

**A BRIEF REPORT ON THE WMPA MEETING, MEGHALAYA CHAPTER**

**DATE: 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2008**

**VENUE: RURAL RESOURCE TRAINING CENTRE (RRTC), UMRAN**



**CO-ORDINATED BY: VOLUNTARY HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF  
MEGHALAYA (VHAM), UPPER NONGRIM HILLS, SHILLONG 793003,  
MEGHALAYA**

Mayfereen Ryntathiang

## **A Report:**

After a long time, the World Mountain people's Association (WMPA) / Meghalaya chapter organised a meeting of community members to finalize the issues on which we can work together as a team. This meeting saw the attendance of farmer's association, herbal medicine cultivators and practitioners, NGOs, and individual members. This meeting had 14 members attending at Rural Resource Training Centre, Umran to discuss on the following:

Brief introduction of WMPA

About the regional centre

About upcoming Issues to discuss

The Brief introduction of WMPA was shared by Mayfereen to some of the new members who wanted to know more about this Association. Some of the new members asked innumerable questions as to when it was formed? Who is in it? Who is eligible? and how can they get involve in pushing the matter forward? It is definite that most of the members who attended are from the rural parts of East Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi District and Jaintia Hills; hence, they were told that they fall under the third college category. The facilitator shared on the formation of the WMPA and why, to which they want to be a part of, provided they are given the appropriate information.

Some of the questions revolved around why this chapter of Meghalaya failed to respond, the answer given was that we lack committed people, lack of time, too many priorities, and others to push the association forward.

Then some light was shed on the regional centre. As explained by Mayfereen, the regional centre is meant for the community members wherein they are the sole keeper and considered to be entirely responsible for the maintenance of the centre. A lot of discussion hovered around the idea of the regional where some think that regional centres are supposed to be delving on many issues whereas some think that we can focus on one issue without leaving the sub issues.

Then finally, it was decided that we focus on herbal medicines using the regional centre for research, training, documentation, extension and discussion from a rights perspective. The sub issues that are going to be looked into are agriculture, dyeing, health from a holistic point of view, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and Trade rights. The herbal medicine practitioners and cultivators like many others were excited about the idea and cannot wait for the actual proposal to be implemented.

**Bah Nongbri, District Forest Officer, Government of Meghalaya**, who is also a constant support and friend of WMPA share his scientific views on the importance of herbal medicines and shared that in Meghalaya most of the plants have medicinal value. Meghalaya is rich in resources but because of ignorance of our rights, most of it is taken from under our noses. This was further enhanced when bah Nongbri shared the case of the stolen taxus bacarta by an American company that uses the taxus bacarta to treat cancer. When in fact, the tribals of Meghalaya have been using this as a medicine for cancer since time immemorial, but have definitely not registered it or its value. This leaves the participants numb, but vouches to get our rights back.

Conclusion:

This is just the beginning of the wheel and not the end. A follow- up meeting will be held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February to strengthen our decision to carry to Nepal on March 2008.

Mayfereen Ryntathiang