



MANIPUR STATE RURAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION (MSRLM)



CAMPAIGN ON **BACK TO SCHOOL**

EMPOWERING SHG WOMEN THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED LEARNING



An initiatives under the Social Inclusion and Social Development (SISD), MSRLM

www.manipursrlm.gov.in



OVERVIEW

BACK TO SCHOOL

Empowering SHG Women Through Community-Led Learning

The Back to School campaign is a pioneering initiative of the Manipur State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM), under the Social Inclusion and Social Development (SISD) Thematic, designed to bring learning back to the grassroots in a joyful, inclusive, and effective way. Moving beyond conventional training models that often reach only a few SHG leaders, this campaign invites all SHG members

- especially those at the margins - into an engaging, school-like environment.

It simplifies complex themes such as Social Inclusion, Gender, PRI-CBO Convergence, and Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW), making them accessible and relatable. Women learn together, share experiences, build confidence, and reclaim their right to knowledge - often for the first time in their lives.

Back to School is a community-owned, peer-facilitated movement that ensures no one is left behind. The use of nostalgic classroom

elements and local infrastructure fosters emotional connection, trust, and active participation. By bridging knowledge gaps through participatory learning, it sets a new benchmark for community outreach.

To assess its impact and potential for scale, the campaign is being piloted in April 2025 across 8 MSRLM-promoted Village Level Federations (VLFs) in Imphal East, selected from 8 clusters spanning 4 blocks. Trained cadres are already in place, and additional capacity-building will support wider outreach based on the pilot's outcomes.

Beyond increasing awareness of entitlements and governance, the campaign fosters leadership and collective agency. It has sparked a renewed sense of identity and purpose among SHG women, transforming them into confident changemakers in their communities.



Why 'Back to School' Campaign?

At its heart, the 'Back to School' campaign is MSRLM's response to an urgent need - to democratize learning, deepen grassroots awareness, and ensure that no SHG woman is left behind in the journey of empowerment and inclusion

For MSRLM

MSRLM's core objective through Back to School is to bridge the last-mile knowledge gap caused by resource limitations and conventional, top-down training approaches that primarily reach leadership committees. This campaign uniquely reaches every member, including the most vulnerable, by fostering welcoming, fun, and accessible learning spaces. It also strengthens collaboration with critical stakeholders such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), schools, and line departments (Social Welfare, PHED, Health), integrating them into grassroots learning and thereby expanding outreach and ensuring sustainability beyond direct program support.



Ultimately, it aligns with MSRLM's vision of inclusive development by transforming every SHG member into an informed, confident agent of change within her community

For the SHGs and CBOs

For SHG members, the campaign is far more than an educational intervention - it is a transformational journey. It rekindles the joy of learning through nostalgic school-like settings, provides first-time classroom experiences for many, and builds social capital by enhancing awareness on vital social issues. Through the campaign, women develop deep understanding and engagement in areas like gender mainstreaming, social inclusion, local governance, entitlements, and government convergence mechanisms. This knowledge empowers them to become confident participants and decision-makers in village planning, Gram Sabhas, and federation activities, ultimately strengthening community solidarity and self-reliance.



The Innovation

“Rooted in Culture, Driven by Community, Transforming Learning into Leadership.”

This campaign is inspired by the Kerala’s **Kudumbashree** model known as ‘**Thirike School**’ (**Back to School**), yet it has been meticulously adapted to the local socio-cultural context of Manipur to maximize relevance and impact.

Thematic Classrooms Focused on Critical Social Issues: Learning is organized into four core classrooms addressing Social Inclusion, Gender, PRI-CBO Convergence, and FNHW. This ensures targeted, in-depth engagement using local content and participatory methods tailored to the community’s realities.

Peer-Led Facilitation by Trained SHG Cadres: Sessions are led by SHG members trained as facilitators, who bring credibility, empathy, and leadership from within the community. This peer-driven approach fosters open dialogue, trust, and sustained learning beyond the campaign.

Use of Existing Community Infrastructure: The campaign leverages schools, community halls, and public spaces to conduct sessions, minimizing costs and embedding learning within everyday community life. This accessibility encourages higher participation and grounds discussions in familiar settings.

School-Like Setup for Nostalgia and Engagement: The campaign recreates a nostalgic classroom environment - complete with attendance registers, badges, and learning materials; which motivates participants, reduces anxiety, and makes learning a joyful, memorable event.

Community Ownership and Low-Cost Implementation : The entire process is driven by SHG federations, utilizing local resources and volunteerism. This low-cost, community-owned model promotes empowerment and ensures that the learning movement is sustainable and scalable.



Fostering Collaboration and Strengthening Local Governance: By actively involving PRIs, schools, and government departments, the campaign strengthens institutional linkages and improves understanding of governance, entitlements, and convergence mechanisms. This builds capacity for better public participation and social accountability.

Building Custodians of Village Development:

Ultimately, the campaign aims to develop SHG members as confident custodians of their village's development—equipped to monitor, plan, and advocate for inclusive growth and social justice.

The Impact

The Back to School campaign was piloted in eight Village Level Federations (VLFs) selected from eight Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) within Imphal East district, which consists of approximately 160 VLFs.

- Over **90%** participation rate with more than **5,000** women actively engaged.
- Expansion underway across all **160 VLFs** in Imphal East district, with plans to scale statewide, reaching over lakh SHG members.
- Inclusion of marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, widows, elderly, and transgender individuals increased substantially.
- Greater awareness about Gram Sabhas, governance, rights, entitlements, and convergence.
- Stronger collaboration and convergence between PRIs, line departments, and SHG federations.
- Development of a sustainable cadre pool capable of continuing facilitation post-MSRLM support.
- Collaborative ownership from local governance structures, with MLAs, Local Leaders, and Zila Parishad members actively supporting the initiative.

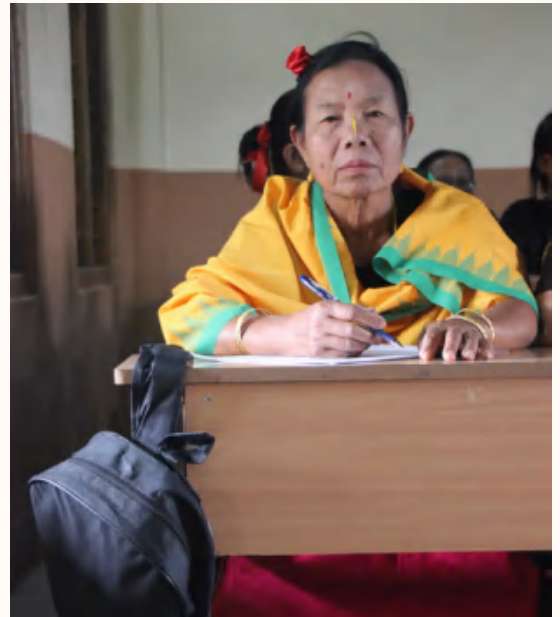
Through these impacts, MSRLM is pioneering a replicable model for grassroots empowerment and participatory governance.





Beyond Knowledge: Stories That Speak, Voices That Rise

The Back to School campaign goes beyond just spreading information - it creates nurturing, school-like spaces where women rediscover their voice, agency, and confidence. Through this collective learning journey, even those who once felt invisible are now stepping up in governance forums, planning meetings, and community dialogues. The campaign nurtures social cohesion, leadership, and solidarity - laying the groundwork for lasting village-level transformation.



"Joining 'Back to School' has been a gift I never imagined. Sitting in a classroom again, listening, laughing, and learning with my sisters - it brought back my childhood memories and gave me a new sense of pride. Even if I don't understand everything, I feel included and valued."

N. Basanti, SHG Member

"At first, I was nervous - wondering what 'Back to School' would be like. But now, it's exciting. I've learned about inclusion, our rights, gender equality, and the power we have when we stand together. SHG has made this possible for me."

***Yendrenbam Jugeshwari,
SHG Member***



"When we wore our ribbons and sat with our bags, I felt like crying. It was like stepping back into my childhood. We laughed, shared meals, and learned with dignity. This experience has brought us closer and made us confident to speak up for ourselves and our communities."

K. Thoibi, Elderly SHG Member



The Backbone:

Community-Led, Institutionally Supported

The campaign's core strength is the cadre pool of SHG members who lead facilitation, planning, and mobilization on the ground. Supported by Social Action Sub-Committees within CLFs and VLFs, and backed by MSRLM's facilitation and PRIs' moral and political support, the campaign enjoys a strong multi-stakeholder foundation. Schools contribute by opening spaces and encouraging participation, embedding learning firmly within the community fabric.

This network of support is critical for sustaining momentum and embedding learning into everyday village life.



The Road Ahead:

Sustaining Change Beyond the Campaign

MSRLM is committed to scaling Back to School campaign across all districts in Manipur, targeting over **1.33 lakh SHG members across 12,733 SHGs**. The focus remains on inclusive participation, community ownership, and linking SHGs to governance and government schemes. Strengthening the cadre pool and fostering collaborative platforms will ensure that the campaign's empowering legacy endures long after direct programmatic involvement.

As part of the first phase of the district-scale-up program, **Tengnoupal District** will roll out the campaign across four Cluster Level Federations. This phased expansion is designed to deepen community-led learning, institutional convergence, and grassroots leadership across the state.



The Back to School campaign exemplifies how community ownership and thoughtful innovation can overcome resource limitations and social barriers to learning. By transforming SHG women into confident learners, leaders, and active citizens, MSRLM is expanding the reach of critical social themes and nurturing sustainable grassroots empowerment. This scalable model offers valuable lessons for regions seeking inclusive, enjoyable, and meaningful learning approaches that leave no one behind.

