



GRASSROOT

Annual Report 2024-2025

17+ Years of Existence



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ORGANISATION OVERVIEW

01.

PROFILE

Social Enterprise with a rights-based approach to youth engagement, advocating for and raising awareness about livelihood development, Citizenship, preservation of Culture and Traditions.

02.

SERVICE PROVIDED

Consultancy Services for Human Rights: Surveys, Research, and Documentation efforts to mobilize youth and communities, including awareness campaigns for health-based interventions (RCH, Community Health), livelihood, rights, and entitlements, aim to challenge gender stereotypes.- Market-linked interventions to improve livelihoods and life skills.

03.

OPERATIONAL TERRITORY

East Khasi Hills District, Ri Bhoi District, East Jaintia Hills District, West Jaintia Hills, West Khasi Hills, Eastern West Khasi Hills, East Garo Hills in the state of Meghalaya and Manipur, Assam, Tripura and Nagaland

04.

INCORPORATED

Founded in September, 2007Registered under the Meghalaya Societies Registration Act, 1983SR/G-57/19 of 2019

***FCRA:**214250108 under the registration under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India*

***12A:** AAAAG7114JE20212*

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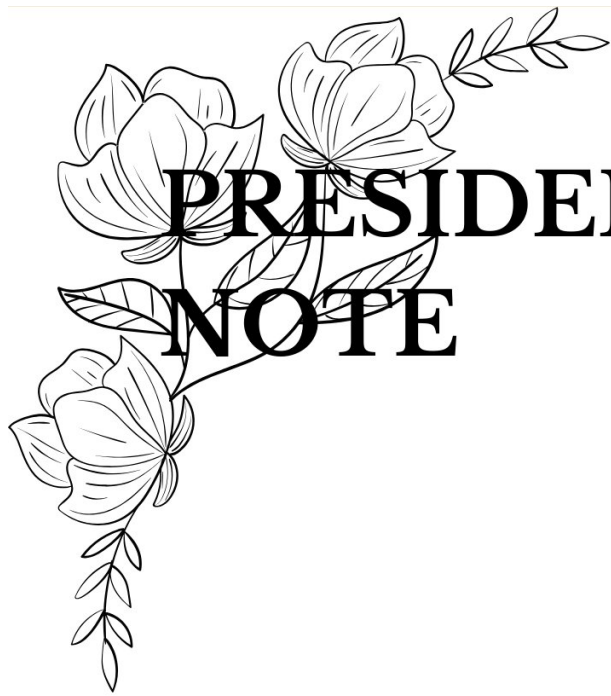
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05.

PAN NO.

AAAAG7114J



PRESIDENT'S NOTE



**MAYFEREEN
RYNTATHIANG**

The year 2024-2025 represents the stories and impacts of the people we work with through the states of NE. Their stories inspire us to think of policies and way forward across the work verticals and geographies.

This report brings shared commitments of dedication, motivation, passion and drive towards changing lives and society as a whole. We are bringing this year's stories' of people who have strived beyond their odds, unravel the strength within, discover the potentials they have, envision the future they want to see and the audacity to create platforms for many to be empowered like them.

Turning that intention into action can be hard, especially with a task as daunting as promoting livelihood, protecting the one planet we've got, engaging young community members, co-creating ideas and manoeuvring dynamics. But luckily at Grassroot, we have a network of changemakers who have taken that first step—and many more.

As we constantly endeavour to empower Indigenous People's Rights, it is encouraging to witness and observe the wisdom they have and how best this wisdom is transmitted from one generation to the other. The traditional spa is one such example.

The local traditional institutions, the government departments, friends and families are the most strengthening power and consistent support; empowers us to do more and more. I pay my gratitude to them for their faith in us.



Profile of the organisation

Organisation Overview

Grassroot is a registered Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that is committed to work with communities from an Indigenous Rights and Gender perspective. It was formed on July 27, 2007 with the purpose of addressing injustices that impedes human rights and to protect, defend and promote indigenous peoples' rights. Grassroot works to empower indigenous people through capacity building, skills development activities, sustainable livelihood programmes, women & youth empowerment and advocacy. We exist to ensure equal accessibility, responsibility and opportunities that are sustainable for everyone



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.



VISION

"RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER OF THE INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY"



GOAL

"ACHIEVING THE MASS RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT"



OBJECTIVES

Culture and Tradition

Empower communities to define their own future by establishing effective local, social, and political systems. - Encourage individuals to improve their traditional skills, knowledge, and cultural traditions. To preserve and revitalize their heritage, encourage the sustainable use of natural resources and develop human capital to fulfil society's changing requirements



Youth

“Unlock the Potential of Rural Youth!”



Imagine a future where young people are empowered to be the architects of their own destiny. We envision a vibrant ecosystem that fosters self-employment opportunities, igniting the entrepreneurial spirit in both educated and uneducated youth. By encouraging active community engagement, we inspire young minds to take ownership of their roles in shaping a prosperous future. Our mission is to empower youth to proudly embrace their cultural heritage and history, expanding their horizons beyond formal education and unlocking their full potential."

Livelihood

- Rooted in Local Strengths: Harness the power of locally sourced materials to drive self-sufficiency, resilience, and reduced dependency. By leveraging indigenous resources, we foster a vibrant economy that's uniquely tailored to our community's needs.

- Connecting to Global Opportunities: Bridge the gap to local, national, and international markets, unlocking doors to economic growth, sustainable development, and cultural exchange. By facilitating access to broader markets, we empower local entrepreneurs to thrive on the world stage.

- Honouring Tradition, Embracing Innovation: Encourage the exploration of alternative knowledge and economic activities while preserving and honouring traditional skills. By blending heritage with innovation, we forge a unique path to sustainable development that celebrates our community's rich cultural legacy.



Advocacy

- Inform, Empower, thrive: Ensure equal access to vital technical and legal information, unlocking informed decision-making and community-led development.

- Justice for All: Safeguard economic, political, and social rights, preventing violations and championing justice. Every community deserves dignity, respect, and equal opportunities.

- Women's Voices, Stronger Communities: Amplify women's participation in decision-making processes, fostering inclusivity, diversity, and a more equitable society.

- Innovation Meets Tradition: Empower communities to blend technological advancements with their unique cultural heritage, preserving values while embracing innovation and progress.



OUR ENDEAVOURS

Livelihood Enterprise Development program **01**

Location: Rongjeng Block East Garo Hills District

Meghalaya

Year: 2022-2024

Stake Holders: SHG Groups of Rongjeng Block

Client: National Bank of Agriculture and Rural
Development (NABARD)

Tree plantation cum Carbon-Offsetting **02**

Location: Eastern West Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya & Ri-
Bhoi District

Year: 2023-Till Date

Stake Holders- 5 Villages

Client: PANGEA ECONETASSETS PVT LTD

Strengthen Community Development Initiatives in North-East India **03**

Location: East Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya

Year: 2019-2024

Stake Holders 20 Village of East Jaintia Hills District

Client: Bread for The World Germany, Church Auxiliary
for Social Action

Khasi Traditional Spa **04**

Location: Laitmawsiang, Laitkron Block, east Khasi Hills District
Meghalaya

Year: 2023- Till date

Stake Holders: Youths of the Village

Client: SIDBI

Zoonotic and Vector Borne Disease **05**

Location: Eastern West Khasi Hills District Meghalaya

Year: 2023- Till date

Stake Holders: 10 villages of EWKH

Client: Indian Institute of Public Health

Organisational Strengthening **06**

Location: North East Region

Year: 2023- Till date

Stake Holders: Indigenous Women Forum of
North-East India (IWFNEI)

Client: Pawanka

Eco-Brick Museum **07**

Location: Mutong Village, near Moopun falls, east
Jaintia Hills District Meghalaya

Year: 2023-2025

Stake Holders: Mutong Village

Client: Meghalaya Basin
Development Agency (MBDA)

Empowering Livelihoods with Solar Energy: A climate resilient-Smart Choice **08**

Location, East Khasi Hills, East Jaintia
Hills, Ri-Bhoi District

Year: 2024- Till date

Client: SELCO

Peace Architect Fellowship **09**

Location: Meghalaya (East Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi District) &
Manipur (Senapati District)

Year: 2024-Till date

Client: Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation

Strengthening Women's Voice in Land Governance **10**

Location: East Khasi Hills, Easter West Khasi Hills, West Jaintia
Hills District of Meghalaya

Year: 2021-Till date

Stake Holders: Indigenous Women of Meghalaya

Client: AYNi/FIMI

Empowering Excellence: Enhancing Organisational Efficiency and Capacity Building **11**

Location: Meghalaya

Year: 2024-Till date

Stake Holders: Organisational Staffs

LIVELIHOOD ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME(LEDPSUPPORT ED BY NABARD

Bamboo handicrafts involve creating both artistic and functional items using bamboo as the main material. This renewable, fast-growing resource has been utilized across cultures for generations due to its strength and versatility. The craft encompasses diverse products including furniture, home decor, utensils, baskets, musical instruments, and jewelry. Most residents of Rongjeng Block rely on bamboo handicrafts for their livelihood. The program mentioned supported them by:

- Creating enterprise marketing platforms within groups
- Enhancing women SHGs' skills
- Increasing income and financial independence
- Empowering low-income women
- Ensuring sustainable livelihood opportunities
- Helping SHGs establish production units

Methodology

The methodology for engaging Self-Help Groups in Rongjeng follows four key steps: first, identifying SHG members by collaborating with local leaders and organizations to create comprehensive member lists; second, conducting introductory meetings to present the LEDP initiative and its benefits; third, hosting detailed orientation sessions focusing on livelihood development and skill enhancement while addressing questions; and finally, implementing a transparent screening process for selecting participants based on interest, availability, skills, and potential benefit, with community representatives ensuring fairness throughout the selection.



ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

Kong Daka Shadap opened the session with a warm welcome before providing an orientation on Byrwai Handicrafts. The business was established in 2021 after members completed training at DCIC Handicrafts in Shillong, with additional training later received from DCIC Jowai and Grassroot Shillong. These three training programs enabled them to diversify their craft repertoire. The ten-member group demonstrates strong teamwork and mutual support in pursuing their shared objectives. Byrwai Handicrafts promotes their products through exhibitions like the Meghalaya Saras fair and sells directly to customers from their shop in Khliehrait Village. Despite challenges, the members remain committed to business growth and development. Following Kong Daka's orientation, the Rongjeng team and Byrwai Handicrafts discussed their various crafts and pricing strategies. Kong Daka concluded by thanking Grassroot for their growth opportunities and expressing appreciation to the Rongjeng team for their visit, which she found inspiring for their business exploration.



DEMONSTRATION UNIT

On November 7, 2024 visit highlighted a new demonstration unit for bamboo handicrafts, particularly traditional Mura stools. This facility serves multiple purposes: showcasing local artisans' work, creating sales opportunities to improve livelihoods, preserving cultural heritage, educating the community, and promoting sustainable practices through bamboo use. The well-designed space effectively connects craftspeople with buyers while supporting the community's commitment to skill development and cultural preservation.



CONCLUSION

The session was highly productive and insightful, providing a comprehensive overview of Byrwai Handicrafts and their achievements. The discussion highlighted their journey from initial training to becoming a successful enterprise, showcasing their teamwork, dedication, and growth. The interaction with the Rongjeng team underscored the shared commitment to advancing handicraft skills and fostering local economic development.



"TREE PLANTATION CUM CARBON OFFSETTING"

Tree plantation faces significant hurdles including improper planting techniques, neglect during crucial early growth years, and increasingly common wildfires due to climate change. These factors can destroy additional trees and increase carbon dioxide emissions through changes in land cover, potentially worsening the very problems we aim to solve

Successful tree plantation requires consideration of tree types, species adaptability, geographical location, soil compatibility, and close monitoring of weather conditions. This scientific approach ensures trees establish strong roots before facing seasonal challenges, mature fully, and provide lasting environmental, economic, and social benefits throughout their lifetime.

Embrace concepts like 'Greet with Trees' to promote sustainable gifting and popularize trees as presents for special occasions in areas needing reforestation. By pursuing a scientific and sustainable strategy for tree planting rather than haphazard efforts, we can collectively address climate change, absorb harmful carbon dioxide, and create benefits that humanity can enjoy for generations to come.

Working Approach:

- Free, Prior and Informed Consent(FPIC)
- NOC Intellectual People's Right.
- Promoting Collectivism.

Planned Activities:

- Land (Nursery development & Plantation).
- Sourcing of Saplings.
- Identified Village Representative and Labourers.
- Village Groups for monitoring (Women's group, SHGs etc).
- Nursery and afforestation Booklets/Registers.

Proposed Objectives:

- To help reduce greenhouse gases and prevent climate change.
- To help enriching the biodiversity.
- To prioritize native species that are well suited to the selected regions unique climate and soil conditions (moisture, fertility and erosion).
- To introduce Cash trees and NTFPs for additional income for the Communities

By focusing on these objectives, Grassroot endeavors to uplift communities, instill confidence in the youth, and also foster conservation for local biodiversity.

Proposed Area:

Eastern West Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya.

Type of activity proposed:

Planting of different types of tree species that are well suited to the Eastern West Khasi Hills district region, with the village representatives under the period of one year. The villages selected for this project are Kartein, Umkrem, Nongshillong and Wahliewlong under Mawthadraishan block consisting of much area needed for plantation starting from 3 acres and above. The ownership of the lands fall under private and community.

Completed Activities:

- Awareness program conducted with representatives from four areas
- Grow Tree experts assessed plantation site feasibility with Grassroot staff
- Formal agreements established with selected villages; NOCs and consent forms collected
- Baseline survey identified suitable local species for high survival rates
- Carbon sequestration capacity building held February 19, 2024, with Meghalaya Biodiversity Board participation
- Kong Laitlin Lyngdoh Nonglait provided one-year land use for nursery activities
- Nursery construction (48'x36') began March 4 and completed March 9, 2024
- Two laborers hired for temporary nursery construction
- GIS personnel mapped four plantation sites on April 11, 2024
- 25,000 saplings ordered (Champa, Puma, Cherry Blossom, Alder, Neem)
- Successful collaboration established with Meghalaya Biodiversity Board and Block Development Office
- Community preparation sessions held May 9 and 23, 2024, for site preparation and pit digging
- Pit digging completed between July 3-29, 2024, with 8-12 hired laborers and volunteer support from Marwein clan
- Saplings transported in batches from Nongkasen Private Nursery to project sites throughout early August
- Plantation activities conducted August 1 - September 4, 2024, with strong voluntary community participation
- Community members demonstrated exceptional ownership and collectivism, reflecting Grassroot's positive impact
- Eastern West Khasi Hills District plantation event attended by G. Kharmawphlang (Deputy Commissioner) and W.R. Massar (Block Development Officer)
- Deputy Commissioner emphasized importance of ongoing tree maintenance and highlighted benefits of planting on community lands
- Information/branding boards installed at all plantation sites acknowledging funding agency and collaborators
- Green net fencing installed before winter to protect saplings from cattle grazing and frost damage



WAY FORWARD

The way forward involves weekly monitoring of surviving saplings and evaluation of the nursery register, alongside discussions of ongoing and completed project elements to determine possibilities for extension. The team envisions successful implementation across the four target villages, which could create opportunities to expand the project to additional districts or states throughout the Northeast. With sustained support and collaborative efforts, the team remains confident in their ability to achieve sustainable, meaningful outcomes as the project progresses.



PURPOSE

The project serves multiple purposes: capturing carbon for offset trading, purifying air (1 acre absorbs 6 tons of CO₂, produces 4 tons of oxygen), replenishing groundwater, filtering water pollutants, creating employment (20,000 trees generate 1500-1800 workdays), and boosting tourism through outdoor recreational activities like camping and bird watching.



Strengthening Communities for Sustainable Development in North East India



SUPPORTED BY

BREAD FOR THE WORLD, GERMANY/ CHURCH FOR AUXILIARY
SOCIAL ACTION

In 2014, the NGT banned coal mining in Meghalaya due to harmful rat-hole mining practices, prioritizing community well-being over economic interests. This ban affected many coal-dependent communities as no alternative livelihoods were provided. East Jaintia Hills District residents face particular challenges after decades of coal mining, leaving them with limited skills. Addressing this challenge has been Grassroot's main focus since its founding.

Grassroot has implemented programs for livelihood enhancement, advocacy, and strengthening people's organizations, youth, and women. We conducted capacity building with People's Organizations on local peace-building to help analyze and manage conflicts. We also provided gender mainstreaming workshops with traditional institutions to promote gender equity and justice. Professional organizational streamlining was developed to improve teamwork.

In 2020, Grassroot launched an Eco bricks campaign in Mutong village, reusing waste plastics to prevent landfill pollution. These bottle bricks can construct walls and furniture, offering waste management solutions where industrial recycling isn't available. Community changes show the campaign's importance in shifting mindsets toward environmental responsibility. This led to creating a bottle brick museum with the Meghalaya Basin Development Agency, preserving traditional products as an educational space about indigenous practices.

INDICATORS ACHIEVED :

120 households access to government schemes such as MGNREGA, MHIS, E.Shram. 15 SHGs were trained on composting, bokashi poultry and piggery, mushroom cultivation, handicrafts and more.

155 unemployed youths were trained on livelihood skills such as food processing, bakery, floriculture, indigenous food snacks making, Integrated Farming System.

Moolang village saw a producer's group of agricultural products and is a supplier to local entrepreneurs within the state. The producer's group consists of Aijingkyrmen PG, Iengskhem PG and Turshaphrang PG.





KHASI TRADITIONAL SPA SUPPORTED BY SMALL INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA (SIDBI)



Meghalaya, a state known for its abundant medicinal herbs, is known as the bank area due to its preservation and protection. However, traditional medical practitioners face challenges such as lack of accurate documentation, lack of patent and intellectual property rights, lack of proper connections to reach a larger market, and the absence of a compounding production unit. Additionally, there is a lack of suitable planting locations and weather conditions for various herbs. As a result, traditional practitioners are unable to adopt this practice on a large scale for the benefit of their own economic systems. The state's efforts to preserve and protect these plants are hindering their continued practice.

General Objective: To promote and preserve traditional knowledge and practices. This promotes entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihood.

Project Goal: Preserving wisdom and individuality.
sustaining value-added economic enterprise
Encouraging youth to follow traditional wisdom.





Given the challenges, Grassroot has been working with herbal medicine practitioners (irrespective of gender) in the villages of Laitmawsiang, Khrang, and Kongthong in East Khasi Hills District since 2019.

These three villages are noted for their uniqueness: Laitmawsiang, which has a heart-shaped rock, virgin forest, and historical caverns, is now a tourist destination, while Kongthong and Khrang are known as the whistling village, with people flocking to Kongthong to hear the whistling language. Grassroot, with the cooperation of the local dorbar of Laitmawsiang village, began its adventure to establish a traditional spa (Herbal Clinic) in Laitmawsiang village, where only locally available herbal oils will be utilized for various traditional massages.

This spa will provide additional source of income for herbal medicine practitioners, as well as preserve their practice and identity for future generations. Because Laitmawsiang village is popular with tourists from all over the country and throughout the world for its breathtaking natural beauty, the organization decided to add value by opening a traditional spa (Herbal Clinic).

What's new about this? This plan aims to promote economic empowerment through traditional wisdom, identify and address entrepreneurship gaps, and create opportunities for younger generations to learn and grow.

Developing a physical infrastructure to practice and instruct many people in the field of traditional medical practice.



Project Outcome

Indigenous wisdom is strengthened and empowered for overall sustainable development, including economic, social, and cultural upliftment

Activities implemented under the Project

- Capacity building in hospitality administration (public relations, cleaning, hygiene, etc.) in collaboration with IIHM or other reputable hospitality institutions.
- Capacity building for Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Construction of a Traditional Spa
- Intensive capacity development in leadership, advocacy, and entrepreneurship
- Inauguration of Traditional Spa: The traditional spa was inaugurated on November 6, 2024, in the presence of local dignitaries (CEM of KHADC, Representatives from different organizations) and community members.



Sustainability

Once the practitioners are empowered enough to engage, address, and advocate for their own economic power spaces, the initiative will be given over to them, with Grassroot providing technical assistance as needed.

The successful launch of our Skill Development Programme for Traditional Khasi Spa is an initiative that has not only revived a cherished cultural heritage but also empowered local youth and women with valuable skills and knowledge.



The impact extends beyond cultural preservation, as it is poised to contribute significantly to the community's economic growth and self-sufficiency. By fostering entrepreneurship and income-generation opportunities, we are confident that this project will have a lasting, positive impact on the local economy and we look forward to seeing the continued growth and success of our Traditional Khasi Spa.



Zoonotic and Vector Borne Disease supported by Indian Institute of Public Health

1. To generate insights into threats of animal-to-human pathogen exchange in diverse ecosystems undergoing development
2. To expand understanding of transmission risk and prevention opportunities; biobank data and specimens for prospective studies on emerging ZVBDs
3. To enrich research knowledge, skills and population-level perspectives
4. To Enhance awareness among local communities about risks and prevention of TADs and ZVBDs to contribute to their communities
5. To Strengthen existing disease surveillance initiatives for ZVBDs and encourage expansion to address other infectious diseases in future by the local communities
6. To generate local community's feedback after the longitudinal task completion
7. To capacitate the field volunteers to train communities under the ZVBD project in Eastern West Khasi Hills

The Zoonotic Vector-Borne Diseases Research project is a collaboration between Grassroot and the Indian Institute of Public Health in Shillong. The project aims to create awareness and conduct advanced research in the breathtaking landscapes of East Jaiñtia Hills and Eastern West Khasi Hills. Grassroot has managed to obtain Free Prior Informed Consent from village officials and has conducted a comprehensive baseline research in the handpicked villages, identifying Community Resource Persons who will play a critical role in surveillance initiatives.

The project also focuses on immersing itself in village life and understanding the social dynamics that drive illness spread. Through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the project aims to uncover the intricate links connecting communities and disease

Comprehensive trainings will empower staff, community resource individuals, and the community as a whole, cultivating resilience and readiness.

Since its inception in September 2022, the project has been a journey of enlightenment, learning about the community's inherent rights, the influence of village headmen and women's groups, and the apprehension when extending traditional testing techniques. The organization recognizes the transformative impact of health-focused projects and invites participants to join them on this thrilling adventure. Together, they can lead new research, strengthen community resilience, and shape a future where health and knowledge reign supreme.



Expected Outcomes

- ➔ **Generate insights into threats of animal-to-human pathogen exchange in diverse ecosystems undergoing development**
Expand understanding of transmission risk and prevention opportunities; biobank data and specimens for prospective studies on emerging ZVBDs
- ➔ **Enrich research knowledge, skills and population-level perspectives**
Develop abilities of clinical, public health, veterinary and social-science researchers to engage in trans-disciplinary research
- ➔ **Enhance awareness among local communities** about risks and prevention of TADs and ZVBDs to contribute to their communities
- ➔ **Strengthen existing disease surveillance initiatives** for ZVBDs and encourage expansion to address other infectious diseases in future.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN FORUM OF NORTH EAST INDIA

Funded by The Pawanka Fund

The Northeast of India comprises states such as Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. These regions are known for their linguistic and ethnic diversity, with tribals heavily represented in the hilly states. Each tribe has a unique history, language, customs, and way of life passed down through generations. Despite being depicted as having more freedom and avoiding oppressive social practices, women in North East India still do not hold an equal status in society. Despite access to education and self-sufficiency, women are excluded from decision-making positions in social, political, and economic institutions. Gender disparity is also a cause of persistent violence against women in the indigenous communities. Despite this, women in North East India have been instrumental in peace building efforts and preserving indigenous customs and traditions. Indigenous women groups and forums are present in various community structures, with some establishing leadership roles at both local and national levels. The Indigenous Women Forum of North East India is one such forum.

Introduction of IWFNEI

The Indigenous Women's Forum of North East India (IWFNEI) was formed in 24th October 2004 with a Convenor to lead the organization. The forum's mission is to empower women's participation in decision making bodies, traditional knowledge, socio economic issues and culture. IWFNEI has been engaged in empowering the indigenous women's voice by building on their skills and capacity; as a peacemaker, the forum mediates among conflicting communities while simultaneously advocates with the government for restoration of harmony in the region. The first Convention of IWFNEI was held from April 28 to 29 in 2007, at Diphu Town under Karbi Anglong District, in Assam where the first Executive members/officials of IWFNEI were selected for a period of two years.

During the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) workshop on "Use of National and International Human Rights procedures to address Torture and Violence against Women" held in Guwahati from March 27 to 29, 2010, IWFNEI simultaneously selected a new team of Office Bearers for the 2010–2012 term. According to its 2024 Digest, IWFNEI is now manned by a selected Convenor and Co-convenor along with Finance Secretary and 4 Advisors. IWFNEI is the first Indigenous Women's Forum in the North East of India.

The Principal aim and Objective of the Forum is to serve as a platform to facilitate and strengthen solidarity and better understanding among the member organizations and other like-minded organizations and movements - "to enhance indigenous women of North East India through various programs and activities for development, unity, peace and justice".

At present the forum is a conglomerate of 12 unit members from the 7 States of the North East of India (viz Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Meghalaya), they are all part of the General Assembly of the forum which is the supreme body of IFWNEI.



MISSION

To enhance Women's participation in decision making bodies, traditional knowledge and cultures through various activities.



VISION

Indigenous Women of North East India are empowered in a just and sustainable society.



OBJECTIVES

- To serve as forum, creating a space to come together and share ideas and experiences.
- To advocate and campaign for the cause of indigenous women and people.
- To coordinate with other Indigenous organizations and movements.
- To research and document various issues regarding the Indigenous women/people and disseminate them through publication.
- To promote and preserve our traditional knowledge, attires, cultural heritage and identity.
- To facilitate the attainment of our aspirations.

TARGET AUDIENCE: 12 UNIT MEMBERS OF IWFNEI

- Karbi: Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA) based in Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam
- Rabha: Rabha Women's Association in Goalpara, Assam.
- Zeme: Zeme Mother's Association, Dima Hasao, Haflong, Assam.
- Tewa: All Tewa Women Association, Assam
- Hajong: Hajong Women's Organization/ Hajong Mahila Samiti, Assam.
- Naga: Naga Indigenous Women's Network, Nagaland
- Naga: Naga Women's Union, Manipur
- Zomi: Zomi Mother's Association, Churachanpur, Manipur
- Garo: Mother's Union Tura Garo Hills, Meghalaya
- Lai (Schedule Tribe), Lai Mother's Association, Lawngttai, Mizoram
- Tripuri/ Borok: Borok Women's Forum, Tripura.
- Tangsa: Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Expansion meetings and field visits with new units and reviving existing unit members that were inactive.
- Leadership Training on Emerging Indigenous Identity and Feminist Perspective and Digital Strengthening and Financial Operation.
- Training Programme on "Sustainable Livelihood with a primary focus on seed preservation and exchange of seeds among the member organizations.

The Mothers Union is one of the oldest indigenous organization in the State and the North East region at large; the group was formed after independence with the intention to provide welfare and charity services to the women in Garo hills. The organization grew in scope and became more active in the community as protectors of women's rights and the guardians of the customs and traditions of the Garo people. Mothers Union connection with IWFNEI was established in their first formal meeting in Tura Meghalaya, on the 11th of November 2023. Thereafter, Mothers Union became an active member of IWFNEI and benefitted from the forum's various meetings and training programmes.



The Hajong Women Organization or Hajong Mahila Samiti consist of a group of women that belong to the Hajong tribe, a small ethnic group that is classified as a scheduled tribe in certain regions but faces government efforts to derecognise them elsewhere. Despite initial challenges in scheduling due to the rural location and farming commitments of the members, a meeting was held on June 7th with 12 Hajong women and 4 IWFNEI team members at Christian Basti, Dispur, Guwahati, Assam. During the meeting, participants discussed challenges related to their tribal identity, land-holding issues, and the difficulties of forming a collective women's forum due to scattered settlements. Despite these challenges, the Hajong community has established a women's association at the local and district levels in Assam. The participants expressed interest in joining IWFNEI; Although the formal process of joining as a member unit is still underway, the organization has already participated as a beneficiary in two key training activities under the project, viz; Three-Day Leadership Training on Emerging Indigenous Identity, Feminist Perspectives, Digital Strengthening, and Financial Operations and the two day workshop on "Sustainable Livelihoods" with a focus on seed preservation, seed exchange among member organizations, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

The Borok Women's Forum (BWF):

The Borok Women's Forum is one of the oldest unit member of IWFNEI; based in Tripura, the forum is well accepted by its community and the State at large. In recent years, BWF became inactive due to various issues which in time were resolved internally and in 2022 a new leadership was in place. The forum needed more support to strengthen the new management, hence, through the project, the Borok Women's Forum was revived and put into action after IWFNEI was able to convene the members on July 24, 2024, to address and stabilise the new leadership. The meeting was attended by 13 BWF members, 5 IWFNEI officials, and 3 male representatives from Indigenous organizations.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Scheduling frequent field visits to the unit members' base became challenging for the project team due to time constraints and a limited number of dedicated project staff.

More consideration must be given to assessment, identification, communication, and meetings when reviving existing members or expanding the forum with new unit members, all of which are areas where the project is limited due to lack of time and resources.

Measuring training effectiveness: The feedback mechanism used was through notes written by participants and via phone calls, which may compromise the quality of the feedback and the response from the implementer.

The training design efficiently catered to the differences in age and levels of experience within the participants, however the time, energy and resources consumed in this exercise need to be considered.

Keeping participants engaged and motivated throughout the training, especially if it is delivered over an extended period was a challenge especially when the participants are diverse and language barrier was evident; although the design had this covered effectively by using translators, yet the time, energy and resource consumed in this exercise need to be considered.

The mobilisation of participants across the region for a training was a significant challenge considering that there were participants who come from remote areas and also because their time and livelihood is defined to their village/town.

CONCLUSION

The Indigenous Women's Forum of North East India (IWFNEI) has been a vital platform for empowering indigenous women since its inception in 2004. Despite initial challenges, the forum has consistently provided training and capacity-building opportunities, fostering leadership, sustainable livelihoods, and community development. The forum has revitalized dormant member organizations and integrated new ones, demonstrating its commitment to capacity-building and empowerment. By embracing diversity, collaboration, and adapting to emerging challenges, IWFNEI aims to forge a brighter future for generations to come.

ECO-BRICK MUSEUM- supported by MBDA (Meghalaya Basin Development Authority) in collaboration with Green AMMO



Meghalaya generates more than 500 tons of waste per day. The capacity to hold garbage is decreasing due to limited landfill. In Jowai, the issue of waste management needs to be addressed rapidly before the piles of garbage dump covers the roads and localities in the town. A good number of shops (say 10 – 15) remained closed as this pile of garbage is stationed right in front of their shops. Numerous efforts taken by the government to dispose of the waste did not turn out to be successful because people agitated. On the other hand, having a landfill without proper segregation of waste and implementation of other scientific measures will still cause the same problem to our future generations.

But looking at the bright side, every problem has a solution. One of the solutions is bottle brick technology where we can convert soft plastic waste and wasted water/juice bottles into eco bricks. These eco bricks can be used for building furniture like tables and chairs as well as construction purposes like wall fences, making of bus sheds and others. However, there are advantages and disadvantages for using these eco-bricks. Its advantages is that it is zero cost, absorb abrupt shock loads, are reusable, easy to work with, lightweight and repurpose the plastic that is rapidly threatening to take over our ecosystem. The disadvantages of using a bottle brick is that it is highly flammable in nature, therefore construction of kitchen using these bottle bricks is not advisable, the plastics when exposed directly to the sunlight also releases harmful toxins which may cause hazardous health problems and this can be mitigated by plastering the constructions with either cement or bamboo to avoid the plastics being exposed to direct sunlight.

Another solution is making of composts out of the kitchen waste that is generated from each household every day. Jowai falls under the municipal cooperation and is overlooked by Jowai Municipal Board. There has been an attempt to initiate waste segregation by the municipal but there has been a gap in their approach to awareness which results the public to not adhere closely to the initiative. But if segregation of waste can be managed, it can even generate livelihood opportunities.

The pilot innovation proposed at Mutong village is the construction of a traditional eco museum using bottle brick technology. The bottle brick is made up of waste plastics which can reduce a significant amount of waste plastics ending up in landfills or being burnt. Mutong village is also a booming tourist attraction with more than 10000 tourists including both locals and others visit the famous Moopun falls, Sahksaw, Rynji, Latang and many more tourists' sites along the stretch.

Hence, addressing the problem of waste management in these tourism sites through the concept of bottle brick technology will positively impact these communities. Through the display of traditional eco museum, many visitors will learn more about the cultural practice of the people residing in these communities. This very project will bring about collectivism in the village and contributing to other subsidiary benefits to the people and the community we work with

There has been numerous activities that grassroot has been working on in making the eco-brick a successful one and these are as directed:



Training on FPIC

Before the beginning of any project, Grassroot begins its session with the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) to seek the approval and consent of the community people if the project is going to be a partnership or not. The FPIC was initiated to enhance people's power.



Training on Brick Bottle

Grassroot, a community member with expertise in brick bottle technology, has trained the people of Mutong village to create a museum made from brick bottles. The main goal is to reduce, reuse, and recycle plastic waste, which has a significant negative impact on the environment. With 1500 bottles made so far, the museum aims to encourage other communities to reduce, reuse, and recycle plastic waste. The training is not only for elders but also for school students, promoting environmental friendliness and income generation. The museum serves as an example of community involvement in environmental conservation efforts.



Collaboration with Restaurants

We collaborated with restaurants, shops and other centers in and around khliehriat and ladrymbai to give away their plastic bottles to us so the same can be transported to mutong village should there be limited supply of this material. Simultaneously, an awareness on waste management was also given to the villages within the periphery of Mutong village(cham cham, lumchyrmit, impala and moolang. The main objective of the awareness is to bring collectivism within the communities in terms of plastic waste. The community members of these villages were very cooperative when it concerns to plastics owing to the condition of lawmusniang Jowai in the past recent months. Therefore they have come up with the concept of "Free and Clean Plastic Zone" within the jurisdiction of 5 villages.



Identification of traditional items

During the quarter, a survey was conducted to identify traditional artefacts in the village. The goal is to gather information about these rich items, encouraging local entrepreneurs to showcase their products in an eco-brick museum, providing a platform for earned-livelihood, and showcasing the village's identity to tourists from different states.



Distribution of Bio-degradable and Non-Biodegradable dustbins

Grassroot distributed dustbins to villages like Cham Cham, Moolang, Lumchyrmit, Mutong, and lapmala, urging villagers and school students to dispose of biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste in specific bins. This initiative aims to collect plastics for the eco-brick museum and promotes reducing plastic use among community members, achieving its objectives.



Empowering Livelihoods with Solar Energy: A Climate Resilient- Smart Choice

The "Empowering Livelihoods with Solar Energy" 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 access to electricity. By promoting the use of solar energy, the project seeks to improve the quality of life, enhance economic opportunities, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. This initiative was done by Grassroot in collaboration with Selco Foundation.

The primary objectives of the "Empowering Livelihoods with Solar Energy" project are:



RAISE
AWARENESS



STOCK
ANALYSIS



SENSITIZE
STAKEHOLDERS



PROMOTE
SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOODS



REDUCE
ENERGY
POVERTY



ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

Awareness programs were conducted in six locations:

- Umylyngka
- Laitmawsiang
- Laitkor
- Mawthadraishan
- Umphyrnai and
- Nongstoin

SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP

Sensitization workshop was conducted in two locations:

- Umylyngka
- Laitmawsiang

ASSESSMENTS

- Nongrah
- Nongmensong
- Mawtari
- East Jaintia Hills
- Umylyngka and
- Laitmawsiang

INSTALLATIONS OF SOLAR LIGHTING

Solar installation in Umylyngka and Laitmawsiang, benefited 5 people total. In Umylyngka, three people use the solar lighting for poultry farming and one for an eatery shop, while in Laitmawsiang, one person uses it for herbal medicine production. The solar lighting provides reliable illumination allowing for extended working hours, greater independence from the electrical grid, and cost savings compared to traditional energy sources.



An exposure trip to Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya

An exposure trip by Grassroot team to Ri-Bhoi District in Meghalaya, India, where we visited local food processing units in Umktieh and Umsaitprah. Women from the Nathiar Processing Co-operative Society and Byrwai IVCS also participated. In Umktieh, they learned about wine and juice production from seasonal fruits, including quality control, hygiene practices, and machinery usage. In Umsaitprah, they gained knowledge about spice cultivation and processing, particularly for Lakadong turmeric and ginger. The trip provided hands-on experience that empowered the women with new skills to enhance their economic prospects, promote entrepreneurship, and contribute to community development and sustainable growth in the region.



CHALLENGES

- It was also discovered that the majority of the shops are rented, and the landlords might oppose the installation of solar panels. Additionally, some shops will need to be relocated to a different area as the property owner plans to utilize the space for other construction purposes.
- Irregular electricity supplies hindered business operations in most of the areas that the assessment was conducted.
- Financial constraints and lack of the necessary machines limited the ability of the community people to start or expand their businesses even though they have the potential.

CONCLUSION

The assessment revealed significant entrepreneurial potential in the evaluated regions. To capitalize on these opportunities, key recommendations include enhancing financial and market access, implementing mentorship programs, resolving quality and marketing challenges, securing additional funding sources, and upgrading electrical infrastructure. These interventions can create sustainable livelihoods and economic advancement for vulnerable groups including single mothers and youth. Additionally, incorporating solar energy solutions offers transformative benefits such as clean, reliable power access, greater economic possibilities, health condition improvements, and environmental protection. Supporting both entrepreneurship and sustainable energy will strengthen community resilience and prosperity.



PEACE ARCHITECT FELLOWSHIP

SUPPORTED BY ROHINI NILEKANI PHILANTHROPIES FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

The Peace Architect Program is a collaborative initiative by Grassroot and Amyaa that selects nine young leaders from Meghalaya and Manipur to become peace builders and conflict resolution specialists in their communities. The fellowship equips participants with critical thinking skills and contextual understanding of cultural, historical, and social factors to develop innovative solutions to local challenges. The program aims to create a network of leaders who can transform narratives and facilitate meaningful dialogue for peace and development. Through comprehensive capacity building, interviews, and advocacy planning, fellows are already implementing their plans in their respective areas. The initiative seeks diverse perspectives—worldly, local, political, social, and economic—to co-create learning communities, foster collaboration, and build power from within to address core issues driving unrest and implement strategic responses promoting peace, justice, and collective liberation.

OVERVIEW

Grassroot focuses on empowering youth in Meghalaya and Manipur to participate in community development beyond formal education, connecting them with their cultural heritage. Their leadership programs help young people assess themselves, set goals, and develop advocacy skills. A notable achievement is their impact on women advocates who previously lacked voice in male-dominated communities. These capacity-building initiatives have expanded women's thinking beyond traditional farming roles to address agricultural and natural resource injustices. Five women, selected as fellows in partnership with Action Aid North East, now represent their communities on environmental justice issues and challenge local governance. Grassroot addresses regional unrest by amplifying voices for peace, transforming narratives for dialogue, and creating collaborative learning communities. Their goals include strengthened youth leadership, enhanced learning ecosystems, and a holistic approach to addressing injustices through peace and collective liberation. They plan to refine strategies through stakeholder collaboration for



Meet our Fellows



**JESSICA
PARIONG**



**BENI SENGORA
P SANGMA**



**RUSHALIMON
SOHIONG**



**PAVEINE
LILY H**



D. LUNGBILA



**THIBA
SAMUEL**



**N G
ANGELUS**



**LICKJAI S
KONYAK**



**P.N.
APOLLOS**



**ALBASSTAR
KHONGSIT**



**PHIRALIN
KHONGLAM**



**GARYSTAR
PHANBUH**



**EBITCY MARY
KHONGRYMMAI**



"Empowering Excellence: Enhancing Organizational Efficiency and Capacity Building at Grassroot Shillong" Supported by Dasra

Introduction

Grassroot Shillong 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, workshops, and exposure trips. This report provides an overview of these initiatives and their impact on the organization.



WORKSHOP ON MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Workshop on Management Information Systems was designed to enhance staff data capabilities. It covered three key topics: the importance of data in decision-making, techniques for data collection, and best practices for data management using Excel and Google Sheets. Expert-facilitated with hands-on experience, the workshop significantly improved staff abilities in data management and analysis, enabling better organizational decision-making and improved efficiency.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND EXPOSURE TRIP TO DARJEELING AND SIKKIM

The capacity building and exposure trip to Darjeeling and Sikkim was designed to enhance staff capabilities in cultural preservation and sustainability. The trip included meetings with local organizations, communities, and the Sikkim Lepcha Students Association. The trip also included interactions with the resilient Lepcha community in Dzongu and learning about the challenges facing the Teesta River.

The trip was an inspiring journey into the heart of indigenous culture and environmental awareness. Staff gained a deeper understanding of the importance of cultural preservation and sustainability, and the organization's commitment to these values has been deepened. The trip also provided opportunities for staff to build relationships with local partners and stakeholders, enhancing the organization's partnerships and collaborations.

PARTICIPATION IN THE 16TH BIODIVERSITY WEEK

The 16th Biodiversity Week organized by NEN featured Grassroot Shillong showcasing Indigenous products from Meghalaya. The event brought together participants from the Northeast Region and beyond to celebrate biodiversity conservation.

Grassroot Shillong displayed four key products:

- Lakadong Turmeric from Byrwai, known for its high quality
- Herbal Massage Oil from Laitmawsiang made with local ingredients

- Indigenous Cookbook and UNDRIP Book highlighting local cuisine and Indigenous rights
- Sohphlang, a traditional tuber crop central to Meghalaya's cuisine and culture
- The event allowed Grassroot Shillong to promote Indigenous products, increase awareness about biodiversity conservation, and strengthen relationships with local partners and stakeholders.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Continue investing in staff development through training programs, workshops, and exposure trips to build organizational capacity.
- Strengthen partnerships with local organizations, communities, and stakeholders to better promote Indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and sustainability initiatives.
- Increase promotion of Indigenous products to raise public awareness about biodiversity conservation while supporting Indigenous community livelihoods.

Implementation of these recommendations should help Grassroot Shillong enhance organizational efficiency, advance their mission of supporting Indigenous rights and cultural preservation, and contribute to sustainable livelihoods in the communities they serve.

Strengthening women's voice in Land Resources Governance, Supported by AYNi-FIMI



The AYNi FIMI project is an initiative of the International Indigenous Women's Forum, aiming to empower indigenous women globally. The Project's primary objectives include:



PROMOTING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Strengthening indigenous women's organizations and leadership to advocate for their rights and interests



SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Funding small-scale projects that promote community development, self-determination, and cultural preservation



FOSTERING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Building networks and alliances among indigenous women's organizations worldwide to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices.



ADVOCATING FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Promoting the rights of indigenous women, including their rights to land, territory, and natural resources.



INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

Building the capacity of indigenous women's organizations to manage projects, funds, and resources effectively



ADVOCACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Supporting indigenous women's participation in decision-making processes and advocacy efforts at local, national, and international levels



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Promoting economic empowerment among indigenous women through sustainable livelihoods, entrepreneurship, and access to markets.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN PROJECT CONTEXT:

After recent elections in Meghalaya state, the Deputy Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) has helped implement important changes to the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. These changes aim to empower indigenous communities through enhanced autonomy and self-governance.

The KHADC introduced two significant amendments in 2023:

1. The Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Elaka) (Amendment) Act, 2023 - Enables women to participate in community and committee decision-making processes
2. The Khasi Social Custom of Lineage (Amendment) Act, 2023 - Preserves and protects Khasi social customs of lineage while promoting gender equality through women's participation in decision-making

While these changes address long-standing demands from indigenous communities in Meghalaya, concerns remain that they may not fully address all indigenous aspirations, suggesting more work is needed to fully protect indigenous rights and interests.

ACTIVITIES PROGRESS SUMMARY

Workshops/Seminars with allied departments:

The Workshop on Indigenous rights, UNDRIP, and Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution aimed to promote awareness and understanding of indigenous rights among government officials, local heads, and community members in Meghalaya.



Key Objectives:

- Promote Indigenous Rights: Educate participants about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and its relevance to indigenous communities in Meghalaya.
- Understand Sixth Schedule: Clarify the provisions and implications of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which pertains to the administration of tribal areas.
- Empower Local Communities: Foster a dialogue between government officials, local heads, and community members to ensure that indigenous rights are respected and protected.

Target Areas:

The workshop was conducted in three districts of Meghalaya:

- East Khasi Hills
- Eastern West Khasi Hills
- West Khasi Hills

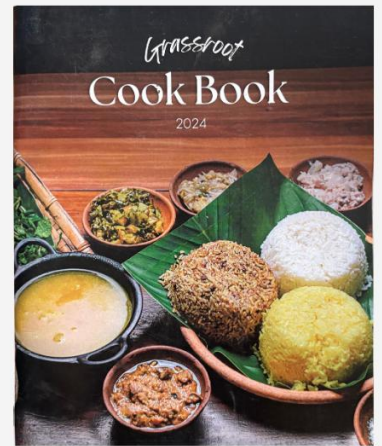
By engaging with government officials, local heads, and community members, the workshop aimed to promote a collaborative approach to protecting indigenous rights and promoting sustainable development in Meghalaya.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPACITY BUILDING



IDENTIFICATION AND PRODUCTION OF THE INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEM:

Indigenous Food Cook Book was officially launched on 29 November 2024, marking a significant milestone in promoting indigenous cuisine. The event was attended by key stakeholders, including contributors, chefs, government officials and partners.



WOMEN ADVOCATORS TRAINING

These programs aimed to strengthen the capacity of indigenous women leaders to advocate for their rights and interests



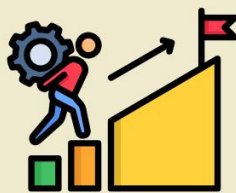
STATE/REGIONAL LEVEL IW COLLECTIVE FORMATION



On August 9th as observed as the International Day of Worlds Indigenous Peoples, to serves as a crucial platform to raise awareness about the challenges faced by indigenous populations worldwide. We finally have made an efforts to organized an observation and celebration of World Indigenous Day on the 9th of August 2024, held at St. Edmunds College Auditorium, through Panel discussion and more activities in regards to the 'Formation State of Women Advocators' to strengthen our indigenous women and indigenous youth in emphasizing the importance of raising the voices of indigenous people.



KEY CHALLENGES AND ADOPTED STRATEGIES



- Collaborating with government officials on training programs, workshops, and seminars presents challenges due to conflicting schedules and time constraints. Despite these difficulties, the team remains committed to building successful partnerships and ensuring effective stakeholder involvement.
- Working with daily-wage single mothers presents scheduling challenges as they have different availability times and often can't attend full-day sessions. Their primary focus on earning income to support families makes mobilization difficult. Employer restrictions frequently prevent attendance, requiring creative solutions like ordering from their workplace to accommodate participation.
- Time constraints are the main challenge when organizing training programs for single mothers. Mobilization is difficult because they have different availability times based on their work schedules. Many women are reluctant to attend since missing work means losing income. These factors make it challenging to bring participants together simultaneously for meetings or training sessions.



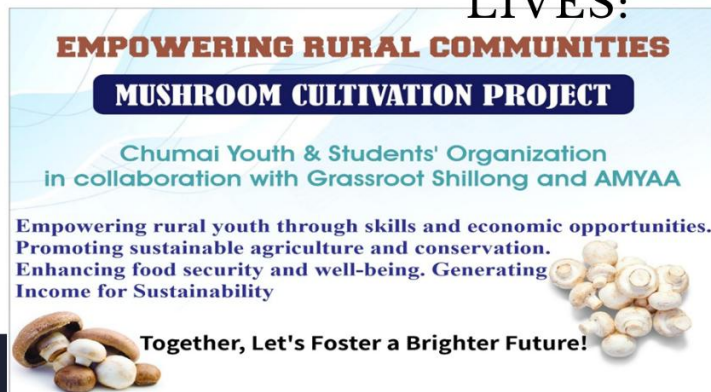
Conclusion

The AYNi FIMI project in Meghalaya, Northeast India successfully empowered indigenous women through leadership development, community initiatives, and rights advocacy. By providing capacity-building and grant support, the project strengthened indigenous women's organizations, enhancing their ability to address community-specific challenges. This work advanced indigenous women's rights in Meghalaya and contributed to building a more inclusive, equitable society.



EMPOWERING YOUTHS, TRANSFORMING

LIVES:



THE NG ANGELUS STORY

In Senapati District, Manipur, Mr. NG Angelus, a Peace Architect trained by Grassroot Shillong and Amyaa NGO Manipur, has implemented successful youth empowerment initiatives. Focused on enhancing youth livelihoods, Angelus introduced mushroom cultivation as an income-generating activity in Chumai Village.

By collaborating with the Chumai Youth and Students Organisation, village leaders, and women's groups, he established a successful program that he now aims to expand to other villages. His work demonstrates how dedication, stakeholder collaboration, and innovative approaches can create meaningful economic opportunities and positive change in rural communities.

Key Achievements



- Established sustainable mushroom cultivation as a youth livelihood project in Chumai Village
- Partnered with local stakeholders to develop and implement the initiative
- Provided training to empower youth ownership of the project
- Expanded program to other Manipur villages for broader regional impact

A Brighter Future Ahead

As Angelus continues to inspire and empower youths across Manipur, his story serves as a beacon of hope for a brighter future. With his unwavering commitment to creating positive change, Angelus is poised to make a lasting impact on the lives of countless young people, shaping a more prosperous and harmonious Manipur for generations to come.

GARYSTAR PHANBUH

Garystar's interest in preserving Khasi culture and tradition led him to Grassroot Organisation Shillong in 2024. He underwent training in massage therapy, medicinal herbs making, hospitality, and management, laying the foundation for creating a Khasi traditional spa. This initiative not only showcased his commitment to cultural preservation but also demonstrated his entrepreneurial spirit.

Garystar earned a spot in the prestigious Green Hub Fellowship program, where he gained valuable training in responsible tourism practices, community-based eco-tourism, and indigenous rights advocacy during a six-month period.

His dedication led to new professional opportunities in 2025, including a position as Spa Therapist and Manager at Grassroot Organisation Shillong and a Fellowship with ActionAid. These roles allow him to continue his work in cultural preservation, community development, and advocacy for indigenous people's right

A Brighter Future

Garystar Phanbuh inspires youth in Meghalaya through his dedication to preserving Khasi culture and promoting community development, demonstrating how passion can drive positive change and motivating others to follow his example.

INDIGENOUS WOMAN'S JOURNEY TO ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

Kong Laitlin Lyngdoh, an indigenous woman from the Khasi community in Meghalaya, has transformed her life and those of her community through integrated farming systems and sustainable practices. She and her group, supported by Grassroot and FIMI AYNi, started a successful business focusing on organic green leafy vegetables and composting.



Kong Medracy Marbaniang, an indigenous woman from Umlongka, Shillong, has transformed her life and contributed to her community's economic growth by starting a litchi juice processing unit. She leveraged her community's abundant litchi resources and began supplying organic products to local markets.

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH FOOD PROCESSING IN UMLYNGKA VILLAGE.



Nathiar Processing Co-operative Society Ltd, a women's society in Umlongka village, East Khasi Hills district, has successfully established a thriving chips-making business with training and support from Grassroot and FIMI AYNi.

SUCCESS STORY



Terisha Sangma (37) heads a self-help group in Rongjeng Imsamdrop focused on traditional bamboo handicrafts. Initially facing challenges like inadequate training and marketing, the group's prospects improved after a 2023 development program by Grassroot Organization Shillong and NABARD. Today, Terisha successfully preserves cultural heritage while generating income as a bamboo handicraft entrepreneur.



Malmitha Momin (25) is a mother of two from Imsamdrop Rongjeng who supports her family through bamboo handicrafts as an SHG member. Initially challenged by limited buyers, low prices, and skill gaps, her situation improved with the 2023 LEDP Project in Rongjeng. The program provided skill enhancement, financial awareness, loan opportunities, and marketing connections. Now more confident, Malmitha and other artisans can distribute their bamboo products to various markets while preserving their cultural traditions.



Mumthaz Momin leads an SHG in Rongjeng Baringre Wadro as a mother of two. Originally farmers with various skills training, her group was inspired by neighboring villages to pursue bamboo handicrafts. Through a 2023 NABARD-supported development program by a grassroots organization, they acquired crucial skills in techniques, marketing, financing, and entrepreneurship. Currently, they successfully produce and sell bamboo products with organizational support from Shillong and aim to expand their business by increasing their bamboo handicraft production.



Jaya, a hardworking mother, faced challenges in accessing quality bamboo. The project connected her with reliable suppliers, enabling her to produce high-quality mora. She now makes 3 mora per week, earning Rs. 7,200 per month.

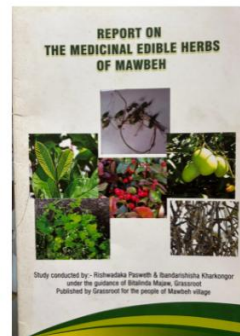
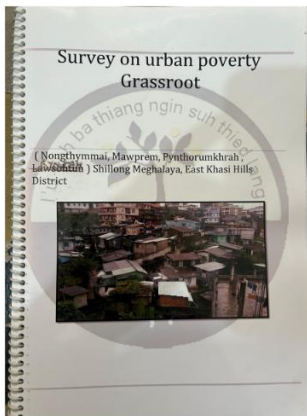
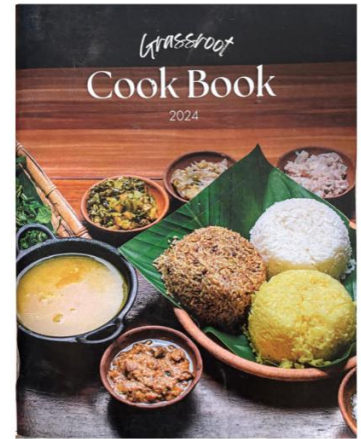
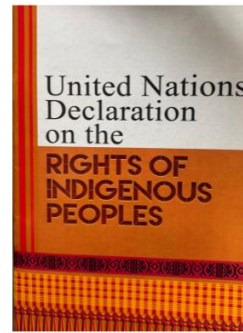
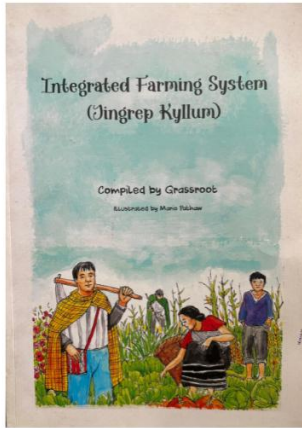


Chebe, a mother of three, lacked confidence due to illiteracy. The project's training not only equipped her with handicraft skills but also boosted her financial literacy and marketing knowledge. Though she initially made only 5 products per day, with practice and perseverance, she now produces 10 products daily, earning Rs. 2,400 per month.



Talsina, a passionate entrepreneur, lacked business acumen. The project's training equipped her with essential business skills, including financial management and marketing. She now produces 4 mora per week, earning Rs. 9,600 per month.

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