



»» NEWSLETTER ««

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TOGETHER

Project for Community Based Forest Management & Livelihoods Improvement in
Meghalaya (MegLIFE) | Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA)



FROM PROJECT DIRECTOR'S DESK

Greetings to everyone reading the newsletter!

The MegLIFE Project is a multi-sectoral and multidimensional initiative being implemented by MBDA, Government of Meghalaya with the assistance of JICA. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of community stakeholders, mobilize resources, and optimize fund utilization for Natural Resource Management and Income Generation Activities. One of the key aspects of the project is the restoration of forests through community participation. The MegLIFE team has been working tirelessly to provide handholding support to a large number of community members, who have benefited significantly from the project. In this issue of "TOGETHER", some field experiences have been compiled, highlighting the project's success stories.

The project has initiated a cluster-based approach for the Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS). After the initial period of preparation, MegLIFE has now begun implementing livelihood activities also in its project areas.

Successful accomplishments of different activities under project components during this period are highlighted in this issue. This would certainly encourage all stakeholders to participate in the project mandate with dedication.

-Dr. Vijay Kumar D., IAS

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RESTORING FORESTS IN A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

The conservation and restoration of forests primarily involves three strategies – afforestation through natural/artificial regeneration, protection and management. MegLIFE Project restored 2787 ha of degraded forest land through afforestation through participation of communities who owned the forest lands in 138 villages.

The overall objective is ecological restoration of degraded forests and to develop the forest resources with peoples' participation, with a focus on improvement in the livelihoods of the communities. MegLIFE aims to support and accelerate the on-going process of devolving forest conservation, protection, management at the village level.

The major components of the afforestation includes implementation through three plantation models i.e. Artificial Regeneration (AR), Aided Natural Regeneration (ANR) and Agroforestry.

The models and choice of species for afforestation is demand-driven and afforestation area is sanctioned based on willingness and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed between the Village Project Implementation Committee (VPIC) and Community or private individuals for sharing benefits and protecting the afforested area for a period of 30 years from the day of signing of the agreement.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF VILLAGE COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

4-day Residential Training Program for Village Community Facilitators of the MegLIFE project organized on data entry in MIS, writing of VPIC cash books and community procurement.

500 VCFs across all the MegLIFE Villages are trained on bookkeeping and digitization of Village Project Implementation Committee records in web MIS under MegLIFE.

SPMU, MegLIFE across all district headquarters of Meghalaya organized the Training.





Microplanning and Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) initiated in Group 2 villages under the MegLIFE project. MegLIFE staff are working diligently to prepare PLUP and Microplan in a time-bound manner. The activities listed by communities in the Microplan is the base for preparation of Annual Plan of Operation (APO) of the Project. The activities are implemented in the Project Villages by involving the community.



In Microplanning process, the Village Project Implementation Committee (VPIC) develops a 5 years village development Plan that comprises forest management, watershed conservation, and income generation plans recommended for the holistic development of the village which will be implemented with financial assistance from the MegLIFE Project and also through financial and technical Convergence with different Govt. schemes.

SUPPORTING LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS THROUGH IVCS APPROACH

MegLIFE will support the establishment of Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCSs). Each IVCS will cover maximum 6 villages to minimum 1 village having minimum membership of 150 members. Revolving fund will be placed to IVCS. Based on gradation and recommendation from VPICs, IVCS will provide loan to member SHGs. The IVCS will collect savings from its members and, once it has reached a milestone for operational performance, MegLIFE will facilitate convergence of fund from other schemes/projects under GoM to deposit a corpus fund in the IVCS account to provide additional resources for lending to other members (PGs/ individuals). IVCS will come under the umbrella of the Meghalaya Cooperative Apex Bank, which will provide them with bulk loans.



CHALLENGING THE CHALLENGE

During the monsoon season from May to October, the resilient Tuidam Village in the Saipung Block, a vital part of the MegLIFE Project, encounters transportation challenges due to the rising water levels of the river. However, the determined project staff devises a solution, lifting a total of 4600 seedlings up to the riverbank and then personally carrying them on foot to the plantation sites, covering a distance of 4-5 kilometers. Their unwavering dedication and perseverance in the face of adversity demonstrate their commitment to nurturing the environment and making a positive impact on the land they cherish.



A REMARKABLE TALE OF TRANSFORMATION

Once a forsaken coal mining site spanning 14 hectares, this land of Arenggittim Village now blooms with life. The community's ownership of this space has birthed a stunning revival - 700,000 slips of citronella and lemongrass stand tall, thriving against all odds. In the gentle breeze, their fragrance speaks of both nature's resilience and human dedication. This incredible feat, made possible by the MegLIFE project in collaboration with Megh Aroma Mission under INR, paints a portrait of what collaboration and care can achieve.



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“Together” we can make a difference...