

1. WEAVING THE WAY TO SUCCESS



Smti. Bindass Syiem is a resident of Mawlong Nongtluh Village, which is in the Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya. For generations, her family has been rearing lac insects and producing lac dye (locally referred to as Laha) as a means of livelihood. Smti. Bindass decided to follow in their footsteps and also take up laha as a source of income. However, the low production of laha made it difficult to make ends meet in a large family, and take care of the needs of her three children. She knew that she needed another way of earning an income but that was too difficult a prospect for her as she did not know any other traditional activities, and had never taken up any other livelihood work. That was when she heard of the newly started Enterprise Facilitation Centres (EFC) under IBDLP and decided to register herself at one.

At the EFC, Smti. Bindass naturally chose sericulture as a livelihood option since she did not want to abandon her traditional livelihood but rather to upgrade it. So in 2013, shortly after her registration, she was sent to Bangalore for training on Post Cocoon Technology of Muga and Eri-Silk, conducted and funded by the IBDLP Basin Development Unit (BDU). Soon after the training, she applied for a Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loan of Rs 50,000 to start Laha cultivation in her own homestead garden. With her husband's help, she also started weaving and dyeing.

Today, Smti. Bindass produces 30 to 40 kg of Laha annually. She uses this for dyeing traditional woven cloth which she then sells at the large market in Nongpoh. Her annual income has now risen to Rs 1,00,000 and she is now able to send all her three children to good schools at Nongpoh.

In the year 2015, Smti. Bindass was helped by the EFC at Umling to go for yet another exposure visit, this time to Jharkhand. The goal of this exposure visit was to learn more about Micro Enterprise Promotion. Upon returning, she rallied her friends, neighbours and fellow weavers from Mawlong Nongtluh village and in June 2015 launched a Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society - 'Nangkiew Shaphrang Multi-Purpose Co-Operative Society'. The goal of this Cooperative Society was to promote Laha Cropping, and traditional styles of dyeing and weaving. The phrase 'Nangkiew Shaphrang' means "climb ever higher". It aptly represents the spirit of this cooperative society and its desire to create better livelihoods for themselves and their community members. Smti. Bindassis currently the elected President of the organisation.

Smti. Bindass hopes that one day, with the support of her fellow weavers in the co-operative society, she can not only better promote this age old method of using natural colouring for dyeing cloths, but she can reach these traditional products to larger regional markets, and indeed to markets all over the country.

(Courtesy: www.mbda.gov.in)