

KOHIMA COLLEGE KOHIMA

Assignment On Environmental Studies (501)

Topic: A report on forest conservation
in area / block / village / district.

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Acknowledgement

First of all I would like to give thanks to our almighty God for his love and blessing towards me and granting me a good life, through him I could able to accomplished my work on time. I would also like to give a special thanks to Sir, Nuklu Phom "Green Oscar" winner or "Whitley Award 2021", and his team for their immense work and determination towards the land of Naga. I would also like to give thanks Ma'am, Medo for giving me an opportunity to write a report on forest conservation in Phom area/district.

A report on forest conservation in Phom area:

INTRODUCTION:

Church worker Nuklu Phom belongs to the Phom indigenous community in Nagaland in northeast India. He is noted for his work in connecting communities to conserve biodiversity and switch to sustainable livelihoods in his ancestral village.

The effort led to the increase in congregations of the long-distance migratory bird Amur falcon, and other wildlife, in the community-conserved area centred around his village.

From "shooting with catapults and guns" to "shooting with cameras", church worker Nuklu Phom mobilised communities in his ancestral village Yaongyimchen, in mountainous Nagaland, to identify an area for conservation in community-owned forests, over a decade ago.

BODY:

Under Phom's leadership communities worked together to do away with hunting, protect biodiversity and adopt sustainable livelihoods centred around the 10 square km Yaongyimchen Community Biodiversity Conservation Area (VCBCA) set aside by them for conservation.

Their efforts over time led to the revival of dwindling wild life, including an ~~area~~ increase in congregations of the long-distance migratory bird, the Amur falcon, the conservation initiative's flagship species. Amur falcon is a small grey bird that annually migrates over 30,000 km from Siberia, China and Mongolia onto the southern parts of Africa.

People had taken to hunting the birds and selling their meat during the bird's stopover in Nagaland. By documenting the significant increase in numbers of roosting Amur falcons over time in VCBCA, Phom was able to demonstrate the comeback of wildlife and restoration of ecosystems following a hunting ban and environmental-friendly farming.

Phom was recently honoured with the Whitley Award, in recognition of his nature conservation efforts. He aims to connect more Communities in rural Nagaland to be part of the network of community reserves managed by indigenous Communities in what he calls the Biodiversity Peace Corridor, to mitigate the growing conflicts between humans and nature amid the growing impacts of climate change in the eastern Himalayas.

"The expanded Biodiversity Peace Corridor will incorporate 16 villages across four Nagaland districts. Communities will connect with each other across their village borders to conserve biodiversity and take up sustainable livelihoods and wildlife can move freely across these reworked reserves," said Phom who engaged with communities with his team at Lemsachenlok Society in Nagaland that received the India Biodiversity Award 2018.

Sustainable, supplemental livelihoods are necessary for the communities because the areas set aside for conservation used to be jhum (shifting cultivation) fields. By switching

to sustainable, non-extractive land-use practices, his team can ensure that the area supports both biodiversity and livelihoods, uniting some of the most economically constrained communities in a common cause, states the award-associated press release.

Phom, who studied theology and ecology, will also revive the tribal education system and enable elders to teach traditional knowledge to the younger generation. The Whitley Awards are presented annually to individuals from the Global South by UK-based charity the Whitley Fund for Nature. The award worth £40,000 (INR 41,33,343) is expected to be a shot in the arm for his plan to extend the corridor and introduce alternative livelihoods.

As much as 88 percent of Nagaland's forest is privately or community-owned. Bodetung Myanmar, the state falls in the Indo-Myanmar and Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspots. YCBCA is one of the 407 community-conserved areas (CCA) in the state as per a 2015 TERI study and 82 percent of these CCAs have entirely or partially banned tree felling and other

hunting and enforce various conservation regulations. These CCAs, covering more than 1,700 Square Km (170000 hectares), also contribute to Carbon Storage (an estimated 120.77 tonnes per ha) and are essential for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Nagaland dependency on natural resource-based income generation also exposes it to climate hazard, according to the 2021 report Climate Vulnerability Assessment for Adaptation Planning in India using a Common Framework released by India's Department of Science and Technology. It finds that the major drivers of climate change in Nagaland are very low coverage of rainfed agriculture.

Phom and team have chalked out ways of integrating climate adaptation and mitigation options into their planning process and interventions to climate-proof vulnerable communities participating in biodiversity conservation actions. "we will generate alternative livelihoods through short-term and long-term plantations as per the local soil and climate conditions to enable climate adaptation. we will also look out for the market chains so that

the products can be integrated into those systems", said Phom.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a spanner in the works by hindering in-person outreach efforts among communities to drive home the message of biodiversity conservation and ensure participation. "Virtual meetings and phone calls etc. won't have the same impact on people, so we are severely limited in outreach due to the pandemic. We need to keep the momentum going in terms of funds for switching to alternative livelihoods from hunting and other unsustainable practices," adds Phom.

Observations, such as the marked reduction in wildlife, deforestation and loss of crop productivity, led to the crystallisation of the idea of a community-conserved area and after about four years of discussions and meetings with village councils, Yaongyemchen inhabitants began conserving the YCBCA in 2010, Phom told Mongabay-India in a 2018 interview. The conservation area straddles the villages of Yaongyemchen, Alayong and Sanglu.

The prelude to the CCA in 2010 began with Phom teaching the importance of environment protection to students of the college he was associated with. He also tapped into sermons and speeches through church work to draw people's attention to environmental issues in the region.

But it was the field-based experiences that added the wind beneath Yaongyimchen wings. "I started taking them to the forests and spending the night in the wilderness, dividing them into groups and encouraged them to pay attention to the sounds of wildlife and collected data, normally towards evening we could hear the sounds of barking deers but this has already decreased. We involved communities, especially the hunters, in observing and photographing wildlife," said Phom, adding that one of the main successes of the conservation initiative was the hunting ban.

The number of Hoosting falcons, rose from 50,000 to one million after the conservation initiative began. One of the most successful activities of the campaign is satellite tagging of birds facilitated by wildlife institute of India Scientist Suresh Kumar and the forest department for a better understanding of the Amur falcons migratory route. "Longeng" a female Amur Falcon, was tagged in 2016 from the roost site in Yaongymchen Community Reserve in Longeng district.

The abundance of termites in September and October makes the area a preferred refuelling site for the birds before they commence their flight across the Arabian Sea to the African continent. In addition, the birds are not connected to specific sites in this part of India but seem to change preferences, most probably depending on the availability of food, according to the Convention on Migratory Species.

"They are known as 'Tuma LO-i, in our language which means a bird that crosses water (body) and comes from a faraway

land. To me, the birds represent entities that connect landscapes and unite people. Now there is a huge interest among tourists and scientists to study our area," he adds. He hopes to unite more scientists, policymakers and communities to expand the Biodiversity Peace Corridor.

CONCLUSION:

Pia Sethi, co-author of the 2015 TERI project report on Nagaland CCAs attributes the success and sustainability of these efforts to the unflinching efforts of change makers like Nuklu Phom, you need a local who is really committed to the cause, that the communities are giving up these areas and they are giving up hunting so there is an opportunity cost involved. So you need a committed local to convince and lead them through it, Sethi told Mongabay-India.

While local community members in these close-knit villages support the decisions of the elders to conserve, they often face financial constraints in the process such as not being able to hunt and fish and sell for subsistence, which is

Why these CCAs need support in various forms, ecotourism, livelihoods, etc. Also, they have enormous pride in culture and heritage and are encouraged when outsiders visit the areas, elaborated Sethi.

The village formed the Yaongyimchen Community Biodiversity Conservation Area (YBCA) in 2007, and was also honoured with India Biodiversity awards in 2018 for conserving wild species. More than ten lakhs of Amur Falcon have been nesting in the Community Biodiversity Area.

References:

<https://india.mongabay.com>

Indian "Green Oscar" winner Nuklu Phom envisions a Biodiversity.