

SPECTRUM

Volume II

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OUR VISION

“ To create an environment of equality and social justice where justice can be addressed through participatory planning and help people lead a life with dignity, security and pride. ”



OUR MISSION

“ To alleviate poverty and social exclusion by empowering women from poor and marginalized communities. ”



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SECURE IDENTITY ON HILLS, BECOMING CHANGE AGENT

Among the Naga tribes of Manipur, the village authority system is still in practice. This system is subject to highly unequal land and power relations, where village development issue is the exclusive right and prerogative of the village chairman and authority members. Astonishingly, women have no rights over any village development decision whatsoever. Despite this, there have been slight changes and evolution in women participation in village issue, particularly in Meipou Village. These villages, situated northwest of Tengnoupal District, is one of the targeted villages of PRI-CBO Convergence Project.

One of great changes after the implementation of PRI-CBO Convergence project was that, empowerment of the women on the government entitlements and schemes. Through activities like PAE, EAP and VPRP various discussions and suggestions were carried out during the VLF meeting with the help of the LRGs on the improvement of entitlements rights system in their respective village.





There has been a massive increase in the knowledge and understanding within CBO community over the entitlements and the process involved for availing them. During 2019-20, concept of Gram Sabha and GPDP was introduced in Machi Block, more than 50% of the village women participated during the Gram Sabha proceedings. The village authority chairman and members had little to less knowledge on the process and the objective. Meipou Village, the Chairman said that "we don't understand the concept and the process to carry out GPDP in our village as it is an alien concept and no proper training nor financial power has been vested upon us to carry out such development planning activity in the ambit of our village". The Chairman showed much concern on the State negligence towards the Hill districts on such important development. The state SIRD don't hold expertise on the conceptual clarity on the functioning of the VA nor the financial commitment vested upon them.

In the year 2020-21 Gram Sabha and GPDP has been mandated by the State government across all 16 districts in Manipur. In Machi block, village authority chairman and members still lacked the conceptual clarity on the process and outcome. One of the great changes and impact to our project village, Meipou village, is mentioned below.

The Meipou village authority chairman and village youth club approached the LRG and VLF members to train them on government entitlements and VPRP/GPDP process. Now, the only thing that remains, is the process of availing these rights by way of transparency and accountability to the villagers by the chairman. The Chairman governing system has taken a democratic approach by providing CBO members a platform to participate and initiate a dialogue with village leaders. Thus, the community stakeholders are becoming more aware on democratic system of preparing development plans in the present society.

BEACON OF CHANGE: MENTORS

Teachers are considered to be a pathway to knowledge, leading to social suppleness, particularly for students who come from less fortunate households.



“Teachers provide the doorway for accessing knowledge, building confidence and overall development to be able to add value to the society at large”. The above statement reflects rightly in the efforts of Kudumbashree mentors, determined to play a crucial part in the transformation of marginalised community in Manipur towards inclusiveness village development through participatory planning methods and sharing their respective experiences from working with various local self-government and community-based organisation in Rajasthan, Odisha and Sikkim.

Mentors currently works at Keirao Bitra and Machi block in Manipur. During their initial days, they were pretty disappointed as the SHG and VLF had less knowledge on various government entitlement and their processes. The poor state of relationship between PRI/VA and SHG federation, further affected mentor interest and motivation. However, mentor’s determination to improve the quality of life for the community never wavered. As a next step, mentors started interacting personally with PRI/VA leaders, participated in various vilage/ panchayat meetings, church mass, interacted with youth club, women groups and elderly people within the community. The interaction helped mentors understand issues pertaining to the local context.





INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Choose to challenge stereotype and inequality

Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission and Kudumbashree-NRO celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March, to spread the message on gender equality. This is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call for accelerating women's equality.

In Machi, Village Level Federation in collaboration with village women groups, organised a multifaceted event at various community hall across the block. During the event local resource group and VLF members deliberated on the impact of drug and alcohol abuse on women. Various other means like plays, dance and singing competitions were used to reinforce the message. Church and Village Authority leaders participated in these events.

In Keirao-Bitra, MSRLM and Kudumbashree-NRO celebrated the day in DC office complex, Porompat. The event was graced by Chief guest Hon'ble Adhyaksha, Deputy commissioner, Superintendent of police and up-Adhyaksha. Some of the key engagements with community implemented in project locations were health booths, awareness rallies, tales of women leadership, session on mental health and various other competitions. Series of workshops and discussions meetings among various stakeholders including community, Government officials, Self Help Groups were also organised in the project location.

One of the highlights of the day came from Top Chingtha cluster on the special occasion of international women's day, the 8 VLFs came together to work on fulfilling the demands of their SHG members by organising an enrolment mela assisting the eligible beneficiaries to access their Entitlements. The Panchayat Pradhans of 4 Panchayat and the Youth Clubs were extremely supportive. A day prior the VLF with the help of youth club had mobilised people for the enrolment through mike announcement.



Binota Loitongbam

State Mission Manager (SISD), MSRLM

Binota Loithangbam is the State Mission Manager for Institutional and Capacity Building at Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission. Binota has over 10 years of rich experience in social research, long-term social development and programming in diverse socio-cultural settings. Being part of Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission since 2015, her work spanned areas of strategic planning, program design, and project management.

Binota core responsibility focus on strengthening the role and effectiveness of the women institutions in Manipur.

Binota speaks to Spectrum on what continues to drive her commitment to work towards the most marginalised in the society.

Commitment to create inclusive and diverse society

1. Tell us about your professional journey and what motivated you to be associated with the development sector?

My parents were the motivating factor for me to be in this development sector. My father being a local Politician and mother in the ICDS. My mother was always this busy person engaging with women and children and was always travelling to different villages.

That was a time when there were few educated working women. My mother was always looked up all men/women with respect and for support. That image of my mother interacting with women/children and travelling etc remained a motivation and driving force my being in development sector.

There has been no looking back since then and I continue to learn new things in the sector and enjoy the work I do every day!

2. Tell us about your journey with MSRLM so far. Any highlights you would want to share with us?

MSRLM started later in comparison to other states. Yet over the years, the changes we have brought to the lives of the SHG women has been of utmost value. I joined Mission back in 2015 as a State Mission Manager handling the IB & CB vertical. My work involves social inclusion, building Institutions and convergence with PRIs initiatives.

I think some of the most pivotal moments professionally came in when the organisation offered me the freedom to deal with varied challenges head-on. These experiences gave me a lot of exposure, which I wouldn't have otherwise got into any other project.

MSRLM continues to give me freedom to tackle challenges and work on opportunities every step of the way. It is in these moments, that I have learnt and grown most as a professional, alongside my peers and colleagues. Everyday I have spent with this organisation has been a significant learning experience.

3. What do you think is the MSRLM distinguishing factor in the development sector?

I really believe that one of the key changes is "What we want to accomplish and how we want to accomplish it" as an organisation. That is what still motivates me to come to work every day with this organisation.

The first area is addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and social exclusion by aiming at social change at the grassroots. We have progressed enormously as an organisation over the last six years, and we continue to attach a lot of value to adapting to situation to reach our goals.

The second area is what we do as an organisation to reach our goals. We offer lot of space to our colleagues to think, analyse and come up with relevant solutions to social problems. The creative freedom to analyse and adapt to situations at-hand, leads to a stronger programmatic approach and better results. This is much needed in our context which is dynamic and fast changing. Also, the learning opportunities that come to our colleagues within such a professional framework adds immense value to them and to our work as an organisation. .

4. Is there anything that you would like to convey to your colleague of MSRLM?





I would just like to say that we all are here because there is a need. It's important to be aware and committed to work for the betterment of those who are marginalised. We need to constantly reflect on what we are doing and come up with meaningful strategies that can best serve those in need, both collectively as an organisation and as individuals.

5. Is there anything that you would like to say about the Convergence Project work in Manipur?

The Convergence Project with Kudumbashree NRO has brought positive and strong sense of "We Can and We will" to the women SHG members. Women in Manipur already has a history of strong collectivism in social action. The NupiLan (Womens War) and the Imakeithel (Mothers market) need not be explained. Yet, in my observation the collectivism lacks awareness of right, legality and knowledge and exposure to deal in the larger spectrum.

This is one of the main reason why women in the state remain mere participants of collective action. With the Kudumbashree Convergence Project, the right based approach in a balanced manner has enabled the SHG women to not just participants but important stakeholder in that collective social development.

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

<p>PROJECT PRI- CBO Convergence Project, Manipur</p>	<p>728 Women SHG members trained under the project</p>	<p>03 Communities covered under the PRI-CBO Convergence Project in Manipur</p> 	<p>3055 Beneficiaries have received various benefits through activities</p> 	<p>34 Local government have integrated VPRP plans in their planning</p> 	<p>773 Women farmers have diversified their livelihoods</p> 
<p>PROJECT envisages developing strong community cadre and local institutions to improve the reach and quality of public service delivery</p>	<p>82 Farmers (mainly tribal women were selected) to be engaged in the tribal weekly market in Machi block</p>	<p>747 SHG members participated in a series of health camps organized in 6 GP across Kejrao-Bitra Block</p>	<p>06 Kudumbashree Mentors working across 4 blocks</p> <p>03 Field Coordinator</p>	<p>173 Strong pool of local resource Group members created in both blocks</p>	<p>23 Strong pool of internal mentors Group members created in both blocks</p>

PRI-CBO Convergence Project is working towards bringing an equitable long term systematic change within Manipur's in strengthening participatory approach and promote gender equality. MoU in partnership with Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission has implemented the project across two blocks to develop and strengthen the community-based approach to access entitlements, livelihoods and address social issues.

This year saw the successful completion of two years in Manipur. Given the quality and effectiveness of the project work. The convergence project reach has now been extended to two new blocks. New strategy has been developed to meet the specific needs of these two new blocks and carry forward the best practices undertaken in the old blocks. PRI-CBO Convergence Project strives to bring meaningful changes within the community.

UPDATES FROM FIELD

Block Level Internal Mentor Selection for new blocks held in Keirao-Bitra and Machi



Kudumbashree-NRO&MSRLM organized a two-day Block Level selection workshop at Keirao-Bitra and Machi from 27th to 30th January 2021. The focus of the workshop was on identification of internal mentors out of the current LRGs working in the current two blocks. The training witnessed maximum participation of LRGs currently engaged as well as professionals from Kudumbashree H.O team and Block team of MSRLM.

The experience of working in the project, process undertaken, stakeholders involved, tools used in the project work, communication & interpersonal skills were used for the selection criteria.

Strengthening the ownership within the VLF and its members through “Jeetenge Hum Campaign”.

Kudumbashree-NRO has prepared VLF strengthening module. The campaign focused on the solidarity and collective action induced back into the VLF through activities designed to follow up on their demand plans, engage with the departments and reconnect with the community for collective empowerment.

The entire activity has to be taken up in a campaign mode and in a festive atmosphere ensuring the participation of all the stakeholders.



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

MANIPUR STATE RURAL LIVELIHOOD MISSION IMPHAL EAST

Geographical Background -

Gram Panchayat	Top Chingtha
Block/ Tehsil	Keirao Bitra
District	Imphal East
State	Manipur
Pincode	795140
Population	1052.6 hectares
Households	1,051
Assembly Constituency	Androk

Village Level Federation Profile -

Name of the VLF	Mangal Piba
Name of the VLF President	K. Anoubi Devi
Name of the VLF Secretary	K. Daina Devi
Cadre	16
Sub committee	4
Total SHG	20
Total SHG Member	230
SHG Graded	18
Total CIF Fund received	19,80,000/-
RF	18 SHGs

Gender Issues identified -

- Women in our communities have always been active in social activities, the presence of women in addressing social issues have always been acknowledged and appreciated.
- Unfortunately, with such strong women voices what we realised is unawareness of our entitlements. Having knowledge about one's entitlements is a basic right, an entitlement is accorded to the right holder to access to some benefits, with lack of awareness the basic right to access becomes null.

Activities undertaken -

- During the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP), the SHG and federation brought up many demands. As a part of the Entitlement Plan, there were many demands for Health cards, Insurance, NSAP.
- To address the demands of our SHG women, we planned an enrollment camp in collaboration with the Panchayats, Legal Service Authority, Manipur Rural Bank and Post office.

Intervention -

- The PRI-CBO convergence Project under MSRLM gave us the basic concept of having knowledge on one's entitlements and the power it adheres.
 - The strong foundation of our federation and the knowledge from the Project gave our VLF the path to access various benefits.
 - The journey on entitlement access started for us when we first did the Participatory Assessment of Entitlement activity which gave us the knowledge on schemes we lacked and a baseline data on status of entitlements accessed in our SHGs.
 - We began by demanding back out MGNREGA job cards which were held by the elected members for years. We successfully got back 420 Job Cards back from their custody and started demanding and obtaining jobs. Since then, we have been continuously working towards achieving entitlements.
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- The SAC and LRG members visited each stakeholder with a letter and assured their collaboration for enrollment camp on 8th March, women's day.
- The Panchayat Pradhans and the Youth Clubs were extremely supportive. A day prior the VLF with the help of youth club mobilised people for the enrolment through mike announcement.

Following were the booth for enrolment:-

1. Legal Aid and Health Card enrolment by Manipur State Legal Services Authority (MASLSA)- 75 women got enrolled for CMHT, 35 women for Ayushman Bharat and 2 CMST
2. Insurance enrolment by MSRLM Bank Sakhi- 43 for PMSBY and 10 for PMJJBY
3. Opening of Sukanya Samridhi Saving by Yaripek Post office- 11 saving accounts were opened.

