

# STORIES FROM THE FIELD...

## Revival of Sacred Groves, Meghalaya, NE India



Dehal Umrang Sacred Grove owned by the Tado Clan and Malai Majaw Clan respectively are abandoned Sacred Groves covering an area of 6 hectares and 75-80 hectares respectively. After a series of discussions with senior members of the Clan members, the community facilitator convinced the Clan members to revive the groves which they have agreed to do so. The Clan members have shown their willingness to avail outside assistance to enable them to replant and preserve the area. The local community has always been afraid to avail any outside assistance for planting and reforestation of their land for fear of losing rights over the land. This fear is now gradually decreasing through efforts of the community facilitator and the positive manner in which the project have been designed.

The confidence of the Syiem (Traditional Head) and his Dorbar in the community facilitator has resulted in their assigning the responsibility of drafting necessary rules and regulations for protection of the grove in consultation with the village heads and clan elders and Project members to him. It has also been decided that thereafter these Sacred Grove and the rules and regulations will be registered with the Autonomous District Council. This will be the first instance of its kind in the entire State.

The cluster of five villages in Umden which is the project site supported by Community Forestry International as part of the Community Forestry Alliance for North East India project, is dotted with patches of degraded, clan-owned sacred groves. In their effort to enhance their livelihood,

communities have taken to large-scale plantations of broom grass and bamboo which has led to a decrease in the water table in the region and a loss of forest cover.

Many of the sacred groves which in the past harbored a rich diversity of flora and fauna, are on the verge of extinction. The community facilitator trained under the project has taken an initiative to revive two abandoned sacred groves: the Mawshapliang Sacred Grove and the Dehal Umrang Sacred Grove.

The Mawshapliang Sacred Grove and the

