



MegLIFE Project

# TOGETHER NEWSLETTER

Project for Community Based Forest Management & Livelihoods Improvement in  
Meghalaya (MegLIFE) | Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA)

## FROM PROJECT DIRECTOR'S DESK

Greetings to everyone reading the newsletter!

As we step into the third year of the MegLIFE Project in FY 2024-25, I am excited to share our ambitious targets and continued commitment to sustainable development. This year, the project aims to cover an impressive 8,000 hectares of plantations, contributing to environmental preservation and livelihood enhancement. We also plan to complete the construction of 400 Community Halls, which will serve as vital spaces for local engagement and development.

In addition to this, we are focused on implementing over 2,000 hectares of half-moon terracing to combat soil erosion, building around 1,000 soil and water conservation structures, and rejuvenating 84 springshed areas to improve water availability. Our efforts also extend to strengthening local economies through the operationalization of 73 Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCSs) and mobilizing 1,112 Self-Help Groups to support micro-enterprises.

With the hard work and dedication of our team, I am confident that MegLIFE will successfully achieve these targets. I extend my best wishes to everyone involved as we continue to make strides toward a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

**Dr. Vijay Kumar D., IAS**



## Snapshots of the Activities during 1st Quarter (April–June, 24) and 2nd Quarter (July–September, 24)

### Empowering Communities Through Inclusion in MegLIFE Project

The MegLIFE Project, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, ensuring the active participation of minority groups and all genders. In Malchapara and Kolkatola villages in Betasing Block, this commitment is evident as over 20 women have been employed in daily wage work, contributing to plantation activities like staking and pit digging. These efforts not only provide economic opportunities for women but also promote social change within the community. The MegLIFE Project's focus on inclusion demonstrates that progress towards a more equitable society is achievable, step by step.



### Review Meeting for MegLIFE BPM/DPM in Garo Hills Region

A review meeting for the MegLIFE BPM/DPM team of the Garo Hills region was held in Tura on May 24th, 2024, chaired by APD Shri Gunanka DB, IFS. During the meeting, the team discussed key MegLIFE project activities, including plantation, soil and water conservation (SWC), community hall construction, finance, Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCS), and spring rejuvenation initiatives. The team also established update timelines to ensure timely progress. The meeting was a productive session, offering valuable insights and fostering collaboration, ultimately proving highly beneficial for the successful execution of the MegLIFE Project.



### Mass Awareness Campaign for IVCS in Thanglashai Village



A Mass Awareness campaign for the establishment of Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCS) was successfully conducted on May 15, 2024, in Thanglashai village, Mawryngkneng Block. The campaign was led by Mr. Wanjoplang Shabong, Deputy Manager, Project Management. The village head, dorbar head, and members of women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Producer Groups (PGs) actively participated in the session. The community expressed strong enthusiasm for establishing an IVCS and showed commitment to following the project guidelines for its effective management. This engagement marks a positive step toward sustainable community development.

## Meeting on Plantation and VPIC Performance in Thadlaskein



A productive meeting was held at Thadlaskein, bringing together VPIC Members, BPMU staff, DPM, and the Block Development Officer (BDO) to discuss key aspects of the MegLIFE Project, with a particular focus on plantation activities. During the discussions, concerns were raised about the performance of VPIC, prompting calls from the DPM and BDO for improvement. Plans were put in place for monthly review meetings to track progress. VPICs were also reminded about procurement and payment procedures, with a strong emphasis on maintaining proper payment documentation. Plans were set to begin creating advice lists and utilization certificates from the following month.

## MLSC Conducts Training on Springshed Management at Thadlaskein

Earlier this week, the MLSC team held a training session at Thadlaskein, focusing on springshed management. The session was attended by 14 participants from the Shiabnai VPIC. Villagers were taught hands-on techniques for evaluating vital springs, enabling them to successfully restore one spring. The training also covered water quality assessment, with participants learning to conduct physical tests to evaluate water quality. The villagers expressed satisfaction with the training and the practical knowledge gained, recognizing its importance for the sustainable management of local water resources. This initiative marks a significant step in community-driven environmental conservation.



## Halfmoon/Eyebrow Terracing Demonstration at Mejlgre Nokat VPIC

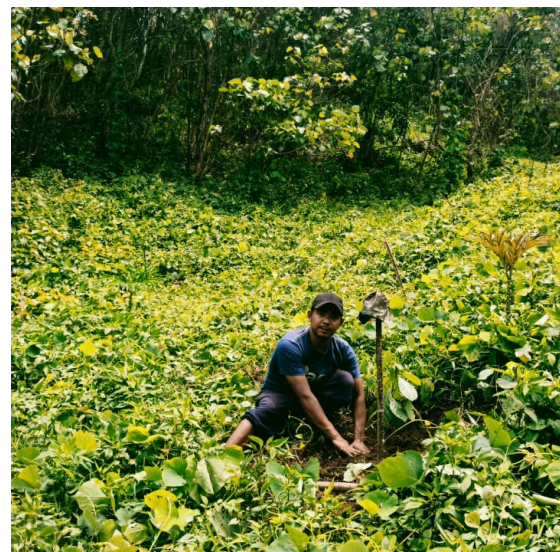
On April 16, 2024, a demonstration of Halfmoon/Eyebrow Terracing, a soil conservation technique, was conducted at Mejlgre Nokat VPIC, where plantation activities took place in 2023. Led by the Field Engineer, GIS, and Project Associate of Dambo Rongjeng Block, the session focused on showcasing the technique's role in mitigating soil erosion and enhancing soil moisture retention. This intervention is a key strategy in improving land productivity and reducing environmental degradation. The demonstration was well-received by the community, highlighting the importance of sustainable farming practices for long-term soil health and conservation.





# World Environment Day 2024 Celebrated with Mass Planting at Kalak Songgitcham VPIC

On June 5th, 2024, in celebration of World Environment Day, the Samanda Block BPMU staff visited Kalak Songgitcham VPIC to inspire other VPICs in the MegLIFE project through a mass planting activity. The event took place on a 34.5-hectare ANR plot, where over 400 saplings were transplanted, including Chambu, Chirori, Aritak, Jamun, Arjun, and Achri species, sourced from the Community Nursery. Women played a central role, transporting the saplings in handmade bamboo baskets and actively participating in the planting process. The event also sparked valuable discussions on the environmental benefits of plants and their role in sustainability.





## Training of Trainers on Vented Dams Organized by MegLIFE

On July 11, 2024, MegLIFE staff from the Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) vertical organized a Training of Trainers (TOT) for block field engineers. The morning session, held in a classroom setting, was led by Resource Person Shri P. Rapthap, Divisional Soil Water Conservation Officer from the Engineering Department, focusing on the technical aspects of vented dams. In the afternoon, participants visited Mawiong village in the Mawryngkneng block, where they were guided by Shri B. Makdok, Soil & Water Conservation Ranger from the Shillong (T) division, to observe the practical applications of the vented dam structure.



## Two-Day FMP Training for Master Trainers Organized by CoE



The Centre of Excellence (CoE) team organized a two-day training on Forest Management Planning (FMP) for Master Trainers from all districts on July 11th and 12th, 2024. The training was led by Dr. S. Ashutosh, Co-Chairman and Director of CoE. The first day featured theory sessions, covering the foundational concepts of FMP, while the second day focused on practical applications at Mawroh Forest. Participants engaged in activities such as laying sample plots, enumerating trees, conducting biodiversity surveys, and using a mobile app for data entry. The training aimed to enhance the skills necessary for effective forest management.

## Successful Inaugural General Meeting for Domesal Rongrong IVCS Ltd

The Inquiry and Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) for Domesal Rongrong IVCS Ltd was held on July 25, 2024, at Rongrong Antidam village, Songsak Block, with the Junior Cooperative Officer of East Garo Hills District in attendance. The event began with an Inquiry session to confirm the society's mission and operational plans, followed by the formal establishment of the cooperative during the IGM. Members elected the Managing Committee, adopted the byelaws, and outlined a roadmap for community-driven development. The focus will be on leveraging local resources and empowering residents through collaborative cooperative efforts, fostering sustainable growth.





## 8-Day Springshed Management Training Program Organized by MegLIFE

The MegLIFE team successfully organized an 8-day Springshed Management training program from July 22nd to July 30th, 2024, for Field Engineers, GIS staff, and representatives from the Soil and Water Conservation Department and Water Resources. Led by experts from the MLSC department, including Shri Abhishek Likam (CHIRAG), Shri Shyam D. Yawale (PSI), Shri Naveen Gusain (PSI), and Shri Kunal Upasani (ACWADAM), the training aimed to enhance participants' understanding of Springshed Management. The program equipped them with the necessary skills to develop Detailed Treatment Plans (DTPs) to improve water management and conservation efforts in the region.



## SPMU MegLIFE Organizes First State-Level Workshop to Strategize Future Plans



The SPMU MegLIFE staff organized a landmark three-day state-level workshop to outline future strategies, set targets for upcoming activities, and foster stronger team cohesion. This event not only celebrated the dedication of the team but also motivated staff to strive for excellence in meeting project goals.

The first day of the workshop focused on technical sessions covering various core components of the MegLIFE project, including GIS, EPA, Soil and Water Conservation (SWC), and the SALT Farm & Agroforestry model. Additionally, a Knowledge Management session was held for nodal KM staff to enhance the sharing of information and best practices.

Day 2 delved into important topics such as target setting for Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCS) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), springshed management techniques, and addressing challenges related to finance and procurement. The day also covered capacity building and Management Information System (MIS) issues. It concluded with vibrant cultural programs, team-building activities, and outdoor games, strengthening bonds among staff members. The final day focused on Human Resources (HR) topics, with a special address by Additional Project Director Shri Gunanka D. B., IFS, who reflected on the project's achievements and outlined expectations for the future. The day wrapped up with a presentation of the workshop outcomes, followed by the announcement of the MegLIFE awards, recognizing the best-performing staff for their outstanding contributions. This workshop marked a significant milestone in aligning the team towards the project's future success and reinforcing the spirit of collaboration.



## JICA Mission Visits North Garo Hills to Review MegLIFE Project Progress



Ms. Inagaki Yukari and Ms. Sushma Sen Adarshi, representatives from JICA, visited North Garo Hills for a 3-day review of the MegLIFE Project over the weekend. During their visit, they conducted site visits to Thapa Dangre and Ajasiram villages, where they were warmly welcomed by community members, Shri A.K. Singh, IAS, DC-cum-Chairman of MegLIFE NGH DPMU, and APD MegLIFE Shri Gunanka DB, IFS. The mission featured engaging community interactions, cultural performances, and important discussions on the project's progress. The visit concluded with the MegLIFE Awards 2024, celebrating the dedication of staff in advancing rural development.

## Training Session on Community Nursery Management for Khaidong and Lumbangla VPIC Members

On October 2, 2024, a training session on Community Nursery Management was held for Khaidong and Lumbangla VPIC members, emphasizing environmental conservation and sustainable practices. Village leaders underscored the collective benefits of the initiative and the importance of community collaboration. A Project Associate from MegLIFE's Forestry team provided an in-depth guide on nursery establishment, covering land acquisition, site preparation, nursery bed construction, and seed sowing, focusing on managing one species per bed. Practical demonstrations on soil preparation, irrigation, and seedling transplantation were also conducted. Future goals include fencing, installing shade nets, and fostering biodiversity through continued community involvement.



## PLUP and Microplanning Exercise Conducted at Jadigittim VPIC



The MegLIFE BPMU staff conducted a Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) and Microplanning exercise at Jadigittim VPIC, Baghmara Block, South Garo Hills District. During the session, the team assisted the community in map reading, helping them interpret the boundary map created using drone imagery and understanding the various Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) classes. The exercise aimed to improve the community's understanding of land resources and gather valuable input for developing the Present Resource and Ownership Map. This collaborative effort will help shape future development plans in the region, ensuring community involvement in decision-making.





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