

Kohima college Kohima
Nagaland Assignment on
Environment Education

Submitted to : Madam

Assistant professor Environment
Education

Submitted by :

Izeule

Rollno :108(A)

5th semester

Topic : A Report on Forest Conservation in My village (Benreu)



Historically home to the Zeliang tribe, Benreu village in the Peren district of Nagaland is the abode of clouds and rains. The average rainfall in the area is 2056 mm, making it one of the favourites of the Rain Gods in the country. Perched at a height of 1950 metres, the surreal Benreu faces the third

highest peak of Nagaland, Mout Pauna. It is situated 67kms from Kohima and 120kms from Dimapur. It is one of the most beautiful village in Nagaland. It is famous for it natural beauty and serenity and a destination for wildlife lovers. From a decent vantage point, one can see the shimmering rice fields in the foothills and the Teipuiki river dividing the glassy landscape into Nagaland and Manipur.

The sub-tropical forests of Mount Pauna are home to some of the most globally threatened species of flora and fauna. The Forest has various rare and endangered species of birds, mammals, orchids and many other endemic/important plants. Mount Pauna is listed as an Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Eastern Himalayas Endemic Bird Area (EBA) for its unique avifauna. Besides its natural bounties, the Mount Pauna holds a very special place in the cultural history of the Zeliangs. If the local folklore is to be believed, the 3500 feet high mount Pauna is inhabited by a guardian spirit called Mireuding. Mireuding was siezed from his dying mother's womb by an old spirit- Sepai to guard the inhabitants of Benreu. Ever since that

day, perched atop Pauna, the benevolent spirit of Mireuding hovers over the forest and looks after its village.



Benreu has a good supply of water ,the water flow down to the field from the village above. Without water we cannot cultivate anything, we cannot survive . And if there is no forest we cannot get water .so, the forest has to be preserved. Unlike ,the other neighbouring village, Benreu village has a good source of water, because of conservative measures taken

by the villagers. Each household of the village is connected with running water. The Forests of Mount Pauna have been responsible for ensuring water security in the village. Majority of the Benreu villagers are farmers, growing rice in the fields fed by the streams from Mount Pauna. The farmers also cultivate snails and fishes in the standing water of these paddy fields. Unlike Benreu, the neighboring villages face water shortage. People have to fetch drinking water from water sources that are far off. This has a lot to do with the changing rhythm and cycles of jhum cultivation, a common practice in the area.

Jhum cultivation involves clearing of forest area which is then burned and cultivated for few years. This process may result in high yield initially, but continuous cropping of the area results in decreased soil fertility. Jhum cultivation involves long period cycles, whereby farmers cultivate an area for some time, then shift to a new forest area and repeat the same process. Traditionally, a cultivated area is left

fallow for 50-60 years allowing it to replenish soil fertility. But this has reduced drastically, as with increasing population, farmers have been returning to the same site within 3-6 years. As the jhumming cycle is disturbed, many negative consequences follow.



Heiguineule, a 60 year old Zeliang farmer shared some of the traditional practices pertaining to jhum cultivation as she winnowed the rice while speaking to me. She tells me that during the cultivation period, people would abstain from having salt fearing that the produce will not be good. The villagers celebrate Langsimyi to pray to the spirits to bless the cultivators with a good harvest. Most of the traditional tribal festivals revolve around agriculture, as a vast majority of the population of Nagaland is directly dependent on farming.

Some years ago, the jhum fire caught the entire forest upto Mount Pauna which left the forest burning for three months. It destroyed the catchment area and the streams feeding the terrace fields. Indiscriminate logging and hunting were also other issues that were worsening the health of the eco-system of Mount Pauna. Realizing the impact of jhum in our forest ecosystem the community decided to take the matter in their hands, by announcing a complete ban on jhum cultivation, hunting and

logging within the Mount Pauna range in 2002-03. Because of forest preservation in the village we are getting enough water and a healthy production of grain in the paddy field. In 2012, with guidance and support of NEPD (Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development), the “Pauna Range Conservation Committee (CCA)” was formed in Sept 9th 2012 and strict rules and regulations were framed for the management of Mount Pauna CCA. The villagers started to conserve forests believing that the population of wildlife would increase like in the earlier days.

Presently, the villagers have adopted rules for a ban on hunting wildlife from the year 2003 and impose a fine of Rs. 10000 for defaulters. People who are depending on forest resources for daily life were provided with an alternative livelihood with the support from NEPED(Nagaland Environment Protection and Economic Development). The CCA has also prepared a management plan with the support from Foundation of Ecological

Security (FES). The Zeliangs want to scale up this unprecedented noble initiative of conservation in other areas too, for the same they have been conducting village level seminars on conservation. The villagers have also involved in plantation, planting local plant seedling, local fruits bearing plants during World Environment Day to attract a lot of birds and animals in the village. The villagers also participate in different exposure programmes conducted by FES within and outside Nagaland.

Just like the Zeliangs, communities in different parts of the world continue to have a critical linkage with their natural ecosystems for a variety of purposes; spiritual, cultural and economic. Today, Benreu has been declared as a tourist village by the Nagaland's Ministry of Tourism. Mount Pauna with its breath-taking views is now a living showcase of conservational practices of these highlanders. Not only will Benreu be always remembered for its picturesque beauty, but also for the

unwavering efforts of the Zeliangs for sustaining it so well.



Sources of information from :

- **Heipeuding**

- **Kiezuiying Lungalang (Tourism care taker, Benreu)**
- **CCA management members**

Thank you