

*“Fostering climate resilient upland farming systems in the North East (FOCUS)”*  
**SOCIETY FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE IN MIZORAM**  
*(A Society registered under Government of Mizoram)*  
**MIZORAM: AIZAWL-796001**



**Operational Manual for**  
**FARMERS INTEREST GROUP**

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## **BACKGROUND**

The overall goal of FOCUS is to increase household agricultural income of 64,500 households and enhance their resilience to climate change. This would be achieved through the development objective of increasing the environmental sustainability and profitability of the farming systems practiced by the highland farmers of Mizoram.

The FOCUS project is going to be implemented in four districts of Mizoram namely Mamit, Kolasib, Champhai, and Serchhip. The remaining four districts of the state, namely Aizawl, Lunglei, Lawngtlai and Saiha have not been considered due to on-going implementation of other major projects. Demographic details of the four districts are given in the Table below. It shows that the selected districts taken together constitute 42.75% of the total geographical area of Mizoram; 28.13% of the state's population and 32.83% of the total number of households of the state.

### **1. FARMERS INTEREST GROUP**

Farmers Interest Group (FIG) shall consist of 10 – 20 farmers- varying the membership from activity to activity. Formation of FIG may include: proximity of members farm to each other, crops/commodity grown/raised by farmers in which the farmers have expertise/specializes in, member's willingness to assist each other. The lead farmer and agriculture experts/assistants from the block/circle/village will train associate member on different aspects of the project, and each of them in return will support 10 farmers.

**1.1. Role of FIGs:** The main role of FIGs would be overseeing their own FIGs formed under the project with the aim of making improvements through training and assistance to its members and via them to the associate members.

**1.2 Process of Formation:** FIG will mostly focus primarily on a single commodity and will carry out business interventions around that commodity. However if the FIG wants to work more than one commodity, they are free to do that provided that they can do it with the expected rigor. However, FIG is to be registered under the project and should abide by the rules and regulations of the project.

For the formation of a FIG, the following processes need to be followed:

a) In the first meeting, the farmers will be informed about the purpose, objective and benefits of forming FIG. This activity will also involve exercise to develop a vision of the members regarding the activity the FIG will be involved and the probable expected outcome. A broad contour of the commodity interventions and the expected outcome will be laid out in front of the community. The community needs to reflect on it and in the subsequent meeting the formation process can be initiated.

b) In the second meeting the FIG needs to be officially formed. Once the group is formed, the members will decide on the following:

- Name of the FIG
- Membership norms including membership fees.
- Preparation of FIG by Law. Minutes of general body meeting approving the byelaws needs to be attached to the FIG registration form.
- Resolution to open bank account
- Date of next meeting and frequency of meetings
- In this meeting, the members will also select the Office Bearers namely President, Secretary and Treasurer

c) VLW in coordination with Lead Farmer is responsible for registration of FIG under the project. **(Annexure-1)**

### **1.3 Membership Norm:**

- Any farmer involved in Jhum, settled agriculture and horticulture (depending on commodity) can be a member of the FIG. But only one membership from one household whether male or female.
- 50% members of FIG should be women.
- At least one women member should hold the post of office bearers in FIG.
- A member shall belong to the same village
- A member shall be required to abide by the rules and regulations of the FIG.
- A member shall be ready to pay contribution as per the group decision.
- Membership fees should be collected from member FIG (the amount should be decided by the quorum)

### **1.4 Activities of FIG:**

FIG shall carry out business activity of its own. The major activities of FIG will include-

- Preparation of micro plan
- Collective procurement of inputs
- Access to better technology services for productivity enhancement, market information and so on
- Creation of common infrastructures and equipment's
- Facilitation in aggregation of produce and collective marketing
- Processing and Value addition of the produce
- Access to institutional credit and leveraging benefits from government schemes

### **1.5 Institutional Structure:**

**1.5.1. Office Bearers:** Office Bearers are a team of three leaders selected by the FIG members for a fixed tenure of one year, to run the operations of the FIG. They are President, Secretary and the Treasurer and their roles and responsibilities are given below:

#### **1.5.2 Roles and Responsibility of Office bearers:**

##### **(a) Role of President:**

- To chair the meetings and facilitate discussions engaging all members
- To help the group arrive at decisions
- To oversee implementation of group decisions
- To represent the group in different forums and meetings/seminars
- To support conflict resolution effort

##### **(b) Role of Secretary:**

- To convene meetings in consultation with President
- To set the agenda for the meetings
- To ensure attendance and participation of members
- To get the minutes of discussions recorded
- To execute the decisions of the Group

- To report the members on the progress of groups activity
- To coordinate and facilitate linkage with public and private agencies

**(c) Role of the Treasurer:**

- To become custodian of cash and bank balance of the group
- To ensure safeguarding and accounting for all funds received by the group
- To issue receipts for the fund received
- To arrange up to date record keeping
- To present financial picture of the group from time to time
- To finalize accounts at the end of each fiscal year and facilitate timely audit

**2. SUPPORT TO FARMERS INTEREST GROUP (FIG):**

(a) The FIG should prepare micro plan for the group as per the chosen activity during the time of registration. While preparing micro plan, VLW/Staff at Circle are responsible for facilitating the activities. Based on micro plan, the project will provide grant and materials to the FIG to meet the resource gap. The maximum grant that can be provided by the project will be Rs.30000/- which may be utilized for investment in the jhum plot like purchasing of seeds, seedlings and other planting materials apart for initial expenditure for setting up the FIG. Provision of planting materials, seedlings etc may be provided from the project will be based on FIG micro plan. Illustratively, project support will be available for the following purposes:

- Creation of common infrastructure like storage etc.
- For supply of planting materials, seeds etc
- Farm management viz. pesticides, insecticides and fertilizers (organic or inorganic) etc
- Common facility Centre.
- Introduction of new technologies
- Setting up of processing unit

(b) For release/provision of assistance from the project, the following conditions must be fulfilled by FIG

- The FIG must be registered under FOCUS Mizoram
- The FIG must submit micro plan giving in details the proposed activity plan.

**(Annexure-II)**

- The FIG must have opened its Bank Account .
- Regular updating and maintenance of meeting minutes cum attendance register, cash book and vouchers.

**Note:** VLW/Staff at Circle in coordination with Lead Farmer will be responsible for monitoring FIG and recommend the eligible FIG for grant release to DPM.

### **3. GRANT/SUPPORT FLOW MECHANISM:**

- The FIG will prepare micro plan with cost estimates and support requirement (from the project or linkages/networking with other line departments) under facilitation from Staff at circle and Village Level Worker. Staffs at circle will summarize micro plan under his/her allotted village and submitted to DMU. DMU will examine the plan and submit grant release request to PMU.
- After receiving necessary approval and sanction from competent authority, the project will release grant to the Farmers Interest Group's (FIG) account.

### **4. PROCUREMENT MECHANISM**

The FIG's would be empowered to undertake procurement of works, goods and services in line with community procurement guidelines of the project and in line with the approved micro plans.

### **5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

FIGs should prepare progress report every month. Lead farmer should collect MPR of FIGs and submit to VLW/Staff at Circle. **(Annexure-III)** The compilation report across the entire villages have to be submitted to DMU and then to PMU. After receiving financial assistance from the project, FIGs should submit Utilization Certificate to VLW/Staff at Circle. Staff at circle would submit FIG Utilization Certificate to DMU. **(Annexure-IV)**

### **6. MAINTENANCE OF BOOKS OF RECORDS**

FIGs should maintain attendance cum meeting minutes register, cash book and vouchers. Every transaction made in the name of FIGs should be updated regularly. However, support received in the form of materials like, planting materials, seeds etc and the total quantity have to be recorded in meeting minute. During the time when distributing those materials, the FIGs should record the list of member FIG receiving the materials along with the quantity.

The books of records maintained by the FIG at all reasonable time should be open for audit/inspection/verification by the project staffs.

### **7. FIGs TO BE MOBILIZED UNDER THE PROJECT** (extracted from PIM)

**1) Jhum and fallow management FIG:** Mobilize a new Jhum and fallow management FIG – with 20 members each representing 10 jhum households. Each jhum FIG members should be linked to 20 associate members. Elect a management committee for the JF-FIG, a Lead farmer and initiate steps to open bank account with contribution from members. Steps for formation of jhum and fallow management FIG:

- Identify a Lead Farmer in each project village in consultation with the Village Councils This task will have to be taken up by the Circle/Block level staff and Village level workers of the line departments.
- Youth (including women) and progressive farmers to be preferred as Lead Farmers.
- Take a commitment letter from the selected Lead Farmer to support project activities in the villages and to be the project contact point in the villages.

- Orient the Lead Farmers on their role in project implementation and their role in supporting FIGs and project target households.
- Conduct a training for all Lead Farmers to undertake nursery management and also train them in use of better seed and seedling, fertility management in *jhum*, low cost soil and water conservation measures, linear planting, environmental impact of *jhum* cultivation, FIG formation and management for better *jhum* and fallow management.
- The project has allocated INR 50,000 to support each Lead Farmer. Seek a plan from each Lead Farmer on utilization of this support for establishing a nursery or any activity that will become a model activity for the community.
- Provide support to the Lead Farmers in two instalments after signing an agreement with each Lead farmer. The amount to be released directly to the bank account of Lead Farmers in two instalments and should be based on the implementation of the agreed plan.
- Lead Farmers and Village Level workers to conduct a meeting of *jhum* farmers interested in taking up *jhum* and establish a FIG comprising about 20 farmers and each FIG member having about 20 associate members. Only one FIG per village will be established covering all *jhum* households.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare two plans covering: (i) *jhum* cultivation during the next cycle; and (ii) *jhum* to be left fallow.
- FIG to be trained in low cost soil and water conservation, better seeds and seedling, tree plantation, linear planting, fertility enhancement measures and techniques to continue cultivation on the land for more number of years.
- The project support for better *jhum* in about 0.25 ha of land of each *jhum* farmer and also 0.25 ha of fallow land to flow through FIG bank account.
- Each FIG to submit a plan for: (i) better *jhum*; and (ii) fallow management indicating the activities to be undertaken and the costs separately from; (i) centrally sponsored schemes; (ii) IFAD project; and (iii) beneficiary contribution.
- Once the plan is approved by the DMU, FIGs to start implementation and the project to release funds directly to the bank account of FIGs based on progress in work.
- In instances where water harvesting measures are required, the Lead Farmer will support the FIGs to prepare plans for the same and access funds either from the project or from other centrally sponsored schemes.
- FIG support will be repeated during the third year of implementation subject to the farmers continuing the cultivation activities on the same *jhum* plot and taking up soil and water conservation activities.

**2) Community Conservation Area FIG:** Comprising 5 members nominated by the VC. Initiate steps to open a bank account with contribution from members. Steps for formation of community conservation area FIG are:

- Lead Farmer and the Village level workers in consultation with the Village Council to identify village conservation areas of about 20 Ha per village.
- A FIG for village forest conservation to be established and a bank account to be opened.
- FIG to prepare a plan for village forest protection, establishing nursery and for replanting of high value trees.
- The project to release funds based on approved plans and also based on progress in implementation

**3) Landless farmer FIG:** The FIG comprising about 20 members – Elect a management committee – open a bank account with contribution from members. Steps for formation of landless farmer FIG are:

- The Lead Farmer and the Village Level workers of the line departments to form a FIG comprising landless farmers (farmers without tenurial rights) the terrace rice cultivation farmers. Each FIG to consist of about 10-20 farmers. Each household to get support for 0.25 ha.
- Each FIG to seek allocation of land from the Village Council for undertaking settled agriculture.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare a plan covering upland farming /horticulture development.
- FIG to be trained in use of better horticultural practices, intercropping, water harvesting, soil fertility management.
- Once the plan is approved by the DMU, FIGs to start implementation and the project to release funds directly to the bank account of FIGs based on progress in work.
- In instances where water harvesting measures are required, the Lead Farmer will support the FIGs to prepare plans for the same and access funds either from the project or from other centrally sponsored schemes.
- FIG to apply to the Revenue Department for issue of temporary patta.

**4) Terrace rice cultivation/Wet rice cultivation FIG –** FIG to have about 20 members, initiate steps to open a bank account with contribution from members. Steps for formation of TRC/WRC are:

- The Lead Farmer and the Village Level workers of the line departments to form a FIG comprising the terrace rice cultivation farmers. Each FIG to consist of about 10-20 farmers and each FIG member to have 20 associate members. Each household to get support for 0.5 ha.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare a plan covering terrace rice cultivation.
- FIG to be trained in SRI, use of better climate resilient seeds, azolla, rice and fish cultivation, in situ fertility management techniques and double cropping.
- Once the plan is approved by the DMU, FIGs to start implementation and the project to release funds directly to the bank account of FIGs based on progress in work.
- In instances where water harvesting measures are required, the Lead Farmer will support the FIGs to prepare plans for the same and access funds either from the project or from other centrally sponsored schemes.

**5) Upland settled agriculture/Orchards FIG -** FIG to have about 20 members, initiate steps to open a bank account with contribution from members. Steps for formation of orchards FIG are:

- The Lead Farmer and the Village Level workers of the line departments to form a FIG comprising the terrace rice cultivation farmers. Each FIG to consist of about 10-20 farmers and each FIG member to have 20 associate members. Each household to get support for 1.0 ha.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare a plan covering upland farming.
- FIG to be trained in use of better horticultural practices, intercropping, water harvesting, soil fertility management.
- Once the plan is approved by the DMU, FIGs to start implementation and the project to release funds directly to the bank account of FIGs based on progress in work.



- In instances where water harvesting measures are required, the Lead Farmer will support the FIGs to prepare plans for the same and access funds either from the project or from other centrally sponsored schemes.

**6) Farm value chain FIG – Steps for formation of value chain FIG are:**

- Identify clusters for undertaking cultivation of selected value chain crops.
- Identify two CRPs in each cluster in consultation with the Village Councils. This task will have to be taken up by the Circle/Block level staff and Village level workers of the line departments.
- Youth (including women) and progressive farmers to be preferred as CRPs. CRPs should have good knowledge about cultivation of selected value chain crops.
- Take a commitment letter from the selected CRPs to support project activities in the villages and to be the project contact points in the villages.
- Orient the CRPs on their role in project implementation and their role in supporting FIGs and project target households.
- Conduct a training for all CRPs to undertake nursery management, fertility management, low cost soil and water conservation measures, linear planting, environmental impact of *jhum* cultivation, and FIG formation and management.
- Each CRP to prepare a plan for developing nursery of selected value chain crop and project to provide support to these CRPs to emerge as nursery entrepreneurs in the clusters.
- The CRPs and the Village Level workers of the line departments to form a FIG comprising the value chain farmers. Each household to get support for 0.5 ha.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare a plan covering value chain crop cultivation.
- FIG to be trained in use of better cultivation practices, intercropping, water harvesting, soil fertility management.
- Once the plan is approved by the DMU, FIGs to start implementation and the project to release funds directly to the bank account of FIGs based on progress in work
- In instances where water harvesting measures are required, the Lead Farmer will support the FIGs to prepare plans for the same and access funds either from the project or from other centrally sponsored schemes.

## **8. MICRO PLAN OF FIG**

### **1. Jhum FIG micro-plan with 5 sub-plans**

#### **a. Key player: Jhum FIG**

#### **b. Sub-Plans**

- Catchment area survey and watershed structure development sub-plan
- Jhum plot, soil and water conservation sub-plan
- Fallow plot soil and water conservation sub- plan
- Jhum plot cultivation sub-plan
- Fallow plot cultivation sub-plan

#### **c. Major Sources of Funding**

- Catchment area survey and watershed structure development sub-plan: Centrally Sponsored Schemes, MGNREGS, other government schemes, and beneficiary contribution.
- Jhum plot, soil and water conservation sub-plan: Centrally Sponsored Schemes, MGNREGS, other government schemes and beneficiary contribution.

- Fallow plot soil and water conservation sub-plan: Centrally Sponsored Schemes, MGNREGS, other government schemes and beneficiary contribution.
- Jhum plot cultivation sub-plan: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.
- Fallow plot cultivation sub-plan: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.

## 2. Village Forest Conservation micro-plan with 2 sub-plans

### a. Key player: Village Forest Conservation FIG

### b. Sub-Plans

- Soil and water conservation and contour trenches sub-plan
- Tree planting and source protection sub-plan

### c. Major Sources of Funding

- Soil and water conservation and contour trenches sub-plan: Centrally Sponsored Schemes, MGNREGS, other government schemes and beneficiary contribution.
- Tree planting and source protection sub-plan: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.

## 3. Settled Agriculture micro-plan with 2 sub-plans

### a. Key player: Settled Agriculture FIG

### b. Sub-Plans

- Water harvesting structure construction sub-plan
- Settled agriculture including irrigation sub-plan

### c. Major Sources of Funding

- Water harvesting structure construction sub-plan: Centrally Sponsored Schemes, MGNREGS, other government schemes and beneficiary contribution.
- Settled agriculture sub-plan: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.

## 4. Landless household micro-plan with 2 sub-plans

### a. Key player: Landless household FIG

### b. Sub-Plans

- Water harvesting structure construction plan
- Settled agriculture plan

### c. Major Sources of Funding

- Water harvesting structure construction plans: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.
- Settled agriculture sub-plan: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.

## 5. Value chain commodities micro-plan with 2 sub-plan

### a. Key player: Value chain FIG

### b. Sub-Plans

- Water harvesting structure construction plans
- Value chain production plan

### c. Major Sources of Funding

- Water harvesting structure construction plans: Centrally Sponsored Schemes, MGNREGS, other government schemes and beneficiary contribution.
- Value chain production plan: FOCUS and beneficiary contribution.

## 9. CONSOLIDATION OF FIG SUB-PLAN INTO VILLAGE PLAN

The physical targets and costs, financing and physical and financial implementation schedules of each FIG need to be consolidated into a village plan. Same template can be used but “Activity” column need to be replaced with “Name of FIG”.

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**SOCIETY FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE IN MIZORAM**

(A Society registered under Government of Mizoram)

**MIZORAM : AIZAWL-796001**



Tele : 0389 – 2318687

Telefax : 0389 – 2322511

e-mail : focusmizoram2018@gmail.com

website : <https://focus.mizoram.gov.in>

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**Annexure-I**

**FIG REGISTRATION FORM**

1. **Name of FIG** : \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Name of Village** : \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Registration No** : \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Block** : \_\_\_\_\_
5. **District** : \_\_\_\_\_
6. **State** : \_\_\_\_\_
7. **Date of formation** : \_\_\_\_\_
8. **Name of commodity on which the FIG is formed** : \_\_\_\_\_
9. **No. of members within the group:**
  - **No. of male** : \_\_\_\_\_
  - **No. of female** : \_\_\_\_\_
10. **Account details** :
  - **Account no** : \_\_\_\_\_
  - **Name of bank** : \_\_\_\_\_
  - **Name of branch** : \_\_\_\_\_
  - **IFSC** : \_\_\_\_\_



**Annexure-II**  
**TEMPLATES FOR MICRO SUB- PLAN**

Name of FIG-  
Village-  
Block-  
District-

**A. Summary physical targets and costs**

Activity	Quantity	Unit cost <u>1/</u>	Total cost
<b>Total</b>			

1/ Units costs for civil works shall be based on detailed cost estimates by technical persons.

**B. Financing**

Activity	Sources of finance and proposed contribution					
	CSS	MGNREGS	FOCUS	Beneficiary contribution	Others	Total cost <u>2/</u>
<b>Total</b>						

2/Total cost same as in Table A above

**C. Physical Implementation schedule**

Activity	Quantity <u>3/</u>	Phasing				Total Quantity <u>3/</u>
		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
<b>Total</b>						

3/Quantity same as in table in Table A above

**D. Financial Implementation schedule**

Activity	Total cost <u>4/</u>	Phasing				Total cost <u>4/</u>
		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
<b>Total</b>						

3/Total cost same as in Table A and B above

**Notes:**

1. Add more columns, if required.
2. The profile of FIG should be submitted along with the Micro Plan.
3. Minutes of first meeting along with the Micro Plan.
4. Copy of Bank Pass Book should be submitted along with the Micro Plan.

5. Details of Membership fee collection & other contributions should be submitted along with the Micro Plan.
6. Utilization certificates should be submitted to DMU by the FIG after completion of the activity as per plan.

This Micro Plan is approved by the FIG.

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Signature of President

Signature of Secretary

This Micro Plan has been reviewed by DMU and is recommended for approval.

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Seal & Signature of DPM

**ANNEXURE-III**  
**FIG MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORTING FORMAT**

<b>Basic information</b>	
Date of submission of report	
Reporting period	.....month .....year
Name of FIG	
FIG Registration number	
Functional Specialization of FIG	
Village	
Block	
District	

<b>Meeting details</b>	
Total number of meetings during the reporting period	
Total number of members attending the meeting during the reporting period	

<b>Bank balance details</b>	
Opening bank balance at the beginning of the month	
Amount withdrawn during the month	
Closing bank balance at the end of the month	

<b>Cash on hand details</b>	
Opening cash balance at the beginning of the month	
Amount used during the month	
Closing cash balance at the end of the month	

<b>Work Progress – FOCUS</b>	
Budget for this financial year (A)	
Total expenditure till the end of last reporting period (B)	
Amount spent during this report period (C)	
Total expenditure during this financial year (B+C) = D	
Balance to be spent during this financial year (A-D)	

<b>Work Progress – Convergence (CSS, MGNREGS and others)</b>	
Budget for this financial year (A)	
Total expenditure till the end of last reporting period (B)	
Amount spent during this report period (C)	
Total expenditure during this financial year (B+C) = D	
Balance to be spent during this financial year (A-D)	

<b>Issues</b>	
Community participation	
Fund flow	
Convergence	
Others	

**Signature of the Authorized Representative**



**ANNEXURE-IV**  
**FIG Utilization Certificate Format**

<b>Basic information</b>	
Date of submission of report	
Reporting period	.....month .....year
Name of FIG	
FIG Registration number	
Functional Specialization of FIG	
Village	
Block	
District	

<b>Activity and expenditure during the reporting period</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Amount spent</b>
Total expenditure during the month	

<b>Reconciliation</b>			
<b>Details</b>	<b>Bank Account</b>	<b>Cash on hand</b>	<b>Total</b>
Opening balance at the beginning of the month			
Expenditure during the month			
Closing balance at the end of the month			

**Signature of the Authorized Representative**