

CFI Success Stories

**Revival of Sacred Groves:** The cluster of five villages in Umden which is the project site supported by Community Forestry International 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 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

**The Strength of Traditional Institutions in the Management of Community Forests:**

Lyngkien Village 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 sustainable 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.

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.

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Community Forestry & Biodiversity Conservation in Northeast India-2005-06



Project Overview

The northeastern Himalaya and neighboring montane tracts are not only a "hot spot" of biodiversity, but of cultural diversity as well since most of the communities are indigenous tribal groups. Over the centuries, unique human ecological relationships have evolved, based on the dependence of indigenous communities on the region's forests.

During the British colonial period, Independence era, and up to the present time, Indian governments have respected the unique and remote

nature of the Northeast, while working to integrate the region into a larger nation state. This has inevitably led to confusion and conflict over forest management, with both national models and laws prevailing at some points, and with many exceptions being made.

With demographic pressure from outside migrants mounting and industrial timber demands growing, there is a need for a consistent forest policy framework that provides land and forest security, while clearly identifying man-

agement rights and responsibilities.

In 2003, CFI began its project in Northeast India to address the vast variety of environmental and social problems through the support of indigenous forms of forest conservation and management.

CFI collaborates with local community organizations, local government, NGOs, state government, Forest Department, and other technical agencies.



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Cross-visit to Andhra Pradesh-April 8-13

Representatives from the CFI-NE India project, Mr. Dolin Malai, Community Representative, Umden, Meghalaya, Ms. Jennie Nongrum, SHG Coordinator, BRO, Shillong, Meghalaya, Mr. Mangboy Kipgen, WSDS-Initiates, Imphal, Manipur, Mr. Ibobi Singh, IFS, Conservator of Forests, Imphal, Manipur, Dr. V.T. Darlong, NRM Coordinator, NERCORMP-IFAD, Shillong, were hosted by Dr. Urmila Pingle for a cross-visit funded by CFI to villages in Andhra Pradesh. From the learning of this exposure tour, the implementation of CFI projects in NE India will have a new orientation and motivation, particularly in the areas of forming and strengthening CBOs like SHGs, identifying activities that could improve livelihoods, strengthen community forestry management activities that could even attract community carbon trading, and also develop stronger relationships between the communities, NGOs and government departments/agencies working for the welfare of the people. And above all, the linkage that has been built with the local communities at Adilabad and government agencies/departments like Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh, Integrated Tribal Development Agency, and also few prominent NGOs such as CPF, DHAN Foundation, etc. will go a long way towards drawing their experiences and advice for the cause of the NE India projects. -V. Darlong



Front: Jenni, Urmila & Mangboy;  
Back: Dolin, Vincent & Ibobi





## Community Forestry International-NE India



Members of the CFI Project Team and others  
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CFI team conducts training in Manipur



CFI team in Mawphlang



I. Roy and S. Palit in the field

## CFI Field Projects

### MANIPUR

#### Makhan (Naga) and Songla (Kuki) Villages

CFI is assisting the communities in two pilot project villages to achieve some of the following objectives in 2006:

- Demarcation of Resource Use System on community land
- Forestry inventory & biodiversity survey
- Participatory preparation of work plan for action projects in the villages
- Update and formalize of customary laws for both villages
- Form Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and do capacity development for unemployed youths.
- Implement alternative land use strategies
- Help develop community land use plans
- Secure CF tenure in two pilot villages
- Build inter-departmental linkages
- Link SHGs and LWGs with financial institutions
- Identify income generating options for SHGs
- Create SHG network

### MEGHALAYA

#### Mawphlang Lyngdohship & Umden Siemship

CFI is assisting the communities in the two pilot areas to achieve some of the following objectives in 2006:

- Boundary demarcation and mapping for registering project areas
- Inventory of natural resources
- Submitting and registering JFMC schemes in project areas
- Establishing a dialogue between the District Council and the traditional institutions for registration
- Document customary laws
- Form and train self-help groups in financial management
- Initiate networking of sacred forest and community forests
- Conduct trainings in NRM, analysis and planning methods and working schemes



## Role of the Courts & Implications for Community Forestry

CFI has published a report on CF and the Courts written by Sanjay Upadhyay and Apoorva Mishra of the Enviro Legal Defense Firm, New Delhi. An excerpt from the text, "Judiciary has had a vital role in the forestry sector throughout India. In the NE states, judicial intervention can be traced to the early 1950s. A clear difference in the pattern of issues and their subsequent resolution can be seen in the pre and post enactment of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (FCA). The local forest laws in the different states of

the NE region primarily focused on commercial usage and derivation of economic benefits from forest resources. But commencement of the FCA led to a noteworthy shift in focus of different State Governments and the Administration from deriving economic and financial gains from forest to conservation of the forest."



## Transit Rules for Forest Products in Northeast India

CFI has published a report that provides an overview of the transit rules for forest products in NE India written by Sanjay Upadhyay and Shephali Mehra of the Enviro Legal Defense Firm, New Delhi. An excerpt from the introduction, "The entire northeast of India has vast reserves of forest produce, including medicinal plants. Apart from the traditional silvicultural practices of production forestry the transit of forest products forms an essential aspect of the overall forestry management. Smooth transit of forest based products is not only important for state revenue generation but also for strengthening of the local economy. It has been

noted however, that although transit rules are designed to control illegal extraction, it has also resulted in inefficiency, corruption and thus a disincentive for sustainable forest management adequate livelihood generation. The method of transit of forest products and especially the illegality of it has attracted the attention of the apex court in India.



## Livelihood Projects

### MANIPUR

In the two pilot villages, market environment diagnostic studies were conducted. A diesel hand pump to augment irrigation facilities and increase agricultural production was identified. Also, the potential for bamboo plantations to supplement household income as well as village funds was explored.

Credit/financial linkages were established with a local bank in Sekmai and financial capacity trainings were initiated in keep accounts. Veterinary training was conducted to better identify epidemic diseases to animals and birds and the ways to prevent and protect from possible outbreaks.

SHGs are being helped to manage ginger plantations, soyabean, animal husbandry, bananas, and other small business enterprises.



### MEGHALAYA

#### Umden Siemship

Bamboo Charcoal Kiln Project: (Rs. 150,000/USD\$3,400). Under a JFMC scheme, five bamboo kilns were constructed to utilize the community's surplus bamboo to produce high-grade bamboo charcoal which can be used as industrial carbon.

Bamboo Plantation (Rs. 700,000/USD\$15,900): Under this scheme, 20 hectares of irrigated bamboo plantation will be planted to benefit the community.

#### Mawphlang Lyngdohship

Eco-tourism Project (Rs. 1,500,000/USD\$34,000) This project is funded by NEC to include: afforestation, construction of an interpretive center, button mushroom cultivation plots, buildings for demonstration and training purposes, and training for village youths and tourist guides.

## Sacred Forests

The sacred forests of Meghalaya act as traditional conservation areas with high levels of biodiversity. Some of the activities that are underway by CFI are:

- Training of community members in inventory identification of local trees, shrubs, and herbs. A check list of animals and birds has also been initiated.
- Training of awareness of the protection and conservation of sacred groves and community forests and the need to stop the extraction of orchids and medicinal plants.
- Initiate networking of sacred groves and community forests in both project areas.

