

Introducing alternate methods of farming

NYK Lunglei help farmers reclaim their lives and livelihoods

Nehru Yuva Kendra, Lunglei District, Mizoram is helping farmers to take up alternate methods of farming to increase the agriculture yield and production. With NYK support, the farmer community of the hilly state in the Northeast region of India is leading the way in demonstrating the possibilities of conserving environment and improving profitability in the agriculture sector.

Fifteen years ago, Rosiama Sailo, a farmer in the Lunglei region was a worried man. He had to clear and burn down the forest year after year to be able to cultivate the land and make a living out of it. With meager income, lack of resources and no technical know-how to increase the agriculture yield, he was living a life of poverty. "Thanks to NYKS, I am able to cultivate my land all through the season by planting permanent crops like coffee, oranges and banana", he states. The agriculture system in Mizoram is mainly based on Shift Cultivation method. Therefore, forests are cut down; burned and new sites are selected for cultivation each year. It is estimated that 25000 hectares of land is burned down every year, thus disrupting the environmental balance.

Hundreds of other farmers like Rosiama have been trained by NYKS in collaboration with the Relief and Development Department (DCM) in technologies such as Sloping Land Agriculture Technology (SALT), Bokashi, Fermented Plant Juice (FPJ) and Compost etc. According to SALT technology, hedge row and nitrogen fixing plants such as T.Candida, Flamengia etc are planted across the contours of the slope and its leaves and barks are decomposed to fertilize the soil. The National Service Volunteers campaigned for SALT technology in 20 villages and distributed the seeds of T. Candida to the farmers to enhance the quality of the soil. Bokashi, a traditional Japanese method of using organic fermented fertilizer consisting of chicken manures, rice bran, charcoal, soya to enhance the growth of plants has also been taken up by the farmers as advocated by the NYK.

Various methods such as promotion of Permanent and Organic Farming, distribution of high-quality seeds of Soya Beans, Ginger,

Lemon, Orange, Turmeric and Yellow Variety Passion Fruit etc amongst farmers, teen clubs, Self Help Groups and Youth Clubs have been undertaken in collaboration with the Agriculture and Horticulture departments. Farmers have been also trained in production of Soya Milk, Soya Cheese (Tofu) and Soya Butter; that has helped them venture into new areas to increase their income. This has also contributed to adding value in the food processing as well as agricultural products. Women have been especially trained in food preserving methods such as fermenting, pickle making, jam making in collaboration with State Institute of Rural Development.

In the year 2004, when Mizoram was declared as Organic State by the Government, the use of fertilizers and pesticides was strictly controlled by the Government and the farmers were trained in the preparation of organic fertilizers with the help of youth clubs. NYKS also took concerted initiatives to bring about a change in the way farming was done by introducing new agricultural methods to improve the yield as well as safeguard the environment.

Mizoram, a north eastern state of India is a hilly region with a difficult terrain. 68% of the people are engaged in agriculture. However, due to low agriculture yield and production, per capita income is very low. This has resulted in many other problems such as unemployment, lack of basic facilities etc.

As the Nehru Yuva Kendra explored ways to increase agriculture yield and provide subsidies

to farmers to reduce production costs, it also undertook other activities to address the problem of youth unemployment as well as increasing awareness on environment sustainability. Campaigns to educate village community on environment were undertaken by the Volunteers and more than 80 villages were covered under this. Teen clubs were set up in collaboration with the village councils to undertake activities such as fruit tree plantation, promotion of food preservation, cleanliness campaign and broom cultivations etc. A cleanliness campaign was also undertaken in three villages Belthei, Putlungasih and Bolia. A detailed survey was undertaken by the youth and a score card was prepared after inspecting every household and adjoining areas.

To address the problem of unemployment, other notable achievement was the collaboration of NYK with the Agriculture, Horticulture, Soil

"The training on agriculture, horticulture, food processing and preservation has opened a lot of avenues for me and the entire farmer's community. This has also contributed towards my yearly income. Now I also train my fellow farmers from other districts and villages."

- Rosiama Sailo



In order to uplift the rural community, especially the youth, we focused on introducing new technology in the agriculture sector to provide sustainable livelihood to the rural community.

- Mercy Sellate
District Youth Coordinator
NYK, Lunglei district

and Water Conservation and Fisheries departments in setting up an Agricultural Demonstration Farm Land and Fish Pond in 2 Hectares at Hrangchawkawn, Lunglei, Mizoram for employment generation and promotes dignity of labour. This increased the yield of vegetables, eggs, fishes that were earlier being imported from other states. This farm is being taken care by Chawpui Youth Club and the initiative's results have been remarkable in creating jobs for the unemployed youth.

For India, where close to 70% people are engaged in agriculture sector, efforts such as these by the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan in Mizoram represent a powerful win-win strategy in addressing the challenge of low agriculture yield and profitability of businesses.

Highlights

- In partnership with the Coffee Board, NYK provided subsidy to the farmers to take up coffee plantation. The higher authority of the Coffee Board also approved opening of coffee board office in June 2007 in Lunglei district.
- Collaboration was made with North East Council and coffee convention cum trainings were organized for the North-Eastern States in Lunglei district
- NYK collaborated with Rubber Board to procure budded saplings. Under the scheme, as many as 30 farmers were provided subsidy amounting to a total of Rs 5,61,373
- Campaigns held in Youth Clubs to take up medicinal plantation such as Sandal Wood. NYK helped plant more than 15000 saplings in the year 2008 and 2009.

