

**ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITION OF
SOHLIYA VILLAGE
RI BHOI DISTRICT, MEGHALAYA**

by

**Bachelor of Social Work students, Martin Luther Christian University
on 10th December 2009**



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Introduction:

The Martin Luther Christian University, Department of Social Work collaborated with the Meghalaya Tourism Development Forum (MTDF) to assess the socio economic condition of Sohliya village. There were 40 Bachelor of Social Work students and 7 faculty members of the Department of Social Work who were involved in this study.

Methodology:

The exercise was carried out through household surveys and also Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools were used such as Social Mapping, Seasonal Calendar and Time Line.

Findings of the study¹:

Sohliya is a village which is 33 kilometres from the capital of Meghalaya, Shillong. Umsning (3 km away) is the nearest village that connects Sohliya with the outside world. It falls under Ri Bhoi District, Meghalaya. The households are dispersed and are far from one another.

According to the headman who is also one of the first Khasi inhabitants of the village, the village started in the year 1966. Prior to 1968, around 1962, the village was inhabited by the Bhutias but when the Khasis came to settle in the village, the Bhutias left the area one by one. The first Khasi inhabitants of the village were 7 households who migrated from West Khasi Hills i.e Mawkyrwat and Pariong villages. These people had occupied this place and the land was being allotted by the



Syiem Mylliem. Lyngkhoi is the main clan of the village but in the recent past, there have been other clans also who have come to settle in the village. The first settlers of this village were involved in cultivating sweet potato and sold firewood and this was then a means of livelihood.

¹ 78 percent of the total households were surveyed i.e. out of 68 households in the village, the household surveys could be done in 53 households. The headman clarified that it was the time for processing paddy and therefore many people have gone to the fields and some houses are farm houses in which the owner stays in Shillong for most of the time.

Community Assets:

The village has 8 square kilometres of land owned by the village and 500 acres of community forest where a bicycle track has been developed. There are many birds in the forests and 40 types of birds have been identified so far. There is a football ground for recreation. The community hall is under construction.

Demographic data:

The village has 68 households with a population of 410. There are 30-35 numbers of children below 5 years of age and around 100 adolescents present in the village. There is 1 Primary School, 52 school going children, 9 college going students and 3 Government employees in the village who hold the position as teachers and helper in the Apex Bank

Religion:

All the people belong to the Christian faith. There is one church in the village which stands tall at the centre of the village.

Health:

The major disease in the village is fever or malaria that affects people during the summer months of April to August. The nearest health centre is the Primary health Centre at Umsning. There are two Local Health Practitioners (both men). 52 percent of the households go to the PHC for medical assistance while 40 percent access private doctors and the rest visit LHT practitioners.



Strawberry Plantation

Livelihood:

The main occupation of the village is

agriculture. Tea and Strawberry are main crops cultivated by the people. There are 40 households involved in tea plantation. Strawberry plantation started 4 years ago and the people have received training, seeds, materials and other inputs from the Department of Horticulture. Tea and Strawberry has become a major source of income for the people. There are 61 percent of households cultivating strawberry. Apart from the two cash crops, other food crops that are cultivated are rice, sweet potato, mustard, beans, tomatoes, chillies, ginger and lettuce. The households



Tea Plantation

also rear livestock; 16 households rear cows, 12 households rear pigs and a majority rear hens.

Savings and Credit:

The people's main source of income is from Tea and Strawberry. The annual income of 79% of the households was less than Rupees fifty thousand. In the harvest months of strawberry i.e. from February to June, the people get more or less steady income. These are the months where they can also save some income. Every household in the village has a bank account in either the State Bank on India or Apex bank in Umsning.

As for credit, the people usually take loans in January for buying inputs for the summer vegetables like tomatoes, chillies, ginger, beans etc... The people also take loans in September for buying inputs for the plantation of strawberry. 32 percent of people take loans from the bank and 11 percent from private money lenders and 4 percent from Self Help Groups.

There are 2 active Self Help Groups in the village and they are involved in cultivation of ginger and giving loan to members for various activities. These Self Help Groups received assistance from the Block Development Office.

Labour:

The strawberry and tea plantations require a lot of maintenance throughout the year. It creates labour opportunities for the people in the village especially for those who do not have their own plantations. All the labour that is required in the plantations is from the village itself.

Food Consumption Patterns:

Rice is the staple food but the food pattern changes according to the seasons. In the winter months from November to April, the people have along with rice more of sweet potato and yam as these are the harvest seasons of these vegetables. During the summer months from May to October, the people consume less as they have only rice with whatever vegetables that is available.

Governance:

The Dorbar governs the village. All matters related to the village is addressed by the Dorbar whose head is the *Rangbahshnong* or Headman. The village has around 70 Dorbar members and any person who has crossed the age of 18 is eligible for being elected as an office bearer in the Dorbar.

Housing:

The pattern of housing in the village is mixed. A majority of 75 percent of households have tin

roofed house, 9 percent have RCC type of house and 16 percent are huts.

Communication:

Although there 35 percent of households that own a vehicle, there is no public transport facility in the village and the people have to go to Umsning to access public transport. The village road is a kuccha road. In terms of telecommunication, land line phone connection of the BSNL though present has not been functioning the village. The headman has received a dish for the purpose



Village road

but has not been functioning since its installation. , Therefore people depend on mobile phones for telecommunication; 57 percent of the households have mobile connection.

Water and Sanitation:

There is one stream Umsmu and one river Umran that passes through the village. However the people receive drinking water from PHE department. There are 12 water taps in the village. Around 7 households have their own source of water. The village does not have proper sanitation facilities; 42 percent of households do not have toilets in their homestead. The households who have toilets also have pit latrines.

Access to Electricity:

Although almost the whole village is electrified, yet there are at least 6 households that do not have access to electricity. In terms of electronics and electrical goods, 38 percent of households own a television, 36 percent have a radio and 5 percent have access to satellite television.

Markets:

Umsning is the nearest market to buy basic commodities as well as to sell their agriculture produce. There are two market days in a week in Umsning, once in four days. Tea is sold as an unprocessed product to Nongpoh which is taken for processing. On the other hand, for the sale of strawberry, there is the Ri Bhoi Strawberry Growers Association which buys strawberry from the producers and further packing and sale is done by the association. The headquarters of the association is at Dewlieh, another village which is in the area.

Access to other Government Schemes:

With regard to the implementation of government schemes in the villlage, the National Rural

Employment Guarantee Scheme was started in June 2009 and it was implemented only for 50 days. Mid day meal scheme is being provided to the children. For ICDS schemes the people are getting supplementary nutrition, immunization for women and health education for women. SSA has not yet implemented in the villag

Annexure: 1**Seasonal calendar of the village:**

Months	Particulars
Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plucking strawberries • Pruning tea leaves
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plucking tea leaves
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plucking strawberries • Pruning tea leaves
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plucking strawberries • Plucking and planting tea leaves
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plucking and planting tealeaves
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting strawberries • Plucking and planting tea leaves
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting tea leaves
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plucking tea leaves
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting strawberries • Pruning tea leaves

Crops

Months	Crops
Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting mustard, beans and pineapple
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting ginger, beans, pineapples, tomatoes and chillies
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting beans, chillies, tomatoes and ginger
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvesting chillies, ginger and tomatoes
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvesting chillies, tomatoes and ginger • Rice plantation
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvesting ginger • Rice plantation
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting sweet potatoes • Harvesting ginger and pineapple • Rice plantation
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginger, mustard, rice plantation
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ginger • Planting salads, mustard • Rice plantation
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvesting of rice, ginger, mustard • Planting salads, mustard,
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvesting sweet potatoes and ginger • Plucking mustard and salad • Planting pineapple