

ANNUAL REPORT

2017-2018



nesfas



‘The year of the local’





ABOUT NESFAS

NESFAS is a platform that connects people to the pleasure and importance of local foods and in the process links them to its journey from farm to fork. A journey that generates awareness towards our responsibility towards the environment and the preservation of the indigenous cultures and traditions.

NESFAS works towards offering a singular platform for traditional knowledge systems and modern science as equal partners to charter the course of the 'Future We Want' for the well-being of indigenous communities.

The journey of NESFAS and its young team, guided by global and local experts, was shaped by the priorities that emerged with the engagement with its communities in the rich biodiversity of the hills of Meghalaya and Nagaland. The festivals that brought together the indigenous peoples of the region, formation of networks based on the richness of their agrobiodiversity, research studies that were carried out and strong discoveries of well-being, nutrition, matriarchal societies, have undoubtedly been the driving force behind all of NESFAS activities. These activities fall within domains that are pertinent to securing a sustainable future, food being at the centre, with the aspects of landscape and culture holding just as important a place in their interrelatedness. NESFAS's networks, projects and initiatives fall within these domains and, more often than not, connect all three.



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Letter from The CHAIRMAN

In 2014, using storytelling as the main participatory approach, NESFAS worked with several communities in Meghalaya to understand their diverse approaches to well-being. They all highlighted the importance of maintaining a sense of community (the 'we' feeling) at the local level. They stressed the need of good and collective governance, fair treatment to all and respect of the environment around the community. All communities emphasised the importance of traditional customs and practices, such as land inheritance by women as a way of connecting to the past and of building a future we want. After the global impact of hosting the ITM/IMR 2015 in Meghalaya, NESFAS therefore decided to focus on carrying forward its legacy locally.

To build on local knowledge and practices, NESFAS promoted the revitalisation of local food systems. This Annual Report gives details of several local initiatives undertaken in 2017-2018 (agroecology lessons, farmers markets, mapping of nutrition sensitive and climate resilient species, participatory guarantee system and more).

The various events, workshops, celebrations and partnership building addressed in 2017-2018 were also attempts to have a deeper reflection of national and grassroots level issues.

We are grateful to all those who have always supported us and to those who are constantly reminding us that creative breakthroughs come by learning to reflect on our past initiatives. We are particularly grateful to Dr. P.V. Ramesh, Chairman, Rural Electrification Corporation of India Foundation for encouraging us to develop a cutting-edge project for revitalising a nutrition-sensitive local food approach where production, consumption, livelihoods improvement initiatives could be promoted with local and sustainable resources. We are indebted for this push which led the NESFAS team to develop a project that would bring local and contemporary knowledge systems to have a sustainable impact in some of the most remote villages of not just North East India but also of the country. We are grateful to the support NESFAS received from The Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP) and its supporters.

I am grateful to all Board Members of NESFAS for their guidance on many of our initiatives. I would like to particularly thank the Vice Chairman of NESFAS, Dr. Carl Rangad who on my behalf and of NESFAS willingly presented our experiences and evolving thinking in many National Workshops in Chennai, Pune etc. NESFAS is also indebted to our Honorary Advisers, Mr. Rathin Roy of Chennai, Dr. Francisco Rosado May of Mexico and Mr. Ajay Nayak of Mumbai for all their valuable training, support and strategic advice in all our initiatives.

NESFAS is proud and grateful to its staff for their passion, hard work and grassroots facilitating expertise. We cannot forget the participating communities, without whose support and faith, NESFAS would not have been able to move forward.

We hope you will enjoy reading this Annual Report. We would love you to join us in our endeavor and we would also love to get suggestions of how we can improve our work, including the presentation of future Annual Reports.

PHRANG ROY, Chairman, NESFAS



NESFAS Units

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.

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 link the world's perception of the organisation and the communities it services. The team aims to truly translate 'local voices, global audiences' by sharing grassroot stories that could shape mindsets and play a role in advocating the organisation'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 organisation that is also a centre 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.

NESFAS Framework

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 other's experiences and outcomes.

FOODWAYS



CULTURE



LANDSCAPE



THE Board



Dr. Carl O. Rangad

Vice Chairman (Operations), NESFAS



Anita Roy

Former Teacher, AMBRI, International School, Rome and Slow Food member



Bibiana Rane

Grassroot activist and Custodian Farmer from Nongtraw Village



Patricia Mukhim

Editor, Shillong Times; Journalist and promoter of local food



Dr. A. K. Nongkynrih

Professor of Sociology, North East Hills University (NEHU), Shillong



Phrang Roy

Chairman, NESFAS



Rikynti Syiem

Eri Weaver and Custodian Farmer from Khweng, Ri Bhoi



Shaiphar Dohling

Farmer and Headman of Dewlieh, East Khasi Hills, Head master of SSA Upper Primary School, Dewlieh



K. C. Momin

(Retd) Director of Soil and Water Conservation, Government of Meghalaya, Shillong



H.H. Morhmen

Environmental and Social Activist



Seno Tshuh

Project Team Leader, NEN, Nagaland



G. P. Wahlang

Vice Chairman, NESFAS IAS (Retd.), Former Chief Information Commissioner, Meghalaya Information Commission



Byllaimon Swer

Custodian Farmer, Laitsohpliah, East Khasi Hills



Simorin Marbanian

Custodian Farmer, Beekeeper, and Knowledge Holder from Lyngngam, West Khasi Hills



Dr. Glenn Kharkongor

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU), Shillong



Xavier Sunn

Sr. Associate, Administration and Finance, NESFAS

NESFAS Team



**Pius
Rane**

Sr. Associate,
Agroecology



**Janak
P Singh**

Sr. Associate,
Livelihood Initiatives



**Dr. Bhogtoram
Mawroh**

Sr. Associate,
Research and
Knowledge
Management



**Alethea Kordor
Lyngdoh**

Associate,
Communications



**Merrysha
Nongrum**

Associate,
Community Initiatives



**Evarity
Sungoh**

Associate Trainee,
Community Initiatives



**Sujata
Chettri**

Associate,
Accounts



**Fabian
M Dkhar**

Administration
Assistant



**Amribornson
Skhembill**

Logistics Assistant



**Xavier
Sunn**

Sr. Associate,
Administration and
Finance



**Jessica
Rani**

Housekeeping



**Regina
Rani**

Housekeeping

External Consultants

**Rathindra Roy: Thought,
Learning & Change Facilitator**

**Francisco Rosado May:
Agroecology Consultant**

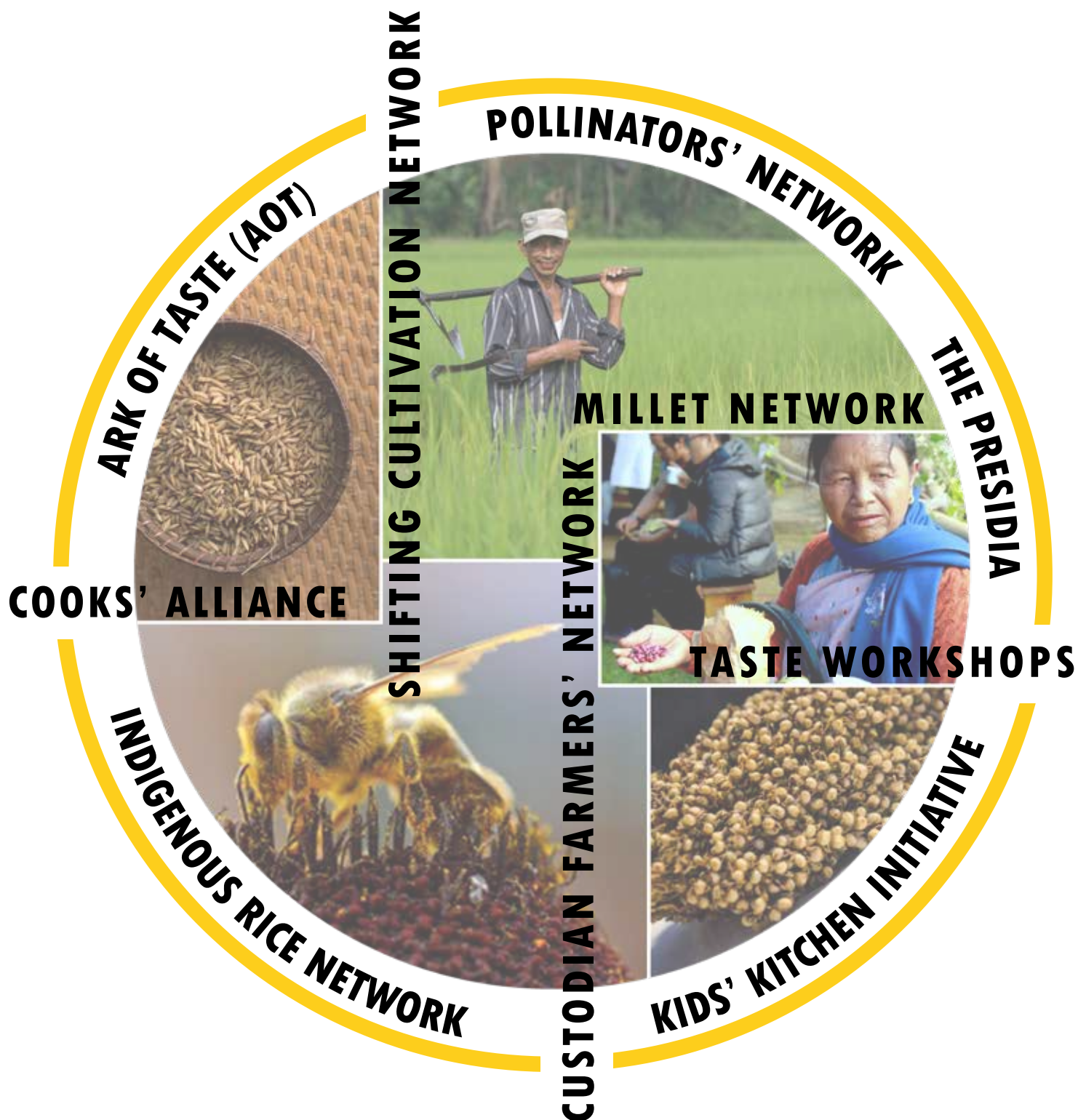
**Ajay Nayak: Habitat
Development &
Communications Consultant**

**Anna Louise Meynell: Eri
Weave Consultant**

NESFAS

Agrobiodiversity Networks

Food is the connecting factor between the consumers and the 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.



ITM Journey

ECHOES OF ITM 2015

ITM 2015 was a monumental undertaking, representing a first for the size of the event and the scope of the programming, both for indigenous gatherings of this kind and for Meghalaya. The fact that this was accomplished by a small team of relatively young professionals in the field makes this accomplishment even more remarkable. ITM 2015 certainly achieved its goal of bringing together diverse indigenous peoples from around the world to celebrate and discuss their agriculture, pastoralists and pollinators experiences while also drawing attention to the agroecology of North East India. The event sparked discussion, spawned networks and left delegates wanting to dig deeper on a conversation that only began to scratch the surface in Shillong. With approximately 10% of the international delegates dropping out due to personal and professional reasons or visa issues, it seemed like there would be a significant gap in leadership, particularly since many of those who could not attend were established forerunners in indigenous rights. Instead, a surprising development was that this gap left space for emerging leaders to step up and let new voices be heard. Indeed, the active presence of youth at the event was felt, and gave encouragement that there is a future for food. Local involvement in the planning and implementation of the event meant that the message of ITM 2015 took hold in Shillong and Meghalaya—both at the government and the community level—and residents are now eager to take the next step in implementing what was learnt for the benefit of indigenous food ways and the environment. For every local event and even in the global context of food and indigenous gatherings, ITM 2015 became a benchmark of expectations and comparisons.

ITM 2015 FOLLOWUP

After the dust settled over the 9 communities that were visited by the International delegates, the NESFAS team visited the various villages to gauge and report from there the community's experiences. The communities reported that they have felt honoured to be a part of such a massive event and hope that such events are organised more often. In fact, the communities expressed that they would like to hold such events at a smaller scale in their regions. They also expressed their gratitude for the attention received by them from the government and hope that this will only be the starting point of more sustainable development to come to their village in the future. The community members said ITM 2015 reminded them of their wealth of traditional knowledge and biodiversity. The pride they feel in their culture and heritage only drives them to strive to protect it and cherish it more.



Indigenous Terra Madre

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 well-being comes not from the accumulation of wealth but from our connectedness with each other.

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES (2017-2018)

APRIL



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Sharing of indigenous knowledge and promotion of trade

1st ever Mei-Ramew Market
A fortnight with Rani Khanna
Organics and Millets National Trade Fair 2017



NESFAS staff ready to serve visitors

7th April

If we empower small-holder farmers to achieve their aspirations, they will do the heavy lifting of development themselves.

AGNES KALIBATA

President, Alliance for a Green Revolution
and former Minister of Agriculture,
Rwanda

1st ever Mei-Ramew Farmers' Market: The conception of a tradition

THE AMBITION

With the vision of connecting people with local farmers, NESFAS hosted its 1st ever Mei-Ramew Farmers' Market on 7th April, 2017. The name 'Mei-Ramew' was a carry forward from the native Khasi language, meaning 'Mother Earth', complementing the ethnicity of the market.

RELATIONSHIPS

The market aided a mutually beneficial exchange between the people and the farmers. It gave the locals a rare chance to directly interact with the farmers as opposed to buying products of unknown origin, and it served as a pioneer platform to educate consumers about the diversity and origin of native products, some of which they may have never heard of.

COMMUNITIES

Communities from Khweng, Ri-Bhoi and Nongtraw, East Khasi Hills showcased and sold their home-grown produce from shifting cultivation, kitchen gardens and wild edibles, presenting an extensive variety of fruits, vegetables, and smoked meats.

The Mei-Ramew market received a positive response from the community, who showed immense interest in the products displayed. The enthusiasm was such that a couple of products, namely Soh-jri and allarut were sold out within the first hour!

NESFAS KITCHEN

To promote the use of the yields sold at the market, the NESFAS staff ran a 'NESFAS kitchen', where visitors could buy a meal made from some of the ingredients. It also aimed to inspire people to experiment with native ingredients and create new tastes in their own kitchens. It introduced recipes like rice congee with wild edibles, and millet pancakes, prepared by Mrs. Anita Roy.

The market also boasted of a Mei-Ramew Weaves stall, displaying hand-made eri-weaves from Umden, Khweng, and Mustoh, supporting local livelihoods, and a Mei-Ramew café stall selling indigenous delicacies such as putharo and ja-shulia, along with a hot cup of shiahkrot (red tea).



Mei-Ramew Weaves stall



Mrs. Anita Roy serving her rice congee with wild edibles



Millet packaging by NESFAS

NESFAS aims to turn this initiative into a regular event, serving as yet another platform for bringing people together and connecting people from all backgrounds and ages to the pleasures of tasty, clean and healthy local food.



"The market was a great opportunity for us to not only sell our products, but it also provided us with experiences and ideas which we can implement in the future."

REDIAN SYIEM
Khweng community.

"I'm glad I came to this market because I was able to buy (all these) vegetables which are good for my grandmother because she can't have anything oily."

MAVERY
Visitor



MILLET DANCE BY RICHARD RANEE
PC- Cinderella M Lyngdoh



Visitors at the Market having the millet banana pancake
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Rani and participants of the workshop - Finding new heroes
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

7th - 17th
th April

I think art has a lot of power to influence and inspire others. People can learn from it and it could be fun!

RANI KHANNA
Indo-French Filmmaker

A fortnight with Rani Khanna UK-based filmmaker wants to share North-East India's indigenous bounty with the world

French-Indian Filmmaker Rani Khanna visited the North East under an invitation by NESFAS and The Indigenous Partnership, to learn about the culture and customs of the indigenous people.

Ms Khanna, who is currently based in London, hopes to translate her visit into a project that will give a voice to local indigenous people in a way that resonates with a global audience.

After visiting a round of villages and interacting with the locals over the span of two weeks, Ms Khanna was exposed to the essential elements of local traditions, particularly those of the Khasi people.



Rani Khanna with the family of Kong Byllaimon Swer at Laitsohpliah
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

ART **AS A MEDIUM** **to share indigenous knowledge**

An artist at heart, Khanna felt arts had the potential of bridging the gap between indigenous heritage and people of not only different ages, but of different cultures, such as the work of local fashion designer Daniel Syiem, who is bringing awareness to who the Khasi people are and what makes them special.

Movies: Rani Khanna's idea of a window to the indigenous bounty of the North-East

Ms Khanna looks at the world through the lens of filmmaking. She believes that it is her way of understanding the world, and through her work, she has hoped to enable others too to make sense of her stance. She intended to do so through movies that would give a voice to local indigenous people of the North East and serve as an opportunity for others to learn about and from its people.

She wasn't sure what themes she would be focusing on, or in what way she would be presenting them to an international audience, but in the midst of dancing, singing, and some adventurous food tasting, recurring themes emerged throughout her stay, such as women empowerment, ethnic fashion, music, and youth engagement in traditional knowledge/customs.



Rani Khanna interviews Mr. Tambor Lyngdoh of Mawphlang community
PC: Adriana Calado

15th April

Finding New Heroes: Storytelling workshop by Rani Khanna



Card activity at the workshop
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

To aid Rani Khanna's vision of propagating the North-East culture to global audiences, NESFAS held a storytelling workshop 'Finding New Heroes' on 15th April, 2017, which aimed at empowering the youth to share the stories of local voices.

The workshop, facilitated by Ms Khanna, trained 20 Mass Communications students from St. Anthony's College, Shillong in identifying stories that resonate to an international audience while giving a voice to local Khasi people.

The objective was for students to find out themes/issues important to them and to be able to translate that into a character-based storyline relevant for those who have never been to Meghalaya, for them to learn and relate to.

Students started by introducing themselves while holding an object that symbolised their culture. Among them were photos, traditional jewellery, and of course, some Kwai. The students also shared folk stories of their childhood, followed by a discussion about the messages conveyed in those same stories.

Some interesting topics identified and shared by the students included promotion of traditional foods, a farmer's life and Phawar (couplets), which are issues they felt are closely linked to their culture.

The unique matrilineal aspect of the tribal societies also played a vital part in the filmmaker's research, as she felt the world has a lot to learn from the indigenous peoples of Meghalaya, who have been able to sustain this system for over 2,000 years.



Rani Khanna interacts with seedkeeper Kong Diat Suting from Moosakhia
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

Rani shared, "The students came up with some insightful ideas which helped me understand their concerns and what is important to them about the Khasi identity and culture, and we managed to learn and have fun in the process, which is paramount to a workshop."

The overall session exchanged dialogues about the gifts of the indigenous peoples, from the perspective of young people who want to contribute and share what they think and believe is important to represent their world and identity, and also what stories do they want to see and imagine, to build a bridge between the Indigenous people and the rest of the world and to convey the wisdom and knowledge of the indigenous people.

A series of clips from different films were screened to provide a better understanding of a good story and how to tell it in an engaging way, with emotion being the key factor for a good storyline.

Holding to that thought, students shared personal stories of struggle and achievement, touching on important topics for the youth of Meghalaya, such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse and gender equality. The environment and the village life also played important roles in the discussion, as students believed they were an important part of their culture which they would like others to learn about.

“

Emotion is really important in a story. Anyone can relate and connect to emotions, no matter where in the world they are from. People do not keep words and ideas in mind. They keep emotions.

RANI KHANNA



Video screening at the workshop
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

One of the oldest foods known to humanity, millets are nutri cereals that have been our staple diet for generations. They are the main source of income, dietary energy and protein for a billion people in semi-arid parts of the world. The array of millets offers a range of grains, flavours and textures.

ORGANICS & MILLETS NATIONAL TRADE FAIR 2017 REPORT



Display of millet products from Meghalaya at the stall
PC- Pius Ranee

28th - 30th April

It's time for each of us to grow smart, eat smart and live smart. Organics and Millets, the Next Gen Smart Foods are the source of regeneration for Gen Next!

**ORGANICS & MILLETS
NATIONAL TRADE FAIR
2017 REPORT**

'Organics and Millets: National Trade Fair' 2017

The Department of Agriculture, Government of Karnataka, organised the 'Organics & Millets National Trade Fair' at Bengaluru from the 28th to 30th of April, 2017, with the objective to expand the market for organic and millets produce. Pius Ranee, Senior Associate, NESFAS, represented Meghalaya at the fair, by invitation from the Department of Agriculture, Meghalaya.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity for farmers, buyers, exporters and manufacturers to showcase their products. This event also served as an important platform of convergence for all organic stakeholders for the promotion of trade and sharing of knowledge about all things organic and millet.

The Fair also created awareness about health benefits of organics and millets. It opened a new era in the field of organic foods and millets across a wide spectrum of people.



Pius Ranee at the Fair

MAY



Collaborations and networking possibilities

Wild Food Plants (WFP) Showcase at Zizira, Shillong
PGS (Participatory Guarantee System) Farm Appraisal
Meeting with Antonella Cordone from IFAD



Interaction with Staff from Zizira
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

3rd May

As Zizira drives towards making Northeast farmers famous, there can be a possible allied activity aligning with NESFAS' vision in identifying market solutions for the farmers associated with the communities working with them.

Wild Food Plants (WFP) Showcase at Zizira, Shillong

Zizira focuses on 'making Northeast farmers famous'

The Mei-Ramew market held on 7th April, 2017, in Shillong showcased local produce from two communities- Khweng, Ri-Bhoi and Nongtraw, East Khasi Hills and impressed the attendees. Among the attendees was a team from Zizira, the first health-focused natural food and product company in Shillong, Meghalaya, India. Following the market, Zizira invited NESFAS for an informal session on 3rd May, 2017, to showcase some products of wild edibles and possible traditional recipes. This served as an opportunity for a possible future collaboration with Zizira through their online marketing platform.

The session covered a presentation by NESFAS Associate Pius Ranee about the dishes served and a brief about the products. The session was followed by an interaction whereby the team from Zizira raised a few queries like the medicinal values of the wild edible plants and growing areas of shiahkrot. The meet ended with the tasting session and a positive feedback from the team.



WFP display at Zizira
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

DISHES PRESENTED

1. Khasi style salad made with wild edible jali
2. Khasi style salad made with wild edible bat pyllon
3. Khasi style mashed potato mixed wild edible Tangduma
4. Khasi style pork cooked with wild edible jaraiñ
5. Shashiahkrot, a herbal tea made from roots

Besides the wild edible local dishes, a variety of finger millet and raw wild edibles were also showcased.

11 - 12th
th May

PGS (Participatory Guarantee System) Farm Appraisal



PGS farm appraisal
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

Follow up & future plans

NESFAS team members Pius Ranee, Janak P Singh and Peter Wallang visited Nongtraw, East Khasi Hills, from the 11th to 12th May, 2017, for the follow up and completion of the PGS farm appraisal data. 15 farmers of the PGS group from Nongtraw have completed their PGS farm appraisal. The team also organised a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the community members. In the discussion, many farmers shared their concerns on issues like the importance of documentation of knowledge, the infestation of pests on plants, and more. In the meeting, the community had also finalised on their plan to set up a community Mei-Ramew café parallel to implementation of a town square plan.

19th
th May

Meeting with Antonella Cordone from IFAD

Innovations in the process of 'transferring of knowledge'



The team along with A Cordone and A Marbianang
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

Mr. Adrian Marbianang from NEERCOMP met with Ms. Antonella Cordone, Senior Technical Specialist, Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Issues, IFAD at NESFAS on 19th of May, 2017, to discuss ideas and support towards the activities of NESFAS.

STRATEGIES & INNOVATIONS

The NESFAS team shared the activities of the organisation, which brought up relevant issues. Ms. Cordone and Mr. Marbianang also came up with a few ideas that NESFAS could implement. The main topics of discussion included strategies for resource mobilisation, branding, and possible services from NESFAS as an organisation that can assist, in terms of expertise, consultancy, enhancement of indigenous youth associated programmes and encourage sustainable livelihood. The group also spoke about innovations in the process of 'transferring of knowledge' and bringing them together at the village level, and networking possibilities with like-minded organisations.



A Cordone and A Marbianang at NESFAS
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

JUNE

World Environment Day

Dr. Francisco Rosado May visits Nongtraw

Workshop: 'Traditional farming and development of indigenous marketing pathways for sustainability of indigenous farming systems'



Advocating traditional farming while empowering women farmers

Workshop: 'Strengthening Convergences for Empowering Women Farmers in Meghalaya'

Learning Zero Budget Natural Farming

Millet Workshop at Laitdiengsai



Tree plantation at Umsawwar community
PC- Cinderella M Lyngdoh



Tree plantation at the Fr. Henry Frassy M. Sec School
Chidekgre, West Garo Hills
PC- NESFAS



Ministry of Dance takes pledge for WED 2017
PC- MOD

5th June

Although the world at large marks the day, it is the indigenous peoples, the traditional farmers, the gatekeepers of biodiversity, the holders of traditional knowledge who are the closest friends of Mei-Ramew, our Mother Nature.

DR. FRANCISCO ROSADO MAY
Agroecologist, Intercultural Maya
University of Quintana Roo, Mexico and
TIP Mentor

World Environment Day Connecting People to Nature

Celebrating the World Environment day became a tradition in 2016 when Mawhiang village in West Khasi Hills requested NESFAS to join in the celebration of the World Environment Day. They decided to dedicate a community land to plant local tree varieties with support from NESFAS. More than 85% of the trees planted survived, a much higher record than what is achieved on an average in the State.

Successively, in 2017, NESFAS and Mawhiang Village decided to use the World Environment Day to replant local trees in areas where there was no growth. NESFAS also got in touch with the Khweng Community to celebrate 2017 World Environment day.

To stand true to the overall concept of World Environment Day and to get people involved in working towards the well-being of the environment, 'Connecting People to Nature' was decided upon as the theme for 2017



Cleaning of Water Sources at Nohron community
PC- NESFAS

Ten partner organisations of NESFAS, along with more than one hundred communities, responded positively to the collaboration. The communities and organisations were from East and West Jaintia Hills, East and West Khasi Hills, Garo Hills, Ri-Bhoi Districts, and from Chizami District of Nagaland, North East Network (NEN), the Catholic Social Services Group, the Shillong Sikh Gurudwara, Society for Urban and Rural Empowerment (SURE), Tynrai Foundation, Society for Action in Community Health (SACH), Ministry of Dance, Schools, Colleges and Institutions.

The communities organised various activities at their own villages for the event, with the aim to promote:

‘Better Environment, Better Soils, Better Tomorrow and Best for the Planet’

The initiative was highlighted through their firm actions while emphasising on awareness for further actions for

‘The Future We Want’

Some of the activities for the day’s celebration included composting, an art competition, tree planting, agro-biodiversity walks, eat-in, cleaning drives, and much more.

The day was a kick-start for these communities, individuals, and organisations that are connected, to come forward for an action towards a better tomorrow. The day reminds the indigenous groups, young and old, men and women, and the different organisations that they are part of Mother Nature.



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2017
5TH JUNE 2017
OUR PLEDGE

Connecting People to nature is the theme for the World Environment Day 2017. We the indigenous and custodian women and men farmers, young people, children of Meghalaya and of Nagaland and our friends who are associated with NESFAS, NEN, Tynrai Foundation, the Catholic Social Services Group, the Shillong Sikh Gurudwara, Society for Urban and Rural Empowerment, Society for Action in Community Health (SACH), Ministry of Dance, Schools, Colleges and Institutions, do hereby remind ourselves that:

- we are part of Mother Nature on whom we intimately depend for our well being and that of our future generations.
- We embrace Mother Nature from whom we draw our language, our culture, our traditional knowledge, our social institutions and our food and nutrition security.

We therefore hereby pledge ourselves to:

- respect and maintain our soil through which nature sustains the fertility of our lands, the purity of our water, the quality of our air and food systems and manages the ever growing risks of climate change;
- protect our biodiversity and our traditional and natural farming systems where plants and all living beings live and work for each other and thereby enhance their ecosystem services for the benefit of all;
- pay special attention to all environmental and culturally significant community conserved areas;
- promote traditional agroecological systems that do not destroy Mother Nature and that produce good, clean and fair food and livelihoods for all.

We the Elders of our communities and leaders of our various organizations do also pledge to:

- play our role as keepers of indigenous knowledge and practices and as leaders, teachers, role models and mentors; and
- empower our youths to always remain connected with Mother Earth.
- support women in their strategic roles as custodians and users of biodiversity for the wellbeing of families and communities.

OUTREACH

All these collaborations led to the drafting of a pledge which has also been circulated internationally. NESFAS has received very strong endorsements from interested individuals in Oxford, UK, Stanford USA, Maya Intercultural University of Quintana Roo Mexico and Coventry Universities and from many communities from Latin America, USA, Europe, Africa, Asia, South India and the South Pacific.

Many of these indigenous organisations and their allies have stated that it will be translated into their local languages and will be read out to their communities that will be celebrating the World Environment Day.

We are very pleased that the pledge that was initiated by NESFAS and the 100 communities, and North East Organisations is being endorsed and used by indigenous food organisations in Latin America, U.S, Africa and South Pacific.

PHRANG ROY
 Chairperson, NESFAS



Dr. Francisco Rosado May at Nongtraw

6th June

Shifting cultivation in Nongtraw village is the best in the world.

DR. FRANCISCO ROSADO MAY
Agroecologist, Intercultural Maya
University of Quintana Roo, Mexico

Dr. Francisco Rosado May visits Nongtraw

On 6th June, 2017, Dr. Francisco Rosado May and team NESFAS visited Nongtraw community, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, with the objective of learning and acquiring better understanding of stress tolerant crops through interaction with farmers and by visiting the shifting cultivation fields.

During the meeting with the PGS group in the community, the farmers shared that crops like millet, sesame, Ja-ing (Black mustard leaves), yams, tapioca, sweet potato, potato and spring onion are the common stress tolerant crops grown.



Dr. May with NESFAS team and community members of Nongtraw
PC- Cinderella M Lyngdoh



Interaction with farmers
PC- Cinderella M Lyngdoh



6th June Dr. May conducts an FGD with the community
PC- Cinderella M Lyngdoh

During the meeting with school teachers, Richard Ranee and Shaiphar Dohling, Dr. May highlighted that it is important for the school children to be equipped with indigenous thinking. He also shared that traditional farming is an intercultural practice and that culture plays an important role in its flourishing. He emphasised on the fact that if there are no indigenous people, there will be no traditional farming.

New areas of research should combine both scientific and traditional knowledge in order to strengthen the farming system. In shifting cultivation, farmers should plant both cultural plants, which include medicinal plants. Mr. Richard rightly pointed out that if people do not practice shifting cultivation, all the medicinal plants are going to be lost.

Lastly, Dr. Francesco asserted that the school garden is the best platform in order to have a network with various departments. The aim is to not only provide livelihoods for farmers but also an exchange of knowledge.

12th June

The modern industrial food and agricultural system which is locked to monocropping, chemicals, specialisation, consolidation, leading to a loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and loss of underutilised food plants will have to be transformed during the 21st Century because of the challenge of climate change and serious health issues.

PHRANG ROY
Chairperson, NESFAS

WORKSHOP

‘Traditional farming and development of indigenous marketing pathways for sustainability of indigenous farming systems’

Dr. Carl Rangad, the Vice Chairman (Operations) of NESFAS, who has been actively involved in all the activities of NESFAS, on the suggestion of Phrang Roy, Chairman, NESFAS, to have a discussion with like-minded people from the scientific fraternity and with people from the communities NESFAS is working with, approached the Director of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Dr. S.V. Ngachan, who showed keen interest in organising such a workshop. This resulted in the training cum workshop jointly organised by NESFAS and the ICAR to enable a creditable database of researchers on indigenous knowledge systems in the North East for future organised research in the field of agrobiodiversity and agroecology.

The broad plan of the training cum research workshop on ‘Traditional Farming and Development of Indigenous Marketing Pathways for Sustainability of Indigenous Farming Systems’ held on the 12th of June 2017 at the ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Umiam was to present the concept of marketing pathways as a way to articulate an indigenous approach with the objective of increasing the probabilities of successful indigenous business around agroecology. By doing so, not only will indigenous knowledge and food systems be more appreciated but local farming systems that are based on diversity will address the issue of carbon sequestration, thus adapting better to climate change. The premise was that a business and an economic approach makes agroecology more sustainable, interesting and attractive to the youth.

The meeting organised by NESFAS and ICAR brought together groups and individuals – scientists, stakeholders, practitioners, civil organisations, NGOs, academicians, researchers, and government for an interdisciplinary interaction and articulation on the importance of traditional farming systems and indigenous marketing pathways. Among the participants were representatives from MLCU, NEHU, NEN Nagaland, NERCORMP, MBDA, NESFAS, ICAR, and custodian farmers from the communities.

The North East has tremendous cultural and agrobiodiversity resources that we need to sustain for better food and nutrition security

DR. S.V. NGACHAN
Director, ICAR complex



Dr May conducting the workshop
PC-Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

Dr. Carl O Rangad, Vice Chairman (Operations), NESFAS shared, “This is a forum to discuss with like-minded people, for preserving our natural heritage such as wild edibles, biodiversity, water, which often have few discourses.” The gathering also stressed upon the immediate issue of Climate Change Adaptation and the targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). It was pointed out that the FAO has established that the world’s agricultural soils have lost between 50 and 70 percent of their original carbon stock leading to soil degradation and desertification. Dr. Rangad stressed on the importance of carbon sequestration, which can be adopted by anyone through traditional ways of composting, which most indigenous communities already practice.



ICAR workshop- Group activity
PC-Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Participants take the stage to present their ideas
PC-Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



The participants at the workshop
PC-Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

DR. MAY AT THE WORKSHOP

Dr. Francisco Rosado May, from the Intercultural Maya University of Quintana Roo, Mexico, was the main resource person who facilitated the workshop and motivated the participants to share their knowledge, experiences and perspectives during the workshop.

Using data of his own Maya indigenous community of Mexico, he showed that his people were able to adapt to climate change through an efficient construction of knowledge through long periods of observation, trial and passing of this knowledge between the elders and the young.

He stated that indigenous businesses that take into account cultural dimension, support the growth of vibrant local markets, value qualitative analysis and the accumulation of experience are the ones that tend to succeed.

OUTCOME OF WORKSHOP

1. It was agreed that such workshops and capacity building opportunities are very important and they should be continued with the support of ICAR and hopefully TIP.

“It is expected that this would not be a one-off workshop but a beginning to a series of workshops based on the outcomes of the present one and would trigger off the change that is targeted for a better and sustainable ecosystem in the North Eastern Region of India.”

DR. CARL RANGAD
Vice Chairman, Operations, NESFAS

2. ICAR would like NESFAS, with its strong grassroots connection, to be involved in some of their future work with possible funds from ICAR resources.

3. The Director of ICAR, Dr. S.V Ngachan made an additional announcement that ICAR has funds under the ‘Tribal sub-plan’ that the institute is implementing. In this regard, the Director has requested NESFAS to identify two sites of their project area for the implementation of the project.

Mr. Rathin Roy, M&E Consultant for NESFAS, at the session, addressed that the purpose of this meeting is to look at things from the point of view of our indigenous brothers and sisters, and diverse stakeholders, because different people generate different practices from their knowledge. The workshop concluded with a consensus to document all the works done in different institutions, identify gaps and present proposals for future actions.



13th & 14th June- Kong Byllaimon Swer from Laitsohpliah Community represents women farmers from her community
PC- A Skhembill

13th - 14th June

If you take away land from women in the rural areas, you take away their livelihoods; you take away the very thing that they identify with. We fight, because we have nothing else to lose.

MELANIA CHIPONDA

Land defender in Zimbabwe working with the WoMin African Gender Extractives Alliance

Workshop at SIRD 'Strengthening Convergences for Empowering Women Farmers in Meghalaya'

Indigenous women of today have been moulded by generations of powerful women that have played indispensable roles in myriad spheres. Their interests and skills range from traditional to contemporary, from mother to artist, activist, advocate, and healer.

With the vision of safeguarding these skills and encouraging women to bring out their true potential, North East Network (NEN), Shillong organised a two-day workshop on 13th and 14th June, 2017, on developing a roadmap for actions to be taken towards 'Strengthening Convergences for Empowering Women Farmers in Meghalaya' at SIRD (State Institute of Rural Development), Nongsder.



Merrysha Nongrum, Junior Associate, NESFAS, at the workshop
PC- A Skhembill

The workshop aimed at highlighting barriers faced in the State in terms of agriculture and livelihood, with a special focus on gender barriers for women farmers. It also laid emphasis on identifying gaps and challenges of the different stakeholders; both Government and non-Government organisations and draw collective action towards supporting women farmers in Meghalaya.



Kong Byllaimon Swer

delivered a presentation and shared the story of her village, Laitsohpliah, her role as a custodian farmer, and the strong partnership between NESFAS and her village. "The major issue in our village is unhealthy soil and water scarcity, which really becomes a struggle for our farmers," shared Kong Byllaimon. She then highlighted the need of giving back to mother earth and not merely exploiting it. As a result, she shared the composting activity done by the PGS groups in her village under the guidance of NESFAS. She lastly advised her fellow farmers to practice multi-cropping in their farms because according to her traditional knowledge, multi-cropping would protect from natural calamities.

On behalf of NESFAS, Ms Merrysha Nongrum, Associate, NESFAS and Kong Byllaimon Swer, custodian farmer from Laitsohpliah village, participated in the panel discussion.

Organisations such as Grassroot, BIDS, Synjukjongka Hima Mawphlang, SURE, NERCORMP, Bethany Society and Government Departments converged at a single platform to discuss issues, challenges, and recommendations for ensuring rights and entitlement of women farmers in Meghalaya. Each organisation presented their experiences in terms of working with women farmers and the challenges faced by women. From the presentation delivered by the different speakers at the workshop, challenges such as lack of capital, water scarcity, market access, rented land/scarcity of land, pest control, lack of compensation, certification of organic farming, lack of documentation, government recognition and poor infrastructure, are some of the main challenges that were highlighted in the forum. Besides these issues, there was also a strong focus on climate change issues such as drought and flood that lead to soil degradation.

The second day of the workshop saw the formation of the 'Women Farmers Rights Forum' called MAKAM (Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch) which was an outcome of the discussion on the challenges, under the leadership of NEN. This forum will coordinate to work on issues faced by women farmers in the state.



"We, as indigenous women and indigenous peoples, believe it's vital to take into account our knowledge to prevent and adapt to climate change, because the communities are the ones who know how"

TARCILA RIVERA

Advisor in Peru, a Quechuan activist and Executive Director, CHIRAPAQ



SIRD workshop
PC- A Skhembill



Interaction between Dr. May, Agriculture officer and farmers at Uyyalawada

16th - 20th June

Learning Zero Budget Natural Farming NESFAS Team visits Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad

NESFAS Associates; Pius Ranee and Janak Preet Singh, visited Hyderabad on the invitation of the Government of Andhra Pradesh from 16th to 20th June, 2017. NESFAS Consultant, Dr. Francisco Rosado May, also accompanied them.

The project on Zero Budget Natural Farming was initiated by Subhash Pallekar, a former agriculturist from Maharashtra. The core principle is to revive soil biology. It is being implemented phase-wise, started in September 2015 with 2000 villages, i.e., 10% of the total population of Andhra Pradesh. Besides targeting the farmers, the project also targets those landless farmers by giving them some sort of financial support for the leasing of land to cultivate. Utmost emphasis is put on changing the mind-set of the farmers. The approach is farmer friendly by adopting innovative mediums of knowledge distribution.



NESFAS team with the farmers of Uyyalawada

The purpose of the trip was for NESFAS to learn the concept of Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) adopted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. The man behind this programme was Shri. T. Vijay Kumar, Advisor to Government Agriculture and Co-operation Department, Andhra Pradesh Secretariat. The field-trip was accompanied by a number of Government officials including other non-government officials. Dr K.S Varaprasad, Former Director, ICAR-110R and consultant, Hyderabad was also part of the mission.

It was noted that land issues in Andhra Pradesh are different as compared to the ecosystem of Meghalaya, in terms of land fertility, ecosystem, crop biodiversity, agroecology and climatic conditions.

On 17th June, 2017, the team visited a village called Uyyalawada. They got a chance to interact with more than 50 men farmers. Uyyalawada is the first village in which the project of ZBNF has been initiated with 32 groups formed consisting of 10 members in each group.

26th June

We have to reboot ourselves by switching to organics and millets.

KRISHNA BYRE GOWDA
Agriculture Minister, India

Millet Workshop at Laitdiengsai



A workshop cum awareness programme on the importance of 'Millet' was held on the 26th of June, 2017 at Laitdiengsai Village, Mawkyntnew Block organised by the Social Service Centre (SSC) Shillong, in collaboration with NESFAS. The programme is also part of a project called 'Facilitating Agricultural Regeneration Resources' initiated by the SSC.

With the theme 'No Woman No Krai', a slogan that was started by Slow Food International and adopted as a campaign locally, the workshop focused on the importance of millet (Krai), the emergence of millet networks in the local and global forum, and the role of women as protectors of this resilient crop.

Mapping the diversity of millet and a cooking class on two recipes of millet were also conducted, in which participants from 6 villages, namely Jongksha, Laitdiengsai, Mawmuthoh, Mawpyrshong, Mawblang and Rapleng actively took part.

Millets are nutritional powerhouses because they have high fiber and mineral contents that make them one of the healthiest cereals. Iron and calcium content in finger millet is higher than rice. Millet is believed to help prevent and cure modern lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.



Pius Ranee shared in the workshop that millets are pest-free crops that require no chemicals. Most importantly, they are climate-smart crops that can increase food sovereignty for farmers and can be sourced locally. Though millet is easy to cultivate, it is unfortunate that most farmers in the region have stopped cultivating this precious crop. Awareness about the crop can help support local farmers through increased consumption of a variety of millet foods, also, gain benefits from their health values. At the same time, this can help contribute to the local economy, which is good for the people, health, and the environment.

The workshop concluded with a resolution to further implement actions such as community seed exchange and documentation of local recipes of millet.



"The aim of the SSC is to promote traditional farming and the essence of traditional crops. We shall further take active steps to promote the cultivation of millet in the villages working with the SSC"

FR. BERNARD LALOO
Director, SSC

JULY



**Indigenous communities' perceptions on
climate change affecting food systems**

© Andre J Fathome

**Identification of stress tolerant crops in the context of
climate change in Meghalaya**



NESFAS Associate Merrysha Nongrum with volunteers for the survey

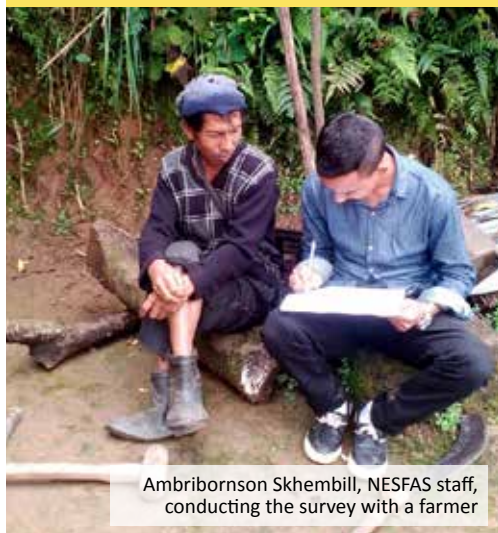
26th July

‘Identification of stress tolerant crops in the context of climate change in Meghalaya’

The study on ‘Identification of stress tolerant crops in the context of climate change in Meghalaya’ is linked to the IFAD-EU-CCAFS Grant of linking agrobiodiversity to value chain, climate adaptation and nutrition for empowering the poor to manage risk. The Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP) and NESFAS decided that for North East India they would work with community members to define stress-tolerant crops and assess their conservation status, erosion threats and degree of use.

TIP sent Dr. Francisco Rosado May to help the NESFAS staff to work out the survey approach which was conducted among 262 households residing in eleven villages which are spread over four districts, viz. West Khasi Hills, West Jaintia Hills, RiBhoi and East Khasi Hills. The groups chosen for this study were the Pnar-Khasi, Khyntiam-Khasi, Bhoi-Khasi and Lyngngam-Khasi and identified on the basis of their geographical distribution. After many focused discussions, the 282 farmers selected for the study made many suggestions which led to the main findings of the study. These findings can be divided into four categories: indigenous communities’ perceptions and experience of climate change, character of the indigenous food production system, identification of stress tolerant crops and the stakeholder’s role in their conservation.

When asked to identify stress tolerant varieties, the farmers named 39 such crops (including their multiple varieties as well) belonging to different categories, viz., grain crops (3), fruit crops (6), tuber and root crops (9), shrub crops (1), sugar crops (1), spice crops (2) and vegetable crops (17) revealing a conscious desire on the part of the farmers to balance their cropping system to meet different dietary needs.



Ambribornson Skhembill, NESFAS staff, conducting the survey with a farmer

AUGUST



TIP Youth Fellowship Programme
World Honey Bee Day

7th - 9th
th August

‘Regional Consultation on Farming System for Nutrition (FSN)’

Dr. Carl O Rangad delivered a presentation at MSSRF, Chennai



Dr. Carl Rangad at MSSRF

Dr. Carl O Rangad, Vice Chairman (Operations), NESFAS, presented at the seminar ‘Regional Consultation on Farming System for Nutrition (FSN)’ from the 7th to 9th of August, 2017 at M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai.

Focus areas of the presentation included mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being, the importance of local food systems, the role of Indigenous people as guardians of agrobiodiversity, agroecology, traditional and cultural identity, and food and nutritional security.

27th August
- 1st Sep

The Indigenous Partnership (TIP) International Youth Fellowship Programme 2017

August 2017 saw the initiation of the The Indigenous Partnership (TIP) - International Youth Fellowship Program 2017 in Rome, Italy.

Supported by The Christensen Fund (TCF), the fellowship aimed at creating a platform for intercultural knowledge exchange among the youth of different indigenous communities and syncing them to global views, while sustaining their identities.



The fellows at the VIPP training, Germany
PC- VIPP

While each of the Fellows has individually shown dedicated efforts in their home communities, the time at the TIP fellowship allowed them concentrated exposure of working within a system and its work orders. This tuned them to a professional code of conduct and functioning in a global organisation. At the same time, as the fellows travelled on field visits with experts, they learnt technical terminology, observation, scientific analytics and their social connections.

PHRANG ROY
Chairperson, NESFAS

The Fellowship program was designed for four months and was hosted with TIP host Bioversity International, an international agricultural research institution with a focus on scientific evidence. The program prepared the fellows through training, professional development, networking, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agrobiodiversity issues, and also to develop exposure through different Rome-based UN Agencies.

The Fellows selected for this programme represented three different indigenous communities: Karen from Thailand, Karrayyu from Ethiopia and Khasi from North East India. They included Pius Ranee and Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh from Meghalaya, Nutdanai Trakansuphakon from Thailand and Roba Bulga Jilo from Ethiopia. From the 27th of August, 2017 to 1st of September 2017, the group was trained by the Advanced Creative Training of VIPP (Visualisation in Participatory Programs) Facilitators in the Training Centre of Monastery St. Ulrich, SW Germany. This training was a specialised workshop for experienced facilitators and trainers, who wanted to engage in global or local institutional work. They also had sessions and trainings with Slow Food International team at the headquarters in Bra, Italy.

The fellowship addressed two core areas of TIP work, firstly, agroecology, which has increasingly emerged as the connecting thread of all their agendas. The second was communications, which was essential to share the grassroot stories on a global platform. The time spent in Europe allowed each of the Fellows to be exposed to the best minds at related organisations like Bioversity International, IFAD, FAO, Slow food and many more.



Andtonella Cordone, Senior Technical Specialist Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Issues, IFAD, with the Fellows



Training on Ethnobotany of Plants
PC-Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Session with the Indigenous Peoples Desk at IFAD
PC-Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

Personally, the learning that I got from the Fellowship Programme was beyond my expectation. Through this programme, I have come to understand the importance of agrobiodiversity, soil fertility and seed in addition to agroecology. I have also understood the principles of project planning and project management although I would like to learn more. I found the training on Visualisation in Participatory Programme to be a useful instrument and I have been applying it in most of my field work. At the moment I am currently working on the manual of Agroecology School and setting up of community seed banks. Regarding the community seed banks, I have been able to help our communities with the support of LI-BIRD from Nepal. Through this programme, I have come also understood the basic principles of nutrition security that NESFAS is currently working on. I am using methods like Dietary Diversity Score, mapping of nutrient rich species etc. In a nutshell, the Fellowship programme that TIP has launched has become a platform for exchanging of ideas among indigenous peoples; it provides deep insight on local food systems. Overall, it has become a tool of empowerment for us young people.

PIUS RANEE

Senior Associate, Agroecology, NESFAS



The Fellows- Nutdanai Trakansuphakon, Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh, Pius Ranee and Roba Bulga Jilo, with NESFAS Chairman Phrang Roy



Fellows Nutdanai Trakansuphakon and Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh with Luis Francisco Prieto, Focal Point Indigenous Peoples, Slow Food International

The TIP Fellowship Programme for Indigenous Youth that I was part of in the year 2017 has brought about a great understanding of the scope of work for sustainable development issues. Though I am from a Media and Communications background, the training on the different subjects that are essential for addressing indigenous issues, local food systems and sustainable development were very crucial for understanding the concepts in depth. Subject knowledge on issues like agrobiodiversity, agroecology, soil seed, food and nutrition, and others, plays an important role in developing any form of messaging and stories. I have also gained confidence and skills in facilitating workshops and training, all because of the VIPP Facilitation Training. Through this, a few workshops and facilitation programmes have been conducted, including a storytelling workshop for the youth in Shillong, orientation programme for college students and for the new team members that recently joined NESFAS. I am also grateful for being part of the Social Media Reporting team at the 2017 UN's Committee on Food Security by the FAO. Getting five blogs, on food and other issues, published on FAO's website is one of my most cherished achievements, that also gave a better understanding of what to capture in a story. With all the knowledge that I have gained throughout the Fellowship Programme, my way forward is to focus on Communication for Rural Development and ideate narrative change to promote local voices and concerns, with best practices and blend of the latest digital communication technologies.

ALETHEA KORDOR LYNGDOH

Associate, Communications, NESFAS

Though honey bees have been around for millions of years, indigenous people, with their strong connection to ecological farming systems, still take pride in acknowledging the importance of pollinators and their services to agriculture.



World Honey Bee Day
PC- NESFAS

19th August

Working closely with the communities, NESFAS, over the years, in collaboration with the communities, has designed future possible interventions towards promoting livelihood opportunities through beekeeping practices. The Indigenous Pollinators' Network is a platform and a free space that brings together beekeepers, farmers, traditional knowledge holders and experts to deliberate, discuss, research and share their concerns, views and solutions, and enhance the role of pollinators essential for traditional food systems.

World Honey Bee Day

Beekeeping for livelihood and sustainable agricultural development

The 'World Honey Bee Day', celebrated on 19 August, 2017, was organised by the Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Meghalaya and sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare at the Integrated Agriculture Training Centre (IATC), 6th Mile, Upper Shillong.

NESFAS was invited to represent the Indigenous Pollinators' Network and Mr. Janak Preet Singh, Sr. Associate, NESFAS, spoke to the various farmers present at the programme.



Shahmiki Kyndait, Beekeeper from Mopyut community
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

The Government of India has highlighted that by 2032 they aim to increase farmers' income and have identified honey as one of the products that will help to create employment opportunities and livelihood for the rural population. The farmers can contribute to the domestic consumption and provide export to neighbouring countries.

The event brought together people from various institutions in Meghalaya to share collective knowledge and create a platform to amplify the work of beekeepers and also to promote the practice for enhancing livelihood opportunities in the State. NESFAS envisions stronger networks of beekeepers in the near future. The event resulted in forming connections with local institutions and further developing and strengthening the network, through research and documentation engagement.

SEPTEMBER



Reviving traditional foods



© Andre J Fathorne



Inter-School Indigenous
Cooking Competition



Inter-school Indigenous Food Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS

23rd September

The Inter-School Indigenous Food Cooking Competition

The Inter-School Indigenous Food Cooking Competition, Shillong was held on the 23rd of September, 2017 at 'Lahai-roi' Gardens, Umkdait, Nongmensong, Shillong, as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebration organised by Seven Set Higher Secondary School, Shillong.

The theme for the event was 'Take a ride back to our roots: The future we want' and only featured local cuisines from North East India. A 'Mei-Ramew Market' had wild edibles and shifting cultivation products from Khweng Village on sale. Kong Plantina's Mei-Ramew café boasted of special local snacks for the visitors. Around 14 schools from Shillong took part in the competition.



Inter-school Indigenous Food Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS



Stalls at the Indigenous Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS



Participants at the Indigenous Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS



Participants at the Indigenous Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS



Students cooking local cuisines for the competition
PC- NESFAS



Participants at the Indigenous Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS



Participants at the Indigenous Cooking Competition
PC- NESFAS

OCTOBER



Encouraging the youth through rural markets

NESFAS at MLCU's 'Synergy 2017'



Mei-Ramew Market at MLCU Synergy
PC- NESFAS

13th October

Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.

KOFI ANNAN

Former Secretary General, United Nations

NESFAS at MLCU's 'Synergy 2017' Encouraging the youth

On the 13th of October 2017, the Department of Management and Commerce Studies, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, organised a Management event called 'Synergy 2017', with Rural Marketing as its theme, at MLCU Campus, Dongkatieh, Nongrah. The aim of this event was to provide a platform for students to learn and understand the challenges and opportunities pertaining to the dynamics of rural markets in Meghalaya.

NESFAS was invited to participate and facilitate the farmers market. Farmers from partner communities; Khweng, Ri-Bhoi and Nongtraw, East Khasi Hills and Laitsohpliah, were able to showcase and sell their organically grown seasonal products. Their products received a positive response from the consumers.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Janak P Singh, Sr. Associate, NESFAS delivered a talk on 'The opportunities and Challenges in the Rural Market in Meghalaya' at the event.
- There was a Mei-Ramew Weaves stall that featured the weaves products and also the millets.
- NESFAS organised sensory games for the students.
- There were many enterprises that took part in the event. Some of them include; COLKS (Centre of Learning, Knowledge & Services), Wan's Food and Vegetables Processing Factory, Kara food processing factory, and many more.

Through this event, NESFAS got the opportunity to highlight its works to the young people who took part in the event. NESFAS also encouraged the youth to become future entrepreneurs and encouraged a sense of responsibility to defend the rich agrobiodiversity of the region. The Department of Management and Commerce Studies, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, has requested NESFAS to collaborate with them in helping them ideate and co-design future activities.

NOVEMBER



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Collaboration with REC: Exploring CSR possibilities

REC Project Associates visited NESFAS communities



7th - 12th
th November

The REC (Rural Electrification Corporation) is a Navratna Central Public Sector undertaking under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power.

The REC Foundation was established by the REC to plan, implement, coordinate and monitor its CSR initiatives.

REC strives to achieve a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives through its CSR initiatives, overseen by the REC Foundation. REC is actively involved in facilitating setting up of projects designed to reduce its carbon footprint and ensure sustainable and secure growth.

REC Project Associates visited NESFAS communities for CSR possibilities

Ms. Riya Singh and Ms. Andrea Kobor, from International Innovation Corps (University of Chicago), Project Associates of REC, visited Meghalaya in November 2017. They visited a few partner communities of NESFAS.

With the aim of exploring possible collaborations that could be developed between NESFAS and the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) Foundation through the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Funding of REC.

OUTCOME

Right after their visit, NESFAS team initiated the drafting of the project proposal 'No One Shall Be Left Behind Initiative: Biodiversity for Food, Nutrition and Energy Security for 3000 households in Meghalaya and Nagaland, North East India', in which Riya and Andrea contributed by guiding the team through the gradual process.



DECEMBER



Collective Community Participation

World Soil Day

Workshops

'Collective action to revive indigenous food systems through school gardens'

'Community validation of land use changes, agro-biodiversity and climate change'



World Soil Day- Students of Women's College perform a roleplay
PC- A Skhembill

5th December

In everything we do, we depend on soil, be it our daily activities or cultivation or even for building purposes.

BYLLAIMON SWER
Custodian farmer from Laitsohplich

World Soil Day 2017

Celebration with the indigenous communities

NESFAS, along with Laitsohplich, Laitthemlangseh and Laitumiong communities observed the 'World Soil Day 2017' at Laitsohplich village, Meghalaya on the 5th of December, 2017. The programme was centered on FAO's 'Global Soil Partnership's' theme: 'Caring for the Planet starts from the Ground'. The programme was chaired by Mr. Nestar Kharmawphlang, Headmaster, Laitsohplich LP UP School. He said, "Our villages face harsh environmental challenges such as heavy rain, fog and storm which make it difficult for us to practice organic farming." Hence, the programme addressed their concerns and discussed a way forward.



World Soil Day- Dr. A K Nongkynrih shares in the importance of Soil Health
PC- A Skhembill

Resource person Dr. A K Nongkynrih, HOD, Department of Sociology NEHU highlighted the fact that the villages around Sohra region experience heavy rainfall; therefore there is a high amount of soil erosion. Hence, it is important for the communities to preserve the soil. For instance, Dr. Nongkynrih suggested that the forest cover should be maintained at the hill tops around their village as this helps the rainwater to percolate into the soil while simultaneously increasing the soil fertility. NESFAS initiated the composting campaign in the different partner communities in 2016. It has brought many communities forward to take the initiative to their own agricultural lands and Mrs Byllaimon is one such farmer who is actively composting and applying it in her fields, and producing organic crops. A role play was also presented by the Social Work students of Women's College, Shillong around the theme which portrayed a close connection between a households' farming activities and the soil which was greatly appreciated by the communities who attended the programme.



World Soil Day- Dr. Carl O Rangad, presents the NESFAS Annual Report to Bah N Kharmawphlang
PC- A Skhembill

Dr. Carl Rangad, Vice Chairman (Operations), NESFAS, said “Soil is not a renewable resource”, hence the importance of celebrating World Soil Day initiated by UN Food and Agriculture Organisation was highlighted. However, this should not be a one-day event but should be a perspective that we practice daily. By celebrating this occasion, the three communities became a part of a Global movement that commemorates the importance of soils and soil health.



World Soil Day
PC- A Skhembill



Bah Lamphrang and Bah Shaiphar
PC- Pius Ranee

11th December

It is important for me as well as the community to teach children about the value of our food systems.

BYLLAIMON SWER
Custodian farmer from Laitsohpliah

WORKSHOP

Collective action to revive indigenous food systems through School Gardens

Over the course of interaction with the communities, a concern was raised for having a safe space where people can come together and start discussing their concerns and issues, and then bring in others into the conversation which could eventually lead to collective action. At the school level, a subject like Socially Useful Productive Work (commonly known as SUPW) can become an entry point to start having a dialogue with young minds where elders and school teachers can share their knowledge.



Workplan for school garden in SUPW
PC- NESFAS

Traditional farming practices were encouraged in school garden programmes, and at the same time, the respect for farming as a viable profession was subtly instilled in the young minds.

NESFAS' INITIATIVES

The communities associated with NESFAS graciously embraced the school garden activities and all members of the community were, at the same time, actively involved. In the long run, the students can become the active voice of their own communities. They can contribute in defending their agrobiodiversity by practising it in their school garden platforms.

Since 2012, the initiation of 43 school gardens in the communities associated with NESFAS, have contributed to students in learning the basic methods of farming and understanding where food comes from. It has also contributed in participatory documentation of traditional knowledge and local crops.



Bah Nestar Kharmawphlang of Laitsohpliah community
PC- Pius Rane

ROADMAP

On the 11th of December, 2017, seven school teachers and local knowledge holders from Nongtraw, Dewlieh and Laitsohpliah communities of East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, came forward to actively discuss and prepare a road map for the year 2018-2019 under SUPW classes. Along with the NESFAS team, they were able to include specific school garden activities that can fit in the curriculum. Their active participation in suggesting the specific activities for the school garden programmes will then guide them throughout the year in implementing these activities.

A work plan of three schools (Nongtraw, Dewlieh and Laitsohpliah) under SUPW curriculum was produced. Also, the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) was signed with the three schools.

Side by side, training on the importance of agrobiodiversity for nutrition was conducted. This aimed at guiding the cooks at the ICDS Centres to ensure a nutritious diet through the Mid-Day Meal Programmes for the children in their own communities.

WORK PLAN- 2017-18					
KYTEM SCHOOL: DEWLEH L.P & U.P SCHOOL					
Sl. No.	JAIT KAM	LANG	HAEI	MANO	JINKYNTHON
1.	SHYRTIE/THANG SHNA FILM JINGHAI SHNA EBOH/ RINGAP/SHNA JINGHNA -THAIR JINGTHAI SHNA FILM	DECEMBER JAN-FEB	KHLAN KPEA SHA SKUL/ OHYONG	KHYNNAN SKUL NONGHAI KMIS/KPA STANTHUP/ REKHE/PO/ EADH/INDEBUT	DEC. PYNHREH DANREH/CAI KJANG KUMBA JHIAEP HATON JONGH KA DEI KA PA BADIANG CHA BAN PYN DPT
2.	THUNG	FEB- MARCH APRIL	LYNGNA/KPA	KHYNNAN SKUL NONGHAI KMIS/KPA SHY SHY/CAI	DONRAH DAN BUDDIENHUN SA KA KURUM THUNG KAT KUM KA KUM ODA KADA BUN JINGTHAI
3.	PYNKHUI/THIEN KYNGAT THUNG (MAN KAO) KJ TIN/KHET (DAN/JANG/SANRHA)	MAY-JUNE JULY-AUG. SEPT. OCT NOV-DEC	LYNGNA KPEA	KHYNNAN SKUL KMIS/KPA/ GMC/JONG/CAI STL	RYNGKAT BAI KI DOR KHANHE BA KI KHYNNAN SKUL KH KYNHAW BHA HABA KI PULE
4.	OTAMASA-TAMHOI (FESTIVAL) (SHNA JAMHUN SON) EXPOSURE TRIP/STUDY TOUR	SEPT+OCT	SKUL SHANAR SHNIE	KHYNNAN SKUL KMIS/KPA/ CAI/SHY/CAI SHY SHY/CAI NONGHAI	KA JING WANRAH LANG SHI JAKA IA KI JINGLE SINGKAM

Workplan for school garden in SUPW



14th December

WORKSHOP

'Community validation of land use changes, agro-biodiversity and climate change'

The workshop 'Community validation of land use changes, agro-biodiversity and climate change' with Porksai, Pyndengmulieh and Nongthawkhong villages was held on 14th of December, 2017, at the primary school premises in Pyndengmulieh village, West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, India.

The workshop is part of the second phase of the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research (PAR) project on 'Supporting Agrobiodiversity Maintenance and Use in the Context of Land Management Decisions'. NESFAS is the implementing partner in the first phase of the research conducted in the Lyngngam area in 2014.

The objective of the workshop was three fold:

- 1. To share data and results with the communities in Lyngngam***
- 2. Validate and complete data sets***
- 3. Develop a plan for community-based activities to support the management and use of agrobiodiversity***



Eighteen participants from the villages of Pyndengmulieh and Nongthawkhong attended the workshop.

Ms. Merrysha Nongrum, Junior Associate, NESFAS, led the first technical session on sharing and validation of crop varieties' data. The participants were asked to walk with the facilitator to the next room where various 'stops' with the types of crops collected during the research in 2014 were listed. In the first stop on rice varieties, it was shared with the participants that sixteen varieties of rice were identified in the research conducted in 2014. In the pre-visit by the NESFAS consultant in October 2017, three more varieties of rice, namely Ba-bhoi, Ba-lieh and Ba-Dori were identified.

The second technical session included a film screening at Lyngngam, followed by a discussion on land use changes facilitated by Dr. Lavinia Mawlong. Dr. Mawlong firstly introduced the various types of land use in the villages of the Lyngngam area as evident from the fieldwork conducted in 2014 ranging from home gardens, fruit gardens and paddy fields to community based rotational fields, reserved forests and water sources. The findings of the research conducted in 2014 suggest that due to an increasing population in the area, there has been a decrease in the area under reserved forests while an increase in the area under rotational cultivation, with a shorter fallow period leading to greater pressure on the environment. The discussion with the participants confirmed these statements as evident in the current agricultural practices.

This session was followed by a discussion on climate change wherein the results of the research conducted by PAR in 2014 were shared with the community while facilitating a discussion on what climatic changes have taken place since 2014 until the present. The last few years that of 2015-17, participants point to a more erratic weather. In particular, in 2017, the communities have experienced excessive rain and high winds, which have destroyed their paddy.



Presentation by the community



Discussion of workplan



Group discussion



Pius Ranee presenting to the community



Lunch

JANUARY

© Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Encouraging entrepreneurship to aid knowledge sharing



**Marketing workshop for millet
NESFAS at 2nd Organics and Millets Trade Fair
Traditional textile exhibition by Anna Louise Meynell**



Suklin Dohling and Lamphrang Diengdoh, Youth from Nongtraw community
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

11th January

With proper exposure and packaging, not only will the traditional art forms get recognised but artisans will also have a greater income and better livelihood.

SHRUTI KEDIA
Co-founder and Editor, Decent Neta

Marketing workshop for millet

Encouraging entrepreneurship amongst women and youth in local communities

Suklin Dohling and Lamphrang Diengdoh from Nongtraw community, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya received a brief training on marketing processes and strategies on the 11th of January, 2018 at NESFAS Headquarters. They are members of the Nongtraw Multipurpose and Marketing Co-operative Society. NESFAS Sr. Associate of Livelihood Initiatives; Mr. Janak Preet Singh guided them in making a final product, ready to be sold in the market.

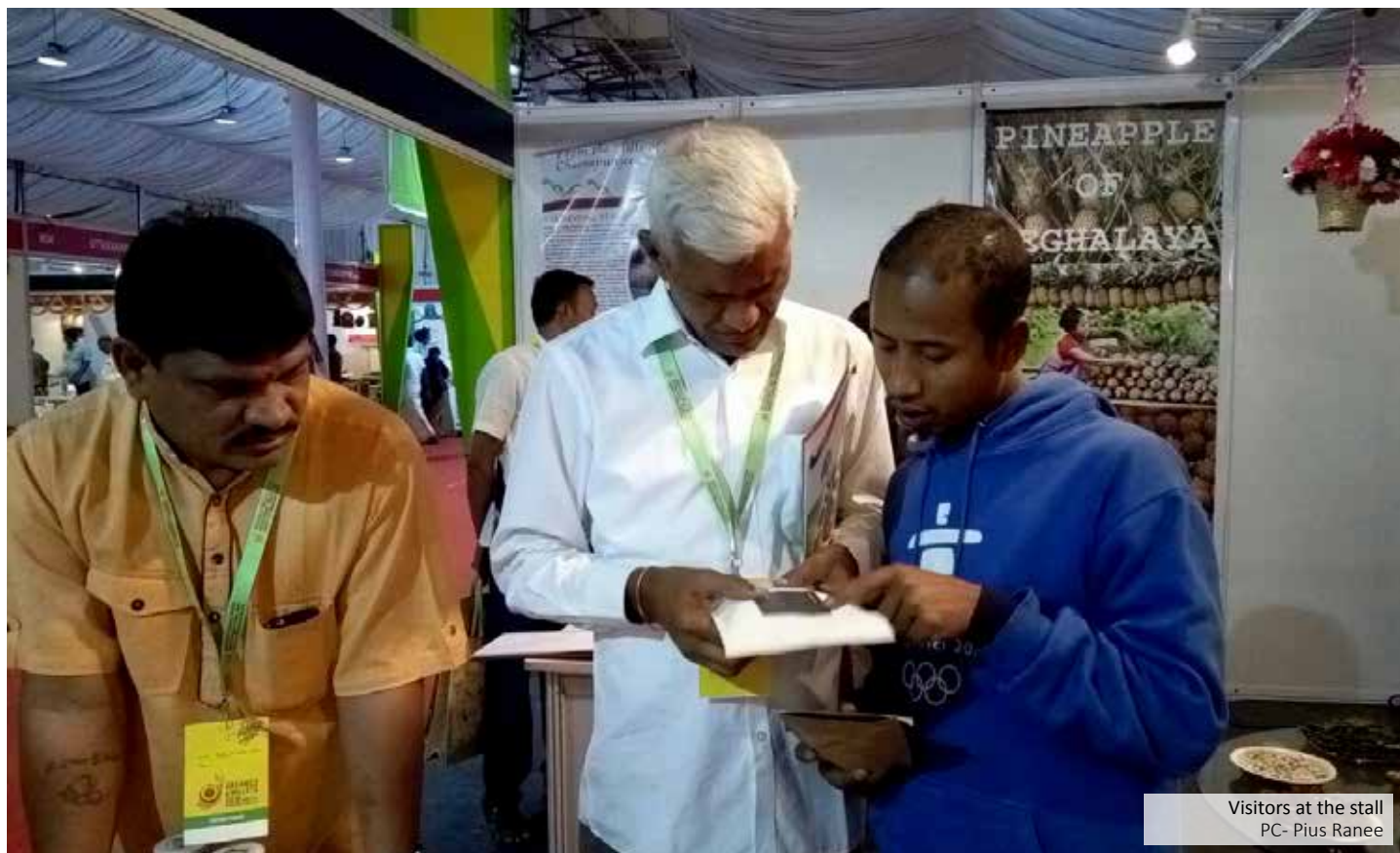
The training concentrated on packaging and labelling of two local products and adding social value to it; Finger millet and Adlay millet (commonly known as Job's tears). Some of the core components that were discussed include hygiene, packaging, labelling, and costing.



Marketing workshop for Millet
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

The NESFAS team has already carried out this mini-experiment when Pius Ranee represented Meghalaya at the 'Organics and Millets 2017 International Trade Fair'. Now, this process is going to be carried forward by the communities itself, starting with Nongtraw's Co-operative Society, which is an initiative of the indigenous youth from the community.

With this, NESFAS is venturing into creating income opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship amongst the women and youth in the local communities.



Visitors at the stall
PC- Pius Ranee

19 -21st
th January

There is great potential in our local products because they are traditionally grown and people in Karnataka have shown great interest in them. Each product has a unique story.

PIUS RANEE
Associate, NESFAS

NESFAS at the 2nd Organics and Millets Trade Fair

Pius Ranee, Senior Associate, Agroecology, represented NESFAS at the 2nd 'Organics and Millets' International Trade Fair 2018 organised by the Government of Karnataka, which was held from the 19th to 21st January, 2018 at the Bangalore Palace. This is the second time Pius took part in this Trade Fair, which is a platform for multi-stakeholders aiming towards organic and millet promotion.

This participation would not have been possible without the support of The 'Meghalaya Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium' (MgSFAC), Government of Meghalaya who were gracious to meet all the expenses for the participants from NESFAS. Along with other representatives from the Government of Meghalaya, community members Mr. L Nongspung from Mawklot, East Khasi Hills and Mr. Dharmen Momin from Sasatgre, Garo Hills also took part in the fair.

Finger millet and Adlay millet (commonly known as job's tears) were the two main millet varieties taken by Pius that were displayed and sold at the trade fair. These millet varieties were packed with the help of the youth who took part in a workshop held at NESFAS. Sourced from East Khasi Hills Meghalaya, the whole process was carried out as an initiative of the indigenous youth of Sohra, Meghalaya. Like the previous fair that was held in April, this year's fair too, opened up avenues in the field of organic foods and millets across a wide spectrum of people and encouraged youth participation.

According to Pius, "If we want to promote local entrepreneurs, we have to fully understand the mind-sets of consumers. Once we understand that, we can then shape their mindsets towards consumption." He also observed that many by-products (like millet biscuits, millet flakes) of millet varieties were showcased in different stalls at the event.

"It was a great experience. I sold all of the Job's tears packets taken from here," shared Pius as he was able to promote and showcase our local food products on a big platform. This has also enabled him to connect with some of the scientists and nutritionists who showed a keen interest in the millet varieties taken from this region. Through this networking experience, fresh ideas and valuable information was gathered.

'THE WORLD OF ORGANICS AND MILLETS' aimed at converging Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture, Farmer Security, New Markets, Future Foods. These were the core-focused areas that were addressed at the event and provided many local participants a connection with potential markets and contributed to knowledge exchange to promote trade.



Anna Louise introducing the exhibition
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

24 -26th
th January

The objective of the exhibition was to share among the locals and others her research on the traditional textiles of Ri-Bhoi District, and also to share about the richness and value of textiles in our region with the local people

Traditional textile exhibition by Anna Louise Meynell

The exhibition 'Textile Traditions of Ri-Bhoi District- An exhibition of traditional hand-woven textiles' was organised and conducted by Anna Louise Meynell, from the 24th to 26th January, 2018 at Savio Hall, Laitumkhrach. Anna Louise Meynell has been engaged with NESFAS from 2014 and she is also the consultant for the Mei-Ramew Weaves.

The exhibition was inaugurated on the 24th of February, 2018 where Anna Louise Meynell gave a talk about her work and introduced the exhibition to the guests and other attendees. Anna explained about the textile of the three tribes – The Raid Nongtluh, The Hima Khad Ar Lyngdoh and the Karbis of RiBhoi. She also spoke about the history and the significances behind different motifs. The Chief Guest, the Syiem of Hima Khad Ar Lyngdoh was also there to share his support towards the work of Anna.

The exhibition showcased old pieces of different tribes' traditional attire and some of them were over 80 years old. There were also different stalls where the communities from Ri-Bhoi displayed and sold their products. Different types of Eri products and other handmade products were sold during the three-day exhibition. A NESFAS Mei-Ramew Weaves stall was also set up in the exhibition where the weave products were displayed and sold.



Anna Louise textile exhibition-
Opening ceremony



The Syiem of Hima Khad Ar Lyngdoh at the exhibition
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Traditional textiles of the Ri-Bhoi
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Traditional loom
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

FEBRUARY



Propagation of culture and preservation of ancestral food systems

**Mei-Ramew Weaves stall at NIFT Spectrum 2018
Seed Fair at Lyngngam**



Mei-Ramew Weaves stall at NIFT Spectrum
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

16th - 17th
February

Meghalaya has a rich variety of hand-woven textiles, with unique characteristics that reflect the state and its skilled artisans. The state produces three varieties of silk – Eri (locally known as ryndia from the castor plants the silkworms feed on), Muga and Mulberry. The Ri-Bhoi District is one of the main regions of Meghalaya where eri-culture and handloom weaving is still practiced. All the materials involved in the process are sourced from the district itself.

Mei-Ramew Weaves stall at NIFT Spectrum 2018

NESFAS exhibited a Mei-Ramew weaves stall at NIFT 'Spectrum' on the 16th and 17th of February, 2018. The stall was managed by Lynnette Langstieh who is an Intern at NESFAS. The exhibition at National Institute of Fashion Technology, Shillong aimed at creating awareness of what role NESFAS plays with Eri Silk, weavers, and also to try and create a partnership with them and to inspire the students.

'Spectrum' is NIFT's annual college festival that takes place in all the respective NIFT campuses around India. The event was organised and conducted by the students of NIFT, Shillong. Many visitors- teachers, students and others came and viewed the products, and the stall received a lot of appreciation regarding Eri weaves. The stall put forth the works of NESFAS and made the visitors aware about NESFAS' initiatives.



Mei-Ramew Weaves stall at NIFT Spectrum
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

SIMORIN MARBANIANG
Headman, Pyndengmulieh



Seed Fair Lyngngam
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

22nd February

Traditional seeds are very important, and if they are not preserved, there is a danger that they might disappear entirely from our food landscape.

Seed Fair at Lyngngam

The partner communities of Lyngngam area, namely Pydengmulieh, Porsai, and Nongthawkhong jointly hosted a Seed Fair on the 22nd of February, 2018 at Pydengmulieh village.

This programme was organised mainly to create awareness in preserving, strengthening and most importantly to promote the local seeds that have been under the perseverance of our ancestors, and also to educate and build understanding amongst the farmers of the Lyngngam area on the importance of seeds and their exchange within and among the community.

Mr. Simorin Marbaniang, Headman of Pydengmulieh, inaugurated the programme through a welcome speech.



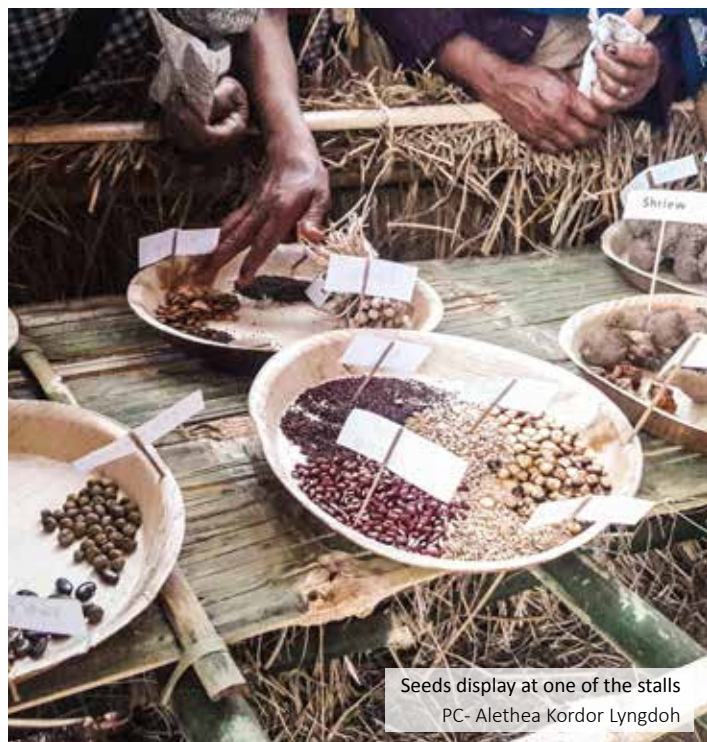
Farmers collecting seeds from the display
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

Six communities from West Khasi Hills, East Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi, and West Jaintia Hills happily shared and exchanged local seeds brought from their own villages to the other communities.

The delegates representing East Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and RiBhoi shared their stories and experiences about the importance of the different varieties of seeds and how NESFAS helped them in exploring the possibilities.

Towards the end of the programme, a photo exhibition that was held at the verandah of the school, showcased exchange festivals that were organised in WahSohra (East Khasi Hills), Rongram (Garo Hills) and Mooskahia (Jaintia Hills). Photos of the Biodiversity fair that was held in Chizami (Nagaland) were also on display.

Finally, they all moved towards the seed display stalls and many farmers took home seeds brought in from other regions of Meghalaya. More than 160 local seeds were brought and displayed at this fair.



Seeds display at one of the stalls
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Merrysha Nongrum, Associate, NESFAS
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Kong Mawsor in her stall of seeds display
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



Photo exhibition of seeds and seedkeeping
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

MARCH



Inter-generational knowledge exchange



Seed Fair at Laitsohpliah



School children learning about seeds
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

13th March

Our traditional food crops are chemical free, but most importantly they are also nutritious and tasty.

RICHARD RANEE
Headmaster, Nongtraw LP School

Seed Fair at Laitsohpliah 'Traditional Seeds for a Sustainable Future'

A seed fair was held on the 13th of March 2018, organised by Laitsohpliah RC/LP UP School at Laitsohpliah Village, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, supported by NESFAS. Laitsohpliah Village is one of the active partner communities of NESFAS and is engaged in many activities since 2014. This fair was a follow-up programme of the workshop in Sohrarim village on 'Collective Action to Revive Indigenous Food Systems through School Garden Programme'. One of the outcomes of the workshop was a work plan for three schools from Nongtraw, Dewlieh and Laitsohpliah village to organise a seed fair.

The theme of this event was 'Ki Symbai Tynrai, Ka Laweiba Phyrnai'. In the informal fair, school students, teachers and community representatives from the three villages gathered to exchange seeds so that the school children could further plant them in their respective school gardens in the planting season. The fair also aimed at an inter-generational knowledge exchange between the farmers and young students.



School children learning about seeds
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh



“As a young farmer, I would like to thank NESFAS for giving me the many opportunities to visit other communities and learning about the farming systems and practices that they have.”

BINASI SWER

Young farmer from Laitsohpliah

23-24th
th March

“If the future of food and the world is to be sustainable, we must go back to our roots.”

DR. CARL O RANGAD

Vice Chairman, Operations, NESFAS

“As teachers, we are responsible for guiding the students’ path. It is important for all of us to possess traditional knowledge, besides modern knowledge,” said Bah Shaiphar Dohling, Headmaster, Dewlieh UP School. He also shared that the School Garden activity in his school has helped them in many ways. The students, as part of their SUPW class, are now actively involved in documenting the local crops of Dewlieh village.

Kong Binasi Swer, a young farmer from Laitsohpliah, also shared her experience about her recent visit in the month of February, 2018 to Lyngngam area for a Seed Fair programme that showcased seeds of six communities. She had the chance to bring back different seeds that are not commonly available in her village.

“Our traditional food crops are chemical free, but most importantly they are also nutritious and tasty,” said Bah Richard Ranee, Headmaster, Nongtraw LP School. He shared a story about the arrowroot plant that is commonly found in his village. Whenever the farmers are in the field, they would never carry drinking water from their homes; instead, they would look for this plant and drink the juice that it extracts.

The event served as a motivation for young children to be aware and further learn what is important for them to contribute towards a sustainable future. “I learnt that it is important to preserve our traditional food systems because these are the foods that are healthy for us all,” said Ibanjalis Rani, a young student of class V from Nongtraw, LP School.



Welcome address by the student of Laitsohpliah RCLP and UP School
PC- Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh

CONFERENCE

‘Interdisciplinarity and Big History’ hosted by the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts

The two-day Conference on Interdisciplinarity and Big History, hosted by the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, began on the 23rd of March 2018, with an address by Nivedita Nair, a third-year student at SSLA. She talked about the prime values of interdisciplinarity, about the evolution of history from the time when religion was the centre of all knowledge, to one where science became the new religion, and about the importance of a Liberal Arts education.

After various other sessions, the last discussion of the day titled Indigenous Understanding, Rights and Contributions, was a roundtable discussion where various panelists shared their ideas on various indigenous topics. Dr. Carl Rangad initiated the discussion by explaining the meaning of Meghalaya. He believes that the youth today focuses more on modernity than on ethnicity. He proposed that this structure of functioning can be defended by indigenous farming and threw some light upon the Meramo Festival, as an ode to Mother Earth.

On the second day, Dr. Rangad introduced the works of NESFAS and shared his thoughts on agriculture down the ages. He mentioned, “Recognition and application of ecological and evolutionary principles will be critical for overall development and management of agriculture in the future.” Some of the challenges for the future of agriculture, according to Dr. Rangad, include crop losses, climate change, soil depletion, water, etc. He strongly advocates that the future of food lies in organic farming.

Financial Overview

April 2017 to March 2018

Opening balance: INR 7419443.75
Donations and Grants: INR 37588.00

Capital expenses: INR 122557.00
Administrative and operational cost: INR 1086586.93
Personal cost: INR 2362582.00
Programme expenses: INR 1640901.11

Closing balance: INR 7867558.75

Total expenditure: INR 5212627.04 (Total of Sr. No 3, 4, 5, 6)



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