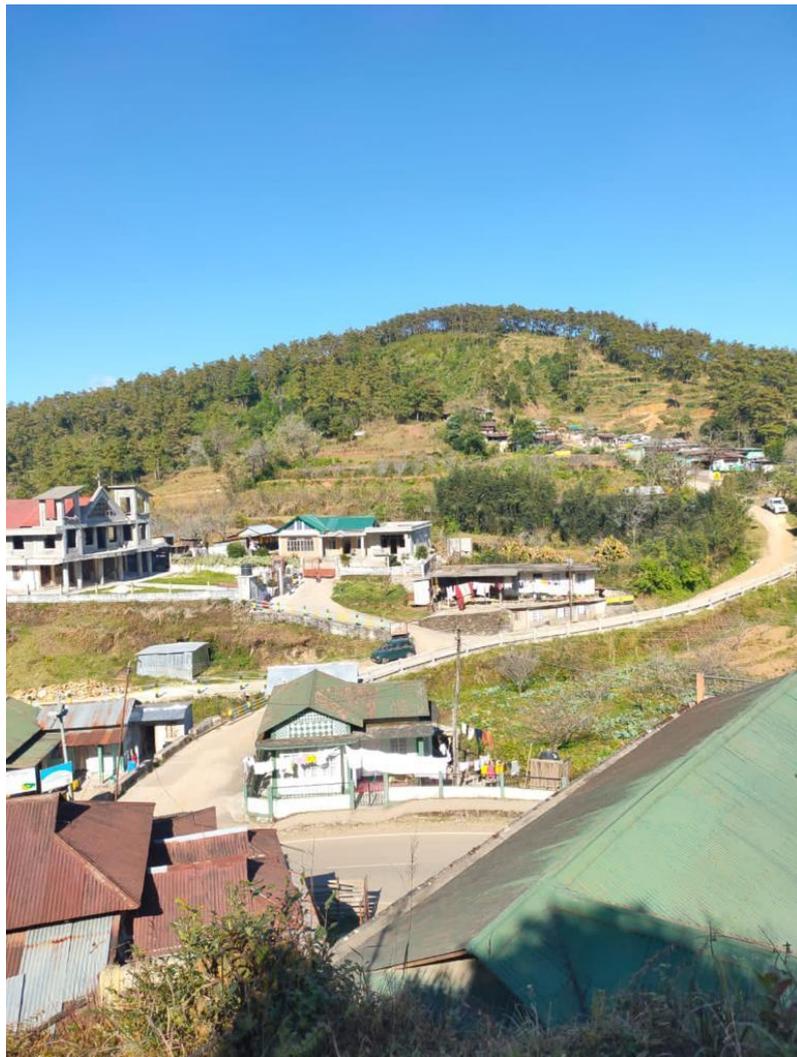


Women Leadership — Jani Mawiong Village holds true



Brief

The Community Led Landscape Management Project (CLLMP) implemented by the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency (MBMA) lays special emphasis on the participation of women into the decision making process for the village by making it a mandate for a woman to be the Secretary of the Village Natural Resource Management Committee (VNRMC); a committee that oversees the implementation of the project at the village. In rural India, where women participation at a village meeting (durbar) is still a relatively new topic, CLLMP has been a step in the right direction towards greater equity as far as voicing the opinion of women and making them the frontrunners in taking important decisions for the welfare of their own community. Meghalaya; which prides itself for its matrilineality is also sorely lacking in this regard.

Jani Mawiong village

Jani Mawiong village, under Mawphlang C&RD Block, East Khasi Hills located just about 30 kilometers from state capital Shillong has made great strides towards realizing this goal. Not only is the Secretary a woman, but they have also chosen the President as well as the Treasurer of the VNRMC to be represented by women as well. This has been the first instance in all the villages of the state of

Meghalaya implementing the project where all three of the important positions have chosen women representatives. It has indeed been a landmark occasion for CLLMP where women participation is concerned.

A conversation with Kong Buldahun Langstieh, who is the President of the Committee reveals that it is indeed an imperative issue in their village as women are not yet allowed to attend the main dorbar meetings (which is held once a year) in their village but with the arrival of CLLMP, the perception of the male residents of the village has slowly start to change as they realized women bring forth issues which are different but none the less pertinent as compared to men. The VNRMC of the village was formed in the month of July, 2020.

She duly credits the headman of the village in giving them the chance to be a part of the committee and emphasizes that perhaps in the near future, things would eventually change in her village as well as other villages in the state where women participation is virtually nonexistent.

Kong Fulsida Sunn, the Secretary of the VNRMC expresses that this is her first time in taking a responsibility of her village of this magnitude and whilst a bit nervous, she is also excited at the prospect of taking up this challenge and have even given a few innovative ideas for the purpose of afforestation in their village by suggesting to use hay to better protect the saplings from the frost during winter. She also mentioned that there is mutual understanding and camaraderie amongst all the three female members as they are also close friends outside of work. "A Secretary is the backbone of any committee hence, I feel there is an added responsibility to my work, besides managing my day to day affairs as a school teacher and a mother." she quipped.

The Treasurer, Kong Lucky Daughter Langstieh also expressed her eagerness in taking up the mantle. "Our VEC treasurer has always been a male, hence it is something of a momentous occasion for me as well as for all the females in Jani Mawiong village." Indeed, this has been the much needed catalyst for the women of the village.

While the road is long and arduous towards the representation of women, especially in the socio-political sphere of the Khasi culture, villages like Jani Mawiong is making strides in bringing in inclusive development into the fold.



(L-R) Kong Fulsida (Secretary), Kong Buldahun (President), Kong Lucky Daughter (Treasurer)