

*“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**



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**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, Serchhip and the two newly established districts viz. Saitual and Khawzawl. The remaining four districts of the state, namely Aizawl, Lunglei, Lawngtlai and Saihahave not been considered due to on-going implementation of other major projects. Demographic details show 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 INTERESTGROUP**

Farmers Interest Group (FIG) shall consist of 15 – 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 FIG member on different aspects of the project.

**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.

**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 (Collection of FIG and member details may be done as per MIS web based, while the collected data may be updated into MIS web based).

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 need 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 bylaws 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. Both the spouses could be a joint member in FIG. But while recording household outreach, double counting has to be avoided. In cases when the farmers are engaged in more than one production system, the other member of the family could be included in another commodity FIG.
- 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 while 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 PLUP based 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 safe guarding 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 be supported through Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) based micro plan prepared by each commodity FIG. While preparing PLUP, VLW/Staff at Circle are responsible for facilitating the activities. Based on the plan, the project will provide grant and materials to the FIG to meet the resource gap. The [initial assistance](#) that can be provided by the project will be Rs.30000/- which [will be utilized as a revolving fund and](#) may be [applied](#) for investment in the jhum plot like purchasing of seeds, seedlings and other planting materials apart for initial expenditure for setting up the FIG. [A second assistance may be provided especially in cases when the project was not able to fully roll out planned support to the FIGs as it occurred in kharif of FY 2020-21 due to Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdown. The decision on additional assistance will be taken by the project management in consultation with the Mission Director and IFAD.](#) Provision of [quality](#) planting materials, seedlings etc may be provided from the project [and](#) will be based on each FIG prepared PLUP 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 prepared PLUP based micro plan may be submitted to DMU
- 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 prepared PLUP based micro plan may be submitted to the concerned VLW and Staff at circle. They will examine and summarize the plan and submitted to the DPM for approval.
- 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 PLUP based micro plans.

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

FIGs should prepare progress report half yearly along with the prescribed format of Utilization Certificate. Lead farmer should collect the report of his/her allotted village FIGs and submit to VLW/Staff at Circle. The compilation report across the entire villages have to be submitted to DMU and then to PMU.

### **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 and also revised as per Supervision Mission 2020 recommendation)

- 1) **Jhum and fallow management FIG:** Mobilize a new Jhum and fallow management FIG – with 15-20 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 concerned DMU.
- Youth (including women) and progressive farmers to be preferred as Lead Farmers.
- 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 15- 20 farmers.
- 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 prepare PLUP based micro plan and submitted to the DMU.
- 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.
- Temporary land pass should be made between *jhum* farmers and Village Councils on tenurial security with a minimum of 15 to 20 years for cultivating medium and long term crops and covering the *jhum* cultivation cycle of 3 years and fallow period of 10-15 years. Negotiations should be made between the *jhum* farmers and VCs with sharing of 10-20% benefits from medium and long term crops also including tree crops and orchards. ( **Annexure-IV** )

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 PLUP based micro 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 15-20 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). Each FIG to consist of about 15-20 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. In cases when land allocation could not be done, establish new landless FIGs comprising jhum FIG members in the villages where there is availability of land for allocation. Care should be taken to ensure that the poorest households in general and women headed households in particular get this benefit ([the project may use the Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011 to identify extreme poor households](#)). Animal husbandry and agri-processing related interventions with existing landless FIGs should be started in villages where there is no adequate land for allocation.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare PLUP based micro plan.
- FIG to be trained in use of better horticultural practices, intercropping, water harvesting, soil fertility management, livestock etc.
- 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.
- FIGs to apply temporary land pass to the concern Village Council excluding animal husbandry activity. (**Annexure-IV**)

4) **Terrace rice cultivation/Wet rice cultivation FIG** – FIG to have about 15-20 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 15-20 farmers. Each household to get support for 0.5 ha.
- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare a plan covering terrace/wet 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 15-20 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. Each household to get support for 1.0 ha.



- Each FIG to open a bank account and prepare PLUP based micro 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** – FIG to have about 15-20 members, initiate steps to open a bank account with contribution from members 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. CONSOLIDATION OF FIGSUB-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”.

**Annexure-I**  
**TEMPLATES FOR PLUP BASED 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					Total cost <u>2/</u>
	CSS	MGNREGS	FOCUS	Beneficiary contribution	Others	
<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 PLUP based Micro Plan.
3. Minutes of first meeting along with the PLUP based Micro Plan.

4. Copy of Bank Pass Book should be submitted along with PLUP based Micro Plan.
5. Details of Membership fee collection & other contributions should be submitted along with the PLUP based Micro Plan.
6. Utilization certificates should be submitted to DMU by the FIG half yearly.

This Micro Plan is approved by the FIG.

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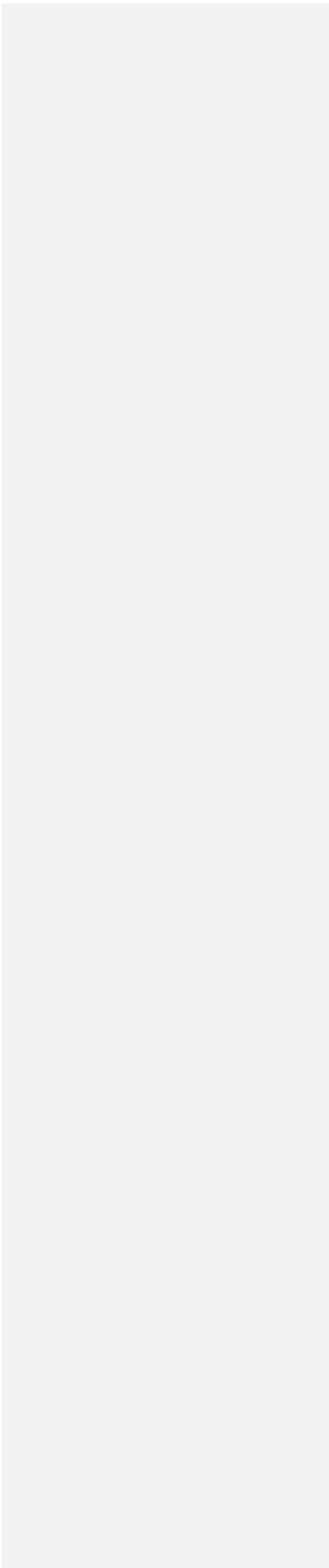
Signature of President

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-II**  
**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 reporting period	
Closing bank balance at the end of the reporting period	

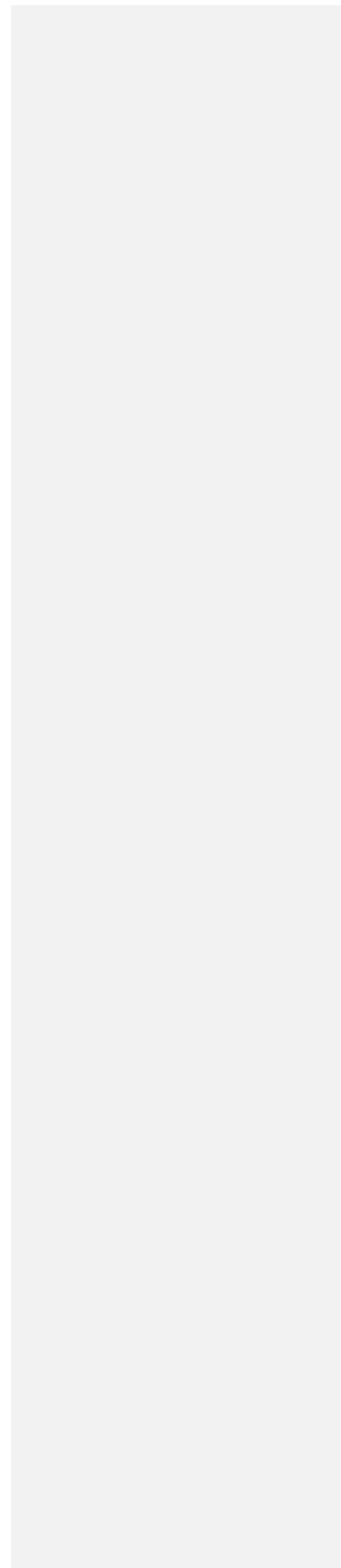
<b>Cash on hand details</b>	
Opening cash balance at the beginning of the reporting period	
Amount used during the reporting period	
Closing cash balance at the end of the reporting period	

<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-III**  
**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 reporting period (Please mention the reporting period)			
Expenditure during the reporting period			
Closing balance at the end of the reporting period			

**Signature of the Authorized Representative**

s

**Annexure-IV**  
**Land Pass Permission**

This Land Pass Permission is made and executed at (village and district) on this (Date) of (Month), 2020.

**By and between**

Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ S/o, D/o, W/o \_\_\_\_\_ age about \_\_\_\_\_  
(years), Occupation \_\_\_\_\_, residing at, (address)

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(Hereinafter called the Chief of the Village Council, which term shall mean legal representatives, administrators, executors, nominees and assignees, etc., or any one claiming through or under him/her) of the **FIRST PART.**

**And**

1) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of FIG) Jhum FIG, represented by its President,  
Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ S/o, D/o, W/o \_\_\_\_\_ age about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ residing at (address) \_\_\_\_\_

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2) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of FIG) Jhum FIG, represented by its President,  
Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ S/o, D/o, W/o \_\_\_\_\_ age about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ residing at (address) \_\_\_\_\_

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3) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of FIG) Jhum FIG, represented by its President,  
Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ S/o, D/o, W/o \_\_\_\_\_ age about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ residing at (address) \_\_\_\_\_

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4) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of FIG) Jhum FIG, represented by its President,  
Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ S/o, D/o, W/o \_\_\_\_\_ age about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ residing at (address) \_\_\_\_\_

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5) \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of FIG) Jhum FIG, represented by its President,  
Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ S/o, D/o, W/o \_\_\_\_\_ age about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ residing at (address) \_\_\_\_\_

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(Hereinafter called the Jhum cultivators which term shall mean and include all their heirs, legal representatives, administrators, executors, nominees and assignees, etc, or any one claiming through or under them) of the **SECOND PART.**

Whereas the Jhum farmers have approached the Village Council and offered to undertake intensive jhum cultivation on the scheduled property under the administrative control of the Village

Council and the Lessor Council has agreed to issue a land pass permission to the scheduled property on terms and conditions as hereunder.

Whereas the Jhum farmers are the members of Jhum FIGs promoted under FOCUS and intend to intensify jhum cultivation to reduce soil erosion, maintain soil fertility and improve soil moisture through various development measures promoted under FOCUS and intend to get permission from the Village Council for longer term management of the jhum plot.

**NOW THIS PERMISSION WITNESSETH AS UNDER:**

1. The land pass permission shall be for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years.
2. The Jhum farmers shall be entitled to undertake jhum cultivation on the schedule property.
3. The Jhum farmers shall be allowed to grow medium and long term crops (both horticultural and tree crops) and will be allowed to tend to these trees/crops and the same jhum plot will be allotted to the members of FIGs for the entire duration of this land pass permission.
4. The FIGs and their members will share the benefits from the medium and long term crops cultivated on the jhum plot with the Village Council and the Jhum farmers shall pay .....percent of the value of medium/long crops cultivated by the jhum farmers.
5. This permission only provides for cultivation and usufruct rights and the jhum farmers will not to make any claim for ownership.
6. That the jhum cultivators shall not sublet the schedule property or transfer this permission in favour of any person whatsoever without permission from the Village Council.
7. The representatives of the Village Council shall be entitled to inspect the schedule property at all times.
8. That in the event of the jhum farmers committing breach of any of the terms and conditions mentioned above, the Village Council shall be entitled to terminate this permission without any notice and take over the possession of the leased property.
9. Any dispute arising from this lease including the sharing of benefits shall be settled by the Deputy Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_ district and his/her verdict shall be final and binding on both the jhum farmers and the Village Council.

**Schedule Property**

All that the piece and parcel of jhum Land bearing admeasuring. \_\_\_\_\_ acres, situated in \_\_\_\_\_ Village, \_\_\_\_\_ Block under the jurisdiction of \_\_\_\_\_ District and bounded by,

North :

South :

East :

West :

In witness whereof the Village Council and the jhum FIG representatives have signed this land pass permission in token of their acceptance with their own free will and without any undue influence and coercion in the presence of witnesses:



**President -Village Council**

**FIG 1 Representative**

**FIG 2 Representative**

**FIG 3 Representative**

**FIG 4 Representative**

**FIG 5 Representative**

**Witness**

**1.**

**2.**

