

PRI-CBO CONVERGENCE PROJECT

MAMIT MIZORAM



Mizoram State Rural Livelihoods Mission
Government of Mizoram



Kudumbashree - National Resource Organization
Government of Kerala

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
Testimonies from the field	1
About Us	1
PRI-CBO Convergence	2
Project Expansion	3
Project Timeline	4
Project Core Activities	5
Village Poverty Reduction Plan	10
Success Stories	19
Village Assembly	27
Way Forward	28
Team Members	29

TESTIMONIES FROM THE FIELD

I am very thankful for this project and the activities. I got a chance to do a lot of things in this village. VPRP is also good, it is so helpful for making the GPDP. Through this project, the VO did sex education awareness for the student with the help of their teacher it is also part of the village development. Even from the side of the VC, we can always give support because we know that what activity they are doing is for the development, for our child, and for us. This project has a good working environment together with VO, the line department in our village and the NGO. The benefit of this project is not only for the VC, and VO but largely for the public we are working for.

LALZUITHANGA (VC PRESIDENT,
KHAWRIHNIM VILLAGE, REIEK BLOCK)

Working together with the Kudumbashree team has also helped us to know the status of the few Aanganwadis and based on that we could also take the necessary steps for improvement. Now, We engage more with the ALMSC.

LALNUNPARI (CDPO, ZAWLNUAM ICDS
PROJECT)

When I started to work as LRG. I have learned a lot of things. How the VO are important for the village development. And how valuable are VO and the VC. So I just know what scheme we can use but we never apply, that thing is also for the development of the village. We apply many things so the poor people can get the benefit we are so thankful for this convergence project. It makes me the smart guy. We can reduce the poverty in our village through this project.

LALRUATFELI (LRG LUNGPHUN
VILLAGE, REIEK BLOCK)

It is a good project, especially for us. So, there is an LRG, and these LRGs help us on many occasions with the development of the village. What the village needed but we think we cannot do ourselves. We can do this in convergence with the VO. We do not know all the problems of the village but VO makes us aware of them. It is easy to work with VO and we have good coordination with them.

ZARZOLIANI (VC MEMBER, REIEK
VILLAGE, REIEK BLOCK)

TESTIMONIES FROM THE FIELD

This project is beneficial for SHG members. We can see that they better understand schemes, fulfil their needs, and solve several problems.

H. BIAKCHUNGNUNGA (VC SECRETARY,
W.PHAILENG VILLAGE, W.PHAILENG)

PRI-CBO Convergence Project is a good project and interesting for our village. We have a lot of achievements from this project. In this project, we can work together with VC-VO and all line departments for developing our village. We don't want to stop this project for our village. Please continue for ours. We have a lot of work plans for PGSRD like road repair, and Bazar shed. We hope that we can achieve this through this project.

ZORAMTHANGI (VO VICE PRESIDENT,
PHULDUNGSEI, W.PHAILENG BLOCK)

This project was very helpful for our village. Got so many achievements for the village under MGNREGS, PHE, Jal Jeevan Mission, NSAP, PMAY-G, Adhar Card and Food supply through Ration Card.

SAIZAHAWLA (VC PRESIDENT,
DAMPARENGPUI, W.PHAILENG BLOCK)

The PRI-CBO Convergence Project plays a very important role in the effective implementation of different schemes from the Government through convergence by building relationships between the Village Council and communities in a democratic manner. I am very grateful to Mentor and LRGs for helping us to achieve our goals to improve the nutritional and health status of children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers and their holistic development.

R.LALNUNPUIA (CDPO, REIEK ICDS
PROJECT)

This project is very good for the development of our village. We see a lot of achievement because of this project. We organised Adult Literacy and Free Health Mela with the help of the Internal mentors and departments. We hope that we will keep working together in the and have more achievements during this year i.e.2023.

LALBIAKNUNGA (VC PRESIDENT,
ZAWLPUI, ZAWLNUAM BLOCK)

ABOUT US

KUDUMBASHREE - NATIONAL RESOURCE ORGANIZATION

Kudumbashree, the Kerala government's poverty eradication mission, evolved from traditional community practices, government development programs and decentralization campaign experiences from across the state. Formed in 1998, the fundamental premise of Kudumbashree was that the poor need to be active agents in their own development.

Having proven its success in Kerala, Kudumbashree was, in the year 2013, recognized as a National Resource Organization (NRO) by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India, under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). Kudumbashree NRO has been mandated to provide technical and implementation support to State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) based on mutual interest in two major domains:

- PRI (Panchayat Raj Institutions)-CBO (Community Based Organisations Convergence)
- Enterprise Development

The work done by Kudumbashree-NRO is based on the principle of creating local and state-level capabilities for large-scale implementation of the interventions. At present KS NRO has been extending its support to twenty-four states and one union territory.

MIZORAM STATE RURAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION

Mizoram State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MzSRLM) was launched on 22nd April 2013 to initiate the implementation of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) which is a flagship programme under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).

The Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.

MzSRLM has currently covered 73,618 rural poor households in 602 villages across 26 RD blocks in 11 districts through self-managed Self Help Groups (SHGs) and federated institutions

PRI-CBO CONVERGENCE

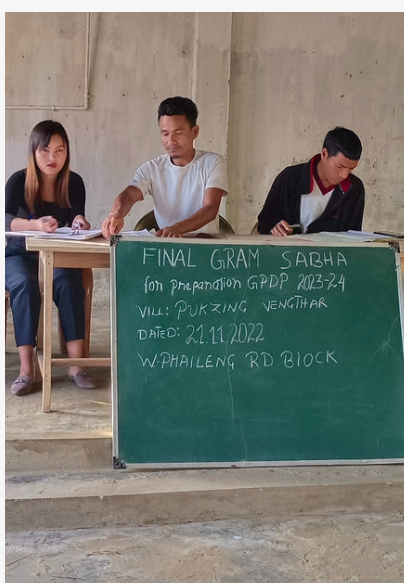


ABOUT THE PROJECT

The PRI-CBO Convergence Project is an attempt to enhance coordination and collaboration between Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Community Based organisations (CBO). The project uses centrally sponsored schemes as entry points for strengthening the PRI-CBO interface

PROJECT GOAL

- Increasing the efficiency and reach of poor-centric programmes
- Better participatory planning by panchayats together with the community organisation network
- Increased capability of CBOs to demand entitlements
- Democratically conscious community to help strengthen and sustain local government institutions



PROJECT RATIONALE

The purpose of the PRI-CBO Convergence Project is to enhance participatory local governance by enabling the institutions of the poor to identify and access their rights and entitlements through a demand-based approach and to capacitate the community to formulate and implement development plans for the progress of the society

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Initiate processes which would ensure that the benefits under various entitlements and schemes accrue to members of SHGs under NRLM
- Strengthen women's participation in local self-government processes such as the Village Assembly
- Contribute towards making the PRIs Village council, departmental committee and CSOs more responsive towards the needs of the society; particularly women
- Help develop a pool of community cadres to work with community institutions and local governments to strengthen capabilities of convergence

PROJECT EXPANSION



Saturation in Serchhip



Pilot in Serchhip



Scale-up in Mamit

PROJECT TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2021 - MARCH 2022

BMMU Orientation on PRI-CBO Convergence Project

VC Orientation on PRI-CBO Convergence Project

VO General Body Orientation on the project and LRG Identification

Training to the VPRP Facilitators and VPRP Roll out

Mobilization for Gram Sabha and Integration of VPRP with GPDP

Consultative meetings with block, district and state-level line departments regarding VPRP

Meeting for Thematic integration within MzSRLM.



Nutrigarden was developed in Anganwadi across all blocks.

Training for Nutrigarden and Soap making conducted by KvK

Formation/Activation of ALMSC and VHSNC on a pilot basis.

Meeting with Project Officer, State Planning Board regarding the localisation of SDGs

APRIL 2022 - SEPTEMBER 2022

Innovative Initiatives such as awareness programs on alcoholism, drug abuse, sex education and child protection through rallies and classroom sessions.

Free medical check-ups and medicine distribution in various villages across all the blocks. A mobile medical unit was set up and counselling sessions were arranged.



OCTOBER 2022 - MARCH 2023

Formation/Activation of ALMSC and VHSNC on a pilot basis.

LRG Training was conducted in all the blocks of Mamit.

Training of the VPRP CRP and Livelihood CRP across all the pilot blocks

Training on VPRP for all the blocks at the state level

Roll Out of VPRP across all pilot blocks

Innovative activities such as adult literacy classes, free health check-ups and plastic-free village sessions were arranged.

PROJECT CORE ACTIVITIES



VC Orientation at the Block

Orientation to Village Councils is a key activity of PRI-CBO Convergence project. In the orientation, the major idea is to orient the VC members on the importance of VC-VO Convergence and the role which needs to be played by the Village Council.

During the orientation, The participants were provided with inputs to highlight one of the major achievements in their village. The Village Council members were also oriented on the importance of planning and how their support would make the plan more fruitful in nature.

VO General Body Orientation at the Village & LRG Identification

VO General Body Orientation is a mechanism to identify the foot soldiers of the project. The orientation helps the CBO network understand the importance of the Local Resource Group and how they can contribute towards the village's development. The orientation comprises the basic idea of the Convergence project and thereafter a group exercise is conducted in order to understand the activeness of the SHG members. The identified members undergo a detailed orientation for the selection process.

Training to the VPRP Facilitators

Village Poverty Reduction Plan is an essential local development plan. The plan consists of four parts: entitlement, livelihood, PGSRD, and SDP. The training was held over two days, during the course of which formats were developed and discussed at length. Each component was thoroughly discussed to ensure that the facilitators understand each component. A scheme booklet was additionally shared to make the facilitators aware of the various schemes and processes for obtaining the benefits under various components.



VPRP Roll Out

VPRP roll-out was carried out in different phases. The process started after the training of the VPRP Facilitators at the block with the concept seeding exercise at the CLF and VO level and thereafter the plan preparation, consolidation of demands and finally, prioritization was carried out across all levels namely SHG, VO and VC. The VPRP rollout was done ensuring the participation of both SHG and Non-SHG members to make a comprehensive and inclusive plan for the village. Extensive technical support was provided to do the VPRP on the mobile application and formats for offline work was also made for places with internet accessibility issues.

GPDP Gram Sabha

Gram Sabha is a constitutional platform wherein the demands of the community are brought forward and discussed. The Gram Panchayats are also constitutionally mandated to the preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) for economic development and social justice utilizing resources available to them. The GPDP plan gets discussed in detail during the Gram Sabha and the most important demand gets approval from the quorum. GPDP Gram Sabha is conducted three times. The first Gram Sabha is to discuss GPDP and the plan for a particular year followed by 2nd and 3rd Gram Sabha wherein the plan gets finalised and uploaded in the e-gram swaraj portal. As a comprehensive plan in form of VPRP is prepared by the community, the objective is to present the plan in these gram sabhas so as to integrate it with the GPDP.

LRG Selection

The VC-VO Convergence Project includes the selection of LRGs. The LRGs are from among the CBO network. The selection is done for assessing their level of interest in village development. The LRGs are selected based on their writing abilities, communication skills, and capacity to function as team players. The selected LRGs are expected to contribute to the well-being of their community.

MzSRLM Thematic Integration Meeting

Based on the experiences of working in the pilot blocks, the Kudumbashree NRO team constantly faced the crunch of human resources in the departments and funds shortages hindering the realisation of the community demands. To overcome this problem, the team felt the necessity of coordination and convergence within the different thematics of MzSRLM, giving the possibility to not only utilise the resources available under each thematic but also the different programs being run in an individual capacity. Thus, the thematic meeting was conducted for all to understand each other's work and develop an understanding towards VPRP and how different verticals can help in achieving the VPRP demands.



VPRP Consultative Meetings

One of the major milestones after the preparation of the VPRP is to integrate it with the GDPD and the AAP of respective line departments. Even after the submission of the community plan, a constant follow-up is required to ensure that the plan just does not sit on the desks of some departments but is acted upon. Consultative meetings were thus held between the Village Organisation, Village council and the Line Departments throughout the year to achieve the results, these meetings were facilitated with the help of the cadres in the project under the guidance of the Kudumbashree NRO team. The Internal Mentors visited various Line Departments to inquire about the status of VPRP demands from their respective VCs. All the demands received were incorporated into the action plan. However, due to a scarcity of funds, the Line Departments informed that it would not be possible to achieve all the targets within the same year. Various demands such as PMAY-G, Ujjwala Gas Connection, Insurance and Pension Schemes were achieved while many demands were carried forward to the next financial year.

LRG Training

LRGs play an integral role towards the Convergence project and it is important that they can take care of the project and act as foot soldiers. The participants were provided with an overview of the Convergence project and its activities and cadres. They were also provided with a detailed idea about the project and its objectives. The Internal mentors facilitated this training along with the Field Coordinators and Mentor Resource Persons to discuss and elaborate on their roles and responsibilities. Moreover, they explained the importance of LRGs in the project and also the role they play towards making the project successful. An overview of the different verticals under MzSRLM was also introduced by the BMMU staff as well as the channel for communication for ensuring coordination between them and the staff.

Anganwadi Level Monitoring and Support Committee (ALMSC) Formation/Activation

The coordination committee is the backbone of the anganwadis. The committee is as per the guidelines laid by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in the year 2010. The committee is an official committee as per the Government order acting as a platform wherein the issues of the administration of Anganwadis can be discussed in detail. The Kudumbashree NRO team did a baseline survey to understand the status of the already existing committees and the status of their functionality. Based on the baseline survey, the pilot villages for the formation/activation of the committee were decided.

The report of the baseline survey was then discussed with the ICDS and joint training by the project cadres and the circle officers was done for the formation/activation of the ALMSC. A total of 23 villages were taken as pilots for the formation/activation of ALMSC across the Mamit district. Currently, the committee engages in the development of Nutrigarden, the VHSND celebration and in the planning of activities and events.



Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Committee (VHSNC) Formation/Activation

The Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC) is a crucial component of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). As its name implies, this committee's role is to coordinate village-level efforts to address problems with health and socio-economic factors. In particular, they were envisioned as playing a crucial role in "local level community action" under NRHM, which would eventually develop to assist the process of Decentralized Health Planning. Therefore, VHSNCs are expected to support the ASHA, develop village health plans that are tailored to local needs, and act as a mechanism to encourage community action for health, particularly for social determinants of health. They are also expected to act as leadership platforms for improving community awareness and access to health services.

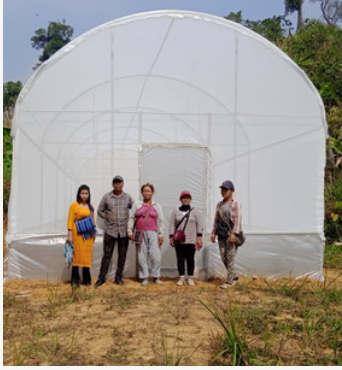
A meeting was conducted with the Medical Officer to discuss the formation of VHSNC and its scope of work, and a circular regarding its formation and cooperation with Kudumbashree NRO was then issued to smoothen our engagement with the stakeholders. Followed by a meeting between Kudumbashree NRO and ICDS Staff in the presence of the CDPO was held to discuss the scope of VHSNC and its formation. Joint training including circle officers from ICDS and Project cadres was conducted in a total of 18 villages across Mamit for the formation of VHSNC. Currently, the committee engages in the planning of the VHSNC fund and in planning the VHSND.

VILLAGE POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN



Process Adopted

- **Block-level training for VPRP Facilitators:** Training was jointly conducted by the Mentor Resource Persons, Professionals of Kudumbashree NRO and MzSRLM staff. The training was delivered based on the application prepared for VPRP
- **CLF Concept Seeding:** CLF Concept Seeding was conducted at the CLF level by the facilitator i.e LRGs to make the CLF members get an understanding of VPRP and the expected role to be played by CLF members
- **VO Concept Seeding:** Concept Seeding is conducted at the VO level to prepare the VO members about the calendar preparation and also the plan preparation at the SHG level. The concept seeding exercise provides a basic understanding of the roles of VO members.





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- **SHG-level plan preparation and prioritization for entitlement & livelihood:** Entitlement and Livelihood are important components of VPRP. It is important to note that all demands generated through VPRP cannot be achieved and hence the demands which are of utmost priority are taken into consideration.
 - **VO level plan preparation on PGSRD and SDP and consolidation and prioritization:** PGSRD and SDP are based on the infrastructural requirements and SDP is prepared based on the social issues prevailing in a particular village. Moreover, SDP plans are prepared based on consultation with the CBO network and a detailed plan is prepared to create awareness and reduce the problem in the village.
 - **VC Level Consolidation & Prioritization:** Village Council meetings are conducted to make the VC members get an idea about the VPRP plan. The detailed plan is presented by the CBO members and the most important one is prioritized to be integrated into the GPDP. The poorest of the poor are given utmost priority based on necessary criteria.
 - **VPRP Submission and integration in the GPDP Gram Sabha:** VPRP is an integral part of village development. The plan is presented first in the Gram Sabha and after necessary approval, the same is submitted to the Village Council. During the Gram Sabha, each of the demands is explained in detail and the same is approved by Gram Sabha
 - **VPRP Follow-Up:** Follow-up is an important mechanism under VPRP. Regular meetings and follow-ups are essential to achieve various demands under VPRP. Follow-up is carried out with different stakeholders towards the achievement of demands.
 - **VPRP integration with AAP of Line Departments & Follow-up:** Line Departments are one of the important stakeholders towards VPRP achievement. The departments have numerous schemes for the village welfare and hence it is important to get the line departments on board. The departments can help achieve different demands which are part of the VPRP plan.

VPRP DEMAND - MAMIT (2022-2023)

Particulars	Reiek	W. Phaileng	Zawlnuam
Job Card	1	16	48
Health Card	4	132	116
Ration Card	4	6	59
National Social Assistance Programme (Pension Schemes)	50	81	286
Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)	74	65	279
Ujjwala - Gas Connection	81	101	276
Saubhagya - Electricity Connection	7	62	44
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)	22	183	389
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)	11	124	172
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)	15	135	258
Livelihood (Farming)	284	368	240
Livelihood (Animal Husbandry)	482	386	389
Livelihood (Micro-Enterprise)	127	240	143

VPRP ACHIEVEMENT - MAMIT (2022-2023)

Particulars	Reiek	W. Phaileng	Zawlnuam
Job Card	1	8	29
Health Card	4	80	39
Ration Card	4	81	30
National Social Assistance Programme (Pension Schemes)	1	11	16
Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)	25	49	46
Ujjwala - Gas Connection	25	66	170
Saubhagya - Electricity Connection	4	26	5
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)	13	38	53
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)	5	78	46
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)	10	66	43
Livelihood (Farming)	57	73	53
Livelihood (Animal Husbandry)	57	19	19
Livelihood (Micro-Enterprise)	14	4	90

VPRP Progress

Chicken Distribution under Reiek RD Block

Poultry is an important aspect of livelihood in the state of Mizoram. The villages under the Reiek RD block have two key livelihood components i.e. agriculture and poultry. As part of VPRP demand, there has been a demand for chicks from the SHG members. But, transporting the same was a challenge because of the high transport cost and also the demand for less quantity of chicks.



Each Village Organization was given the responsibility to find out the exact number of SHG members and the transport cost also needs to be paid by the beneficiaries themselves. Also, the Village Organization took the lead to ensure that proper time management is followed while distributing the chickens. The Village Council President offered his vehicle to pick up the chicks from the farm and the same was used to distribute them across different villages. A total amount of Rs. 1,40,000 was collected across eight villages and each beneficiary contributed Rs. 5 as the transport cost. A total of 1936 chicks were distributed across 8 villages under Reiek RD Block. The same was deposited in the account of Zoram Co-Operative Society and the manager was kind enough to provide with a credit of seven days. Chicken feed was also distributed worth 400 kgs across eight villages.

Distribution of Sprayers

Mizoram is a state wherein the majority of the population is dependent on Jhum cultivation. As part of VPRP demand, the SHG members have demanded sprayers for easy spraying in the agriculture fields. The beneficiary list was prepared and submitted to Block Agriculture Department with the forwarding letter from Block Development Officer. But, before the submission necessary discussion had taken place with the Village Council Members and the neediest was given priority. The sprayers were provided at a subsidized rate i.e. the price of one sprayer is Rs. 1650 and the department provided it at Rs. 800. The distribution of the sprayers was done by the Block Development Officer and Block Agriculture Officer in presence of BMMU staff and other stakeholders.



Golden Card Camp

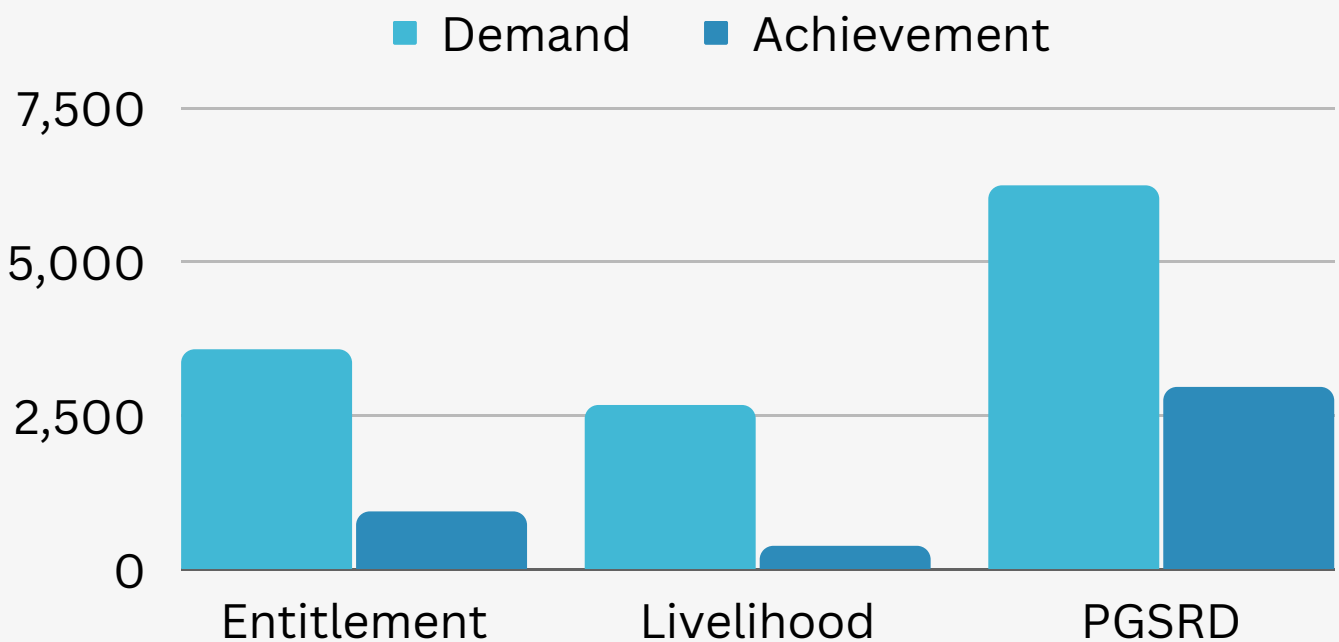
A Golden Card camp was organized in collaboration with Damparengpui CSC wherein the families who were left out were covered. A total of 18 families (as part of VPRP demand) comprising 92 members are covered. Initially, the members were provided with an orientation about the importance of the Golden Card and its usage by the CSC representatives. More camps will be followed in the days to come.

Ujjwala Scheme

As part of the VPRP, the SHG members had demanded Gas Connections under the Ujjwala Scheme. A total of 276 demands were received from Zawlnuam RD Block. Owing to the lack of knowledge about the application process, LRGs provided assistance to the SHG members to fill up the applications for the scheme with proper documents and the same was discussed with the Block Mission Unit. A letter of recommendation was then issued from the BMMU after approval from the BDO for prioritising this list of beneficiaries under the scheme. In the first phase of the distribution of gas cylinders, a total of 170 beneficiaries received the benefit within 1 month of application submission, while the rest of the names are in the pipeline for the upcoming financial year.



VPRP STATUS - MAMIT (2022-2023)



LITERACY FOR ENTITLEMENT

“When you’re illiterate, you’re not just blind to reading and writing. You’re blind to being cheated in your wages, the need for healthy food and good hygiene, your own rights, your children’s need for education... the list could go on and on.” - Mission India

Introduction

Adult literacy refers to adults' ability to use a language, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Adult literacy includes basic literacy, desirable civic knowledge, personal hygiene, and the adoption of political and occupational skills. The United Nations defines Basic Literacy as the ability to read 40 words per minute, write 20 words per minute, and perform two-digit arithmetic. The average literacy rate of Zawlnuam Block in Mizoram as per the 2011 census was 67.5%. The block has a heterogeneous population as compared with other parts of Mizoram, dominated by an 80% Christian population, followed by Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim populations at 12.25%, 5% and 3.4% respectively. The challenge that the block faces are both in terms of the high number of illiterates who are adults and wide disparities in literacy between the rural and urban populations. These are impediments to national efforts to achieve Education for All and end poverty. Adults who have been denied access to early education must receive special attention.

Adult literacy has suffered in India as a result of the country's delayed efforts in this area. Adult literacy was neglected during the country's first three decades of independence because there was so much emphasis on expanding primary education. With the change of government in India in 1977, a nationwide adult education programme for socioeconomic development was launched, resulting in a national demand for adult literacy.

The Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) is a community demand plan prepared by the Self Help Group (SHG) network which can be further integrated into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). As part of the Social Development Plan (SDP) under the VPRP, Adult Illiteracy was identified as one of the social issues by the Village Organisation (VO) and Adult Literacy Classes were demanded under VPRP in Zawlpui village of Zawlnuam RD Block. The internal mentor along with the VO had a meeting with the Village Council (VC) and it was decided to arrange adult literacy classes in the Zawlpui village.

In search of a teacher

VO along with the Internal Mentor approached the Headmaster of the Primary School, Zawlpui to explore the possibility of evening classes for the adult students. Due to the low teacher strength, it was found that there is no possibility of initiating the classes, still, the headmaster promised to allot space for the classes in the evening. In order to explore other avenues to mobilise resources for initiating the classes a meeting was arranged with the Zawlnuam Government College. As there was no human resource to support the program on a regular basis, they could not help with this search for a teacher. As the public institution could not provide a teacher, the VO decided to go ahead with the adult literacy classes on a voluntary basis. The next step was to mobilise these adults to come out of their homes and sit in a classroom like small children.

Mobilising the crowd

The Mentor Resource Person met the Block Resource Coordinator of Zawlnuam RD Block regarding conducting an awareness session on adult literacy with the objective of mobilising adults to attend the classes. The BRCC accepted the proposal for the awareness programme as they agreed to give resource persons and technical support in organising the programme. Once the resources were arranged by the BRCC, a meeting was conducted with the stakeholders in order to finalise the date of the programme. A follow-up meeting with Zawlnuam Government College helped procure all the stationary and blackboard from its NSS unit for the adult literacy classes.

Starting with the classes

After the awareness session on Adult Literacy by the BRCC, the names and details of the interested students were registered and the date, time and venue for the first class were communicated. The inauguration of the class was done by the Village Council President in presence of the VO members, Internal Mentor, Mentor Resource Person and the Field Coordinator in the YMA hall. The stationary procured from the NSS Unit, Zawlnuam Government College was distributed among the students after the attendance and class started with the basic lessons on the alphabet. The class ended with the preparation of the class calendar, the availability of the students was enquired and the VC President nominated the teacher for the next two months from among the VO members at a basic honorarium to be paid by the VC. The decision to have biweekly classes was taken and a WhatsApp group was formed for better communication.

A ray of hope

The Block Mission Management Unit, Zawlnuam has decided to certify the students on successful completion of three months of classes and assessment. The idea of the adult literacy classes in Zawlpui is not to expand the horizon of job opportunities for these students but to develop civic literacy, develop an awareness of their entitlements with the hope that they won't be snatched off their rights because one cannot read or write.



NATIONAL FAMILY BENEFIT SCHEME

National Family Benefit Scheme is a one-time assistance provided to a family when the breadwinner of the family passes away. The scheme was first discussed with Social Welfare and Tribal Affairs department. This is the story of Lalrammuani an SHG member who hails from Hreichuk village under the Serchhip block. Her life took a turn when her companion had to leave her. She is a widow and has two children who are in their growing stage. The family is totally dependent on farming for their survival. One fine day, she goes to the SHG meeting and the SHG President informs her about the National Family Benefit Scheme. But, she couldn't get many details from the President and knocked on the door of VO to get support. The VO President informed the Internal Mentor regarding the SHG member. The Internal Mentor without taking much time filled up the application form along with the requisite documents. The application form was approved by the Village Council President and further, the application form was submitted to Social Welfare and Tribal Affairs Department by the Kudumbashree NRO team and Block staff to the department for further processing. During the discussion with officials, it was learnt that the benefit can only be provided based on priority. Her case got special attention because she is a widow and she belongs to a poor family.

The process took around six months to be processed and one fine day she received a call from the department that her application got approved and the benefit got transferred to her bank account. She says “ Many schemes are there in place for women like me but due to less education don't get to know much regarding the different schemes. The VC-CBO Convergence Project helps us to know about the different schemes and it also creates a platform for us to get different benefits of various schemes under different departments. The project also takes care of collecting applications from the doorstep which helps us to live a better life”.

Tears rolled down her eyes in joy and she immediately reached out to the VO President expressing her joy and that day her happiness had no boundaries. Furthermore, she thanked the Village Council President and Internal Mentor for helping her get the benefit and she is grateful to them for helping her. She bought chicks to generate a stable livelihood for herself and her children.

TAKING EXTRA MILE FOR HEALTH

Mahatma Gandhi said, "It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver." One cannot argue but sometimes the ignorance of one's own health is not out of habit but a result of a lack of resources and a mere adaptation to one's environment.

A village with a small population of approximately 74 households, Zawlpuoi is situated beside the Lankai river at the Zawlpuoi-Tripura border. The major livelihood activities being farm-based and animal husbandry the economic condition of these households is quite weak. Being an interior village, it lacks a lot of amenities like transport facilities, and no health sub-centres and the absence of many such institutions of the government makes life more difficult for the villagers.

Owing to the lack of medical services in the village and accessibility to those services at the block PHC is a challenge, the outcome has been ignorance of one's health. Fevers, coughs and colds and many such diseases or viral infections are taken care of by taking paracetamol without a doctor's prescription. It is because of this that the Village organisation (VO) of Zawlpuoi village demanded a health check-up camp and awareness about lifestyle diseases. VO along with the cadres (LRGs and Internal Mentor) of the PRI-CBO convergence project had a joint meeting with the Village Council (VC) to plan for the health check-up camp, after which a letter was issued from the VC to the PHC requesting support in organising the camp.

After collecting the letter issued by the VC, the Internal Mentor along with the Field Coordinator had a meeting with the Medical Officer (MO), Zawlnuam PHC for seeking his support in the planning of such a camp. The concerns raised by the medical officer were the shortage of medical supplies and human resources. Where the PHC used to get the medicines supplies on a quarterly basis, currently, it was reported to be done on a yearly basis. There were concerns that organising such a camp in a village will create a shortage in the PHC for their daily operations. Though there were concerns about the lack of staff that was proposed to me managed by planning the camp on a less busy day. Now, the only hindrance to organising the health camp was the shortage of medical supplies where the PHC needed the help of the MzSRLM.

An internal discussion was done among the BMMU staff and it was decided to seek support from the BDO for both organising the camp and looking into the matter of medical shortage in the PHC. Cluster Coordinator along with the BMM met with the BDO, to discuss the plan for the health check-up camp in Zawlpui and the problems faced. The BDO to have a better understanding of the situation had a telephone conversation with the MO and decided to give financial assistance for buying the medicines required for the camp, whereas requested the MO to arrange for the rest of the required resources.



The date for the camp was then finalised by the MO to be 10th February 2023 and all the arrangements were started by the cadres and VO members. The community hall was allotted by the VC President as the venue of the camp and it was cleaned by the VO members, announcements on mike and WhatsApp messages were circulated to mobilize as many people as possible so they to avail the benefit of the health check-up camp. On 10th February 2023, the registration started at 11 am, VO members had already arranged the desks and chairs for doctor consultation. A dispensary desk for the distribution of medicines and one for an eye check-up were set up. While in the other corner of the hall, tests for malaria, blood sugar and vaccination were ongoing. The check-up camp lasted until 4 pm.

With the support of the Medical team, VO members, cadres and BMMU staff the health check-up services were extended to a total of 211 people, of which 120 people came for doctor consultation and medicine, 38 for eye tests, 24 for blood sugar tests, 7 for vaccination, 19 for malaria test and 3 pregnant women for consultation. Appreciating the efforts taken by the medical team, the villagers presented them with one chicken as a present.

UJJWALA - FOR A CLEAN FUTURE

In a house made of bamboo, Lalramthari and Lalrosanga live in Phuldungsei village. Apart from the husband and wife in the house, they have no children. Suffering from health issues, either of the two is unable to work outside. The family grows vegetables and cultivates rice for their livelihood in the field allotted by the Village Council. For preparing the food, both husband and wife collect firewood from the forest which is quite far from their house. Lamramthari is member of Josapha SHG. Having no access to clean cooking fuel at her home and after sharing her troubles with the SHG members, the SHG members decided to include her name under the Ujjwala scheme during the VPRP plan preparation.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) was launched on 1st May 2016 and implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas with the tagline, "Swachh Indhan, Behtar Jeevan". The scheme intends on creating a smoke-free Rural India to benefit five crore families living below the poverty line (BPL), especially the women who are most vulnerable as they face the health hazards related to unclean cooking fuel. A total of 5 lakh deaths are accounted for in India alone of unclean cooking fuel as per WHO estimates. The scheme aimed at providing concessional LPG connections to the entire nation by the year 2019, curbing the environmental hazards caused due to deforestation and air pollution.

After the plan preparation at the SHG level, it was consolidated at the VO level and Lamramthari's name was prioritised for the scheme. After this, the demands were presented and incorporated into the GPDP through gram sabha. The documents were collected by the LRG and submitted to the internal mentors of the project. The same documents were then submitted at the block level to the gas agency. After a period of three months, her demand was approved by the department and the gas agency delivered gas along with the stove to her house. Lamramthari was very thankful to the LRGs and VO members for introducing her to this scheme and helping her to avail such benefits. Today, she feels relaxed and gets much more time for engaging in her farm. She says that it will help her to increase their income and the family's living condition.



GOLDEN RAY OF HOPE

Lalruatfeli is a 14-year-old girl, who lives in Reiek RD block's Khawrihnim village. From her birth, she suffers from a mental disorder. She lives with two sisters, a mother, and a father. Her father is an alcoholic and drug addict who does not contribute to the family's finances. Her mother Zoremthangi cultivates some veggies on a tiny farm near their home. The family is not going hungry thanks to the department's ration.

Lalruatfeli's reliance on her mother limits her mother's mobility and the work opportunities open to her. Her daughter relies on her for even minor tasks like bathing and changing menstrual pads during her menstrual cycle. Because of her daughter's health and her husband's drug problems, she is unable to work and feels scared to leave Lalruatfeli at home alone.

Economic Rehabilitation Program is for specially-abled households where one-time assistance is given for starting any livelihood activities. The Kudumbashree NRO team had a meeting with the Director, Social Welfare & Tribal Affairs, and after the necessary discussions with the BDO submitted the applications to the department. A total of 20 beneficiaries across Reiek and West Phaileng received this aid.

Zoremthangi and Lalruatfeli were both at the farm near their house when we met them. She was in tears as she received the one-time aid as part of the Economic Rehabilitation Program because it was the first time she had received any monetary assistance from any department. When she received the money, she told us about her plan to use it to buy some chicks and chicken feed and start backyard poultry.

Din Dini, Lalruatfelis's eldest sister, is the family's only hope. She is in her second year of a public administration degree at Aizawl PUC college. Din Dini wishes to work as a civil servant. She intends to pursue civil service training after graduation. Her mother had to suffer greatly last year when her scholarship was delayed in order to pay her fees. Din Dini's mother had to go from house to house collecting blankets to wash along the river bank in order to pay Din Dini's college tuition fees.

After six months, Zoremthangi used the money she received from the economic rehabilitation program to buy 40 chicks and some feed to start a business for her family. Zoremthangi was able to diversify her income alternatives while also spending more time with Lalruatfeli and taking better care of her daughter.

VILLAGE ASSEMBLY



Under The Lushai Hills Act 1953, the Village Assembly (Gram Sabha) is a platform which serves as a part of democratic institutions for each and every person registered in the electoral roll.

However, the village assembly meetings are majorly attended by the head of the family. The practice is a part of the customary traditions of the Mizo Society.

With the advent of the Self-help group concept under the guidance of MzSRLM, progressive changes were witnessed. Among the steps of behavioural change were the participation of women collectives in the public forum, utilizing the platform for creating self-identity, voicing out for family and contributing efforts and energy for the village development by playing multiple roles.

In PRI-CBO Convergence project locations, successive changes were experienced across the three RD Blocks namely Reiek, West Phaileng and Zuwalulam. The project was scaled up in Mamit district with an aim to strengthen the Village Assembly participation with the support from the SHG network. Various mobilization techniques were used such as rallies, poster making, street play etc. were conducted to bring the CBO network closer to the activities of village development.

Joint stakeholders meetings were organized at each village and detailed orientation was provided to the Village Council members and CBO network regarding the importance of Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha being a constitutional platform the people's participation is the key.

WAY FORWARD

PRI-CBO Convergence project has been implemented in Serchhip District since the year 2019. In the year 2021, the project was scaled up in Mamit District. During this time, the project has been working closely with the Local Self Government (LSG) and the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) through the Village Organization (VO) of the SHG federation.

It has been found that CSO plays an integral part in the implementation of various Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The CSO also take up many community-led initiatives for the development of the villages. Therefore, setting up a platform where the LSG, the CSO and the CBO can have an interface for discussing the various issues of the village will be an important aspect of ensuring sustainable convergence between the stakeholders.

Line Departments can provide the CBO cadres with technical knowledge of schemes and provide skill-based training in order to enhance the knowledge of the community members. A robust system where the VO/CLF acts as the interface between the community and the Line Departments will help in achieving a bottom-up approach to development.

Strengthening of democratic platforms such as Village Assembly will ensure that the CBO is given the space to participate in local self-governance. Additionally, democratic processes such as community-led planning and dissemination of information regarding various Government schemes and projects can be enhanced by involving the CBO network and utilizing the human resource available with the CBO network. This has resulted in better negotiation of different benefits which are part of different departments.

An established resource pool, such as Local Resource Groups (LRG) and Internal Mentors (IM), can be utilized for developing convergence strategies for the entire state in the long run. Regular monitoring of the resource pool by the stakeholder i.e. SRLM in order to identify gaps in their skills and knowledge and designing programs to enhance their technical skills will ensure that the resource pool is utilized to its fullest potential.



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