



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022-2023

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# Grassroot: Empowering Communities and Transforming Lives

## Introduction:

In an ever-changing world, Grassroot stands as a beacon of hope and progress, working tirelessly to empower economically and socially oppressed sections of society. Through collaboration with communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and passionate individuals, Grassroot strives to enhance the rights and well-being of those who have been marginalized.

## A Journey of Transformation:

Over the years, Grassroot has taken bold strides towards social justice and empowerment. Our mission is to ignite a sense of responsibility and power within individuals and communities, paving the way for a brighter future. By fostering partnerships with communities, government bodies, civil societies, and like-minded individuals, we have created a powerful force that works collectively to dismantle barriers and uplift the oppressed.

## Expanding Horizons:

At Grassroot, our dedication to creating positive change knows no bounds. We have expanded our efforts beyond traditional boundaries, addressing a myriad of pressing issues.

Our initiatives encompass skill-building, entrepreneurship, healthcare, capacity building for indigenous people's rights, cultural preservation, and ensuring food security. By addressing these diverse challenges, we have solidified our commitment to bringing about holistic and sustainable transformation.

## Unleashing the Power Within:


Grassroot's vision revolves around recognizing the immense potential and power of individuals and communities. We believe that true progress can only be achieved when every person embraces their responsibility towards society. Through our programs, we empower individuals to take charge of their lives, enabling them to enhance their social, political, and economic rights. By unlocking the collective power of the masses, we are catalyzing social empowerment on a grand scale.

## A Call to Action:

As we reflect on our journey thus far, this report serves as a testament to the numerous impactful programs implemented by Grassroot. However, our work is far from complete. We invite you to join us in our mission of creating a more inclusive and just society. Together, we can build a world where every individual, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive.



Grassroot's unwavering commitment to empowering the oppressed and marginalized is reshaping the social landscape. Through collaboration, dedication, and a relentless pursuit of justice, we are paving the way for a brighter future. Let us continue to work hand in hand, harnessing the power of the community, and embracing the responsibility we all share. Together, we can achieve social empowerment on a scale never seen before.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mayfereen Ryntathiang', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mayfereen Ryntathiang  
President, Grassroot,

# ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHTS

No.	Particulars	Brief
1.	Entity	Grassroot
2.	Head Office	Nongkseh Madan, Dongmot, Shillong 793005, Meghalaya, India
3.	Telephone Number	Ph: 8974632962
4.	Profile	<p>Social Enterprise with a rights-based approach towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• youth engagement</li><li>• livelihood development</li><li>• advocacy and awareness in the citizenship space</li><li>• curation &amp; preservation of tradition and culture</li></ul>

5.	Incorporated	<p>Founded in September,2007</p> <p>Registered under the Meghalaya Societies Registration Act,1983</p> <p><b>SR/G-57/19 of 2019</b></p> <p><b>FCRA:214250108</b> under the registration under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India</p> <p><b>12 A: AAAAG7114JE20212</b></p> <p><b>80G: AAAAG7114JF20228</b></p>
6.	years of exixtence	15 years
7.	Services Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consultancy Services for Human Rights</li> <li>- Surveys , Research &amp; documentation</li> <li>- Youthand Community Mobilisation Efforts</li> <li>-Awareness campaigns for Health based Interventions , Livelihood, rights entitlements', breaking gender based stereotypes</li> <li>- Market Linked nterventions for livelihood up -gradation</li> <li>- Life Skills Interventions</li> </ul>

8.	Operational Territory	<p>East Khasi Hills District, Ri Bhoi District, East Jaintia Hills District, West Garo Hills, East Garo Hills and South Garo Hills in the state of Meghalaya and Manipur</p>
9.	CONTACT PERSON'S DETAILS	<p>MAYFEREEN RYNTATHIANG PRESIDENT, GRASSROOT</p>
10.	Contact Details	<p>PHONE +91.89746 32962  <u>EMAIL</u>  <u>mayfereenlyngdoh@gmail.com</u>  Website:grassrootshillong.org</p>
11.	PAN No.	AAAAG7114J

12	<p>ONGOING / IMPL MENTED PROJECTS / PROGRA MMES 2015-23</p>	<p><b>1. Strengthening Women’s Voices in Land Resource Governance</b> Empowering women in land rights and issues of governance</p> <p>Client: AYNi FUND, Peru</p> <p>Period: 2022-2024</p> <p><b>2. Creating Impact through Social Entrepreneurship</b> Empowering Youths on scaling up their social and economic enterprises</p> <p>Client: Erasmus Programme of the EU and Worldview Impact Period: 2020-2023</p> <p><b>3. ‘KyršiewLaTynrai’ (awakeningmyroots)</b> Empowering Traditional Medicine practitioners on IPR, Indigenous Right, entrepreneurship</p> <p>Client: Pawanka International PERIOD : 2021-2022</p>
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ONGOING  
/ IMPL  
MENTED  
PROJECTS  
/  
PROGRAM  
MES  
2015-23

#### **4. Skills to Succeed**

Creating and building existing skills for youth in Meghalaya

Client: Quest Alliance

year: 2019-2023

Impact: 310

Impact: 100 herbal practitioners to be mobilized and trained from a gender and indigenous lens

#### **5. Strengthening Community Action For Development in North East India**

Period: 2021-2024

Client: Bread for the World, Germany

Impact: 2500 individuals, 10 Community Based Organizations were mobilized and trained

People's Organisation

Period: 2017; Ongoing



ONGOING  
/ IMPL  
MENTED  
PROJECTS/  
PROGRAM  
MES  
2015-23

## **6.Integrated Farming System**

Training and Capacity Building Interventions

Client: Meghalaya State Skills Development Society/ADB

Impact: 100 farmers were mobilized and trained; projected impact is 150 Farmers

Period: 2018-2020

## **7. Food Security: Documenting the traditional herbs of womenpractitioners in the state.**

Client: International Indigenous Women Forum (IIWF)

Period: 2017-2018

Impact: 32 direct women practitioners and 100 indirect

ONGOING /  
IMPLE  
MENTED  
PROJECTS/  
PROGRAM  
MES  
2015-23

## 8. Entrepreneurship

### Development

Training and Capacity Building  
Interventions National Urban  
Livelihood Mission

Client: Meghalaya Urban  
Development Authority

Impact: 250 individuals across 25  
Self-Help Groups were  
mobilized and trained

Period: 2015-2018

**9. Community Action for Health  
(CAH)** Community Health Rights  
in 63 villages of East Khasi Hills,  
9 PHCs and 3 Blocks.

Client: National Health  
Mission (NHM)

Period: 2015-2017

Impact: 63 VHSNC trained, 63  
Monitoring committees  
constituted and community  
members including ASHAs and  
AWW trained on health rights  
and entitlements.

13.

Team  
Strength

02 Administrative  
05 Team members  
20 Field Coordinators  
01 Social Media consultant  
01 Website Consultant  
01 programme consultant  
01 Financial Consultant

# Goals and Objectives: Empowering Communities for a Sustainable Future

## Culture and Tradition:

- Facilitate the establishment of efficient local, social, and political structures that empower communities to shape the future of their own territory.
- Empower individuals to upgrade traditional skills, knowledge, and cultural practices, preserving and revitalizing their heritage.
- Encourage the sustainable utilization of natural resources to develop human capital that meets the evolving needs of society.

## Youth:

- Foster an environment that promotes self-employment opportunities for both educated and uneducated youth.
- Encourage young people to actively engage in community development and take ownership of their roles in shaping a prosperous future.
- Empower youth to embrace the significance of their cultural heritage and history, expanding their horizons beyond formal education.

## Livelihood:

- Promote the utilization of locally sourced materials for self-sustainability, fostering resilience and reducing dependency.
- Facilitate access to local, national, and international markets, creating opportunities for economic growth and sustainable development.
- Encourage the exploration of alternative knowledge and economic activities while preserving and honoring traditional skills

## Advocacy:

- Ensure equitable access to relevant technical and legal information, empowering individuals to make informed decisions.
- Safeguard the economic, political, and social rights of communities, preventing their violation and promoting justice.
- Promote the active participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels, fostering inclusivity and diversity.
- Empower communities to adapt their existing social structures to incorporate new technological advancements, embracing innovation while preserving their values.

These goals and objectives represent our unwavering commitment to empowering communities for a sustainable future. By focusing on culture and tradition, youth engagement, livelihood enhancement, and advocacy, we aim to create an environment where communities thrive and individuals are empowered to shape their own destinies. Together, we can build a society that respects and celebrates its diverse heritage while embracing progress and innovation.

# PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN IN 2022-2023

## Strengthening women's voice in Land Resources Governance (Manipur and Meghalaya)

### 1. Introduction:

The project focuses on empowering indigenous communities, specifically the Tangkhul Nagas and Khasis, residing in Manipur. These communities, like many others in the region, are deeply entrenched in patriarchal systems where decision-making power, including control over land and natural resources, lies predominantly with male members. This project aims to address the challenges faced by women in these communities, empowering them to participate in decision-making processes and resource management. By collaborating with women's self-help groups (SHGs), local women's groups, and traditional governance systems, we seek to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation from both male and female perspectives. Additionally, the project aims to analyze the impact of development activities centered on modernity, progress, growth, sustainability, and equity on the lives of indigenous communities.

### Financial Year: 2022-2023

Location: Wunghon and Mapao Village, Manipur and Mawthadraishan and Nongstoin Block, Meghalaya

### 2. Objectives:

- Strengthen the capacities of indigenous communities in the fields of law and leadership, enabling them to actively participate in governance processes.
- Establish a platform for women entrepreneurs who can drive sustainable change by leveraging traditional wisdom and knowledge.
- Promote and sustain collective rights over community land resources governance.



### 3. Activities Undertaken:

- Workshops with allied departments, Village Authorities and community members: Organized workshops on Land Resources Governance, emphasizing the significance of Article 371 (C) and the sixth schedule and its alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Local leaders actively participated in these workshops.
- Policy analysis and research: Conducted a comprehensive narrative report on women's role in Land Resources Governance, specifically in Wunghon, Mapao and pyndengrei villages of Manipur and Meghalaya respectively.
- Entrepreneurial capacity building: Collaborated with JCRE Skills Solution, Manipur, to provide capacity-building training on entrepreneurship for indigenous youth and women in both Wunghon and Mapao villages. The training aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills to establish their own enterprises. The same was conducted in Meghalaya using our own human resources who have been trained in the field of entrepreneurship.
- Identification and promotion of the Indigenous food system: Organized an Indigenous Food Competition during the Mapao Clean Village Festivals in Mapao Village. This competition celebrated local indigenous food and ingredients, encouraging their preservation and utilization. Additionally, an oral storytelling session was conducted to raise awareness and appreciation for the indigenous food system among community members in Wunghon and Mapao Village.

Through this project, we strive to empower indigenous women in land resource governance, ensuring their active participation and decision-making roles. By addressing the limitations and challenges they face, fostering leadership and advocacy skills, and promoting collaboration and convergence among indigenous women's groups, we aim to create a more equitable and inclusive society. Together, we can uplift indigenous women, recognize their invaluable contributions, and build a sustainable future rooted in cultural heritage and gender equality.

#### 4. Achievements:

- Collaboration for entrepreneurship training: Established a partnership with JCRE Skills Solution and Mr. Chingya Luithui from the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights to provide entrepreneurship training and sessions on UNDRIP.
- Development of advocacy and entrepreneurship modules: Drafted training modules on advocacy and entrepreneurship, enhancing the skills and knowledge of indigenous community members in understanding their rights and building their capacity.
- Training Indigenous Women on Integrated Farming System: Conducted activities to promote the use of local natural resources and combat climate change. Specifically, training sessions were held to encourage women to create bio concoctions using locally available resources at home.

The project has made significant strides in strengthening the voices of women in land resources governance among indigenous communities in Manipur. Through workshops, research, capacity building, and community engagement, we have created platforms for women's participation, celebrated indigenous knowledge, and empowered individuals to take charge of their futures. This ongoing work will continue to promote gender equality, sustainable development, and the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage.



# PICTURES

An oral storytelling was conducted with women elderly groups on the Indigenous Food system at MapaoZingsho Village.



Indigenous Food Competition was held in Mapao Zingsho during the Mapao Clean Village Festivals on 24th October 2022.





# Photographs



Legal Accessibility Services for Women and Men:  
Empowering Justice and Equality

# Supported by New Space India Limited (NSIL)

## Introduction:

Violence against women is a global issue that infringes upon their rights and well-being. The United Nations defines it as any act of gender-based violence resulting in physical, sexual, or psychological harm to women. In India, domestic violence is a prevalent crime committed against women, often by male family members who hold positions of trust and power. The Domestic Violence Act of 2005 addresses this issue by defining various forms of domestic violence, including threats to health, physical and sexual abuse, emotional and economic abuse, and harassment related to dowry demands. To combat these crimes, the Criminal (Amendment) Act of 2013 recognized specific acts as offenses, such as acid attacks (Section 326A), attempt to acid attack (Section 326B), sexual harassment (Section 354A), act with intent to disrobe a woman (Section 354B), voyeurism (Section 354C), stalking (Section 354D), and trafficking of women for exploitation (Section 370 and 370A of the Indian Penal Code).

Supported by New Space India Limited (NSIL), this project aims to create awareness about domestic violence and its legal ramifications, providing accessible legal support to women and men.

## Goals:

1. Enable access to timely legal support and empower women to seek justice for violated rights.
2. Increase reporting of crimes committed against women and girls.
3. Encourage women to utilize the judicial system to attain justice for crimes committed against them.
4. Establish a sustainable legal support system.
5. Provide post-care and follow-up services for all resolved cases.

## Methodology:

The project was conducted in collaboration with the Block Development Offices and the Meghalaya State Legal Service Authority (MSLSA). Community-level engagement is facilitated through local heads and women's groups. Focus Group Discussions are organized with women's groups and Self Help Groups (SHGs), in partnership with lawyers from the MSLSA. The program focuses on creating awareness about domestic violence and facilitating legal accessibility services for both women and men. An action research approach is employed, utilizing Participatory Action Research (PAR) to identify and resolve the challenges faced by the community.



## Activities:

1. Awareness Campaigns: Conducting targeted awareness campaigns to make communities aware about domestic violence, its legal implications, and available support systems.
2. Legal Aid Clinics: Establishing legal aid clinics to provide free legal consultation and support to survivors of domestic violence.
3. Capacity Building Workshops: Organizing workshops to enhance the knowledge and understanding of women and men regarding their legal rights and avenues for seeking justice.
4. Helpline Services: Implementing a helpline service to provide immediate assistance and guidance to individuals facing domestic violence.
5. Advocacy and Outreach: Engaging in advocacy efforts to raise awareness among stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public about the importance of addressing domestic violence and ensuring legal accessibility.
6. Collaboration and Referrals: Collaborating with other organizations and agencies to facilitate comprehensive support services for survivors, including medical assistance, counseling, and rehabilitation.

Through the support of New Space India Limited (NSIL), this project aimed to empower women and men to access legal services and seek justice for crimes committed against them. By creating awareness, enhancing legal literacy, and establishing a sustainable support system, we strive to increase reporting of crimes, ensure survivors receive adequate care, and promote a society where domestic violence is not tolerated. Together, we can work towards a future where equality and justice prevail for all.

The targeted location for the project is in East Khasi Hills District.

table(next page).

Block	Localities/areas of operation	Target group
Myllem	4th Mile,	Women's group, Localheads, Self Help Group and Village organization
	3rd Mile	
	Madanriting	
	Umsohsun	
	Wahingdoh	
Mawlai	Mawlai	
Mawpat	Nongmensong	
	Nongrah	
	Pynthor	
	Nongmensong	
	Demthring	

Grassroot with its initiative started activities with Local heads and women’s group at thecommunity level to raise an understanding on the violence against women. The discussionswereheldatdifferentplacestogather knowledgeandinformation tothepeople. Strong collaboration with the Block Development Office of Myllem, Mawpat and Mawlai, Women’s groups’, and local headmen aided us in achieving the requisite activities.

Activities	Planned	Status	Remarks
FocusGroupDiscussion(FGD)			
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	10	Completed	Active participation ofwomen.
Localheads Women’sgroup Brainstorming on localidentificati on andneeds for/ofinterventi on usinglocally available materials			

Activities	Planned	Status	Remarks
SustainableLegalSupportSystem			
LegalAidMela	3	Completed	The awareness campaign was done inCollaboratio n with Block Development Office and Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority(MSL SA).
Paralegal training	2	Completed	Training of Women andyouthtobe a ble tomanage is suesarise inthei rlocalityandwo rkinghandin ha ndwiththelocal institution.

Activities	Planned	Status	Remarks
Post care and follow up would be available on all terminated cases			
Data collection on terminated cases		Completed	16 cases were covered up in the data collection.
RENEWAL CASES ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		Completed	Follow up with cases submitted.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD LINKAGES			
Linkages	2	Completed	Linkages done with MSLSA, Block Development Office , Social Welfare department and entrepreneur

Activities	Planned	Status	Remarks
Entrepreneurship development training	4	Completed	Capacity building on entrepreneurship was initiated. Bakery training was also conducted with the participants to encourage livelihood activity.



# Empowering Communities for Sustainable Development in North East India

Supported by Bread for The World, Germany/ Church for  
Auxiliary Social Action

## INTRODUCTION :

In 2014, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposed a ban on coal mining in Meghalaya due to the detrimental practice of rat-hole mining. Recognizing that the right to life takes precedence over economic interests, the NGT prioritized the well-being of communities over profit. However, this ban has adversely affected the livelihoods of numerous coal-dependent communities, as the government and enterprises failed to provide alternative sources of income. The situation in the East Jaintia Hills District is particularly dire, as the people have been engrossed in coal mining for decades, leaving them with limited options for diversifying their skills and livelihoods. Overcoming this challenge and shifting mindsets has been the primary focus of Grassroot since its inception.

Moreover, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the difficulties faced by these communities, impacting them as it has the entire world. Despite facing numerous obstacles, Grassroot has managed to organize several programs that have positively influenced the communities and fostered a change in mindset. These changes can be categorized into different areas:

## Socio-economic Changes :

Grassroot has conducted various programs and training sessions focused on livelihood enhancement and income generation. In collaboration with local resource person Mr. Helpme Laloo, Grassroot organized a two-week-long Integrated Farming System training at Pamrapaithlu village in 2022. A total of 35 trainees, including 26 women and 9 men, participated in the program. The post-training follow-up revealed that the majority of participants found the training highly beneficial for upgrading their livelihoods. For instance, Mrs. Christianti Chyrmang and Tedabuhki Rymbai, both farmers, applied the knowledge gained to produce organic bio-concoctions and compost, resulting in increased crop yields. Out of the 35 trainees, 20 have seen significant improvements in their livelihoods and income generation.

In the same year, Grassroot collaborated with Bethany Society to provide skills development training to 35 young individuals from Moolang village in the East Jaintia Hills District. The training aimed to equip youth members, aged 16 to 30, with the skills necessary for self-employment and employability in various livelihood opportunities. The training encompassed both hard and soft skills, including bio-concoctions, bokashi piggery, livestock health and nutrition, enterprise development, fundraising, leadership skills, problem-solving, conflict management, time management, team building, gender equality, career development, presentation skills, and fostering a positive attitude.

Following the training, 30 of the participants established their own Producer's Groups' and began producing compost, bio-concoctions, and cultivating mushrooms, significantly improving their livelihoods. Notably, Mrs. Arky Rymbai's exceptional skills led her to win ten prizes in a flower competition organized by the Horticulture Department in Jaintia Hills. She is also set to receive a subsidized poly house from the Horticulture Department.

## Socio-cultural Impact :

During the Integrated Farming System and Integrated Skills Training programs, Grassroot organized cultural events in each community upon completion of the training. These cultural programs have played a pivotal role in enhancing the aesthetic, artistic, historical, intellectual, and social development of the communities. They have instilled a deep sense of pride in the community members regarding their unique culture and traditions, which have been passed down through generations. These programs have fostered an appreciation for their own identity and heritage.

## Environmental Initiatives :

In 2020, Grassroot initiated a campaign on bottle bricks or ecobricks in Mutong village, East Jaintia Hills District. The concept of bottle bricks involves reusing waste plastics to prevent them from ending up in landfills, thereby minimizing environmental pollution. Bottle bricks can be utilized to construct various items, including walls and furniture. In communities without access to industrial recycling or incinerators, this campaign has empowered them to manage plastic waste effectively. The positive changes witnessed among community members demonstrate the significance of spreading this campaign to change mindsets and foster a sense of responsibility towards our planet.

## Gender Empowerment :

During the Integrated Skills Training in 2022, trainees received comprehensive training on gender and career development, which was further reinforced through an activity called "inclusive football." This activity, organized in six communities, aimed to help trainees understand the distinction between sex and gender, identify prevalent gender stereotypes in their respective communities, and raise awareness about the various forms of gender-based oppression. Addressing these gender issues is crucial and challenging, but it is a vital step toward fostering equality

## Political Engagement :

The establishment of the Saiñdur People's Organization (SPO) in East Jaintia Hills District has united communities to work together for a common cause. SPO members are actively involved and committed to addressing community issues. In 2021, a workshop on "Indigenous Leaders and Indigenous Rights" was organized for SPO members, where problem tree analysis and strategies for resolving issues were taught. The workshop also facilitated discussions on the "Sixth Schedule," which serves as a "mini constitution" for the four states in North East India. The PO team embodies a spirit of ownership, collectivism, leadership, and active participation in supporting their communities. Strengthening Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) is another strategy employed by Grassroot to empower community members across 20 different villages in the East Jaintia Hills District. These CBOs aim to develop strategic plans to improve accessibility to schemes offered by different departments, as well as provide guidance on loans and entitlements. Through the formation of CBOs, community members become aware of the various entitlements available to them.

## OBJECTIVES :

1. Equipping young minds with the skill sets necessary to drive economic development.
2. Fostering self-belief among vulnerable unemployed youth by creating sustainable employment opportunities.
3. Acting as a facilitator to bridge the gap between poverty and self-employment opportunities.
4. Imparting skill-oriented training to rural youth, enabling them to develop technical and professional expertise in areas such as compost preparation, bio-concoctions, apiculture, handicrafts, food processing, bakery, indigenous fast food, floriculture, entrepreneurship, enterprise development, financial literacy, and gender empowerment, waste management.
5. Serving as an information center, offering guidance and facilitation to rural communities.

By focusing on these objectives, Grassroot endeavors to uplift communities, instill confidence in the youth, and foster sustainable development in North East India.

## ACTIVITIES ACCOMPLISHED :

In 2014, the National Green Tribunal's ban on coal mining had a detrimental impact on individuals whose livelihoods depended primarily on handicrafts. The traditional craft of creating cone baskets, widely used for transferring coals from mines to trucks, experienced a significant decline in demand. This dying art has lost its appeal to younger generations, mainly due to a lack of recognition. Recognizing the need for intervention, Grassroot initiated a training program on 'Bamboo Jewelleries' for 30 young women from East Jaintia Hills who already possess skills in working with bamboo crafts. The training program is conducted in collaboration with Master Trainers registered under the District Commerce and Industries Centre, Khliehriat block, East Jaintia Hills district, Meghalaya.



## Training Objectives :

1. Revitalize the practice of bamboo handicrafts through innovative approaches.
2. Establish market linkages to generate passive income for these women.

Target Group: Self Help Groups and Producer Groups

Training Center: Byrwai, East Jaintia Hills

Number of Trainees: 30 women

Duration of Training: 15 days

## Expected Outcomes :

1. Certification of 30 women as skilled artisans in creating bamboo jewellerys.
2. Establishment of market linkages to generate a sustainable income.
3. Increased interest of younger generations in working with bamboo crafts.

In February, Grassroot mobilized members of the People's Organization. However, due to the pandemic, meetings and programs aimed at strengthening the newly formed organization were unable to materialize. Therefore, on September 24th, Grassroot, in collaboration with the CASA team from Shillong, organized a meeting with the People's Organization members at the office of the Deputy Commissioner. This gathering served to provide proper orientation and conduct elections for office bearers.

## Activities:

1. Capacity building program with the Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) of Mutong and Byrwai.
2. Session on market linkages and packaging for bamboo jewelleryes.
3. Meeting at MBDA for collaboration on a traditional eco-museum.

From September 26th to October 12th, 2022, Grassroot organized and facilitated a 14-day training program on handicrafts in Byrwai village, East Jaintia Hills District, Meghalaya. This training program, supported by Bread for the World, Germany, involved 25 participants, including community members, IVCS members, and local Master Trainers who conducted sessions on handicrafts. The training encompassed both theoretical and practical sessions to enhance participants' understanding of the subject.

The livelihood trainings provided have had a significant impact, as trainees have begun applying the skills they acquired. A total of 65 youths have been trained in Integrated Farming System (IFS) and bamboo handicrafts. Among them, 30 individuals have started their own small-scale businesses, while 35 have pursued further upskilling through networking with various government departments, aligning with schemes and accessing loans. As part of the IFS and Handicrafts training, 27 trainees were connected with government departments such as the Meghalaya Institute of Entrepreneurship, District Commerce and Industries Centre PRIME, BASIN Development, etc. Notably, Ibalashimti from Moolang and Medies Dkhar have initiated their ventures in Integrated Farming System. These women have formed a producer group to produce compost, bio concoctions, mushrooms, and other natural farming products.

The group showcased its products at a stall during a collaborative event with NABARD held at All Saints Cathedral hall from November 23rd to November 25th, 2022, to uplift income generation for the Self Help Groups (SHGs) and expand their product range. This market served as a platform for trainees to enhance their networking skills with other producers and entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, trainees from Byrwai, East Jaintia Hills District, collaborated with Grassroot to sell their handmade craft products at the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, resulting in significant profits.



On October 30th, 2022, another meeting was held with the members of the Saiñdur People's Organization (SPO) at the DC Office in Khliehriat, East Jaintia Hills District. During this meeting, the roles and responsibilities of the organization members were assigned, and the elected office bearers and executive members were officially appointed. A total of 21 members were present.

Additionally, Grassroot engaged in various networking activities :

- Visits and networking with DCIC for certification collaboration with trainees in different trades.
- Collaboration with the labor department to raise awareness about programs, benefits, and entitlements.
- Coordination with the DC office to obtain permission for conducting awareness programs on schemes and entitlements.
- Capacity building program with the CBOs of Mutong and Byrwai.
- Session on market linkages and packaging for bamboo jewellery trainees to enhance their knowledge of final product finishing for customer attraction.

### Overall Assessment:

Seminars conducted in each community have proven highly productive, as they attracted a larger number of community members from different villages, resulting in increased contributions within the community. Notably, these seminars have fostered a sense of ownership and greater participation of women in workshops and planning. Furthermore, community members are becoming more aware of the programs and services available to them.

## Highlights:

A significant highlight was the meeting held with the members of the Saiñdur People's Organization (SPO) at the DC Office in Khliehriat, East Jaintia Hills District. During this meeting, the assignment of roles and responsibilities to the organization members, as well as the appointment of elected office bearers and executive members, generated a sense of ownership and a desire for developmental progress. This motivation further inspires the Grassroot team to contribute more to the welfare of the people.

## Lessons Learnt:

When working with communities, it is essential to consider socio-economic, socio-cultural, and political dynamics and realities. Maintaining political neutrality is crucial to ensure that all groups can actively participate in project development activities.

## Challenges:

1. The responsibilities of household chores often pose difficulties for community members to attend workshops and training sessions on certain days, as they need to look after younger siblings and their own children.
2. Frequent changes in community leadership hinder rapport-building and the overall development process.
3. The impact of coal mining activities makes it challenging for trainees and members to focus on natural farming due to soil degradation and reduced productivity.

## Good Fit Practices:

1. Engaging local leaders in various programs and workshops has proven successful.
2. In-person encounters are generally more beneficial, although occasional online meetings can be helpful and cost-effective.
3. Building connections with line departments facilitates workshops and programs.
4. Encouraging youth leadership within communities contributes to program success and easier mobilization.



# Photographs





# Photographs



# “Sustainable livelihood and income generation for youths”

Supported by NABARD

## Introduction :

"Sustainable Livelihood and Income Generation for Youths" is an inspiring project spearheaded by Grassroot Shillong, aimed at equipping young individuals with valuable carpentry skills. This initiative has received generous support from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

This transformative three-month training program serves as a crucial component of Grassroot's mission, which is to nurture entrepreneurial spirit and livelihood-generation skills among the vibrant youth of Meghalaya. Don Bosco Tech Nongstoin, nestled in the picturesque West Khasi Hills District, serves as our esteemed technical support institution.

The training program specifically targets 30 youths aged between 18 to 35 years who possess a deep interest in carpentry.

Mobilization efforts have been made possible through the collaborative efforts of various departments, local community leaders, Village Organizations (VOs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

By providing carpentry training, we aim to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for these enthusiastic youths, dismantling the barriers of unemployment and opening pathways for them to establish their own furniture enterprises or secure gainful employment with established furniture makers.

## Objectives of the Project:

1. Alleviate youth unemployment within the community.
2. Enhance the livelihoods of young individuals.
3. Empower trainees (Youth) to access start-up capital upon completion of their training.

## Summary

The skills training program commenced on April 11th, 2022, with the participation of 30 enthusiastic youths. The training concluded on July 11th, 2022, culminating in a memorable valedictory program held on July 13th, 2022. In addition to the core curriculum, several other valuable trainings and activities were incorporated.

The following elements were included in the training program:

1. Comprehensive guidance on the schemes and services provided by the Government of Meghalaya for aspiring entrepreneurs and individuals seeking to establish their own enterprises. This insightful session was facilitated by the Functional Manager of the District of Commerce Industries Centre (DCIC).
2. Financial literacy training, an essential aspect facilitated by the Meghalaya State Rural and Livelihood Society (MSRLS). This session empowered trainees with crucial knowledge on finance management and the significance of savings.

3. Establishing credit bank linkages, where trainees had the opportunity to interact with representatives from different banks.

4. A captivating exposure visit to the esteemed Don Bosco Technical School in Shillong, allowing trainees to witness excellence in action.

All 30 trainees successfully completed the carpentry skills training program. The journey culminated on July 13th, 2022, after which they were diligently monitored for placement opportunities. Grassroot collaborates closely with the All Furniture Association to provide further upscaling and placement opportunities for these talented trainees within the association's esteemed network.



# Livelihood Enterprise Development Programmes (LEDPs)

## Supported by NABARD

### Introduction :

Handicrafts, a prevalent occupation in the Rongjeng Block, serve as a means of livelihood for many people in the area. However, there is a pressing need to enhance their skills and improve marketing strategies for their products. By providing a comprehensive training program, we aim to create a platform that not only promotes their crafts but also enhances their marketing skills. While there is already a significant demand for crafts, stools, accessories, and other handicrafts, the challenge lies in meeting the market demand effectively.

### Methodology :

The implementation process involved the following steps:

1. Identification of SHG members in the villages of Rongjeng Block.
2. Conducting an orientation on the LEDP project for SHG members.
3. Screening and selection of women SHGs.
4. Organizing a fifteen-day training program and establishing linkages with the DCIC department and banks.

## Objectives

1. Provide a platform for enterprise promotion to the groups.
2. Improve the skill set of women SHGs to enable them to generate more income and achieve financial independence.
3. Empower women from low economic backgrounds.
4. Ensure sustainable livelihood options for women SHGs by establishing production units.

## Training Location

The first batch of training was conducted in Baringre Wadro Village, involving a total of 30 participants from women SHGs.

## Activities Conducted

1. Mobilization: Mobilization efforts were carried out in three villages.
2. Participant selection: Participants were selected voluntarily by the SHG groups.
3. Inauguration: The training program was inaugurated on 8th March 2023, and the training commenced on 9th March 2023.
4. Handicraft training: A comprehensive 15-day training program focused on creating bags and jewelry.
5. Sessions with Banks and DCIC: Sessions were conducted to educate participants on PMEGY and establish credit linkages.

## Next Action Plan

1. Conduct training in Imsamdrop village.
2. Follow up with the first batch to support them in setting up their production units and establishing credit linkages.

We envision these initiatives as catalysts for the growth and development of the handicraft sector in Rongjeng Block, leading to improved livelihoods and economic empowerment for women. With continued support and collaboration, we are confident in achieving sustainable and impactful outcomes in the journey ahead.

## Photographs:



## Community meeting and monbilization



## Inauguration day



## Photographs:



## Training sessions



## Sessions on Government schemes

# SKILLS TO SUCCEED

## Empowering Youth for a Brighter Future

### (Supported by Quest Alliance)

#### Introduction:

The Skills to Succeed project, supported by Quest Alliance and implemented by Grassroot, has been an incredible initiative running from April 1, 2022, to April 1, 2023. Our mission is to equip young individuals, aged 18 to 35 years, with the necessary skills for both self-employment and employability, opening doors to livelihood opportunities. We conducted training programs in the picturesque villages of Khliehtyrchi, Mihmyntdu, Sabah Muswang, Demthring, and Moodur in the West Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya. Let's dive into the remarkable journey we embarked upon.

#### Training Program Highlights:

Throughout the project, we had the privilege of working with 170 enthusiastic trainees, consisting of 152 females and 18 males. Our comprehensive training program spanned 21 days, immersing participants in a transformative learning experience from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM each day. The sessions seamlessly blended theoretical knowledge with practical hands-on exercises, ensuring a holistic understanding of the subjects.

## Objectives:

The Skills to Succeed project aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Empower young individuals as catalysts for economic development by equipping them with essential skill sets.
2. Instill a strong sense of self-belief in vulnerable unemployed youth, creating sustainable employment opportunities.
3. Bridge the gap between poverty and self-employment by acting as a facilitator.
4. Impart skill-oriented training to rural youth, enabling them to develop technical and professional expertise in various areas, such as compost preparation, bio-concoctions, apiculture, food processing, bakery, indigenous fast food, floriculture, entrepreneurship and enterprise development, financial literacy, gender awareness, and waste management.
5. Serve as a comprehensive information hub, offering guidance and facilitation services to rural communities.

## Activities and Achievements:

Our training program focused on motivating and inspiring the youth to explore self-employment opportunities, thereby fostering rural economic growth. We divided the skills training into two categories:

1. **Hard Skills:** Trainees received practical guidance in diverse areas, including compost preparation, bio-concoctions, apiculture, food processing, bakery, indigenous fast food, floriculture, entrepreneurship and enterprise development, and financial literacy. These hard skills form the backbone of their entrepreneurial ventures.

2. **Soft Skills:** Recognizing the importance of well-rounded development, we also imparted essential soft skills, such as leadership, problem-solving, conflict management, communication, time management, team building, presentation skills, and fostering a positive attitude. These skills complemented their technical knowledge, preparing them for success in the real world.

### Outcome and Impact:

The outcomes of the project have exceeded our expectations, as the boot-camp model, held within the trainees' own villages, proved to be highly effective. Witnessing the trainees' unwavering interest and dedication, we observed a significant impact in their chosen trades. Several participants have already launched their own successful livelihood-generating activities, such as baking, food processing, bio-concoctions, apiculture, and more.



The Skills to Succeed project has been a transformative journey for all involved. We are immensely proud of the trainees' achievements and their determination to carve a better future for themselves and their communities. This project has not only empowered individuals but also contributed to the sustainable development of the rural economy. We express our sincere gratitude to Quest Alliance for their unwavering support and to the trainees for their dedication and enthusiasm.

Together, we are building a brighter future, one skill at a time.

## PHOTOGRAPHS:



Inauguration of first Skills To Succeed program at Khliehtyrchi Village West Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya in presence of different heads form different departments both Governmental and Non-Governmental.



Trainees attending the inauguration program Apiculture training with the trainees of Khliehtyrchi of Skills To Succeed, Supported by Quest Alliance village West Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya



## PHOTOGRAPHS:



Inauguration of first Skills To Succeed program at Sabah Muswang & Demthring Village West Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya in presence of different heads form different departments both Governmental and Non-Governmental.



Training on Bio-concoctions as a part of the Integrated Farming System by our Master Trainer held at Demthring Village West Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya.



## PHOTOGRAPHS:



Practical Training on Vertical-composting and Keyhole garden held at Madur Village West Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya



Indigenous Fast-food training with the trainees held at different villages of WJH District Meghalaya



## PHOTOGRAPHS:



Indigenous Fast-food training with the trainees held at different villages of WJH District Meghalaya

# INITIATIVES

Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust  
Empowering Women



The MoonCatcher Project  
Removing Barriers for Girls



## SANITARY PADS DISTRIBUTION

Revitalizing Menstrual Hygiene in India: Breaking  
Taboos and Empowering Women

Menstruation, a natural bodily process, remains shrouded in taboo and neglect in India. Recognizing the need to bridge the gap in menstrual hygiene and generate awareness on this critical issue, Grassroot took the initiative to facilitate a groundbreaking discourse. In collaboration with The Moon Catcher Project, Civil Hospital Adolescence Clinic, and Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust, we embarked on a transformative journey to challenge the societal stigma surrounding menstruation.

A significant aspect of our campaign involved the distribution of cloth sanitary pads, meticulously crafted by the talented women of the Self Help Group (SHG) at Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust, in partnership with the Moon Catcher Project based in the United States. These eco-friendly and reusable pads symbolize more than just a practical solution – they signify a shift towards empowering girls and women in our state.



By providing access to menstrual products, we aimed to dismantle barriers, combat stigmatization, raise awareness, and ultimately, enhance their overall well-being.

Prior to the distribution, engaging discussions were held with adolescent girls and women to foster a safe space for dialogue. The fundamentals of menstruation and menstrual hygiene were explored at length. Astonishingly, we discovered that 90 percent of the girls were initially hesitant to open up and share their experiences, necessitating considerable persuasion and encouragement

. It is disheartening to acknowledge the persistence of widespread myths and misconceptions surrounding menstrual hygiene. Despite being an entirely natural occurrence exclusive to women, menstruation has been enshrouded in secrecy and perpetuated by societal taboos in numerous communities.

These harmful taboos surrounding menstruation can have detrimental effects on the emotional well-being, mentality, and lifestyle of girls and women. Moreover, they directly impact their overall health. Our discussions aimed to dispel these myths, replacing them with factual information about the female reproductive system and the menstrual cycle. Among the many queries posed, participants sought clarity on topics ranging from wet dreams to menstruation post tubectomy/sterilization. By addressing these concerns head-on, our facilitators paved the way for a profound shift in understanding and acceptance.

Over the course of our campaign, from November 2021 to March 2023, a total of 724 cloth sanitary pads were joyfully distributed across East Khasi Hills and East Jaintia Hills. Each pad carries with it the hope of empowerment and the promise of a brighter, healthier future for girls and women in our community.

As we reflect on our achievements, we acknowledge the importance of continued efforts to break the shackles of menstrual taboos. Grassroot remains committed to championing menstrual hygiene, promoting open conversations, and creating a society where every woman's well-being is valued and prioritized. Together, let us embrace a future where menstruation is seen as a natural and beautiful part of life, free from shame and discrimination

**A table below indicated the figures.**

SL NO.	Community/Organisation	No. of Pads Distributed
1.	Lawei Baphyrnai Children Home for Girls, Shillong East Khasi Hills	20
2.	Open day Shelter IewMawlong (Bomfyle Road), Shillong, East Khasi Hills	30
3.	Open Day Shelter Mawblei, East Khasi Hills	30
4.	Reach Shillong Ministries Open Day School for Underprivileged Laitkor, East Khasi Hills	80

5.	A.W.Thomas Girls' Home, Shillong, East Khasi Hills	30
6.	Khrang Community, East Khasi Hills	50
7.	Nongkyrsoi Secondary School Khrang, East Khasi Hills	50
8.	Moolang East Jaintia Hills	50
9.	Iapmala Village, East Jaintia Hills	50
10.	Nongmensong Open Day Shelter, Shillong, East Khasi Hills	34
11.	Dangar PHC, Dangar, East Khasi Hills	77

12.	Sohra, East Khasi Hills	70
13.	LAITLYNGKOTUMTHLI SCHOOL, EAST KHASI HILLS	20
14.	LaitlyngkotNongthymmai School, East Khasi Hills	20
15.	Thynroit HWC, Sub Centre East Khasi Hills	30
16	Wahkhen village, East Khasi Hills	42
17	Grassroot, Shillong, East Khasi Hills	30
18	Grace Drop in Centre for Women Laitkor	45

## **Title: Empowering Girls: Promoting Menstrual Health, Healthy Lifestyles, and Personal Well-being**

The recently held awareness program aimed to empower girls by addressing crucial aspects of their well-being, including menstrual health, healthy lifestyles, and personal care. Through interactive presentations, engaging discussions, and dynamic activities, we strived to create a positive impact on their lives.

Key activities performed during the Sanitary Pads distribution.

### **1. Menstrual Health and Hygiene: Embracing Self-Care with Confidence**

The session commenced with an enlightening presentation on menstrual health and hygiene, emphasizing the significance of self-care during menstruation. Participants actively explored the journey of girls and young women through menstruation, unraveling the reasons behind it. Valuable insights were shared on maintaining a routine that promotes safe and convenient menstrual practices. From breaking the barriers of hesitation to providing clear directions, we aimed to empower every young woman to embrace their periods confidently. Furthermore, the discussion shed light on the importance of a balanced, healthy diet, including iron-rich foods, to support overall well-being.



## 2. Holistic Approach to Health: Presentations and Empowering Discussions

To foster holistic well-being, several presentations were conducted on diverse topics. Healthy eating took center stage as we discussed the profound impact of nutrition on one's physical and mental health. The significance of regular physical activity in maintaining a healthy lifestyle was highlighted, encouraging girls to embrace the joy of movement. We also facilitated open conversations about sexual activity, substance abuse, and domestic violence, providing vital information and resources to empower girls in making informed choices.

## 3. Audio-Visual Experience: Exploring Menstrual Health and Substance Abuse Awareness

A captivating video was showcased, capturing the attention of young adolescents, addressing menstrual health and hygiene. Simultaneously, at Thynroit HWC and Sub Centre East Khasi Hills, an eye-opening discussion on substance abuse, particularly smoking, took place. By combining visual storytelling with impactful conversations, we aimed to educate and inspire adolescents towards healthier life choices.

## 4. Curiosity and Empowerment: The Reusable Pads Initiative

The participants displayed great attentiveness and curiosity throughout the program, particularly when discussing menstrual hygiene and the benefits of using reusable pads. To ensure their personal well-being, each girl received reusable pads as a gesture of empowerment. Witnessing their enthusiasm to adopt sustainable and hygienic practices was truly inspiring.

## 5. Zumba: Unleashing the Power of Physical Fitness

To emphasize the importance of physical fitness, an invigorating Zumba session was conducted. Through a lively round of Zumba dance, girls experienced the joy and benefits of engaging in regular physical activity. The energy and enthusiasm in the room were contagious, leaving the girls with a newfound appreciation for the positive impact of movement on their well-being.

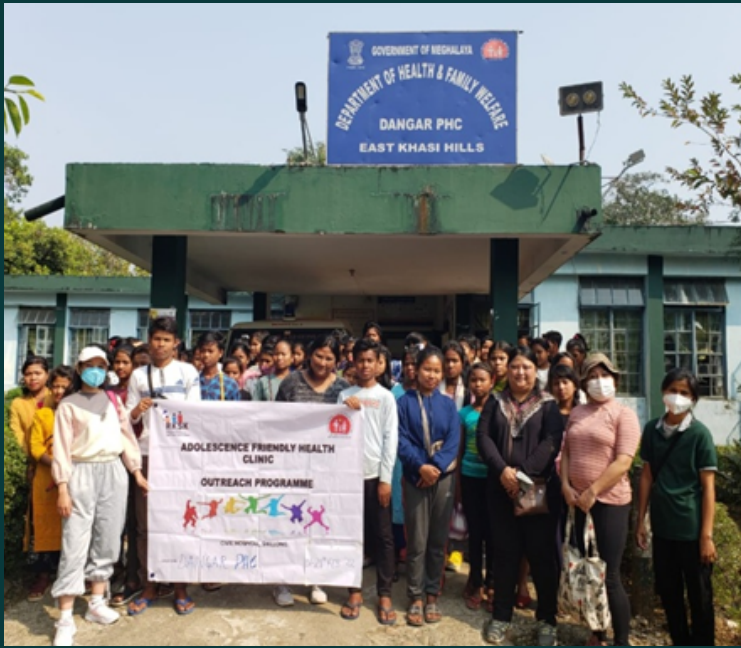
### Acknowledgments:

This successful awareness program and sanitary pad distribution were made possible through the dedication and collaboration of the Grassroot Team, including Phidahun Dkhar, Banylla Kharkongor, Darishish aLyngdoh, Emeka Kharbani, Jose Vigil Khardewsaw, Luckytwency Rymbai, Nabashisha Khongstia, Mebashisha Mawlong, Wakani Sukhlain, Mayanka Chyrmang, Cynthia Kharwanniang, and Mayanka Chyrmang from the Civil Hospital Adolescence Clinic. Their collective efforts and commitment played a vital role in empowering girls and fostering positive change.

The awareness program on menstrual health, healthy lifestyles, and personal well-being left an indelible impact on the lives of the participants. By equipping girls with knowledge, resources, and the confidence to prioritize their well-being, we believe that they are now better prepared to navigate the challenges and embrace a future full of empowerment and personal growth.



# Photo Gallery



Unleashing the Power of Collaboration

## **Zoonotic Vector-Borne Diseases Research:**

We are thrilled to present an exciting and groundbreaking initiative, the Zoonotic Vector-Borne Diseases Research project, a vibrant collaboration between Grassroot and the esteemed Indian Institute of Public Health, Shillong. Our mission is to raise awareness and conduct cutting-edge research in the captivating landscapes of East Jaiñtia Hills and Eastern West Khasi Hills.

At the forefront of our endeavors, Grassroot has masterfully orchestrated the delicate task of obtaining Free Prior Informed Consent from the esteemed village authorities. We have also diligently conducted a comprehensive baseline study in the handpicked villages, strategically identifying the Community Resource Persons who will play a pivotal role in executing our cross-sectional, longitudinal, and syndromic surveillance efforts. Their tireless dedication will ensure that no stone is left unturned in our quest for knowledge.

But our efforts don't stop there. We believe in immersing ourselves in the vibrant tapestry of village life, delving deep into the social dynamics that underpin the transmission of diseases. Through spirited focus group discussions and captivating in-depth interviews, we aim to unravel the intricate threads that connect communities and diseases, shedding light on previously unexplored territories.



Equally crucial to our success is the mobilization and organization of comprehensive trainings. These trainings will empower our staff, community resource persons, and the community itself, nurturing a collective spirit of resilience and preparedness. With knowledge as our shield, we will stand united against the challenges that lie ahead.

Since our inception in September 2022, this project has been an incredible journey of enlightenment, punctuated by valuable lessons and unforeseen obstacles. We have come to understand the intrinsic rights of the community, the profound influence wielded by the village headmen and women's groups, and the trepidation that arises when pushing the boundaries of conventional testing practices. It is through these challenges that we grow, evolving as an organization that embraces the transformative power of health-focused initiatives.

As we venture into uncharted territory, we invite you to join us on this enthralling expedition. Together, we can pioneer groundbreaking research, bolster community resilience, and create a future where health and knowledge reign supreme. The path may be challenging, but the rewards are immeasurable, shaping the very fabric of our society.



## Economic Empowerment for single mothers:

The collaboration between FST and Grassroot to work in the urban settings with single mothers began with an objective to look at the challenges faced by women in Shillong too, an urban area to cater to :

1. Identifying skills and skill gap through a socio-economic study
2. Building or enhancing skills
3. Linkages with Financial Institutions
4. Building an array of women social and economic entrepreneurs who can challenge status quo
5. Create collective efforts for socio and economic support
6. Market linkages
7. Advocacy and Advocacy skill building for schemes and programmes entitlement and Justice

What do we hope to gain?

1. Access to income and assets: When women have a source of income, they are on the path to becoming a healthy, empowered economic actor.
2. Control of and benefit from economic gains: Women who are able to decide where, when, and how to spend their income see improvements in their social and economic status and the level of resources devoted to their children.
3. Power to make decisions: Decision-making is a core expression of agency and refers to the capacity of women and girls to take purposeful action and pursue goals free from the threat of violence or retribution.
4. Collective Efforts: A support system to aid them gain confidence and express larger income flow and advocate for social protective systems.

So far we have been able to identify 50 single mothers from Nongmensong and Nongrah areas, completed skill gap analysis, trained them on off-farm skills like bakery, introduce entrepreneurship and advocacy skills.



Grassroot Collaborated with the Indigenous Women's Forum of North East India (IWFNEI) to conduct a training on "Enhanced Leadership" & "Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls" for 41 participants from different states of the North East Region. The training was held from the 19th to 23rd January 2023, at the Pastoral Centre, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Statewise representation :

1. Assam State: Rabha Women welfare: (3) members.  
Zeme Mother's Asso. (3) members.  
. Karbi Nimso Chingthur Association: (4) members as an observers.
- (4). United Tribal Assam: 1 member as an observer
2. Arunachal Pradesh:
  - (1). Tangsa Women Association: 3 members.
3. Manipur State:
  - (1). Naga Women Union: 3.
  - (2). Zomi Mother's Association: 3 members.
4. Mizoram State:
  - (1). Lai Women Association: 4 members.

## 5.Nagaland State:

- Lotha Women organization:(4) members as an observers.
- . Naga Indigenous Women Network:(3) members.

## 6.Tripura State.

- (1).Borok Women's Forum(4) members

The session was then handed over to the Resource person Mr. Mrinal Gohain who contextualized certain historical and social progression of the Indigenous Peoples in the North East India over the past decades. Due to vast demographic changes over the decades there is discernable change in the ethnic features effecting local populations, especially in the States bordering International boundaries. The economy is changing and shifting from the hands of indigenous community to the non-indigenous hands so also Power dynamics has seen drastic shift from people centric policy to market and profit oriented ideology. The multi ethnic mother tongues being spoken and transmitted from generation to generation is being diluted by the languages of the dominant communities in the region. One prime example is the Hindi language which is slowly replacing the different mother tongues and it has become the lingua franca in the NEI. He pointed out the danger of such a trend as it will dilute our culture and can even bring it to extinction.

The State and electoral politics has opened the door to inequality in society which has also negatively effected the hitherto to classless and egalitarian IP societies in the last decades. He explained the background of the word “Hegemony” and said that it is prevelant into many levels in today’s life. In earlier days, society was more traditional yet liberal at the same time which is not the case to day. The ideology of the Government in present times is producing a policy which is tampering with history to retain power by any means .

In earlier days, there was almost no discrimination in society as compared to the present days. We see more discrimination now because of the class factor brought about by inequitable distribution of economic benefits on society . Today most young people are migrating to the metros where they are absorbed in the informal job market where they face further discrimination and harassment due to their low economic status. Further the Government is increasingly imposing “development” schemes in the north-east without initiating proper discussions with the people



I . The question is whether such schemes are really benefitting our people particularly your younger generation. In other words Government policies are based on market forces and not on people's welfare. The speaker then talked about Antonio Francesco Gramsci, who was an Italian founder cum leader of Italian Communist party and was also philosopher, journalist and a writer. Gramsci remained imprisoned under the law of sedition until he died and wrote many books on how the powerful or the ruling capitalist use cultural institution to retain the power of capitalist society. He explained how cultural hegemony is used to manipulate the people emotions to control them and minimize the use of force to maintain law and order. The speaker asked whether patriarchy is a form of hegemony and if they could recognise the many forms and ways they live under patriarchal hegemony. The speaker stressed on how accountability needs to be at the core of the system, whether we engage with the government or among ourselves. He encouraged the NEI people's to have regular discussions and exchange of ideas in order to develop policies to sustain Indigenous development. He concluded by saying that all new ideas for our development must come from our indigeneity to ensure our identity and traditional genius remain vibrant and dynamic with the changing times.

SESSION 2 . Began with introduction of Ms. Elanor Dictaan Bang-oe who is a Coordinator of Indigenous Women Program Tebtebba having vast experience working with the Indigenous Women and their issues at the Regional and International level for long.

She recalled how in the past too Tebtebba has helped our Forum in various ways and expressed our disappointment for not joining us in person. After brief introduction the session was handed over to the Resource person Ms. Eleanor begin her session by expressing her own difficulties and disappointment for her inability to attend in person as planned due to Visa problem. She however expressed her joy on seeing the gathering of our members even though it could only be a virtual meeting. Briefing on Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls basing on CEDAW and UNDRIP Eleanor started with a pictorial example on Indigenous women relationship with men, where it depicts how unequal the opportunities are for women vice versa men. The basic principle of CEDAW is based on equality for man and woman by emphasising appropriate access to both and eliminating discrimination that exist to support the change in relationship between man and woman. CEDAW was adopted on 30th July 1979, . The speaker discussed in details about what is General Recommendation in UNDRIP and the recent General Recommendation No.39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls.

### State Obligations-

- A. Equality and non-discrimination with focus on intersecting forms of discrimination.
- B. Access to Justice and Plural Legal Systems.
- C. Right to effective participation in Political and Public life.
- D. Right to work.

E. Right to Health.

F. Right to Culture.

G. Right to land, territories and natural resources  
(article 13,14)

H. Right to Food, water and seeds, (article 12,14)

I. Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable  
environment (art 12,14)

The speaker explained the above obligations that the state is bound to provide as the rights of the indigenous women and girls. All the rights were explained in detail by the speaker who concluded by encouraging the women to reflect on the situation existing in our respective states and how to exercise these rights. This was followed by a brief discussion with the participants on issues of equality, discrimination, decision making and women's empowerment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our entire family for their constant support The Board members, Team Members and Volunteers of Grassroot.

Friends of Grassroot

Bethany Society

Faith Foundation

MSSDS- Meghalaya State Skill Development Society

VHAM- Voluntary Health Association of Meghalaya, Shillong

ADR- Association for Democratic Reforms, New Delhi

NEN- North East Network

MSWC- Meghalaya State Women's Commission

MIE- Meghalaya Institute of Entrepreneurship

CASA-Church Auxiliary for Social Action

MUDA- Meghalaya Urban Development Agency

BRDC-Bio Resource Development Centre

Kiron Joshi, Chartered Accountant

COLKS- Centre of Learning, Knowledge and Services

MSSLA-Meghalaya State Legal Service Authority

REACH MINISTRY

NHM-National Health Mission

Civil Hospital Shillong

Adolescence Clinic

Deputy Commissioner's Office, East Khasi Hills District

Deputy Commissioner's Office, South West Khasi Hills District

Deputy Commissioner's Office, West Khasi Hills District

Deputy Commissioner's Office, Eastern West Khasi Hills District

Deputy Commissioner's Office, West Jaintia Hills District

Deputy Commissioner's Office, East Jaintia Hills District

Deputy Commissioner's Office, East Garo Hills District

BDO Myllem , Mawthadraishan, Mawpat, Mawlai



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