



EXEMPLAR

CASE STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

“ Build a community where every individual has the opportunity to thrive
and where no one is left behind ”

PRI-CBO CONVERGENCE PROJECT- MANIPUR



Aajeevika
National Rural Livelihoods Mission
Government of India



Kudumbashree
Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission
Government of Kerala

Kudumbashree-National Resource Organisation



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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to this compilation and express our deep appreciation for the MSRLM, Kudumbashree NRO and the countless individuals who have dedicated themselves to the cause of poverty eradication and women's empowerment. Through your unwavering commitment, we witness the dawn of a brighter future for all.

Disclaimer

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FOREWORD

“Exemplar” is a testament to the incredible achievements and transformative power of grassroots institutions and the individuals who drive them. Through a collection of case studies, this book showcases the best practices and success stories of women collectives, PRI members, representatives of the Village Authority, and Line Departments. It celebrates their accomplishments, highlighting the spirit of resilience, determination, and community empowerment.

The case studies presented within “Exemplar” provide valuable examples for other district women collectives to learn from and emulate. By sharing their experiences, the book aims to inspire and encourage further progress in inclusive and sustainable development. It emphasizes the boundless potential that lies within every individual and collective endeavour and the extraordinary impact that can be achieved through collaboration and community unity.

The case studies within “Exemplar” serve as a catalyst for change, urging all stakeholders to continue working towards their goals. The book aims to empower individuals and communities to shape their destinies and create a brighter future by providing tools and insights. It underscores the importance of collaboration and the role of grassroots institutions in uplifting communities and driving sustainable development.

Overall, “Exemplar” is a powerful testament to the indomitable human spirit and the potential for positive change when individuals, organizations, and communities come together with a shared vision for progress. It is a source of inspiration and guidance for those seeking to make a difference in their communities and a call to action for stakeholders to continue forging ahead on the path toward inclusive and sustainable development.



(M H Khan)

Additional Chief Secretary, RD & PR
Government of Manipur

PREFACE

Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM) began its interventions in 2014 by the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Manipur to implement NRLM in the State with the mission “To reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots institutions of the poor”.

Kudumbashree (Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission) started its intervention in the area of women’s empowerment by bringing a NeighborHood Group (NHG) to focus on local development through building a good relationship between Community-Based Organizations (CBO) and the Local Self-Governments. Kudumbashree was center stage when it was recognized as the National Resource Organization (NRO) by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in 2012.

The Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM) partnered with the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission, Kudumbashree NRO to implement the Panchayati Raj / Village Authority - Community-Based Organization, PRI/VA - CBO Convergence Project in the state of Manipur. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the partnership was signed by the two missions in 2017. Kudumbashree National Resource Organization (NRO) provided technical support to MSRLM to strengthen the relations between CBO and Local-self Government in two districts i.e. Imphal East and Tengenoupal District.

The culmination of this remarkable journey is the book you hold in your hand: “Exemplar”. Within these pages, you will find a collection of case studies that showcase the best practices and success stories achieved through the unwavering efforts of women collectives, PRI members, representatives of Village Authority, and Line Departments. Each case study is a testament to the transformative power of grassroots institutions and their ability to uplift communities. The stories and experiences shared in “Exemplar” celebrate the achievements of individuals who have worked hard to reach their goals and provide valuable examples for other women collectives in the district to learn from and aspire to. These stories embody the spirit of resilience, determination, and community empowerment, highlighting the boundless potential that lies within every individual and collective endeavor. We hope you will be inspired by the extraordinary impact that can be realized when organizations collaborate, communities unite, and individuals are given the tools to shape their own destinies. May the experiences captured in “Exemplar” serve as a catalyst for further progress, encouraging all stakeholders to forge ahead on the path toward inclusive and sustainable development.



(Smt. N Bandana Devi, IAS)
State Mission Director, MSRLM

CONTENTS

I	Background	08
II	Abbreviations	14
1.	Health, Nutrition & Sanitation	17
1.1	Case Study on Awareness Class for Adolescent Girls on Menstrual Cycle	19
1.2	Community Participation towards enhancing Health and Sanitation: Activation of VHSNCs	22
1.3	Activation Of Village Water Sanitation Committees (VWSC)	29
2.	Education	37
2.1	Where there is a will there's a way: Case study on the opening of Primary School during Pandemic	41
2.2	Back to School: Re-Enrollment in Haraorou Tangkham Panchayat Schools	43
2.3	Read, Write, Succeed: Inauguration of free coaching center	46
2.4	Breaking Barriers to Knowledge: Adult Education	48
3.	Access to Entitlements	51
3.1	Convergence Mela: A Collaborative Initiative by PRI and CBO for Community Empowerment	53
4.	Livelihoods	61
4.1	Building reliability between CBO and KVK	64
4.2	Ray of Hope	65
4.3	The more you learn, the more you earn	71
4.4	Power of Perseverance: Case Study On Daily Market	75
5.	Women and Child Development	81
5.1	Prioritizing Women's Health: Celebrating International Women's Day	83
5.2	Nurturing Minds, Shaping Futures: Activation of Anganwadi Centre	85
5.3	Choosing Health and Wellbeing: Empowering Youth to Prevent Drug Abuse"	87
5.4	Balasabha	88
6.	Creating avenues of change: Institution Building	91
6.1	Village Coordination Forum (VCF) - AHONGBA (Case Study on Opening of Library at Sita Village initiated by VCF)	93

BACKGROUND

The PRI-CBO Convergence project was initiated in Manipur in the year 2018. The project is about collaboration between the network of women's self-help groups and local governments to bring in participative planning and development. Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission implemented the project in pilot mode in two districts with the support of Kudumbashree, a National Resource Organisation under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission.

The partnership was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2017. The PRI-CBO Convergence project was implemented in 12 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the Imphal East district and 33 Villages in Tengnoupal district. Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM) extended the project to cover 38 GPs across four blocks in Imphal East, and 67 pilot villages across two blocks in Tengnoupal District.

The PRI-CBO convergence project envisages a mutually beneficial relationship between the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the communities in the process of implementing poverty eradication programmes and further extending that partnership to various departments and schemes. While such partnerships help the communities in improving their livelihoods and social security, the local governments benefit from better outreach and effective delivery of services. Departments get to enhance the quality of implementation of schemes by working closely with communities.

The project activities began in February 2018 and continued till March 2023, spanning a total of five years and three months. The project focussed on capacity building of various stakeholders in the field, including Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), and the community cadres. The community cadres, also called Local Resource Group (LRG)/Convergence cadres, are a group of grassroots community members selected and trained to lead the project implementation in their respective areas. Internal Mentors are a smaller set of women selected from among the cadre, for facilitating the convergence activity at block/district level.

A total of 242 cadres and 33 Internal Mentors were developed and deployed in two districts of Manipur. They were trained extensively through processes and were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their roles in implementing the project at the grassroots level. Mentor Resource Persons from Kudumbashree, who bring with them vast experience and knowledge on different aspects of community development and convergence, trained the community cadre. Training local cadres selected from the community by Mentors from Kudumbashree is a key strategy adopted by the PRI-CBO Convergence project.

Active participation in the project processes increased women's visibility; women engaging in decision-making processes did create ripple effects on the way the communities engaged with institutions of governance and administration.

Selected members of the LRGs/Convergence cadre were promoted as Internal Mentors who handhold and supported the new cadres selected in Phase II intervention across the two districts. The Internal Mentors who are cadres of the Cluster Level Federations (CLF) played a key role in supporting the expansion of the project and strengthening the Village Level Federations (VLF). Education of various stakeholders through the project processes is an approach used by the project to ensure sustainability.

The community cadre evolved through the different stages of the project by taking up different types of activities for community mobilisation and building partnerships with local governments. The cadres showed excellent initiative and commitment in taking up several campaigns addressing pertinent issues faced by the local communities. These included adult education programs, health camps,

enrolment fairs, strengthening of citizen committees, and drives against drug abuse, alcoholism, and plastic pollution.

The cadres, through their consistent work, helped not only in achieving the deliverables of the project thereby improving the community access to entitlements and livelihoods programs, but by triggering the shift towards developing a positive mindset among the communities towards such initiatives too. This is evident through the increased participation of women in Gram Sabhas, the way women liaise with local governments, and the extent of ownership seen in the federations of SHGs. The federations have been able to assess available resources, plan for programs, take up community initiatives, and monitor them. Social Action Sub Committees of Village Level Federations gained the capacity for effective functioning. All these led to greater partnerships between the communities and the local governments including PRIs and Village Authorities.

This booklet 'Exemplar' showcases the commendable endeavours of the federations and their members, with the support of MSRLM and Kudumbashree NRO, through a compilation of case studies from the project intervention districts of Manipur. These case studies illustrate how consistent efforts to enhance the skills and abilities of the members and the federations have resulted in women being able to assert their agency in decision-making and in spearheading initiatives for the betterment and advancement of their communities. This has been made possible through their active participation in public forums, not only in areas governed by the PRI Act but also in the hill areas where traditional governance structures exist.

Context of the State

Located in the northeastern region of India, Manipur shares its borders with Mizoram, Nagaland, and Assam within the country, as well as an international boundary with Myanmar. Known as 'A jewelled land', Manipur derives its name from its unique topography, featuring an oval valley surrounded by nine hills. This region is of immense ecological and cultural importance, boasting a diverse range of flora and fauna, as well as a vibrant mix of cultures.

Bamboo cultivation is a major industry in Manipur, with an expansive land area of over 3000 square kilometers dedicated to its cultivation, making it one of India's largest bamboo cultivation areas. The state's profile can be geographically divided into two regions: the hill region and the valley region. Initially comprising nine districts, Manipur witnessed the addition of seven new districts in 2016 through the bifurcation of existing ones. The hill region encompasses five districts, namely Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Chandel, and Ukhrul. On the other hand, the valley region consists of four districts, including Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, and Bishnupur. The hill districts cover approximately 90% (20089 sq. km) of the state's total area, while the valleys constitute the remaining 10% (2238 sq. km).

Manipur is home to diverse ethnic groups, broadly classified into three main categories: the Meiteis, Kukis, and Nagas. The Meiteis and Meitei Pangals (Muslims) form the majority population in the valley region, while the Kukis and Nagas are predominant in the hill regions. This cultural diversity adds to the richness and uniqueness of Manipur's heritage. With its stunning landscapes, rich biodiversity, and a tapestry of different ethnic communities, Manipur stands as a captivating state that offers a captivating blend of natural beauty and cultural treasures.

ABOUT LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Local Government in Manipur - The state of Manipur has two types of local governments under the following Acts.

- **Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994** - A two-tier PRI system is in place at the village and district levels as per the Act in the valleys of Manipur. The first elections to the Zilla Parishads (ZPs) at the district level and Gram Panchayats (GPs) at the village level were held in 1997.
 - **The Manipur Hill Areas Autonomous District Council Act, 1971** - In 1971, Manipur was granted statehood and the government of India promulgated an Act of Parliament which was called Manipur Hill Area District Council Act. This provides for the creation of six ADCs covering the hill areas of Manipur.
 - **Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956** - Areas with a significant population of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the hilly regions are governed either by traditional inheritance or by the provisions of the Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956. Every Village Authority shall be a body corporate by the name of the village for which it is constituted and shall have perpetual succession and a common seal and shall by the said name sue and be sued, with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract and do all other things necessary for the purposes of this Act.
-

Implementation Strategy Adopted for the State

Phase I of the project was implemented in 12 pilot Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the Imphal East district and 33 pilot villages in the Tengnoupal district. Building on the success of Phase I, Phase II was extended to 38 pilot GPs across 4 blocks in Imphal East District and 67 pilot villages across 2 blocks in Tengnoupal District. The project spanned a duration of 5 years and 3 months, starting in February 2018 and concluding in March 2023. A key focus of the project was capacity building for various stakeholders, including PRIs, SHGs, and the community cadre. Local Resource Group (LRG)/Convergence cadres and Internal Mentors, comprising grassroots community members, were developed to lead project implementation at the Gram Panchayat and village levels. A total of 242 cadres and 33 Internal Mentors were trained and deployed in Manipur, equipped with the necessary skills to effectively carry out their roles.

The LRGs/Convergence cadres were evaluated and promoted as Internal Mentors, supporting new cadres in Phase II interventions. They played a crucial role in expanding the project and strengthening Village Level Federations (VLFs). The community cadres facilitated various activities such as adult education programs, awareness classes, health camps, and initiatives against drug addiction, alcoholism, and plastic pollution. They also facilitated collaboration between panchayat functionaries and SHG federations, bridging relationships and building ownership.

Over the course of five years, the community cadres contributed to achieving project deliverables with the support of various line departments and PRI members in improving entitlements, livelihood access, and opportunities for the community. They also fostered a positive mindset among villagers, promoting women's participation in Gram Sabhas, liaising with PRIs for resource assessment, and encouraging ownership among the federations in engaging with PRIs for planning and monitoring community-led initiatives. Institutional platforms such as the Village Coordination Forum (VCF) were formed in hill areas to enhance coordination among active CBOs and Village Authorities (VAs).

Additionally, the Social Action Sub-Committee (SAC) was strengthened and capacitated in all VLFs of both districts, enabling effective planning, monitoring, and implementation of project activities. These efforts contributed to the long-term success of the project and strengthened collaboration between the community and PRIs/VAs, facilitating better decision-making and implementation of initiatives.

Profile of the Intervention Area

Phase I

PROJECT INTERVENTION AREA		
Name of the Districts	Imphal East	Tengnoupal
Total No of Blocks	1	1
Total No of GP/VA	12	33
Total No of CLF	NA	NA
Total No of VLF	35	23
Total No of SHG	367	165
Total No Cadres (Local Resource Group)	102	124

Phase II

PROJECT INTERVENTION AREA		
Name of the Districts	Imphal East	Tengnoupal
Total No of Blocks	4	2
Total No of GP	37	111
Total No of CLF	8	4
Total No of VLF	108	51
Total No of SHG	1451	212
Total No Cadres (Local Resource Group)	66	75
Total No Internal Mentors	15	14

MAJOR IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The PRI-CBO Convergence project in Manipur has had a significant impact on the participation and empowerment of women in the state. Prior to the project, the involvement of women in Gram Sabha, the village-level governance body, was limited. Social activist women groups like Meira Paibi and Youth Clubs existed, but they did not collaborate extensively with Local Self Government (LSG) institutions due to their activist nature.

However, with the implementation of the PRI-CBO Convergence project and its capacity-building activities, awareness about governance increased, and women's interest in participating in village development issues grew. Meira Paibi, which is a social activist women's group, transformed its approach and began conducting rallies and actively engaging in village development matters. A remarkable outcome of the project was that almost 90% of Meira Paibi members became Self-Help Group (SHG) members, gaining awareness of their rights and entitlements through project activities.

The project facilitated collective action by leveraging the strengths of the LSG structure and conducting participatory exercises involving all stakeholders. This approach helped streamline and organize demands for improved village development planning and implementation. Through enhanced collective participation and utilization of platforms like Gram Sabha and line departments, women empowered themselves and actively engaged in political action.

The project also transformed the perspective of women collectives i.e. Meira Paibis (Valley region) and Women Associations (Hill Regions), as they began working more closely with the government. This shift in community stewardship was encouraging, with community women and other local representatives actively participating in the governance process. The Gram Panchayats (GPs) became more vibrant entities, thanks to the dynamic and enthusiastic community of women who actively collaborated with the PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions).

The project's capacity-building exercises proved enabled PRIs to work closely with the community. The strengthened communication flow within grassroots institutions facilitated effective information dissemination and the planning of developmental activities. The positive response from stakeholders during the pilot phase motivated further engagement and expansion of the project. The PRI-CBO Convergence project contributed to the multifaceted goals of rural development in the villages, inspiring other communities to form SHGs and federations at the village level.

Both the valley and hill regions of Manipur benefited from the project. In the hill regions, Village Authorities had the opportunity to engage with communities, fostering creative partnerships and leading to a paradigm shift in development approaches. Women also gained increased participation in the village assembly in certain areas. Similarly, State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) expanded working with programs like MGNREGA by reaching out to communities, initiating discussions, and prioritizing demands, recognizing the benefits of such partnerships.

The Convergence initiative in Manipur, implemented through the collaborative efforts of SRLM and Kudumbashree, has made remarkable progress and accomplished significant outcomes in alignment with its objectives. Contextualised to suit Manipur's distinctive governance structure, the project effectively engaged a diverse range of stakeholders, including women federations, traditional governance institutions, civil society organisations and line departments.

Through capacity-building endeavors, stakeholders have gained empowerment, resulting in enhanced collaboration and a holistic approach to community development. The project has successfully encouraged the active participation of women in local governance, fostering inclusivity and empowerment. Exposure visits to Kerala have proven invaluable in terms of experiential learning and served as inspiration for implementing effective strategies in Manipur. Departmental convergence and convergence camps have successfully bridged the gap between line departments and the community, ensuring improved access to entitlements and services. Livelihood opportunities have been enhanced through agricultural support and training programs. Targeted awareness campaigns and community interventions have effectively addressed social issues. The partnership with citizen committees such as VHSNC has led to positive transformations in Anganwadi Centers and the wider community. The accomplishments of the project exemplify the successful integration of modern and traditional governance systems, thereby fostering inclusive and sustainable development across Manipur.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALMSC	<i>Anganwadi level Monitoring and support Committee</i>
ANM	<i>Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife</i>
ASHA	<i>Accredited Social Health Activist</i>
AWW	<i>Anganwadi Worker</i>
BMI	<i>Body Mass Index</i>
BMMU	<i>Block Mission Management Unit</i>
CBEC	<i>Community Based Events Committee</i>
CBO	<i>Community Based Organization</i>
CDO	<i>Chief Development Officer</i>
CDPO	<i>Child Development Project Officer</i>
CDS	<i>Community Development Society</i>
CHO	<i>Community Health Officer</i>
CIF	<i>Community Investment Fund</i>
CLF	<i>Cluster Level Federation</i>
CMHT	<i>Cheif Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang</i>
DAY-NRLM	<i>Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission</i>
DMMU	<i>District Mission management Unit</i>
EC	<i>Executive Committee</i>
FHTC	<i>Functional Household Tap Connection</i>
GPDP	<i>Gram Panchayat Development Plan</i>
ICDS	<i>Integrated Child Development Services</i>
JJM	<i>Jal Jeevan Mission</i>
KVK	<i>Kishan Vigyan Kendra</i>
LRG	<i>Local Resource Group</i>
LSGI	<i>Local Self Government Institution</i>
MC	<i>Managing Committee</i>
MDM	<i>Mid-day Meal</i>

MGNREGS	<i>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme</i>
MO	<i>Medical officer</i>
MSRLM	<i>Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission</i>
NHM	<i>National Health Mission</i>
OB	<i>Office Bearers</i>
PHED	<i>Public Health and Engineering Department</i>
PMJAY	<i>Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana</i>
POCSO Act	<i>Protection of Child from Sexual Offences</i>
PRI	<i>Panchayati Raj Institution</i>
RD & PR	<i>Rural Development and Panchayati Raj</i>
SAC	<i>Social Action Sub-Committee</i>
SBM	<i>Swachh Bharat Mission</i>
SDP	<i>Social Development Plan</i>
SHG	<i>Self Help Group</i>
SISD	<i>Social Inclusion and Social Development</i>
SMC	<i>School Management Committee</i>
VA	<i>Village Authority</i>
VCF	<i>Village Coordination Forum</i>
VHSNC	<i>Village Health, Nutrition and Sanitation Committee</i>
VLF	<i>Village Level Federation</i>
VPRP	<i>Village Poverty Reduction Plan</i>
VWSC	<i>Village Water and Sanitation Committee</i>
ZP	<i>Zila Panchayat/Parishad</i>



HEALTH, NUTRITION & SANITATION

"The strength of a community lies in the health of its members. Let's work together to promote well-being for all"

Theme : Health, Nutrition & Sanitation

During the commencement of the project in 2018, while interacting with the CBO members the NRO team encountered various issues related to community health like limited healthcare infrastructure, shortages of healthcare professionals, and reduced access to health education. Another formidable challenge is the burgeoning burden posed by Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease and diabetes, which are often ignored by the community due to a lack of awareness about their complications. Furthermore, the functioning of Village Level Health and Sanitation Committees, pivotal at the grassroots level for promoting community health, often falls short due to issues such as resource constraints, lack of training, and inadequate community engagement. Strengthening these committees is imperative to enhance local health outcomes. Access to clean drinking water and dependable household water supply is an enduring challenge in numerous regions, where contaminated water sources expose vulnerable populations to waterborne diseases. Ensuring access to safe water is fundamental in preventing illness. And lastly, the limited awareness and deeply entrenched cultural taboos surrounding menstruation and menstrual hygiene, especially among adolescent girls, pose significant hurdles. This dearth of knowledge can adversely affect their physical and emotional well-being. Tackling these challenges in public health necessitates a multifaceted approach involving the development of healthcare infrastructure, policy reform, community engagement, health education, and culturally sensitive interventions. Collaboration between governments, non-governmental organizations, healthcare providers, and communities is imperative to make substantive progress in overcoming these obstacles and promoting improved public health outcomes for all. Addressing these challenges required targeted interventions and policies at the community level to improve healthcare access, strengthen healthcare infrastructure, and promote preventive and curative measures for better health outcomes. Within our intervention districts, successful best practices adopted by the community exemplify these efforts, as showcased in the ensuing case studies falling under the thematic umbrella of Health, Nutrition & Sanitation. Through these endeavors, we aspire to reshape community well-being and pave the way for a healthier future.

1.1 Case Study on Awareness Class for Adolescent Girls on Menstrual Cycle

Adolescence is a significant period of human life. Children reach puberty and encounter various physical, psychological, and emotional changes. One of the biggest changes that adolescent girls encounter is the start of menstruation. Various studies have found that it is vital for an adolescent girl's initial experience with this phenomenon to be as positive as possible. As unsafe menstrual practices lead to various health conditions. In addition, many girls are forced to stay home from school while menstruating because of unhygienic toilets, and are often deprived to attend compulsory sport meets and events etc. Hence, proper awareness and knowledge should be provided to them at an early age itself. In order to do that, children should be aware of the proper measures that can be used when they encounter problems during the time of the menstrual cycle.

During VLF meetings with the Internal-Mentors, many VLF members raised the concern that menstruation and menstrual hygiene-related discussions are still a taboo. These topics are not discussed in any platform neither in schools nor in SHG or VLF meetings. As a result, women and young girls are ignorant of hygienic practices and the possibility of adverse health impacts.

The first step was to learn more about menstruation practices among SHG members and girls in the community. I-mentors were assigned to collect data from each SHG and VLF. They found that roughly 40 percent used menstrual pads during their periods. The rest used traditional methods like cloth pieces. These were often are unhygienic and could potentially lead to diseases such as fungal and urinary tract infections, reproductive tract infections (RTI), and cervical cancer.



Class conducted at Damjol Church, by Suthat VLF, Tengnoupal Block



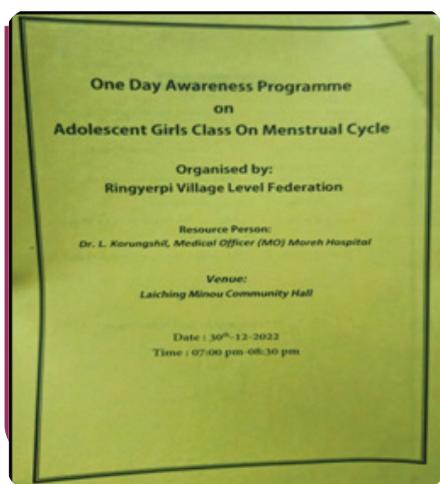
Experience sharing of SHG members while interacting with I-Mentors - "During our times, we did not have any idea about menstrual pads, we did not even wear panty/underliners. We used pieces of clothes folded, tied & held with thread at waist under our phanek (Traditional Wrapper/Mekhla). With that, we continued doing Household chores and going to the field. The pieces of clothing were dried and hidden from others, mainly, men in the family. We felt shy to hang them and dry them in the sunlight" said Mrs. Tedarshim, SHG women.

While discussing this problem with the CLF, VLF, BMMU, and NRO teams, the group collectively realized that making sanitary pads accessible cannot be the only solution. The main challenge was to bring in a shift in perception that would result in behavioral change. For this, the team decided to initially concentrate on creating awareness about the menstrual cycle among the women of the villages. As a first step, they decided to reach out to young girls. The BMMU and CLF officials instructed the I-Mentors to discuss this during the VLF meeting. During this meeting, respective VLF EC Members along with Convergence Cadres and I-Mentors had decided on the resource persons i.e. Doctors from PHC and ASHA workers, and the avenues where awareness classes could be arranged.

The Office Bearers (OB) along with the Convergence Cadres and Internal-Mentors approached the PHC Doctor and ASHA workers in their respective areas to orient the adolescent girls of their villages, regarding the biological changes that the human body undergoes during puberty, precautionary measures and when to seek medical assistance.



Distribution of free sanitary pads at Khomunhui VLF, Aimol Khunyai Village, Tengnoupal Block



On April 2022 under the guidance and support of DMMU, BMMU, NRO Team, CLF, VLF, Internal-Mentors, and Convergence Cadres; around 16 VLF of both CLFs in Machi Block, organized the Adolescent Girls Awareness class on Menstrual Cycle at the Village level under the tagline “Be Period Positive and Cherish Puberty”. The session was conducted by Doctors, Nurses, and ASHA workers. The program was attended by 264 girls and 340 SHG women at the village level.

In these awareness classes, the facilitator interacted with the girls and to discuss the menstrual cycle. The three phases of the menstrual cycle were explained with the help of posters and digital presentations. After that, the facilitator also talked about useful home remedies to manage menstruation comfortably, how to use sanitary pads, and the situations in which they should approach doctors for assistance. In the final 20 minutes, girls were given time to ask questions and clarify doubts. Many questions related to common myths and problems faced during periods were asked not only by the girls but also by the SHG women who attended the session along with them.



Resource Person - Dr. Ibema Devi, conducting class at Thangwar VLF, Machi Block

Way Forward: The VLF (Village Level Federation) took a groundbreaking step by initiating the Adolescent Girls Awareness class on the Menstrual Cycle in 2021-22. This educational activity not only involved young girls but also attracted the participation of SHG (Self-Help Group) members. It proved to be immensely productive. After this session, all four CLFs (Cluster Level Federations) in Machi and Tengnoupal blocks of Tengnoupal District collectively



Class conducted at Karshil VLF, Maipou Village, Machi Block

decided to organize such awareness classes every year, during the Winter and Summer Breaks when girls returned to their villages from hostels. To ensure adequate follow-up, the agenda for discussion in the sessions were recorded in the books of records of each VLF. As a result in the year 2022-23, a total of 44 VLFs from both blocks with the help of Convergence Cadres, I-Mentors, and VLF members organized awareness classes on the menstrual cycle during winter break i.e. December 2022. As a result, an impressive number of 718 adolescent

girls and 536 SHG women attended the sessions conducted by PHC (Primary Health Centre) Doctors and Asha Workers.

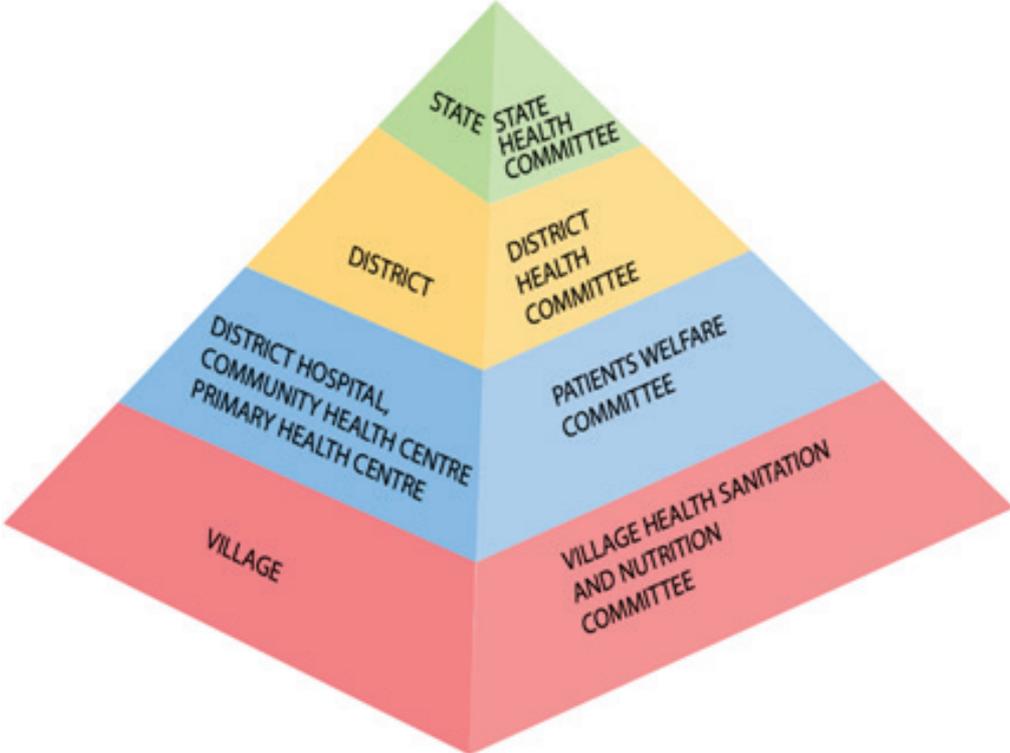
This awareness classes improved knowledge and understanding of the natural processes of the menstrual cycle and equipped young girls and women with strategies to manage this aspect of their lives effectively. It stands as a testament to the VLF's commitment to promoting empowerment and well-being among adolescent girls in the community.

1.2 Enhancing Health and Sanitation through Community Participation: Activation of VHSNCs

As part of enabling effective confluence between NHM, DAY-NRLM, and ICDS for improving nutritional quality, health benefits and sanitation and hygienic practices at the community level, the platform of VHSNC formed at the village level becomes pivotal for strengthening practices promoting public health, nutrition, and hygiene by ensuring active participation of the community stakeholders namely the PRI members, frontline health workers like ANM, AWWs, School teachers, ASHA workers; serve beneficiaries and the CBO network (SHG federation).

In 2005, the Government of India launched the National Rural Health Mission in order to provide accessible, affordable, and quality health care to people living in rural areas of our country. The mission aimed to reduce maternal and child death and provide better access to health services, especially for vulnerable sections. In 2013, the NRHM was subsumed under the National Health Mission, which also addresses the needs of people living in urban areas through the National Urban Health Mission.

The National Health Mission aims to ensure universal access to health care by strengthening health systems, institutions, and capabilities under the National Health Mission. The various institutions which have been set up at different levels for effective health planning have been given in the pyramid below. Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs) serve as village-level institutions for health planning and action for the marginalized and poor sections.



Implementation Architecture

About VHSNCs

VILLAGE HEALTH SANITATION AND NUTRITION COMMITTEES has been formed to take collective actions on issues related to health and its social determinants at the village level. They are particularly envisaged as being central to 'local level community action' under NHM, which would develop to support the process of Decentralized Health Planning. Thus the committee is envisaged to take leadership in providing a platform for improving health awareness and access to community for health services, addressing specific local needs and serving as a mechanism for community-based planning and monitoring.

The committee is formed at the revenue village level and it should work closely with the Gram Panchayats. It shall act as a sub-committee of the Gram Panchayat with the Panchayat overseeing the committee. It should have a minimum of 15 members which should comprise elected members of the Panchayat who shall lead the committee, all members working for health and health related services, community members/beneficiaries and representation from all community sub-groups, especially the vulnerable sections in hamlets/ habitations.

The CLFs in Sawombung and Heingang Blocks of Imphal East district initiated a discussion regarding the activation of VHSNCs to ensure the participation of SHG members and to assess the status of VHSNCs and their composition within select Gram Panchayats in Sawombung and Heingang Blocks of Imphal East district. The objective of activating this committee came from the frequent discussions that the CLF had conducted in the Monthly CLF Managing committee meeting regarding adopting measures to check anaemia in Pregnant women, promotion of menstrual hygiene among Adolescent girls and making basic health checkup amenities accessible to the community. The NRO mentors, along with the Internal Mentors, participated in monthly meetings held in the CLFs. During these meetings, the concept of activating the existing Health Nutrition committees in the Panchayats was conveyed to the CLF members. The purpose of this idea was to provide a platform for the committees to address and mobilize for their concerns. The CLFs were sensitized that Through the activation of these committees, the CLF members would have a dedicated platform to raise awareness, seek support, and mobilize resources for addressing the health and nutrition challenges prevalent in their communities. By leveraging the existing infrastructure and administrative framework of the Panchayats, the committees could effectively coordinate efforts, implement initiatives, and drive positive change in the realm of health and nutrition at the grassroots level.

VILLAGE HEALTH AND NUTRITION COMMITTEE (VHSNC)

Sr. No	Questions
1.	<p>Does the Village have formed VHSNC? If Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the chairman and how many members are there in the committee? • No. of women members in the Committee? • How many VHSNCs are there in the Gram Panchayat? • How many times in a month, a meeting is organized by VHSNC? • What was the agenda that was discussed by the committee last month? • How many registers are maintained by the committee ? • Do the committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintains Village Health Register <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services Monitoring tool and Register <input type="checkbox"/> Death Register <input type="checkbox"/> Birth Register
2.	Does the VHSNC receive an untied fund annually? If yes, what is the amount?
3.	Is the Annual Action Plan prepared by the VHSNC?



The sites of intervention were identified through a survey conducted by Convergence cadres along with their VLFs. This survey questionnaire was made by the NRO team in discussion with select VLF members, cadres and DMMU team.

The intervention was initiated by the Waiton Gram Panchayat in Sawombung Block. A Joint meeting was organized with assistance from the ex-PRI members of the Waiton Gram Panchayat involving members from the VLF Social Action Sub-committee, ANM and Nurses from the local PHC, CLF OB members and cadres of the VLFs. The discussion focused mostly on the difficulties faced by the existing VHSNC on fund availability, mobilization, inadequate participation from the community, and lack of proper documentation of the VHND events. The ex-Panchayat

President emphasized that support could be provided by SHGs in proper mobilization and information dissemination required for maximum coverage and efficient service delivery during VHNDs.



Joint meeting for VHSNC activation between PRI members, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, ANM, OB members of CLF and VLFs and Cadres

Post the Survey, the analysis of field study highlighted that although VHSNCs were in place in most GPs, they were mostly dysfunctional and did not have any active involvement of the CBO network. The VLFs in Waiton Gram Panchayat hence found it necessary to come together and hold joint discussion meetings with Health Frontline workers and Functionaries of the Panchayat to know about the status of VHSNCs. Opportunities for the materialization of Social Development Plan demands, especially health, sanitation, and nutrition necessities using the VHSNC platform and involvement of CBO in active mobilization for health camps were discussed by the VLF and taken as a resolution.



Following the PRI-led joint meeting and VLF EC meeting for discussion on the way ahead, a meeting between the VLF OB members, Health Frontline workers of the GP, and cadres was called by the ASHA worker of the village assisted by VLF cadres. The VLF cadres initiated discussions on the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the VHSNC and the composition of the committee. It was also decided that the committee will facilitate the inclusion

of VLF Social Action Sub-committee members who must collaborate with the efforts of SHGs and other stakeholders in the committee together for achieving better health status in the village. A letter was drafted and submitted by the committee to the Medical Officer of the Local Health Sub-centre requesting a one-day training session for the members of the committee.



As an outcome of the meeting, two days of training for the committee was conducted on Committee composition, stakeholders' responsibility, register maintenance and planning for Annual Health Plan. By the end of the training, it was decided to include 2 SAC members from 4 VLFs formally in the existing Committee. Discussions on inclusion and participation of the SHG

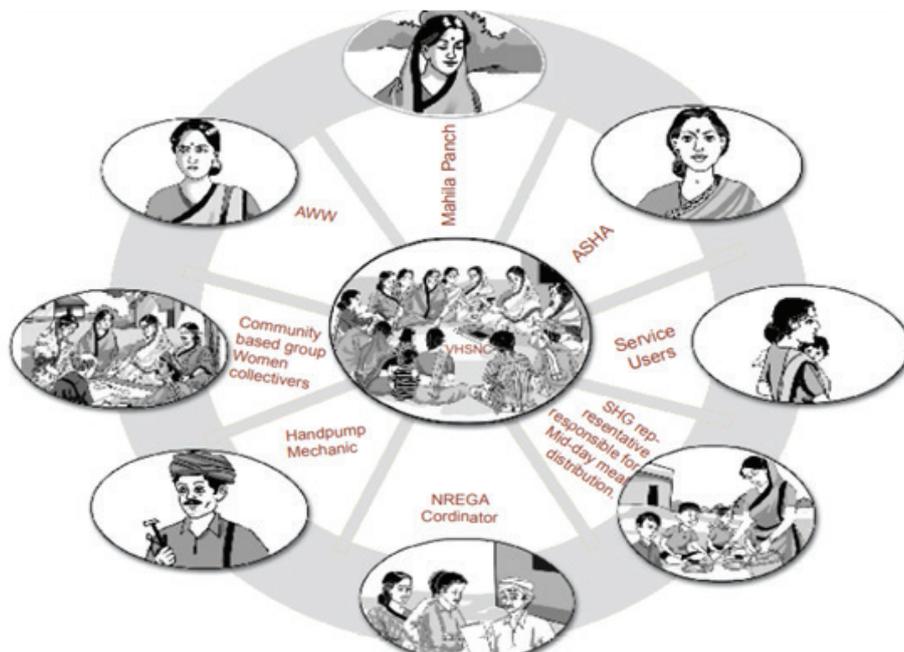
federation, increasing the involvement and ownership of the CBO and PRIs in the VHSNC, and promoting better clarity of roles and responsibilities to each member composing the committee were undertaken by the CHO.

The objective of VHSNCs is to:

- Inform the community about the health programs and government initiatives.
- Enable the community to participate in the planning and implementation of the programmes, and take collective action for the attainment of better health status in the village.
- Take action on social determinants and all public services that directly or indirectly affect health and health outcomes.
- Facilitate the community to voice health needs, experiences and issues related to access to health services such that the institutions of local government and public health service providers can take note and undertake appropriate action.
- Equip Panchayats with the understanding and mechanisms required for them to play their role in the governance of health and other public services and provide leadership to the community for collective action to improve health status.
- Provide support and facilitate the work of community health workers like ASHA and other frontline health care providers, who form a crucial interface between the community and health institutions.

***Source:** Handbook for members of Village health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee published by National Health Mission

Link-https://nhm.gov.in/images/pdf/communitisation/vhsnc/Resources/Handbook_for_Members_of_VHSNC-English.pdf



Composition of VHSNC



Meeting for inclusion of CBO members and planning for Village Health Nutrition Day, Waiton GP, Sawombung Block

Finally, to mark the activation of the committee the VHND for the month of January 2023 was planned with participation from PRI, ASHA, and AWWs, VLF SAC members and school teachers. Special care was taken to draft out a responsibility matrix for all stakeholders responsible for organizing the event. The VLF ensured that their demands from the Social Development plan i.e. screening for malnutrition and demands of health cards under the entitlement plan was included in the planning for VHSND.

Mobilization for identification and information dissemination to the target groups was jointly conducted by VLFs and PRI. The first Village Health Nutrition Day was attended by 135



participants who received awareness on malnutrition and anaemia in pregnant and lactating mothers and violence against women. The ICDS stall provided screening for malnutrition and other medical services like hemoglobin tests and BMI screenings were made available to the community. Free sanitary pads for adolescent girls participating in the programme were distributed by the VHSNC committee members. CMHT and PMJAY enrolment for 55 members was completed during the event in which 35 were SHG and 20 were non-SHG members.

Activities/Events initiated by the committees with support from different Line Departments:

Health Department/ private agencies:

Cancer Screening and Awareness

Awareness programme on menstrual Hygiene and Sanitary napkin distribution to Adolescent Girls

Health Camps- Eye camps, BMI checks, Diabetes and Pressure monitoring

Awareness on Anemia in Pregnant Women and Distribution of Folic acid and Iron tonic

Awareness on Malaria and distribution of Mosquito Nets

Social Welfare/ Legal Aids Clinic:

Awareness on women rights and POCSO Act

Awareness on Mobile Phone misuse for Parents and children

Common Service Centres:

Enrolment of CMHT and Ayushman Bharat Health Card

Outcomes of activated VHSNCs:

- ▲ Inform the community about the health programmes and government initiatives.
- ▲ Enable the community through the community based organizations to participate in the planning and implementation of the programmes, and take collective action for the attainment of better health status in the village.
- ▲ Take action on social determinants and all public services that directly or indirectly affect health and health outcomes.
- ▲ Facilitate the community to voice health needs, experiences and issues related to access to health services such that the institutions of local government and public health service providers can take note and undertake appropriate action.
- ▲ Equip Panchayats with the understanding and mechanisms required for them to play their role in the governance of health and other public services and provide leadership to the community for collective action to improve health status.
- ▲ Provide support and facilitate the work of community health workers like ASHA and other frontline health care providers, who form a crucial interface between the community and health institutions.

The initiative to activate the VHSNCs with the support of the CBO network enhanced the platform towards better community participation in planning, mobilization and implementation of health awareness and service delivery. The intervention which was first started in Waiton Gram Panchayat of Sawombung block has now been replicated and activated across 9 more GPs in both Sawombung and Heingang Block with 15 functioning committees.

1.3 Activation of Village Water Sanitation Committees (VWSC)

Pukhao Gram Panchayat, an intervention GP under the Phase II of PRI-CBO Convergence project intervention in Imphal East District of Manipur has three major villages namely Pukhao Naharup, Pukhao Ahallup, and Pukhao Khabam. These villages have been facing acute problems related to the availability of clean drinking water and the degradation of natural sources of water like the Iril River and from other catchment areas.

Pukhao Naharup	Pukhao Khabam	Pukhao Ahallup
Total Population- 1,479	Total Population- 593	Total Population- 463
Total Households- 320	Total Households- 129	Total Households- 87

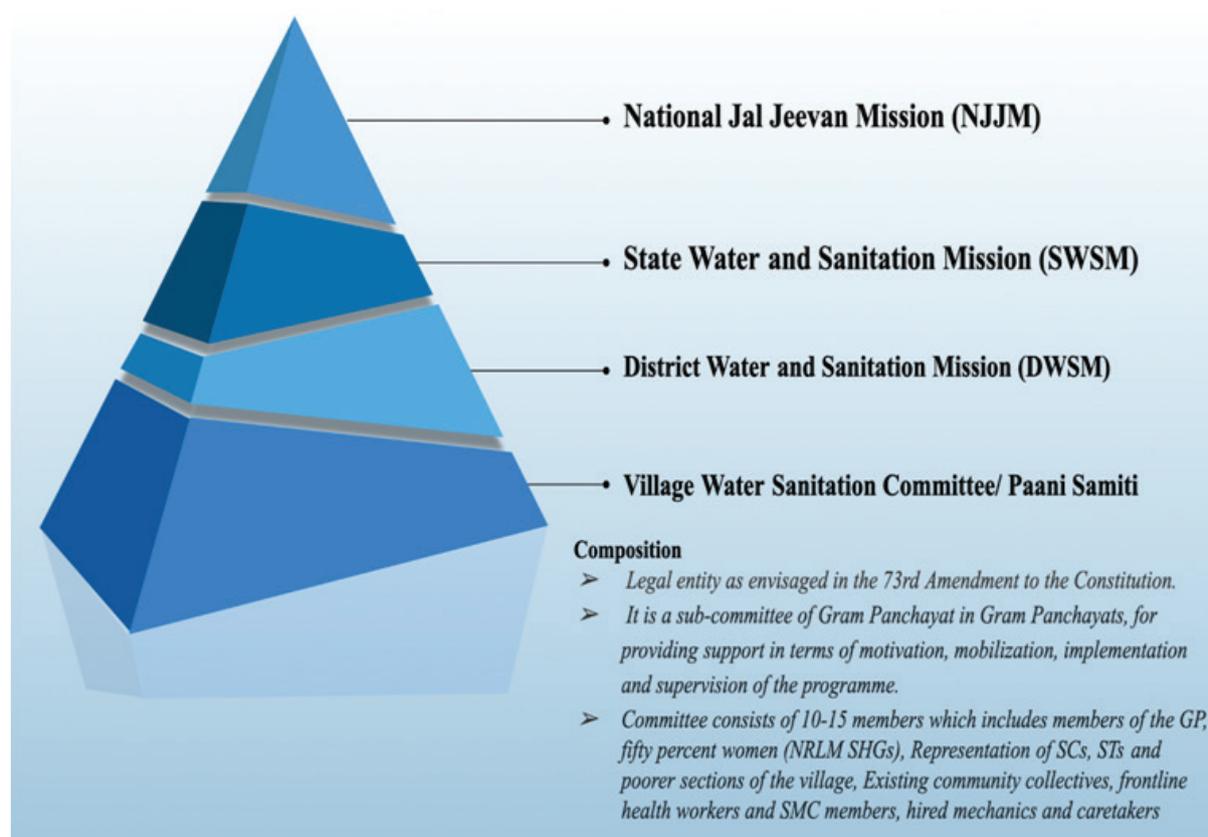
*Source- 2011 Census

In such a scenario, the four VLFs identified lack of clean drinking water and inadequate water pipeline connection to households as an issue in the Social Development Plan component of the Village Poverty Reduction Plan, 2022-2023. However, due to the absence of a formal platform in the Panchayat owing to the delay in the Panchayati Raj Elections, the SHG representatives were confused about the process to be followed for integrating the demands prepared under VPRP into the GPDP so as to materialize their demands through resource support from the Panchayati Raj Department. VLFs namely, Lamgjing Leirembi Apunba Lup VLF of Ahallup - Naharup village and Chaokhatpagi Mangal VLF of Pukhao Khabam VLF came together in the follow-up planning meeting to discuss on planning and resolution of the water shortage faced by the community. Internal Mentor Yumnam Mirabai Devi of the PRI-CBO Convergence project supported and assisted the Convergence Cadres and VLF members in the meeting for planning activities to work around awareness generation on clean drinking water, emphasizing on strengthening of existing water and sanitation committees and stimulating the accountability of the community.

Jal Jeevan Mission and VWSC: A general understanding

- ▲ The central government launched the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme in 1972 to provide assistance to States for rural water supply.
- ▲ This programme was renamed as National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) in 2009 which included central and state share of taxes. It aimed to provide safe and adequate water for drinking, cooking and other domestic needs to every rural person on a sustainable basis.
- ▲ The NRDWP was restructured and subsumed into the Jal Jeevan Mission with its goal to provide Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household i.e., Har Ghar Nal Se Jal by 2024
- ▲ Village Water and Sanitation Committee shall be constituted as a sub-committee of Gram Panchayat in Gram Panchayats, for providing support in terms of motivation, mobilization, implementation and supervision of the programme. They are formed as implementation agencies under the National Jal Jeevan Mission.

Institutional Mechanism under Jal Jeevan Mission



The VLF members planned a joint consultative meeting with the ex-PRI members, local Village Development club groups and Health Frontline workers of the panchayat (ASHAs and Anganwadi workers) for accessing the status of Water and Sanitation Committee. The Committee is responsible for planning initiatives to improve accessibility to clean drinking water in the village. The meeting was facilitated by an ex-ward member along with the VLF OB members of the village and the following resolutions were taken:

1. Activation of the existing water committee and inclusion of CBO (VLF SAC members) in the committee
2. Drafting of letter from the committee to the PHE department for providing training to the committee and completion of pending JJM FHTC project in village
3. Prepare an action plan that includes activities like cleanliness drives, community-led planning for follow-up on enhancing infrastructure around the development of water resources, and monitoring
4. Converging with different departments like Panchayati Raj, PHE, Social welfare, and education for planning initiatives under the Water Sufficient Village Sankalp adopted by the Panchayat.



Joint meeting for accessing the status of VWSC

The role of the SHG federation in mobilization and demand plan preparation for Public infrastructure and follow-up with SBM demands through the Water committee was highlighted. ASHAs and Anganwadi workers came together to identify public institutions like Panchayat ghar, PHCs, Sub-centres and Anganwadi centers which can be utilised for initiating Rain Water harvesting infrastructure and Solid Waste Management. A remarkable effort was made by the ex-PRI members and members of the Village Development club to identify the local resource envelope and mobilize the community to take awareness campaigns on water conservation.



Activation of Water Sanitation Committee of Pukhao Ahallup-Naharup village with inclusion of CBO (members of VLF Social Action Sub-Committee)



VWSC representatives meeting with Asst. Engr (PHED div, IE)

The Village water Sanitation committee formed for Ahallup and Naharup villages approached the PHE department with their demands to fast forward the process of water pipeline supply in their village, conduct an awareness programme on lack of clean drinking water and sanitation and organize a formal training to the newly activated committees.

Sir Mayanglambam Romen Singh (Asst. Engr) of Imphal East District, PHED division-Imphal East extended his full support for the immediate assistance to the demands by the committee, following which new pipelines had been placed in Ahallup village. An awareness program on clean drinking water and water conservation techniques was also organized by the department which was conducted on the 4th of February 2023 in both Ahallup and Pukhao Khabam villages of Pukhao Gram Panchayat.



Awareness programme on lack of clean drinking water and Water conservation



Pipeline distribution by PHED

Both the committees formed had taken tremendous effort in mobilizing and documentation of the awareness program. The PHED department being the implementing agency of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) scheme collected the 131 SBM toilet demands of the VLFs with the list of applications referring to the Village Poverty Reduction Plan document.



Water resources mapping by VWSC members

Following the awareness generation, the Village Water Sanitation committee members came together to conduct a water resources mapping jointly for Ahalup and Naharup villages in the presence of CLF OB members, Youth club members and other elderly persons within the community. The resource mapping highlighted the need for renovation and construction of tube wells, river bunds, retaining walls and drainage facilities along with the identification of public institutions which were in need of drinking water facilities and clean toilets. The mapping was facilitated by the NRO team and Internal Mentor placed in the Panchayat who assisted the committee members in technical planning, mapping exercise, charting and submission of the plan to the Panchayat and the PHED department.



Poster awareness and cleanliness campaign under the leadership of VWSC (Ahallup and Naharup)

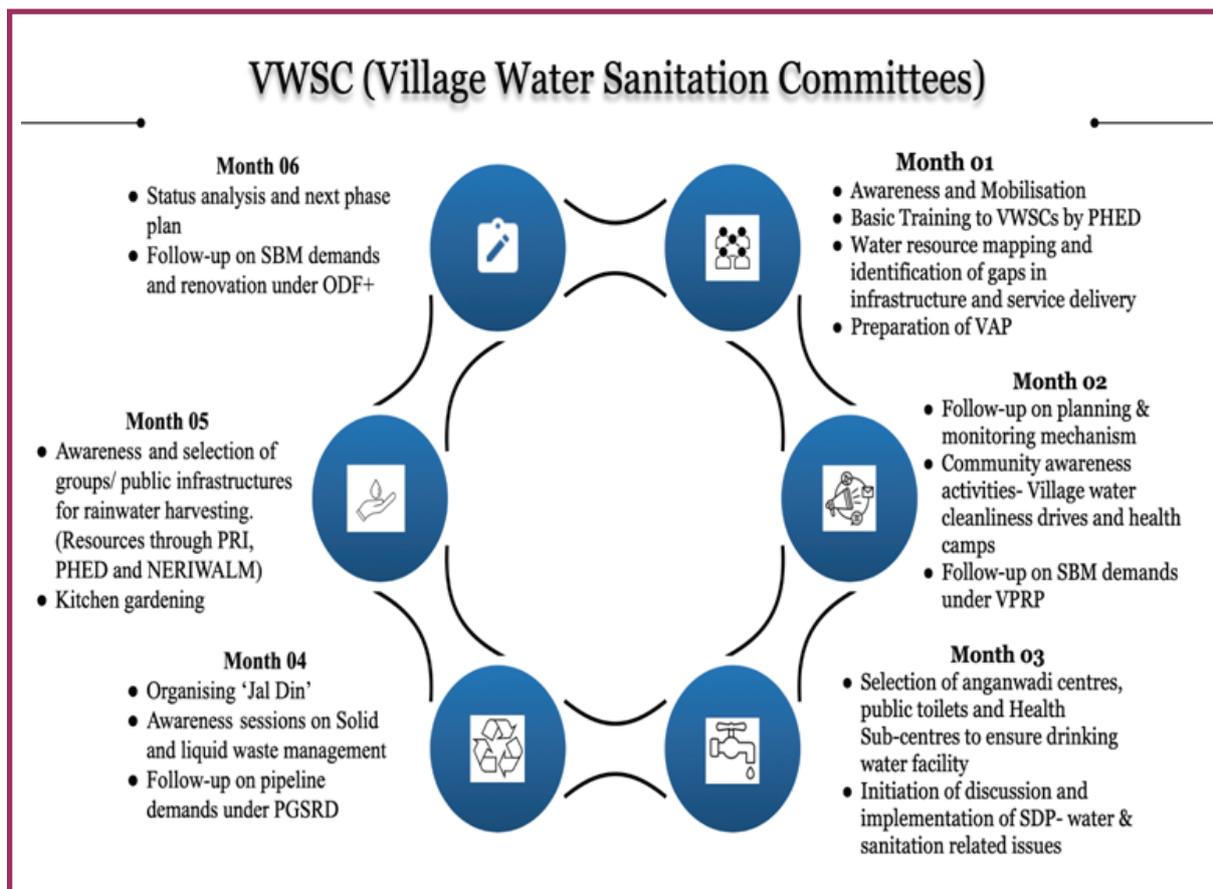
The committee stirred into action by collectively organizing a Clean Water drive and Poster Campaign. The SHG federation, PRI members, ASHA and Anganwadi workers, SMC members and children took part in cleaning the community water resources and planting posters for awareness generation on sanitation practices and controlled use of fertilizers in farmlands to reduce water pollution through chemical seepage into lakes and ponds.



Training to VWSC members by PHED resource person

The Department followed up the effort of the community by facilitating the training on committee function to the VWSC members on 10th of April 2023. It was facilitated by Action Officer- Takhellambam Gobin Singh of Imphal East PHED division on composition, roles and responsibilities, Jal Jeevan Mission Awareness, and community-led action for water conservation.

The committee members have observed notable changes in terms of increased accountability of the local community towards collective planning and keeping vigilant towards factors contributing to water pollution.



Month Wise plan of activities to be undertaken by the VWSC

The committee has realized the essence of convergence between SHGs, the Panchayati Department, and the Public Health and Engineering Department implementing the Jal Jeevan Mission as it moves ahead with its planned set of activities and monitoring

1. Implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission and monitoring the workflow at the field level
2. Undertake Community-led activities toward water conservation
3. Approach relevant departments to access support on awareness generation and technical resources
4. Regular follow-up and Record Keeping
5. Discussions on activities conducted in Gram Sabhas and working closely with Panchayat Standing Committee
6. Materialization of VPRP demands and working towards enhancing sustainable practices

The Kaifadabalan Women Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited (CLF), Sawombung Block has decided to replicate the initiative in the next phase of panchayats based on need and assessment conducted jointly by the panchayat, CBO, Village collectives, and Health frontline workers.



EDUCATION

“Education shouldn’t be a luxury,
it is a basic human right”

Theme : Education

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on children and the learning population within the community. The planning and preparation of the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP), which encompasses a comprehensive social development plan, underscored a multitude of issues. These concerns were also emphasized in the Cluster Level Federation (CLF) vision document, which emerged from extensive discussions at the federating Village Level Federation (VLF) level.

The CLF vision document underscores a focused approach to addressing several community challenges. These challenges encompass issues such as school dropouts, deficiencies in basic school infrastructure, an inadequate number of teachers, and the imperative need for inclusivity. Additionally, the document stresses the promotion of literacy drives and campaigns aimed at enhancing awareness and engendering participation among adults across various spheres of societal engagement.

The following are some of the key highlights of the discussions that were focused on during the collaborative discussions held between CBO and PRI members channelised under the guidance of the Internal Mentors under the PRI-CBO Convergence project.

1. **School Closures:** The pandemic has led to the closure of schools, universities, and colleges in Manipur, disrupting the learning process for millions of students.
2. **Unequal Access to Technology:** The shift to remote learning has highlighted the unequal access to technology among students in Manipur. Many students from low-income families or rural areas have limited access to computers, internet, and other necessary resources for online learning.
3. **Disparities in Learning Outcomes:** The pandemic has widened the disparities in learning outcomes between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds in Manipur. Students from low-income families or those with learning disabilities have been disproportionately affected by school closures and the shift to remote learning.
4. **Impact on Mental Health:** The pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of students, teachers, and parents in Manipur. The stress and uncertainty caused by the pandemic have led to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.
5. **Impact on Enrollment:** The pandemic has also impacted enrollment in community colleges in Manipur, with reductions in enrollment being largest among students from marginalized communities.
6. **Impact on Early Childhood Education:** The pandemic has had a significant impact on early childhood education in Manipur, with evidence showing that it has disrupted the relationships among members of educational communities and the administrative functioning of educational institutions.

The PRI-CBO Convergence project has established a platform to initiate transformative initiatives aimed at addressing the issues deliberated upon during the planning and strategy sessions for the realization of Social Development Plans (SDP) under the VPRP. The project has enlisted the active involvement of dedicated Cadres who have championed their

respective Village Level Federations (VLFs). Their role encompasses the dissemination of vital information pertaining to services offered by line departments. This facilitates the formulation of pertinent plans to effectively address existing demands.

Simultaneously, the engagement of PRI members has proven pivotal. They have proactively extended their support by liaising with department functionaries and Civil Society Organizations. This support encompasses logistical and financial assistance as well as mobilization for the execution of diverse events.

The Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) have upheld their commitment to ensure the sequential execution of activities through collaborative and fruitful means. They have vigilantly overseen the adherence to processes, thereby ensuring effective and regulated monitoring throughout the course of implementation.

Several impactful activities have gained considerable momentum within this context, signifying the positive stride towards addressing community needs:

- **School Re-enrollment Initiatives:** The endeavor to re-enroll children into schools holds significant importance. By ensuring children's return to educational institutions, we are investing in their future prospects and fostering a sense of continuity in their learning journey. This activity aids in mitigating the disruptions caused by the pandemic and rekindles the flame of education.
- **Enhancement of School Infrastructure and Services:** The improvement of school infrastructure and services is a substantial stride toward creating conducive learning environments. A well-equipped and well-maintained educational setting directly impacts students' overall learning experiences. This initiative emphasizes the value of creating an atmosphere that supports effective teaching and learning, ultimately elevating educational outcomes.
- **Promotion of Basic Literacy among Adults:** The campaign for promoting basic literacy among adults holds immense significance. Elevating adults' literacy levels equips them with essential skills for navigating daily life and engaging more actively in societal affairs. This initiative empowers adults, promoting lifelong learning, and contributing to the overall betterment of the community.
- **Opening of Short-Term Coaching Classes:** The initiation of short-term coaching classes responds to the immediate educational needs of the community. These classes provide targeted support to students who require additional assistance. Such initiatives offer timely interventions, enhancing students' academic performances and boosting their confidence levels.

In summation, Kudumbashree National Resource Organisation (NRO) played a pivotal role by providing essential support and guidance to SHGs, VLFs, and PRI bodies, effectively bridging education and knowledge-related gaps and contributing to strengthening sensitization and community stewardship for village development by organizing literacy drives, awareness sessions and initiating steps for installation and revision of community infrastructures with the help of Line Departments and PRI/VAs. Illustrated in this theme "Education" are some of the best practices that were organized during the tenure when the PRI-CBO Convergence Project was working with MSRLM.

2.1 Where there is a will there's a way: A case study on the opening of Primary School during Pandemic



School, Heinoukhong Village, Machi Block of Tengnoupal District, Manipur

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic brought about a series of lockdowns, resulting in the closure of schools and severely disrupting the education of children worldwide. This situation posed an even greater challenge for Heinoukhong Village, a village of 71 households situated in Machi Block of Tengnoupal District, a remote hilly area, which is predominantly inhabited by the Maring Naga community. The village faced significant obstacles in ensuring continued education for its children. The primary hurdle was the unavailability of internet connectivity, making digital learning platforms inaccessible. This was exacerbated by the children's limited access to devices. There was thus an urgent need to look for alternative ways

to ensure continued learning opportunities for the children in Heinoukhong Village throughout the pandemic.

Dangshawa Boinu Maring, a member of Tangla Self-Help Group (SHG) who also worked as a member of the Convergence Cadre for Tuishimwar Village Level Federation (VLF) under the PRI CBO Convergence Project, took the initiative to address this. She organized an emergency meeting with VLF OB (Office Bearer) members to discuss the issue and find a solution that would ensure uninterrupted learning for the children who had recently started their



school education. The emergency VLF meeting was organized with all precautions to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

In the VLF meeting, it was collectively decided to conduct a survey in the village to determine the number of children studying from Nursery to Fifth standard. With the help of VLF EC (Executive Committee) members, they gathered the necessary data. Subsequently, a consultative meeting was organized with Village Assembly (VA) members, Youth Club Members, the Women Association, and the Church to find a viable solution.



It was decided to appoint 7 teachers with a minimum of 4 years of teaching experience from within the village to cater to the educational needs of 37 students. To ensure the sustainability of the school and provide salaries to the teachers, a nominal admission fee of Rs 300 and a monthly fee of Rs 500 would be charged from each student. This fee structure was significantly lower than that of private schools in the area. Additionally, the SHG members contributed monthly amounts ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 1000 for 11 consecutive months to support the management and maintenance of the school.

To address the issue of infrastructure, the VA members successfully reopened a non-functional Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA)-funded school building through discussions with the SSA convener. Following all the necessary lockdown guidelines, the school for Nursery to Fifth standard classes was opened by the third week of June 2020. Attendance registers



were maintained for teachers and students, and monthly progress reports were discussed during VLF EC meetings.

Way Forward: The VA members, VLF members, and the entire village collectively decided to continue this initiative even after the

lockdown ended. The main reason for this was the affordability of this school compared to other private schools. And to ensure effective management, a Village Coordination Forum (VCF) was formed, comprising two members from each village collective, including VLF, VA members, Youth Club Members, Women Association, and the Church. This forum is facilitated by the Convergence Cadre and chaired by the Village Chief. This school was seen as an exemplar and a similar model was adopted in the nearby village of Maryland in Machi Block, located 18 km in May 2022.

2.2 Back To School: Re- Enrollment In Schools of Haraorou Tangkham Panchayat

Yumnam Khunou Junior High School which was established in 1958 is located in Yumnam Khunou area of Haraorou Tangkham GP, Sawombung block of Imphal East district. The school is managed by the Department of Education and provides education up to upper primary classes (Class I to VIII). There are in total 164 students in the school. The school witnessed a decrease in the number of enrolments this year, particularly owing to the negative impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the livelihoods of the people. This has resulted in children's admission being revoked in the private schools due to failure in the payment of high amount as school fees. Few parents have had to admit their children in government schools which are free for all.

The Yumnam Khunou Junior High School was willing to accommodate as many students as possible, but the infrastructure of the school couldn't support this. The school has a pucca building with two spacious rooms which is further divided into 4 rooms with plywood. The plywood used for the partition did not touch the roof resulting in easy movement of noise/sound from one room to another. The school serves as the first learning place for the children where they not only learn but also create memories for life and also good infrastructure, thus contributing towards a positive learning environment. However, poor infrastructure in the school like broken school windows, walls scribbled, cracked and unhygienic toilets did not support an effective teaching-learning environment. The staff room is also used as a kitchen where the mid-day meal (MDM) is prepared. The school is equipped with 2 cooks in addition to the teaching staff who not only prepare the meals but are also responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the school.



The dilapidated state of a classroom



However, the teachers and students of Yumnam Khunou Junior High School are very active and motivated. But with only 6 teachers and one headmaster, they face difficulty in taking all 8 classes simultaneously. To cope with this challenge they call the students on a rotation basis from standard I to IV on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and from standard V to VIII on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. It was an idea to accommodate all but still children are compromising their right to education. The lack of staff was a serious issue and has been hampering the proper functioning of the school. Besides, the inadequate infrastructure and lack of staff, the school also struggles in regularizing mid-day meals (MDM) due to delay in processing of school grants.

TIME-TABLE CLASS-I-IV

CLASS / PERIOD	8:20-9:10	9:30-10:15	10:30-11:15	11:30-12:15
I	ENGLISH PRIYOSAKHI	M/M NONI	MATHS SUSHINI	-
	M/M NONI	MATHS SUSHINI	ENG PRIYOSAKHI	-
II	ENG SUSHINI	M/M LALITABI	HINDI ANITA	MATHS CHITRAKHA
	MATHS SUSHINI	HINDI LALITABI	MATHS ANITA	EVS LUCKY
III	M/M LALITABI	EVS LUCKY	ENG CHITRAKHA	HINDI ANITA
	EVS LUCKY	ENG CHITRAKHA	HINDI ANITA	MATHS NONI

TUE, THUR, SAT.

TIME-TABLE (CL-V-VIII)

CLASS / TIME	1	2	3	4	5	6
V	HINDI ANITA	M/M LALITABI	MATHS LUCKY	ENG PRIYO-SAKHI	EVS NONI	-
	S/Sc SUSHINI	MATHS NONI	HINDI ANITA	M/M LALITABI	SCIENCE LUCKY	ENG PRIYO-SAKHI
VI	SCIENCE NONI	MATHS CHITRAKHA	ENG PRIYO-SAKHI	HINDI ANITA	M/M LALITABI	S/Sc SUSHINI
	M/M LALITABI	ENG PRIYO-SAKHI	MATHS CHITRAKHA	S/Sc LUCKY	SCIENCE SUSHINI	HINDI ANITA

MON, WED, FRI.

Rotation-wise school routine

Considering the disadvantages owing to the conditions of the government school, the parents and community believed that private schools significantly outperform government schools. Hence, the underprivileged families who wished to give the best education to their children sent their children to private schools. This struggle of families to send their children to private schools due to their lack of trust in government schools challenged the notion of “Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act” (RTE Act 2009).

This issue was raised during the preparation of the Social Development Plan as a part of the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) by the Matik Mangal VLF members. The VLF had a consultative meeting with the PRI members and village collectives post Gram Sabha under the guidance of NRO mentor and MSRLM Internal mentor where the VLF took the responsibility of identifying such children who were not able to continue school due to various reasons. By January, the VLF had identified 42 children, and follow-up meetings were held with the school authority of Yumnam Khunou Junior High School and the parents to inform them about the existing government school in their GP and its services. Following up, the VLF EC members and Convergence cadre collected the required documents of the children. On 17th March 2022 a program was jointly organized by Matik Mangal VLF and Haraorou Tangkham Gram Panchayat where a total of 153 participated including children, parents, youth club members and SHG members and CLF OB members.



School Enrolment Program jointly organized by Matik Mangal VLF and Haraorou Tangkham PRI

A session on the importance of education was given by the School Headmaster and the enrolments of 36 identified children in classes I-VI were carried out. To motivate the children, the VLF also distributed stationery items like notebooks and pens to the students.



Uniform Distribution by VLF members

On 7th April, a follow-up meeting was conducted in which the students were given school uniforms, and a discussion on the lines of improving school infrastructure and services were held. The PRI and VLF along with the School Authority have decided to send a proposal to the Zonal Education Department for the upgradation and improvement required in the school. The stakeholders joined hands together to bring quality education accessible to all.

2.3. “Read, Write, Succeed”: Inauguration of free coaching center

In remote Lamboikhul village under Uyumpok Gram Panchayat Imphal East district, Manipur, it was observed that children were not performing well in schools and factors influencing the children to drop out were becoming a complex and alarming problem. This phenomenon of frequently encountering weak educational results and having a high risk of drop outs were observed to be due to the slow down in learning from the formal school education system during the Pandemic and the acute problem of families being unable to afford private coaching for their children.

Whilst the school going children's fates were dangling in an entangled web, a collective effort to curb these issues was becoming very essential. In regards to the obvious need to investigate the acute problems, Anouba Mangan Village Level Federation, a federation of Women SHGs from the village came forward to discuss the problem and the prevailing challenges and issues. This VLF clung to a ray of hope that their interventions and initiatives of free coaching class service will help improve the school going children cope with the major learning loss in terms of formal schooling and to mitigate the high risk of dropouts in the Gram Panchayat.

This initiative started by convening a consultation symposium by the Anouba Mangan VLF with various stakeholders including the Panchayat Zilla Parishad member, influential persons in the locality, women representatives from SHGs, Zonal Education department, parents and guardians of the children and other women representatives. Therein, the Panchayat decreed to pitch in funds by paying a honorarium to teachers engaging in teaching the children in need. A free coaching was designed to be conducted during the vacation period, after the exams, and evening after school for 3 months as an initial activity plan. The first batch of 48 students who enrolled for the coaching, completed their session on 29th January 2023. The 48 students belonged from 1st to 6th standards. The VLF with support from the PRI members and Village Development Club mobilized 4 interested youth members who volunteered themselves as teachers. This collaboration not only highlights the significance of community involvement in addressing educational gaps but also showcases the power of collective action. By pooling their resources, the VLF, PRI members, and Village Development Club were able to bridge the gap in educational access and provide quality learning opportunities for the 48 students.

The students were greatly helped by these initiatives and sincere efforts were also made for the best use of the opportunity by strengthening the teacher-student-community relationships. This resourceful intervention of the Anouba Mangan VLF has been fruitful and well accepted by the community. Keeping in view the importance of sustaining the coaching program, a “free coaching service center” was inaugurated by MSRLM Imphal East DMM, VLF members, local youth club and was participated by the 48 students enrolled for the program. A joint committee including the multi-stakeholders have also been put in place to regulate the functioning, activities and curriculum of the center.

Once devoid of such opportunities, now every underprivileged child has access to extra classes for all subjects to help improve their academic results, clear doubts, build conceptual clarity, and equally excel. The VLF has planned to raise the center into a Balsabha in days to come and continue with the functioning of the center and encourage neighbouring villages to replicate good practices for a strong foundation of the community.

This is an example of multi-collaborative resilience towards a better education for our children, an example of how convergence with different programmes and stakeholders can help unleash us from the web of poverty.



DMM Imphal East with Volunteer teachers, VLF members and Zila Parishad member inaugurating the Free Coaching Center



Inauguration and enrolment ceremony of Free Coaching Classes with Painting Competition themed: Clean and Green Village

2.4 Breaking barriers to Knowledge: Adult Education

The Top Chingtha Gram Panchayat (GP) in the Keirao Bitra Block of Imphal East district, recognized the need for adult literacy as an essential during the preparation of the Social Development Plan, of the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP). The VLF with the support of



the convergence cadres decided to take initiative in improving the literacy rate among adults with the support of the CBO network, PRI members, and line departments. The adult literacy program was expected to be beneficial in improving their literacy skills at first and progressively enhancing their knowledge levels.

The VLF members with the support of the convergence cadres follow a simple and proven strategy to ensure community participation for conducting Adult Literacy classes by involving elected representatives in the GP and also approaching the Adult Education department. To begin with, a survey was conducted with the support of the convergence cadres to identify the beneficiaries who wished to participate in the

program, a total of 94 beneficiaries were identified. Subsequently a meeting was organized with the beneficiaries and the GP Pradhan in which the participants shared their expectations from the classes.

Later, a second consultative meeting was arranged with the PRI members, Youth Club members, School Headmaster, CLF and VLF OB members. During this meeting, the time and schedule for the classes were finalized, and three centres were selected for conducting the classes. In the meeting, the ZP and CLF OB members agreed to provide the necessary study materials required to conduct the classes.

The CLF took the responsibility of sharing 94 slates with the identified beneficiaries which were to be circulated to other GPs as well under the CLF once the course was completed in Top Chingtha GP. The VLF on the other hand took the responsibility of selecting volunteers who would function as teachers for the adult literacy classes. With all the plans intact the first centre was inaugurated on 19th January 2023.

A meeting was arranged with the volunteer teachers before inaugurating to discuss the syllabus. Total of 10 volunteer teachers came forward and we discussed the syllabus, timing, and duration of the classes with the beneficiaries. It was planned to conduct the classes in the local language for 2 hours in the evening from 5 pm to 7 pm. The teachers were provided with the necessary materials to conduct classes. A plan was put in place to conduct the classes for 3 months and the syllabus and cover the same as three distinct parts:

- Part 1 - Essential Reading & Writing
- Part 2 - Basic Mathematics
- Part 3 - Basics of Phone Usage.

On the inauguration day, the Senior Project officer of the Adult Education Department joined and oriented the participants on the significance of adult education. He also informed the staff about the kind of support that the department will be able to provide. A monitoring committee was formed to ensure the quality and regularity of the classes with responsibilities for resolving any kind of issues that may arise. The Senior Officers also announced that the beneficiaries will be provided with certificates after the completion of the course.



Inauguration of Adult literacy classes in Top Chintha GP with 94 beneficiaries

In addition to the logistical aspects necessary to conduct the program, the team considered it important to pay particular attention to certain essential factors as well. It was mandated that the classes must be conducted in a safe and secure environment and that the teachers were provided with the necessary training from the Adult Education Department. The teachers were to pay specific attention to the learning pace of participants and cater to their specific needs. The beneficiaries are to be supported with skill building in such a way that they can apply it to their daily lives. In addition to covering the syllabus, it was also decided that different awareness programs for the beneficiaries must be conducted. Training must also include classes on skills such as manufacturing paper bags and different useful products from plastic waste, etc.

The success of the program in Top Chintha inspired its replication in other four blocks, Keirao, Kshetrigao, Sowumbung and Heingang of Imphal East district, with the support of PRIs, CLFs, VLFs and the concerned departments of Govt. of Manipur. Soon exams will be conducted in the GPs where 3 months have been completed and the students will be given certificates once they pass the exam.

The adult literacy classes had a very profound and transformative impact on the senior citizens of the community. Their commitment and eagerness to learn was very evident in their consistent attendance and active engagement in every class. The provision of the necessary training by the Adult Education department further enhanced the quality of instruction, resulting in a positive learning experience for the beneficiaries. In the classes they were also provided with training in manufacturing paper bags and useful products from plastic waste. These additional skills fostered a sense of empowerment, enabling them to explore income-generating opportunities. The Adult Education Classes had not only provided them with the opportunity to learn how to read and write but also created a platform for relaxation, happiness and social interaction among their peers.



ACCESS TO ENTITLEMENTS

“An inclusive community is one that prioritizes accessibility to entitlements, recognizing that everyone deserves dignity and support”

Theme: Access to Entitlements

The PRI-CBO Convergence project aimed at empowering the community by improving access to entitlements. Before the intervention of the PRI-CBO convergence project in Imphal East and Tengnoupal district, the SHG women were not much aware of their rights and entitlements and the benefits that they should receive through the government schemes. The benefits were often limited to those with close connections to PRI members. But after the intervention of the project, a series of activities were undertaken to raise awareness among the community members about their rights and entitlements. The PRI-CBO Convergence project with the assistance of community cadres, organized a range of awareness programs.

To involve the engagement of the community in identifying their needs and demands, the major tool of the project, Participatory Assessment Entitlement (PAE) which is designed to foster information dissemination, sensitizing Self-Help Group (SHG) members about both Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and State Sponsored Schemes (SSS) and how to access it, to mitigate the poverty. These entitlements can include access to government schemes, social welfare programs, and other support systems which can be accessed through the various line departments. In this activity after providing information demands are collected from the SHG members and after collection of demands various initiatives were taken by the community to fulfill their demands. With the support of the convergence cadres, the VLF members visited various line departments in both districts and formally submitted their demands to the departments. For example, Health camps were organized at GP/Village level not only to give awareness of healthcare services to the beneficiaries but also the department distributed the CMHT cards and provided them with information on the significance of the CMHT card. This initiative has benefited the community members to understand the benefits and provisions of the CMHT scheme.

In 2019, the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) was introduced in both districts to address the community's needs. In pursuit of fulfilling the demands raised, various strategic initiatives were undertaken. A notable approach was the organization of a VPRP achievement mela, providing a platform to showcase the achievements and progress made in response to the community's demands.

The PRI-CBO Convergence Project in Manipur's Imphal East and Tengnoupal districts stands as a model of community empowerment. By raising awareness, engaging with government departments, and fostering collaboration, the initiative effectively facilitated access to entitlements for community members. The PAE tool, health camps, and various other events served as pillars in this transformative process, highlighting the potential of collective action and partnership in driving positive change. Here, we have mentioned one such successful event that has helped is accessing entitlements with the support of the PRI, CBO and the various Line departments, the name of the event was the VPRP Achievement Mela or the Convergence Mela. This initiative was undertaken in almost all the GPs of Imphal East district.

3.1. Convergence Mela: A Collaborative Initiative by PRI and CBO for Community Empowerment

People’s Plan Campaign Guidelines and the Joint advisory by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Rural Development mandated Self-Help Groups and their federations under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) to participate in the annual GPDP planning process and prepare the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP).

The initial stage of the VPRP roll-out was conducted in Imphal East District in the year 2019. It was very crucial to orient about the VPRP process and its importance to the LSGIs and the CBO members as they are the most important stakeholders of this plan preparation. For this purpose, we conducted orientation programs at the District, Block, and CLF levels with the support of MSRLM officials and convergence cadres.

The main objective behind the Convergence Mela was the enhancement of entitlement accessibility and giving awareness on the benefits to the community with the support of the CBO network and PRI’s collective efforts. The mela not only aimed for the achievement of VPRP demands but also focused on bringing collectivism through a fun planning process. The planning process started at the VLF EC meeting, where the convergence cadres shared the idea of various available schemes and initiated a discussion on organizing enrolment camps. Based on the suggestions from the participants, the Convergence Mela format was prepared at the VLF level and was further discussed, consolidated and finalized at the GP level.

After discussing at the VLF EC meeting about the enrolment camps, different VLF-level activities were arranged to make the VLFs take ownership. Training was given to the internal mentors and convergence cadres on the various field-level activities. The cadres then facilitated every activity from plan preparation to conducting the VPRP achievement mela.

The first activity conducted at the VLF level with the VLF EC members was called the ‘web of poverty’.



WEB OF POVERTY AND “Haq Ka Dabba” Activity

In this activity, the participants were given chits to write the top three indicators of poverty that they can identify in their surroundings. Then one of the participants was asked to read the topmost indicators that she has identified and written in her chit. The facilitator will then give her to hold one end of a rope. Based on the indicators written by each of the participants the rope is extended to whosoever has written the same indicator. For example, if someone has written lack of livelihood then the rope from that person will be extended to the second person who has written the same. By the end of the activity, connecting all the indicators, the participants will finally become entangled amongst themselves and will create a web of poverty. Through this activity, the facilitator will explain the multidimensionality of poverty as while connecting to each other collectively they were making a web of poverty in their village. The facilitator then gives them the space to discuss how they can solve these issues and asks them to write the solutions on a piece of paper and keep them together in a small box where she/he makes sure that the discussions are connected to schemes or entitlements. After writing the solutions to their problems on a piece of paper, they collect it in a box that is called the ‘Haq ka Dabba’.



Now the participants will be asked to disentangle the rope taking the relevant cues from their ‘Haq ka Dabba’ and once they select the relevant cue from the ‘Haq ka Dabba’ they can release the rope from their hand and support others to do the same. Here now the facilitator will talk about the importance of following up with the VPRP and the collective effort needed for approaching Panchayats and various departments.



Presentation of VPRP demands and services required before PRI members

After finalizing the schemes and awareness programs during the VLF (Village Level Federation) meeting, a GP level consolidation meeting is organized. This meeting is attended by members of the VLF OB (Office Bearers), PRI (Panchayati Raj Institution) members, Youth Club members, and cadres.

During the GP level meeting, the final list of demands collected from each VLF is consolidated. A joint meeting date is decided upon to strategize on how to proceed with the plan effectively.

In the joint meeting, roles and responsibilities are assigned to the VLFs, PRIs, and Youth Club members. They discuss and determine the number of stalls required for SHG (Self-Help Group) members to showcase their local products. Additionally, the number of food stalls and pickle or snack stalls is also finalized during this meeting.

Further, the funding components are discussed to ensure the necessary financial support for the event. A specific date is chosen, and letters are prepared to invite various line departments to participate in the event. These letters are sent to the respective departments through the Panchayat President. Overall, the joint meeting serves as a platform for collaborative decision-making and coordination among the VLFs, PRIs, and Youth Club members, ensuring a successful execution of the planned event.

In addition to the individual GPs organizing their own events, provision was made for those GPs that decided to come together and integrate their efforts. Through consensus, these GPs recognized the benefits of collaboration and decided to organize a combined enrollment mela event that would cover the participation of 2-3 GPs.

A one-day joint meeting between the collaborating panchayats was conducted for this purpose.

This process of organizing the combined enrollment mela event involves coordination and cooperation between the participating GPs. They work together to develop a unified plan, leveraging the strengths and resources of each GP.

The VPRP achievement/Convergence Mela was successfully organized by a total of 48 Gram Panchayats across 4 blocks in Imphal East District. This event garnered active participation and proved to be beneficial for approximately 16,235 Self-Help Group (SHG) members and 5,695 non-SHG members. 11 line departments were involved in the disbursement services across the GPs, the prominent ones being- Health, Social welfare, Agriculture (KVK), PHED, Postal and Banking departments.

Services	PRI supported stalls	Smart card for accessing pensions	Ujjwala Gas	Ration Card	CM HT	Weaving card	Yarn card	Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana	Farmer Card	PMJ JBY	PM SBY	Health Camp beneficiaries
Keirao Block	1040	1157	174	111	564	543	319	0	77	75	104	2357
Kshetrigao Block	513	830	250	216	951	600	350	23	169	100	270	867
Sawombung Block	905	543	20	0	155	45	13	180	92	12	18	821
Heingang Block	370	603	20	0	67	211	31	161	53	17	33	948
District Total	2828	3133	464	327	1737	1399	713	364	391	204	425	4993

Table- Block Wise Achievements of different schemes

In addition to the disbursement of various scheme benefits, the VPRP achievement/Convergence Mela placed significant emphasis on raising awareness and sensitization among the community. Several awareness programs and camps were organized to address specific health and social concerns. These programs catered to the needs identified in the respective Gram Panchayats.

Some of the key initiatives undertaken during the mela were:

1. **Health Camps:** The mela featured health camps where medical professionals provided healthcare services and conducted check-ups. These camps aimed to diagnose and address common health issues like High/ low BP, Sugar tests and eye diseases prevalent in the community.
2. **Cancer Detection and Counselling Camps:** Special camps were set up to detect and provide counselling on cancer-related matters conducted in collaboration with Karkinos Health Care and the District CMO office. The objective was to increase awareness about cancer prevention, early detection, and available treatment options. Participants received information on the importance of regular screenings and lifestyle modifications to reduce the risk of cancer.
3. **Awareness of Anaemia among Pregnant and Lactating Women:** There were specific awareness programmes conducted to address anaemia among pregnant and lactating women, specific awareness programs were conducted. These programs aimed to educate women about the causes, symptoms, and preventive measures related to anaemia.

They also highlighted the importance of proper nutrition and the role of supplements in combating anaemia during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

4. **Menstrual Hygiene and Sexual Health Awareness for Adolescent Girls:** The mela placed special emphasis on creating awareness among adolescent girls regarding menstrual hygiene and sexual health. These initiatives aimed to empower girls with knowledge to make informed choices and maintain their overall well-being.
5. **Awareness on Various Schemes:** The mela served as a platform to raise awareness about various government schemes and initiatives like pensions, health cards, insurance cards etc. Information dissemination sessions were conducted to educate attendees about the eligibility criteria, benefits, and application processes for different schemes. This enabled individuals to avail themselves of the available benefits and support services more effectively.



PRI led stall in VPRP achievement Mela

In addition to the line departments, the Gram Panchayat representatives (PRIs) played an important role in setting up stalls and providing various services. They facilitated the creation of MGNREGS job demand cards, issued birth cards, death cards, and rural residential certificates. The PRIs also focused on creating awareness about special initiatives undertaken in the Gram Panchayats, such as waste management and the MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme).



To attract more participation and promote livelihoods, the VPRP /Convergence Mela allocated stalls to SHG groups at the venue. These stalls provided a platform for SHGs to showcase and sell a wide range of locally made products. The mela facilitated the display and sale of various items, including local handicrafts, clothes, hand-made soaps and candles, toys, paper items, pickles, and more.

Name of Block	Name of Cluster	SHG stall profits
Keirao	Top Chingtha	Rs. 1,03,800/-
	Keirao	Rs. 1,59,870/-
Kshetrigao	Bashikhong	Rs. 1,94,800/-
	Thambalkhong	Rs. 86,100/-
Sawombung	Khundrakpam	Rs. 65,220/-
	Lamlai	Rs. 52,200/-
Heingang	Heingang	Rs. 1,69,730/-
	Khurai	Rs. 1,25,880/-

Table - Compiled profits of SHG members who had put up stalls in GP Achievement melas



Convergence Photowall consisting VPRP achievements put together by PRI and CBO members

The convergence photo wall served as a visual representation of the progress made and the positive changes brought about through materialization of VPRP demands. It showcased photographs, images, and success stories that highlighted the outcomes, improvements, and transformative initiatives undertaken within the Gram Panchayats. The photo wall aimed to instill a sense of ownership and responsibility among the PRI and CBO members by showcasing their collective efforts and contributions towards the development of their communities.

Outcomes of the initiative

1. Community led Demand planning, prioritization of vulnerable sections and consolidation
2. Community led mobilization and monitoring
3. Liaisoning of CBO with PRI, Line Departments and other agencies for service delivery
4. Dissemination of information on scheme benefits
5. Promotion of Locally made food products
6. Realization and building ownership on Village Poverty Reduction Plan Achievements
7. Initiation of platforms of convergence
8. Awareness generation



Notable Highlights:

1. Achievement mela is recognised as an effective platform for community led governance by MoPR.

Refer to twitter post:



Link to the thread: https://twitter.com/mopr_goi/status/1542762051667312640?t=-95eZBDCOs4PoQgnPL-hqA&s=08

2. Video Documentation of Inaugural VPRP achievement Mela by Kudumbashree NRO team in Waiton Gram Panchayat, Sawombung Block



Link to the youtube Video- VPRP Follow up mechanisms



LIVELIHOODS

"A community that prioritizes and supports its members' livelihoods creates a virtuous cycle of prosperity, stability, and happiness"

Theme: Livelihoods

Women in Manipur have a longstanding history of engaging in diverse entrepreneurial activities, enabling them to participate freely in social and economic spheres beyond their homes. A prominent illustration of this entrepreneurial prowess is the “Ima Keithel” meaning “Mother’s Market” which has been exclusively managed by women for over four centuries. Approximately 4,000 women traders and potentially making it the largest female-run market in Asia. In a testament to the evolving times and the increasing aspiration of young women towards entrepreneurship, the market’s nomenclature “Ima Keithel” also known as “Nupi Keithel” meaning “Women’s Market”. This change in name reflects the surge of youthful female entrepreneurs who are now actively shaping the market’s vibrant tapestry, further enriching Manipur’s entrepreneurial heritage.

Poor households in Manipur have multiple livelihoods as a coping mechanism for survival. Traditionally, women in Manipur have thrived as entrepreneurs in the handloom and handicraft sectors. However, as time has progressed, women have shown a growing inclination towards non-traditional sectors, particularly excelling in food processing, mushroom cultivation, and opening of daily markets as formidable women entrepreneurs. Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM), which is diligently working to fortify and amplify the existing livelihood avenues, while concurrently introducing diversification strategies.

When the PRI-CBO Convergence Project commenced in Manipur, it was observed that women were very energetic but needed a sense of direction to utilize their skills. Activities like livelihood mapping inspired not just women but also the Panchayat members to become active participants in the development activities.

The Convergence Cadres played a crucial and active role in the entire livelihoods mapping exercise, from its inception to completion. Their involvement at the Self-Help Group (SHG) level and assistance in arranging meetings with elected representatives, Village Level Federations (VLFs), and SHG groups significantly contributed to raising awareness within the local community. The process started with a planning meeting involving state, district, and block teams to finalize the module for the mapping activity. Inputs from concerned teams regarding livelihood activities in their respective blocks, including farm, off-farm, and entrepreneurship, were gathered.

Before beginning the mapping exercise at the village level, meetings were held with elected representatives to brief them about the objectives and benefits of the exercise for village development. Additionally, Village Level Federation (VLF) meetings were organized, where executive committee (EC) members were informed about the exercise, emphasizing not making promises of financial benefits to the community. Dates and venues for conducting the activity in SHGs were also determined during this phase. The responsibility of executing the exercise in all SHGs was taken up by Convergence Cadres.

After collecting data at the SHG level and consolidating it at the VLF level, the executive committee members authorized the document with their signatures and official seal before handing it over to the Panchayats/Village Authorities (VAs). The block team, Convergence Cadres, and mentors collaborated closely throughout the process. The community and PRI/VA bodies responded positively and actively participated in the exercise.

This mapping exercise served as an extensive immersion activity, enhancing the understanding of project mobilization, community engagement in which kind of livelihoods, and sensitization about the training provided by the respective line departments. For the VLFs, it proved to be a valuable organization-building exercise, providing ample experience in managing large-scale processes systematically and evolving into a competent umbrella organization. The local bodies benefited by establishing a closer relationship with the community and identifying women community leaders who can drive community initiatives forward alongside the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Village Authorities (VAs). Furthermore, this exercise allowed them to comprehend the importance of generated data and make informed decisions for effective local development planning.

The Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM) and line departments benefited from the vast database, which helped them target the right beneficiaries for their programs and schemes. The District Collector and District Planning councils were regularly apprised about field activities, gaining a deeper understanding of ground realities, and enabling them to design and implement various development programs.

The Kudumbashree National Resource Organisation (NRO) played a pivotal role by providing essential support and guidance to SHGs, VLFs, and PRI bodies, effectively bridging livelihood-related gaps and contributing to strengthening rural livelihoods and community stewardship for village development by organizing camps and awareness classes with the help of Line Departments and PRI/VAs. Illustrated in this theme "Livelihoods" are some of the best practices that were organized during the tenure when the PRI-CBO Convergence Project were working with MSRLM.

4.1 Building reliability between CBO & KVK

Huikap village is one of the most inspiring villages located in Angtha Gram Panchayat where fruitful results of the efforts made by the Village level federation and its cadres working for better convergence opportunities with agricultural departments stands out as an example



Huikap Women Development Village Level Federation

among the other panchayats. The village is located in Keirao Bitra Block where the PRI-CBO Convergence project has been initiated since 2018.

Huikap Village stands out among the other villages because of its Village Level Federation (Huikap Women Development VLF) which was formed on 25th of March, 2018. The VLF has since become established and has adopted different initiatives aimed at the enhancement of community livelihoods.

As a result of the livelihood mapping conducted as an intervention activity by the convergence project, the village was able to learn and possess significant data on the kinds and types of livelihood activities prevalent in the area. Along with this, participatory activities and schematic information to the cadres of the VLF made them very active and aware to plan and demand entitlements and resources for improving and diversifying their farm livelihoods in a much more effective manner.



Livelihood mapping activity

Following up with the demands, the VLF members and Convergence cadre promptly acted by visiting their Panchayat Pradhan who helped them to reach out to the nearby Andro Kishan Vigyan Kendra Officials. At the office, the VLF members found out about the various types of seasonal seeds, farming related training, fertilizers and other miscellaneous resources that were available from time to time in the KVK centre.

In most of the villages in Manipur, paddy is the dominant form of cultivation. There is a lack of awareness that exists among the farming

community about the availability of horticulture seeds and pulses with Agriculture and Horticulture Departments. The information from KVK convinced the federation women to cultivate alternative crops along with paddy. As far as the KVK was concerned, the VLF had already demonstrated their competence with a successful group vermicomposting initiative. This convinced them that providing seeds to them would not go in vain.

Vermicomposting initiative was started by Lanshenmi SHG composed of 10 members of the Huikap WD VLF. With an initial investment of about 30,000 provided by the CIF, the members approached the KVK with the help of mentors and LRG for vermicompost training. The compost pit was done through MGNREGS demand and post-training, and worms were provided by the KVK at a rate of Rs.1300 per kg. The initiative has been functioning by collecting food waste from the 10 members and yearly they have been able to gain a revenue of 60-70,000 per month. Throughout the year, they sell their biofertilizers in an organic shop at Imphal.



Vermi-composting By Lanchenbi SHG members

Within a week, 120 kgs of Pea and mustard seeds were provided by the KVK to the VLF from which, after cultivation, generated an income of about Rs. 12,500 each for 5 farming members. The VLF OB members along with KVK officials Ms. Nandini and Ms. Soramoli Baladevi, ensured proper monitoring and guidance to the cultivators during the harvesting period. Thereafter, when they had achieved good harvest results, Subhasini Devi (Convergence cadre) initiated discussions on accessing relevant training from the KVK and upskilling themselves and enhancing their livelihood.



Maize Farming



Maize and Peas seeds distribution by KVK

In September 2019, as a result of the increasing engagement and trust building between the KVK and the VLF, a series of training sessions were made available to the SHG members. The first of these was a 2 day training on flower plantations. 5 members from the SHG participated. Most of the members were practicing floriculture on a small scale till now where most of their produce were used domestically and the rest was sold in the Ima Keithel market of Manipur. Marketing the produce has always been tricky in remote villages. This problem was recognised and training was provided on market-led expansion where 3 participants learnt about various methods to market their products effectively after production. Further, at the VLF EC meeting, the 3 participants shared their knowledge with the rest of the federation members showing them the way for better group led marketing and local market opportunities. Further, a food packaging training was organized by KVK associating with Central Agriculture University at Imphal where 20 VLF members participated. This platform provided the participants with an improved understanding of techniques and skills for packaging different farm products and understanding their shelf life.



Seed Distribution and Expert assistance from KVK

Besides the training, 15 SHG members of the VLF achieved an average production of about 500 kgs of Black gram and green gram, 50 kgs seeds of which was provided by the KVK. This brought the members profit of about Rs. 48,000 within 3 months. Following this, SHG members received the next bags of about 80 Kgs of Mustard seeds and 60 Kgs of maize seeds which was cultivated soon after the end of the paddy season in the year 2020-21.

On their successful seed production programme, the KVK Programme Coordinator said, “we gave them the inputs, they cultivated it, they have grown and managed, they harvested it and now, the Central University is going to buy it and double the income of the farmers. Definitely, this is our strategy too to double the farmer’s income by 2022 through the Seed production programme and they have started seeing Seed production as a lucrative business’ ”.

The KVK has also been helping a lot to demonstrate and train the interested SHG members in diversifying their farming skills by introducing them to Honey beekeeping activities. 10 bee boxes were handed over to the VLF in the year 2020.



Bee box distribution by KVK

Talking about the increased interest from the community on Livelihood training, Ms. Soramoli Baladevi (Programme Coordinator, KVK, Imphal East District) shared “If one group was provided with the training, then other groups would definitely approach us. This paved the way for different training programmes. For instance, a programme on soyabean processing that imparted knowledge on the nutrient value and the nutritional security for the entire family and also how it can be a source of income generation, or programmes on piggery and duck rearing”.

Ms. Soramoli commended the efforts made by the VLF for active participation and monitoring support which has helped the local community to harness better farming productivity. Taking into account the growing interest and encouraging results shown by the VLF Women group, the Horticulture Minister of the State Th. Shyam Kumar who was a resident of the village also donated a sum of 1 lakh to be invested on agricultural development purposes.

Furthermore, on the occasion of World Food Day (16th Oct '2019) the VLF along with support from KVK organized an exhibition of local farm products where around 7 SHG groups participated. Awareness on local produce and the organic nutritional value of vegetables was provided by KVK resource persons. Based on the success of the event, the VLF was invited to participate in two district-level Exhibitions organized by KVK to promote organic farming and nutritional wellness.

1. QRT travel workshop exhibition by KVK's of Manipur

- Date: 21.12.2019
- Participants- 6 SHG members from Huikap Women Development VLF
- Products displayed- Black gram, cabbage, King chilli, papaya, etc

2. Exhibition cum Nutri Recipe Competition

- Date: 16.10.2020
- Participants- 6 SHG members from Huikap Women Development VLF
- Awards: Received 2nd Prize



SHG members of Huikap Women Development VLF in District level Exhibitions

These events bolstered the confidence of the SHG women, and the initiatives by the the VLF set an example for other groups in the district by showing the way of adopting best practices and guidance from the KVK experts.

With the updated information they have now received, the VLF are now planning to register the VLF with Farmer Group certification that will help them in better resource accessibility, producer group benefits and also avail Kissan Credit Cards for financial assistance.

The VLF members said that various training programs and interactions with the agriculture department that were facilitated through the PRI-CBO Convergence project gave them an understanding of various organic farming techniques and skill training accessibility which is helpful in generating better income for the SHG families.

4.2 “ A Ray of Hope”

This is the story of Sapna, she is a member of Panthoibi SHG that comes under Mateileima VLF. She is a determined woman from Top Noria Gram Panchayat, Kshetrigao Block who transformed her life by utilizing the training and assistance provided by the Food Processing Department. Through her entrepreneurial spirit and hard work, Sapna generated a sustainable livelihood for herself but also became an inspiration for other women in her community. The Local Resource Group (LRG) members of Top Noria, discovered the opportunities offered by the Food Processing Department. They explored the department’s assistance programs and subsequently organized a meeting with the Village Level Federation (VLF) to discuss the training possibilities.

A total number of 30 members showed interest in pickle making training and on 16th October 2021, the identified beneficiaries received the training from the Food Processing Department. Sapna who was a part of the training, took a loan of Rs. 30,000 from the VLF , and started her own pickle making business. At the initial stage, she started by selling her pickle in her own (Self-Help Group) SHG and VLF meetings. As her pickle gained recognition and demand, she expanded her customer base. She began selling her homemade products to nearby shops, her dedication and the quality of her pickles enabled her to generate a daily sales revenue of nearly Rs. 500 with a profit margin of Rs. 300.

Sapna’s ability to generate income has positively impacted her family’s well-being and increased her self-confidence. When asked about her future plans, Sapna expressed her eagerness to expand her business further and train more interested women from her SHG and involve them in her enterprise. With the increasing demand for her products, Sapna aims to capitalize on this opportunity to not only uplift her own economic status but also to empower other women in her community.



Sapna’s journey from being a participant in a training program, to becoming a successful pickle-maker and entrepreneur is very inspiring. The support that she has received from the Food Processing Department, VLF and her SHG members have helped her in overcoming her initial challenges. Her story serves as an example of how training initiative and entrepreneurial endeavours can uplift individuals and communities.

4.3 “The more you learn, the more you earn”

In India, mushroom farming is becoming popular as one of the most profitable agri-business owing to its low investment, simple technology and less required space. Mushrooms are also a nutritious vegetable, a good source of protein and iron. There are various edible species of mushrooms amongst which, the most cultivable varieties are oyster mushrooms, paddy straw mushrooms, button mushrooms and oak-tree mushrooms.

In Manipur, it has not been long since people have shown interest in it as an alternative source of income. But due to the availability of main raw materials aplenty in low cost, along with an easy to cultivate process, the oyster mushrooms and paddy straw mushrooms are growing gradually as household products and picking up as a small scale business. The growing popularity of mushroom farming in the villages resulted in its high demand in VPRP 2021 livelihood plan.

Under the PRI-CBO convergence project, after preparation of VPRP, the main focus was on following up on the demands of Entitlement and Livelihood considering the approaching months towards the end of the financial year, which means the line departments having funds would be working towards concluding the FY with implementing more activities. Taking the advantage of this timing, livelihood plan follow-ups were prepared at every VLF where they prioritized the demands to be submitted first and set a timeline for document collection and department visits.

In the livelihood plan follow up, there was an evident increase in the demand for mushroom farming in both phase I & phase II Panchayats, the internal mentors having prior experience of working with the line departments in the area of livelihood started initiating the plan.

One of the examples was from Nongren Chingnungkok Gram Panchayat where the two VLFs Mangalgee Lambee Nongsda and Ema Oksu followed up on their VPRP livelihood plan.

The Nongren Chingnungkok is a Panchayat in Sawombung Block in Imphal East District of Manipur State. It is located 5 KM towards North from District head quarters - Porompat. Having situated near a river, the main occupation of the people is sand and gravel extraction followed by weaving by the women. The SHG members of the panchayat during the VPRP discussion showed keen interest in exploring alternative livelihood practices including mushroom farming.

The internal mentor Ashalata, who herself has experience in mushroom farming, started mobilizing the interested individuals into groups, sensitizing them on the importance of collective farming. By 29th November, 2021, she was able to form two committed groups within the Mangalgee Lambee Nongsda and Ema Oksu VLFs and submitted the mushroom training demands along with the necessary documents to Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK).

After a month and a couple of follow ups in between, the KVK came to the panchayat for training and demonstration in two batches. The VLF members, excited about the progress also invited their Pradhan who is known for her supportive attitude towards CBO. Observing the enthusiasm of the members, the Pradhan also presented them Rs 2000. The training was taken well by the participants and discussions were initiated on the post production value as

well. The main components required for mushroom farming are paddy straws, polythene bags and spawn. Two packets of spawn costing Rs 40 each will be sufficient for 3 polythene bags resulting in 3-4 Kg yields from each bag in 45 days and its price can increase up to Rs 200 per Kg. The mushroom can be sold easily in the market due to its high demand or the groups can also explore the idea of mushroom pickles which are equally popular.



1. Demonstration on mushroom



2. GP Pradhan handed a token of appreciation

Inspired by the easy method of cultivation, good yield and economy of production and being exposed to the marketing ideas during training, the 10 members from Mangalgee Lambee Nongsda VLF and 20 members from Ema Oksu VLF have started a joint practice of oyster mushrooms with constant push from the internal mentor. SHG members find mushroom farming quite valid due to its low capital investment and high yields obtained even under controlled rural conditions. Mushrooms are a good supplement for protein lacking diet and can be easily cultivated indoors and marketed profitably.

Details of Mushroom farming undertaken under the VLFs post-training

Mangalgee Lambee Nongsda VLF	Ema Oksu VLF
Started on 1st February	Started on 25th January
10 members unit	20 members unit
Personal fund: Rs 1000 invested by each member	Rs 1,00,000 fund from CLF through Business Development Planning
Scale: 50 bags of spawn in 150 plastic bags	Scale: 100 bags of spawn in 300 plastic bags



3. Preparation of paddy straw by the SHG members



4. Mushroom yielding

The triumph of collective mushroom growing experienced by the SHG members gave them more reasons to enhance their new found alternative livelihood activity. They did not stop just with the mushroom training, with the revelation of possible collaboration and support from the various departments within their reach they started exploring. Through the guidance of one of the prominent and learned community members, the SHG members arrived at the doorstep of the Regional Institute Of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship which ensured them the training on value added products of mushroom. On 14th February, 2022 the 20 SHG members of Ema Oksu VLF commenced their 200 hours training on mushroom pickle making.



Training on value-added production of mushroom



The members of Mangalgee Lambee Nongsda & Ema Oksu VLFs are among those who do not hesitate to grab opportunities when it surfaces. The process of VPRP followed by the Convergence Project orientation acted as a strong platform to pave the path for possible convergence with the line departments. Additional prior experience with internal mentors in the area of working with line departments has made the process easier in the scale up blocks.

In the past couple of years, since the livelihood mapping took off as an entry level activity, the PRI-CBO convergence project has been able to bring about impactful changes in terms of developing capacity of the CBO to work together with not just PRI but also line departments. The CBOs have been recognised as valuable and reliable assets to the stakeholders and are entrusted with the implementation of various schemes.

4.4 Power of Perseverance: Case Study on Daily Market

Tuishimi Village is a picturesque small village nestled in the scenic hilly terrain of Machi Block, located in Tengnoupal District. The village is primarily inhabited by the Maring Naga community, who have a rich cultural heritage and a deep connection to the land. Surrounded by lush green fields and fertile soil, where the tribal communities cultivate a variety of vegetables and fruits using traditional farming methods. Due to this, organic tribal produce has gained immense popularity among the local consumers belonging to the valley region. And for the tribal communities residing in Tuishimi and in neighboring villages, the nearest market is in Pallel area which is located in a valley region.



During the Rumpi Village Level Federation (VLF) meetings which consist of three villages and 9 SHGs, one common pressing issue that repeatedly took center stage was the absence of a designated marketplace in the Pallel area. Local vendors and entrepreneurs, eager to showcase their unique and quality products, were compelled to set up makeshift stalls on the roadside. However, they faced numerous challenges, including the imposition of an additional tax in the form of a hawker tax (tax impose on Tribal people if they sit in the Non-tribal Market in Pallel). Despite these hurdles, the demand for tribal products remained high among local consumers, underscoring the need for a proper marketplace. Recognizing the significance of this matter, the discussion progressed to the VLF meeting, which involved the active participation of Convergence Cadres.

These meetings served as a platform to collectively address the issue and devise a solution. After thorough deliberation, it was unanimously decided to establish a weekly market in the Pallel area. This decision aimed to provide a permanent space for vendors to showcase their goods and cater to the increasing demand from local consumers.

13th December 2019 - (Weekly Market)

The VLF leader took the initiative to engage in discussions with the "All Laiching Village Authority Action Committee," which is a federation representing the Village Authorities of four villages i.e. Laiching Khunou, Laiching Khullen, Laiching Kangsang, and Laiching Maipou. Recognizing the importance of the demand put forth by the VLF, the committee agreed to explore a suitable location for the market that would be easily accessible. After careful consideration, it was determined that the Tuishimi Village Gate would be the most feasible spot for setting up the market. This location proved advantageous as it was situated just a few meters away from the Pallel Market and NH-39, ensuring convenient access for both vendors and customers. Since the market area fell under the jurisdiction of Tuishimi village authority, the VLF and the Laiching Village Authority Action Committee (LVAAC) approached the relevant village authority, which agreed to grant permission for the market setup.



On the 13th of December 2019, the market was successfully inaugurated for the first time. It featured a variety of products, including seasonal vegetables cultivated by Self-Help Group (SHG) members, Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), and handcraft items. The market quickly gained popularity, attracting both locals and visitors alike. However, unfortunately, the weekly market had to be discontinued due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revival of Tribal Market (20th March 2023)

During a review meeting of the Convergence Cadre with CLF along with the VLF, OB members and I-Mentors raised the agenda of the discontinuation of the Tribal Market due to the pandemic. On recognizing the significance of the market and the positive impact it had on the community, the Mentors from Kudumbasree National Resource Organization (NRO) and I-Mentors took the initiative to convene a meeting involving all the convergence cadres, as well as representatives from the KANMUCOS CLF Members. During the meeting, it was unanimously resolved to reopen the market, driven by the collective determination to support and uplift the tribal communities. Instead of retaining the previous "Weekly Market" format, the CLF made the decision to transform it into a "Daily Market." This new format aimed to provide a consistent platform for Self-Help Group (SHG) members belonging to the 17 Village



Level Federations across 26 different villages under KANMUCOS CLF to sell their produce. In a remarkable display of cooperation, the Laiching Village Authority Action Committee extended its support to KANMUCOS CLF and took the responsibility of constructing the market shed and a toilet facility using their available resources. This gesture highlighted the solidarity and convergence between different community groups in their efforts to promote economic opportunities and empower local women entrepreneurs. With the reopening of the

market on the 20th of March 2023, the community witnessed the revival of a vibrant market space. Thus, SHG women, with their diverse range of products, now had a dedicated space to showcase and sell their goods on a daily basis.



The market not only provided an avenue for sustainable income generation but also served as a platform to preserve and promote the unique tribal produce and handicrafts, ensuring their continued appreciation among local consumers. The reopening of the market symbolized the resilience and determination of the tribal communities, as well as the unwavering support from various organizations and authorities involved. The collective efforts and collaboration displayed during this process reinforced the commitment to foster sustainable development and economic empowerment within the region. The market promotion was done in the nearby markets such as Pallel and Kakching with the help of SHG members. As a result, the vegetable



daily vendors from Pallel and Kakching markets purchased the vegetables in bulk at wholesale rates. The women vendors of the tribal market did not have to sit in the marketplace whole day to sell their produce, thus saving not only the time and money.

The inauguration of the first daily market exclusively for tribal Self-help Group (SHG) members was held on March 20th, 2023, marking a significant milestone for the community. The event was graced by Mrs. Binota Loitongbam, the State Mission Manager (SMM-SISD) of Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM), who inaugurated the market. This initiative

brought about numerous advantages, particularly empowering the tribal communities to sell their products without any fear or hindrance. In the past, they had to endure the burden of sitting on the sides of the road and paying extra taxes to sell their goods. However, with the establishment of this dedicated market, they now have a platform to showcase and sell their unique products.

The response to the market's opening surpassed all expectations, with an impressive turnout of SHG vegetable vendors on the first day. A total of 42 SHG members who are vegetable vendors participated, and a large number of people flocked to the market for their shopping needs. Currently, the market hosts an average of 30 stalls each day (including two tea-stalls), and the participating SHG women vendors are experiencing profitable returns ranging from 500 to 3000 per day. This additional income proves to be a valuable asset for the SHG members, without disrupting their normal daily schedules. The market's operating hours, which is from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., allow them to manage their other responsibilities effectively.

For the proper management and monitoring of the tribal market, the CLF had formed the Market Monitoring Committee which consists of 9 members including two I-Mentors, three Convergence Cadres, three CLF SAC Members and one Livelihood convener of CLF Livelihood Sub-committee.

Way Forward - Recognizing the need for continued development and smooth functioning of the Tribal Daily Market, KANMUCOS CLF aims to integrate Village Authority representatives from the local area into the Market Monitoring Committee. By involving these representatives,



the market can benefit from their insights, expertise, and local knowledge. This collaborative approach ensures that the market remains in tune with the needs of the community and facilitates its ongoing success.

Overall, the inauguration of the Tribal Daily Market has brought about positive change for the tribal SHG members, providing them with a secure space to sell their products, generate income, and contribute to the local economy. The sustained growth and prosperity of this market hold great promise for empowering these women and uplifting the entire tribal community.



WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

*"Empowering women and ensuring the well-being of children
is the cornerstone of building a just and inclusive society"*

Theme: Women and Children Development

Women in Manipur have played a very vital role in shaping Manipur's society and politics. But despite all the progress, women and children in Manipur still face challenges, including gender-based violence, access to education, health care, and gender-based discrimination. These issues have often remained unaddressed due to a lack of focused interventions and a lack of awareness among the community about the ways in which these challenges could be resolved.

The intervention of PRI-CBO has brought to notice the deep-seated concerns that had been largely unaddressed. The project aimed at bringing the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Community-Based Organization together to drive the targeted initiatives for the women and child development. The community cadres empowered by the project played a pivotal role in raising awareness about the various issues in the region. These cadres became the driving force behind the initiative taken up by women to address the social challenges that persisted for so long by bridging the gap between the grassroots and administrative bodies.

The PRI-CBO Convergence project has provided a platform for the initiation of transformative initiatives to tackle the issues that had silently plagued women and children and also fostered a sense of ownership and accountability within the community. During the project intervention, many initiatives were taken in the piloted blocks that included health camps for women-related issues, access to education, economic opportunities, awareness of gender-based violence, and initiatives for the overall welfare of children. This shift towards community-led development not only amplified the voices of the previously unheard but also laid the groundwork for sustainable change.

After the intervention of the PRI-CBO Convergence project in Manipur in the piloted blocks changes can be seen in the situation of women and child development. This project has made people notice the problems and encourage the community to come together and work together to find solutions for the problems. Even though there are still challenges to overcome, but now the community members are motivated and changes can be seen within the community.

In Exemplar under this theme Women and Children Development we have mentioned some of the case studies that have reflected the initiative and the ongoing efforts for women and child development. The main objective behind taking up these initiatives was to address the issues related to gender inequality, prioritize women's health, and provide proper education opportunities for children. One of the notable initiatives involves a focus on women's health during the celebration of Women's Day. This effort was taken to focus on the importance of women's health needs and provide cancer awareness. Another impactful endeavor was centered around the activation of the Anganwadi center, which played a crucial role in educating children and nurturing them with essential nutritious food. Drug abuse was one of the major issues that was prevalent in most of the Gram Panchayat, so the community also took various initiatives to solve these issues one of the initiatives was crime mapping and providing awareness to the community members regarding the effects of drugs. Leading to these Balasabhas were also formed in some of the GPs so that apart from academic education the children are also engaged in other co-curricular activities and do not engage in any other toxic and harmful activities. Balasabha also aimed in giving a platform for the children to voice out their thoughts and contribute to the decisions that impact their development and well-being. These initiatives aim to create a more inclusive and equitable society for women and children.

5.1 “Prioritizing Women’s Health: Celebrating International Women’s Day”

International Women’s Day 2022 was celebrated with great enthusiasm and active participation from the Self Help Group members, the event was organized by the Cluster Level Federation with the assistance of the NRO team. The primary focus of the event was to promote greater awareness and wellness support, particularly in the context of women’s health. The Manipur State Rural Livelihood Mission, in collaboration with Karkinos Manipur Cancer Care Institute, organized cancer awareness and risk assessment camps at the grassroots level.



International Women’s Day- Women’s Health

Health is one of the most important parameters which reflect the wellness of the society. Health is a holistic measure of well-being that encompasses physical, mental and social aspects. There are several factors such as lack of education and awareness on hygiene and nutrition which are responsible for different health problems. As part of International Women's Day celebrations this year, considerable attention was given to the different lifestyle diseases that women develop due to lack of awareness and knowledge and also due to sheer ignorance.

Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission along with Karkinos Manipur Cancer Care Institute, Imphal together provided community health service by organizing cancer awareness and risk assessment camps at the very grassroots level. The Kudumbashree NRO team facilitated the arrangement of the awareness sessions and assessment camps with active support from Cluster level Federations namely, Dhruvatarata and Kaifadaba Lan women's co-operative societies around 150 SHG women actively participated and registered for the cancer risk assessment camps.

There was an urgent need to identify issues related to women's health, especially on the different types and symptoms of cancer was the need of the hour. Distinguished resource persons like Dr. G.S Moirangthem (CEO of Karkinos, Imphal), Miss Ranita (CHO) and Miss Santibala, conducted awareness sessions for the SHG members. The sessions were mainly focussed on educating the participants about different types of cancers prevalent among women such as breast cancer, ovarian cancer, mouth cancer, etc, along with their causes. The women were motivated to learn and self-assess various symptoms of cancer which enable them to take precautions and detect cancer at an early stage. Additionally, the session emphasized gender-specific health issues faced by women, including menstrual problems, pregnancy complications, and hormonal therapy. The participants were also made aware of the importance of nutritional choices and stress management in maintaining overall well being. The SHG members were engaged and inquisitive were engaged and came up personally to the Karkinos teams seeking advice about the day-to-day health concerns and measures to keep them healthy and well.



Cancer risk assessment by Karkinos team

Following the awareness sessions, risk assessment and consultation were conducted through one- to-one interaction using assessment forms, and symptom analysis indicators to identify the health related issues among the participants. The participants’ BMI, blood pressure, oxygen saturation level, and height and weight were measured to provide a comprehensive health assessment. Based on complaints and checkups, participants were given necessary advice and follow-up on several health problems and also assured further assistance for consultation whenever they need.

Lastly, the sessions looked to foster the mental and spiritual growth of women in community for achieving gender parity. To spread awareness and strengthen women in dealing with physiological and psychological changes, a yoga display session was organized at the event. The Chief Health Officer (CHO) introduced the concept of laughter yoga to the SHG members through demonstrating exercises like milkshake laughter. In this exercise the participants mix the ingredients of a milkshake together and drink it, while laughing. It was explained that through laughter yoga the body releases a joy cocktail, which is a mix of hormones and chemicals that will keep your body in a state of good health and happiness. The International Women Day 2022 was celebrated successfully with the collaboration of the various departments and participation of the SHG women.



K.Inaocha Devi (Zilla Parishad, Tuliha) said, “It is significant for the society as a whole to imagine, encourage and work towards achieving the qualities of a futuristic woman- a woman who is independent, aware, healthy and nurtures great aspirations”.

By saying this she also patiently requested the PRI members to provide all necessary support and guidance when approached by any aggrieved women from the community.

5.2 “Nurturing Minds, Shaping Futures: Reactivation of Anganwadi Centre”



Wangkhem Village, nestled in the remote area of Chanamsandrok GP, is a quaint little village where the majority of the population depends on agriculture and weaving for their livelihoods. The village is situated far from the town area, and proper connectivity is a persistent challenge. A survey to understand the status of the Citizen Committee was conducted by the convergence cadres. Through the survey, they found that parents were hesitant to send their children to the Anganwadi because of various issues like inadequate infrastructure and shorter class durations in the Anganwadi centre. During the survey, it was also noted that there was a Community-Based Events (CBE) Committee that was only functional when any kind of events need to be arranged at the Anganwadi Centre, but there was no Anganwadi Level Monitoring and Support Committee (ALMSC) formed.

The VLF members were concerned about the well-being of the children and mothers in the village and hence brought up this issue during a VLF Executive Committee (EC) meeting. It was decided that the VLF would collectively take action. The VLF members approached the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) supervisor and the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), but unfortunately, they didn't receive much support. The VLF office bearers decided to address the matter anyhow and approached the Director of the Social Welfare Department.

The VLF members were informed that there was no specific monitoring committee formed at the Anganwadi centre level, but there had been a state-specific advisory, as per which women collectives, community-based organizations, or ex-government employees could adopt an Anganwadi centre and work towards its betterment. Encouraged by this information, the VLF members decided to take charge and bring about positive change in the Anganwadi Centre.

A joint meeting was conducted with the PRI members, Youth Club members, ASHA workers, Anganwadi teachers, and VLF members. During the meeting, responsibilities were allocated,

with the Zilla Parishad taking charge of modifying the building, the PRI members overseeing infrastructure and uniforms, and the VLF providing study materials and reopening the Anganwadi centre with a focus on Poshan Abhiyan, which aims at combating malnutrition among children, mothers, and adolescent girls.



(Inauguration of Anganwadi centre and SHG members bringing nutritious food on the inauguration day of Anganwadi Centre)

Through the rigorous participation and collective efforts of the VLF, PRI members, Youth Club, ASHA workers, Anganwadi teachers, SHGs, and Cluster Level Federation (CLF), the Anganwadi centre in Wangkhem Village was inaugurated on 23rd February 2023. For ensuring the community participation, each SHG was tasked with bringing different nutritious food items to the Anganwadi centre on the inauguration day. The CLF also pitched in by providing a whiteboard for the centre. After the inauguration, the main focus was to strengthen the Community-Based Events (CBE) Committee and include the CBO members in the committee to ensure the sustained functioning of the Anganwadi Centre. A plan to improve the infrastructure of the Anganwadi centre was included in the GP plan.

With these efforts, 19 children in the age group of 3-6 years were enrolled. Maintaining records of attendance was introduced. At present, they have classes from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. The children are taught about colors, numeracy, and alphabets in the class. They were also engaged in storytelling and role plays, preschool activities with the active participation of the Anganwadi worker to improve the children's physical and contingent development. Parents of the children enrolled in Anganwadi Centre were given awareness of personal and community sanitation, along with encouragement to maintain a nutritious daily diet and monitor the food habits of their children.

The infrastructure was improved by the PRI members, study materials and toys were made available with the support of the CLF and VLF and the Poshan Abhiyan program helped in improving the health status of the children, mothers, and adolescent girls. Besides this, continuous distribution of deworming tablets (Albendazole) was also done to ensure the children stay healthy. The formation of the Community-Based Events Committee is still in process and the main focus will be to make the CBO members a part of the committee and to organize various events, engaging the community, and creating awareness about health, sanitation, and nutrition. Formation of the committee is a glowing example of community leadership catered to use purposively and strategically to bring in sustained change.

5.3 Choosing Health and Wellbeing : Empowering Youth to Prevent Drug Abuse

Drug abuse has become one of the major issues in Manipur, affecting the lives of many people. During the preparation of the Sustainable Development Plan in Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) process, Khongman and Thongju Part 2 Gram Panchayat, the issue of drug abuse was brought up by the SHG women. The VLF members decided to take necessary actions to solve the issues by raising awareness programs and different activities to solve the issue of drugs in their GP.

In the Gram Sabha, the VLF presented the issue to the PRI members and asked for their support to solve the issue of drug abuse in their village. To analyze the situation and identify the types of issues faced by the community, a crime mapping exercise was conducted in 42 Self-help Groups covering 425 families. It was found that a total of 237 families were directly or indirectly affected by drug and alcohol abuse, resulting in a minimum of 5 deaths per year. Additionally, the families had to go through domestic violence, children's education are also getting affected, 63 people are facing health related issue, 5 are mentally disturbed because of extensive use of drugs, 14 children are drug addicts and in the GP some people have HIV, the number was not definite due to their discomfort in sharing.



Joint meeting with the VLF OBs



One day awareness campaign

After crime mapping, a monitoring committee was formed at the GP level with the CBO members and the frontline workers. Due to political reasons, the PRI members and the Youth Club Members refused to be a part of the committee, but they agreed to give external support for it.

The committee took up certain major tasks to combat drug abuse:

- 1. Counseling and Therapy:** Individuals in need will be provided with professional counseling and therapy services, they will be also provided with support and guidance throughout their journey to recovery.
- 2. Medical Camps:** Regular medical camps will be organized specially for the individuals affected by drug abuse. These camps will be mainly focussing on the health-care services for addressing both the physical and mental health issues.

3. **De-addiction centre:** To ensure a comprehensive and specialized treatment centre for the addicts. This centre will focus on providing tailored care and support to individuals seeking recovery and promoting a drug-free lifestyle.
4. **Empowering Children:** Children below the age of 18, who are already affected by drug abuse will be actively engaged in Balsabha, a dedicated children's group aimed at educating and empowering children, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to resist drug abuse and create a better future for themselves

To enhance the impact of their efforts, the PRI members are to issue a serious notification for the awareness programs and instill punishment systems to combat drug abuse. The PRI also planned to establish relationships with the Social Welfare Department, Legal Aid Clinic and Department of Social Justice for the benefit of the community. The VLF members approached the Department of Health and Family Welfare and Department of Rural Development for their support in enforcing awareness programs.

The joint efforts of the Gram Panchayat, VLF and other community members led to significant improvements in addressing drug abuse. The crime mapping exercise helped identify the severity of the issue, leading to the implementation of necessary actions to prevent and combat drug abuse. The establishment of a monitoring committee and relations with various departments helped ensure that the issue was continuously monitored and addressed. The provision of counseling and therapy services, medical camps, and de-addiction centres helped individuals recover and lead healthier lives. For future plans it was decided to engage the children in Balsabha to prevent the future generations from becoming victims of drug abuse. Overall, the joint efforts of the community are to create a safer and healthier environment for the people of Khongman and Thongju Part 2 Gram Panchayat.

5.4 Balasabha

During the social development plan preparation under VPRP, the VLFs of Thambalkhong GP identified the various issues faced by the children after the pandemic as there is no doubt that children lived quite a different life during the pandemic than what the regular world, with its fair share of joy it carries in the form of school, friends, bonding and merriment that could be offered to a child. The average child's life has been disrupted in multiple ways when the pandemic hit the world on an unexpected and speedy note. Many children became the unconscious users of electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, mostly a by-product of their commitment to attend online classes and increased dependency on smartphones in general. This in turn led them to embrace a lifestyle with limited physical activities and interaction with the real world. Closely observing this scenario and the gravity of the issue that it poses to our growing generation of children, the community with the support of cadres, NRO team and MSRLM proposed to work on it strategically.

The VLF members took their concerns to the PRI members in the Gram Sabha. And with the support of the PRI members, the VLFs arranged awareness programs regarding the misuse of mobile phones. But the VLFs noticed that the awareness programs alone wouldn't be enough to resolve this issue from the core. Inspired from Kudumbashree's work with children to collectivize them and enhance their leadership potential in Kerala, the initiative to form Bal Sabha was proposed. Bal Sabha is a children's forum that aims to enhance the leadership qualities of children, capacitates them to work in teams, developing a creative mentality while improving their learning skills and motivating them to fulfill their dreams by making them responsible towards the society.

Formation of Balasabha

The process to form the Balasabha revealed the power and efficiency of community-centred action could bring to the forefront for any social program. Once the need for the forum was realised after the joint meeting of the VLFs in Thambalkhong GP, the convergence cadres mobilized the parents and children providing them with awareness on the importance of the formation of Balasabha.

After much ground work and deliberation, the idea to collectivise children in the Panchayat and pave them the way to rekindle life through valuable childhood bonds and interactions, the Balasabha in Thambalkhong GP was all set to be formally inaugurated and to commence its activities. The Balasabha inauguration in Thambalkhong GP saw the immense support of two VLFs, PRI members and local clubs. On the inauguration day, two Balasabhas were formed and leaders from among children were selected. As of now, four Balasabhas have been created consisting of 25 children in the age group of 6 to 18 years in each Sabha from Monthly meetings are organized every 2nd Sunday and agendas are decided for the same. Some of the agendas include socially relevant and contextually specific areas such as raising awareness about child marriage, drug abuse and domestic violence, stress management and child rights and entitlements. The agenda also includes participation in activities such as sports and possible coachings that children could benefit from such coachings that could be organised for badminton and so on. The Balasabhas started meeting once a month. Its main activities included raising awareness for children about the consequences of excessive mobile phone usage. The VLF arranged a drawing competition for the children and the winners were awarded. Different activities like coaching for dance, art, yoga, painting competition, race competition and other sports etc. were organized as well.

The formation of Balasabha in Thambalkhong GP is a perfect example of empowering children by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to become responsible citizens in the future. This initiative will also result in an effective solution to address the issue of mobile addiction and promote physical activities among children. Balasabhas also provided children a platform to enhance their leadership qualities and also helped them to identify and take the initiative to solve social issues prevailing in their own village.



Inauguration of Balasabha in Thambalkhong GP



Awareness program in Thambalkhong GP

6.1 Village Coordination Forum (VCF)



Village Coordination Forum (VCF) members, Maryland Village, Machi Block, Tengnoupal District

Need of Village Coordination Forum (VCF)

Tengnoupal District is the home for diverse ethnic groups that could be broadly classified into two main groups i.e. Kukis and Nagas. Having different traditional and cultural backgrounds, the common point that can be observed in each village of Machi and Tengnoupal Blocks is the presence of a number of Community-Based Organizations (CBO) i.e. Women's Associations, Youth Clubs, Church, Village Level Federations along with Village Authority (VA) working separately but with the common objective i.e. development of the village.

It was felt that a Village Coordination Forum (VCF) could act as the common platform where the representatives of all the village collectives (CBO) along with the VA could coordinate at the Village Level to develop inclusive and participatory plans. It is constituted as a confederation of all the village CBOs for discussing issues of development and social welfare within the village. The platform was envisioned as a voluntary forum formed with the purpose of learning and sharing issues and information, to reach collective and inclusive decisions for taking collective actions for village development. Hence, working together with VA and CBOs would help them to engage in collective decision-making, which in turn promotes public action for the common good. The committee was also formed to support in institutionalizing convergence with the concerned Line Departments.

The objectives of the Village Coordination Forum (VCF)

Once the need for VCF was realised, it was then required to lay out the specific objectives that the forum would serve. Primarily, the forum was envisioned to promote an inclusive decision-making administrative system that would aid village development. This was to be orchestrated through the mutually beneficial work of both the VA and CBOs by realizing their roles and responsibilities as pivotal agents for various public institutions. This included forums such as the monitoring committee for Anganwadi Centre, Schools, and other flagship programs of the government.

Another objective of VCF was considered to be the support that the forum would have to provide in order to materialize the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) prepared by the VLF & SHGs. This would involve strategically creating a plan of action to prepare a list

of entitlements and demands and consolidate the same with the support of the VLF and SHGs. This in turn demanded the forum to take on the responsibility to ensure continuous working together of the constitutional institution, the Village Authority (VA) in this case, and the social institution or the CBO for holistic development of the community. The VCF also has the objective to work closely and effectively with various line departments to organize camps and classes for social inclusion, local economic development, poverty reduction, social development, and the development of FNHW. On the whole, the VCF was envisioned to be a platform that would cater to community engagement, involving the local administrative and political leadership and strategically bringing in change.

Please Note:

- 1) The facilitator should specifically give clarity to all the collectives on the day of the Concept Seeding meeting itself, that it's a voluntary forum in which "NO FUND" will be channelized by any government or private agency.
- 2) Formation of VCF is only possible if all the collectives of the respective village agree to it.
- 3) The minutes' register should be maintained by the bookkeeper of the VCF.

Process of Formation of Village Coordination Forum (VCF)

The following steps were followed for the formation of VCFs

Step 1: Concept Seeding on VCF: To get familiarized with the rationale and concept of forming VCF, a consultative meeting should be organized by the Convergence Cadre with the help of VLF OB members. In this meeting, 2-3 members from all the active CBOs of the villages should be invited through VLF. The VLF president with the help of Convergence Cadre should explain the concept of VCF and its working. And if all the collectives of respective villages agree on the concept, then the VLF president should invite the Village chief to discuss who will be the member from each collective, the time, and the venue for the first orientation meeting.



VCF chairman (Village Chief) addressing the 1st VCF meeting, Chingnunghut village, Tengnoupal Block



VCF Members after the Orientation meeting on VCF, Gomi Village, Machi Block, Tengnoupal District

Step 2: Orientation meeting on VCF: In this meeting, the VLF and Village Chief initiates the discussion on the distribution of responsibilities such as assigning roles of book-keeper and convenor to members in the team, and discuss the frequency of the meetings in a year (Time and Venue). After the formation of the forum, it is the responsibility of the Convenor to conduct the meeting as per the decision taken up by the members of VCF.



Composition

The VCF will include the two members from each collective actively working in respective villages including Asha and Anganwadi workers. Its composition is as follows:

- Village Authority members
- Women Association members
- Youth Club members
- Women Society members
- Village Authority
- Village Level Federation
- Asha workers & Anganwadi workers
- Church Pastor

VCF members may include retired government officers or any other leader/respected person but should be the resident of the respective village after the collective decision. The total members of VCF should not exceed 30 members.

Who is the Chairperson?

The Chairperson of the VCF should be the Chief of that village. In case if the Chief didn't want to take responsibility as the Chairman then the Chief along with the VA members can select among themselves who can work as Chairman for VCF.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Chairman of VCF

The Chairperson will:

- Be responsible for ensuring that meetings are held on a monthly basis (as per the decision taken by the VCF members regarding the frequency of the meeting).
- Lead the meetings of the committee and ensure smooth coordination amongst members for effective decision-making.
- Ensure that the records are adequately maintained.

Who is the Secretary / Convenor?

The Convenor of the VCF should be the President of that VLF. In case if the President of that VLF didn't want to take responsibility as a Convenor then the VLF members can select among themselves who can work as Convenor for VCF.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Convenor of the VCF

- ▲ Fix the schedule and venue for monthly meetings of the committee.
- ▲ Ensure that meetings are conducted regularly with the participation of all members.
- ▲ Information about the meeting should be circulated prior to all the members of VCF.
- ▲ Identifying the cause of the gap; recording the decision on collective action as needed by the village to address the gap and designating the persons responsible for leading the collective actions, the specified timeframe to undertake the action, and recording follow-up action.

Members: The two representatives from each CBO will be the members of VCF. The responsibility of each member is to discuss and share the information they received so that that information will be circulated to all the residents of the village through the respective collectives.

For eg: If the convergence Cadre got to know about any new scheme then the VLF president can invite her to the VCF meeting to orient the session on that particular scheme so that each member of the VCF can circulate the information among their respective group. Through which the preparation of the beneficiary list will be easy as through a common platform all the representatives of each collective received the information.

Special Invitees

VCF members can also invite the Guest Facilitators like School Headmaster, CDPO (ICDS), and Doctors (PHC) in order to understand the guidelines for the formation of Monitoring Committees such as [School Management Committee (SMC), Anganwadi Level Monitoring Committee (ALMC), Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC)].

Monthly Meetings

The VCF functions through its meetings. Therefore regular meetings are a hallmark of a functioning VCF. It is in the meeting that the VCF monitors and plans its objectives like organizing camps and classes for social inclusion, local economic development, poverty reduction, and social development. It is a platform for taking and initiating action, identifying, and discussing problems, and planning for ways to mitigate them. The meeting also serves as an important platform for service providers to learn about the gaps in the community feedback and for the community to learn about the gaps in provider feedback.



Activities of Village Coordination Forum (VCF)

For example

- 1) If the VCF in the meeting has decided to organize the health camp with the support of the Health Department (PHC). So, the distribution of responsibility can be as follow:
 - ▲ for that VLF had given the responsibility to convergence cadres under the SAC sub-committee to visit the department, arrange the meeting and logistic required for the camps
 - ▲ VA members can decide the Venue and letter required, and other administrative formalities
 - ▲ Youth Club can take the responsibility of management part during the camps like registration, sitting arrangements, etc
 - ▲ Women Association and VLF can take the responsibility of circulating the information about the camps and arrangement of funds for refreshment, drinking water, etc

Maintenance of records

For the maintenance of records, the Minutes book should be maintained by the VCF in which all the agenda and the decisions taken should be recorded date wise. For the maintenance of this book, one bookkeeper should be selected among the VCF members.



"The formation of the Village Coordination Forum (VCF) in my village helps us a lot in overall development work. As the forum represents the members from each collective, hence it acts like a convergence platform to discuss the social issues related to health, environment, economy, flora, and fauna of the village in one place considering all the consent from each representative. Whatever decision is taken in the meeting every month is forwarded to the concerned society for a necessary action plan. Thus, VCF has become an important platform for an effective and smooth administration in today's village affairs."

**-W. Korungin Makunga, Chairman,
Khulsaibung Village, Machi Block, Manipur**

The following case study "AHONGBA" demonstrates the collaborative potential of various working groups, including Village Associations (VA) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), which came together and formed Village Collective Forum (VCF) which aim to engaged in collective decision-making for the village development. This convergence leads to remarkable achievements, as evidenced by the successful establishment of a library called "AHONGBA". The case study provides valuable insights into the effective functioning of diverse collectives working together harmoniously as a cohesive unit.

AHONGBA (Case Study on Opening of Library at Sita Village initiated by VCF)



AHONGBA (Library) opened at Sita Village, Tengnoupal Block supported by VCF

Sita, a remote village situated in the Tengnoupal Block of Tengnoupal District, consists of a total of 75 households. Most people are involved in agriculture and animal husbandry as their primary occupations.

While the preparation of the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) in the Sita Village, when the Public Goods Services & Resource Development Plan (PGSRD) and Social Development Plan (SDP) components were discussed at the VLF meeting, the common agenda which was raised was the idea of establishing the library within the school premises but was remained in paper due to the lack of Co-ordination among other CBOs (Community-Based Organizations). However, after the formation of the VCF, the agenda of opening a library for children was raised during the first VCF meeting.

The VCF identified two significant issues to be addressed before opening the library. Firstly, they needed a suitable space within the premises of the Upper Primary school for easy accessibility by students. So, the VLF members approached the Headmaster and Teachers with a request letter from the Chief, and after discussions, they agreed to allocate a room for the library within the school premises. Secondly, the arrangement of books posed a challenge. So, Mentor Sonu Nair (Kudumbashree NRO) utilized her experience working with the Kerala-based NGO, "*KANAL Innovations Kerala*" and sought their assistance. The NGO generously donated 152 books covering various categories such as general knowledge, storybooks for kids, autobiographies, English short stories, exercise books for mathematics and English, and even books on Mahatma Gandhi. Through collective efforts, both these issues were resolved successfully.



Book donated by NGO KANAL Innovation Kerala.

The VCF and school staff collectively suggested the name for the Library - '**AHONGBA**' which means "**Change**". On 24th March 2023, with the support of the VCF and school staff, the library was inaugurated. To ensure proper monitoring and functioning of the library, the VLF was entrusted with the responsibility. Two registers were maintained: one to keep track of the books and another to record the allocation of books to students and villagers. The school staff provided seating arrangements in the library, as per the request of the VCF.

With the support of the Youth Club, the VCF aims to collect more books from different sources. This initiative will contribute to the growth and enrichment of **AHONGBA**- the library, making it a valuable resource for the entire community.

The establishment of the **AHONGBA** - the library in Sita Village, Tengenoupal Block, stands as a testament to the collective efforts of the VCF, Mentors from Kudumbashree NRO, I-Mentors (MSRLM), the school staff, and the generous support of NGO KANAL Innovations Kerala. This initiative has brought about a positive change in the lives of the village's children and residents by providing them with access to educational resources and fostering a love for reading.

AHONGBA serves as an **Exemplar** of community-driven development, promoting knowledge, and empowering individuals to bring about meaningful change in their lives.



"It is great that Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their Village Level Federation (VLF) are taking up other activities for the development of our rural areas apart from the usual financial inclusion. It is good that a library has been set up in our Village High School initiated by VCF under the guidance of the PRI/VA-CBO Convergence Project (MSRLM). This library, I believe, will go a long way. Further promoting reading habits among the student community and also helps in knowledge expansion in the community at large."

- Paokholun Haokip Chief (Sita Village)

Testimonials



“My journey from being a simple SHG member to I-Mentor has been incredible. Not only gaining respect and recognition which I got from society but also this journey enhanced my self-confidence and changed my lens to observe society. It has also pushed me hard in finding my identity and in what terms, I am capable of contributing to my society.”

*-Shinglai Rosemary (I-Mentors),
Machi Block, Tengenoupal District*



“I have been working as an Internal Mentor with the Manipur State Rural Livelihood Mission since 2021. This role has brought me closer to my community and ignited a passion within me to actively contribute for its betterment on my personal level. Throughout my journey I have witnessed at firsthand the power of unity, compassion and collective action in creating positive change within the community. For instance I have been organizing community events, volunteering for social causes like drug abuse, etc. This experience has enabled me to discover my passion, and has greatly contributed to my personal growth.”

*-N. Nganthoi Chanu (Internal Mentor),
Kshetrigao Block, Imphal East District*



“As an Internal Mentor working for the PRI-CBO Convergence Project, Embarking on this journey has transformed my life from being a mere SHG member and a Homemaker to an active citizen working towards empowering the community. The Knowledge, awareness, skill and motivation that I received have boosted my creativity and conviction to speak and liaison with different stakeholders like PRI members, Line Departments officials etc and ensure effective planning for various activities.”

*- Ashem Sanahanbi devi (Internal-Mentor),
Keirao Block, Imphal East District*

Our Manipur Team



State Mission Director

N. Bandana Devi

State Mission Director (IAS)

MSRLM - State Mission Manager (SMM)

Binota Loitongbam

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