



# Climate Change and India's North East

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## CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDIA'S NORTH EAST

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Climate change is about nature, and it is people who are closest to nature are the one who gets affected most. While those who are closest to nature contributes the least in the current anthropogenic climate change, they are also 'tasked' to bear the cross for mitigation and adaptation. In other words, the global, national and state unequal power and economic structure gets reflected in process, decision-making system and the activities in dealing with this challenge. So what we see unfolding in India's North East in terms of efforts to deal with climate change is a reflection of the unequal world.

All states in North East Region comprising Eight States have prepared their state action plan on climate change under Climate Change Division of Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change with financial and technical support from Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Consultants consist of IRG Systems South Asia Private Limited (IRG-SSA), New Delhi and the CTRAN Consulting Ltd., Bhubaneswar (Orissa). These SACPCC of the states were prepared in line with National Action Plan on Climate Change, states do not have their 'freedom' to go their way despite the federal structure and their political, socio-economic 'situations'. Such economic and power structure is also clearly visible in global climate change debate, discussion and decisions, from global north to south. Such a power structure is visible within global south where decisions are made by powerful capital led state structures rather than bottoms up processes. While it is true that climate change is a global phenomenon and requires efforts at that level, the processes and activities for mitigation, adaptation requires real people on the ground.

The reports on state action plans indicates the following:

1. Lack of effective involvement of citizens and communities in understanding climate change, mitigation and adaptation ways except for some consultations and participation in meetings. Several Committees set up for framing policies and implementation does not find mention of the 'people' they want to address/help.
2. All SACPCC reports do not address the political economy of climate change both globally and locally (Country and at the state level). This means that politically 'marginalized' communities are made to feel that all human beings are responsible equally for CC and all human beings are equally affected, but at the end, some are to take the task of reducing the impact.

3. North East being a largely nature dependent region, is being asked to mitigate by changing ways of doing agriculture like Jhum cultivation, planting more trees as carbon sink (REDD+), by being less dependent on nature's produce.
4. There is thrust on industrial tree plantation in the name of re-forestation. Carbon Sink and industrial logging activities are likely scenario in the future if the Action Plans are allowed without further discussion.
5. As both adaptation and mitigation strategies, there is clear indication of bringing in large storage hydros. The report does not mention on how dams will function when there is unpredictable water conditions, and that including large hydros crowds out support for true climate solutions such as wind and solar with lesser social and environmental impact.
6. There is also a push for cash crop plantations such as Palm Oil for livelihood options without understanding implications when introducing a market led solutions.
7. In Manipur, there is also an indication of militarizing climate solution by creating "State Forest Protection Force"! indicating that communities will become an enemy of climate related projects.
8. The Action Plan has completely ignored the critical element of climate change and gender.
9. Overall there seem to be lack of data and there is urgent need to create data baseline for proper decision making.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS**

There are three types of climate mitigation projects in the North East. These include, carbon sink/REDD+ projects where villagers are to promote and protect trees as carbon sink and for which they are paid 'environmental service fee'. The second type of project include, bio-fuel plantations primarily Jathropa plants which gives oil seeds and in theory helps reduce the use of petroleum oil thus carbon dioxide. The third kind of mitigation projects include CDM or Clean Development Mechanism where hydro project developers claim that their technology and their electric producing projects are clean and that the 'clean' energy they produce helps reduce GHC.

#### **Carbon Sink Projects. REDD+**

On Pilot Project on Community Based Carbon Sequestration Project in the Sub-Catchment of Umiam River. Implemented at Wahlyngkiem Sunei, Wahlyngkien Ramklang under Mawphlang Lyngdohship, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya. According to the concept note of the project,

“The project seeks to support indigenous communities to conserve good forest and restore degraded forests through assisted natural regeneration and afforestation activities as well as develop new income generating activities that address poverty and help control local drivers of deforestation. The project builds community capacity, provides technical support for resource management and climate resilient farming systems, and empowers and capitalizes women administered micro-finance institutions. The project also seeks conserve rare, endemic, and endangered species found in the area and improve watershed hydrology”.

The MOU between Department of Forest and Environment, Government of Meghalaya and Community Forestry International (CFI) in 2005 which allows CFI to conduct its project in Meghalaya finds no mention of climate change or carbon sink. Similarly in the Resolution of the Community Forest Management Committee of Wahlyngkien Sunei & Wahlyngkien Ramklang Villages under Hima Mawphlang Lyngdohship, East Khasi Hills District. November 2005, there is no mention of climate change mitigation, but strangely, the members of the Community Forest Management Committee of **Wahlyngkien Sunei & Wahlyngkien Ramklang Villages** under **Hima Mawphlang Lyngdohship**, East Khasi Hills District, which constitute a part of a Pilot Project of Community Forestry International, and represented by Local Level Working Committee, found that their forest is degraded and hence requires some kind of restoration activities. And the resolution, unlike in the past where villagers themselves take matters in their hand to restore their forest, was asking for Government of India or any other donor agency to help them with funds “for taking care of the opportunity costs of protection and also for the support activities”.

The MOU indicates lack of information on what exactly their forest restoration is suppose to achieve, and this could be deliberate on the part of the promoter CFI.

**IN SIMILAR PROJECT, in a Village** Makhan in Senapati District, Manipur inhabited by Liangmai of Zeliangrong Naga, CFI also initiated a pilot project on REDD where the villages ‘agreed’ to protecting and propagating forest for ‘support’ from CFI. Similar lack of information to the villagers is visible on what these projects purports to do.

in a post Paris Agreement, the government of Mizoram have announced a REDD+ project. No access to the agreements but it is clear from interactions with people from Reiek is that REDD+ projects is being expanded without proper consultation processes. It is important to emphasize that FPIC has not been followed in the introduction of any of the climate programs as is in this case. Villagers are informed of how they will benefit b planting and saving trees, however carbon sink is a larger process of the global world an ‘innocent’ villager is ‘forced’ to follow the diktat (of that decision which is seen by many as a non-solution to climate change).

Link: <http://www.mizoramtourism.org/mizoram-news/mizoram-selected-among-others-for-redd-project>

ANOTHER, Climate Change mitigation activity is of growing agrofuel or what is known as bio-fuel to those who promote it. The state action plans also has this options where 'wastelands' are identified for growing crops like Jathropa for oil seeds which can 'replace' and/or mix with petroleum oil which can reduce oil use.

D1 Williamson Magor Bio Fuel Limited, a joint venture company between D1-BP Fuel Crops Limited, UK and Williamson Magor group incorporated in July 2006 promoted Jatropha plantation by the farmers on 62,500 Hectare as on 31-12-2007

Plantation	2007	2008	2009	Total
	Hect	Hect	Hect	Hect
- Bramhaputra Valley / Arunachal	4400	14000	14000	32400
- Barak Valley / Meghalaya	10400	10000	10000	30400
- Nagaland	9600	10000	10000	29600
- Manipur	2000	2000	2000	6000
- Tripura	13000	20000	10000	43000
- Jharkhand	23000	15000	20000	58000
- Orissa		5000	10000	15000
Total	62400	76000	76000	214400

### Plantation Model

In line with national objective as stated in "Mission Jatropha" and also Bio Diesel Procurement Policy dated 9 October 2005, the company promotes plantation of Jatropha by the farmers individually and also through Self Help Groups (SHGs) with necessary technical assistance on plantation and guaranteed buy back arrangements. **D1 Williamson Magor made commitment that the company will supply selected planting materials in the form of seedlings, plantlet to the farmers at cost. It will supervise the plantation and its maintenance in the initial years with its own expertise shared with the farmers and SHGs at free of cost.**

Access to MOUs between villages are not available. From talking to farmers at Khulsaibung, Chandel District, it is learnt that they are not aware of how planting Jathropa is linked to climate change, they are only promised of oil plants which they are suppose to grow and which will supposedly bring more price instead of doing shifting cultivation. While, Williamson Magor plantations are almost abandoned, there is likely of the return of oil seeds/agrofuel plantations not only as a result of the state action plans but also that there is much bigger push from the post Paris Agreement where nationally determined plans includes reducing carbon intensity n more rigorous ways.

## **ADAPTATION WAYS**

Climate Change Adaptation – North Eastern Region of India (CCA-NER) is an adaptation project for the states of Nagaland, Sikkim and Meghalaya funded by the same donor GIZ under the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) which funded the SAPCCs of the states. These projects are donor activities and the priorities are also in accordance to the donor's. This technical cooperation program is in partnership with the **Ministry for Development of the North Eastern Region (MoDONER)**, the lead executing agency for the North Eastern Region at the national level. The nodal implementation partners in the three states are:

- Department for Planning and Economic Development (Govt. of Meghalaya)
- Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development (Govt. of Nagaland)
- Department of Science, Technology, and Climate Change (Govt. of Sikkim).

### **The project component includes the following:**

- Community Forest Management in Mawlyngbna
- Revision of Meghalaya Water Policy, Water Resource Management and Land Use Modeling at Umiam Lake
- Silk in Meghalaya
- Promotion of local rice and seed sharing Tsiese Basa, Sakraba, Longkok and Yonglang Integrated Water Resource Management in Tsiese Basa and Kohima
- Disaster Preparedness in Sikkim from GLOF, Sikkim
- Oak Forest Management in Sikkim
- Meliorated and re-evaluation and Orchid plantation in Kabi Lungchok , Sikkim

For a region like north east where the people live close to nature, it is critical to also focus on Adaptation as climate change will alter nature's old ways. Apart from 'experimental' projects in many sectors, it will be important to conduct research on how adaptation can be best evolved and lessons exchanged in similar terrain. Donor driven agenda must not dominate local knowledge, action and priorities in mitigation or adaptation strategies.

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