

Challenges faced and overcome in first initial six months March- Aug 2020

Back ground scenario:

Corona Virus came as a very big awakening of alarm of the century, which we were never prepared for, at least for far unreached place like ours. Over the century such pandemic has never reached or affected to a level to even such an interior area, where sometimes even vehicle cannot reach. The situation was faced by dilemma/panic/disbelief/denial by the community, people of all strata, government, medical departments. The first phase of lockdown was just taken as a time of uncertainty, yet hoping that it will be over by a month. Within the first two months there were no cases of covid 19 either. Therefore people were very skeptic about it saying it's just over reacting or propagandas. But by the month of mid of May returnees from different state started to return, and the first 3 covid 19 cases were confirmed on May 25th 2020 and Nagaland became part of the map of Covid 19 of the world, and since then until now everyday there has been rise of the cases, and there are 3583 cases, 1648 active, 1921recovered,8 death, until the day of my writing this challenges. So far in every district, the District Administration has taken in control of the situation, forming Join Action Committee (JAC) headed by District Commissioner (DC) apart from the District Task Force (DTF- which is also headed by DC). JAC members comprise from the public bodies such as Tribal bodies, church, youth, student bodies etc. Decisions taken by JAC with the DTF are disseminated to the different bodies, villages, colonies to again disseminate to the public. Even when the returnees came, quarantine for the returnees was put in three phase, and that was taken cared by District level, village/colony level, and home. This is taken in very strict measures, taken up by each village/colony/ward so that community spread will not take place. So far according to Government report there is no community spread yet. So we are hopeful that we can continue this good report.

In **Nagaland Church** has given one of the biggest positive responses during this time of emergency. In every District in all the quarantine centers it is the church who took up the responsibility to do all the cooking and delivering home cooked food to the returnee. They also took the responsibility of reaching the food on time apart from all the relief work, as the churches made rotation/schedule accordingly.

Problem/challenges faced:

However due to lock down, though Covid 19 is not spread in the community as per the Government report, it has adverse affects on the livelihood of the common people. During the first phase of lock down somehow people manage food grain, but by the second phase of lock down people started having problem for getting food grain, i.e. by mid of April and May. Government supply also has not taken place, for some villages, from district head quarter; every other village has their own special lock down again, not letting anyone from outside to enter. So food supply could not reach on time, or reach the very interior villages. There are villages which are not recognized (Atleast in our district), so government supply did not reach them. So for all this relief work has been carried through the government, student/youth body, social bodies etc. It was really a time of working together hand in hand. Our Childline team also went out of their way in reaching out to the needed children and women in their own particular areas

RBAN/Organization work during covid 19 6 months:

1. Cooking for the quarantine people, as no community were willing to come forward during the very first quarantine. As people were afraid due to lack of awareness. The village from where this people were taken for quarantine even refuses to let them in, so the district administration took them to a temporary center.(This happen before the returnee started coming, so our District was not ready)
2. Supply of basic PPE to the most interior villages for the frontline worker as community quarantine started
3. Reaching out with food stuffs to the interior village/unrecognized villages
4. Awareness to the community on covid 19, health and hygiene in regards to keeping the SOP given out by government
5. Relief work to the quarantine centers: preparing the quarantine center/food stuffs
6. Being in the forefront in the JAC

RBAN on livelihood work:

I think we have come with the right approach, Maybe, God has a plan to save our people. The Integrated sustainable livelihood approached has really helped our community. In fact because of lockdown, many have gone back to farming in general, even in small spaces of their backyard, those who have land, in bigger areas. Now our people have come to realized as no vegetables or food stuffs were available the need for self reliance , people are all going back to farming, realizing that self sustenance is the only answer for survival.

But now we cannot go back the old traditional way, it has to be holistic integrated sustainable model: sustenance of human race, soil, environment/NRM

However, I would like to highlight three groups of people, those 1. landless migrants to town as vegetable vendors (here also women are the vendor), 2. women SHGs group members who supply vegetables on daily/ weekly bases to towns like Dimapur and Kohima and the 3. Daily wages earner.

Again another worst hit are the daily wage earner, small time carpenters, and handicraft. Some of them are going back to paddy cultivation, but most of them do not have land, and all kinds of construction works or manual works stops, so livelihood for many are in dire state.

Given below is an article by Nagaland Express which expresses, the reality the rural people not only of Jalukie/Peren Area, but the rest of the districts of Nagaland.

Nagaland Express Aug 16,



Nagaland is a state where 70% depend on agriculture directly or indirectly.

A regular source of Nagaland Express revealed that Jalukie farmers particularly who are dealing with cucumber, pumpkin, maize king chilies etc, requires a helping hands of their farm products to be exported for sell at the earliest.

Because of covid 19 pandemics most of the district is sealed, even agricultural produce could not go out. The farmers are facing huge market crisis who's only source of livelihood are their fruits vegetables and other produce. Hence the restriction in agricultural and allied movements is not only hampering the financial situation of farmers but also causing post harvest lost of perishable produce like fruits and vegetable

The farmers across complain of difficulties in marketing their produce due to pandemic situation. Most of their produces are perishable items, and they are afraid of major lost which affects their livelihood. This kind of situation compels the farmers to give up on big scale farming and plans to meet only their needs.

Most of them had taken loans, and other financial assistance to start their farming, for some the only source of income is their farm produce. Given the situation there is less hope for getting any profit during this time unless government authority step in to paint a better hope and save famers.

Challenges after six months plus:

1. Ensuring food security for the rural poor.
2. Migrant coming back may not go back, as most of the companies may not take them back, in Peren District alone more than 1300 migrant returned so far, many are still anticipated, there are few students, but most of them are just 4th grade labors, as they are mostly school drop outs etc
3. Need for relearning of farming/other livelihood skills
4. Education for children: as of now in Nagaland Education is one big challenge , why because Government talks about online and that certain phase is completed successfully. But interior district where there is no connection, and where the teachers cannot go back as they are posted from different place or village, the children are without teachers or any learning.
Parents are struggling to buy smart phone, where will they fit the thumb drive that the government is giving out with lessons , where there is no computer/laptop etc, and where electricity is very irregular
5. Many of these women have taken small loans for their daily activities, how to repay back without market to sell their products

Some recommendation

1. Livelihood – Integrated sustainable livelihood approach – (farm, off-farm, non- farm) alternative skills. Implementing livelihood program not only through women but also the youth group.
2. Education – can the new education system introduced by the government be able to take place in interior areas? Less exams and more skills oriented, online? Why I have mentioned education is, because most of the women who are working hard for any surplus is for their home and mostly children education, which is our future hope.

What kind of education is needed for our survival?

Maybe Syllabus should be according to the need of certain region /vocational or formal..why I say this because we run the only RSETI in Nagaland, and the Human Resource department has made only one syllabus for the country, which is not relevant for the NE India, at least for Nagaland eg.1. vocational training for women- laddoo making/achar- what will our interior village women do with that learning, normally sweet is not part of our cuisine, 2. Garment; according to syllabus sari- blouse, we don't wear sari so learning to make sari blouse make no sense

3. Market access- online? Thinking outside the box...rural online vegetable market linking with local youth group?

Market may not be the same anymore: the new Market? Market: as mentioned market is a big issue. Can we even think about home delivery/online market for vegetables, farm produce, how can we connect and make market chain. We have started to discuss with some youth group in Dimapur who are willing to be part of this chain, but still need more discussion as we have never done before. In Kohima youth groups are organizing market place in the local ground.

Youth has to be included for any livelihood discussion or planning specially on Market

4. Health- community health/ hygiene and sanitation is a must along with any program, as it is the only way to keep safe, and most of our interior community are very much unaware about it.
5. Government has to take their role in reality and in grass root level till the most interior part of the State. So much is written down, center is announcing so many schemes, but it needs to be done in reality, specially with the emergency we are facing now, and which will continue

I m enclosing the recommendation of MAKAAAM Nagaland chapter that we have made during women farmers convention 2019 for your perusal.

Recommendations from the Women Farmers' Convention 2019 (MAKAAM Nagaland)

- Setting up of a Women Farmers Council that advises the Department of Agriculture on policy making for more inclusive and just schemes suitable for women
- A Single window for all agriculture related services like registration of women farmers' cooperatives, monetary loans for transport facilities, procurement of equipment to reduce drudgery of women's work and increase productivity etc must be set up at the earliest.
- Promote and support diversity-based ecological agriculture, including small and marginal women farmers. Promote food crops that ensure food and nutritional security such as millets and protect the environment from adverse effects of chemical farming.
- The government must recognize indigenous knowledge of women farmers in conservation of genetic diversity, and seed banks in their policies. This will facilitate agricultural scientists and Krishi Vigyan Kendras to work together with women farmers who have the knowledge of indigenous farming systems and seed banks to improve local food production and combat climate change. Include and increase women farmers as farm extension workers and resource persons to create awareness and bridge the information gap.
- The State's Education Policy must include agriculture in curriculum to influence our youth to take up agriculture as a profession. A subject expert group should be set up to develop the curriculum.
- Interdepartmental linkages between Integrated Child Development Scheme (Ministry of Women and Child Development) and the Dept of Agriculture to ensure that the benefits of improved agriculture covers all including children. Millets should be introduced into the midday meal in schools and for children at ICDS centres. Local procurement and local use to be promoted to enhance village economy.
- The State Government should apply for organic state certification with full preparation to promote sustainable agriculture and agro-economy which will open various new opportunities for women farmers to secure better prices for their produce.
- Build and Support women farmers' cooperatives and collectives for integrating sustainable agricultural support systems from farm to market. Capacity building efforts must be undertaken towards building the leadership of women in these cooperatives by including financial literacy training, preserving and processing and marketing management for sustainability.
- Create road network infrastructure for affordable transportation of agricultural produce from rural areas to towns; create cold storages and collection centers in rural areas to facilitate farmers' access to markets.
- Women farmers must be allowed to own land as a matter of right, to secure their lives and livelihoods. Gender sensitization effort must be undertaken at all levels, to encourage and facilitate land ownership for women farmers including agricultural lands.
- Women must be included in Village Councils and all levels of decision making.