Networks

'Jhum' ties hill dwelling communities to their culture as they ceremonially clear and cultivate the farm land every few years and then let it rejuvenate over a long fallow period until its fertility has been naturally restored. Many communities reiterated to NESFAS the importance of 'shifting cultivation' in their food security and sustainable livelihood. Jhum steps forward as vital to biodiversity conservation as at one time farmers can grow more than 20 different types of crops. However there are a lot of misunderstandings which have relegated the process to a controversial tag of "slash and burn cultivation". The Network has created global advocacy links with other indigenous communities facing similar issues.

Custodian Farmers' Network

Custodian farmers are local producers who protect, promote and preserve crop-diversity and thereby contribute actively to the global efforts to enhance the overall biodiversity. NESFAS has identified more than 117 custodian farmers over the last six years and helped them see their significance as protectors of biodiversity.

Pollinators' Network

Last few decades saw a major decline in the number of pollinators, a global phenomenon unwise to ignore considering their importance in food cultivation. Unrestrained use of pesticides and harmful chemicals in large scale farming has been recognised as one of the major reasons. The Pollinators' Network is a small attempt to restore the population of pollinators, in the areas occupied by the NESFAS communities, creating awareness on bees and other pollinators, land's health indicators and to connect beekeepers to indigenous knowledge holders. NESFAS also connects the locals to larger national partners like the Keystone Foundation.



Millet Variety
© Andre J Fanthome



Millet Variety
© Andre J Fanthome



Millet Variety
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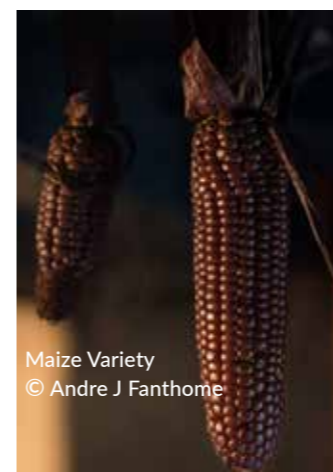
Holistic meals of the indigenous communities
Photo Courtesy: Andre J Fanthome



Local knowledge holder
© Andre J Fanthome



Maize Variety
© Andre J Fanthome



Maize Variety
© Andre J Fanthome



Cooks' Alliance

Cooks' Alliance comprises a group of people who share a common love for food and cooking. They understand and know the best use of food ingredients or wish to do so. NESFAS recognises that cooks have great potential in food advocacy as they know the social, economic as well as environmental significance of consumption of seasonal local food. They also bring together a network of sharing, learning and exchanges between professional chefs, local street food vendors and home cooks on food and flavours tied to tradition and nutrition.

Taste Workshops

It is important to connect the tastes of sweet, salt, sour, bitter, and umami to health, nutrition, tradition and the biochemistry of the body leading to a holistic gastronomic experience with food that is good for the body, mind and soul. Through Taste Workshops, NESFAS attempts to create a sensory education into rediscovery and appreciation of the collective heritage and diversity through food. Triggering our gustatory senses, taste whisks us through the collective memory of a unique place and time, taking the participants on a journey connecting the people on the farm, market, kitchens and the dining table.

Kids' Kitchen Initiative

A visit to the William Lewis Boys Home Orphanage, Mawphlang, on 26th July 2014, by the NESFAS team gave birth to the concept and led to its prompt initiation of the Kids' Kitchen Initiative (KKI). The boys' home caretaker, Mr. Samuel Jyrwa recounts how thrilled and excited the boys were, and still are, to be a part of the KKI team - a small step for most of them towards the realisation of the dream of someday becoming a chef. Facilitated by the NESFAS Flavours Development (FD) team, cooking classes with the boys were conducted on a regular basis on culinary skills, basic principles of cleanliness, proper washing of vegetables, disposal of waste, importance of local ingredients, among other lessons.

Ark of Taste (AOT)

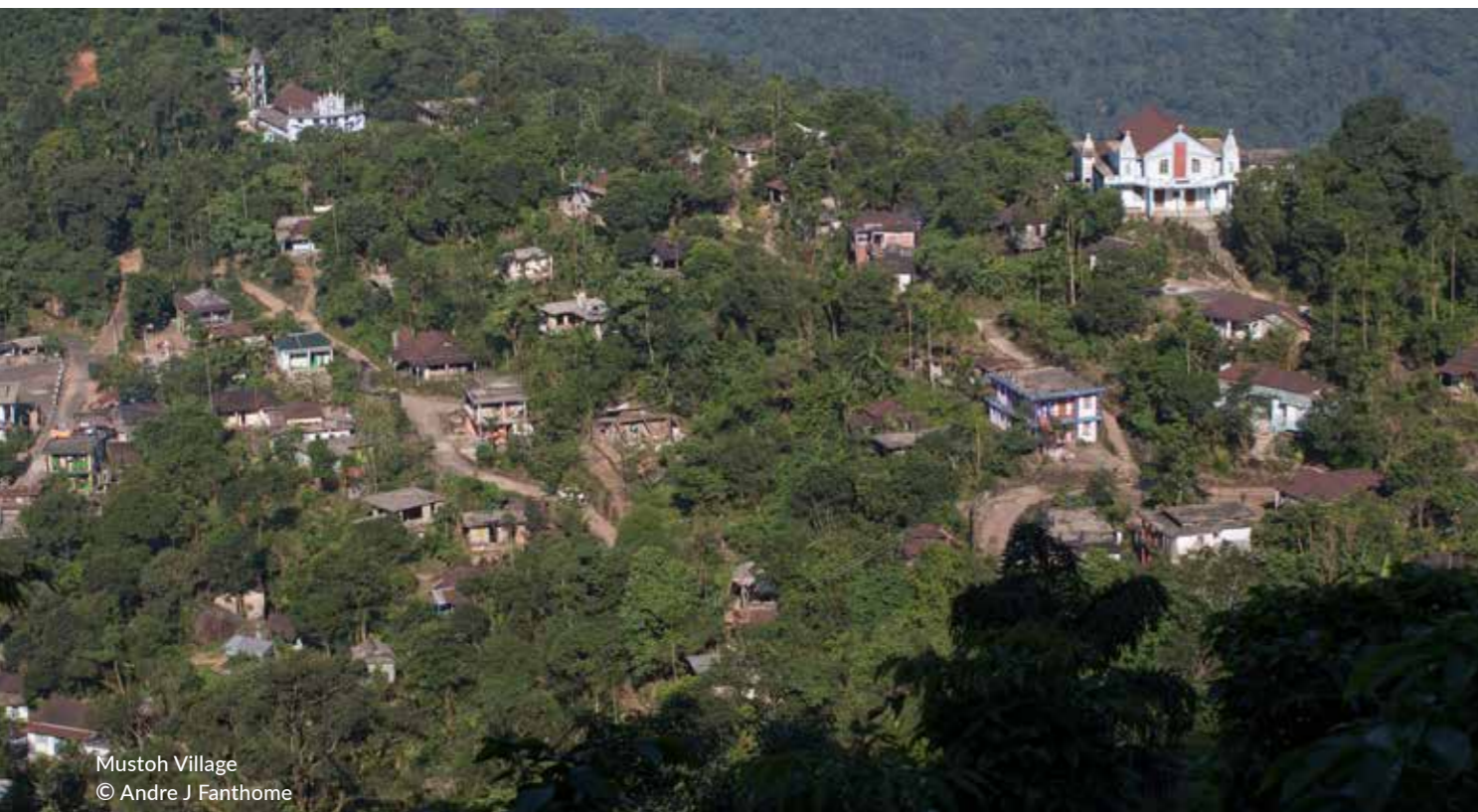
Designed to preserve foods that are sustainably produced, have a unique taste and are native to a distinct eco-region, the Ark of Taste brings into focus its risk of extinction. It then invites everyone to actively partake in its protection by seeking them, buying and consuming them, spreading their story, supporting their producers and in some cases (such as in the case of endangered wild species), promoting their conservation and reproduction. The AoT, could be any food product such as a single crop, an animal breed, a recipe or even a traditional method of preparation. In 2014, NESFAS's nomination listed 20 items to the Ark of Taste, from which the Sha Shia Krot (wild root tea), Sohnamtra (the Khasi Mandarin) and the Lapunei (a variety of wild herb), were accepted as passengers of the Ark. By November 2015, NESFAS nominated 96 AOT products to Slow Food International.

The Presidia

Presidia, a Latin word for 'stronghold', symbolises the defense and promotion of agrobiodiversity products by showcasing them as well-established quality (Presidium) produce and linking them to ethical market value chains. Run by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, it is a project geared towards plants, animal products and cooking practices that are at the risk of disappearing. The Khasi Mandarin, locally known in Meghalaya as "Sohnamtra" was first nominated for the Presidia project following a visit by Francesco Sottile, member of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity and the International commission for the Ark of Taste, Italy, in February 2014. The Sohnamtra, was accepted into the Presidia project after its assessment as a product that fulfills the criteria for the same - culturally significant, tied to a territory and declining in production.

Education, Documentation and Advocacy

Food is literally the translation of the land it is grown on and culture of people who produce and consume it. The study of these relationships lead to the insights into the timeless knowledge and sustainability anchored in these traditions. NESFAS was founded on the philosophy that traditional food systems highly express the qualitative aspects of food. The understanding, learning and sharing of these is essential to their survival. These values, though context specific, well support a sustainable and bio-culturally diverse food system, dictated by socio-cultural norms based on how man interacts with his ecology. NESFAS believes that these values are critical to developing a good, clean and fair food system and thus important to be documented and promoted.



Mustoh Village
© Andre J Fanthome

Youth Food Clubs

Youth are most vulnerable to changing food practices and dietetic patterns, constantly being drawn in by glamorous food trends which might be unhealthy. Currently, taking steps towards widening the network throughout the state by meeting students across colleges and forming food clubs for the "Local Food Movement", NESFAS's Youth Food Clubs (YFC) were initiated to connect youth to their local food and to expand their food choices to the next generation. The gatherings try to give local food a fighting chance through sessions at the institutes, at NESFAS office and at Festivals, also linking them to similar global youth networks and programs.

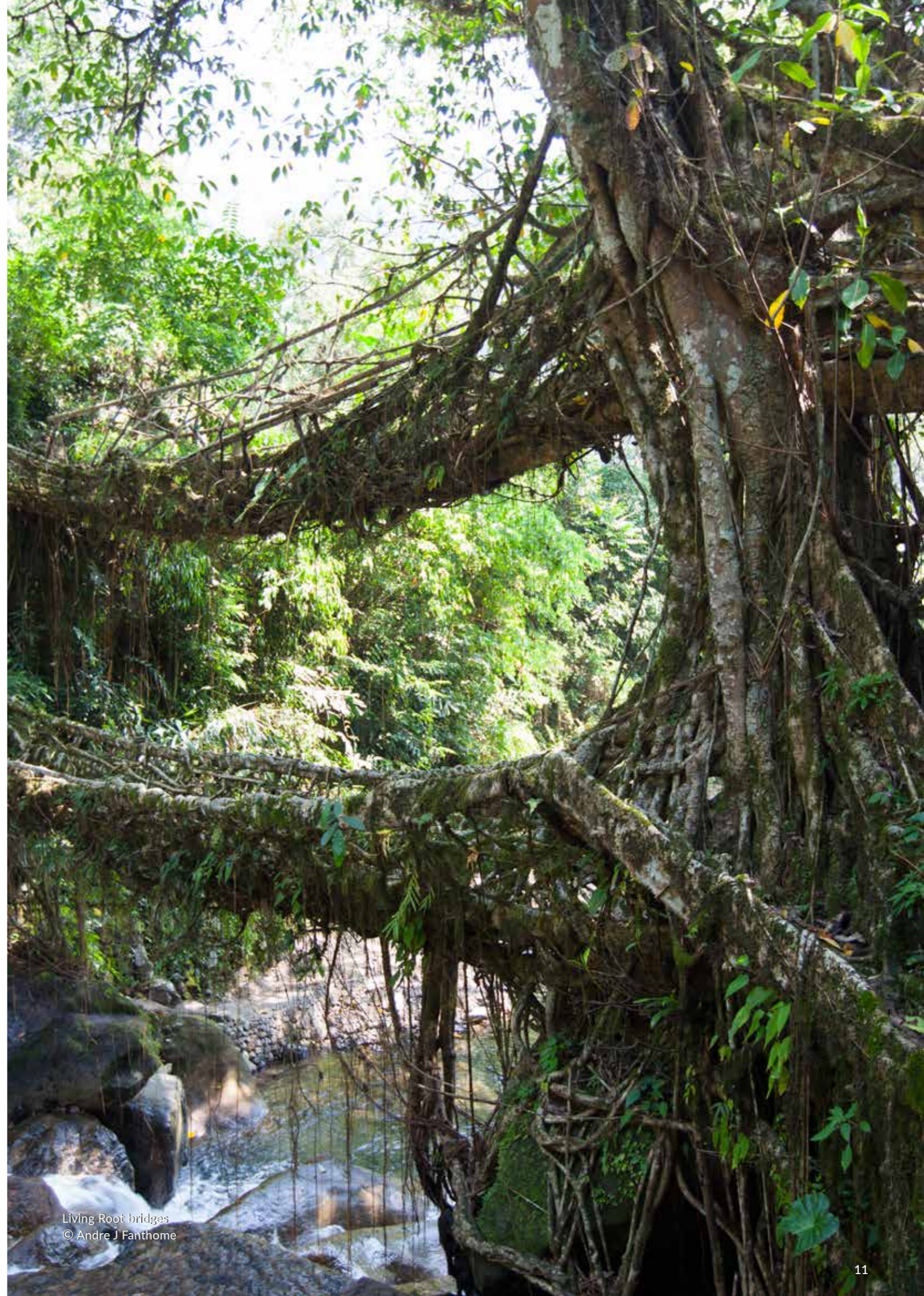
Biodiversity Walks

From the sacred forests to the jhum field, the narrative of the land is essential for the cultural bridging of generations. The ABD Walk is an exploratory walk with the community knowledge-holders through their available forest and field areas that brings to light the variations and varieties of wild edibles and medicinal plants available in these areas. NESFAS's Agro-Biodiversity Walks concentrate on including children - and youth of the community

and serve as opportunities for inter-generational knowledge transfer. These walks give the youth and children a sense of the importance of the natural resources and often lead to eat-ins with wild edibles collected from the forest leading to yet another level of education, where the participants learn how the plants they identified should be used.

Wellbeing Studies And Digital Storytelling (Dst)

The global dialogue on happiness and wellbeing was one of the key themes at Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM) 2015 sessions. Based on this a series of Wellbeing studies were conducted in 2014 by The Indigenous Partnership and NESFAS, who sought to develop a paper based on parallel case studies in the indigenous communities of Meghalaya and Kenya. The study provided a platform for indigenous communities to reflect on their own wellbeing as a basis for making sense of modern ways of living in relation to their own. The study tries to gather an understanding of the subject through folk stories or experience of the community or individuals. These are captured on digital media as short films that reflect the community's take on wellbeing. To produce the digital stories, the participants are often given basic training in



Living Root bridges
© Andre J Fanthome



Eri silk moths and cocoon
© Andre J Fanthome



Khneng Embroidery
© Andre J Fanthome



Eri weaving
© Andre J Fanthome

story board making, photography, videography and editing such that the production is completely of the community due to the level of involvement. "Wellbeing studies" have been conducted in a number of villages, bringing to light eleven key factors as being contributors to the Wellbeing of these communities - Identity, Unity, Love and Respect, Humility, Clean Environment, Reserved Forest areas, Agriculture, Education, Livelihood, Infrastructure, and Preservation of Culture.

Participatory Videos

Participatory Video (PV) is a tool that is used by NESFAS to help communities document relevant issues and traditional knowledge, so as to encourage their visibility to a wider audience, ensure they are archived and transferred, all in a participatory manner. The videos' participatory approach entails the participating community's substantial obligations to the content's nature and theme. The participants are trained in basic video production skills such as camera work, scripting and editing and hence the videos produced are a reflection of what the community considers important and wishes to share with the world. NESFAS facilitates the training of the participants, supports the production as well as the sharing of the works of the PV teams who belong to particular hubs. Five participatory video hubs around the northeast region including three in Meghalaya at Nongtraw and Mawphu, East Khasi Hills, Chandigre in Garo Hills and two in the Nagaland districts of Chizami and Noklak have been set up till now.

Documentation of Cultural Heritage Of Meghalaya

The road to ITM 2015 became a strategic reason to document the rich biodiversity offerings of Meghalaya through the eyes of national and local talents. Together with the Arts and Culture Department of Meghalaya, NESFAS facilitated the production of four films that showcase the cultural heritage of Meghalaya. The opportunity brought together original, innovative and engaging photo documentation from individuals, journalists, photographers, and production companies on the unique cultural heritage of Meghalaya's local food and livelihood systems. Selected through a tendering process 12 films and 2 books were commissioned. The documentary films include "Between Forest and a Song" by Red Dur Productions, Wanphrang Diengdoh; "Ka shad lukhmi", "Material Culture", "Ka shad Shoh kba" by Green Hills, Natalie Diengdoh; and Hooked, "When tongues go silent", "Songs and secrets of Sadolpara", Sounds from the truck country, Kings have their resorts, people have their songs, Brief life of insects, Love songs of Sotja and Ringjeng, "Escaping Museum" by Tarun Bhartiya. The coffee table Book was titled "Shifting through the Cloud" and the Photo Essays book was titled "Meghalaya". These add to the NESFAS list of publications which include "Mother and Child Nutrition" among the Chakhesang tribe in

the state of Nagaland, North-East India and Nutritional status, Food Insecurity, and Biodiversity among the Khasi in Meghalaya, North-East India both with NIN (National Institute of Nutrition).

Livelihood Advocacy

NESFAS works closely with interested communities to strengthen local economies through various novel interventions. Aiming for economic benefits in sync with social, environmental and cultural sustainability. The organisation's initiatives aim for economic promotion of local products, fosters close relationship between producers and consumers.

Mei-Ramew Cafés

Building on the four decisive traits of a Chef - Knowledge, Skill, Attitude and Identity, a Mei-Ramew cafe is a public eating space, where sustainable produce is served as glamourised cuisine to conscious consumers. NESFAS works with interested village or traditional cafe owners, who wish to improve their already existing establishments. The individuals are provided with training and advice on areas of customer service, hygiene, menu, flavour development, management and presentation.

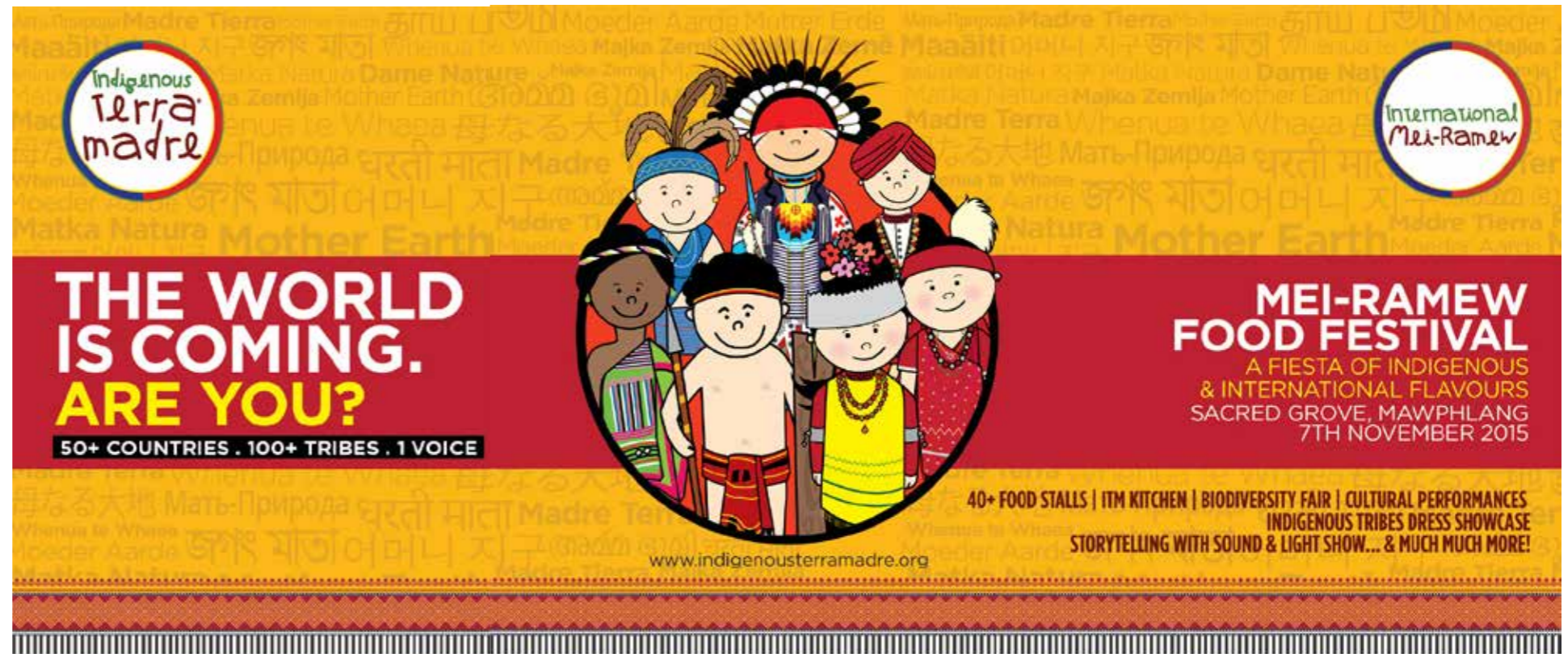
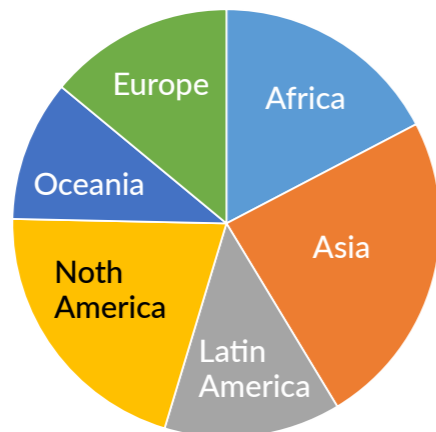
Meiram-Ew Weaves & Khneng Embroidery

NESFAS began work on preservation of the traditional skill of Eri weaving, with the visit of Carol Cassidy of Lao Textiles (South East Asia) to the weaving communities of Byrnihat, Khweng, Plasha and Rongjari in March 2014. On assessing the traditional weaving skills, product quality of the silk, and the challenges faced by the weavers, she recommended NESFAS develop a preservation program. The Eri silk is drawn out from the cocoon of the Eri silk worm, and involves very little investment for cultivation and hence has earned the name, "poor man's silk". The fabric is appreciated for its beautiful texture, flexibility and the fact that it remains cool in summer and warm in winter. Also known as "ahimsa silk" or "peace silk" as the extraction process does not kill the worm. Along with Eri, the Khneng embroidery is a traditional craft from Mustoh, Shella and other nearby villages. It caught NESFAS's attention as a beautiful yet endangered art whose unique thread embellishes the traditional outfit of the people. In association with Special Purpose Vehicle Society (SPVS), Meghalaya, under the Chairmanship of Mr. G. P. Wahlang (IAS), former Chief In-formation Commissioner of Meghalaya, a decision was taken to jointly work to revive Khneng. With the help of a local consultant, Ms. Lajoplin Nongsiej and consultant from Scotland Ms. Anna-Loiuse Meynell, a training programme was taken up with the last three knowledge holders of Khneng guiding 11 trainees from the village and has since then developed an increasing following and seen as a livelihood option through NESFAS events.

The indigenous Terra Madre (ITM) or international Mei-Ramew 2015, from 3rd to 7th November was attended by 606 delegates representing 62 countries and 169 indigenous food communities. The 5-day event was devoted to the knowledge and cultural rights of indigenous peoples and their rights to the Mother Earth. It was, in fact, a milestone on the larger path to sustainability and justice for indigenous communities and ultimately our natural ecosystem. With NESFAS as its anchor and strengthened by the 41 co-hosting village communities, and Slow Food International, ITM envisioned a “Future We Want” where indigenous peoples have a unique part to play in shaping a future more respectful of the environment and its biodiversity. The premise of ITM is that indigenous communities can set positive examples for promoting the pleasure of sustainable food systems that are more socially, economically and culturally just – where wellbeing comes not from the accumulation of wealth but from our connectedness with each other. The plenary and thematic sessions at Indigenous Terra Madre 2015 (ITM 2015) were designed as forums to explore these concepts and to spark future collaborative initiatives. The event also saw two of the religious communities of Shillong, both the Sikhs and Catholics, playing an important role in building bridges by hosting traditional dinners for the delegates at the local Gurudwara and the Church respectively.

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES WAS AS FOLLOWS:

- Africa: 49 delegates
- Asia: 64 delegates
- Latin America: 29 delegates
- North America: 62 delegates
- Oceania: 21 delegates
- Europe: 44 delegates



41 Co-hosts
41 Villages came forward from Meghalaya and Nagaland to become the co-hosts for the ITM 2015. They drove their communities and gave NESFAS the confidence with their indigenous knowledge and culture that they were waiting to share.

9 Visiting Villages
Out of Co-hosting villages 9 were selected as visiting centres considering their distances from Shillong for a day-field visit. The villages worked with stringent guidelines on waste management, food + farm + feast preparations, toilets, school gardens, ABD forest walks and more to get ready for the visitors.

ODF Villages
The 9 visiting villages were declared ODF (Outdoor Defecation Free) after training and fitting of toilets in every household of the said village. This activity was driven by NESFAS and executed by the Government of Meghalaya.

Prevents
A series of Pre-events from food tastings, to theme song launch, the Chief Minister hosted dinner, dinner at The Meghalaya House in the national capital Delhi, reporters training workshops, flash mobs, capacity building workshops for traditional village cooks were a build up leading to the ITM 2015.

Theme Song
The call of the ITM 2015 theme song “Ko-Mei-Ramew” drove the entire campaign of the event and its lead up. Even after the event it reverberated and kept the memory of the days alive.

Documentation
2 Publications and 8 films became agents to document the heritage of the indigenous communities of Meghalaya and were executed with local artists, photographers and film makers with the support of Department of Culture & Tourism.

State Infrastructure
The road to ITM became an opportunity for upgrading the infrastructure to and at the villages. The access and road network to some of these remote villages was undertaken and improved drastically as a long term impact for the betterment of trade and network to market centres.



The inauguration of ITM 2015 summed up the five days of the event into a single evening. From state, national and global dignitaries, delegates, traditional elders and youth of the indigenous world. Formal speeches, ceremonial traditions of gathered communities, cultural performances made the gathering iconic.

Local Voices, Global Audiences! was the call of the two - day programme of 16 plenary and 14 thematic sessions on topics ranging from wellbeing to women's role in nutritional security, to storytelling and indigenous voices on climate change.



Additionally, the programme over two days included taste workshops on insects, wild edibles, honey and fermented foods and a Cut Above: A Slow Meat two-day training for regional butchers and students at the Institute of Hotel Management Shillong to learn about good, clean and fair meat production from farmers and butchers from the United States and Germany.

Besides the sessions at NEHU which were restricted for the delegates, for the host citizens seminars, exhibitions and film festivals revolving around the ITM 2015 themes were held. They were organised in partnership with the local institutes involving dialogues with local academicians and students. It was essential as Shillong is a major education destination for youth in North East.



Nine host villages of Meghalaya welcomed the ITM 2015 delegates to explore the taste of tradition, cultural narratives and crafts born of the land they live in. On behalf of the 41 host villages of Meghalaya and Nagaland these villages within driving distance from Shillong created a treat of food, culture and landscape experiences.

The concluding day of the Indigenous Terra Madre saw a joyous celebration of food, music, dance and culture as delegates and the public mingled at the Mei-Ramew Food Festival at the Sacred Grove, Mawphlang. An estimated 70,000 people flocked to the food festival where cultural performances, biodiversity exhibition and local and international cuisines were showcased.



The gathered ITM delegates from around the world on behalf of their food communities from across the world signed the Shillong Declaration of the ITM 2015 which focused on issues pertaining to food, agroecology, traditional agricultural practices, and their voices being heard on the global playground. The communities brought out various points such as land issues and land rights of the indigenous peoples while highlighting the need to understand the issues and also looking at better practices of land use.



The voices of concern and way forward from the ITM 2015 were chartered in the Shillong Declaration signed by the 606 delegates. While every community in Meghalaya was represented, NESFAS thought it important to share the outcomes with the most marginalised in the village in keeping with its call "no one should be left behind." Also it was important to check that the preparation of 4 years that shaped the sustainable habitats of the village was continuing and maintained. So the NESFAS visited its partner villages, shared the ITM Shillong Declaration and the messages from the many new friends the communities had made from across the seven indigenous continents. The interactive sessions were anchored by the screening of ITM 2015 videos, posters of the declaration stuck on the village walls, orientation sessions on agroecology and other training program plans. The NESFAS team also sat with the communities to understand other concerns like decrease in forest cover, livelihood options, climate change, protection of the plants from pests, insects attack without the use of fertilizer, education gap in terms of agriculture. The team was happy to see that most of the communities were still maintaining the status quo of Open Defecation Free. In Dewlieh to maintain this standard, the village council came out with the idea to award the family who practices good hygiene and sanitation with an amount of Rs. 1000. The monitoring on a regular basis by the government's PHE Department was a good driver. It was encouraging for NESFAS to see that the communities saw the use of the agroecology framework to address the concerns on changing nature of forests, farms and climate to preserve nature. There were further developments like in Langshongthiang the community was ready to give land for school garden, interest in Self-Help group, livelihood options in Eri silk production in Lyngngam area, herbal medicine and also the thought of developing a village plan idea for the benefit of the future generations.



Community Feedback

"One thing which I learnt during ITM-2015; is to respect our mother earth. Since then; I always end up telling my own people to do the same thing"

- Diona Ranee - ITM delegate

"ITM -2015 has given me a platform to share a story on shifting cultivation and the diversity of crops that I am growing in the field and this has become the burning topic during the discussion"

- Jasenta Ranee - ITM delegate of Nongtraw village

Thousands of people came for the ITM at Mawphlang and the field was well maintained, there were dustbin every 5 feet. I really put my appreciation to NESFAS who organised the event.

- Prosius from Porksavillage

"They've banned everything, coal, sand quarry, wood! What should we do now, we don't have options anymore to support ourselves and our family. These children needs to know and learn so that they will have a sustainable future . THAT'S THE FUTURE WE WANT"

- Mr. Synrem, Headman of Pyrda village

"ITM-2015 signifies unity in diversity."

- Rojas Diengdoh- ITM delegate of Wahsohra

"In 15 years time, we look forward to setting an example to others to become a model village in terms of sustainable agriculture, in terms of livelihood options and also a healthy living atmosphere"

- Mr. Synrem, Headman of Pyrda village

"ITM-2015 is just the beginning of our relationship with NESFAS. I am hoping to see more strong collaboration for the overall welfare of our people"

- Shaiphar Dohling

After understanding the real issue that the world is facing right now (climate change); I would like to spend more time with the students to come out with a possible idea to cope up with this issue"

- Richard Ranee - ITM delegate of Nongtraw

"ITM really helped us in realising the importance of local food that we need to preserve them for our future food"

- Mr. Boris Marwein, headman of Laitumiong

"I'm a little deaf but during the ITM I think I heard everything out loud. Even though we spoke different languages, everything was clear to me. I felt like I was a woman of 25 years of age during the ITM"

- Kong Per, ITM delegate of Pyrda

"I would like to thank NESFAS for giving us the opportunity to voice our concerns with other people. Besides various workshops and discussions; I really enjoyed the comfort provided by NESFAS"

- Shemborlang Diengdoh, ITM delegate

	ITM FOLLOW UP	LIVELIHOOD	TRAINING	EVENTS & CELEBRATION	FOOD & FLAVOURS	AGROECOLOGY	HABITAT & INFRASTRUCTURE
Apr 2016		NESFAS initiated the PGS program with a meeting with Bethany Society to understand the situation of livelihoods sector and activities being undertaken by different organizations		World Earth Day celebration at Mawhiang: A workshop cum training program by on tree plantation along with a drawing competition at local school			
May 2016	A follow up of the Pre ITM 2015 Activities in Lyngngam					In depth interview with three custodian farmers that will help in developing a methodology to get the ground reality in terms of our understanding towards agro ecology, in Nongtraw Village	
June 2016	Study: A follow up of the Pre ITM 2015 Activities in Khweng	Improved understanding of existing livelihood activities & potential livelihood assets. Review of market issues and agriculture in Khweng, Nongtraw and Laitsohpliah.		World Environment Day Plantation at Mawhiang		A workshop on Agro ecology for the PV team members at NESFAS Headquarter	
July 2016		Participatory workshop on Women's Human Rights and Sustainable Livelihoods organised by NEN	1st Composting Workshop at NESFAS Headquarters				
Aug 2016			2nd Composting Workshop at NESFAS Headquarters 3rd Composting Workshop at NESFAS Headquarters	International Day of the World's Indigenous People Take the Bait Fishing Fest at Khweng Village Mini Mei-Ramew Festival at Khweng Village	Cooking class by Kong Anita: Baking with Sand Session at NESFAS 4th Composting Workshop at NESFAS Headquarters		
Sept 2016	Study: A follow up of the Pre ITM 2015 Activities in Dombah Village			Orientation talk at Women's College NESFAS at Terra Madre Salone Del Gusto		Introduce the concept of agroecology through a dialogue process among the PGS farmers in Dewlieh, Laitsohpliah, Khweng and Nongtraw	Village Mapping, Khwen Ri-Bhoi
Oct 2016		PGS Orientation programme and Local Group formation		Lyngngam Rural camp of TISS Students from Labour Department & Social protection, Guwahati	Share the findings of the first draft of a forthcoming book that Prof. Harriet Kuhnlein is writing on the basis of the nutritional assessment study that NIN, Rachele and Harriet undertook in preparation for the ITM 2015 at Mairang		Village Mapping, Khweng Participatory Village Mapping Exercise at Khweng Village, Ri-Bhoi
Nov 2016		Visit to Mustoh Village, Shella with external Eri consultant Anna Louise Meynell	Composting at Laitsohpliah - 1st Session Composting at Laitsohpliah - 2nd Session	1st International Agrobiodiversity Congress. Dr Carl O Rangad (Vice Chairman, Operations, NESFAS) participated in the Congress representing The Indigenous Partnership (TIP) and NESFAS. He presented an abstract of a study, which was also exhibited as a poster. NESFAS participated at the 8th Biofach India, New Delhi. Shaiphar Dohling (active member of PGS group) from Dewlieh community and Janak P Singh represented NESFAS.		Meeting on "Agroecology AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT", with Bah Phrang, Bah Carl, Bah GP Wahlang, Dr. AK Nongkynrih and Pius at NESFAS Headquarter	
Dec 2016			Composting at Laitsohpliah - 3rd Session Composting at Laitsohpliah - 4th Session	Terra Madre Day Celebration at Moosakhia (Daniel Moss as the Chief Guest)		Daniel Moss visit Programme on Neighborhood Youth Parliament NYP by NYK at Sohrarim	
Jan 2017			Training for Youth Leadership and Community Development: workshop organized by SURE sponsored by NYK on the topic "Youth and Agriculture" at Moosakhia				
Feb 2017							
Mar 2017			Composting 4 quintals at NESFAS Headquarter	Women's day/ NESFAS at Chizami Biodiversity Festival 2017	Cooks' Alliance Workshop at NESFAS Headquarter		

The Startegic Efforts



Culture of Retreats & Review

When it is a small and young team connected to a large network of global and local knowledge holders and consultants it becomes necessary to periodically review the course, progress and strategies. Rathindranath Roy who is a learning facilitator and change guide anchors what NESFAS refers to as "Retreats". Targeted as quarterly reviews they are seen as recharge points for all NESFAS initiatives. The programme is guided by Chairperson Phrang Roy, Chairman-Operations, Dr. Carl Rangad and Communications and Habitat Consultant Ajay Nayak along with periodic guests who can facilitate sessions with a fresh perspective of their specialisation. The retreats focus on discussions, submission and analysis of result matrix reports of each unit that set the prioritisation on the work plans for the quarter. Besides the official tasks the duration of the retreats are broken up into a gathering of the NESFAS board and friends for feedback, correctives and approvals on the year plans. Additional programming is worked upon to imagine, inspire the team and also partner community visits to set scope and perspectives on the live landscapes of operation and the community feedback. These retreats aim and end with the team having a clear plan of action for development of NESFAS'S intervention with responsibilities demarcated, time schedules and results specified and initiation of efforts to generate necessary resources.

Community Mobilisation

The NESFAS Community and Governance Team worked on activating the resources the community offered to focus the directions given by the ITM 2015 and the Shillong Declaration.



Youth and Agriculture Workshop
© Pius Ranee



Youth and Agriculture Workshop
© Pius Ranee



A Khasi woman and her child
© Andre J Fanthome

Community Participation in International Study 20/11/16

NESFAS along with the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad, TIP, Bioersity International and Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE), McGill University, Montreal, under the guidance of Harriet V. Kuhnlein, Professor Emerita of Human Nutrition, Founding Director, CINE, have been conducting a study on nutritional status, food insecurity and biodiversity among the Khasi tribes of Meghalaya, in 2015.

The study is in the final stages of analysis and aimed to share data for community input. Funded by the Agro Ecology Fund (AEF) in the USA, this research is a part of the work of the Task Force on Traditional, Indigenous and Cultural Food and Nutrition of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences. Apart from the West Khasi Hills, studies were also done for reporting to the Indigenous Terra Madre 2015 that was organised in Meghalaya in November last year from the Mohawk in Canada, the Chakesang in Nagaland and the Karen in Thailand. The 4 which were reported at the ITM 2015 will be a part of the 12 chapters from different parts of the world that the Task Force is putting together for a publication. This research was to uncover gender roles and local food resources that might contribute to improving nutritional status, particularly of women and children.

On the 20th of October 2016, a small group of individuals from Mairang who were involved in this study met with NESFAS team at Pyndemumiong, Mairang, to go over the findings of the studies. The participants, mostly women, were happy to receive the information provided to them, especially when they themselves were a part of the sample group. D Pariong, Project coordinator, Wellsprings Social Service Society, Meghalaya, who was also present at the meeting said, "Every time a survey is done, there never is a return of findings to the sample group. This time it was good that the findings were shared. A lot of helpful information was given out today. And will encourage future participation as this community will share with other communities."

The exchange also instigated questions from participants on the results and on consumption patterns for common sufferings like anemia, age for weaning off babies and what variety of rice offers better nutrition among others.

Rural camp for Labour Studies & Social Protection Department, TISS - Guwahati - 28-30 /11/16

NESFAS organised a rural camp for students of Labour Studies & Social Protection Department, TISS at Langshongthiang Village, in the Lyngngam area of West Khasi Hills District. The 21 students along with Rajdeep Singha, Chairperson of the Department were accompanied by NESFAS Associate Merrysha Nongrum. The 21 students along with Rajdeep Singha, Chairperson Centre for Labour Studies and Social Protection were accompanied by NESFAS Associate



Merrysha Nongrum. The rural camp aimed to provide the students a clear cut understanding of rural lives, particularly the relationships between the agricultural practices and lifestyles. They also covered areas like agriculture practice and technology, role of women and gender issues, wages and livelihood. A community meeting in the village encouraged the participants to actively interact with the community after which some custodian farmers took the students to the Jhum fields.

The students were able to observe first hand and learn as briefed by the community people about the traditional agricultural practices. After coming back from the Jhum field, the students went for the transect walk and visited the households.

Neighborhood Youth Parliament (NYP) by NYKS at Sohrarim- 20/12/16

Is part of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Shillong, the Tynrai Foundation held a programme at Sohrarim to deliberate on certain new possibilities for the rural youth to improve their employment opportunities. The theme of the session was "Agriculture and Youth" and drew crowds from villages like Nongtraw, Dewlieh, Mawjrang, Diengsong and Ladmawphlang and also other organisations besides NESFAS like Rice Socio Development Quid, A Ray of Hope Foundation (AROH), Rympei Jingtup Development Society, Society for Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE). The session was chaired by Mr. Shaiphar Dohling, Secretary of Tynrai Foundation, Mr. Kaisar Dohling, National Youth Volunteers of 12-Shnong Laitkroh C&R D Block, Resource Person Rev. H H Mohrmen and Mr Pius Raneer an Associate from NESFAS.

The programme highlighted a common consensus among various stakeholders for the need to create a platform for youth employment problems that empowers them to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic and development of their community.

The possibility of agriculture, a timeless practice in the communities, is facing many hurdles to earn a livelihood like shortage of arable land, limited access to credit and resources. Agriculture, a timeless practice in the communities, is facing many hurdles to provide livelihood options - like shortage of arable land, limited access to credit and resources, along with the pressure of aspiration that the urban life draws the youth into. H.H. Mohrmen suggested "One of the ways out of this problem is expanding the scope of agriculture with engagement in the livestock business." H.H. Mohrmen suggested "As one of a way out of this problem is expanding the scope of agriculture with engagement in the livestock business."

NESFAS suggested the possibility of establishing a youth based food network at a rural community level with the help of development practitioners, youth leaders, youth associations, producers' organisations and policy makers alike. Mohrmen also recommended, "It is important to identify entrepreneurship ideas within the region and to carefully understand the scope that lies with regards to the maintaining and the execution of these ideas into practice."

23-27/01/17 Moosakhia, Youth and Agriculture Workshop

A training session for Youth Leadership and Community Development was organised by the Society For Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE) Jowai, sponsored by Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) Jowai at Moosakhia Village, Amlarem Block, West Jaiñtia Hills District, Meghalaya. NESFAS founded one of the sessions to address "Rebranding agriculture as a profession for the youth". In this workshop, many youths from Jowai, Samanong, Wahjajer, Mopyut and also from Moosakhia took part. Most of the participants were still pursuing their education, some were farmers and some were involved in other employment sectors. Janak Preet Singh and Pius Raneer, Associates at NESFAS were supported by HH Mohrmen in facilitating the session where certain issues concerning the youth drifting from agriculture in leaps and bounds was discussed. In this era, we often forget that food, clothing and shelter are the basic necessities for survival.

They raised the debate how modernization has shifted focus from agriculture putting food security and agricultural sustainability under threat. Based on the survey held in Khat-ar Shnong, it was found that many of youth were of the view that farming is a poor man's dirty job. This notion about farming as a profession has pushed interest away along with the views of lethargic lifestyles. A profession is always associated with a certain caliber. In this case, an officer will gain more respect than a farmer. The main idea of the session was to rebrand agriculture as a job which gives a sense of pride and respect which actually feeds any 'Officer'.

Focus group discussion and follow up of Tree plantation that was held on World Environment Day, 06/03/17

Tree plantation in Mawhiang village was a post ITM activity. Community people took the initiative and came up with the idea of tree plantation during World Environment Day, 2016. This day Mawhiang Community came together and celebrated the World Environment Day by planting trees. The community had chosen and donated a big plot of land for the tree plantation. On 6th March 2017, NESFAS team visited Mawhiang village for a follow-up programme of the plantation. Mr. Balajied, the Secretary of the village took the team to observe the land. It was seen that approximately 80% of the trees are in good condition after a period of more than 9 months.

The community of Mawhiang have decided to once again plant more trees in the same plot of land in the upcoming World Environment Day 2017, to make use of the empty spaces around. After the following up on the trees, a Focus Group Discuss (FGD) with women farmers of Mawhiang community was conducted.

Five women farmers participated in this discussion. This FGD is part of a small survey conducted by MAKAM or Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (Forum For Women Farmers' Rights), in which NESFAS'S local partner NEN Shillong approached NESFAS for conducting in one of the villages that it was working with. The FGD focussed on the role of women in a community and the livelihood activities that women are engaged in. Some of the other areas discussed in the FGD include; resource rights of women farmers, credit and allied services availability, safety and security of women in their village, women's voice and decision making, and, the role of organisations and groups at the village level.



NESFAS looks at the significance of the community and global calendars and sees opportunities to create events and festivals that become occasions to celebrate indigenous food and farming.

**World Earth Day Celebration 22nd April 2016:
Planting thoughts not trees**

The Celebration Calendar 2016-17 for NESFAS began with the World Earth Day celebration at Mawhiang. Where the team with the community created a workshop cum training program on tree plantation. Hosted at the village school the gathering also had a drawing competition and a students' play on the theme: Trees for the Earth, a small Food Diversity Fair and planting of fruit trees in the garden. A heavy downpour didn't stop the villagers from joining the festivities or from attending the workshop cum training. Dr. Carl O. Rangad, Rtd. Director of Horticulture and current Vice Chairman of NESFAS, and Dr. A. K. Nongkynrih, Professor of Sociology, NEHU oriented the session with the importance of trees to the earth. Dr. Rangad reminded the community of their heritage of biodiversity and rich forests which the community acknowledged is shrinking and lamented the fact that it is now much tougher to cultivate the land. Dr. Rangad urged the community to be wise and explained why the timeless cycles of the earth practiced by their ancestors of not planting trees in April will be continued along with the lessons from the past of managing their natural resources like forests. Dr. Nongkynrih spoke to the gathering about how the community should not just look at planting trees but also think about how they can maintain other resources of their forests and said, "It is easy to plant a tree but it is harder to built a forest of thought."

World Environment Day Celebration 04th June 2016: Planting the trees

The World Environment Day coincided with the approaching monsoons and the season of plantation. Mawhiang community decided that as their ancestors erected Monoliths, they would plant living monuments – trees, that their children might see, and hopefully adopt, the values of preserving nature. Based on traditional knowledge and biodynamic culture, the community conducted a tree plantation drive on the eve of World Environment Day. The plantation area donated by the community was surveyed, soil densities tested, trees typology decided on that basis and accordingly saplings of local trees were picked. While the community itself collected 150 saplings, the Nongtraw community of East Khasi Hills also showed its support by contributing 150 fruit plants. Another 200 and 350 were contributed by Dr. A. K. Nongkynrih and Dr. Rangad, respectively. The types of trees included Alder, known for their nitrogen fixing and medicinal value, and trees that provide timber, fruit and flowers. The community members expressed their excitement. "I know that my children will enjoy the benefits of our efforts and I look forward to a better future for them," exclaimed Kong Levi Kharlyngdoh, farmer and resident of Mawhiang. Damutskhem Kharwer, a class 7th student said, "I learned at school that plants produce oxygen and freshen our air. Today I planted a 'sohpohmawlyndaw' tree. I will take care of my tree and if it dies I will plant another in its place."



*"It is easy to plant a tree but it is harder to built a forest of thought,"
- Dr. A. K. Nongkynrih*

Tree plantation
© Raisa Daimary



Smoked fish
© Lambok Thangkiew

*"We will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if we fail to address the educational needs of indigenous people."
– U N Secretary - General, Ban Ki-moon*

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples - 08/08/16

Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity & Food Sovereignty (TIP) and NESFAS celebrated the United Nation's International Day of the World's Indigenous People by vowing continued support for the wellbeing of their communities. NESFAS celebrated this day by focusing on its relationship with its partner villages and the UN theme for the year 2016 "Indigenous People's Right to Education". The UN states that "Indigenous people have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning." This day pays tribute to the world's 370 million indigenous people, and reaffirms UNESCO's determination to safeguard and promote their identities, languages and knowledge systems. Nurturing and harnessing this potential calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Says Phrang Roy, Chairman NESFAS and Coordinator for TIP, "Out of desperation, out of temptations and sometimes out of ignorance many of us may tend to abandon our traditional practices even before we could clearly understand their intrinsic values."

Mini Mei-Ramew Khweng Festival - 27/08/16

Mini Mei-Ramew Festival, Khweng, was taken up as an initiative by the community of Khweng following its participation in the Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM) 2015 where it was one of the co-hosts along with 41 other communities. The community wished to conduct the festival as a symbolic appreciation of ITM 2015, locally known as the International Mei-Ramew, that allowed the community to revive their culture and strengthen their belief in the traditional food systems and knowledge that they have. The community felt the need to lead this initiative as they wished to tell their stories and discuss, through this platform, the various issues that they feel are meaningful to farmers, Indigenous Peoples and people who share their concerns about food systems, environment, diversity, land, and a future where the youth lead the way.



Mini Mei-Ramew Festival, Khweng
© Shubham



Millet Pakora
© Alethea K Lyngdoh

The festival overall brought together people from the different parts of Meghalaya, especially the urban public of Shillong, to witness the rich and abundant culture, food systems and biodiversity around Khweng Village. The main highlights were: food fest, Mei-Ramew market, the plenary sessions on handloom, handicraft, school garden, habitat exhibition, agro-biodiversity walk and other cultural programmes. The Mei-Ramew Food Court showcased diverse recipes which mostly consisted of foraged wild edibles. Lastly, the festival concluded with the cultural programmes; drama by RITI Academy Shillong, with music that highlighted the traditional music of Khweng, Ri- Bhoi, and dance performances. The Chief Guest, Mr. Nestar Kharmawphlang, Farmer and Head Master, RCUP School, Laitsohpliah, said, "I see that the future is in danger, nowadays people don't like indigenous foods, they eat 'junk food' which is unhealthy."



Phidarilin Uriah
© Alethea K Lyngdoh



S. Mylliepdah
© Alethea K Lyngdoh

Cooks Alliance Workshop with Millet (Krai) 10/11/16

Millet (in Khasi is called as Krai), a popular crop in the bygone days, is increasingly being forgotten. NESFAS appreciates those who make an effort to revive this crop. As one of its initiative, the community people who grow millet are taught to create a fusion of dishes that are contemporary using millet as the main ingredient. A cooking class was held at NESFAS office with the special focus on millet. Miss Duh Mylliepdah from Laitkor Village conducted the cooking session in the NESFAS office. She showed her recipes which fused the traditional ingredients such as Millet in the dishing of pakora, chapati and poori.

Terra Madre Day Celebration 10/12/16

The 8th Terra Madre Day was celebrated around the world on 10th December. An annual call from Slow Food to action, which has become a tradition where hundreds of events take shape ranging from collective meals, fundraisers, community festivals, protest, a workshop for children, excursions to producers and much more from around the world. To show solidarity with Terra Madre Network one of NESFAS partner villages, Moosakhia, used their creativity and knowledge to build a better food future by celebrating a themed get-together with near-by villages of "Loving the earth, Defending the future." It was an informal gathering, where the potluck luncheon showcased their creativity and diversity within their network of friends and neighbours along with practices of sustainable food production. They displayed the varieties of ingredients collected either from the forest, their kitchen garden and even the school garden, to make a meal.



Terra Madre Day
© Alethea K Lyngdoh



Kong D Suting shares 'kwai' with Naga women
© Evarity Sungoh



Local seeds variety display
© Evarity Sungoh



Cook's alliance workshop
© Alethea K Lyngdoh

Women's Day - 08/03/17

Women traditionally play a central role in any indigenous communities. NESFAS highlights the role of women as custodians of our agrobiodiversity and foodways. On 8th March 2017, the 106th Women's Day across the globe, it honored the many women who are the undeniable protectors of the biodiversity. Women in Meghalaya bestow many factors responsible in bringing wellbeing in their community and also play a crucial role in enhancing and conserving indigenous practices of seed keeping or even foraging. Kong Bamonlang Shabong a custodian farmer from Pyrda Village, Meghalaya, is a proud Khasi women representing a matrilineal society and believes that men and women are both responsible for contributing wellbeing in the society. However, she claims that women take the responsibility of seed keeping holistically. Kong Plantina Kharmujai, proud owner of the first Mei Ram-ew café in Khweng village, Ri Bhoi, transformed her tea and food stall and serves fresh local food; vegetable gathered from her garden and also wild edibles foraged from nearby forests. Her café features traditional food from Ri-Bhoi which is strikingly different from the rest of the state, but most importantly the café has now become the hub of the village whereby many community members would drop in before they set off to work in the morning and lastly gather again every evening for a cup of tea while she serves tea with local snacks like Putharoor Pumaloi.

"The women in our village take care of farming, livestock, foraging, chores, fodder, fuel, children and many more" says Kong Iolin Kharsyntiew of Mawhiang Village. Indigenous women are also recognised as the key traditional knowledge holders of a community. They are the ones usually engaged in simple story telling practices or share knowledge with their younger generations. Kong Slibon Nongrum of Laitsohpliah, an illustrious indigenous knowledge holder was an eminent soul who passed away at the age of 83.

Cooks' Alliance Workshop - 18/03/17

On the 18th March 2017, a Cooks' Alliance Workshop was held in the NESFAS office where Mrs. Anita Roy, Board Member of NESFAS shared with the local cooks of Khweng and Nongtraw community cooking techniques which strongly complement the relationship between traditional food systems and nutrition. The workshop aimed at motivating the community to focus on vegetables as an important food source, in this case to also encourage the use of abundant wild edible plants found in their village. The workshop also shared the importance of different food consumption for a healthy diet, which can also be achieved through recipe fusion and flavour innovations. Among the participants were Kong Plantina Mujai, the owner of Mei Ramew café at Khweng, Kong Dial Muksor, the owner of a local food stall in Khweng that hopes to become a Mei Ramew café one day, Kong Pliemon Barim, a cook at ICDS Khweng, Kong Tharaina Riahtam, cook at the Midday meal program at Nongtraw and Kong Barilin Rane, a passionate youth working for the promotion of local foods.

Mrs. Roy and the cooks exchanged notes on key cooking technique and some traditional food recipes and the importance of sharing traditional values meeting contemporary concerns of nutrition. Some of the recipes included omelette mixed with five green leafy wild edibles foraged from the forests such as jatalo, jamahek, jali, jajew, jatira, and a stew made with rice, wild edibles, with a spoonful of fish sauce. Cooks at ICDS centres have a major role because through the mid-day meal programme, they are the ones who select food items given to the children.

Innovations for Livelihoods

Post ITM2015, NESFAS has increasingly looked at aspirations and building of self-sufficiency for its communities. In this the Livelihoods unit steers the course and created network opportunities to link the producer to consumer to partner system in place.



Food items display at the Terra Madre, Turin
© Raisa Daimary

PGS Program 01/04/16 Livelihood Study

Improved understanding of existing livelihood activities & potential livelihood assets and of situation & problems of market issues and agriculture. On 15th April 2018 the unit visited Khweng, Nongtraw and Laitsohpliah to gauge and understand the possibilities.

Institutional visit to Bethany Society and Urban Organic Farm 28 - 30/04/16

The calendar opened when a Janak Preet Singh and Pius Rane (NESFAS Associates) organised a meeting with Bethany Society, Shillong to understand the situation of livelihoods sector and activities being undertaken by different organizations and to establish future collaborations/networks if necessary - for capacity building of NESFAS livelihood initiatives. Bethany Society, Shillong, is an institution of common interest in the Agroecology sector, as most of them are dealing with organic farming systems. The meeting with Mr. Ikmenroy Nongrum and Mr. Alkin Rynnina, dedicated field staffs and trainers, led to key data on

composting and chemical-free fertilizers. These initiatives align with the Society's revenue generation and also employment of differently abled people that, are associated with them. Following this the team visited the organic farming field of Mr Alkin, near the Fire Brigade in Shillong who demonstrated soil testing as well as usage of organic manure. He shared his system of saving local seeds, multiple cropping and the sale of his produce in his neighbourhood.



Community PGS Workshop
© NESFAS



Janak P. Singh
© NESFAS

Rural Livelihood Surveys: 15/06/16

A study on improved understanding of existing livelihood activities and potential livelihood assets in three communities was conducted by Janak Preet Singh, Associate, Livelihood initiatives NESFAS. The study was essentially done to contribute designing future interventions and strategies in Nongtraw, East Khasi Hills, Laitsohpliah East Khasi Hills and Khweng, Ri-Bhoi.

The study in Laitsohpliah was conducted with the help of interns from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Guwahati through a simple survey format based on interview schedule, transect walk, institutional visit to the organizations focusing on livelihoods. It was found that in all the three villages, the common and most important livelihood asset was agriculture as practiced by almost all of the household in the villages. Also, some households are engaged in beekeeping, basket making, poultry and piggery. Though these villages are agro rich and mostly produce chemical-free crops, there is no distinction of price in the market as compared to the conventional produce. This is a big problem which sometimes is discouraging as they also have no proof of their products being chemical-free. Food processing of fruits like 'Sohiong', a blackberry fruit commonly found in Meghalaya which is underutilised, can become a potential livelihood. Beekeeping is also an important on going practice of many households. For their agro products, nearby markets like IewSohra (IewbakSohra), IewShyllong (Mawjrong), IewShyllong (Laitryngew) are the only source of market accessibility. Khweng community in the Ri-Bhoi District has huge potential in terms of agro/eco tourism. Their existing Self Help Group (SHG) already makes value added products from ginger, like candy and juice at a very small scale and can be improved. Khweng is also famous for eri weaving, with

which NESFAS is already involved but its market and branding can be developed. In Laitsohpliah village, while similar livelihoods were found the markets were a concern and the community had an existing tourist View point. However, while this point generates footfalls there is little revenue, as it is free. Opportunities for commerce can be explored to generate employment for the youth and also for sale of village produce.

Participatory workshop on Women's Human Rights and Sustainable Livelihoods organised by NEN - 26 - 28/ 07/16

A participatory workshop on "Women's Human Rights and Sustainable Livelihoods" was conducted from the 26th to 28th July 2016, by ANANDI (Area Networking and Development Initiatives), an organisation based in Gujarat. It was organised by one of NESFAS partner organisations North East Network (NEN) Nagaland in Shillong, Meghalaya. The resource persons were Ms. Sejal Dand, Director - Research and Advocacy, ANANDI and Ms. Neeta Hardikar, Executive Director & Director Tribal Program, ANANDI. Ms. Merrysha Nongrum, Associate, NESFAS, and Ms. Evarity Sungoh, Associate Trainee, NESFAS, took part in this workshop as they both are involved in working with community initiatives with the villages. With the help of this workshop, they were able to learn certain exercises and tools that can be useful to apply while working with the different partner communities of NESFAS.

The core focus of the workshop is on the role of women in a family and society, and also other important aspects such as their awareness about their rights, entitlement, and identity. This training also concentrated on learning the reflections and questions reviewed from each participant, followed by role play performed by the participants themselves based on topics such as discrimination of women in family, discrimination of a single women, discrimination of women in the community, discrimination of women in the market and discrimination of women in the Village Council. The last day of the training was about understanding the concepts of "creating sustainable livelihoods".



Kong R Syiem
© Andre J Fanthome



PGS Orientation
© NESFAS

It affects different aspects of living such as; security, family, shelter, nutrition, sound health, land, forest, water, peace, transportation, rest and relaxation, environment, education, society, poverty, means of production, skills, information, employment and income etc. "All these factors fall in law and orders for the beneficiary of the women members within family and society" said Merrysha Nongrum. The training contributed to learning new tools and techniques for the participants which will help the community to learn something in relation to the gender works. At the same time, it would help both facilitators and participants to learn things. Tools were identified to help women themselves to see changes.

PGS Orientation Program and Local Group Formation - 05/10/16

Three villages were selected for PGS programme in the 1st quarter 2016, Laitsohpliah, Khweng and Nongtraw respectively. The villages were selected on a priority basis and as per interest of the community. These villages agreed to be stewards of organic farming and agroecology initiative of NESFAS. Since the villages had already agreed to the PGS program, NESFAS approached the custodian farmers of the respective villages and took their advice as to formation of local PGS groups. With the help of the local Dorbar and custodian farmers, the NESFAS team was able to initiate the PGS program. The tools which were very helpful in conducting the program were the display of videos and photo documentations. It allowed the community to receive the information more effectively. The PGS exercise was then extended to Dewlieh village which led to the enrollment target of 100 organic farmers. Therefore total number of farmers enrolled was 130. In each village an orientation programme was conducted alongside farm inspections, appraisals and reading of the farmers' pledge and basic organic standards. The PGS program has come out to be a successful mechanism in tackling the issue of local food systems and promotion of safe and sustainable food systems. It concentrates on custodian farmers and small scale farmers and appreciates their knowledge. As suggested earlier in the 1st quarter, PGS has established the base for the initiation of NESFAS Agroecology work. As part of our exercise, we came across various issues related to documentation of traditional know how with regards to pest management, soil health and seed keeping. It was good to hear farmers raising questions on different types of seeds available and the difference between them. Keeping of agricultural records (for example - book keeping, measurement of agricultural land) were other issues raised. In short we were able to tickle the minds of the farmers.



PRA exercise
© NESFAS

To link the scientific enquiry to the community knowledge is one of the tasks that NESFAS has been establishing since its conception. To establish the regulatory scopes of Agroecology and its ties to the grassroots was one of the challenge that would be faced. Among the series of visits with global experts like Francesco Rosado May NESFAS also consistently interviewed custodian farmers and documented their indigenous practices.



Daniel Moss
© Alethea K Lyngdoh

Community Interviews 20 - 21/05/16

A series of Interviews with three custodian farmers, Horno, Richard and Kresensia of Nongtraw were conducted to help develop a methodology towards agroecology. This would also help build the case for Jhum (Shifting) cultivation, relationships with crops grown and the problems faced by the farmers. The visit also documented the diversity of crops, the techniques unique to the landscape and also the transfer of knowledge to the younger generation. Pius Ranee facilitated the sessions and one of the outcomes he shared was that while shifting cultivation has been such a good practice the community has an increasing concern on the decreasing duration of fallow periods year by year. This discussion with the farmers and the youth, became an opportunity for him to introduce easily the concept of agroecology as he related these existing practices to sustainability and they created their own understanding and tried to elaborate the word agroecology as follows in Khasi, "Kajingrep bah iarpateng kabaio hjinghi kaina kilongshuwa man shuwa ban nangkhampynjanaishuhshuh ban iohiaka bam kabanehjunom" (translated as "Inherited agricultural practice that allows for the further re-design in sustainable food systems")

Agroecology Scope Workshop 19 - 30/09/16

Introduce the concept of agroecology through a dialogue process among the PGS farmers in Dewlieh, Laitsohpliah, Khweng and Nongtraw. The team were able to mobilize around 130 farmers for the PGS initiative. The concept of agroecology and its basic principles was being promoted among the PGS farmers. A set of action plans were put in place which included creating a the database of participating PGS farmers and their orientation on agroecology with the sharing of communication material on the subject.



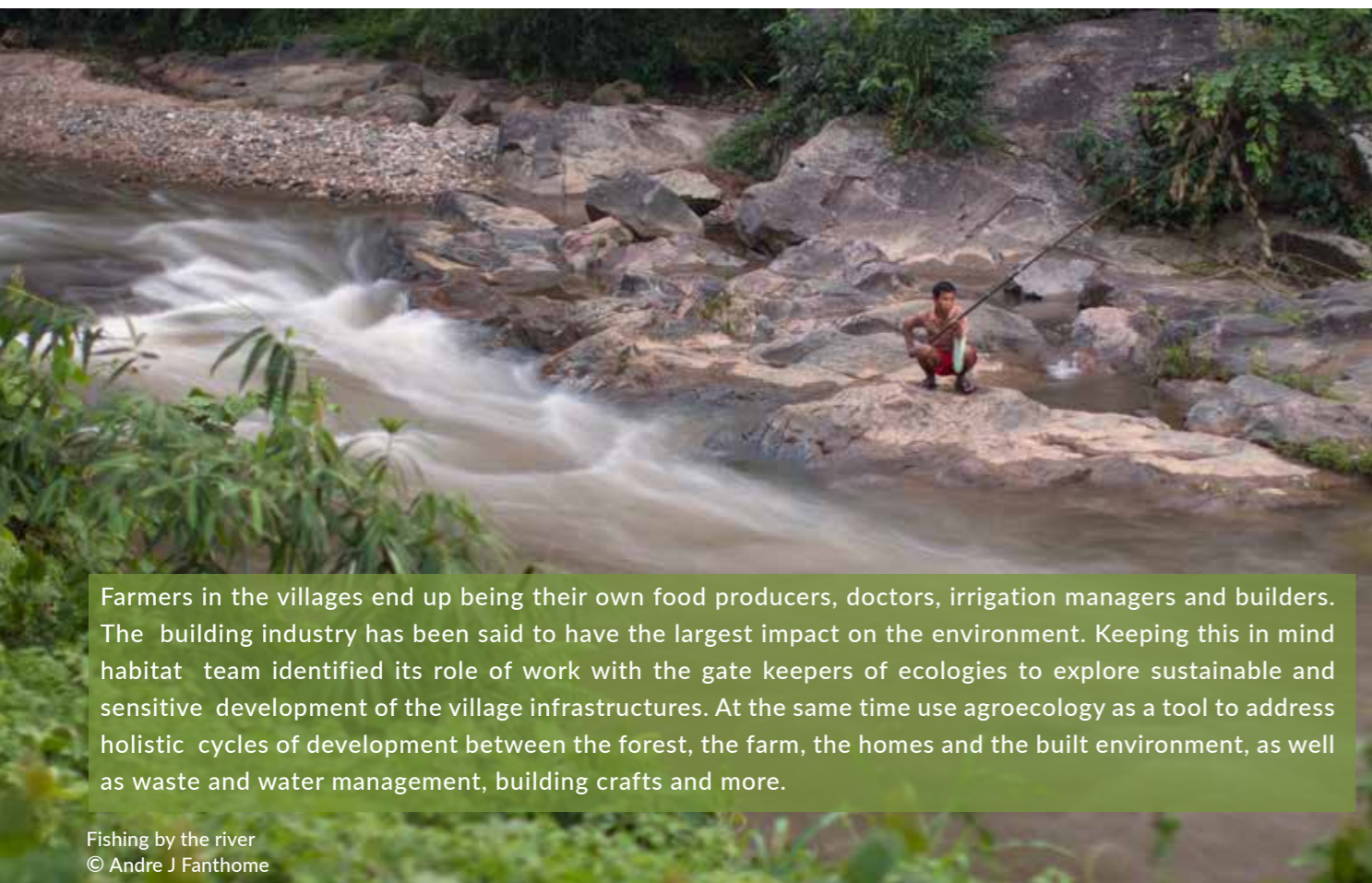
Agroecology Expert Daniel Moss' visit - 07 - 13/12/16

NESFAS hosted Daniel Moss, Executive Director of the AgroEcology Fund (AEF) in Meghalaya. AEF was one of the core contributors for ITM 2015 and NESFAS wanted to share how communities working with NESFAS intend to amplify agroecology, the team took him to seven communities namely Khweng, Laitsohpliah, Nongtraw, Moosakhia, Mawphlang, Porksai and Chandigre.



Daniel Moss' visit
© Alethea K Lyngdoh

Daniel Moss said to the Khweng community, "We would like to support communities like yours who are trying to revive the traditions and keep the land healthy". During the visit, Moss met with many farmers, both young and old, men and women, and exchanged dialogues on the field of agroecology. These few days led Moss to interact with many groups and individuals who are firm supporters of the biodiversity through their ways of life, such as the bee keepers, weavers, farmers, seed keepers, etc.



Farmers in the villages end up being their own food producers, doctors, irrigation managers and builders. The building industry has been said to have the largest impact on the environment. Keeping this in mind habitat team identified its role of work with the gate keepers of ecologies to explore sustainable and sensitive development of the village infrastructures. At the same time use agroecology as a tool to address holistic cycles of development between the forest, the farm, the homes and the built environment, as well as waste and water management, building crafts and more.

Fishing by the river
© Andre J Fanthome

**19 - 23/09/16
Participatory Village Mapping Exercise at Khweng Village, Ri-Bhoi**

The habitat team developed a methodology to review the development of Khweng based on an earlier exercise of a need-based vision plan. Newly armed by the PRA training the team used it to conduct an exercise with the community development team to map the village. This also resulted in identifying a possible community action plan along with household survey, which would document in physicality and numerical data an earlier vision map made by the elders of the community on 9th June 2016. It resulted in a working development map on a participatory basis with the involvement of the whole community. A similar exercise was also conducted at Nongtraw, wherein interns from St. Edmunds participated. By the end of the two exercises, NESFAS hoped to establish the significance of holistic planning and the alternatives to sensitive development in the minds of the communities.



Mapping exercise
© NESFAS

Composting workshop at Laitsohpliah - 12/11/16

The community of Laitsohpliah Village in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills District, hosted a workshop on surface composting organised by NESFAS with Dr Carl O Rangad as its facilitator for participants from four villages around East Khasi Hills namely, Laitsohpliah, Laitthemlangсах, Nongtraw and Dewlieh. The farmers were taught the basics of surface composting by using crop residue and converting it to green gold (organic manure). Surface composting can also be seen as less time consuming and does not involve intricate techniques to learn. According to the Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, FAO, it can take about six to eight months to obtain the finished product in a compost pit.



Composting
© Alethea K Lyngdoh



Bamboo
© Andre J Fanthome

Kong ByllaimonSwer, a custodian farmer from Laitsohpliah Village, shared that in her youth a similar technique was taught to her by her mother but with the use of salt in the mixture to speed up the decomposition. While relevant even today these traditional practices are slowly disappearing and being replaced by the use of urea. Dr Rangad said, "Seeing is believing and learning by doing is the only slogan of extension that will ensure mobilisation and active participation from villages within our state to make them do away with commercial farming".

Knowledge exchange for community: Micro Hydro Empowerment in South and South-East Asia" 16 - 18/11/16

In October, Khweng village was hit by complete blackout with the village children becoming fireflies hovering around the solar street lights, installed before the ITM 2015. Even though there are certain numbers of individual entrepreneurs in Meghalaya who have attempted to harness the hydro energy to address their business requirements this has not filtered to the remote communities. NESFAS participated in a three day workshop conducted by State Council of Science, Technology and Environment, Meghalaya which provided an effective knowledge exchange and platform for technology, policy and local actor development for micro hydro programs. The workshop focused on the use of Pico, Micro and Mini-Hydro Power for possible implementation and longevity. Micro-Hydro Power is regarded as a small-scale renewable energy technology for electrification which is a cost effective way to empower communities. It is a mini grid technology that uses flowing water to generate electricity up to 100kw. The various interactions at the workshop addressed prototype projects in the remote villages where the energy generated by the Micro Hydro Power establishes the integration of nature, conservation and energy production for industry and home.

Pilot Project Initiation using local resources and local innovations - Workshop by Dr. Nongkynrih in Khweng Village 14/01/17

The earlier exercises conducted in the Khweng Community made them approach NESFAS to learn how to initiate introductory projects by using local resources and local innovations. Two important issues identified during the PRA exercises include the school and water issues. The objective of the PRA exercises focused on mobilising the community, to take active steps on their own for planning the village and picturing Khweng after 20 or 30 years. "Community leaders need to develop and establish active measures of 'We Feeling' among the youth who shall carry on ownership and cooperation", said Dr A.K. Nongkynrih, HOD of Sociology, NEHU who facilitated the session. Ideas on water/river management, keeping safety levels in mind, marking the line of construction from the water edge were identified, many of which had their place in the peoples traditional knowledge.





Terra Madre Salone del Gusto, Turin, Italy (22 - 28/09/16)

Slow Food International's Terra Madre - Salone del Gusto is a biannual gathering of food producers, gastronomical scientists, agricultural thought leaders, and key players of the global food chain. The host city of Turin witnessed a colourful display of delegates from all over the globe pouring into Valentino Park which was the main venue besides many others spread across the city. Nine delegates from NESFAS joined the Indian delegation. These included H. H. Mohrmen, Community representative, Board member, NESFAS, Environmentalist and Social Activist, President of Society of Urban and Rural Empowerment, who was also the flag bearer; Ladalín Kharbhoi, Farmer from Laitthlanglang community, Meghalaya; Akole Wekoweu Tshah, Programme Manager, North East Network, Nagaland; Joel Basumatari, Chef, Cooks' Alliance Network; Allanson Wahlang, ITM 2015 Youth Coordinator, NESFAS; Xavier D Sunn, Sr. Associate, Admin and Finance, NESFAS; Raisa Daimary, Sr. Associate, Communications, NESFAS; Daman War, Jr. Associate, Habitat and Infrastructure Development, NESFAS. Beside a walk for Mother Earth across the city there were also plenary sessions, food stall displays, side events and workshops and cultural showcases wherein the delegates take a proactive part. "Our Land: Take your hands off the Earth" a presentation by Mr. Mohrmen where he illustrated the effects of land grabs which as a consequence leads to landlessness of our local farmers in the state. He stressed on this point by explaining that land grabbing has more to do with grabbing by the land owners themselves due to the clan system rather than grabbing by foreigners from outside the state. He also highlighted the effects of land grabbing by the numerous cement and limestone factories that is sprawling in the state of Meghalaya. Akole Wekoweu Tshah gave a talk on "Wild Edibles as Future of Food" explaining a viable scope for alternate systems in the context of North East India. The NESFAS was one among 2 invited stalls from India showcasing the spices, millets, crafts, eri weaves as part of the communities' organic production and also participated in sessions at the ITM (Indigenous Terra Madre) room raising concerns on the place of indigenous peoples in the changing landscape of globalization.

The TIP along with the NESFAS team also organised an evening of ITM Kitchen where indigenous chefs Chef Joel Basumatari from Nagaland and Native American culinary expert Chef Sean Sherman joined hands to engage a houseful service of native flavours and delicacies from the foot hills of eastern Himalayas to the western plains of Minnesota. Organic and traditional recipes got the gourmet touch as the chefs shared the secrets of their lands through this journey of gastronomical delights.



The Indigenous Partnership (TIP) cordially invites you to support

THE INDIGENOUS TERRA MADRE KITCHEN 2016

MENU

Chef Joel Basumatari	Chef Sean Sherman
Amerso	Maštínčala
Chicken And Assorted Vegetables Cooked In Organic Rice Powder.	Stewed Rabbit - Wild Rice Cracker - Rosehip Sauce - Sprouts - Berries
Doh sriang nei-iong	Ašótkaziyapi
Fresh Pork cooked with black sesame paste served with mixed local rice and condiment	Smoked Trout - Grilled Corn • Black Bean Cake - Wild Green Purée - Dried Blueberry
Sticky Rice Cake	Wagméza
Rice Cake Served With Rosella Ice Cream	Corn • Honey Sorbet - Sunflower Cookies - Berry Sauce

@ Ristorante Le Papille,
Via Principi d'Acaja, 37. 10138 Torino,
24th sep 2016 at 8:30pm

Dinner cost: 38 euros (Wine/beer/beverage not included)
Discount for Slow food members: 20%

NESFAS has constantly tried to share the voice of its communities on regional and national platforms.



Khasi women © Andre J Fanthome

1st International Agrobiodiversity Congress - 6 - 9/11/16 Delhi

TIP and NESFAS participated in the 1st International Agrobiodiversity Congress (AIC) focusing on Science, Technology, Policy and Partnership organised by Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources (ISPGR) and Bioersity International in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Right Authority (PPV & FRA) (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare), National Biodiversity Authority (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change), Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Science (TAAS), National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and Asia - Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI). The objective of the Congress was to provide a platform to all the stakeholders engaged in genetic resource conservation and management to deliberate on thematic issues of global importance, with major emphasis on the rational and effective use of agrobiodiversity for food, nutrition and environmental security. The main programme include keynote speeches by eminent speakers, thematic scientific papers and poster presentations along with plenary, technical and satellite sessions on various topics like Agrobiodiversity, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Food, Nutrition & Environmental Security, Climate Change as an Opportunity for Agrobiodiversity Management (Organised by GIZ). Dr Carl O Rangad (Vice Chairman, Operations, NESFAS) represented TIP and NESFAS and presented a study titled "The Deceiving Taste: Agrobiodiversity and Cultural Values Under Pressure", which highlighted the change in the global phenomenon of Agrobiodiversity and Cultural Values. The study was conducted by Phrang Roy (Coordinator TIP) and Rachele Ellena, Research officer, TIP, Rome), among the Khasi communities of Meghalaya and explored key elements of agrobiodiversity and food selection, with the main focus on wild edible plants (WEP) as a contribution to nutrition.

THE DECEIVING TASTE: AGROBIODIVERSITY & CULTURAL VALUES UNDER PRESSURE
 R. Ellena and P. Roy
 The Indigenous Farmhouse (TIP) - Rome

BACKGROUND
 The Northeast of India is considered one of the richest for culturally diverse hotspots of the Indian Subcontinent. Research has shown that most of the diversity of local foods, Indigenous Peoples (IP) often take limited advantage of it. It is not clear what the diets of IP transition from sustainable local resources to include ever-increasing amounts of poor quality commercial foods purchased with limited income, the nutritional status and health of the population declines. The present case study was conducted using the Khasi people of Meghalaya and aimed at documenting the loss of the diversity of agrobiodiversity and food selection, linking specifically to wild food plants (WEP).

KEY CONCLUSIONS
 The study demonstrated the need for food and nutrition education programs that increase exposure to local foods and stimulate them, in order for young people to learn and appreciate them. Agro-biodiversity conservation cannot be fostered without considering the values and knowledge underlying its utilization and consumption. Understanding the multiple determinants of food selection is key in the quest to build public health programs for IP using their local food resources, reaffirming their culinary identity, food sovereignty and food security.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
 • What are the dynamics of the changing traditional food system in Tyms?
 • Are knowledge, consumption, and attitudes towards WEPs changing? If so, how?
 • What factors determine these changes?

METHODS
 By using a combination of methods from the fields of ethnobotany and anthropology, the study investigated variation in consumption, knowledge and values of wild food plants across different generations and gender groups in a rural area in the south of Meghalaya, in the Garo-Jaintia border.

RESULTS
 Cultural values, namely taste appreciation and awareness of wild edible plants' benefits to health, played a crucial role in influencing food preferences and determining food choices.
 The more researched population considered WEPs important as they were healthy, safe and nutritious food for the community. However, in stark contrast with adults and elders, young people showed a clear taste preference for imported/market food over traditional foods.
 Awareness of the threats that imported, marketed and processed foods may cause to health, adults and adults worry for the health of the younger generations.
 Despite knowledge, gathering and consumption of WEPs was found to be widespread among the researched population, elderly people reported that traditional practices, knowledge had decreased, generationally in recent decades and that cultural values surrounding WEPs drastically changed.
 The transition from subsistence to market economy, people's livelihoods and expectations and changes in WEP availability and access appeared to have affected traditional occupations and gender roles related to forest activities, such as gathering.
 Greater knowledge of children to WEPs was reported to be mainly from delecting their preference for WEPs, rather than from their parents.
 Finally, media, television and advertisements were identified as to influence young people's taste. Taste preferences were linked to be a tool for youth to negotiate their identities, retain from traditional values and embrace values from mainstream culture.

FACTORS AFFECTING DIETARY AND GASTRONOMIC CHANGE

Market Forces	Government Policies	Wild Edible Plants (WEP) Availability
• Globalization • New products • New technologies • Access to market • Low price and energy to transport • Water food system	• Expansion to new areas • Loss of traditional values of youth • Migration • Changed lifestyle and eating preferences • Commercialization and commodification of WEPs • Privatization	• Loss of WEPs in rural areas • Loss of WEPs in urban areas • Loss of WEPs in traditional markets • Loss of WEPs in traditional markets • Loss of WEPs in traditional markets



Food items display at 8th BIOFACH India © Janak P Singh



Local fish 'Doh thli' © Andre J Fanthome

NE Connect at 8th BIOFACH India, 10 - 12 /11/16

At the eighth edition of BIOFACH India there was an INDIA ORGANIC Fair showcasing the country's organic diversity at the NSIC Exhibition Grounds, Okhla, New Delhi. Nürnberg Messe India (NMIND), International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture (ICCOA) (co-organizer) and IFOAM Organics International (International Patron) had organised the organic fair. The international trade show was to expose the global organic farming movement to the growing emerging organic industry in India. It also displayed the tremendous development of organic farming certified products from around India and served as an exclusive platform of quality to the global market.

NESFAS was invited to represent its communities to the trade fair to be part of the North East Connect (NE Connect) program, a side event organised by GIZ in collaboration with ICCOA for the various North East Region Governments, in which farmers and producers had engaged interactions with potential buyers from around the world.

Financial Overview 2016 - 2017

- Opening Balance - Rs. 3929645.55
- Programme Grant - Rs. 31111762.42
- Donations and Grants - Rs. 35041407.97

Total expenditure - Rs. 27621964.22

- Capital expenditure - Rs. 26600.00
- Administrative and Operational cost - Rs. 1321682.22
- Personnel Cost - Rs. 3881706.00
- Programme Expenses - Rs. 22391976.00

Expenditure and balance

- Closing Balance - Rs. 7419443.75
- Total Expenditure - Rs. 27621964.22

Financial Statement

