



nesfas

People
Partnership
Practices

khubor

NESFAS' journey of tastes, traditions, technology and teams



MAY-DECEMBER 2018



Mr. Phrang Roy, Chairman, NESFAS and Dr. P V Ramesh, Chairman, REC after signing of the agreement

'NO ONE SHALL BE LEFT BEHIND' REC GRANT

With a view to partner in the rural development programme 'No one shall be left behind', the REC Foundation (CSR Wing of Navratna Central PSU REC Ltd) signed a memorandum with NESFAS. The agreement was signed on the 30th of April 2018 between Dr. P V Ramesh, Chairman REC and Mr. Phrang Roy, Chairman, NESFAS. The rural development project 'No one shall be left behind' is a three-year initiative aimed at enhancing indigenous food systems to improve nutrition, provide food security and generate sustainable livelihoods for over 3000 households in 130 remote villages in Meghalaya and Nagaland, with special focus on youth, adolescent girls, women's groups and community elders.

SIGNING OF THE FPIC

For the implementation of the initiatives of the REC funded project 'No one shall be left behind', NESFAS signed the FPIC- Free Prior and Informed Consent, with a total of 52 villages while its partner signed it with 28 villages between August and October.



Signing of the FPIC

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

May 2018 came with the good tidings that saw the signing of the REC Foundation supported Grant for the NESFAS project "No one shall be left behind." This has been the catalyst for us to shape our grassroots stories under its objective of increasing production, consumption, nutrition and innovation. The project saw the NESFAS team expand operations to achieve the target agendas with new recruits and concrete partnerships in Meghalaya and Nagaland. This newsletter is a brief overview of our efforts for your perusal. Your feedback is welcome for us to keep improving our deliverables.



Dr. Melari Nongrum
Executive Director
NESFAS

General Awareness Workshops on The REC Project

With a view to create awareness about the project 'No one shall be left behind', NESFAS, and its partners, the North East Network (NEN), Nagaland; Society for Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE), Jaintia Hills and Social Service Centre (SSC), Shillong conducted a number of awareness workshops for the project village communities.

NESFAS: 46 villages **SURE:** 28 villages **SSC:** 25 villages **NEN:** 26 villages

Indigenous Food System Profiling

To maintain interconnections between the life and well-being of the community with its natural environment, Bioversity International, FAO, the French National Research Institute for

Sustainable Development (IRD), the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity & Food Sovereignty (TIP), and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) launched an initiative to document indigenous food systems and characterise their practices that enable sustainability and climate resilience. The project 'Research and field work to inform the debate on indigenous food systems through development of knowledge material' was launched in five different regions of the world, wherein Nongtraw in Meghalaya was chosen as a study area in India. The project ran from May-September, 2018, and a report emerged at the end of the study which was presented in the FAO Expert Seminar between 7th-9th November, 2018, held in Rome, Italy.



The NESFAS Team

26th May '18

@ ICAR-NEH Region, Meghalaya



Kong Jesenta Ranee being honoured at the First Annual Convention of the AIMS Network

All India Millet Sisters (AIMS) Network First Annual Convention

All India Millet Sisters (AIMS) Network honoured women farmers in their First Annual Convention held at ICAR-NEH Region, Meghalaya. Kong Jesenta Ranee from Nongtraw community, is among the women farmers who grows millet in her village. She is a pro-active member of NESFAS and strongly believes in the importance of defending the communities' traditional food systems.

Kong Geecy Mary Swer, a young farmer from Laitsohpiah village and Kong Merrysha Nongrum, Associate, NESFAS were also present at the event.



Farmers at the Annual Convention

28th May '18

'Innovations on community Forest Governance and Conservation' Thematic Panel

Organised by: Procasur, in collaboration w/ Nercoromp @ NEHU

'Innovations on community Forest Governance and Conservation'- a Thematic Panel, was organised by Procasur, in collaboration with Nercoromp, Meghalaya, on the 28th of May, 2018 at NEHU. Dr. Carl O Rangad, Vice Chairman (Operations), NESFAS and Ms. Merrysha Nongrum, Associate, NESFAS, were part of the panelists in which they delivered presentations on 'ITM 2015: A Glocal Innovation of the Indigenous Peoples' and 'School Learning Garden' respectively.



Farmers' Trip to Nongtraw village

Ms Patricia Mukhim, Editor, The Shillong Times; Activist; NESFAS Board Member also presented on the issue 'Women and Forest Conservation and Importance of media in public education in Forest Conservation'.

Farmers' Trip

Organised by: North East Network (NEN) @ Nongtraw village, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya

A Farmers' trip, organised by North East Network - 1995 (NEN), had farmers from different regions of India (Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Telengana, and many more) visit Nongtraw village, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya for a knowledge exchange programme. They visited this community with the sole purpose of learning about Meghalaya's common agricultural practice of shifting cultivation, also known as jhum agriculture or jhum cultivation.



Farmers' Trip to Nongtraw village

5th June '18

World Environment Day

On the occasion of World Environment Day, NESFAS' partner communities organised different activities to celebrate the environment.

A creative drawing competition with the theme 'Beat Plastic Pollution' was held at a school while students of another school directed their creativity towards turning waste plastic items into decorative items such as flowers, flower pots, cushions and planting bags. A poem-writing competition with the theme 'Save Our Soils' was also organised.

Nongtraw village hosted delegates from various regions in India for a farmers trip and also developed a pledge to 'Save Our Soils'. An awareness programme on combating plastic pollution was organised by SSC, Shillong for the schools in Jongksha, East Khasi Hills.



Students participate in the drawing competition



Creative articles made from waste plastic items

A Mei-Ramew weaves stall was also set up at the thematic panel session



Eri products at the Mei-Ramew weaves stall



Paul and Rose from Kenya were happy with the Eri silk shawls that they got for themselves

'Beat Plastic Pollution' in order to 'Save Our Soils'

■ 15th June '18

The Indigenous Food Fest

Organised by: Social Service Centre, Shillong Archdiocese
@ Social Service Centre, Shillong Archdiocese

The Indigenous Food Fest was part of a project entitled 'Facilitating Agricultural Regeneration Measures (FARM)', to promote organic farming in nine villages under Mawkynrew and Mawryngkneng C&RD Blocks in the East Khasi Hills district.

The aim of this event was to promote local food products through a Farmer's market, with special focus on wild edibles and locally available nutritious foods. Various farmer's clubs, youth and village organisations, and Self Help Groups participated in this festival. There were 13 stalls altogether which sold mainly fruits, vegetables, food products and handicrafts.



Stalls at The Indigenous Food Fest

■ 28th July '18

All Out of School Programme

@ Mawarliang village, Laitkor



Mrs. Anita Roy demonstrating a recipe for the women of Mawarliang

NESFAS team got the opportunity to share the basics of nutrition, the importance of wild edibles and the idea of a school garden, with the women of Mawarliang village, Laitkor and the school teachers of the Reach Shillong Ministries- An all out of School Programme. Mrs. Anita Roy conducted a cooking demonstration on some of the basic, nutritious and interesting recipes that mothers and school teachers can provide to the children.

As part of the initiative to get children to learn about the food they eat from a young age, NESFAS aided the designing of a school garden for three schools. One of these schools, Lumstoin LP School in Khlieh Tyrshi village, launched a new school garden on the 29th of June.

The School Garden projects are a fun yet educational approach towards nutrition, knowledge-transfer and agrobiodiversity promotion.

In continuation with this initiative, a workshop was held on the 6th of July to prepare a roadmap for the proper implementation of the school garden.



Mr. Carl O Rangad with participants at the launch of the school garden on 29th June

NESFAS strives to become a model in the implementation of community and school gardens

■ 2nd Aug '18

Collaboration Visit to IIT Guwahati



Mr. Phrang Roy and Mrs. Anita Roy with Mr. Avinash Shinde

With the aim to identify sustainable innovations for use in rural communities, Mrs. Anita Roy (Board Member, NESFAS), Mr. Phrang Roy (Chairman, NESFAS) and Mr. Janak P Singh (Senior Associate, NESFAS) visited IIT Guwahati to explore possible avenues for collaboration. Mr. Avinash Shinde shared how the partnership with the DCIC, Government of Meghalaya had resulted in the shaping of innovative moulds that made the work of artisans more comfortable.

13th Sep Exposure trip

Successively, NESFAS took 12 local bamboo artisans from its partner communities for an exposure trip to IIT Guwahati, Department of Design with an objective to expose the local artisans to innovative techniques of bamboo weaving, and to also gather ideas to improve ways of making crafts through bamboo for local livelihood opportunities.



School Gardens

■ 29th June '18

Reserving special areas around schools for cultivation of local vegetables and fruits with assistance from the Indigenous communities, self-help groups and agencies like the Anganwadi, the NESFAS school gardens match the Slow Food principles of 'good, clean and fair', focusing on disseminating indigenous knowledge to children and promoting the use of local vegetables.

Mei-Ramew Farmers' Market

In order to promote the indigenous food systems and to spread awareness about food security and nutrition, a Mei Ramew Farmers' Market was organised by NESFAS, in association with SSC. The market also served as a platform for locals to access organically produced food items and a variety of wild edibles. The market featured food products from 7 villages and a 'NESFAS kitchen' in which young cooks prepared modern recipes using locally available indigenous ingredients. Another highlight, the mid-day meal initiative, presented a number of food items that could be introduced into schools as part of the mid-day meal initiative to provide nutritious meals for young children.



Mid-day meal stall at Mei-Ramew Market

Many of the sellers were farmers and common people from the villages who valued the opportunity to sell their produce and wild edibles produced in their localities. Each component of the market was formulated with the goal of bringing together participants and connecting them to tasty and healthy regional food, to new ideas related to nutrition and to service providers and like-minded people at the market.



Bliwtibon Mawa and her granddaughter

Mei-Ramew Khneng Embroidery Society, Mustoh ■ 21st-22nd June '18

In collaboration with the artisans, NESFAS formed a group called the 'Mei Ramew Khneng Embroidery Society, Mustoh', with the aim to revive the dying art, to enhance the skill levels, to imbibe market sensitisation and to formulate products for the contemporary palate. NESFAS visited Mustoh from the 21st to 22nd June 2018 to meet the 10 artisan ladies who are engaged in the art to work out problem areas and the requirements to help strengthen their skill and passion towards the art.

One of the main areas of concern was the market as they get seasonal orders from very few clients and find it difficult to transfer knowledge from the elder Khneng artisans to the younger generation.



Bliwtibon Mawa



Banisha Synrem & Phaitimul Rimal



Bliwtibon Mawa, a Khneng weaver, says the art of Khneng embroidery can be traced back to around 200 years ago.



Phaitimul Rimal

NESFAS aims to enhance local livelihood activities through proper platforms to showcase and market products.

Benjamin Syiem

intricately styled a sketch capturing the age old Khasi mythological story where a lady farmer fights off a terrifying giant by dishing up a pot of food with nails that leads to the latter's demise.



During the workshop, the participants were invited to share their stories and methods of identifying and documenting customs related to the local land, life, resources and culture. Sharing of ancient myths to strengthen ties to culture and possibly identify the important life lessons behind these stories.



The workshop started under the title of 'Tea Time Stories' on the 13th and 14th of July over cups of tea and continued into the 16th of July as a platform for sharing indigenous folklore and artisanal knowledge.

Siegfried B Sangma

volunteered to cook a tasting of the traditional ThukpaChicken of the Garo as a medium to share the stories of his cultural roots.



Nocy Marak,

a graphic designer and content writer, believes that getting creative people under one roof, brainstorming about ideas to revive old cultural ways can contribute greatly to strengthening of the culture. She looks to do so through her craft for popularising her rich Garo heritage.



Tengnang D Sangma,

a singer and researcher on indigenous heritage, sang about capturing the value of medicinal herbs in stories and in the health of the community since it is believed that these plants have ties to folklore.



Finding our Grassroots Storytelling Workshop ■ 13th, 14th & 16th July '18

One of the key agendas of the 'No one shall be left behind' project was the need to reconnect youth to their roots- traditional knowledge, cultural practices and folklore- as a channel to reestablish lessons from the past. A storytelling workshop seemed opportune to encourage local youth to share their talents using the medium of timeless knowledge in form of narratives. The aim of this initiative was to develop a sense of pride in the youth and sensitivity towards the ingenious of indigenous farmers and get inspired to translate them into stories through their arts of writing, drawing, music and more, therefore creating a career for themselves and for the future of the farmers. Around 30 enthusiasts participated in the workshop who worked as groups to develop projects themed on the sharing of indigenous knowledge.

■ 20th-24th Sep '18

Terra Madre- Salone del Gusto

@ Italy, Europe



NESFAS delegates at the Terra Madre Salone del Gusto

NESFAS nominated five delegates from the indigenous communities of North East India to represent the region at the Terra Madre Salone del Gusto 2018, held from the 20th to the 24th of September in Italy. The theme of the event was 'Food for Change'. The aim of the biennale was to bring together a network of food communities, small producers and processors, fishermen, cooks, academicians and youth delegates for five days with the aim of developing small scale food production, which is traditional and sustainable.

■ 15th Oct '18

Global Hand Washing Day

A global hand-washing day celebration was organised at two villages, Chosaba Village under Phek C&RD Block and New Phor under Weziho C&RD Block. Field coordinators for the REC project and the NEN team conducted the event and a total of 44 people participated in it, including those from the target groups such as children, ASHA and Anganwadi workers and young mothers.



Demonstration of handwashing at the Anganwadi Centre

A celebration of Global Hand-washing Day was held at the Anganwadi centre at Enhulumi village, Chizami cluster. As part of the Global Hand Wash Campaign under the theme 'CLEAN HANDS – A RECIPE FOR HEALTH', a demonstration on hand wash was conducted.

NESFAS delegates got an opportunity to learn, and share some of their practices for the promotion of indigenous food systems of North-East India



NESFAS delegates at the Terra Madre- Salone del Gusto

■ 8th Oct '18

Soil Health & Management Workshop

@ NESFAS HQ



Ms. Silda Kharsati speaks during the Workshop on Soil Health and Management

Ms. Silda Kharsati, Assistant Director, Dept. of Agriculture (Soil Testing) and Dr. Carl O Rangad, conducted a workshop titled 'Holistic Approach to Soil Health and Management' for the NESFAS staff, wherein Dr. Carl explained and stressed on the 6 ecosystem functions of soil which farmers are dependent on, while Kharsati gave a brief talk on soil testing and its process, and also a demonstration on collection of samples of soil.

❗ **Be observant while working with farmers. Start listening and observing.** ❗

Dr. Carl O Rangad

■ 20th, 23rd, 30th Oct '18

Training and Participative Research on Community Seed Bank

@ Laitsohpliah, Shillong

One staff member from NEN attended the participatory research and training on community seed banks at Laitsohpliah village, Shillong on the 20th of October which was conducted by NESFAS. NEN staff then conducted an awareness drive at PathsoNokeng and Phor villages to spread the message about the REC project, Indigenous Food System and the Community seed bank on the 23rd and the 30th of October respectively.



Kong Byllaimon Swer, Custodian Farmer from Laitsohpliah

■ 23rd Oct '18

@ Khweng village

Value Chain Analysis of Eri Silk

A pilot study on Value chain of Eri silk weaves was conducted in Khweng Village. The goal of the study was to assess the value chain of Eri Silk, to determine the present value of the products, to understand the areas of intervention and to establish a list of value-added Eri Silk products.

In the pilot study, data from 25 respondents including 2 women from Liarsluid and 23 from Khweng was collected by Aurilia Tariang, NESFAS.



Kong Synrem, part of the pilot study on Value chain of Eri weaves

■ 29th-31st Oct '18 Training on Participatory Guarantee Scheme

@ Shillong, Ri-Bhoi

A three day training on the Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS) was conducted by the Pan Himalayan Grassroot Organisation (Kalyan Paul, Executive Director, Anita Paul, Community Initiatives Director, and Ramesh Chandra, Team Leader) based in Uttarakhand. Project team members from NESFAS, SURE, SSC and NEN were present for the training programme which was conducted from the 29th to the 31st of October.

The PGS is a participatory certification method that increases the value of indigenous products and also provides access to local markets. In doing so, it also ensures sustainable food production and preservation of local farmers' traditions.



■ Oct '18 Identifying Species

NESFAS started the study of dietary diversity in 32 villages in the month of October. The members of the community who were part of the study included 32 (8 women in reproductive age; 8 elderly; and 8 male youth; 8 key informant) households in 32 villages in Meghalaya and Nagaland.

■ 7th-9th Nov '18 FAO Expert Seminar @ Rome, Italy



NESFAS team members; Phrang Roy, Chairman, Melari Nongrum, Executive Director, and Bhogtoram Mawroh, Sr. Associate, attended the FAO Expert Seminar in Rome, Italy, and presented a case study on the Indigenous Food System of Nongtraw, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya.

Through this platform, they shared knowledge about their local food system practices with the world.

■ 11th-18th Nov '18 Eri Weaves: Exposure Trip to Chirala

NESFAS enabled delegates from the North-East to attend a week-long training-cum-awareness international conference on handlooms called the 'Chenetha Chetikala Sambaralu' in Chirala town, Andhra Pradesh from November 11 to 18 with the view to enhance their skills and expose them to ideas from different parts of the country.

The delegation included local Khneng embroiderers from Mustoh, East Khasi Hills, and Eri silk weavers from Khweng, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya.



■ 18th Nov '18 Soil, Seeds & Composting Workshop @ Rapleng

A workshop on soil, seeds and composting was conducted by Mr. B Syiemlieh & Smt. A Lyngdoh, KVK, East Khasi Hills. The participants included 41 farmers from six villages in the East Khasi Hills District. The aim of the workshop was to educate the farmers about composting and the importance of soil testing.

■ 26th-29th Nov '18 Analysis of Barriers Affecting Child and Maternal Health @ Mupyut and Mulum

SURE identified and analyzed barriers affecting child and maternal health in the villages of Mupyut and Mulum. The economic status of the mothers, nutritional intake, breast feeding practices, complimentary feeding, vaccination practices were all noted through interactions with women and adolescents during home visits. Traditional practices of child rearing and food habits of adolescents were also identified through interactions with the study groups.



Highlights

Thailand Youth & Agrobiodiversity Walk

@ Plasha, Ri-Bhoi

With TIP's support, social entrepreneurs and Indigenous youth from Northern Thailand visited Meghalaya and spent their time collecting forest foods and products from the shifting cultivation fields of Plasha, Ri-Bhoi for the cooking demonstration workshop with the community members.



Youth collecting forest foods during the walk

Monitoring of project activities

The Monitoring System in NESFAS has been facilitated by Mr. Rathindra Roy, Former FAO Staff. He facilitated the team to come up with the Managerial Learning System (MLS) whereby all the planned activities of the quarter are laid down. This system is being tested in NESFAS and it is being seen that improvements have been made to the existing format.

6th-8th Dec '18 Agroecology Workshop

@ Plasha, Ri-Bhoi



Village elder in conversation with Dr. Francisco Rosado May and NESFAS Sr. Associates Pius Raneer & Janak Preet Singh

Agroecology is a study that renders a link between science and logic in the art of traditional farming. It is important as a solution for sustaining a climate change resilient food production system, and also in providing tools and opportunities in sustainable food production, while respecting traditional knowledge.



Delegates at the Agroecology workshop

Aided by TIP, agroecologist Dr. Francisco Rosado May visited Meghalaya and conducted a three-day training on agroecology for farmers from 50 partner communities. The goal was to establish the concept and understanding to preserve and sustain traditional farming systems, and to train farmers in increasing production and productivity of local food crops.

Headsets for translation

65 headsets were procured in November 2018 with the support of TIP. These are mainly used in community meetings for translation. The first time the headsets were utilised were in the Agroecology training facilitated by Dr. Francisco May, on the 6th and 7th December 2018.

10th-21st Dec '18 MNRS Mapping

SURE assisted the NESFAS research team in mapping the Micro-Nutrient Rich Species (MNRS). 28 people from Nongtalang mission, Samanong, Mookjat and Mynso B participated in the mapping exercise with the staff of NESFAS and SURE to identify the species available. A total of 30 species of edibles were identified during the process.

Lukas' Support to NESFAS

In order to map the nutritional and climate resilient characteristics of the local agrobiodiversity, NESFAS undertook a 'participatory mapping for nutrient rich and climate resilient species' exercise.

Lukáš Pawera, Ethno-botanist from Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague, helped NESFAS develop a methodology for the same, which had a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative approaches.



Naw



Riew Matsaw

Species identified during MNRS Mapping

10th-14th Dec '18 Bioersivity Visit



Session on 'Global Indigenous Food System Initiative and Profile of Sustainability and Resilience in Nongtraw' by Gennifer

The visit by the Bioersivity team, Rome, was very useful for them to assess the technical capacity of NESFAS and gain a better understanding of the possibilities that exist in the region for future work. In this context, it was a very successful trip with gains accruing to both NESFAS as well the Bioersivity team. Representing the team, Stefano Padulois, Senior Scientist, Integrated Conservation Methodologies & Use and Gennifer Meldrum, Research Officer, Sustainable Food Systems, visited NESFAS with the aim of strengthening the partnership and creating a stronger network with local partners.

13th Dec '18 Biodiversity Festival & Community Seed Fair @ Akhegwo village, Phek

A biodiversity festival and community seed fair was held in Akhegwo in Meluri district, Phek, Nagaland. This event brought together women farmers from four villages under Phek district along with the village leaders, to celebrate the diverse food and cultures of the farming communities. The theme of the festival was 'Building Resilience for a Food Sovereign Community'. The seed fair was organised by NEN and supported by REC and the Millet Network India (MINI).



Seed exchange at the community seed fair in Akhegwo village

Partners



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- | 1st row (L to R) | 2nd row (L to R) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh | Rejoiceful Rashir |
| Ruth Sohtun | Bhogtoram Mawroh |
| Badarishisha Nongkynrih | Pius Raneer |
| Janak P. Singh | Simchi Sangma |
| Bashisha Mary Nongbet | Stefan W Lyngdoh |
| Fabian Dkhar | Suklinshisha Paliar |
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