

**REPORT ON THE VISIT OF THE  
MEGHALAYA STATE PLANNING BOARD (MSPB) TO  
WILLIAMNAGAR, EAST GARO HILLS  
JANUARY 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2009**

**DAY TWO**

The SPB team arrived at Williamnagar Circuit House at 10.15 am. From there they proceeded to Horticultural Hub at Samgong, East Garo Hills and reached there at 11.00 am. Members of the MSPB were formally welcomed by Shri **V. S. Oberoi**, I.A.S. Principal Secretary and APC, Government of Meghalaya who set the tone for the deliberations of the day. Later, Shri **A. B. Savio Chism**, DHO, East Garo Hills, briefed the members about the Horticultural Hub and the activities undertaken there. The Hon'ble Chairman SPB, Shri. **P. A. Sangma** then presented the members with the resolutions that were passed by the SPB in accordance with the discussions held the day before at Tura.

The SPB members and all the invitees present were taken for a tour of the farm by the DHO and his team. The tour was then followed by lunch. Post lunch, the Deputy Commissioner, East Garo Hills, Shri **D. Vijay Kumar** I.A.S., made a power point presentation on the development of horticulture in the district. The details of the presentation and the interaction with the SPB are attached as **Annexure- I**. The team then left for Mikgilsimgre village for a field visit. A brief write up on Mikgilsimgre village is attached as **Annexure- II**. The SPB team first visited the green houses and the

straw berry and vegetable fields in the village. This was followed by a meeting with the villagers. The meeting was chaired by the MLA of Williamnagar, Shri **Marcuise N. Marak**, Parliamentary Secretary, Horticulture, Sports and Youth Affairs etc. Also present at the meeting were Shri **Nihim D. Shira**, Parliamentary Secretary, Taxation, Law etc., and Shri **Desang M.Sangma**, Parliamentary Secretary, Excise, Transport etc. The *Nokma* of the area and the self help group (SHG) leader of the village spoke and expressed their happiness at the visit of the members of the Meghalaya State Planning Board. The SHG leader narrated how SHG's were first formed in the village and how they progressed so rapidly in the last two years with the assistance of the Meghalaya Rural Development Society (MRDS), DHO and the district administration. A women member of the SHG also spoke and expressed her happiness at the visit of the MSPB. The Chairman, MSPB expressed his happiness and congratulated the villagers for their combined efforts. He also noted that the visit was a learning experience for the SPB. All the other members also expressed their appreciation at the impressive work being undertaken at the village and wished the villagers success in their future endeavours. After this meeting, the SPB team left for Tura.

## ANNEXURE- I

### **HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN EAST GARO HILLS**

Presentation by Shri **D. Vijay Kumar**, D.C., East Garo Hills

Basic statistics of East Garo Hills District:

Population: 2,47,500 (as per 2001 census)

No of villages: 856

Total Area: 2,60,300 Ha

Rainfall: 30,370 mm

Area under Horticulture Crops: 13,742 Ha

Total Cultivable Waste Land: 42,451 Ha

Total Area under *Jhum* Cultivation: 6,000 Ha

The strengths and weaknesses of promoting Horticulture in the District –

#### **Strengths:**

- The district has diverse agro-climatic conditions suitable for growing fruits, vegetables, spices etc.
- There is large area of cultivable waste land on which Horticulture crops can be cultivated.
- East Garo Hills ranks first in the Meghalaya in banana and ginger production.
- New crops like anthurium, gerbera, leather leaf fern, red ginger, chrysanthemum, colored capsicum, cherry tomatoes are successful in the district.
- Technology is available in the district.

- Traditional crops like cucurbits-pumpkin, ash gourd, sponge gourd, ridge gourd, bottle gourd, colocasia beans-long beans are grown.
- There are about 500 strong SHG's in the district promoted by the various NGO's. These SHG's are highly motivated and they can be easily trained to cultivate high value horticulture crops.

**Weaknesses:**

- Inadequate supply of quality planting material is a major problem. Today, the planting material for most of the high value crops is being imported.
- Inadequate infrastructure for marketing, handling, and processing of agricultural produce.
- Poor infrastructure, road inaccessibility, lack of collection centres, godowns, pre-cooling/ cold rooms.
- Inadequate facilities for post harvest management-grading, washing, packing rooms at village and cluster village.
- Irregular power supply in the district.
- Increase in prices and non availability of plant protection chemicals and fertilizers.

### **Area Expansion under Technology Mission (TM ):**

The maximum impact of the TM in terms of increased production and improving the economic status of the farmers was seen in short duration vegetables and high value floriculture crops. The strategy that was adopted for promoting these crops was that in APL House Holds (HH) individual beneficiaries were selected and amongst BPL House Holds, Self Help Groups (SHG) were selected. The selected beneficiaries were trained and subsidy was given under the TM.

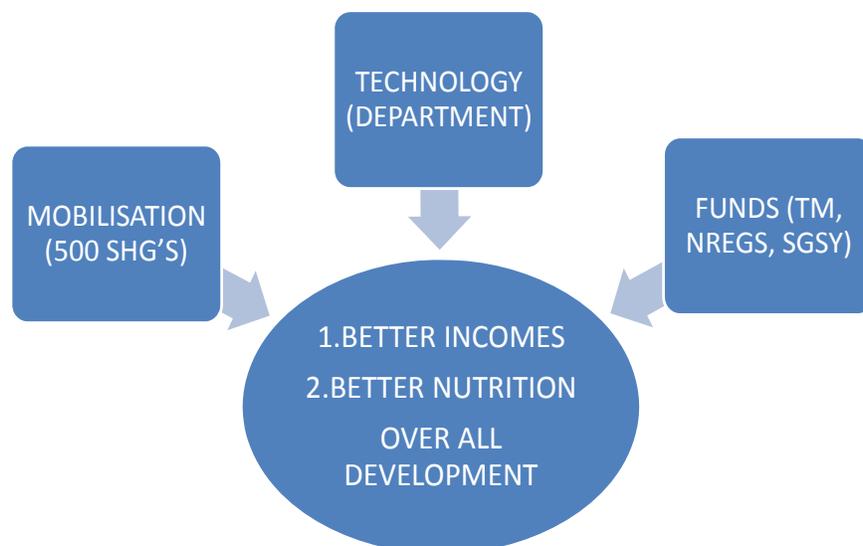
### **Case Study of Mikgilsimgre Village, East Garo Hills:**

The detailed write up on Mikgilsimre village is in Annexure- II. The development process in the village in the last two years can be divided into two phases - Phase I was mobilisation of the village community undertaken by MRDS and Phase II was linking up with departments. Departments provide capacity building and financial assistance to diversify economic activities in the village and finally to improve the economic condition of the people.

### **Model of Development:**

From the experience in Mikgilsimgre and other villages where horticultural crops are being successfully cultivated by the poorest of the poor, the following model of horticulture development and poverty alleviation emerges. This is not a pre-conceived model on the basis of which interventions were made but a model which has emerged from experience.

## HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT & POVERTY ALLEVIATION



There are 500 strong well mobilised SHG's in the district which can be trained easily to take up horticulture crops on a large scale. The technology to cultivate these crops and to achieve international production standards is now available with the Horticulture department. The money to finance the area expansion will come from TM, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY) and others such schemes. Convergence of TM and NREGS can easily be achieved to bring more area under cultivation. Land development can be done under NREGS and purchase of seeds and other inputs can be done from the TM. Large scale plantation of other crops like orange can also be done by converging NREGS and TM.

## **The Bigger Picture of Vegetable Cultivation and Floriculture in the District:**

As already mentioned, vegetable cultivation and floriculture have been highly successful in the district in providing better incomes to the people. However, the successes are seen in only about 5% of the villages where the above model was tried. There are a large number of villages where interventions are yet to be done. The challenge today for the administration is how to replicate the success achieved in villages like Mikgilsimgre in other villages. Two examples of vegetable and anthurium cultivation may be taken to look at the bigger picture and the challenges that lay ahead for the district.

### **Vegetable Cultivation:**

The total area under vegetable cultivation in the district is 2,600 Ha and the production is 24,000 MT. The production is able to meet only 50% of the demand in the district. The other 50% of the vegetables come from Assam. The target is to become self sufficient in vegetables. The economics of vegetable cultivation are as follows:

Investment for vegetables in 1 Ha	Rs. 26,000 (for seeds and other material) + Labour (Presently, the money is being provided to beneficiaries under the TM. More beneficiaries will be provided assistance under SGSY and NREGS)
Annual production	8 MT
Expected income	Rs. 80,000
Marketing and sale	Since there is huge demand for local vegetables in all the markets in the district, vegetable clusters can be developed in villages near markets thus making transportation easy.

Vegetable Cultivation is ideal to provide quicker incomes to the people as it is of short duration. This will have positive impact on the nutritional status of the people in general and children in particular.

### **Anthurium Cultivation:**

Anthurium is being successfully grown in the district. It is a high value crop which has to be grown in poly houses in controlled conditions. The status of anthurium cultivation in the district and the issues to be addressed are highlighted in the chart. The vision is to capitalize on the strengths in horticulture and to increase the production and productivities which will enable people to earn better incomes and better standards of living.

Total area under anthurium	2.26 Ha
Total production in 2008	2,00,000 stems.
Marketing	The entire marketing is being done through Zopar Private Limited, a company based in Bangalore. The farm gate price of each stem is Rs. 10 (Average). Zopar is also providing technical assistance in fabrication of green houses, training and post harvest management.
Post harvest management	Presently, grading and packing is done only at the horti hub, Samgong. Villagers bring the stems to Samgong.
Strengths	1. Anthurium of the district is in great demand in the international markets like Japan due to long stems and big size of the flowers. Hence there is a need to increase the area under anthurium to meet the increasing demand. 2. The IRR of anthurium is 46% and the plant has a life of 8 years.
Issues to be addressed	1. Anthurium is a high investment crop. The initial investment for one unit of anthurium green house

	<p>of 150 sq m is Rs. 4,50,000. The people of the area cannot make such huge investments. The alternative is private investment for which modalities have to be worked out at the government level.</p> <p>2. Post harvest management has to be strengthened and cold chains have to be put in place.</p> <p>3. Other companies should also be involved in marketing to create competition for Zopar and to fetch better prices to the farmers.</p>
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## ANNEXURE- II

### **A WRITE UP ON MIKGILSIMGRE VILLAGE, EAST GARO HILLS DISTRICT**

Mikgilsimgre is a small village in East Garo hills district, situated at a distance of about 12 Kms. from the district headquarters, Williamnagar. There are 21 households (HH) in the village and the main occupation of the people is the traditional *jhum* cultivation in addition to livestock rearing and working as daily wage labourers. The main crops are paddy, ginger, pumpkin, chilli, long beans and yam cultivated in the *jhum* fields. The general economic condition is very poor as a result of lower productivity and lack of other livelihood opportunities.

Population	Male	Female
135	69	66

**Meghalaya Rural Development Society (MRDS)** which is implementing the 'Livelihoods Improvements Project in the Himalayas' entered the village in September, 2005 and started mobilising people to form Self Help Groups (SHG's). Two groups

formed under SGSY in the past were non- functional. After a great deal of motivation and many sessions of interactions two women SHG's were formed and they started saving and inter-lending. A small amount of money was given to each group with which they started cultivation of seasonal vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, long beans. Part of the harvested vegetables was consumed and the surplus was sold in the market. The income earned was deposited in the group account. This earning and the whole idea of doing things together as a group motivated the people to upscale. Seeing the success of the two women's groups, two more men's groups were formed. Now the next step of linking up the groups with the Line Departments was done.

The **Horticulture Department** and **MRDS** joined hands to upscale the vegetable cultivation. Land development was taken up and about 3.5 hectares of land was made fit for cultivation. In 2007- 08, one hectare was brought under vegetable cultivation where the villagers cultivated cabbage, broccoli, tomato, potato, lady finger, brinjal and chilli. About 8,000 kgs of vegetable have been produced and sold in the nearby markets bringing an income of Rs. 40,000 to the SHG's. Encouraged by the response of the villagers, the Horticulture department took up strawberry cultivation in 1 Hectare of land. The villagers harvested 500 kgs. of strawberry within a period of five months and earned Rs.1,05,000. Additional infrastructure in the form of green houses for the cultivation of gerbera (1000 sq m) and

tomato (2 Nos. of 500 sq m), a farm handling unit, two vermi-compost units and a water tank were provided by the department. Strawberry is again being planted this year and gerbera and tomato are about to be harvested. All these have improved the economic condition of the villagers beyond imagination. The average income per household before these interventions and after is an indicator to the success of the approach followed.

Average income per HH	
In October, 2005	In January, 2009
Rs.14,400	Rs.36,000

The list of SHG and their financial status as on 01.01.2009 is given below.

Sl. No	Name of SHG	Amount in bank	Internal loan outstanding	Total corpus
1	Mikgilsimgre Men SHG-1	82338	10500	92838
2	Mikgilsimgre Women SHG-I	58674	8500	67174
3	Mikgilsimgre Men SHG-II	25360	-	25360
4	Mikgilsimgre Women SHG-II	17608	3300	20908
	Total	1,83,980	22,300	2,06,280

### Other Interventions:

- Soil and Water Conservation Department brought 22 Hectares under *Jatropha* cultivation, constructed two water conservation structures, a 1.2 km motorable road (by jeeps) and a three hectare arecanut plantation under IWDP.

- Block constructed a culvert under SGRY thus allowing vehicles to go till the village.

Changes in the village in the last two years apart from increase in incomes:

- The food security and the nutritional status of the people have improved remarkably.
- The number of hours spent on *jhuming* has reduced as the community started focussing on homestead gardens and cultivation of high value horticulture crops which has given them more income.
- The community has developed the habit of saving and taking loan from the SHG. It is able to handle bigger amounts and invest accordingly, for different income generating activities. They are also able to visit banks on their own and access financial services.
- The number of school going children has increased and today all the children in the village are enrolled in school.
- Cases of incidence of malaria have come down from 60% in 2005 to 30% today.
- Most importantly, the people have become confident and have started **dreaming big**. The four SHG's plan to form a village SHG federation and buy a pick up van to transport their products to the market easily.