

STORIES FROM THE FIELD...



The Strength of Traditional Institutions in CFM, Meghalaya, NE India

tainable management of community forests under their jurisdiction. Through the effort of the Mawphlang Lyngdohship and the three Community Facilitators who are also members of the Mawphlang Lyngdohship and who have been trained under the CFI Project, the Dorbar Hima Mawphlang Lyngdohship (the largest traditional institution of the region) held a meeting attended by all adult male members, numbering 2,200 members.

Lyngkien Village is the project site supported by Community Forestry International. It is comprised of a cluster of two villages, namely Wah Lyngkien Sunnei and Wah Lyngkien Ramklang which share a common boundary. The approximate area of the Project site is around 1, 200 hectares.

These cluster of villages fall under the Mawphlang Lyngdohship, a traditional institution governed by the head of the Lyngdohship the *Lyngdoh* of Ka Hima Mawphlang and four *Myntri* (ministers) representing four major Clans. A Committee (Dorbar) of 12 members within the Lyngdohship who are life-members of the Dorbar elected from any clan present in the Lyngdohship are also members of this institution.

Realizing the important role this institution can play in sustainable management of community forests, members of the Mawphlang Lyngdohship were trained and encouraged to revise their customary rules and responsibilities so as to enable them to take a more leading role in managing their community forests. This effort has resulted in the Mawphlang Lyngdohship taking a lead role in addressing issues related to sus-

In this meeting, the establishment of the Mawphlang Lyngdohship Community Forestry Level Network (MLCFLN) was formalized with all 18 villages as members. It was also during this meeting that a resolution was passed vesting all forestry related activities within the Lyngdohship, including conservation, protection, mapping, and management of all categories of forests with the MLCFLN. The MLCFLN was also assigned the responsibility of directing Heads of the 18 villages to set aside patch of forest for creation protected forests and Sacred Groves.

The effort of the CFI project in assisting the villagers in leveraging Government supported forest related schemes has started to show results. Lyngkien village has been awarded a Joint Forest Management (JFM) Scheme which provides funds for undertaking certain activities like aiding natural regeneration for a patch of 10 hectares and the planting of fast-growing species on over 25 hectares in patches of degraded community forest are underway. An even more encouraging aspect is the decision of the Mawphlang Lyngdohship to designate the 10 and 25 odd hectares of forest as a Community Protected Forest after the JFM project period ends.