



GREEN PAGES

Newsletter of Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resources

Vol 1 / No 1

April - June 2015



Kyrdemkhla, East Khasi Hills.

About MINR

The Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resource (MINR) is one of the three Institutes established under the overall umbrella of MBDA. The Institute's main objective is to manage and strengthen knowledge for natural resources and sustainable livelihoods.

This Institute shall facilitate the required knowledge services through the Centre for Bio-Resources, Centre for Water Resources, Centre for Land Resources, Centre for Climate Change and Centre for Real Time Monitoring of Weather.

Vision

Enriching and empowering all the stakeholders with Clean And Green Technologies.



Message

Meghalaya is bestowed with rich natural resources. Extensive forest cover, high bio-diversity, very high rain fall and rich traditional knowledge with the people of the State can help to create wide ranging choices for bio-resources based livelihood opportunities and green economy pathways. Sustainable management of natural resources must therefore be central to the policies and programmes of all the concerned Departments in the State. This in its fact the overarching framework for the Integrated Basin Development & Livelihood Promotion Programme (IBDLP). We need to utilise knowledge dissemination in achieving this goal. This would empower our youth in particular to take lead in natural resource based enterprises and follow environment friendly practices. On the other hand, if natural resources including water, soil, and mineral wealth are not managed properly it will be catastrophic for the State; in the face of climate change the consequences will be even more serious. We have no choice but to accord sustainable management of natural resources the highest priority in governance and public action.

It is encouraging to learn that Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resources (MINR) under the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority is introducing a newsletter 'Green Pages' to create greater awareness about the synergy which is possible between economic development and improvement of ecosystems. A sustainable livelihood based on sustainable ecology is what we have to strive for at the individual level, as a State and as a Nation. This publication is therefore timely and I wish all success to this endeavour.

Dr. Mukul Sangma
Chief Minister
Meghalaya



Message

Healthy ecosystems contribute significantly to prosperity and well being of people of the State. However, with rising population and expanding economic activities in the State, the natural ecosystems are threatened. There is a need to create widespread awareness about ecosystem services and the critical role which they play in sustaining life on earth. Institutionalising payment for ecosystem services (PES) and using this concept as a tool of natural resource management is a natural next step. Poverty alleviation and developmental activities have to go together with environment protection and conservation; our governance frame work should strive to ensure synergy in actions towards this goal.

Every action aimed towards enhancing environment is praise worthy. I am happy to know about the release of the newsletter 'Green Pages' of the Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resources (MINR) under MBDA and wish all success to this initiative.

P.B.O. Warjri
Chief Secretary
Govt. of Meghalaya

In this issue

- ❖ Chief Minister's Message
- ❖ Chief Secretary's Message
- ❖ Guest Column by Shri. Toki Blah
- ❖ Green Initiatives
- ❖ Moving towards a greener Meghalaya



Mawphanlur, West Khasi Hills.



A picture of the “The Rural Poor” is often the image of India. In Independent India, elections have been won or lost on promises to wipe out poverty. Poverty however refuses to either cooperate nor give up the ghost. It continues to haunt the land and its people. Is the problem really insurmountable? In Meghalaya, despite Govt efforts to the contrary, the incidence of rural Poverty continues to grow instead of decrease. This write-up is to focus attention on one small but often forgotten aspect of rural poverty alleviation. Encouraging the rural poor to save. Is it possible or is it easier said than done?

The first problem in such an endeavour is to define Poverty. Politicians have come up with a yardstick to measure poverty. It is known in development parlance as Below Poverty Line (BPL). It is an economic baseline for identifying the poor. A baseline to launch anti poverty interventions. Such interventions are aimed at raising BPLs to an Above Poverty Line (APL) status. So far so good! Problems however arise as APL levels have a notorious tendency to dip sharply downwards once anti Poverty measures of the Govt are withdrawn. Everyone then reverts back to square one. Unsustainability has therefore been the trade mark of all Poverty alleviation measures so far.

It is the contention of this write-up that the attempt to define Poverty strictly by an economic yardstick based on Per Capita Income, though economically correct, is strategically flawed for anti Poverty Interventions. To me the definition of the Poor are those members of society who are either deprived or are unable to access, for various reasons, resources that are capable of improving their quality of life. Credit, one of the most crucial resources, continues to remain beyond the reach of the Rural Poor. Credit requirements of the rural Poor are usually small, marginal and have invariably been tagged as Micro. They are mostly for immediate consumption needs, usually for food. For the Poor, whose cash reserves are generally zero, even such meagre amounts may at times mean the difference between eating and starving. So can the problem be managed?

Studies have shown that the onus of meeting consumption needs is frequently the responsibility of the woman of the house. It is this gender trait that produced one of the greatest breakthroughs in tackling Rural Poverty, especially in relation to accessibility of the Poor to immediate and informal credit through an empowering technology that is now known as the Micro Credit through Self Help Group (SHG) movement. Micro Credit for SHGs revolve round a group of women’s ability to save, lend and repay among themselves from a kitty they collectively create and own. Its fundamentally simple. The dynamics of these actions and the impact they create are anything but simple!

How do we ask the poor to save when often their expenditure needs exceed their income? Definition of savings for the poor is $\text{Income} - \text{Savings} = \text{Expenditure}$, a definition that is nonsense to an economist but perfect sense to a poor man. The rural poor are encouraged to cut down on their chai, bidi, kwai, hooch and teer expenses. Surprisingly they discover that they can then save upto more than Rs. 50/- a day. Such savings contribute immensely to an SHG groups savings and of its ability to extend meaningful loans to its members. A woman SHG member soon discovers she now has access to credit that she owns and controls and most important it is a source that can bring succour when all else has failed. Secondly, the SHG movement also depends on frequent and regular interaction between members. SHG meetings therefore are occasions where women of equal status (affinity) meet, discuss, interface, network and exchange ideas.

In the case of simple, poor rural women, these interactions often result in the emergence of women with the ability to think and speak out for themselves, even in front of their men folk. This in turn brings in self discovery, self assurance and faith in themselves – traits that they never had before. A paradigm change for rural women. It often results in the development of self confidence and in the emergence of empowered village women. Its something we seriously need to study and look into with all the merit it deserves.



Simsang River, East Garo Hills.

Green Initiatives

COMMUNITY NUSERIES AS A SOCIAL ENTREPRISE

Forests provide us with a wide range of goods and services and are self rejuvenating. However, like other ecosystems, are affected by climate change and wanton human exploitation.

Creating Community Nurseries in a participatory mode is a possible answer to some of these challenges. Communities can be trained at the Cluster/Block or District Level in establishing these nurseries.

These nurseries can be supported with technical help from concerned Line Departments and NGOs who can also provide them with economically viable plant saplings of various species that can be easily propagated by communities/CBOs.

The saplings can be planted in areas which are degraded or can be sold to Government Departments or private individuals. This innovative approach can result in higher output from common properties and provide a relatively cheap means of environmental conservation while supporting livelihood opportunities.

SEED BANK

In our State, we have a large variety of indigenous crops but with the passage of time, we have started losing these varieties due to lack of knowledge about their importance in the global market and also because of the easy availability of hybrid seeds.

Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA) is partnering with ANNADANA Soil and Seed Savers Network, Bangalore in order to bring back to life the cultivation of these indigenous crops. These crops are mostly organic, which means, they are more or less free of harmful pesticides, urea, fertilizers, etc. and also they are expected to be resilient to climate change. ANNADANA with the facilitation of MBDA is implementing this unique intervention through the Cluster Level Federation (CLF) that is existing at the Cluster level.

This Intervention is being taken up by seven different CLFs across the state, namely, Pynroi, Lumlyngkien Sohphie, Lamjingshai, Ryntihlang, Jirang Area Servicing, Nengmandalgre and Balgito.

SPRING INITIATIVES

Despite high rainfall, water is scarce. Water demand is on the rise and supply is declining due to changing climate and land use.

The institutional response has been focused on spring development from the supply-side (e.g. tanks and pipes); not in terms of identification of source/recharge areas and targeted aquifer protection. This includes mapping and monitoring water resources, building stakeholder awareness and capacity, institutionalizing hydrogeology training, creating manuals and other materials, and codifying progressive groundwater management in current efforts to draft state water laws and policies.

Several governmental and civil organizations are interested to lead or support these efforts including the Soil and Water Conservation Department, the Water Resources Department, MeWDA, GIZ, Arghyam, Meghalaya Water Foundation, Meghalaya Institute of Governance and others. This initiative will fall under the auspices of the Meghalaya Institute of Natural Resource.

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

In Meghalaya, rivers, streams and lakes have traditionally played an important role in drinking water supply, irrigation, hydropower, ecology, tourism/culture and domestic use. However, relative importance of some of these water bodies has waned due to water contamination.

Detailed assessment of present status of the water bodies with reasons for deterioration in condition and also its categorization is the primary focus of this initiative. Rainfall pattern, ground water level, land use pattern, soil characteristics, climatic conditions, availability of water in the catchment area for channelization into water body, water quality situation in the water body and adjoining areas are the other areas of concerns in this exercise.

The programme also envisages catchment treatment, soil erosion prevention works and quality control measures like sewage treatment.



Production farm at Balgito (North Garo Hills)



Seed varieties collected from West Jaintia Hills.



Spring Mapping and Monitoring.



Water quality assesment of Ward's Lake, Shillong.

Moving towards a Greener Meghalaya



ECO CLUBS

Schools from Sohra, East Khasi Hills were presented with awards at the World Environment Day, 2014. The awards were given in recognition of their efforts and contribution towards conserving and promoting the environment and beauty of Sohra through the activities of the Sohra Eco Club.

GREEN ENERGY FOR THE CLEANEST VILLAGE IN ASIA

Solar streetlights at Malynnong. 30 solar streetlights have been installed. The project was funded by IDFC with support from C&RD Department, MBDA and the local community.



MEGA TREE PLANTATION

The Mega Tree Plantation Festival under the Chief Minister's Youth for Green Campaign. It was reported that 7, 11,060 saplings were planted on the day. The plantation drive commenced formally at Mawphlang. The event was carried out across the East Khasi Hills District.



PRESERVATION OF MAP's

"Consultative workshop on conservation and promotion of medical and aromatic plants (MAP's)" held at Aurobindo Hall, Shillong. Over 300 traditional healers from across the state attended.

CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

14th May, 2015: As a precursor for holding India's first Cherry Blossom Festival in the State, the Avenue Cherry Tree Plantation was launched by the Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma at Ward's Lake. A total of 5000 trees are expected to be planted in and around the city.



DEHYDRATED FLORAL CRAFTS

Dehydrated floral craft technology is an initiative of CSIR NBRI, Lucknow in collaboration with BRDC. This technology has provided livelihood opportunities for hundreds of entrepreneurs. 39 solar dryers have been recently distributed to master trainers of different clusters to further promote dehydrated floral craft products.

SAPCC

13th May, 2015: An Expert Consultation inviting eminent experts from different institutions was held to discuss issues related to implementation of the State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), and prioritizing actions for adaptation to climate change in different sectors. Noted Scientist on climate change Dr. N. H. Ravindranath, Professor, Centre for Sustainable Technologies, IISc, Bangalore also participated in the consultation.

