



## Harvesting solutions through Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems









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Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems

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**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2022-2023



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## about nesfas

NESFAS is a platform that aims to revive, defend and promote the Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems while maintaining the culture and identity. NESFAS, as an indigenous grassroots organization led by local young people, works closely with indigenous communities of Meghalaya and Nagaland, and highly recognizes the role of women as custodians of biodiversity, land, people, nutrition and more. NESFAS also focuses on empowering young people because they are the beacons of hope and true change agents within their own communities in promoting Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems for enhanced local biodiversity based production, consumption and livelihood for their well being.





## note from chairperson

**Bah Nestar Kharmawphlang**  
Chairperson, NESFAS

I feel privileged to have been part of NESFAS right from its nascent stage. My close association with the organisation for a decade now has, in a way, changed my perception, with a lot of learning, unlearning, and relearning along the way. I cannot think about NESFAS without its founder, Bah Phrang Roy, who is the torchbearer, leading the organisation at every step. The credit for NESFAS getting Global recognition therefore, goes to this stalwart of a man with vision and mission.

As the Chairperson of this promising organisation, I owe my gratitude to Bah Phrang and a team of dedicated staff like Bah Pius Ranee, Executive Director, and Kong Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh, Deputy Executive Director, who are leading from the front. I owe my gratitude to all the staff members of the Organization who have been working with unflinching dedication to better the prospects of our Indigenous Peoples. The diligence of NESFAS team members can be witnessed in their work ethics, wherein they never shy away from taking up responsibilities assigned to them. This is the success story of NESFAS in the 10 years of existence. Within a decade, NESFAS activities have impacted all aspects of Socio-Economic and Cultural life of Indigenous Communities. Be it health, nutrition, energy, agriculture and other sectors, NESFAS has intervened to bring changes and create livelihood opportunities for the people. One of the prominent activities is the initiation of Agroecology Learning Circles (ALCs) in line with the

Meghalaya Basin Management Authority's (MBMA) vision of uplifting rural economy. ALCs are platforms where farmers come and share nature based farming practices. As part of this project which is supported by MBMA, rural farmers have initiated experiments on pests, soil and production management and they have achieved significant results. Recently, ALCs have also initiated playing a role in facilitating supply of local vegetables to Schools for the Midday Meal programme, a model design initiated by NESFAS to enhance the health status of school children.

Another activity of NESFAS is the effort to bring millet back to our plate. As the UN has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millet, our initiative to restore and revive millet for the past ten years has been recognized and appreciated by the Government and the public. Having organized millet festivals in different regions and while also encouraging farmers to grow millets, NESFAS has responded to the UN Call to restore and revive Millet for good health. Of course, our efforts will not end with 2023, but we will continue for the years to come.

As we gear up for the upcoming years, let us reaffirm our belief in our capabilities and let us put in our best efforts to realize the dream of indigenous people. As we work hand in hand with other partner NGOs like SURE, SSC and others, we hope their valuable contribution will be for the people of the state and other North-Eastern States of India.

Thank you All.



## note from executive director

**Bah Pius Raneer**  
Executive Director

If we look around us, we will find that nature gives us all our answers. The food we eat, the land we plant our feet upon, the air we breathe, the water we drink, are all nature's gifts to us. We have been so merciless to this generous providence and have recklessly tampered with our blessings through the misuse and abuse of technology and everything that comes as a result of human greed.

As we live in a world infested with the disease of gluttony, we create more obstacles for ourselves. The search to end one misery becomes the start of another, and it is a never-ending loop. For instance, the food demands of the population called for more production of food and the imbalance has led to the creation of inorganic, chemical-infused food, which in-turn has given rise to what is termed as "lifestyle diseases" like cancer, diabetes, hypertension, stroke etc.

In 2022-23, our project, "Empowering Indigenous Communities through Agroecology Learning Circles (ALCs) for resilient, integrated and innovative natural resource management", which is supported by MBMA and funded by the World Bank, is an important stride in addressing food crisis and promoting self-reliance through learning and sharing of indigenous knowledge from one farming community to another.

At NESFAS, we believe in principle and practice that each person, irrespective of age or gender is an important stakeholder in reviving, defending and promoting our indigenous food systems. We focused on intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and involved the youth, children, young and

old men and women and traditional healers in pursuing the goals of sustainability and self-sufficiency. With elderly traditional farmers dwindling in number every year, it was paramount that we take a step to tap their rich knowledge and vital information on our food systems so as to pass it onto the coming generations.

Thus, it has been a year of recollecting and recalling indigenous information and when put to practice, we found that there was a lot to unpack. The tried and tested practices of using natural resources in the surroundings for tackling pest infestation, producing better yield, identifying wild edibles, seed-saving methods and increasing soil fertility through plants and worms- were all lying at the fingertips of our esteemed farmers in a list of questions nobody asked.

Thus it gave our farmers a much needed impetus to address their food security issues and also a platform for commingling with fellow farmers for the purpose of co-learning and co-sharing. One should realise that the knowledge of indigenous people's food systems applies to not only the farming communities, but to the whole of the population as it sends home the message that consuming chemically-infused food is the elephant in the room we all choose to ignore.

Our goal is to make our communities self-sufficient and to make them champions of biodiversity. The year has seen a landmark achievement in our pursuit of food sovereignty and we hope that the younger generations will take cue from their older generations and will get a step closer in realizing this indigenous dream. Thank You.



## Our Partners & Supporters



## Board Members



**Nestar Kharmawphlang,**  
Chairperson, NESFAS



**Rikynti Syiem,**  
Vice Chairperson, NESFAS



**Ivan S Lyngdoh,**  
Executive member, NESFAS



**Hendri G Momin,**  
Executive member, NESFAS



**Hibi Suting,**  
Executive member, NESFAS



**Amba Jamir,**  
Executive member, NESFAS



**Nirupama James,**  
Executive member, NESFAS



**Ability Bynnud,**  
Executive member, NESFAS



## Meet Our Team



**Pius Rane,**  
Executive Director



**Alethea Kordor Lyngdoh,**  
Deputy Executive Director, HR &  
Communications



**Dhruvad Choudhury,**  
Adviser



**H. H Mohrmen,**  
Social Scientist



**Janak P Singh,**  
Senior Associate, Livelihood



**Bhogtoram Mawroh,**  
TIP-NESFAS INT IP Food Issues  
Coordinator



**Khrawborlang Wahlang,**  
Adviser, Innovation, Community  
Empowerment, Monitoring &  
Evaluation



**Nangshankhem Lyngdoh,**  
Senior Associate, Administration &  
Finance



**Fabian M Dkhar,**  
Associate Administration



**Merrysha Nongrum,**  
Senior Associate, Youth & Women  
Empowerment



**Chenxiang Marak,**  
Senior Associate, Nutrition, Garo  
Hills



**Gratia E Dkhar,**  
Senior Associate, Program



**Badarishisha Nongkynrih,**  
Lead Associate, Public Health &  
Food Services



**Stefan W Lyngdoh,**  
Research Assistant



**Kerlang Khonglam,**  
Research Assistant

## Meet Our Team



**Bankerda Chyne,**  
Associate



**Aurilia Tariang,**  
Associate



**Naphishisha Nongsiej,**  
Associate



**Silkatchi Sangma,**  
Associate



**Shaiphar Dohling,**  
Community Consultant for Field  
Supervision & Facilitation



**Ruth Sohtun,**  
Associate, Monitoring & Evaluation



**Bashisha Kharsahnoh,**  
Data Entry Operator, Monitoring &  
Evaluation



**Rundolf Mawlieh,**  
Content Consultant



**Bajanai Diengdoh,**  
Communication Consultant



**Cheatchi Norah Ch Momin,**  
Communication Consultant, Garo  
Hills



**Wisbonlita Lawriniang,**  
Finance Consultant



**Chetan Agarwal,**  
Lead Finance Associate



**Lucy B Nongbri,**  
Technical Lead, Ecology



**Unity Pachiang,**  
Assistant Research Associate



**Darisha Synshiang,**  
Assistant Research Associate



## Meet Our Team



**Sengdim Marak,**  
Research Associate



**Catherine L Nonglait,**  
Research Associate



**Ibalabet Syiem,**  
Research Associate



**Lawandahun W Kharsyntiew,**  
Research Associate



**Ebahunline Lyndoh Marshilong,**  
Research Associate



**Mark B Thabah,**  
Research Associate



**Hiarmon Najjar,**  
Research Associate



**Banisha Khongjee,**  
Research Associate



**Venetia T Shabong,**  
GIS Analyst



**Badianghun Nongsiej,**  
GIS Analyst



**Ringrang Carlos R Marak,**  
Research Associate



**Kitboklang Nongrum,**  
Conservation Biologist



**Jessica Rani,**  
Office Assistant



**Andalin Sawkmie,**  
Housekeeping



**Wankyrshan Warshong,**  
Gardener

## 1 Linking Schools to Agrobiodiversity for Improved diets, Nutrition, and Livelihood.



Children in Meghalaya, particularly in the school-going age are prone to malnutrition, stunted growth and micronutrient deficiency. To address these problems, the “Linking Schools to Agrobiodiversity for Improved diets, Nutrition, and Livelihoods” initiative was started by NESFAS. The objective of this initiative was to make healthy, nutritious, and diverse balanced diets increasingly accessible through school meals. It aimed at procuring at least one-third of the ingredients for the school meals either locally or from accessing the school gardens. The project also aimed to create opportunities or increasing the income of the local farmers by promoting locally sourced ingredients in Mid Day Meals. Wild edibles were also incorporated into the meals, which could

be locally sourced. The pilot project that was launched for six months on May 2022 involved the partnership of 5 villages and the initiative with the self-financed by NESFAS. In June 2023, The Indigenous Partnership then supported the initiative to scale to 11 schools in 7 villages.

Prior to launching of the project, it was found that school meals consisted of only rice, lentils and potato, which fell under only two food groups – pulses and starchy staples. Through the intervention of this project, the cooks were rigorously trained by experts. Thereafter, with the support of NESFAS, five food groups were incorporated into the school meals for a wholesome and balanced nutrition for the students.



## 2 Preparation of People's Biodiversity Registers in Meghalaya, North East India



Meghalaya is part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot and harbors a richness of endemic plant and animal species. It is home to several indigenous communities, such as the matrifocal Khasi-Jaintia and Garo communities, who have been using the landscape to gather and produce food for millennia in a sustainable manner that demonstrates the traditional value of caring, sharing, and living in harmony with nature. To ensure that communities continue to value and conserve the rich biodiversity around their landscapes, which has been sustained by their traditional socio-cultural knowledge and practices, NESFAS believes that the adoption of People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) can play an important role in documenting this rich knowledge. This documentation will enable them to make

sustainable use of their biodiversity, protect their intellectual property, and exercise customary rights over these tangible resources. Through this project, a total of 71 Biodiversity Management Committees in the rural communities of Meghalaya were mobilized to document local biodiversity and its related indigenous knowledge in the form of People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs), especially focusing on species that have often been ignored and marginalized. In the long run, this effort will significantly contribute to increased knowledge on accessing quality seeds for local farmers, creating, conservation of biodiversity. The project is currently supported by the Meghalaya State Biodiversity Board (MBB) and the Nature Conservancy (TNC).



### 3 Empowering indigenous communities through Agroecology Learning Circles (ALCs) for resilient, integrated and innovative natural resource management



Indigenous Peoples’ Food systems are not only unique but are also resilient to have stood the test of time. Indigenous farming practices continue to be major economic contributors in rural Meghalaya despite it being the era of conventional agricultural methods. To further strengthen and empower the farmers in their endeavours to preserve and promote traditional farming practices and protect their food systems, NESFAS introduced the Agroecology Learning Circle (ALC) model in 2018 in their project “No One Shall be Left Behind Initiative”, in which they established 29 ALCs. The MBMA-World Bank then supported NESFAS to scale up this initiative to 100 more ALCs. The project was also part of the innovation component within the Community-Led Landscape Management Project (CLLMP) led by MBMA.

With the coming of this project, custodian farmers were given a common platform to share and exchange their knowledge, unique to their communities. It also saw the revival of many traditional practices and methods of pest management, soil management, and seed management. Most of these practices were found to be diminishing in their usage, with no written records or documentation. Experiments were conducted by ALC groups of each community under this project, using locally available resources mentioned in the methods. This also contributed to the inter-generational transfer of knowledge as people of all ages—men, women, youth and children took part in its activities such as Agrobiodiversity Walks, Cluster Sharing Workshops, Leadership training, and Community-Led Participatory Research.



## 4 | Climate Resilient Village Programme



Meghalaya is a hill state, with uneven terrain. The topography of the state has resulted in many rural areas having problems of connectivity, and therefore, developmental delays. Nongpriang village under Shella Bholaganj Block was cut off from its motorable roads by 5,000 to 10,000 steps owing to its steep foothills. People have lived without electricity ever since it was cut off in 2018. In another village, Mynriah, under Mawkyntrew Block, people had lived without electricity all their lives.

To address such issues, NESFAS partnered with Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) and recently provided solar electrification to 11 villages under the Climate Resilient Village Programme funded by Tata Communications' CSR, and also provided

Solar-powered equipment and lighting facilities for 6 Public Health Centres.

Under this project, a total of 350 households were electrified with DC based Solar Micro Grids across 11 villages namely: Paromgre Dikakol, Badingittim, Badabudi, Dilma Debrak, Mon Songmong, Badupara Gininggittim, Mandalanggre, Gongjagittim, Rongsu Banargittim, Mynriah, Nongpriang. 8000 Households were provided with clean cookstoves, and 7 PHCs were upgraded namely: Phulbari, Dalu, Jaldopara, Silkigre, Sibbari, Swer and Laitryngew. The objective of this initiative is to implement energy solutions through sustainable, scalable and environmentally beneficial manner to bring about overall development and empower the local population.



## 5 Implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Biocentric Restoration Project and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale Unit



Land is one of the most exploited parts of the earth's resources. Over the years the use of land has changed. From traditional use, the world has moved on to rapid commercialization, thereby compromising the quantity and quality of land. To address this pressing need for improving land usage and its restoration, NESFAS implemented the Indigenous Peoples' Biocentric Restoration Project in Meghalaya. The objective of this initiative lies in restoring land in Indigenous Peoples' territories through the recovery of Indigenous Peoples' ancestral knowledge, territorial management and Indigenous People's values and relations

with the territory. Active in four countries, namely Ecuador, India, Peru and Thailand, the initiative which is supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO), centres its activities around the territory along with all the species and living things that inhabit it, irrespective of its use to mankind, to guarantee protection and respect of Mother Earth. Its focus is on the importance of local biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge and its revival. Five communities in East Khasi Hills i.e. Dewlieh, Nongwah, Umsawwar, Ladmawphlang and Nongtraw, are leading this initiative.



## Co - Learning and Knowledge Exchange



At NESFAS, we believe in action and evidence-based learning and methodology. Hence, we facilitate different workshops, training and knowledge exchange programmes all year round to bring about positive results and to strengthen our farming communities in Meghalaya. These events lay emphasis on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and the need to sustain traditional farming practices in the contemporary times of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, through co-learning and sharing. [Read more below...](#)

1. Leaders for a better tomorrow: Excerpts from Leadership Development Programme.
2. Community Seed bank exchange visit hosted by Mulum community.

3. An insightful workshop under the theme "Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems".
4. Community Seed Fair for strengthening Indigenous Food Systems.
5. National and Local Stakeholders convene to work on Forgotten foods in India.
6. Local farmers share their experiments' findings to MBMA officials during a knowledge-sharing session.
7. Seminar on 'Embracing Indigenous People's Food System' by MLCU and NESFAS Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems (IPFS)- A hidden treasure highlighted at International Conference.
8. Exchange visit for community empowerment.



## Project Launch



Within its ambit, NESFAS implements projects that align with its objectives of self-reliance and self-sustenance. Together with its partners, NESFAS has launched and initiated multiple projects pertaining to malnutrition, biocentric restoration, solar energy, nutrition, other such initiatives. These projects go a long way in bringing about prosperity and welfare of the rural communities of Meghalaya. [Read more about the projects launched below...](#)

1. Linking Schools to Agrobiodiversity: NESFAS' latest initiative to oust Malnutrition through school meals kicks off at 5 schools.
2. 5 communities in East Khasi Hills collaborate with NESFAS and UN-FAO for a Biocentric Restoration Project.
3. NESFAS and GHE's Climate Resilient Village Program helps electrify two villages and two PHCs with Solar Energy.
4. NESFAS Second Vertical Transportation initiative launched at Dewlieh village in East Khasi Hills.
5. TIP develops Digital Toolbox for IFAD on Sustainable and Resilient Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems for Improved Nutrition.
6. Summersalt and NESFAS collaborates on a song to celebrate indigenous foods.



## Celebrations and Recognitions



NESFAS celebrates the spirit of indigeneity and oneness with nature through various festivals that it organises at different times of the year with its partnerships and collaborations. These festivals and celebrations not only bring about excitement and anticipation but also give opportunities for reflecting on its achievements and make way for more people-centric projects, building connections and gathering ideas.

[Read More...](#)

1. NESFAS' case study on PGS in Meghalaya featured in UN-FAO latest book.
2. NESFAS, The LOCAVORE, Shillong Chefs and communities from Meghalaya commemorate millet in an ingenious way.
3. School Meals and Agroecology Learning Circle Festival held by NESFAS at Laitsohpliah.
4. Mei-Ramew Cafe showcased at India's Largest Food Festival in Mumbai!
5. Culinary Ateliers Meghalaya Program appreciation certificate and a funding of Rs. 2 lakhs from the Government of Meghalaya.
6. Nongtraw ALC members participated in millet threshing also known as Bom Krai as part of the International Year of Millet.

## Summersalt - Mluh



Watch video here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8wt36h>

## Jhur Khlo (Wild Edibles)



Watch video here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc35985w>

## International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2022



Watch video here: <https://tinyurl.com/yjupbc5h>





# eri silk

NATURAL DYEING



## manual



In collaboration with



Supported by



## LOCAL SEEDS CATALOGUE

From the Community Seed Banks of Meghalaya,  
Khapmaw, East Khasi Hills

**COLOUR**  
Turmeric Yellow






**DYESTUFF**  
Turmeric

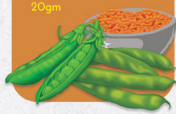









**MORDANT**  
Not Required

**METHOD**  
Wash and grind the turmeric. Cook the grounded turmeric for one hour till boiling point is reached. Strain the water through a sieve. Immerse the yarn in the water and cook for 30 to 45 minutes. Remove the yarn and dry.





Portion size for Mid Day Meal for  
**Lower Primary School**

<p><b>PULSES</b> 20gm</p> 	<p><b>STARCHY STAPLES</b> 100gm</p> <p><small>- If rice is given, do not include other starchy staples like potato, white sweet potato, tapioca. - If nutritious starchy staple like finger millet, then 1:1 ratio can be given</small></p> 
<p><b>GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES</b> Raw Vegetables 20gm <small>- When given in salad form</small></p>  <p>Cooked Vegetables 30gm <small>- When given in boiled or cooked form</small></p> 	<p><b>OTHER VEGETABLES</b> 50gm <small>- Both Cooked and Raw</small></p> 
<p><b>VITAMIN A RICH FRUITS AND FOODS</b> 30gm</p> 	<p><b>OTHER FRUITS</b> 30gm <small>- Local seasonal fruits if available and if affordable</small></p> 
<p><b>EGG</b> 1no.</p> 	<p><b>FATS AND OIL</b> 5gm</p> 
<p><b>NUTS AND SEEDS</b> 5gm</p> 	

Source: Mid Day Meal Scheme, Directorate Of School Education And Literacy, Govt. Of Meghalaya



**AGROECOLOGY LEARNING CIRCLE (ALC)**

Ki lad iada iaki jingthung naki khniang da kaba pyndonkam ia ka spah mariang





## Quotes

“



**Kong Teilis Nongrum,**  
*ALC Member, Pyrda*

I encourage my fellow farmers to practice traditional farming and to avoid the use of chemicals for a sustainable livelihood and for better soil health so that it can bring out good production.

”

“



**Kong Sita Mary Nongrum,**  
*ALC Member, Umsawwar*

Through the sharing of knowledge and ideas of the Durbar that youth have started becoming educated and have become leaders as well.

”

“



**Kong Pontilis Lyngdoh,** *ALC Member, Jaud*

If we are willing to work diligently and start with small things, we (farmers) get many opportunities. Just as all things need time and patience, this seed ball initiative is just starting and we want whatever work we are doing to be sustained and not temporary.

”

“



**Kong Otilia Mukhim,**  
*ALC Member, Jatah Lakadong*

We will continue to preserve traditional farming and seeds that are available in our community. We will also move forward to make organic biopesticides for a chemical-free community while encouraging and promoting school and kitchen gardens

”

“



**Kong Ambious Umsong,**  
*ALC Member & Custodian  
Farmer, Khapmaw*

Through events like this, farmers will be inspired to plant more local food plants for sale and also be able to simultaneously protect these seeds from further extinction and damage.

”



**Abi Norina Ch Marak, Secretary Seed Bank, Daribokgre**

We collect all types of seeds and are working towards reviving traditional seeds like heirlooms, and we will sow them like the generations before us, and will pass it down to the generations after us.

“



**Bah Wankit Swer,**  
General Manager, Knowledge Management, MBMA

Small works undertaken by the community have made huge impacts for everyone. Let us carry this message to others and improve local farming as well as local food.

”

“



**Bah Phrang Roy,**  
Founder, NESFAS

We must strengthen the biodiversity of nature so that we can be free from climate change and indigenous farming is pivotal for securing the future we aspire.

”

“



**Bah Pius Rane,**  
Executive Director, NESFAS

I want all farmers to prosper furthermore and to be skilful in order to bring this policy forward ahead and that the government will look more into strengthening traditional farming.

”

“



**Dr. M.L.S Rao,**  
Programme Associate, WASSAN

When it comes to people's nutritional security, these are the forgotten foods that we often overlook. These crops on the other hand must be highlighted as well as more innovative trials and research must be conducted in order to standardize them by combining government support and bringing them into mainstream agriculture.

”



# Financial Statement



Grant & other income  
**7,44,22,924.40**



Capital  
**1,32,99,673.01**



**FINANCIAL  
STATEMENT**



Fixed Assets  
**31,44,627.45**



Current Assets & Receivables  
**1,01,55,045.56**










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