

## **Together we can change our world (A case study on women leadership and marketing through SHG)**

**Background:** The status of tribal women particularly Naga women have almost the same rights and duties as men. In the bygone days, Zeliangrong Naga women were happy with their position in society because they were given adequate protection. It continue even after the advent of christianity and western education. However, women participation in public meetings and household decision making have very low in the EED/PESCH project area. There was no women leaders in village authority and church before PESCH intervention. The project villagers still prefer men leadership than women because they believe that women are not capable of preserving their ethnic identity. Women played significant role in maintaining food security as they slog along the Jhum and paddy fields. However, women are confined only to the households work. Women are restricted to go outside the house for business activities.

**PESCH Intervention:** In the phase-II, PESCH /EED, we make them formed and strengthening of 24 women SHG in the 6 project villages. We gave capacity building trainings of these groups in phase II & III on Characteristics of SHGs, Book keeping, bank operating system, individual saving and loan Register guideline, group by law, Leadership, Group management, Conflict management and IGA, Livestock management, Economic benefit of bee keeping and handholding work. Through project activities, they got revolving loan on seasonal crops, livestock and grant for fruit plantation.

### **Achievements:**

**1).Leadership:** There is poor participation of the women members in village development committee, village authority and church for resolving women related development issues; yet, the change is significant. There is positive changes with respect to attitude, self confidence, participation in the decision making process and leadership. Now, 1 SHG secretary of New Mandu promoted as VDC chairperson, 1 women SHG leader of Aben was appointed as member of village authority and 5 women SHG members of Longchai, Aben, Thaucham, New Mandu and Old Mandu were president and secretary of church women society.

**2) Bank and Govt.department Linkages:** During the project period, 18 SHGs have been opened saving bank account in the Nationalized Bank of India. Three groups namely Cheikelua SHG of Deige, Ringra SHG of Mandu and Suisam SHG of Aben access loan from IWMP and United Bank of India Tamenglong.

**3). Change in marketing and income:** Not surprisingly, the PESCH field staff came across some of the highly successful women in marketing. It appears that a member has to arrange at least half of the total investment on her own and get the rest from groups. They collected King chilli, which is one of the 3 key products from the groups and different area and also sold directly in

the Jiribam market which is 54-77 km from the project villages. This year they started going to much farther markets at Lakhipur and Silchar, Assam, to increase their sales and more profitable way. Other than chili they also sold vegetables like pumpkin, brinjal, long beans, etc. At present they sold 400 kgs of fresh king chilli at Jiribam market @ Rs. 150 per kg. The annual turnover is approximately Rs.50,000. This activity was a success for the individual members and groups. These activities helped women specially, in acquiring economic and social empowerment.

**Conclusion:** When we asked the SHG members the reason for their success and they answered that it's the Believe that together we can change our world. It makes us real happy to meet and interact with the members. We wish the groups the very best for their next dream. Best wishes for great results in the future.

