The Daily Digestive, as we have called the newsletter produced during ITM 2015, has been a collaborative reporting project of local and international university students and graduates who volunteered their time to provide coverage of the multitude of happenings taking place over the packed five-day event, with the assistance of rising local photographers from the region. They worked late into the night to provide the stories that were synthesized into the newsletter that you received the following day. Additionally, some also served as translators so that we could produce the Daily Digestive in five languages. They were instrumental to the process, and we are so grateful. The structure of the newsletter team allowed local youth who had not had much prior exposure to themes such as biocultural diversity or agroecology to become part of the discussion. From plenaries, to field visits to the food festival, they had an opportunity to see what a significant role their foodways have in ensuring resiliency, and hopefully become inspired to take a more active role in creating the future we want.

This edition of the newsletter provides excerpts, in their words and photos, of the village visits and food festival, so that we give space for youth to tell their stories of the future of food.
Laitsohpliah
By Nancy Jain and Gracynina E Pyngrope

The trip to Laitsohpliah was an experience that gave us a lot of knowledge about the traditional cultures and indigenous habits of this region. The meaning of Laitsohpliah comes from Lait and Plieh, the names of two boys who were good in archery and had always won prizes and fame for the village.

The residents of Laitsohpliah, which is located in Sohra (Cherrapunje), shared many of their tradition with us during the field visit. The way they welcome their guests is tremendously beautiful and honoring. The beating of drums and singing of their religious hymns shows their love and concern for the people visiting there. Not only adults, but also the children are involved in the activities that are performed. They were clearly proud to share their traditions, particularly archery, for which they are well known, and dances, like the shad suk mynsiem (“the dance of the joyful heart”), which is celebrated every April.

The villagers care for a reserve forest and there are varieties of wild plants, flowers and foxts, which only come only at night. The scenery is simply mesmerizing, and while walking one can feel that one is walking on clouds. There are many sightseeing spots near the village that are as beautiful and calm as Laitsohpliah.

Khweng
By Naphisha Kharkongor

Chewing on my last hazelnut in the car back from Khweng, I was reminded that the joy of food was in the ability to share in the experience. The first morsel of food taken after a long journey shared with friends both old and new, the laughter of people from different parts of the world joining together, the curiosity of village children and the generosity of our hosts made for an unforgettable day.

We were welcomed to the village with a song by the young school girls who led us to their village. There we saw women wading through muddy water catching fish from the water that had been let out after the harvest. We tasted edible plants that were grown in a kitchen garden and asked some delegates to identify how many plants they were familiar with and if they used them in their food. We learnt that some plants were used differently in other parts in the world and shared our knowledge with them. We visited the eri silk weaving centre where we learnt how silk from the eri worm was processed and women weavers demonstrated the art of weaving. Members of our group tried their hand at weaving eri silk fabric and listened as the weavers explained how silk is harvested and that soon, come winter, silkworm production stops.

Our hosts invited us to a sumptuous lunch of mustard leaf, fried fish, chicken and other items. Afterwards we sat down to listen to songs, which the village folk had sung in our honour. Our friends from the Philippines, New Zealand and Vietnam also regaled us with songs and dances from their communities and our Australian friends presented the village headman with a gift. The day ended with a phawar by a group from the village and people from the delegation getting on their feet to dance to the beat of the bom drum.
Mawhiang

Bu Juli Bui and Imcharenla Momin

The journey to Mawhiang village was amazing! It is 50 km from the main hub of the city, and the climate there is very pleasant. The community members welcomed the delegates very warmly in a traditional way with kwai, and were very glad to have delegates from different parts of the world. They organized a program with various Khasi traditional songs and dances, and also offered tea and traditional snacks like rice cake, sweet potato and tapioca. They divided all the delegates into different groups to visit places such as sacred forest, school garden and paddy fields.

Our group visited the sacred forest, where we climbed the mountain and had a great view from the top. We came back from our respective places and lunch was ready, and everyone enjoyed local rice, chicken and pork. After lunch they exhibited certain traditional products, including handicrafts and headgear. On the other side of the field there was an entertaining football tournament between the delegates and the local children. Lastly the headman of the village ended the program with a word of thanks by giving saphlang fruit to every delegate. And with that, we bid farewell to Mawhiang and headed back to Shillong.

Food Festival at Mawphlang
Daily Digest Team: Annelie Bernhart, Heather Leach, Punam Pradhan/ICIMOD


Photos: Rahul Sampath, Sally Ride, Amanda Larimai, Eleazer Chyne

North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS)
Kerie Ville, Arbuthnot Road, Laitumkhrah, Shillong 793003, Meghalaya, India
Tel: +918575039852  Email: itm2015@nesfas.org  Web: www.nesfas.org

www.indigenousterramadre.org

Printed at BCD COMPUTERS, Keating Road, Shillong