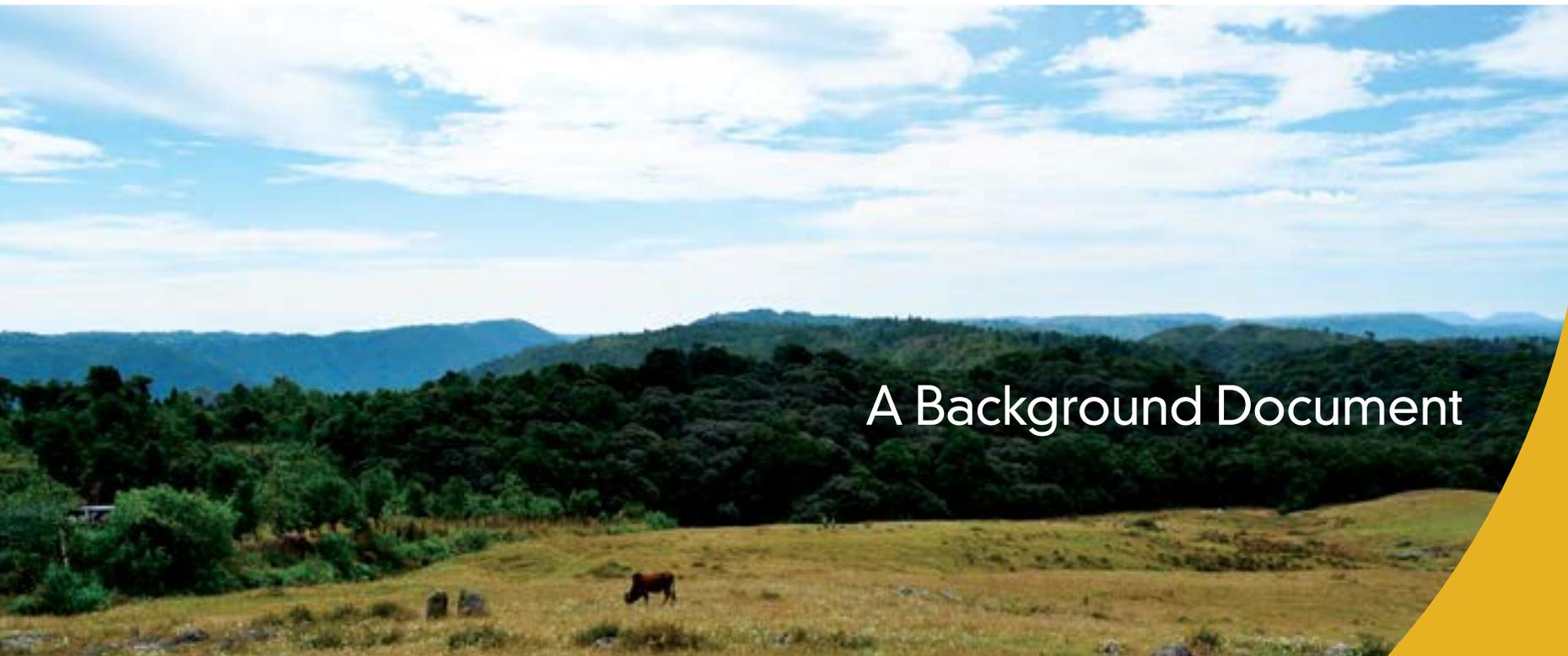




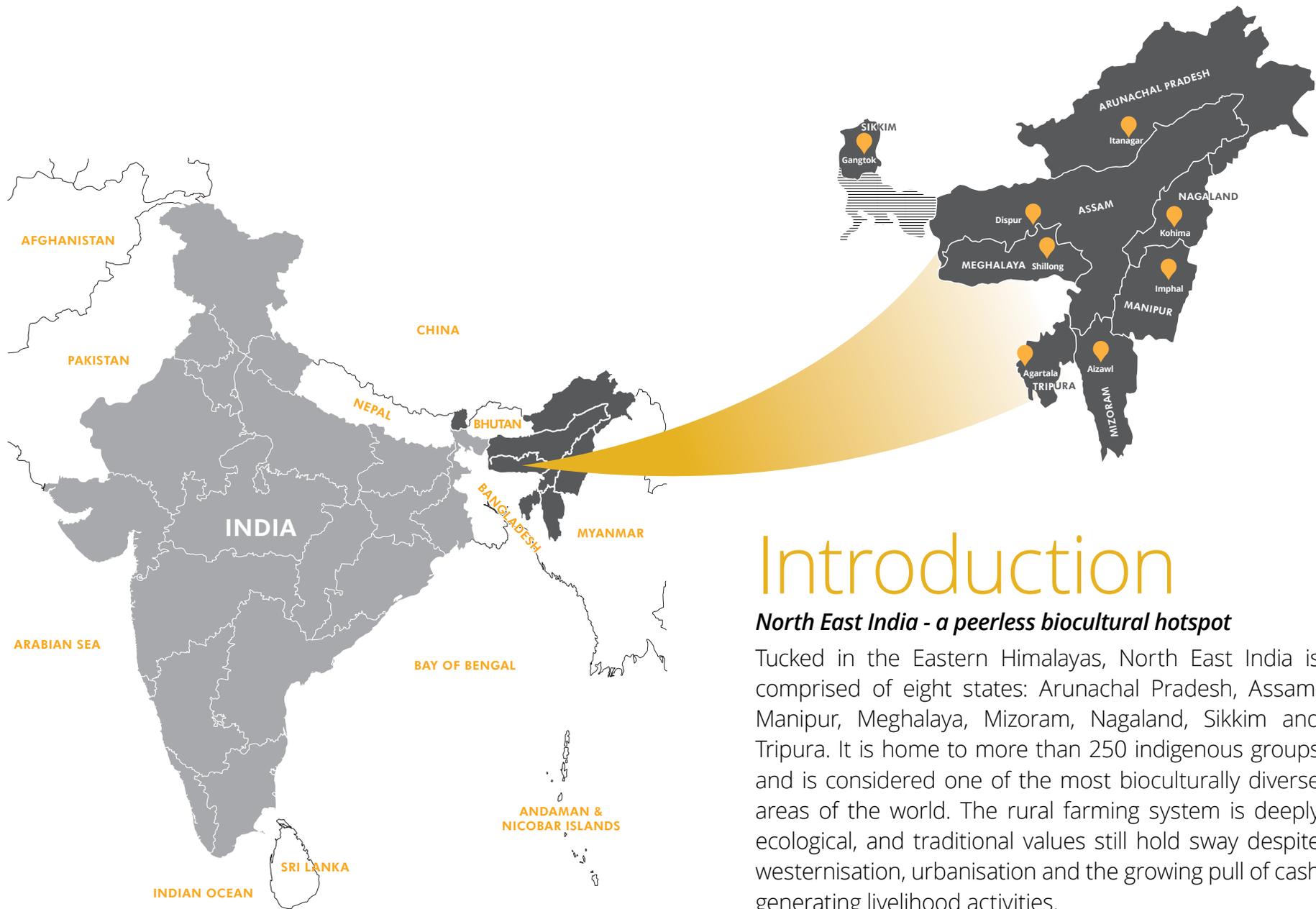
Indigenous Terra Madre 2015 (ITM 2015)

Shillong, Meghalaya, North East India

3RD to 7TH November 2015



A Background Document



Introduction

North East India - a peerless biocultural hotspot

Tucked in the Eastern Himalayas, North East India is comprised of eight states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. It is home to more than 250 indigenous groups and is considered one of the most bioculturally diverse areas of the world. The rural farming system is deeply ecological, and traditional values still hold sway despite westernisation, urbanisation and the growing pull of cash generating livelihood activities.

Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM 2015)

AN INTERNATIONAL GATHERING

ORGANISERS AND FUNDERS

International Mei-Ramew 2015 (IMR 2015) – Mother Earth in local language – is the preferred name of the peoples of Meghalaya for the second edition of Indigenous Terra Madre, an international gathering on indigenous food communities. It is a joint venture of the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (Indigenous Partnership), Rome, Italy; Slow Food International, Bra, Italy; and the North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS), Shillong, India.

The event is supported by several US Foundations, namely The Christensen Fund; Tamalpais Foundation; Swift Foundation; CS Fund; and the AgroEcology Fund. International funders include Bread for the World, Germany and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome. The Government of Meghalaya is supporting ITM 2015 by funding the necessary local preparatory and event management costs. Forty indigenous communities in Meghalaya and Nagaland will be co-hosting ITM 2015.

VENUE AND GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This global event will be held in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, from 3rd to 7th November 2015. Shillong is situated at the centre of a plateau surrounded by hills, three of which are revered by the Khasi people, the majority indigenous group of the state. The other main indigenous peoples of Meghalaya are the Jaintias and Garos, and all three groups follow matriarchal traditions, albeit strongly impacted by modern influences.

Shillong, located approximately 1800m (6000 ft) above sea level, has a cool climate and is only 65 km from the village of Mawsynram, reported to be the wettest spot on earth. The weather in early November is generally cool but pleasant with ample sunshine and daytime temperatures averaging 19°C and nighttime lows around 7-10°C. The houses and meeting halls are generally minimally heated and therefore warm clothes are required for evening.

THE GENERAL EVENT SCHEDULE

The first three days of ITM 2015 will be held at the Campus of the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, one of India's federally established universities and it will include plenary and thematic break out sessions, cultural performances and food tastings. The fourth day will feature field trips to eight host villages, where participants will have the opportunity to spend time and exchange ideas with local food communities in their respective landscapes. Descriptions of these villages and their unique attributes will be provided in advance, so that participants may choose their preferred destination.¹ The final day will include a Thanksgiving Food Festival and a closing ceremony in the scenic hills surrounding the Mawphlang Sacred Grove, 25 km from Shillong.

¹For example, to reach one of the selected villages, participants will walk 2500 steps down an incredibly panoramic footpath. In another village, residents will showcase their community-conserved forests. Another will give delegates an opportunity to understand their agrobiodiversity management practices and to observe their unique and fully organic eri silk weaving and production techniques. Each village will offer a compelling and distinct example of agrobiodiversity conservation in action.



Why ITM 2015?

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

As the world searches for sustainable ways of growing food that avoid and ideally mitigate ecological crisis, scientists and policymakers are, today, turning a thoughtful gaze toward indigenous peoples and their long-standing practices that help to maintain ecological balance. ITM 2015 will gather indigenous food communities working with the Indigenous Partnership, Slow Food International, UN Agencies and other global supporters to showcase their traditional knowledge, evolving skills and sustainable practices that safeguard natural resources and contribute to a resilient food system that promotes a more humane future for a diverse world. ITM 2015 will be a platform for these food communities to interact and engage with scientists and policymakers as they reflect on the theme, ***The Future We Want: Indigenous Perspectives and Actions.***

The Objectives of ITM 2015

1. The first objective of ITM 2015 will be for all Indigenous Terra Madre communities and allies of the Indigenous Partnership to celebrate the wonderful cultural and biological diversity of indigenous communities as expressed in their songs, dance, dress, folklores and food systems that have evolved through generations of close interaction with nature.
2. The second objective is to gather, review and reflect on evolving food and agroecological issues of indigenous peoples in order to build their respective capacities to promote and uphold an environmental standard in which all people can enjoy food that is good for them, good for those who grow it and good for the planet.
3. The third objective of ITM 2015 is to showcase to the world at large the cultural and biological treasures of Meghalaya and North East India. It

will also draw attention to the many innovations of local communities across the world and the success stories of promoting good, clean and fair food through government, civil society and development initiatives. It will highlight the Slow Fashion of the North East movement, which aims to glamorise traditional textiles and weaving practices in North East India that are a crucial part of the sustainable, environmental and ethical movements of the world. Slow Fashion of the North East promotes choosing quality over quantity, and artisanal and local products over mass-produced items.

4. The fourth objective is that traditionally marginalised voices, such as youth, women knowledge holders, the physically challenged, and indigenous farmers, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers, remote dwellers and fisher folk, will actively participate in the deliberations of the gathering.





The Focus of ITM 2015

ITM 2015 will have three main focus areas:

- **CELEBRATION OF FOOD:** The diversity of indigenous food will be celebrated through shared meals, food tastings, workshops, demonstrations, pop-up restaurants and fine dining experiences. Additionally there will be an Ark of Taste display to draw attention to the rare food-ways and sacred foods of various communities, and a Presidia marketplace featuring products from some of the Indigenous Terra Madre communities of Slow Food International.
- **INCLUSIVE DISCUSSION:** Plenary sessions led by well known speakers will cover topics such as the future of local indigenous food, understanding indigenous wellbeing, the UN and the future of indigenous local knowledge systems, and the nutritional wellbeing of matriarchal communities. There will also be parallel thematic sessions where indigenous communities, particularly women and youth, will be encouraged to engage and exchange practical ideas on topics discussed at the plenary sessions.
- **CULTURAL PERFORMANCES:** ITM 2015 will provide a platform for different indigenous communities and well known indigenous cultural artists to showcase their culture, songs, dance and dress.

Accommodations

ITM 2015 and the indigenous communities of Meghalaya will make every effort to ensure the comfort of all delegates and visitors. Each participant will be the recipient of the warmth, hospitality and humility for which the indigenous peoples of North East India are renowned. NESFAS will arrange for the accommodation of select delegates and special guests. Hotels and guesthouses will also be organised for self-paying participants, if requested. Delegates and special guests will be housed in select homestays, hotels, hostels and guesthouses to ensure that high standards of cleanliness and comfort will be provided.

Travel

The nearest international airport to the event site is in Guwahati, Assam. Delegates and special guests will be met at New Delhi or Kolkata International Airports where ITM Volunteers will guide them to their onward flight to Guwahati Airport. At Guwahati Airport, ITM Volunteers will welcome all participants and assist them with their luggage, so that they can travel in comfort during the three hours of their scenic 150 km journey by road to Shillong. Flights of all participants will be arranged to ensure that travel from Guwahati to Shillong will occur during the day. If needed, there is also a helicopter service between Guwahati and Shillong.

Contact

This is the initial background document for ITM 2015. As preparations for ITM 2015 progress, look for more information to be posted on the websites of Slow Food International and NESFAS.

For specific information, please contact:

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ITM WEBSITE

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