

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026



***“RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER OF
THE INDIVIDUALS AND THE
COMMUNITY”***





*I'u soh ba thiang ngin suh thied lang" — the sweetest fruit
is best when sown together*

ABOUT GRASSROOT

Grassroot is a Shillong-based not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of rights, livelihoods, and cultural preservation in Northeast India. Founded in 2007 to address injustices that impede human rights and to protect, defend, and promote Indigenous Peoples' rights, Grassroot works to empower Indigenous Peoples through capacity building, sustainable livelihood programmes, women & youth empowerment, and advocacy to realise their social, political, and economic rights.

Operating across Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, and Nagaland, Grassroot employs a community-first, rights-based approach — one that centres the voices, knowledge, and agency of the people it serves. Its programmes are rooted in three pillars: building civic power, creating sustainable livelihoods, and reviving cultural heritage with the consent of the people we work with.



ViSION

Responsibility and Power of The
Individuals and the Community



GoAL

Achieving the Mass Responsibility
through Social Empowerment



MiSSION

Working with Communities,
Government, Civil Societies and
Like-minded Individuals to
Empower the
Oppressed/Marginalized to
Enhance and Achieve their Rights
Socially, Politically and
economically.

OuR IDENTITY

Registration No. : SR/G-57/19 OF 2019(Registered under the: Meghalaya Societies Registration Act, 1983SR/G-57/19 of 2019)

FCRA Registration: 214250108

12A details : AAAAG7114JE20212

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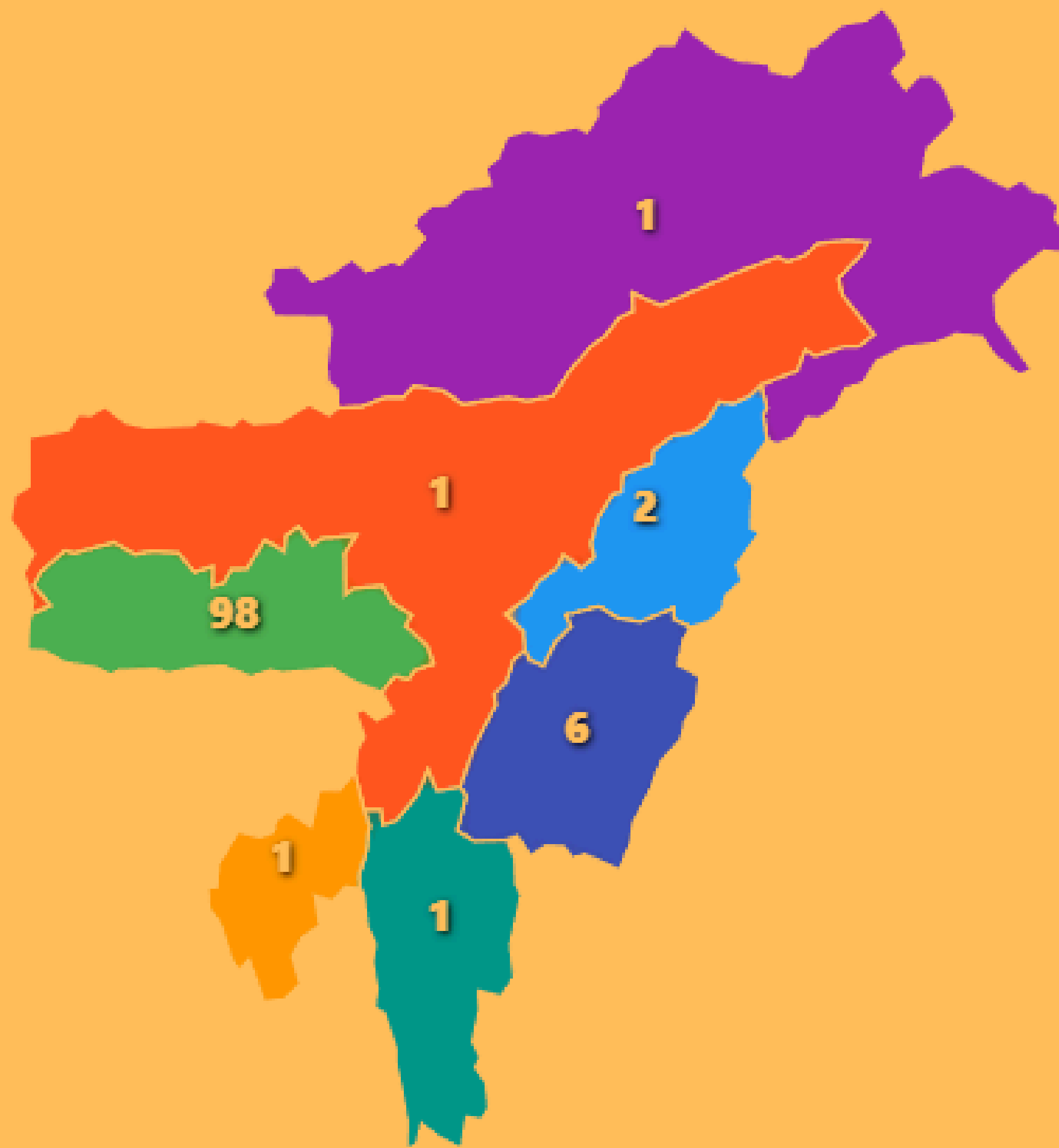
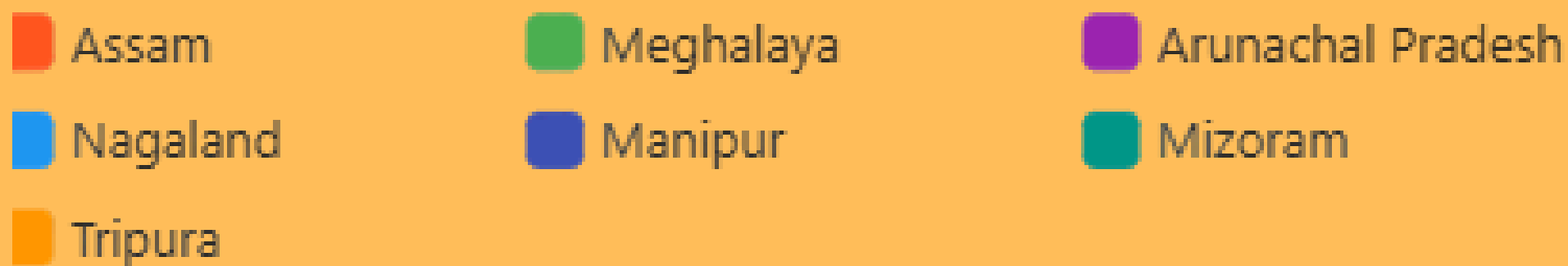
TAN No. : SHLG03426D

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Our ReACH



NOTE *from the* PRESIDENT

We tell stories to make an impact! Grassroot is using this communication tool to inspire and to learn from intergenerational wisdom and knowledge. We convey culture, history and values to unite communities together. One of such example is the tree plantation in Ri Bhoi district where we co-create plans and programmes with the community members to better understand the environmental eco-system from an indigenous mind space. We explore to learn. We explore to engage. We explore to expand. Our work have been grounded in these areas where Indigenous People first and activities follow. Culture, governance, art, music, language and the list goes on.

The challenges we all face are significant. The list is long but at the top is the Manipur constant ongoing conflict that has profoundly affected not only our planned work but also its people's lives'. We sincerely hope these conflicts are resolved and that one day Manipur will attain long-term stability and prosperity.

Even in troubled times, we have confidence that Manipur will do what it has always done — look to the values that have defined them as leaders in sports, art and collectivism.

Women as climate change catalyst are bringing back indigenous agriculture to the fore and out of the forest and non-forest produces, they bring about products that helped support the environment as well as their economies. We join hands with these



Mayfereen Ryntathiang

women in bringing solar solutions to their homes while connecting them with the markets.

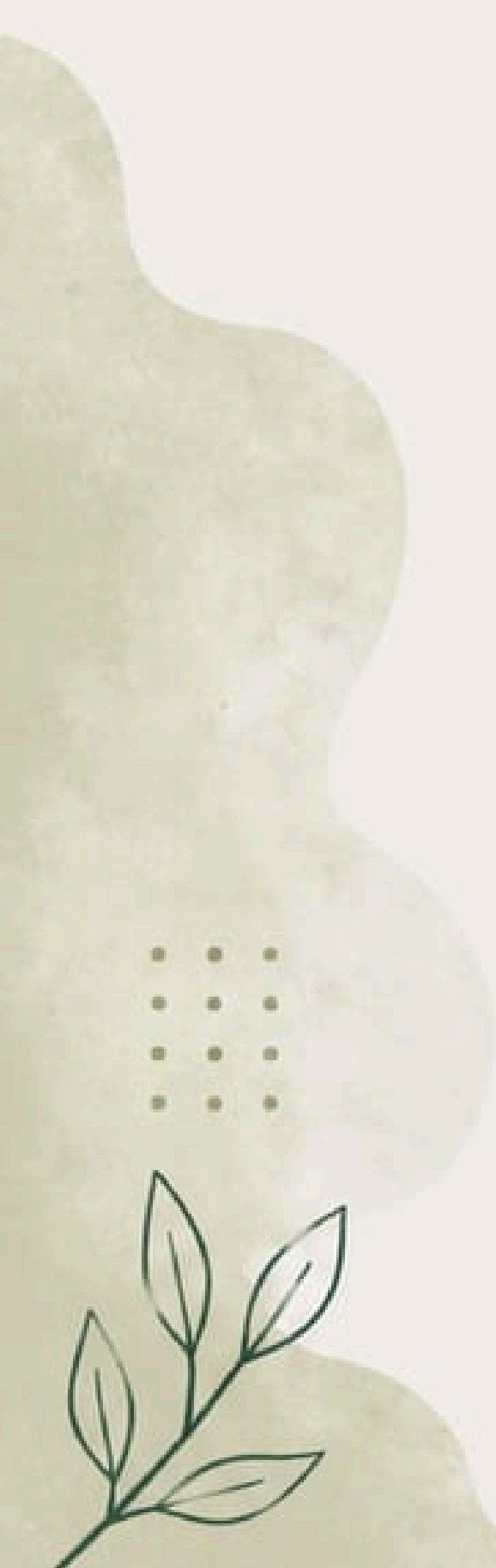
Two things are absolutely foundational to our long-term success: The first is that we believe in our values and the second, which is more important, is that the vitality and flexibility of our creative minds. Throughout 2025-2026, Grassroot demonstrated the power of its fund raising potential as well as the value of showing up for our People— as we always have — in both good times and bad times.

We are no strangers to growth! How much more we live by this vision as we see our young team members grow and thrive through the capacity building they attend, the meetings they engage with and the initiatives they embark. We at Grassroot believe in the system to grow from within. To introspect our way ahead and before us.

As we commemorate another year of learning, growth and challenges, allow me to remind you of a poem '*If*' by **Rudyard Kipling that begins "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs"? We will stay true to this. We must deal with the world we have — and strive for the one we want to see.**



OUR INITIATIVES





TREE PLANTATION cum CARBON OFFSETTING

As part of Grassroot ongoing commitment to environmental justice and climate resilience, Grassroot has integrated tree plantation into its broader vision of inclusive and sustainable change.

In partnership with Pangea Ltd. under the project 'Grow-Trees', we are implementing the "Tree Plantation cum Carbon Offsetting" project—an initiative aimed at addressing both environmental degradation and climate change. Trees play a vital role in absorbing carbon dioxide, preventing soil erosion, restoring biodiversity, and improving local livelihoods. This project not only contributes to carbon offsetting but also supports grassroots empowerment, particularly by involving indigenous women and youth in meaningful environmental action.

The tree plantation activities under this project are designed with a scientific and sustainable approach, taking into account local biodiversity, soil conditions, species suitability, and long-term care. By combining Grassroot's deep-rooted community engagement with Grow-Trees' expertise in afforestation and carbon offsetting, we aim to create measurable, lasting environmental and social impact.



This report outlines the progress, achievements, and lessons learned from the project so far, and highlights the collaborative efforts made to foster climate action and ecological restoration in the target regions.

SPECIES BIFURCATION: LOCAL AND (SCIENTIFIC NAME),
PLANTED NUMBER

Species	Indigenous Name	Number of trees	Total no. of Trees
Species 1 Magnolia Champa	Diengrai	2500	2500+200(donate d by the community)
Species 2 Chukrasia Tabularis A Juss	Dieng Tanglung	2500	2500+100 (donated by the community)
Species 3 Terminalia Myriocarpa	Dieng Khoi	2500	2500+100 (donated by the community)
Species 4 Tectona Grandis	Dieng Rong	2500	2500
Species 5 Artocarpus Chaplasa	Dieng Sohlaram	2500	2500

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through large-scale carbon sequestration.
- Enrich local biodiversity using native tree species.
- Promote sustainable community livelihoods through NTFPs and cash tree species.

PLANTATION MAP

MAWTARI, THAIANG, RI BHOI DISTRICT



Location: Mawtari Thaiang, Umsning Block, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya

*Land Area: 11.693 hectares
(Community-owned by the
Presbyterian Church of Mawtari
Thaiang)*



5th
June

The Tree Plantation cum Carbon Offsetting Project was inaugurated on World Environment Day (5th June 2025). The program was jointly organized by Grassroot and the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Umsning Block- Shri Andrew L Myrthong, MCS.

Saplings were symbolically planted to officially launch the afforestation drive.

Reinforced cross-sectoral collaboration and public participation in environmental protection.

INAUGURATION PROGRAMME

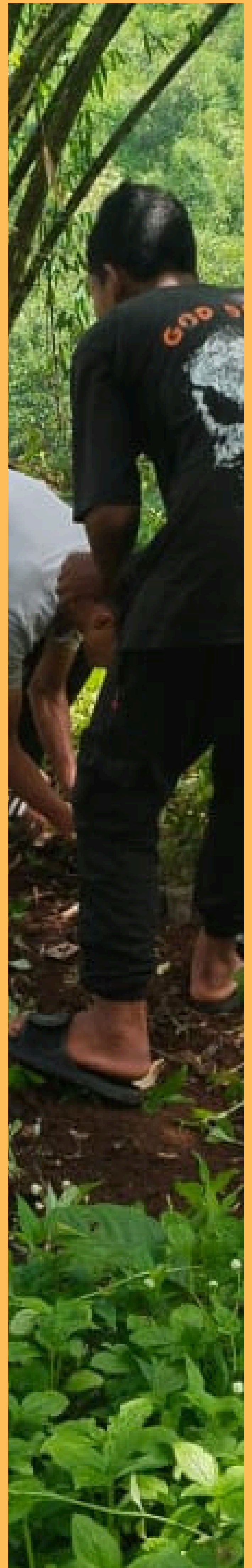


Expected outcomes

The project anticipates significant environmental and social impact. With 25,000 trees capable of absorbing 10–40 kg of CO₂ each annually, the carbon offset potential is substantial, while every acre of forested land is estimated to absorb 6 tons of CO₂ and release 4 tons of oxygen per year. Ecological benefits include improved groundwater recharge, reduced runoff, and natural water filtration. For every 20,000 trees planted, 1,500–1,800 workdays are expected to be generated, supporting local livelihoods alongside opportunities in eco-tourism and native biodiversity conservation.

FUTURE PLANS

Looking ahead, the project aims to extend its reach across other North Eastern States, broadening its environmental and social impact. Efforts will focus on restoring degraded forests and identifying new sites for afforestation, while sustainable agroforestry models will be introduced to ease overharvesting pressures on existing forests. Scaling up nursery operations, planting activities, and monitoring work will create further employment opportunities, deepening the project's role in community development. Ultimately, the vision is to build lasting local economic resilience by weaving together conservation goals with livelihood development, ensuring that environmental restoration and human well-being advance together.



CHALLENGING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN MEGHALAYA



This project ***“Challenging Gender-Based Discrimination in West Bengal, Assam, and Meghalaya”***, supported by ***TDH (Terre des Hommes)*** and implemented by Grassroot in partnership with Diksha and MASK, was initiated in September 2025 with the aim of addressing deeply rooted gender inequalities through Grassroot’s community-driven approach. Recognizing the intersection of gender-based violence, limited agency among youth, and economic dependency of women, the project adopts a holistic strategy focusing on awareness building, capacity development, and strengthening community support systems across the selected intervention areas.

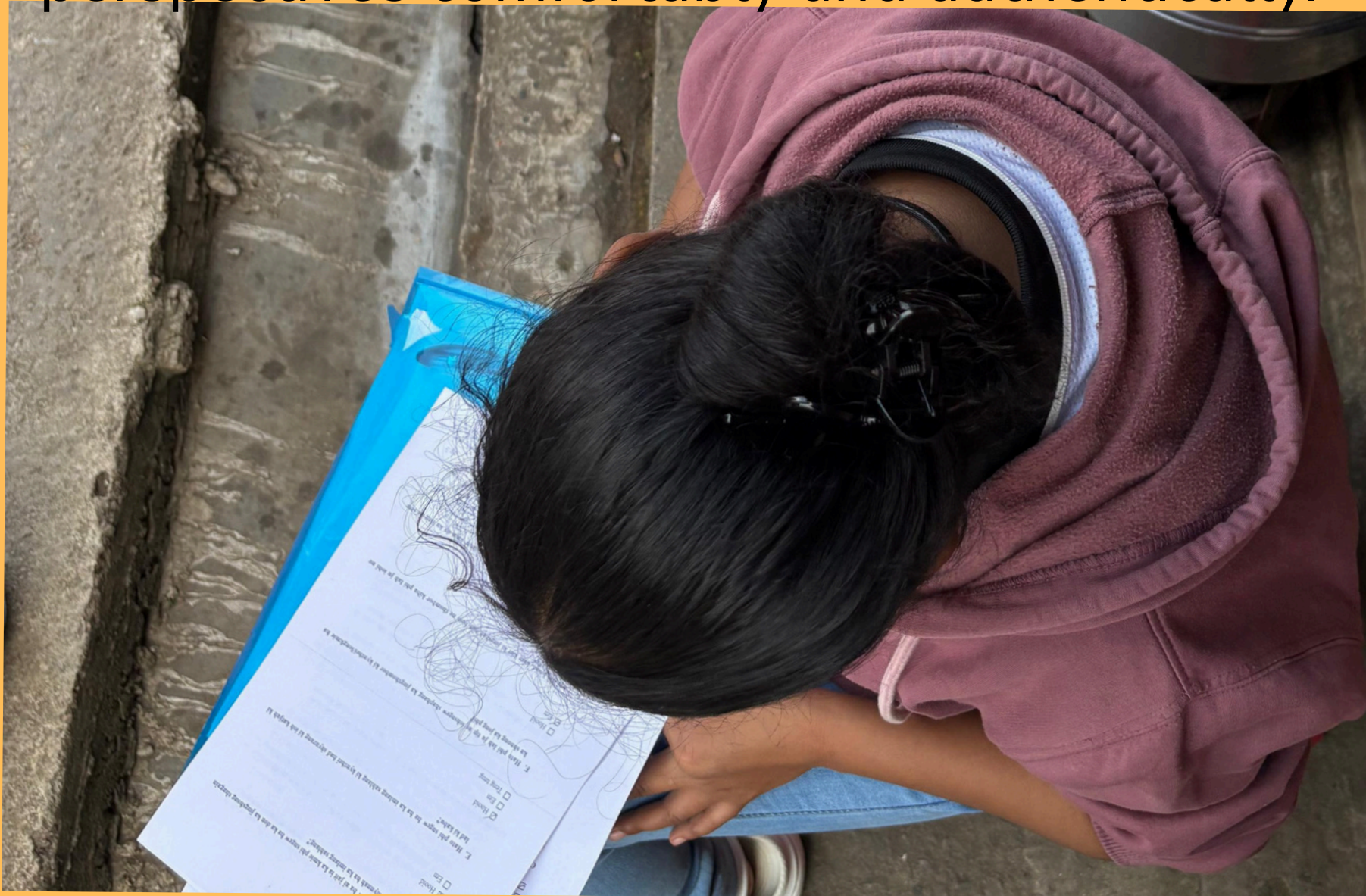
Since its inception, the project has prioritized laying a strong foundation through community engagement,



baseline assessments, and the formation of collectives among children, youth, and women. Emphasis has been placed on initiating dialogue around sensitive issues such as gender, sexuality, early marriage, and domestic violence, while also building the capacities of field teams and community stakeholders to sustain these efforts.

Activity 1: Baseline Survey Understanding Before Intervention

The baseline survey, conducted between October and December 2025 across Nongmensong, and Umlyngka, served as the foundational step of the project. Designed to assess key issues such as early marriage, domestic violence, school dropout, gender attitudes, and awareness of support systems, the survey created an important space for community reflection. Conducted in Khasi through in-person interactions, it enabled respondents—both women and youth—to express their perspectives comfortably and authentically.



The findings revealed a complex and often contradictory reality. While a majority of respondents demonstrated awareness of the legal age of marriage, this knowledge did not translate into reduced instances of gender-based violence. Many participants acknowledged knowing individuals who had experienced abuse, indicating that such issues remain prevalent within the community. At the same time, there was a notable hesitation around intervention. Although respondents agreed that domestic violence should be addressed at a



societal level, many still believed such matters should be handled within families or approached depending on the situation. This highlights a critical gap between awareness and action, shaped by social norms, fear of conflict, and limited trust in external systems.

The survey also shed light on the intersection of economic and social factors influencing girls' education. Financial constraints emerged as the primary reason for school dropout, often compounded by early marriage and pregnancy. Discussions around governance revealed that while women recognize the importance of their participation in decision-making spaces like the Dorbar Shnong, traditional norms continue to limit their involvement. At the same time, the survey captured emerging aspirations, particularly among youth, who expressed interest in vocational skills and income-

Activity 2:

Gender-Based Violence Workshop – Building Conceptual Understanding



On 19 November 2025, a workshop on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) was conducted by Ms Mayfereen Ryntathiang- the President of Grassroot, for project personnel to strengthen their understanding of the issue. The session focused on unpacking GBV not as isolated incidents, but as a systemic issue rooted in social, economic, and cultural structures. Participants explored various forms of violence, including domestic abuse and sexual violence, while also examining the underlying causes such as poverty, substance abuse, lack of awareness, and entrenched gender norms.

Through interactive discussions and exercises, participants identified the far-reaching consequences of GBV, including physical harm, psychological trauma, social isolation, and economic dependency.

A key takeaway from the workshop was the recognition that GBV is often underreported due to stigma, pressure to compromise, and limited awareness of support systems. The session emphasized the importance of ethical and survivor-centered approaches, encouraging participants to respond with sensitivity while connecting affected individuals to appropriate services. This activity played a critical role in equipping the team with the knowledge and perspective required to address GBV more effectively within communities.



Activity 3: Child Rights and Safeguarding Session – Promoting Preventive Responsibility

The session on Child Rights and Child Safeguarding, conducted by Mrs. Shannon Massar, Co-founder and Director, Faith Foundation, Shillong on 8 December 2025,



Participants were introduced to the fundamental principles of child rights, including survival, protection, development, and participation, as well as the framework provided by international conventions.

A key focus of the session was the distinction between safeguarding and child protection. While child protection addresses harm after it occurs, safeguarding emphasizes prevention by creating safe environments and minimizing risks. Participants learned about the various components of safeguarding, including policies, safe recruitment practices, staff training, risk assessment, and reporting mechanisms. The session also highlighted the importance of ethical engagement with children, particularly in communication and information sharing.

Importantly, the training encouraged participants to recognize that even when working primarily with adults, their actions and decisions have direct and indirect impacts on children. This broadened their understanding of responsibility, reinforcing the need to integrate safeguarding principles across all programmes and interactions. The session strengthened participants' capacity to adopt a more holistic and preventive approach to community work.

Activity 4: MASTERCLASSES UNDER RAISING & ACCELERATING MSME PROGRAMME ON BRANDING, MARKETING, PRICING & SOCIAL MEDIA - A Joint initiative by District Commerce & Industries Centre and Grassroot

On 18 November 2025, Grassroot, in collaboration with the District Commerce & Industries Centre, organized a masterclass on branding, marketing, pricing, and social media as part of the Raising & Accelerating MSME Programme. The training was designed for women entrepreneurs from the project areas, providing them with practical knowledge to strengthen their businesses and improve their economic independence.

The training covered key business topics including market research, customer engagement, branding, and pricing strategies. It also emphasized the growing role of digital tools — such as social media, e-commerce, and financial technologies — in helping businesses grow and reach more customers.



Through this activity, participants began to view their work not just as a means of income, but as enterprises with growth potential. The introduction to formal systems such as UDYAM registration further encouraged them to consider long-term sustainability and access to government support schemes.

Activity 5: Experiential Learning – Exposure at FST 20-Year Celebration

As part of the project's focus on capacity building, women Self Help Group (SHG) members participated in an experiential learning activity during the 20-year celebration of the Foundation for Social Transformation in January 2025. This initiative transformed a celebratory event into a dynamic learning platform, allowing participants to engage with real-world examples of community-led enterprises and leadership journeys.



Through exposure to community stalls, panel discussions, and organisational processes, participants observed practical aspects of entrepreneurship, including product presentation, branding, pricing, and customer interaction. The experience also highlighted the importance of visibility, networking, and storytelling in promoting enterprises. A particularly impactful aspect was the opportunity to learn from peer groups, such as women-led initiatives that successfully transformed traditional knowledge into sustainable livelihoods.

The activity had a significant motivational impact, as participants were able to visualize possibilities for their own growth. It strengthened their confidence and encouraged them to see their skills and knowledge as valuable assets. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the exposure visit reinforced the potential for women-led entrepreneurship within their own communities.

Activity 6: Campaign Inauguration – “Generations in Dialogue: Stories Shared, Wisdom Passed”



The campaign was officially launched on 7 February 2026 through an intergenerational storytelling programme titled ***“Generations in Dialogue: Stories Shared, Wisdom Passed.”*** Held in a culturally immersive setting, the event used storytelling as a medium to foster dialogue, preserve indigenous knowledge, and promote gender equity.

The inauguration was symbolically marked by the lighting of fire, including single mothers, resource persons, Grassroot’s President and board member- representing continuity, resilience, and shared wisdom. The storytelling session that followed created a reflective space where participants shared folk narratives and personal experiences, highlighting themes of identity, strength, and social change. The involvement of both youth and elders facilitated meaningful intergenerational exchange, reinforcing the role of cultural traditions in shaping community values.

This activity demonstrated that storytelling is not only a cultural practice but also a powerful tool for social transformation. By centering women’s voices, the event challenged traditional power dynamics and emphasized their role as knowledge holders and leaders within the community.



Activity 7: Rhythms of Resilience – Celebrating Strength, Amplifying Voices

Organized on the occasion of International Women's Day on 7 March 2026, the event ***"Rhythms of Resilience"*** brought together music, community engagement, and advocacy. Conducted in collaboration with Shillong Women in Music, the programme created a vibrant platform to celebrate women's strength, creativity, and contributions.

The event featured musical performances by both women artists and supportive male allies, highlighting the importance of collective participation in promoting gender equity. Beyond performances, the event also supported women-led enterprises by providing space for the sale of locally produced goods, thereby linking cultural celebration with economic empowerment.

The event created a space for expression, dialogue, and solidarity, demonstrating how creative platforms can be used to amplify voices and foster social awareness.



It reinforced the idea that cultural engagement can play a significant role in challenging gender norms and building inclusive communities.



Activity 8: Counselling and Training of Women on Support Systems – Bridging Awareness Gaps



A counselling and training programme on support systems for women was organised by Grassroot on 13th March 2025. The programme aimed to create awareness on legal support mechanisms, gender rights, and safeguarding adolescents, while familiarising participants with available institutional services and strengthening community responsiveness to issues affecting women and young people. The first session was conducted by Jill Marbaniang, Centre Administrator of the One Stop Centre (OSC), East Khasi Hills. She spoke about the role and functioning of the One Stop Centre, established in 2016 to support women affected by violence. She explained that the centre assists women facing various forms of violence, including domestic violence, assault, trafficking, and acid attacks. She highlighted the integrated services provided at the OSC, such as medical assistance, counselling, temporary shelter, police support, and free legal aid.



She also informed participants about helpline numbers 181 and 1971, encouraging them to use and share these services. During the discussion, she addressed concerns regarding delays in the judicial process and emphasised that the OSC continues to support survivors throughout, stressing that addressing violence against women is a collective societal responsibility.

The second session was facilitated by Balarisha Lyngdoh, Consultant at North East Network. She spoke on women's rights and the importance of community response in addressing gender issues. She began with a participatory exercise that encouraged participants to reflect on societal expectations and gender norms. Through this, she explained how gender roles are socially constructed and often lead to inequality between men and women, including disparities in wages and opportunities. She also clarified the difference between biological sex and gender roles. The session encouraged participants to reflect on the barriers women face in expressing their concerns, while emphasising the need for strong community support systems to address gender-based discrimination and violence.

The final session was conducted by Phidahun Dkhar, Adolescent Counsellor at Civil Hospital Shillong, focusing on safeguarding adolescents. She discussed adolescence as a critical stage of development affecting physical, mental, and emotional well-being. She highlighted the vulnerabilities faced by adolescents, especially girls under eighteen, including discrimination, abuse, and inequality. She also provided basic awareness on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, emphasising that these conditions are treatable and should not lead to stigma or discrimination. She noted that in many cases of sexual abuse, the perpetrator is often someone known to the victim. Additionally, she introduced the services offered by the Adolescent Friendly Health Clinic (AFHC), including counselling, outreach programmes, and linkages with other support services. The programme provided participants with valuable insights into the support systems



available for women and adolescents. It enhanced awareness about institutional services such as the One Stop Centre and the Adolescent Friendly Health Clinic, including access to legal aid, counselling, medical support, and helplines. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials from the State Hub for Empowerment of Women, Directorate of Social Welfare, Lower Lachumiere, Shillong, were distributed to participants to further strengthen awareness and outreach.

Life Skills, Health & Civic Awareness Programme

The two-day Life Skills, Health, and Civic Awareness Programme commenced on 30th March 2026 with a focus on life skills and leadership development, facilitated by Mr. Ankush Kurkalang, Founder of Kurkalang Skilling and Learning Centre, Shillong. The session began with a welcome address by Mrs. Christina Wanniang, English teacher at the college, followed by an introduction of the organisation and resource person by Mr. Jason langrai, Project Associate at Grassroot

Mr. Kurkalang engaged students in a reflective discussion on life's realities, the cycle of responsibilities, and the importance of understanding one's role within family and society. Emphasising that while financial stability is essential, individuals are inherently interdependent, he encouraged students to develop responsibility early and adopt a balanced approach to money and life goals.



The session highlighted the significance of goal setting, long-term thinking, and making informed, sustainable decisions. Students were urged to explore opportunities, maintain focus, and evaluate choices in alignment with realistic lifestyles. Discipline and perseverance were emphasised as central qualities for achieving personal and professional growth, with discipline defined as consistently acting for the greater good, even in discomfort. Insights into lifestyle and health, particularly the impact of diet and daily habits on energy and productivity, were integrated into the session.

An interactive coordination activity illustrated the importance of quality over speed, reinforcing the idea that life is a process to be approached mindfully. The session concluded with discussions on leadership, integrity, and personal aspirations, while Mr. Kurkalang extended career guidance and mentorship support for interested students.



The programme continued on 31st March 2026 with sessions on menstruation, reproductive health, and civic awareness, conducted by Mr. Badondor Shylla, RCH Consultant, and Ms. Mayfereen Ryntathiang, President of Grassroot. Mr. Shylla provided detailed guidance on menstrual hygiene, reproductive health, and nutrition, addressing myths and taboos associated with menstruation. He discussed anaemia, iron supplementation, maternal health, and breastfeeding, while also introducing sexual and reproductive health topics such as puberty-related changes, safe sex practices, awareness of STIs and HIV, and access to healthcare services via Primary Health Centres and Sub-Centres, following the RKSK framework.



The session empowered students with factual knowledge to support informed decision-making regarding their bodies and health

Ms. Ryntathiang's session expanded the discussion to rights and civic responsibility, beginning with interactive exercises on fundamental rights like education, health, and housing, illustrating their interconnectedness. She addressed gender and social inequalities, emphasising democratic participation through mechanisms such as the EPIC (Elector's Photo Identity Card), and discussed civic freedoms including expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Participants actively engaged in discussions, exploring strategies to remain informed and collectively responsible in the face of political and social challenges



The programme concluded with a poster-making competition that allowed students to creatively express themes such as rights, gender equality, and freedom, reinforcing learning outcomes. Overall, the two-day programme successfully integrated life skills, health awareness, and civic education, providing students with practical knowledge, fostering critical reflection, encouraging responsible citizenship, and inspiring personal and societal growth

EMPOWERING LIVELIHOODS WITH SOLAR ENERGY

The “Empowering Livelihoods with Solar Energy” supported by SELCO Foundation project aims to promote sustainable livelihoods and reduce energy poverty in rural communities of Meghalaya. The project focuses on harnessing solar energy to empower local communities particularly in areas with limited electricity.



Objectives

- Raise Awareness
- Conduct Assessments
- Sensitize Stakeholders
- Promote Sustainable Livelihoods
- Reduce Energy Poverty

Activities Undertaken

Community outreach and mobilization

Outreach activities were conducted in Mawlai and Umlyngka, where the team visited retail shops and small enterprises to introduce the project, promote solar energy and identify potential users. Letters were also submitted to the Block Development Officers (BDOs) of Sohiong, Mawpat, Myllem, Mawsynram and Mawkynew for support and collaboration.

Awareness Programmes

Awareness Programmes were conducted in Umlyngka, Laitkor, Mawthadraishan, Umphyrnai, Nongstoin, Dangar and Nongpoh to educate communities on the benefits of solar energy and promote adoption of sustainable solutions for improved livelihoods

Sensitization workshops

Sensitization workshops were conducted in Umlyngka and Laitmawsiang, aimed to engage with local leaders, community members to promote the adoption of solar energy solutions. The sensitization initiatives helped build momentum for the project and encouraged community members to adopt solar energy-based livelihoods

Field Assessments

Field assessment were conducted in locations including Nongrah, Nongmensong, Mawtari, East Jaintia Hills, Umlyngka, Nongkseh, Laitmawsiang, Kreit, Mawlai, Lad Smit, Mawsiatkhnem and Myllem to identify energy needs and potential users for solar-based livelihoods solutions.

Installations of Solar Lighting

Solar lighting systems were installed in Umlyngka and Laitmawsiang. The installations provide reliable, cost-effective lighting, enabling extended working hours and reducing dependence on grid electricity.

Installations of Solar Dryers

Solar Dryers were installed in Mawlai, Umsaw, Laitjem, Nongkseh, Laitkor, Swer. Nongstoin, Lakadong and Thadlaskein (West Jaintia Hills) to support mushrooms cultivators by improving preservation, increasing shelf life and reducing post-harvest losses. These eco-friendly solutions also promote value addition and better market ccess for small-scale farmers.

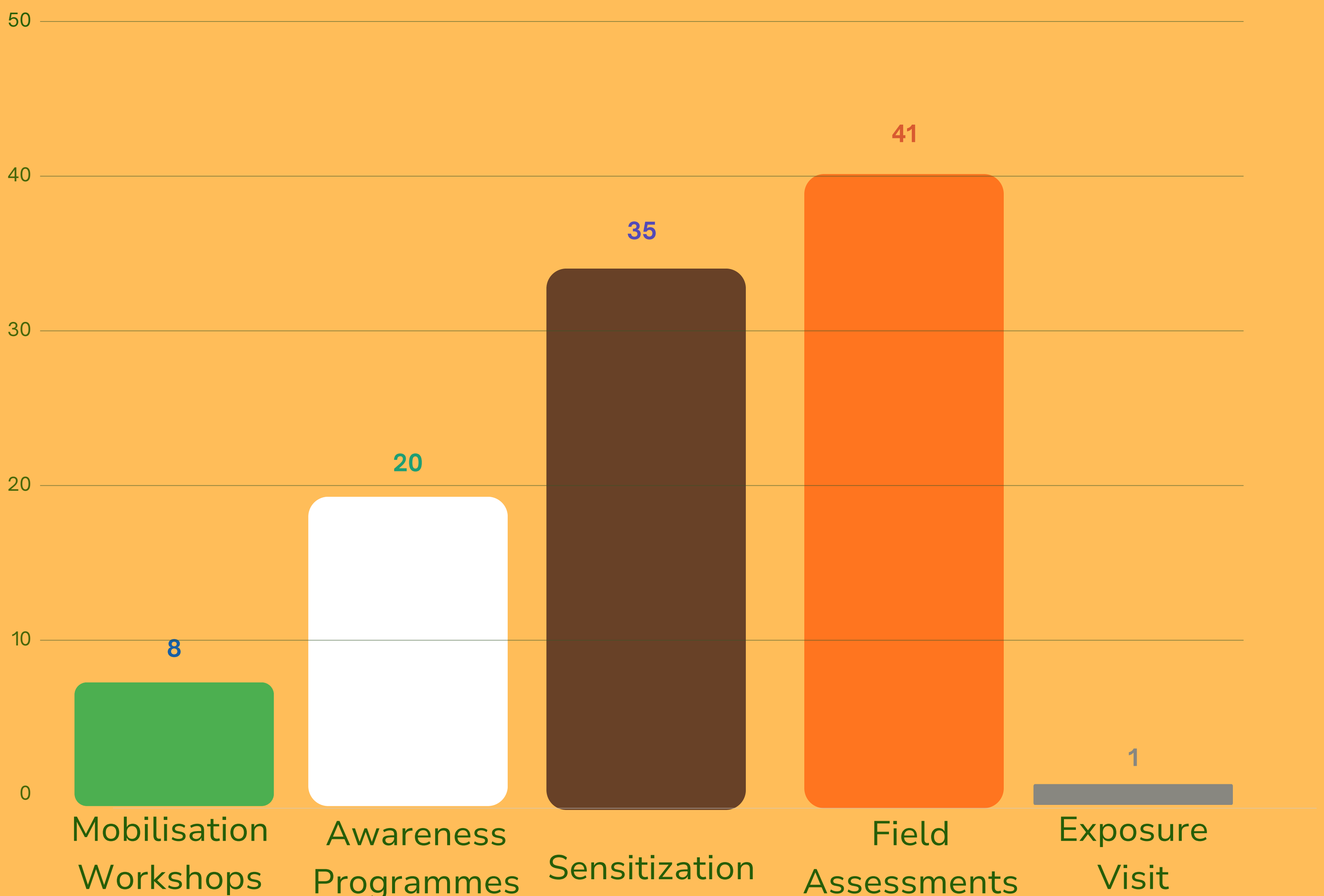
Institutional Linkages

The project actively engaged with various government departments and institutions to strengthen implementation. End users were supported with the registration under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and registration under PRIME Meghalaya. These linkages aimed to facilitate access to financial assistance and promote entrepreneurship through solar-based solutions.

Exposure Visit

The Grassroot team conducted an exposure trip to Umktieh and Umsaitprah (Ri Bhoi District) for hand-on learning in wine, juice and spice processing with participation from women of Nathiar Cooperative Society and Byrwai IVCS. The visit enhanced skills, promoted entrepreneurship and supported livelihood opportunities and community development.

ACTIVITY COUNT



WAY FORWARD

Moving forward, the project will prioritize greater collaboration with Block Development Offices (BDOs) across the district to ensure continued coordination, support, and smooth implementation, while also strengthening relationships with local authorities and field-level stakeholders. Building on the learnings and outcomes from current implementation areas, the project aims to expand into other districts by identifying new locations, forging partnerships with relevant authorities, and assessing the needs of potential end users.



To maximise community outreach, more awareness and mobilization programmes will be conducted at the grassroots level, including community meetings, interactions with local leaders, and information-sharing sessions designed to build trust and encourage active participation.

The project will also seek deeper collaboration with government offices and departments overseeing livelihood programmes, exploring available schemes and creating linkages that enable end users to access additional resources and opportunities for improving their livelihoods.

Alongside this, communication with the SELCO team will be strengthened to ensure a consistent and timely supply of equipment, better meeting the needs of end users at every level. Finally, a financial aid pool will be established to support genuine end users in acquiring their solar equipment without delay, ensuring that no eligible beneficiary is left behind due to financial constraints.

The project has made a steady progress through field engagement, coordination with local authorities and community mobilization. Key activities has also helped introduce the project and generate interest among end users. However, challenges such as lack of clear communication. delays in getting permissions and issues in the registration process has affected the pace of implementation. Despite this, the project has a strong potential for extension and impact. With better coordination, increased awareness and stronger collaboration with government departments and local leaders, the project can achieve improved outcomes and sustainability in the future.

EMPOWERING OWNERSHIP OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: REVIVAL OF LOST ARTS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

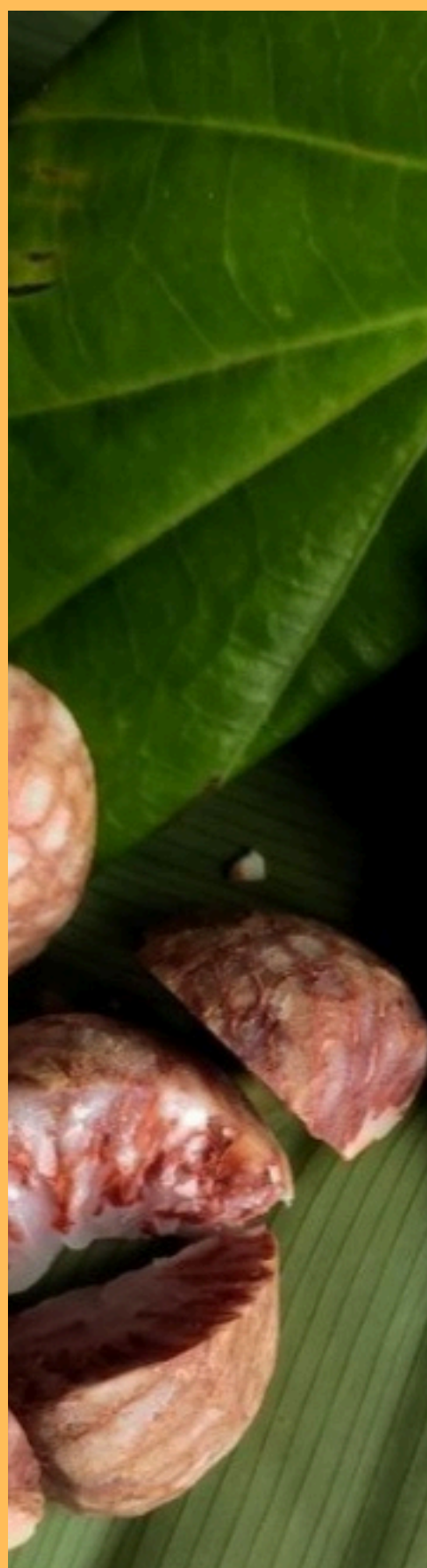
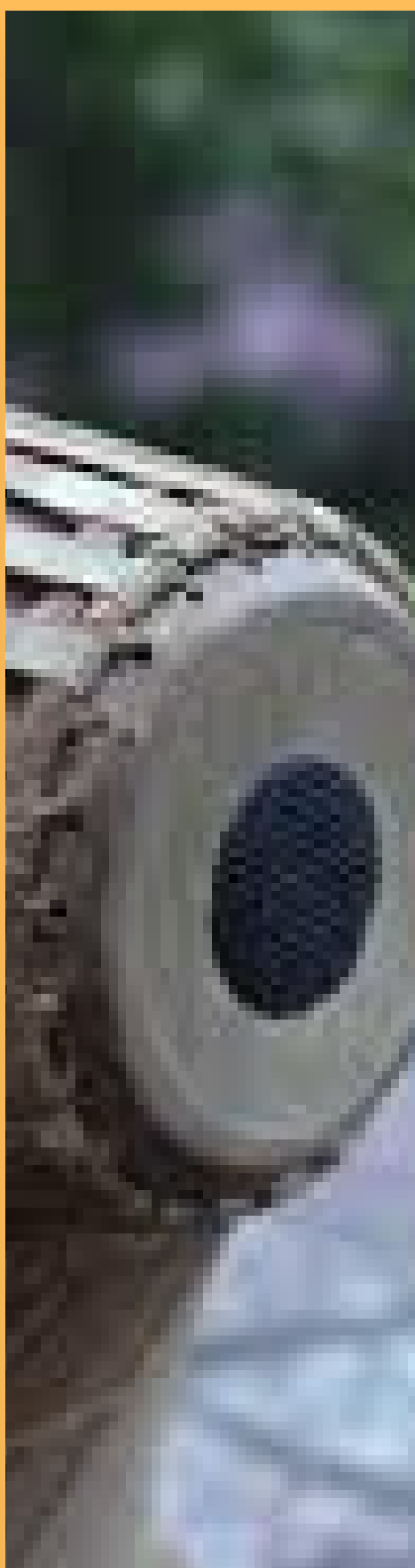
The project “Empowering Ownership of Cultural Heritage: Revival of Lost Arts and Cultural Practices”, implemented by GRASSROOT under the Pawanka Fund.



A regional initiative across North East India aimed at safeguarding Indigenous arts, languages, and traditional knowledge systems. Covering Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Sikkim, the project engages diverse Indigenous communities including Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, Naga, Adi, Borok, Lepcha, Manipuri, and Mishing.

Overall goal of the project

Protect and revitalize Indigenous cultural heritage by strengthening community ownership and promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer. The key objectives include reviving and documenting lost and declining cultural practices, building the capacity of Indigenous youth and communities in research and documentation, and creating platforms for cultural exchange through storytelling, festivals, and regional dialogue.



The project implemented a wide range of activities combining cultural revival with capacity building. A major highlight was the *Two-Day Indigenous Fellowship Training Program* (September 2025), which equipped participants with knowledge on Indigenous rights and practical skills in research, documentation, and storytelling. Mentorship programs are ongoing, connecting youth with elders and cultural practitioners to facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge. Community-led initiatives such as language learning, traditional performances, and documentation of oral histories were also promoted.



“Revitalizing the Rhythms of the Harvest”



The Rice Harvesting Festival in Ri Bhoi district, Meghalaya, documented traditional farming practices, music, dance, and community interaction.

Storytelling Under the Full Moon Light Festival

The storytelling initiative “Storytelling Under the Full Moon Light” in Shillong revived oral traditions and created a platform for intergenerational knowledge exchange.





Assam (November 4th, 2025)



Visited the Centre for Karbi Studies to meet Sarah Phangchopi, who is working on the revival and preservation of Karbi Traditional motif (Pindeng Ahi Amang) among the Karbi Tribe.

Mizoram (November 5th, 2025)



Visited Mizoram to meet Dennis Hrangchal, who is working on the research and documentation of Sikpui Ruoi: The Great Winter Festival of the Hmar Indigenous People.

Meghalaya (November 26th, 2025)



Visited Mawtari Village, Ri Bhoi district, to meet the informants and Riteilang Khongrangjem, who is working on the research and documentation of Khasi community's folktales, traditional games, and festivals.

Arunachal Pradesh (December 2nd, 2025)



Visited AMYAA organization in Roing to meet Dapi Miwu, who is working on the research and documentation of Idu Mishmi folktales, cuisine, language, and folk songs and dance.



Overall, the project has made significant progress in reviving lost Indigenous arts, languages, and cultural practices while strengthening community ownership and participation.



By empowering Indigenous communities—especially youth and women—the initiative ensures that cultural heritage is preserved, celebrated, and passed on to future generations



WOMEN AS CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION CATALYST



The project “Women as Climate Change Mitigation Catalyst”, funded by AYNi focused on strengthening the leadership, rights awareness, and climate resilience of Indigenous women across Meghalaya and Manipur.

The initiative empowered Indigenous communities—particularly women and youth—by enhancing their knowledge on Indigenous rights, climate change, sustainable livelihoods, and community-led development.

During the reporting period, the project engaged over 900 direct participants and 700+ indirect beneficiaries from Garo and Naga communities through capacity-building workshops, consultations, and training programs

Key interventions included leadership and rights-based trainings, entrepreneurial skill development, consultations with government officials and women's alliances, and awareness sessions on renewable energy solutions such as solar energy.

A key component of the project was raising awareness on ***CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39 (GR 39) on the rights of Indigenous Women and Girls***. While this framework was relatively new to many participants, the project introduced its principles in a simplified and contextualized manner, linking it with local governance systems such as the Sixth Schedule. This helped Indigenous women better understand their rights related to participation, leadership, land, and protection from discrimination, thereby strengthening their confidence to engage in decision-making processes.



Key Achievements & Impact



Strengthened leadership and decision-making capacity of Indigenous women

Increased awareness of Indigenous rights, including land and forest rights, and CEDAW GR 39

Enhanced participation of women in community governance and climate action

Improved collaboration between communities, civil society, and government stakeholders.

Promotion of climate-resilient livelihoods and traditional knowledge systems.

Activities :

Consultation Workshops



Consultation Workshop with Government officials , Local heads, and Women Alliance was conducted on 28th July 2025 held at Shillong Club, Meghalaya.



Consultation Workshop with Government officials , Local heads, and Women Alliance of was conducted on 21st February 2026 held at Nokma Council Building,Tura, Meghalaya.



Consultation Workshop with Government officials , Local heads, and Women Alliance of was conducted on 28th February 2026 held at Nokma Council Building,Tura, Meghalaya.

Capacity Building



Capacity Building to equip indigenous community with entrepreneurial skills was conducted on 11th October 2025 held at Naga Taphou Village, Senapati District, Manipur.



Capacity building on Entrepreneurship was conducted with women's group on 10th & 11th October 2025 , held at Edenbari village , West Garo hills district , Meghalaya



Capacity building on Detailed Project Report (DPR) and Cooperation registration with SHGs representatives from Senapati district was conducted on 21st February 2026, held at Maram union hall.



Capacity building on Entrepreneurship was conducted with women's group on 6th November 2025 , held at Magalpara village, West Garo hills district , Meghalaya



A Capacity Building Program for Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs was successfully conducted on 14th October 2025 at Angailongdi Village, Senapati District, Manipur. The program aimed at equipping indigenous women with entrepreneurial skills and inspiring them to pursue self-reliant livelihoods rooted in their local culture and resources.



Capacity Building on Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Indigenous Peoples Rights with Women group of Bunny hills on 24 & 25 October held at Bunny hills Community Hall.



Capacity Building Program for Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs aimed at equipping indigenous women with entrepreneurial skills was successfully conducted on 15th October 2025 held at Khabung Karong Village, Senapati District, Manipur.



Capacity Building on Leadership and Indigenous Peoples Rights with of Bunny hills on Womens group, Community member and Nokma on 18th September held at Chibragre, Community Hall, Rongram Block.



Seminar on Indigenous People's Rights and Governance was successfully conducted on 16th October 2025 held at Lungnilla Elizabeth College, Department of Sociology and Social Work Department Senapati District, Manipur



Awareness workshop on solar energy, 1 awareness workshop was conducted with Women's group and community members of Ri Bhoi District Meghalaya



Capacity Building Program on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was successfully conducted on 4th October 2025 held at Maram Khunou Village, Senapati District, Manipur.



Consultation meeting with Stakeholders was conducted on 26th February 2026 held at Tura.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND CAPACITY BUILDING



CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES

The organization has undertaken structured training programs to enhance the professional competencies of its staff members. These programs focused on the following key areas:

- Project planning, monitoring, and evaluation
- Community engagement and participatory approaches
- Documentation and report writing skills
- Indigenous rights framework.

This project “*Organisational Development Process Enhancing Organisational Efficiency And Capacity Building*” is supported by **DASRA**. Grassroot recognizes the importance of organizational efficiency in achieving its mission to promote Indigenous rights and cultural preservation. To enhance staff capabilities and organizational efficiency, the organization has invested in various training programs and workshops

As a grassroots organization working closely with Indigenous communities in the Northeast region of India, Grassroot Shillong operates in a dynamic and challenging environment. Building internal capacity is essential to ensuring that the organization can effectively respond to community needs, manage resources efficiently, and advocate meaningfully for the rights and cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples.



Staff members participated in a Regional Led Gathering held in Shillong, which served as a significant platform for shared learning, organizational alignment, and staff wellbeing.



The gathering covered the following topics:

Second in Line Leadership — Explored succession planning and the development of next-tier leaders within the organization to ensure continuity and resilience

Impact Narrative — Equipped staff with skills to effectively articulate and communicate the organization's stories of change and community impact

Organisational Compliance — Reviewed key regulatory, legal, and donor compliance requirements to strengthen organizational accountability

Communications Policy — Outlined guidelines and standards for internal and external communications to ensure consistency and professionalism

Child Protection Policy — Reinforced the organization's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable individuals in all programs and activities

Organisational Theory of Change — Deepened staff understanding of the strategic logic underpinning the organization's programs and long-term vision

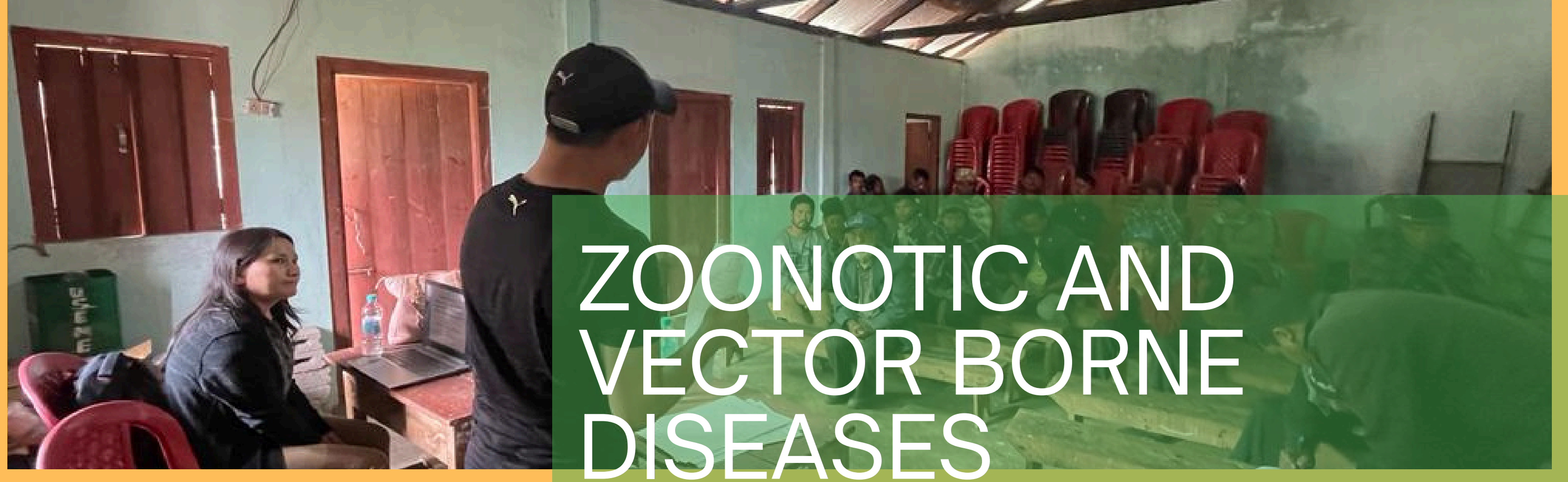
Wellbeing Day — Participants engaged deeply with themes of institutional strengthening, leadership development, and programmatic resilience, gaining insights that could directly benefit their organizations. A dedicated wellbeing day offered a refreshing pause—blending nature, rest, and cultural immersion—highlighting the importance of self-care in sustaining impactful work

Bulletin

Under the banner of Grassroot in partnership with DASRA, our founding president attended the India Philanthropy week in Mumbai to lend her Indigenous voice as a **‘speaker spotlight’** to garner context and driving home the message that ***Indigenous people of North East India are here to break barriers and shape the future. NE is ready for you? Are you?*** was her ground breaking question at the India Philanthropy week to gain and engage in grounding dialogue in the context where India’s philanthropic futures are being shaped.

Taking place during Dasra Philanthropy Week, IPF Mumbai brings together voices from across geographies to reflect on emerging shifts in philanthropy and the partnerships needed to drive the next phase of impact.





ZOO NOTIC AND VECTOR BORNE DISEASES

Three study sites from Ri Bhoi (12 village clusters), East Khasi Hills (8 village clusters), and Eastern West Khasi Hills (10 village clusters) districts have been purposively selected. **In Eastern West Khasi Hills district, IIPH is funding Grassroots to enhance community engagement and liaison with village councils.** Each district has unique environmental and climatic characteristics, but all share high potential for human-animal interaction and elevated risk of trans-border transport.

Aims:

Develop a regional research hub for collaborative, trans-disciplinary training and science

Characterize and evaluate transmission patterns and risks of ZVBDs of India's NER

Identify and forecast cross-species transmission of ZVBDs and TAD threats

India, and especially the north-eastern region (NER), is endemic for vector-borne diseases (VBDs). Recently, due to its changing economy and ecology, India has also emerged as a hotspot for zoonotic diseases (ZDs) which are microbial infections that normally circulate in animals, but "spill-over" to humans. The NER comprises only 8% of India's total geographical area but is home to ~40 million people. More than half of the NER is forested, with designated "biodiversity hotspots". In addition, NER is known for its indigenous tribal communities, with unique cultural practices, and predominantly non-vegetarian food habits, including consumption of bush-meat. Thus, livestock represents an important component of the mixed-farming system that is practiced in this region. This study is being conducted in Meghalaya; home to over 3 million people, 80% of whom live in rural areas and known for its wet climate and biodiversity of animals and plants. The ZVBDs selected for this study are Japanese Encephalitis, scrub typhus, brucellosis, leptospirosis, cryptosporidiosis and novel influenza virus (H1N1 swine flu).



TABLE: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Design	Purpose
Initial census of study areas	Individual household and village-level enumeration
Environmental mapping	Environmental risk assessment
Cross-sectional survey	Disease burden estimation
Qualitative studies	Socio-cultural and behavioural risk factors assessment
Human and animal surveillance	
	Early disease and outbreak detection and detection of potential TAD threats

Study design: Multiple sampling designs and data sources (summarised in Table) is being used to achieve the study objectives.

A cross-sectional serosurvey was conducted across selected clusters in three study districts to assess the burden of zoonotic infections, with laboratory analyses performed using standard serological methods. A total of 1,328 participants were enrolled, of whom 1,307 provided blood samples and 245 provided stool samples.

Longitudinal surveillance is currently ongoing through regular household follow-up to monitor key symptoms. Field Research Assistants (FRAs) facilitate clinical care, referrals, and transportation of severe cases. The longitudinal component includes 900 households, with a total of 5,643 individuals enrolled.

A qualitative study is ongoing to evaluate socio-cultural and behavioural risk factors for scrub typhus and leptospirosis.

QUALITATIVE METHODS:



Environmental data collection integrates field-based GPS mapping with GIS analysis to support spatial clustering, vulnerability assessment, and environmental risk modelling. This work is strengthened through collaboration with ISRO, enabling the use of high-resolution remote sensing data.

Animal surveillance is being conducted at community-level slaughter sites to better capture local transmission dynamics. Samples from livestock are being collected, processed, and transported under appropriate biosafety and cold chain protocols.

Field observations indicate variations in local slaughter practices across districts, with implications for sampling and transmission pathways. Livestock sampled are predominantly sourced locally and are largely above one year of age.



Stories of CHANGE



Mrs. Queency Thangkhiew, a local entrepreneur has successfully enhanced her livelihood through the use of a solar dryer provided under the Solar Project. Prior to this, she faced challenges in preserving mushrooms and pickles especially during unfavorable weather conditions which often led to spoilage and loss of income. With the introduction of the solar dryer, she is now able to dry mushrooms efficiently and maintain the quality of her pickles in a hygienic and sustainable manner. The solar dryer has reduced her dependence on traditional drying methods, saving both time and effort.

As a result, Mrs. Thangkhiew has been able to expand her production and extend the shelf life of her products. The initiative has not only improved her financial situation but also enhanced her confidence as a woman entrepreneur.

Mrs. Ketalin Nongrum is another entrepreneur who has successfully adopted the solar dryer to improve her livelihood activities. Before using the solar dryer, drying food items like beef, chillies and mushrooms was time-consuming and dependent on weather conditions. With the solar dryer, she is now able to dry beef in about an hour along with chillies and mushrooms in a faster and more efficient manner. The dryer ensures hygiene and consistent quality making the process more reliable. Mrs. Nongrum has shared that she faced no problems while using the solar dryer and finds it very convenient for her daily use. This has helped her save time and effort while improving the quality of her products, contributing positively to her household income.

Stories of CHANGE



Mrs. Mariam an Indigenous woman from the Manipur, had limited income opportunities and minimal participation in community decision-making. Hearing that the organisation grassroots is training indigenous Women for capacity building she approach us to participate in the programs. Through project-led capacity-building sessions especially on entrepreneurial skills, she received training in livelihood skills, financial literacy, and leadership development. She later joined a local self-help group, women's group and her team will begin a small income-generating activity, contributing to her household income.

Today, she is actively involved in community planning processes and is recognized as a leader who advocates for women's rights and collective development.

Jerry Pyngrope is one of the single mothers from Nongrah. She is a mother of four and she also looks after her differently able brother. For years she has been juggling around to get a job to meet the needs of the family and also at the same time taking care of her children and her brother. She expressed that being a single mother itself comes with a lot of challenges of having to manage her mental and physical pain but inspite of all these challenges she feels blessed that she is able to raise all her four children all by herself. It was through her persistent efforts that she had the option to save up some money and set up a chicken shop in her area. She also actively participates in any training or programmes.



Stories of CHANGE

However, she is looking for ways to expand her small business; and recently started a clothing business with the support she has received from FST. She is hoping that later on she will actually want to help another single mother who needs assistance.



Pampa Choudhury is a blind mother of 2 children from Nongmensong. Her husband died when her children were very small and since then she was staying only with her children. However, her visually impaired did not stop her from the responsibility she has for her children. With the money her demised husband had saved for her she was able to open an inner-wear shop near her locality and yet additionally she is also taking care of her children. Her eldest daughter would also help her in the shop during her spare time and she has been assisting her mother in any program and training organized by FST so far. While interacting with her we learnt that she

wants to expand her small business if getting a chance for a better future for her children and she also said that she is constantly struggling trying to have a stable position simply to provide for herself and her children. When it comes to the assistance required, she said that if she can get her own shop it will boost her business with more profit and FST supported with the materials required in her shop.

Philinda is a 49 years old mother from Nongrah Shillong, who supported her family through baking. Since the time when she was staying with her husband, she always had a dream of opening her own bakery shop but due to her duty towards her family she never got a chance. At the time when her husband left her, she had no choice but to start earning to support herself and her young children by starting off with baking and taking small orders at her own house.

Stories of CHANGE

Philinda is a 49 years old mother from Nongrah Shillong, who supported her family through baking. Since the time when she was staying with her husband, she always had a dream of opening her own bakery shop but due to her duty towards her family she never got a chance. At the time when her husband left her, she had no choice but to start earning to support herself and her young children by starting off with baking and taking small orders at her own house. She has been one of the most active participants in every activity or program organized by FST so far and during the training on bakery she participated whole heartedly. With the knowledge she has about baking she passed on to her eldest daughter and now with her

daughter's assistance they are handling the business together she is not able to take all order placed during festive season and this has become one of the main obstacles in her business but with the support of FST and contribution from Grassroot she was able to get a big oven for her baking business. Philinda has a high potential of growing in her business since she is doing what she is passionate about and she also mentioned that she is willing to train and help any single mothers if they are interested in baking.



Stories of CHANGE

Syrpailin a Single Mother from Nongrah is a mother of three children.

Due to financial instability she has to take up several jobs to support her family by working in one of the schools in her locality as a mid day meal cook and also by indulging herself in farming activities at the same time helping her mother in pigs rearing. She always has the urged to be able to buy and rear her own pigs which are also one of her interests and finally with the support she got from FST she was able to get two piglets. During the monitoring process the problem that she faced is to get the feeds for the pigs but with proper guidance and information given to her the problem was solved.



Syrpailin shares that though she has never received any financial support either from her husband nor her family and has to struggle to put food on her table and roof over her family's head the only thing that inspires her to work really hard is the love for her children. She'd like to start poultry farming in the future, if she ever gets a chance.

Ritalis is a mushroom cultivator also a single mother from Nongmensong.

She is a mother of 7 children whom she supports all by herself from the time she separated from her husband. Since her husband left her, she has never gotten any support or help from him nor from her family. She has been working as a domestic worker before mushroom cultivating was introduced to her. It was during the peak of covid-19 that she learnt about Mushroom cultivation through her sister who is well trained in this field and in 2022 she even got a

Stories of CHANGE

chance to get herself trained through Agriculture Department, Government of Meghalaya when they organized a training at their department. At first, she started her own mushroom cultivation in a very small scale and sold them in the nearby market and throughout the process she was assisted by her sister but now that people from in and around her locality knows about her, she has a proper networking on marketing her mushrooms. With the support from FST she was able to get more spawns of mushrooms and at the moment she wishes to upgrade and to have a proper place for mushroom cultivation.



OuR FELLOWS



Riteilang Khongrangjem

An Indigenous documentary photographer and storyteller from the misty hills of Meghalaya, deeply rooted in the Khasi tribe's matrilineal heritage. Dedicated to preserving traditions and advocating for Indigenous rights, the work focuses on research and visual storytelling that highlights the connection between people, culture, and nature.

An Indigenous woman from the Karbi tribe of Karbi Anglong district in Assam, Northeast India. She has been working in the social sector for over 10 years and have extensive experience engaging with diverse indigenous communities in the region. Her key areas of expertise include project management and coordination, capacity building, human resource development, organizational management, women empowerment, promoting youth leadership, and community mobilization. She also work as a trainer and facilitator on human rights education, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and women.



Sarah Phangchopi

Her commitment to peacebuilding is rooted in my own experience of the 2005 Karbi-Dimasa. Since then, she has dedicated myself to promoting peace through peace education and community engagement. Through her work with peace projects at Jirsong Asong Social Service Society, she has collaborated with schools, colleges, and village peace committees, with a strong focus on the participation of students, women, men, and youth. She strive to empower women, nurture youth leadership, mobilize communities, heal the scars of violence, and foster cooperation, trust, and solidarity.

OuR FELLOWS



Dapi Miwu

Miss Dapi Miwu from Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, currently working on reviving and promoting Idu Mishmi traditional textiles, with a strong focus on empowering women artisans and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities in the region. She aims to preserve the cultural heritage of the Idu Mishmi community while adapting traditional weaving practices to meet modern demands.

A young fellow Anthropologist hailing from the Land of Pioneers called Mokokchung under Nagaland State. Working as a Research Assistant at The Highland Institute, Kohima. He is also a member of Tribal Design Forum organisation, working as a Youth Ambassador.



Akumtong Imchen



Ncitube Whiting

A Master's in Social Work student from Senapati district of Manipur, and deeply rooted in the cultural richness of the community. With a passion for creating positive change, also driven to address social issues and empower marginalized groups and eagerness to apply the knowledge and skills to make a meaningful impact in the community and beyond

OuR FELLOWS



Dennis Lallienzuol

An indigenous development expert, youth peace builder and conflict survivor from the Hmar tribe of Northeast India. He founded The Bridge School Project, offering education and peacebuilding to conflict-affected children, and The White Dot Solidarity Network, a youth-led initiative fostering inclusive leadership across Asia.

His work centers on community transformation grounded in Indigenous knowledge and wisdom, with a particular focus on environmental conservation, food sovereignty and security, and cultural preservation.

Dennis is a Youth Leader Fund Fellow (2023–24) with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and a Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme Fellow (2022) with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) for South and Southeast Asia. He also contributes to several youth-led United Nations processes and mechanisms. Holding a Master's degree in Sociology from the Delhi School of Economics, Dennis's work bridges social development, policy, and research.

A development professional from Tripura working in the field of community-driven and inclusive development. Her focus lies in strengthening grassroots participation, supporting community initiatives, and contributing to sustainable and equitable development processes.

Also the founder of the Kokborok Learning Institute, through which they undertake translation projects for both private and government organizations. Through this initiative, she works to bridge language gaps while contributing to the wider recognition and use of Kokborok in formal and institutional spaces.



Jasmine Jamatia

OuR FELLOWS



Britstar Marshing

A dedicated Fellow from Mawtari Thaiang, Ri Bhoi District. Also the Chairmain of the Mawtari Thaiang V.E.C

OuR FELLOWS

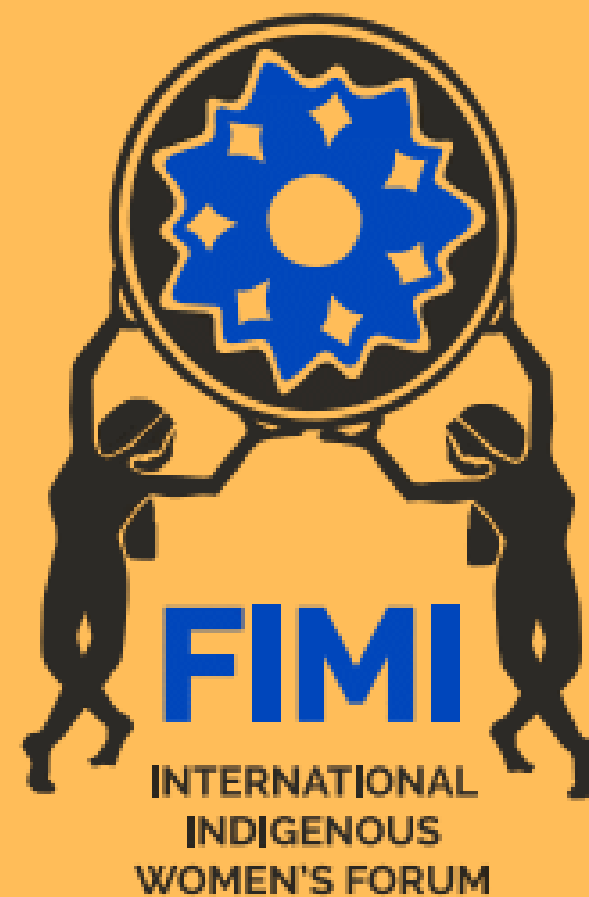
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