

# MSMEs IN NORTH EAST INDIA



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# MSMEs

## IN NORTH EAST INDIA

Capacity Building for Export Competitiveness

by Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank) and  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



# Foreword

More than just businesses, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the heart and soul of the people and communities they work with. MSMEs help in breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation by providing people skills and agency by enhancing livelihoods, skilling, and providing local economic multiplier effects. They provide one of the highest per capita employment investment opportunities thereby reducing rural to urban migration and providing local sources of employment. The MSME sector's contribution for sustainable development is well recognized by the United Nations Development Programme in achieving the SDGs across developing countries. Aside from possessing the potential to create employment opportunities for millions, MSMEs play a key role in preserving and promoting the use of low-cost indigenous solutions and products.

In Northeast India, MSMEs play a crucial role in the region's development; despite only accounting for 1.5% of India's MSMEs, in Northeast India they contribute nearly 62% to the economy in terms of employment, output and exports.

MSMEs in the Northeast region are facing numerous challenges from the global COVID-19 pandemic to increasingly tougher competition – not only against their counterparts from outside the region but also from large entities. Some of these particular challenges facing Northeast MSMEs that have constrained the growth of the sector are poor infrastructure, lack of capital, and inadequate market linkages. UNDP has been working closely to assist the development of the MSME sector across India and have been assisting many MSMEs in Northeast India and most recently to sustain and weather the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNDP and India Exim Bank partnered in 2018 to address some of these key challenges by promoting export potential of the existing MSMEs of the Northeastern States particularly in the States of Assam and Mizoram. Apart from aiming to strengthen the handloom, handicrafts and agro and allied sector, this collaboration also worked to generate awareness and bring together the enterprises that are opting for sustainable solutions, environmentally and socially. Drawing on the project experiences, it is being witnessed that, MSMEs, being part of a larger ecosystem, are imbibing cultures of sustainability when they interact with organisations that believe in responsible sourcing and responsible funding.

The Coffee Table Book tries to capture the work of this partnership by highlighting few success stories and those entrepreneurs who have been able to shine on their own despite all odds.

We wish to thank all those who have been a part of this partnership – UNDP and India Exim Bank teams, relevant Government Departments, social entrepreneurs and Civil Society Organizations without whose support this Coffee Table Book would not have been possible.

We expect our readers to enjoy going through the vibrant images and real life stories of the social entrepreneurs.

**John Borgoyary**

Regional Head, North-East India  
UNDP India

## Message

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in the growth and development of the Indian economy, contributing about 30% of India's GDP, 45% of manufacturing output and 48% of India's merchandise exports. Being the second largest employment generator in a country of around 1.3 billion people, their strategic importance in fostering entrepreneurship development is unequalled. This is all the more so for the North East Region (NER), with the sector contributing to around 62% of industrial output in the region. Given its geostrategic location, serving as a gateway to the East and Southeast Asian markets, the region offers immense potential for the growth of MSMEs.

Since its inception in 1982, Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank) has played a catalytic role in financing, facilitating and promoting India's international trade. The Bank has supported entrepreneurs in the NER through multiple channels including, among others, financing of export oriented units; identifying potential export sectors / products through research studies; promoting knowledge and institutional building through by setting up libraries and instituting scholarships in Universities and Institutions in the region; supporting skill development and capacity building through its grassroots initiatives; and linking local producers with international buyers through its market advisory services.

Appreciating the strategic importance of MSME sector for export promotion in NER, India Exim Bank has joined hands with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for promoting a project on "Capacity Building of the MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness". The initiative seeks to strengthen MSME units in the region by leveraging on opportunities emerging from the Government of India's Act East Policy, as well as growing recognition of the long term advantages of export led growth in alleviating poverty and sustainable development. The initiative supplements India Exim Bank's existing financing programmes and grassroots initiatives for facilitating export promotion in the region.

With this partnership, we have not only managed to achieve several milestones in promoting export competitiveness of MSME sector in Assam and Mizoram, but also contributed towards the States' progress in achieving their Sustainable Development Goals. We believe that these activities would motivate both prospective and practicing entrepreneurs in the region. Our association with the UNDP makes us feel proud to able to provide support to MSME sector in the region, and inspire us to move forward with full vigour to achieve more and better.

This Coffee Table Book is part of the ongoing collaboration between India Exim Bank and the UNDP. I sincerely hope our endeavor of documenting the glorious journey of India Exim Bank-UNDP association is an inspiration for many institutions to replicate such kind of initiative for the development of the region. We have tried to incorporate as many case studies and success stories as possible in this Book. We hope that readers will find it informative and useful, and serves as a valuable reference point for policy makers, entrepreneurs and academia.



**Ms. Shoko Noda**  
Resident Representative,  
UNDP India

## Message

Across India, Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs) employ over 110 million people and play an integral part of the economy in providing jobs and livelihoods and accelerating growth. Around 20 percent of MSMEs are based out of rural areas – supporting sustainable and inclusive development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an eye-opener in so many ways. As we have been living in lockdowns around the world for the last few months, more than ever, we have experienced how small businesses truly are the heart and soul of our economy. The MSMEs not only meet local demands but play an important role in the global supply chain as well. The Indian MSME sector contributes to 45 percent of overall exports from India and 63.4 million units throughout the country.

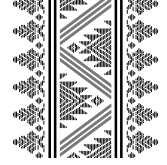
We tend to forget to reflect on the huge contribution smaller businesses make to the global economy, often away from the spotlight. So, I am happy to see how India Exim Bank and UNDP have come together to celebrate our MSMEs. Acknowledging and celebrating the critical work MSMEs have done, India Exim Bank and UNDP have compiled select impact stories that reflect grassroot voices from the states of Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland, in this Coffee Table Book, as part of the “Capacity Building of the MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness” project.

India Exim Bank and UNDP are working together to enhance and boost the export potential of MSMEs and generate employment and provide livelihood opportunities in the North East Region (NER). This was done by building capacities of local entrepreneurs and creating networks and access to markets. UNDP hopes to continue working closely with these entrepreneurs to design policies and initiatives to build back better through greening value chains, fostering innovation and providing access to formalisation of MSMEs with access to markets, finance and services.

One of the things that COVID-19 has taught us is the importance of resilient local economies and MSMEs. While we are trying to ‘build back better’, we need to focus in areas such as the NER that are rich in resources yet lack adequate market connectivity. UNDP strives to work together with the Government and private sector partners such as India Exim Bank to bridge any digital disconnect by supporting smaller business to have better access to the markets to sustain and scale up.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partner, India Exim Bank for joining us to take voices of the North East to the world. I am sure this initiative will inspire many youths from the NER to take on entrepreneurship as their path in life.





# MSMEs in North East India

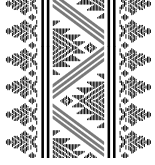
Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of our economy and of many other developing economies like ours. They work to diminish poverty by providing meaningful and contextual employment opportunities to a large number of people in the country at a relatively low capital cost. They encourage innovation and propel industrialization of rural and backward areas, reducing regional imbalances, and assuring a more equitable distribution of national income and wealth.

MSMEs today are widening their domain by producing a diverse range of products and offering services across different sectors of the economy, catering to myriad demands from both domestic and global markets.

As per the data available by the Central Statistics Office, MSMEs have been contributing roughly 30 per cent to the total GDP of the country.

Despite infrastructural, technological, transportation, and communication issues, and despite a dearth of market linkages and challenges hampering movement of institutional credit, MSMEs, in the past decade, have seen exponential growth leading to higher employment of rural populations – of artisans and weavers and of those involved in agriculture and allied services.





The sector generates over 11.10 crore jobs promoting vocational skills and employment opportunities among the most vulnerable sections of the society. It also plays an important role in improving and developing rural and semi-urban areas as production hubs and centres of economic development leading to overall socio economic development of society and improvement in living standards for a large number of people.

The 73rd round of the National Sample Survey found that there are approximately 633.88 lakh non-agricultural MSMEs in the country, out of which, more than 99 per cent are Micro units. MSMEs have a strong standing in both rural and urban areas of the country, their percentage share being 51 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively. They constitute 35 per cent of direct exports, providing employment to over 28 million people. In fact, 80 per cent of the total number of industrial enterprises in India are MSMEs.

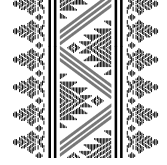
The North East Region (NER), currently home to only 1.5 per cent of MSMEs in India, is a rich gamut of cultures, unique tribes and a plethora of distinctive crafts – it possesses tremendous potential to become the hub of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises in the country.

The NER comprises of eight states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. Its ecology provides a perfect environment for the growth of horticulture, quality spices, medicinal and aromatic plants. Also, the region is home to many 'in demand' and unique products such as, Eri Silk, Muga Silk, Naga Mirchi, and many handicrafts created out of sustainable natural fibers like Bamboo and Cane.









While most MSME units in NER, like in the rest of the country, are micro units, what makes the NER MSME experience unique is that a majority of these are women owned and women operated household industries, their work based largely on adding value to natural fibres and organic farming. Most social entrepreneurs in the region work with women farmers, artisans, and weavers and women form an integral part of the NER MSME value chain, right from production and processing to packaging and marketing.

Further, the region's geographical location and proximity to the south and southeastern nations gives it an inherent trading advantage. But while India's trade with its neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam has grown at a Cumulative Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 23 per cent, the NER's share in this trade has remained static, hovering consistently in the range of 1-2 per cent, and contributing to a mere 5 per cent of the total exports from India to Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan. However, a vast amount of agricultural, handicraft and handloom produce tends to get exported through small markets and mediators taking advantage of the proximity and convenience of transport to these countries. This not only takes away from national income but yields no practical benefits to the producers or to the region as a whole.

Overall, the NER MSMEs have an abundance of natural resources to tap into and a skilled and dedicated work force to build upon. They have the wherewithal to contribute to and benefit from the huge export potential of the region given a little hand holding vis-à-vis markets and trends, the right training, and a push in the right direction.



# Agriculture and Allied Activities

The North East Region (NER) of India has a bounty of agricultural produce. The Brahmaputra basin provides fertile soil for cultivating a range of horticultural products, plantation crops, vegetables, spices, herbs, and medicinal plants.

Agriculture provides livelihood to 70 per cent of the NER population but the States continue to be net importers of food grains even for their own consumption. This is because of an uneven pattern of agricultural growth across regions within the NER, traditional and low yielding farming practices and the limited availability of land for agricultural purposes due to huge, protected forest areas.

The NER produces large amounts of high quality spices such as chillies, ginger, mustard seeds, turmeric, large cardamom, and fruits and vegetables. Many of these products are now finding national and international markets via online selling. The region's comparative advantages in producing these, and other horticulture products can be further tapped into by setting up small-scale processing units for the local market. Such setups are not only manageable but economically viable since they require little seed capital. Further, they have the potential to boost rural employment.

Rubber and bamboo are among the most important agricultural produces in the region and have huge potential for investment. Tripura, the chief production hub for rubber has been declared as the 'second rubber capital of India' by the Indian Rubber

Board. It follows right after Kerala in the production of rubber.

The NER also produces 65 per cent of India's total bamboo, which is also 20 per cent of the total global bamboo production. Mizoram alone contributes to around 40 per cent of the Indian total.

As said, the farmers of NER have retained their age-old wisdom using indigenous practices for sustainable production. With a lot of their produce being naturally organic, they are also naturally inclined towards learning more about organic farming for commercial use. What was earlier seen as a disadvantage due to low output has shown the potential to be harnessed for niche production value and for the development of the region without compromising on ecological benefits. It is estimated that around 18 million hectares of land in NER can be used for organic production and several forms of organic farming are already being practiced successfully in the diverse climates of the rain fed, plain, and hilly areas.

Organic farm produce, with its popularity in national markets, as well as its export viability, is a promising avenue for the overall development of NER. Establishing institutions for capacity building of farmers, enhancing public investment and institutional credit and commercialising the indigenous diversified farming system can go a long way in achieving this goal.









# Handloom

The North East Region (NER) is home to 65.2 per cent of the total handlooms in India with Assam alone accounting for 47 per cent of them. 49.8 per cent of the total weavers in the country are in the North East. Assam accounts for 30 per cent of them.

The handloom sector has been an important cottage industry in NER and has traditionally played an integral role in maintaining the heritage and culture of the region. It has also played a dominant role in the cultural and economic development of rural masses. The sector is globally acclaimed for producing a rich variety of indigenous products including, but not limited to, fabric, apparel – including silk products, home furnishings and accessories. Patterns, colours and approaches to design are often inspired by nature and fabric is dyed using natural sustainable dyes made from turmeric and tea waste among others. Almost 90 per cent of the tribes and communities from the hills to the plains are engaged in this rich tradition.

But despite the natural abundance, the handloom weavers in the area are in dire straits. The reasons are manifold. On one hand is the lack of availability and steep prices of raw material – made only worse by yarn shortages and a highly unorganised supply chain. Then, the weavers excel in their traditional craft but lack training in the use of new tools and

technologies. They also need help in understanding the new age buyer, to be able to make their products more market friendly and export ready. Lack of such training and inadequate marketing intelligence poses another problem leaving the weavers shooting in the dark, seeking innovation in design and constantly facing stiff competition from power looms. Consequently, most small units tend to rely solely on local markets, aggregators, exhibitions, and trade fairs to market their produce. The decline in these and the lack of access to the national and international markets only makes the situation worse.

Traditional weaver households have a weak financial base and no or little access to technology. Lack of working capital, choking credit lines, and bureaucratization/politicization of cooperatives add to their long lasting challenges, constantly retarding the pace and growth of the handloom sector in the region.

Given the huge potential of growth, especially in the export market, the need of the hour is to preserve, develop and promote the exceptional talent of the weavers of NER through a series of initiatives and interventions filling the gaps present in the current set up. Marketing initiatives will do well to promote the sustainable and minimal waste nature of handloom production in the North East.





# Handicrafts

The North East Region (NER) of India is the home of a large number of tribes and sub-tribes. They have a vigorous craft tradition, and every tribe excels in craftsmanship: this excellence manifests itself in the various products its members produce. For centuries, the North East has been a hub of various cultures. This has enriched and emboldened the array of handicrafts one finds here – from bamboo and cane products, to masks, wood carvings, and earthenware. While the raw material used to create these largely remains the same, most tribes and communities maintain their distinctive styles and workmanship producing handicrafts immediately attributable to their individual identity.

The crafts of this region are almost entirely oriented to locally available eco-friendly and sustainable raw materials. They produce basketwork, cane furniture, mats, wood carvings, terracotta, bell metal artwork, brass metal craft, home décor items, utility items, kitchen items such as bamboo bottles, dolls and toys, jewellery including bamboo jewellery, among others. As per the Census conducted by NCAER in 1995-96, NER, including Sikkim, has 8.87 lakh handicrafts artisans, accounting for 18.63 per cent of the total artisan population in the country.

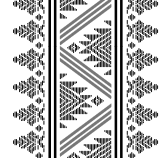
The central and state governments have taken multiple steps to invigorate the handicrafts sector in the region over the years. These include skill development, access to finance, improving connectivity, organising trade fairs, ensuring the availability of raw material and others. Among the many efforts by the central government in the past decade, the setting up of 'Border Haats' along the six international borders of the region is being seen as an initiative that can greatly improve cross border trade.

However, the region is yet to attain its full potential in the Handicrafts sector as well. According to the latest statistics available from the Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts (EPCH), the handicraft exports from the NER has accounted for only 5 per cent of the total handicraft exports from the country during 2018-19. Coordinated action between the government and all stakeholders in the four key areas – welfare policy initiatives, capacity building, product development and infrastructure – can help scale up operations, improving both employment opportunities in, and the revenue generated by the sector. The Handicrafts sector, given a chance to live up to its full potential, is indeed capable of giving the North East Region a global identity.









## About the project


With a view to develop and promote North East India's export performance, UNDP along with India Exim Bank designed the project "Capacity Building of MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness" in 2017.

The project aims at creating stronger MSMEs in the region to boost export, generate employment and provide livelihood opportunities to the youth and women via partnerships with national and local training institutions for delivering the Entrepreneur Orientation Program and Sensitization workshops for Export Promotion.

Since 2018, numerous activities have been conducted to better understand, develop, and strengthen a cluster based approach towards increasing export competitiveness in the North Eastern States, especially in Assam and Mizoram.

Key interventions that complement each other have included exposure visits with the aim to understand the national and global business practices, creating market linkages for local entrepreneurs and connecting them with stakeholders outside the region, skill enhancements and vocational trainings for entrepreneurs as well as artisans.

The identification of clusters was first done via an extensive exercise, mapping handloom, handicrafts and agriculture in the entire region to create a holistic understanding of the ecosystems from the artisan's and entrepreneur's perspectives. It was soon realized that



there was a strong need of streamlining the processes, among others, registering these enterprises.

Social entrepreneurs were identified and trained in managerial and technical skills to help them upscale their businesses and add value to their products.

An exposure visit was organized for entrepreneurs from Mizoram and Assam, where they were taken to food processing units in Pune to make them aware of market competition and enhance their ideas around of innovation and creativity.

A comprehensive database and network of more than 100 social entrepreneurs from the Agriculture, Handloom and Handicraft sectors across Assam and Mizoram was created. This vital network acts as a knowledge sharing and mentorship platform to improve the reach, quality, and sustainability of the MSMEs in NER.

Another remarkable step taken was the creation of a knowledge portal and mobile application for the MSMEs with the aim to provide proper market linkages. The web portal acts as a hub to connect buyers and sellers and create market linkages. It also provides a platform for social entrepreneurs to showcase their unique products.

A resource handbook providing a step by step guide to exporting was also developed for export oriented entrepreneurs.

However, the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic stalled all ongoing efforts. The blow to the North Eastern MSME sector was severe and it became crucial to realign the project's intervention in order to provide aid to the crumbling MSMEs of North East Region.

A scoping study was undertaken to better assess the economic impact of the pandemic, highlight key issues and immediate needs of the MSME in the region.

Technical assistance was given to women producers of Eri Silk helping them boost the rearing cycle of cocoons, promote environmentally sustainable methods and contribute to livelihoods of women producers and entrepreneurs. Bankable proposals were developed to help small businesses approach various financial institutions for availing benefits of various schemes and programs. Recently, institutional buyers and corporates were mapped and connected with producers in the North East Region through various channels.

Resting upon the core idea of the Sustainable Development Goals, designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all", the project aims at creating stronger MSMEs in NER "leaving no one behind". The project's interventions have been designed to enhance the technical as well as the managerial proficiency of entrepreneurs keeping in focus fair, sustained and inclusive economic growth for all target beneficiaries. In other words, these interventions are being taken up with the idea of not just building these businesses but also sustaining them in a manner that is beneficial not just for the business owners but for every single person associated with these business. Overall, the project focuses on bringing together organizations and enterprises to share potential pathways in supporting the entrepreneurship ecosystem within North East India.







# Stories of Change



## AVA Creations, Assam

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*When we first started, we had to work on behavioural change, motivation and self-worth of forest dwelling tribes. From convincing families to let women work, to engaging with children and conducting sessions on financial management, we had to build our programs holistically for the entire community and not just women. There is so much to learn from the indigenous way of life, especially their connect with forests and how they use natural resources. So, we started with upgradation of skills which were already being practiced and gradually progressed to value addition. AVA creations is simply a dream come true.*

*– Ms. Anu Mandal  
Founder, AVA Foundation*

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AVA Foundation, a non-profit society, has been working on community development, livelihood creation and empowerment of women for the past two decades. 'AVA Creations' is a for-profit Community Weaving cum Production Center established in 2017 near the historic Deepor

Beel Bird Sanctuary in Kamrup district. It was created with the vision to provide an alternate livelihood to forest dwellers, increase awareness on sustainable indigenous practices and promote traditional handloom skills. Anu Mandal is the founder of AVA Foundation.



AVA Creations' 'Handloom to Hopeloom' initiative promotes world class products, handwoven and using natural fibres, created by women artisans in forest dependent areas. 'Maa Xuta Prakalpa' is a holistic approach to promote Eri Silk rearing by the women, so they may be able to earn a sustainable income with dignity. AVA works with more than 500 families who have been able to transform their lives

using traditional skills. Today, they are self-sustained, and able to look forward to a secure future.

AVA Creations has also set up a unique "Handloom Experience Center" in Matia Hills to attract tourists and textile enthusiasts with the aim to promote an understanding of fabrics and encourage responsible consumption.

## Zozia Handloom, Mizoram



Mrs. Laltanpuui fondly remembers how as a small girl she was taught to weave on a small toy loom by her mother. Little did she know her casual hobby would become her true passion and a prosperous business, revolutionizing sericulture practices in Mizoram's handloom sector.

Zozia Handloom was established in 1992 at Tlangnuam, Aizawl with only two looms. The word ZOZIA is a beautiful

blend of two words – 'ZO' meaning Mizo and 'ZIA' meaning patterns. Since the very beginning, Mrs. Laltanpuui was sure that she wanted to produce high quality clothes and support the livelihoods of rural women weavers.

She started training women free of cost, also providing them with a stipend to encourage them towards honing their craft. Trained weavers were then provided with



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*“I wanted to do something that could not be replicated, hence instead of acrylic fibres I decided to explore natural fibres and they have made the quality of my products much better. Now, I am not only a weaver, a designer, an exporter but also a silk planter”*

*– Mrs. Laltanpuii  
Zozia Handloom*

”

work sheds, looms, and accessories to help them begin. She now works with 50 talented women weavers who make exquisite puaus, shawls, stoles, dress materials and furnishings.

Having been fascinated by natural fibres Mrs. Laltanpuii also started a 'muga' silk plantation after she retired from being a professor of Political Science.

Today, 'ZOZIA' has two showrooms in Aizawl and also exports to many countries.

In 2014, the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, awarded her with 'The Women Achiever Award' in Sericulture.

Mrs. Laltanpuii was the only woman awardee to have received the "Mizoram State Outstanding Entrepreneurs Award" by the Govt. of Mizoram in 2019.

## Edenthar and Chite Veng Bamboo Handicrafts Cluster, Mizoram



The tribal belts of Mizoram have had a tradition of craft making. Bamboo and Cane grow in plenty and are used in different forms, from making products to construction. Khumbeu the traditional Mizo hat has a special place in Mizoram's culture. It is a symbol of rich heritage and distinctive customs. The ceremonial hat is intricately woven out of fine bamboo, as fine it is said, as the cotton yarn.

It is then lined with smoked Hnahthial leaves, to make it waterproof. One single hat takes two and half days to make! Presenting a Khumbeu to guests is an age-old Mizo tradition.

The Bamboo Development Agency of Mizoram organized a training on making of Khumbeu Mizo hats as a part of the UNDP-India Exim Bank project. The Khumbeu, traditionally



made by the older generation has been a dying artform. "But the demand for Khumbeus is high in the local markets and a training like this would encourage young Mizos to take up the craft and boost local production dynamically. We also want to honour our traditions and customs, and encourage our crafts to flourish", says Mr. Zara, General Manager of Bamboo Development Agency. The initiative was started in two clusters,

namely, the Edenthar and Chite Veng, and since it is very technical to make these elaborate hats, ten expert weavers and artisans were selected from each of the clusters for a forty-five days training.

Mr. Zara is very appreciative of projects such as these since they increase livelihood opportunities amongst the youth and enhance the economy of the state at the same time.



# CAPACITY BUILDING/SKILL UPGRADATION TRAINING FOR PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION FOR WEAVERS' OF AIZAWL DISTRICT

ANDCO Building, Aizawl

Date : 7<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2020



# Lenbuang Handloom & Handicrafts, Mizoram



'Puan' a traditional wraparound, plays a special role in the social fabric of the Mizos. Most women make their own Puan with intricate designs and motifs. Ms. K. Lalmuanpuii was passionate about weaving and loved designing her own puan. She committed herself to her lifelong love for weaving in 2015 and started Lenbuang Handloom.

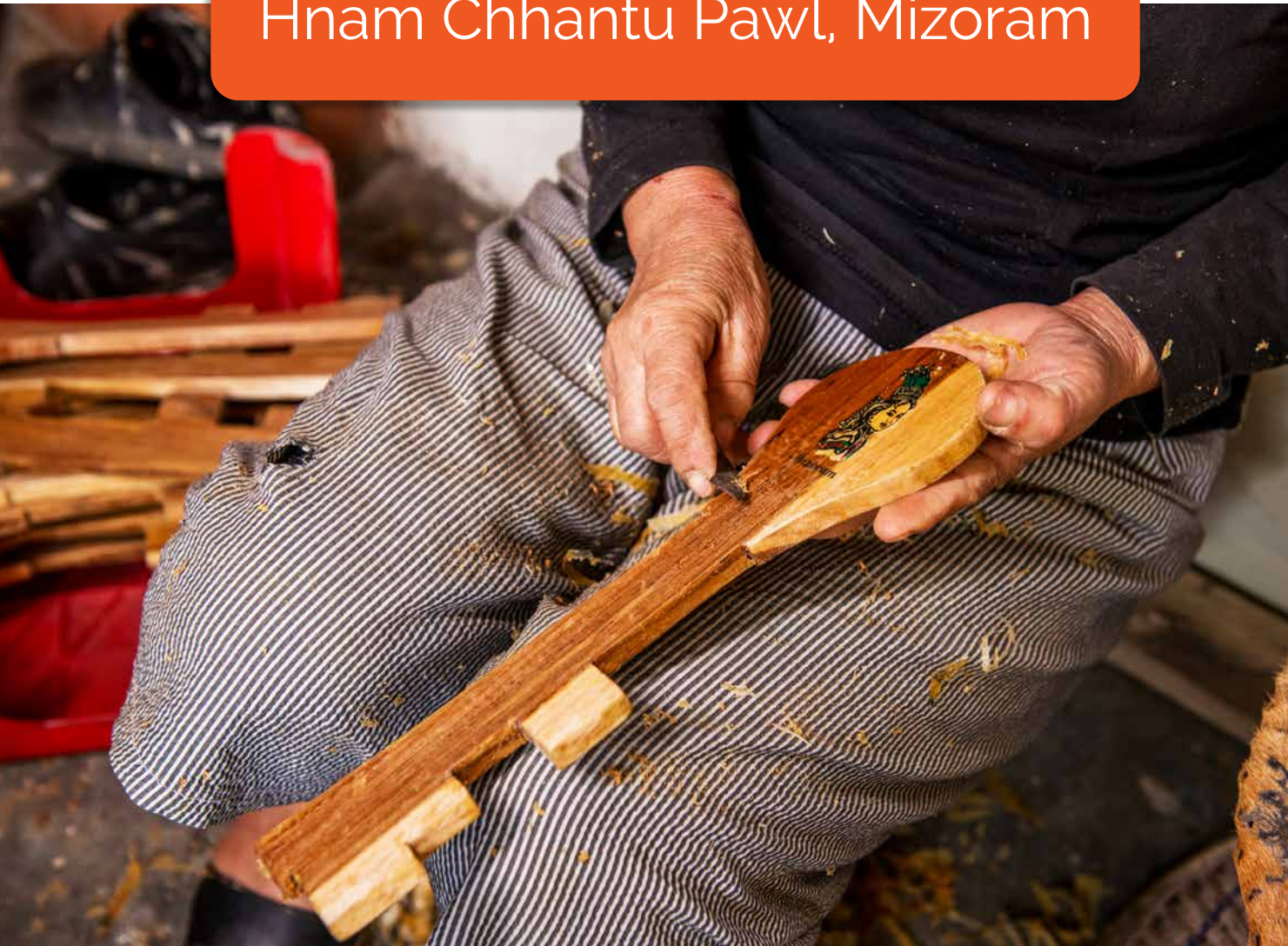
The exploitative system created by middlemen to exploit the rural weavers for unreasonable gains disturbed her greatly and she soon set out to do things differently. She began by working directly with 30 weavers, helping them bypass the system and freeing them from its stronghold. The number of weavers working with her have since doubled.

From weaving 'Mizo Puan' and stoles, they have diversified into clothing and home furnishing products.

Ms. K. Lalmuanpuii's talent and creativity also extends to bamboo handicrafts. Lenbuang is now among the most popular Handloom & Handicrafts enterprises in Mizoram.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the handloom and handicrafts industry severely but that didn't stop Ms K. Lalmuanpuii's entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity. She started making handloom masks and Lenbuang was selected as a recognised PPE Kit manufacturer by the Committee on Promotion of Locally Manufactured Protective Gear, Govt. of Mizoram. Ms. K. Lalmuanpuii, was engaged as a master trainer by the Mizoram Handloom & Handicraft Development Corporation Ltd. (ZOHANDCO) to train weavers of the Aizawl District in manufacturing of PPE Kits.

## Hnam Chhantu Pawl, Mizoram



Hnam Chhantu Pawl believes in the power of culture and the value of traditions. The NGO formed in 1994 aimed to revive Mizo handloom and handicrafts with the objective of bringing about economic self-sufficiency through skill development, and increased awareness amongst both rural and urban poor in the area.

To improve the economic condition of the people, self-help groups were created, and unemployed youth and

homemakers were collectivized and trained in traditional arts and crafts. Contemporary designs are given to the artisans to produce a variety of stunning products ranging from souvenirs to furniture, all using locally available bamboo, cane, and plantain fibres. Finished products are then bought back from them.

A training-cum-production centre, opened in 1996 has been persistently training young entrepreneurs and Hnam

Chhantu Pawl has trained more than 500 youths of Mizoram till now. Some of these entrepreneurs have established successful cottage industries of their own. Currently, the organization is constructing a residential training centre where artisans and weavers can be trained throughout the year.

Hnam Chhantu Pawl also continues to promote numerous self-help groups in various villages in order to increase production and create employment.

It has taken years of hard work and persistence to attain this success. Mr. R. Ramhmangaiha, President, Hnam Chhantu Pawl went through several trainings and workshops on handloom and handicrafts using naturally available resources himself. This was to make sure that he acquired the wherewithal to understand what was required on the ground and manage these initiatives. He was awarded the National Rural Entrepreneur Award from the President of India in 2005.

Hnam Chhantu Pawl has become a shining example of environmentally friendly manufacturing, ethical practices and high quality products for MSMEs in the North East region.



# NENterprise – Chizami Weaves, Nagaland



'Chizami Weaves' is dedicated to promoting and preserving the unique textile tradition of Nagaland, ensuring sustainable livelihoods for economically marginalized women in the region. Chizami Weaves was started by the North East Network (NEN) – a not-for-profit organization with a focus on women's rights – as a livelihoods project in 2008. What began with just 7 women weavers is presently a thriving movement of 600 of them hailing from 16 villages of Phek district and urban settlers of Kohima and Shamator in Tuensang

district of Nagaland. Chizami Weaves produces a range of fabrics, furnishings, apparel, and accessories with distinct state specific identities.

Ever since its inception in 1995, NEN has been working on women's empowerment across areas such as gender based discrimination, violence against women and governance. They also work on natural resource management and creation of sustainable livelihoods through community mobilization, capacity building, networking, research, and advocacy.



Weavers, who had earlier woven only for their own families, today weave for the global market. Products are sold through retail sales at NEN offices, participation in Exhibitions, Melas and boutique shops across the country. They are also exported to numerous clients around the world through HHEC (Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India) and other Government agencies.



NEN works with women from three states in NE, namely, Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland. Their livelihood projects are built around ethical and eco-friendly activities. Income generation has led to recognition and respect for these women within their homes and made for better gender relations in their communities.

## Silk Culture, Assam



Once reserved only for the royalty, Muga Silk is the pride of Assam. Popular as a coveted traditional wear, it is famous for its durability and its brilliant golden sheen. The reputation and legend of Muga has thrived since ancient times. Today, it has become a vital aspect of the socio-cultural and economic life of the people of Assam. Add some traditional Assamese motifs to this radiant fabric and

voila, it transforms into something magnificent, elegant, and distinctly Assamese.

Silk Culture, an enterprise based out of Jorhat in Assam, took advantage of this ever lasting cult of Muga. Their in-house team of weavers creates a range of incredible products, such as, fabrics, stoles, saris, and traditional Assamese outfits which are then sold in retail outlets and



exhibitions and exported to different countries around the world.

MSMEs like Silk Culture are proving to be admirable examples of the success that can be achieved by the sector in the North East Region.



## Heritage Mizoram (Handloom & Handicrafts)



"My dream is to develop a craft village where artisans, weavers and other diversely skilled people can live, create different things and also teach others", shares Mr. Charlee Mathlena, the founder of Heritage Mizoram.

Heritage Mizoram was set up in 2008 with the vision to create a viable avenue for the amazingly skilled Mizo artisans and weavers. The artisans working with Heritage are all home-

based indigenous weavers from rural Mizoram. While each product is intricately created in a riot of traditional Mizo tribal motifs and weaves, using indigenous methods handed down from generation to generation, they follow contemporary design trends, adding to their appeal. Born out of love for the handloom textile and technique, these clothes, apparels, and home furnishings are woven on back strap looms and fly



shuttle looms using natural fibres. Eco-friendly resources such as Cane and Bamboo are utilized brilliantly to make sophisticated homeware products.

Charlee has worked hard to grow his brand and Heritage Mizoram's products are retailed at boutique stores nationally in Goa and Delhi and internationally in fashion hubs like London, Paris, and Berlin.



The UNDP-India Exim Bank project has helped many entrepreneurs like Charlee explore prospective markets, create linkages, and increase their business knowledge. MSMEs like Heritage Mizoram are not only generating sustainable employment for a growing number of indigenous weavers across Mizoram but also promoting social entrepreneurship as a creative force in building an equitable society.

# Kraftinn Home Decor India Pvt. Ltd., Assam



The idea of merging the tradition of handicrafts with contemporary lifestyle needs gave birth to Kraftinn, one of the most successful handicrafts enterprises in the North East Region, with a huge presence on online platforms. Skilled, traditional artisans give flight to their imagination under the supervision of expert designers at Kraftinn. Sustainable raw materials like bamboo, water hyacinth, cane, cotton and kauna are treated using modern scientific methods and

shaped by innovative design practices to create beautiful, modern, and distinctive products showcasing Assam's deepest traditions. Their goal is to promote products that are designed and manufactured keeping the planet in mind. Kraftinn's endeavours are promoting the transition from wood and timber products to high quality bamboo, Meteke (water hyacinth) and Tule based eco-friendly products, furnishings, and utility items. "We remember as kids, we would sit on

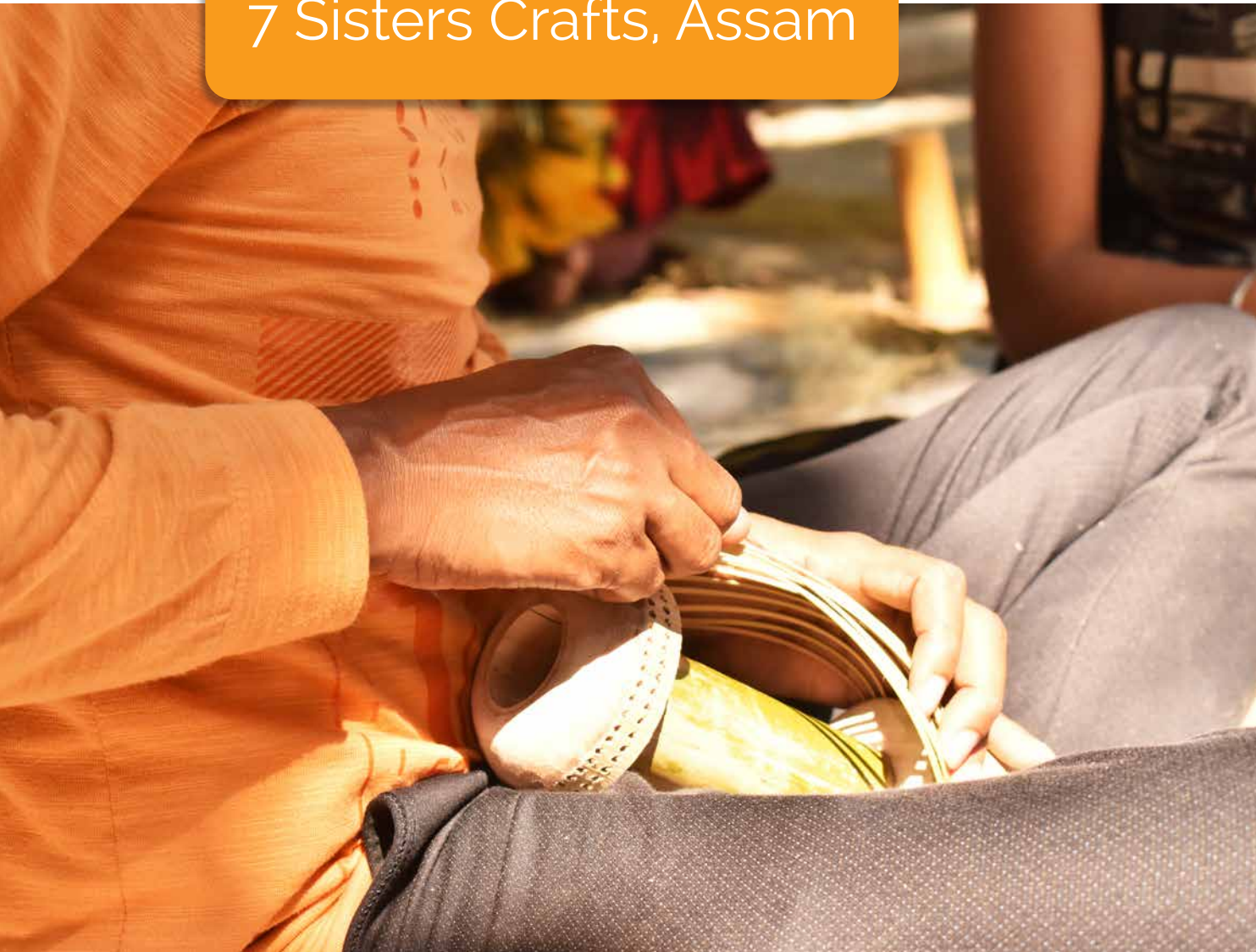


handcrafted stools around a bonfire listening to stories of our grandparents. Handcrafted products have been a part of our life. Knowing some or the other kind of handicraft is considered a life skill in our culture. But gradually, these traditions are dying out and natural materials are being replaced by non-sustainable materials” expresses Parikshit Borkotoky, the founder of Kraftinn.



Kraftinn believes in ethical business practices. They provide financial literacy to artisan communities and enable Direct Bank Transfer for all their artisans, employees, vendors, and suppliers. Clear and defined payment cycles help them plan for their futures and rise up in the socio-economic ladder. Kraftinn's unique work culture also encourages artisans to pursue their dreams outside of work.

## 7 Sisters Crafts, Assam



In 2018, Sunam Taran, a young entrepreneur launched the brand 7 Sister Crafts with the vision to give due recognition to the talented artisans of Assam. He organized artisans working in different villages and clusters and provided them with a much needed platform to showcase and sell their extraordinary craft. These 1300 artisans spread across various clusters and villages make eco-friendly products

ranging from handicrafts to furniture. 7 Sister Crafts sells utility goods made from bamboo – toothbrushes, fruit baskets, bottles, mugs, and furniture, among others. Sunam introduced modern and trendy designs to the ancient craft form to appeal to the new age customer and his brand today creates over 500 different products in 1,000 designs.



7 Sister Crafts also offer services for interior decor design. They even make eco-friendly bamboo huts and similar structures. Bamboo straws, one of their most popular innovations, has gained tremendous popularity.

Sunam's ingenious ideas, successful marketing strategies and environmentally conscious production are winning hearts of people around the world. These versatile products made



by the incredibly endowed artisans of Barpeta, Assam, have reached the markets of Australia, US, and Ecuador today.

Sunam's ambitious venture has created a vocation for many artisans in Assam. 7 Sister Crafts's exemplary efforts in making eco-friendly choices and creating and promoting environmentally conscious business practices is sure to inspire many more new entrepreneurs in future.

## Chawndeng Handloom, Mizoram



Chawndeng Handloom was established 2016 by a young first generation entrepreneur Ms. Lalrinsangi Chawngthu (Sang Chawngthu) with the intention of empowering women through employment generation. Sang experienced many difficulties and without proper guidance, serious dearth of reliable weavers and lack of appropriate machinery, she almost gave up. Sang opened up about her initial struggles, "I visited many institutes to find good, trustworthy, weavers but nothing materialized. Then, last year with the help of this project and the team involved, I was able to connect with the Manager of NERLP (North East Rural Livelihood Project) Lunglei who in turn helped me connect with women self-help groups and that's when I got my confidence back". Gradually, the engagement of women weavers from various districts (Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Mamit) increased and now Chawndeng Handloom has 100 weavers who creating the best quality Puan (wraparound) and cotton shawls. "My weavers, most of

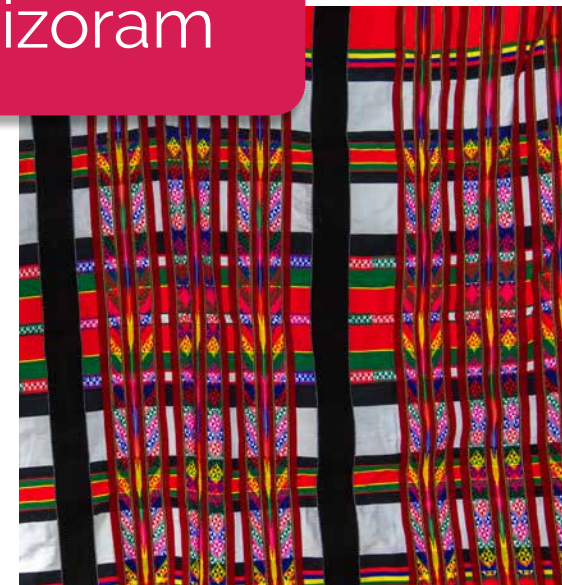
whom are women, are happy to get higher wages and regular payments. I have regular buyers who buy all my stock, and it is extremely heartening to see that the lives of women working with me has improved so much. I plan to expand the range of products to home furnishings and handicrafts, so that I am able to encourage more women to benefit and be empowered by MSMEs like mine", shares Sang.

All the products of Chawndeng Handloom have distinctive designs for individual customers sold through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. Chawngdeng Handloom has Mizo customers from U.S.A, Australia, Canada, Singapore and different parts of India such as Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Manipur, Agartala, and Shillong. Chawndeng Handloom has paved a way for many other young and determined women entrepreneurs of North East India, who are committed to make transformational change in the society around them.

# D.B. Industries, Assam



# Zuangtui Weaving Cooperative Society, Mizoram



## Disha Enterprise, Assam



Disha Enterprise, is a story of conviction and overcoming insurmountable odds and Santanu Sutradhar is the man behind it. "Being the only son of a Judicial officer, my parents wanted me to join the administrative services, but my destiny had something else in store for me", reveals Santanu. Combining his love for traditional Assamese handicrafts and his extensive experience in the export industry, Santanu started his handicraft enterprise in the year 2000.

He identified artisans in Karimganj, a place known for artisans belonging to the Namasudra community, their experience in working with cane spanning generations.

During his initial years, Santanu faced many difficulties, right from sourcing of raw materials to high transportation costs and storage issues. He motivated cane growers to adopt new processes, encouraged value addition to products and small investments in infrastructure, helping him overcome

many of these hurdles. While artisanal skills have been a strong hold of Assamese culture, new techniques were imparted to compete in national and international markets. Traditional weavers, primarily women, were trained to create contemporary designs and use innovative finishing techniques. Disha Enterprise currently works with more than 300 women artisans in rural Assam.

Recognising the immense potential of the growing market for eco-friendly commodities, Santanu reached out to government emporiums, Delhi based exporters, various foreign embassies – no stone was left unturned to market his produce.

Disha Enterprise supplies their beautifully crafted products to various buyers nationally and internationally today, and Santanu Sutradhar, for his innovation, persistence, and hard work, has been selected as a core member of the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts.

# PIPO, Nagaland



Thungchibemo N. Ezung, the young and zealous entrepreneur explains about his venture, "As a student, I wanted to create a space to share the importance of skill development, self employment and a passion for craftsmanship in young people like me". PIPO, started in the year 2016 with the aim to inspire and create local entrepreneurial opportunities, is a handmade jewellery brand. The word 'Pipo' means a collection of accessories and clothing and originates from a Lotha Naga dialect.

PIPO over the years has been involved in creating a collection of minimalistic yet elegant jewellery using metal, semi-precious stones, natural stones, and beads. They work by blending tradition with minimalism.

Mr. Ezung's dazzling handcrafted fusion earrings, necklace and studs are not only amazing clients in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore but also alluring international clients from the United Kingdom, Bangkok, and other countries. He has been involved in sharing his skills with people from around the state and has even spoken in some prominent seminars.

In 2019, PIPO hosted Nagaland's First handmade jewellery exhibition bringing together different homegrown jewellery brands from across the state under one roof. It gave a platform to artisans to showcase their creations and connect with buyers.

Thungchibemo N Ezung, is a solo entrepreneur at the moment but has big plans to expand his inspiring enterprise.

## Karpungpuli (K) Society, Assam



Mrs. Najitora Bori, an inspirational woman founded the Karpungpuli Society in 1985 with a dream to holistically develop remote rural areas of Assam, especially the tribal belts. Since then Karpungpuli Society has been dedicated to many important causes along with playing a crucial part in the promotion and enhancement of handlooms and handicrafts. They have worked on capacity building of self-help groups by imparting valuable trainings and awareness sessions. Their program on Health and Family Welfare has been organizing health check ups and awareness programs on HIV/AIDS, malaria, cancer, and polio. Their phenomenal work also extends to flood relief and working with the homeless.

The handloom and handicraft sector of Assam would not have been the same without the efforts of Mrs. Bori. For the past many decades, they have been specializing in manufacturing

handloom garments from Muga silk, also known as 'the golden silk'. Their gifted weavers transform this wonder fabric into gorgeous garments. They also make garments from Eri silk and create jute handicraft products. Karpungpuli's manufacturing unit works as a rural development centre which provides livelihoods to a large rural population. The skilled and talented Mising tribe of Lakhimpur district had been weaving intricate designs to create different kinds of products for long. Mrs. Bori's initiatives provided them with much needed exposure by showcasing their work in national and international exhibitions, giving them a financial as well as a moral boost.

Karpungpuli Society has been a true symbol of growth and development of MSMEs in rural NER and has been the recipient of many prestigious awards.

## Kamdhenu Industries, Assam



Kamdhenu Industries, a medium-scale food processing enterprise, situated in the middle of the Guwahati city, is witness to the struggle and successes of the first generation entrepreneur, Malamoni Hazarika. Malamoni had started her journey with nothing except for one primary processing machine. Today she is a changemaker, creating a positive dent in society by enabling other women in her neighbourhood

to be a part of her social venture. Her enterprise, Kamdhenu Industries, is managed and run solely by women. It produces more than 15 varieties of pickles, squashes, juices, and cold pressed virgin coconut oil, among others.

Recalling her early days as an entrepreneur, she narrates how she would prepare pickles at home and often carry the surplus to the schools for those willing to buy. Malamoni Hazarika



is one of the 210 entrepreneurs who have benefited from the capacity building interventions under the UNDP-India Exim Bank partnership project. She recollects how the exposure visit to the 3 top-notch food processing industries in Pune ignited her mind. It became a driving force to help her scale up her business, she ploughed her way ahead by purchasing more equipment and machinery and there has been no looking back since.



Malamoni Hazarika today is not only a proud entrepreneur with a thriving business under her belt, is also the winner of three prestigious awards – the National Award for Outstanding Entrepreneurship given by Ministry of MSME in 2008, the National Award given by the Coconut Development Board in 2012 and the Vasundhara NE Woman Entrepreneur of the Year state award for 2015-16.

# Frontal Agritech Private Limited, Assam



Frontal Agritech, a flourishing enterprise, located in Jorhat, Assam, represents a wave of successful MSMEs in the North East Region of our country. Leena Saikia is the face of this transformative change.

After completing her Master's degree in Food Technology from CFTRI, Mysore and having worked in governmental organizations in the agriculture sector, Leena, with the aim to

'Redesign Agriculture' in her region, decided to explore the untapped market of Bhut Jolokia (Ghost Pepper).

Starting her journey in 2005, Leena braved many challenges ranging from dearth of information and guidance for new entrepreneurs, indigenous farming practices with little knowledge of modern techniques to lack of infrastructure and access to finance. There were no exporters in the agriculture

sector in Assam at the time and none of the farmers were growing Bhut Jolokia commercially.

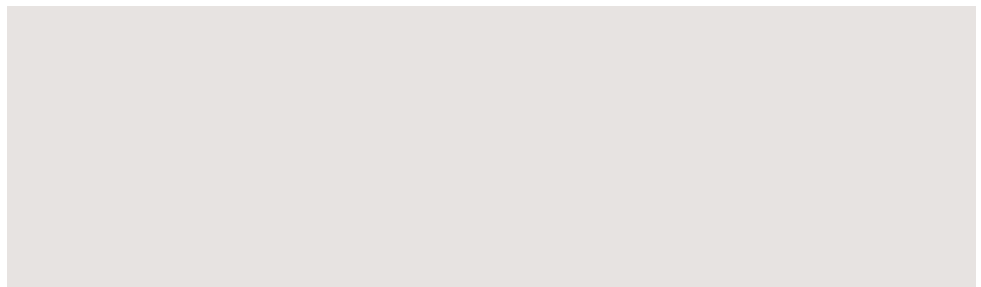
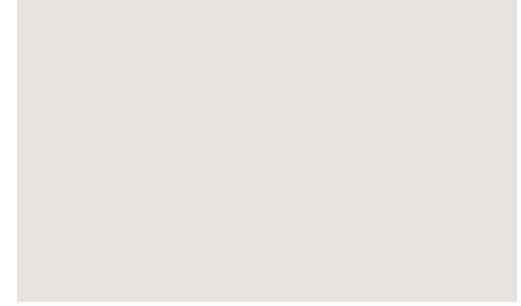
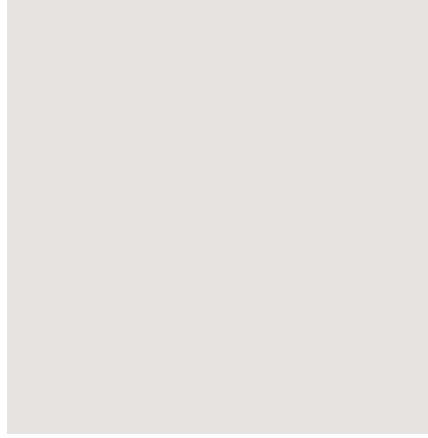
But none of this deterred her spirits and she started building on her dream from scratch.

The first step was convincing farmers on the commercial viability of growing Bhut Jolokia. This was followed by comprehensive trainings and knowledge building. Next, she helped new entrepreneurs set up small-scale processing units, tying up with the State Bank of India to finance the farmers providing them with a buy back guarantee from her company.

In 2007, the Guinness Book of World Records certified Bhut Jolokia as the world's hottest chili pepper, leading to a significant rise in its demand.

Today, Frontal Agritech works with more than 2000 farmers across the North East with several others are engaged in allied processing businesses. Leena exports Bhut Jolokia products to more than 20 countries worldwide. Her two brands Flavaa and GreenLitGrow, produce, process and market many products ranging from Bhut Jolokia pickles, pastes, and flakes to powders and sauces.

Not only is Leena reaping the benefits of her enterprise and hard work, she has succeeded in increasing the socio-economic status of numerous farmers through commercial cultivation of Bhut Jolokia in the region. Leena is indeed the rightful recipient of various accolades such as 'True Legends of North East 2016' by the ABP group & The Telegraph and the 'FICCI FLO North East Achievers Award of Excellence 2017-18'.



**ONE DAY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR**  
**FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS (FPOs)**  
**(REIEK & WEST LUNGDAH)**

Venue : Tlangcheng, Reiek  
Date : 28<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2019

Organised by State Agriculture Management Extension (S.A.M.E.T.), Mizoram  
Supported by Mizoram Organic



# One Organic Partnership, Mizoram



In 2016, a group of young and inspired friends came together to work towards promotion and upliftment of farmers in Mizoram and created One Organic Partnership, a firm that deals in marketing, processing and production of all kinds of organic and natural produce from Mizoram. It is the only private firm that deals with the produce under the Mission Organic Value Chain Development of North East Region (MOVCD-NER) Scheme.

The One Organic team meticulously researched on problems faced by the farmers, explored financially profitable crops and efficient practices to increase yield. They grow turmeric, chillies, and tea, and have developed a range of products from these raw materials, like turmeric powder, turmeric tea, juices, and pickles. They work closely with about 3000 farmers and 14 FPOs and focus on modern farming techniques to increase their produce. Hliappui is one such FPO that has gained with inputs from the One Organic Partnership. Hliappui has a large composition of women who constitute around 70 per cent of their total membership. The Chairman of the FPO, Mr. H.

Thantluanga, participated in exposure visits and trainings on business management and processing techniques and was able to increase their harvest manifold, selling a total of 5724 quintals of ginger in 2019.

Apart from improving agricultural practices, One Organic has also fixed an MSP (Minimum Support Price) to support and secure the farmers working with them. Their capacity building sessions, to introduce contemporary and more efficient ways of plucking tea, led to increased produce and profits for the planters.

Despite the challenges related to logistics, transportation and lack of reliable agricultural research and data, One Organic Partnership has been able to achieve considerable success in a short time. "We believe that if the business is successful, we will be able to give back more to society and significantly improve the lives of farmers. We had taken a leap of faith and it has paid off. In the next few years, we plan to diversify into more sectors and create more market linkages", says Mark Laldusaka, the Managing Director of One Organic Partnership.

# Seven Sisters Development Assistance (SeSTA), Assam



SeSTA is an NGO that works on catalysing inclusive and sustainable development in North East India by enhancing capacities of rural communities. It engages with 40,000 families in 503 villages spread across 15 districts in Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya. Collectivizing women from marginalized communities, SeSTA works to build their capabilities supporting livelihood systems to alleviate mass poverty by strengthening Self Help Groups (SHGs), Village Organizations (VOs), Producers Groups (PGs), and Farmer Producers' Organizations (FPOs). Their phenomenal initiatives have impacted the lives of over 2,00,000 economically and socially deprived people.

Their innovative strategies have reduced the dependency of farmers on fertilizers and helped promote sustainable, environmentally conscious agricultural practices and their interventions with natural resource management and

diversification of the other livelihood's portfolio has significantly helped numerous communities.

SeSTA also focuses on helping FPOs in planning, leveraging finance and governance, inculcating an effective culture of training in accounts and management.

Their most significant work, however, has been in empowering women self-help groups. Pradyut Bhattacharjee, Executive Director of SeSTA shares his profound views, "Though our society is matriarchal, and women do the majority of work at home and in the fields, they are seldom recognised as farmers and decision makers. The most challenging part is to make women believe in themselves. Thus, our vision is for women to have an equal space at home and in society. Our attempt through various initiatives and programs have been to bring a positive change in status quo and help women take charge of their own destinies".



# Entrepreneurs Associates, Nagaland



The story of Entrepreneurs Associates (EA) is unequivocally unique. EA has been passionately working on making entrepreneurship inclusive, responsible, and accessible, with the power to solve complex economic and social problems. They strongly believe that entrepreneurs are leaders of change and pioneers of innovation setting benchmarks for excellence. EA primarily works with livelihoods, incubation, advocacy, financial linkage, and social enterprises.

In the past two decades, EA has trained and mentored over 15000 youths in Nagaland and Manipur, supported more

than 10,000 farmers to take up livelihood activities in rural areas and worked with 1500 SHGs for livelihoods, enterprise development and credit linkages.

They have pioneered two social enterprises, ASPORA and EANFER to aggregate farm products and enhance market linkages. EA's founder and CEO Mr. Neichute Doulo has been a recipient of the prestigious Ashoka Fellowship, and in 2015 the organization was selected by the National Rural Livelihoods Mission to launch the 'Start up Village Entrepreneurship Program'. It launched 2400 rural enterprises in the region.

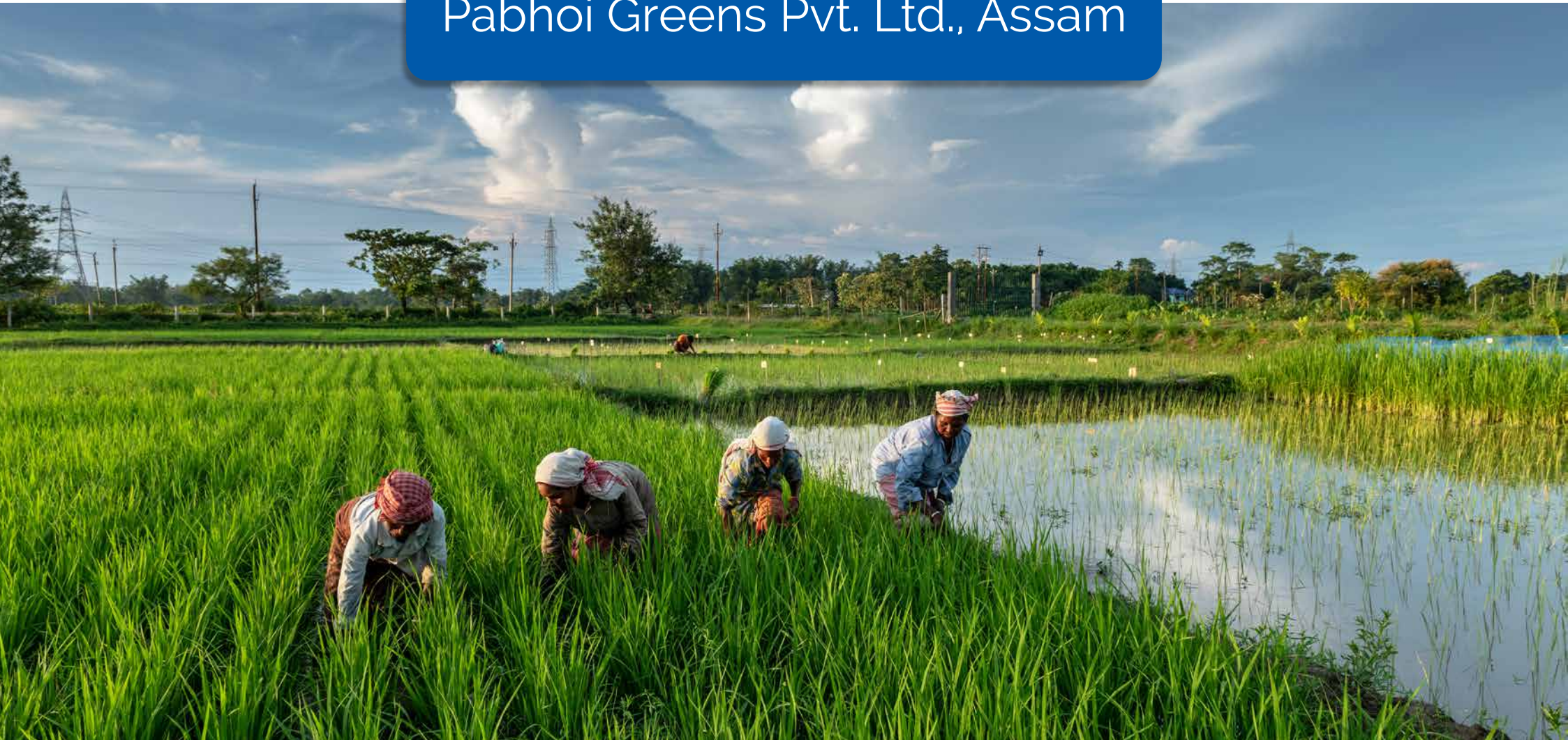


In 2017, they launched a 'one of a kind' program to uplift women street vendors by providing them with legal assistance, health benefits and counselling on financial planning.

EA has been at the centre of historical change in the field of entrepreneurship in NER. Ms. Neikule Doulo profoundly explains, "Entrepreneurship in Nagaland has never been considered a respectable profession hence most people have wanted to get into government jobs. As a result, there has been large-scale

unemployment leading to the youth getting involved in anti-social activities. The challenges in the ambit of entrepreneurship have ranged from overcoming societal mindset to securing bank loans and competing with bigger business owners who were predominantly non-Nagas. A survey conducted in 2002 showed that 70% of trading activities in Nagaland were carried out by traders from outside Nagaland. The same survey conducted in 2018 indicated a sharp increase with 60% of the businesses now owned by the local population".

# Pabhoi Greens Pvt. Ltd., Assam



Pabhoi Greens Pvt. Ltd. (Lakshmi Agriculture Multipurpose Project-LAMP) is an integrated organic farm established in 1976. The activities undertaken at the farm include paddy cultivation, vegetable farming, fruit farming, fish breeding, livestock rearing, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, organic vegetable seed breeding, nursery development, vermi-composting and the production of bio-pesticide. It also undertakes, many social and educational activities including training and capacity building programmes, organizing farm

tours, and offering consultancy services on organic farming, farm design, fishery and seed production. Pabhoi Greens has worked with 100 farmer families in Assam, Nagaland and Arunchal Pradesh in collaboration with organizations like Aaranyak, Tata Trusts, and WWF-India. It has been providing training to farmers, NGOs, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), students and farming enthusiasts since 2008 and has trained over 16,000 participants till date. The farm has also initiated the first organic farmers' cooperative at Pabhoi.



Further, leading the way in Organic Heirloom Seed production, Pabhoi Greens, is helping farmers achieve Seed Sovereignty through resource building, dissemination of knowledge and capacity building. With the vision of safeguarding indigenous seeds, it has established the first organic heirloom seed production system and seed bank in the region.

Pabhoi Greens is managed by a team of 41 members with women occupying more than half of the workforce, under the



leadership of its Founder and Managing Director, Mr. Neelam Dutta, a social entrepreneur, organic farmer, trainer, social worker and wildlife activist. In 2014, he received the prestigious Haldhar Organic Farmer Award. He received an Ambassadors Grant from the World Food System Centre (WFSC) by ETH Zurich as well.

The team at Pabhoi Greens continues to work for the people of the region in order to help them achieve food and nutritional security.

# Tongphi Products, Nagaland



Tongphi products has had a humble beginning and the name of the brand, 'Tongphi' means change in the Lotha Naga dialect explains Mr. Lanchibemo Tsopoe, the founder of Tongphi Products. Tongphi in its true sense represents change in the field of processing natural resources in Nagaland.

Following a training programme on soap making by the Nagaland horticulture Department, Mr. Tsopoe, ventured into this sector, he is now empowering farmers by using local resources to make skin care and wellness products.

Situated in Wokha district which is called the 'Land of Plenty' since a variety of fruits and vegetables grow there, Tongphi products, began to address the issue of large scale wastage – a vast amount of fresh local produce used to perish before it reached the market due to poor transportation and lack of storage and preservation facilities. With the vision of finding a practical solution to the problem, Mr. Tsopoe started manufacturing products which converted surplus fruits and vegetables into soaps with a shelf life of 24 months. Tongphi now produces a range of unique soaps, and many other beauty and wellness products. They have a strong team of 30 soap makers who are all homemakers and work in shifts after completing their household chores. Tongphi has enabled them to contribute to their households financially. "Generating awareness among the general public about the benefits of natural and organic products as they are usually habituated to using chemical based products was one of the challenges. But there is a growing demand for our products now and we have been receiving wonderful feedback from our customers", shares Mr. Tsopoe, with a sense of satisfaction and pride.

# Sunny Agro Industries, Assam



# CK Food Udyog Private Limited, Assam



## Zo Bio Hub, Mizoram



Ms. Lalhlupuii Ralte, the innovative entrepreneur behind Zo Bio Hub has learnt a lot from her father, an expert in Mizo medicinal plants. She invested her own capital to set up a distillation unit in 2017. She braved innumerable challenges – her unit was the first of its kind and new paths had to be forged at every nook and corner. From understanding the how of aromatic oil extraction without experts or consultants in the field to the difficulties around getting the oils tested – there were no references, no predecessors whose path could be followed. She recounts how the only place that tested these oils was situated around Delhi and it took a significant time and effort to get that done. She shares how the quality of oils differed from small to big machines and how they had to innovate and experiment to attain and maintain the quality of her products. Gradually and with a lot of effort and determination, things started falling into place. Along with

making aromatic essential oils, she started to create awareness among the villagers to adopt permaculture.

Zo Bio Hub tied up with the State Medicinal Plant Board and now works with 22 villages on a zero deforestation model. “We had to persuade the farmers to grow aromatic plants, convince them that it would fetch them higher returns. Our vision is to gradually expand into making medicinal dyes, especially of plants and herbs that are abundant in the wild.” says Ms. Lalhlupuii Ralte.

Zo Bio Hub is a path breaking start up that aims at systematic commercialization of many of Mizoram’s indigenous bio resources while also making sure that the varieties are conserved and well kept.

The web portal developed as a part of the project will help MSMEs like Zo Bio Hub in exploring markets and meeting buyers from around the globe.

# इंडिया एक्ज़िम बैंक India Exim Bank



## India Exim Bank's Endeavour in the North Eastern Region

India Exim Bank endeavours to support entrepreneurs in the North Eastern region (NER) in harnessing the tremendous export potential of the region through its dedicated office at Guwahati. Since starting its operations in 2003, India Exim Bank's Guwahati Regional Office (GRO) has been coordinating closely with trade and industry bodies and institutions in NER and plays a vital role in promoting exports from the region. This has been achieved through a wide range of programmes and activities such as capacity building, marketing service, creation of export awareness, and financing of exports and export-oriented units.

### Supporting MSMEs across sectors through its Financing Programmes

India Exim Bank has extended financing to several export-oriented units in NER, covering sectors such as food processing, agro-based manufacturing, petroleum, healthcare, tourism, coal, fisheries, horticulture, floriculture, handloom, leather and tea, among others.

## Capacity Building Initiatives

Having one of the highest literacy rates in the country, capacity development and building human resource capital in the region assumes added importance for overall social and economic growth. Towards this vision, India Exim Bank has been actively supporting capacity development programmes and knowledge building seminars, supported by the linkages with select trade and industry bodies and institutions from the region.

## India Exim Bank's Studies on Export Potential for North East States identified potential products and export markets

India Exim Bank has published a number of research papers, many of which have direct relevance to NER. For instance, Bank's research publication on "Potential for Exports of IT Enabled Services from North Eastern Region of India", identifies that NER offers good scope for development of the IT industry and related services because of various factors including the high level of literacy and large population of English-speaking workforce coupled with the low attrition rates. India Exim Bank's Study on Export Potential identified potential products and export markets for the States of Mizoram and Sikkim. The Bank's Study on "Act East: Enhancing India's Trade with Bangladesh and Myanmar Across Borders" outlines the current status and challenges at border trading infrastructure at India-Bangladesh and India-Myanmar borders and delineates strategies to strengthen trade across borders.

## To promote research and knowledge-building, India Exim Bank has also taken the initiative of setting up scholarships in select universities and institutions

Universities/institutions supported by India Exim Bank through its scholarship programme in NER cover the North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST) in Arunachal Pradesh, Tezpur University in Assam, Manipur University, Mizoram University, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in Meghalaya, Sikkim-Manipal University, Nagaland University, Sikkim University and Tripura University. These scholarships have been instituted to recognise and encourage meritorious students and researchers of the region and are envisaged to contribute to India Exim Bank's overall endeavour in the North East region of the country. The Bank has been closely associated with the setting up of Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong and has provided support for setting up a Knowledge Centre library in the Institute.

## Leveraging Institutional Networking for Development of North East Region

India Exim Bank also collaborates with key institutions in the region to facilitate exports and private sector development of the region. The Bank closely interacts with organisations and financial institutions in the region as well as international organisations to promote development of MSMEs and to support exports from the region.





Historically, the North Eastern Region (NER) of India was a central node in the global network of economic interactions at the beginning of the twentieth century. Political and social changes over the last century have all had their impact on the nature and evolution of the economics, institutional growth, and infrastructure in the region.

The region is endowed with a rich and diverse resource base which needs to be unlocked with care and sensitivity. The challenges of integration into the national and global marketplace are significant, and the journey has to be navigated with gentle but firm steps. The strategy needs to be calibrated and customized based on the context prevalent in each state and respond to the specific challenges in each sector.

What is common to all the sectors is a relative lack of awareness of opportunities that exist in the global markets and how MSMEs can leverage and benefit from knowledge building and exposure. The region will need to build on the existing networks and harness the individual strengths and complementarities at both the enterprise as well as the state level to create a brand North East to make a significant dent in the global marketplace.

Individual stories of excellence and recent initiatives like "Capacity Building of the MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness" have rekindled hope of a long term sustainable economic revival. Governments at both national and state level are keen to support the export community and broad base the basket of exports from the region. Taking advantage of these windows of opportunities will make exports from the region attain their deserved place.

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