

# SEEDS OF CHANGE: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS CULTIVATING N RTH EAST INDIA'S ENTREPRENEURIAL FUTURE







## Disclaimer

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This coffee table book "Seeds of Change: Women Entrepreneurs Cultivating Northeast India's Entrepreneurial Future" is a compilation of inspiring stories of women entrepreneurs from India's Northeastern states. The narratives featured in this publication primarily represent women from underprivileged backgrounds who have emerged as first-generation entrepreneurs, overcoming significant socioeconomic challenges and structural barriers.

The selection of these stories was guided by our commitment to highlight entrepreneurs who have demonstrated exceptional resilience and innovation despite limited access to resources, education, and market opportunities. Many of these women have transformed traditional skills and cultural heritage into sustainable business models while simultaneously uplifting their communities.

While we have made every effort to present accurate information, FICCI FLO and Nikore Associates make no representation towards the completeness or correctness of the information contained herein. This document is for informational and inspirational purposes only. All information is subject to change without notice.

This publication is not intended to be an exhaustive representation of all women entrepreneurs in the Northeast region. Rather, it showcases selected examples that illustrate the transformative potential of entrepreneurship in overcoming socioeconomic barriers. The entrepreneurs featured were chosen based on factors including their journey from adversity to achievement, innovative approaches to traditional crafts and products, impact on local communities, and contribution to preserving cultural heritage.

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I often talk about women's empowerment. That is because I have seen women's leadership, their hard work and their dedication.

Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister

NA NIKORE  
ASSOCIATES



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The Power to Empower

**SEEDS OF CHANGE:**  
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS CULTIVATING  
**N** **RTH EAST INDIA'S**  
**ENTREPRENEURIAL FUTURE**







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# Foreword

## FLO

### PRESIDENT



The entrepreneurial landscape of Northeast India has always been enriched by remarkable women who dare to dream differently. As I reflect on the stories captured in this collection, I am struck by the extraordinary resilience and innovative spirit that defines each narrative. These pages showcase visionary entrepreneurs who have built enterprises that uplift entire communities - from transformative spice businesses that support local farmers to pioneering beverage ventures that have revolutionized regional agriculture.

These are more than just success stories - they are testimonies of courage, creativity, and unwavering determination. We meet women who have broken barriers in traditional industries, artisans preserving ancient crafts while creating opportunities for differently-abled youth, and innovators who have transformed local resources into globally recognized products. Each entrepreneur featured here has woven their personal mission into the fabric of their business endeavors.

Through stunning visuals and compelling narratives, this book celebrates not just individual achievements, but the collective spirit of women who are reshaping the economic and social landscape of the Northeast. Their stories remind us that entrepreneurship, at its heart, is about seeing possibilities where others see limitations.

Regards,

**Joyshree Das Verma**

President, FICCI FLO





# Foreword

## FOUNDER

### NIKORE ASSOCIATES

In curating these stories of remarkable women entrepreneurs from the Northeast, we sought to capture not just their business journeys, but the soul of their enterprises. Each page reveals how traditional crafts, modern innovation, and social purpose can intertwine to create ventures that transcend conventional business metrics.

The entrepreneurs you'll meet in these pages have built businesses that honor their roots while embracing the future - from hospitality ventures that showcase cultural heritage to artisanal enterprises preserving indigenous craftsmanship. Through stunning photography and intimate narratives, we invite you to witness how these pioneers are transforming their communities while preserving the rich cultural tapestry of the Northeast.

These visionaries remind us that success is not measured solely in profit margins, but in the lives touched, traditions preserved, and communities strengthened. Their journeys, captured in these pages, serve as both inspiration and testament to the transformative power of women's entrepreneurship in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Regards,

**Mitali Nikore**

Founder, Nikore Associates





# LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Dear Reader,

It is with immense pride and deep reverence that we present to you "Seeds of Change: Women Entrepreneurs Cultivating Northeast India's Entrepreneurial Future." This coffee table book represents more than just a collection of success stories-it is a testament to the indomitable spirit of women from India's Northeast who have transformed challenges into opportunities.

At Nikore Associates, our research consistently reveals how women entrepreneurs face disproportionate barriers to economic participation, particularly in regions with complex geographical, infrastructural, and sociocultural challenges. The Northeast region, despite its rich cultural heritage and abundant natural resources, has historically seen limited documentation of its entrepreneurial landscape, especially regarding women-led ventures.

The entrepreneurs featured in this book were selected through an extensive field study across seven northeastern states (barring Manipur). Our team specifically sought first-generation entrepreneurs from underprivileged backgrounds who have overcome significant hurdles-be they financial constraints, limited market access, traditional gender expectations, or infrastructural challenges. These women have not merely established businesses; they have pioneered new pathways for economic empowerment in their communities.

From traditional handloom artisans who have modernized century-old techniques to innovative food processors preserving indigenous ingredients, from hospitality pioneers creating new tourism paradigms to skilled craftswomen transforming bamboo into global products-each entrepreneur featured has demonstrated exceptional resilience, creativity, and business acumen despite limited initial resources.

We acknowledge that this compilation is not exhaustive. There are countless other inspiring stories across the region that remain to be told. However, through these selected narratives, we aim to highlight patterns of innovation, resilience, and community impact that characterize women's entrepreneurship in Northeast India.

This publication is the culmination of collaborative efforts between FICCI FLO and Nikore Associates, reflecting our shared commitment to documenting women's economic contributions and advocating for more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. We hope these stories will inspire other aspiring entrepreneurs, inform policy discussions, and attract greater investment and support to women-led enterprises in the region.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each entrepreneur who shared her journey with us, and to the communities that nurture these ventures.

On behalf of the Editorial Team

Sincerely,

**Biprajit Roy Choudhury**

Assistant Research Manager

Nikore Associates







# INTRODUCTION

Northeast India is a cradle of rich traditions and artisanal skills, nurtured and passed down through generations. From handloom textiles and intricate crafts to indigenous food products and sustainable tourism, the region's cultural wealth is constantly being transformed into economic value. At the same time, improved connectivity, infrastructure development, and supportive government policies are fostering a more conducive business environment. This momentum is fueling local innovation, attracting investment, and opening doors to new domestic and international markets.

Within this evolving economic landscape, women entrepreneurs have emerged as a transformative force. Women in Northeast India have long held positions of influence within their communities, playing key roles in agriculture, trade, and household economies. Many states in the region report FLFP rates higher than an average Indian state—Nagaland, for instance, saw an increase in FLFP from 18% to 50% between 2017 and 2024, while Tripura and Meghalaya recorded steady growths in participation rates of 42% and 48.1%, respectively. However, these numbers do not tell the full story. While progress is evident, women entrepreneurs continue to navigate systemic challenges, some of which include access to finance, infrastructural constraints, and restrictive social norms that shape mobility and market participation.

A comprehensive study by FICCI FLO and Nikore Associates, conducted across seven northeastern states, engaged with women entrepreneurs across sectors to identify the key factors influencing their journeys. The research framework, structured around four pillars—factors of production, infrastructure, regulatory framework, and social norms—was built to reveal both opportunities and persistent barriers. For example, while schemes like the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) provide enhanced subsidies for women entrepreneurs, awareness and accessibility vary across states. Market integration remains another hurdle; Mizoram's Handholding Scheme (Bana Kaih) has successfully linked traditional craft sectors to formal markets, but similar efforts in other states need strengthening.

This book is a tribute to the women entrepreneurs of Northeast India—who are reshaping their communities despite the odds. Their stories are marked by resilience, innovation, and the pursuit of a better future. Through these pages, we delve into their journeys—stories that often begin with limited resources but boundless ambition. By sharing their triumphs and challenges, this book aims to honor their contributions, highlight gaps in the ecosystem, and inspire the next generation of women entrepreneurs in Northeast India.







# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH









# Nang Pamela Chowlu, Founder, The Woodpeckers Nest Guest House

-Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh

**N**ang Pamela Chowlu, a resident of Namsai, has been running The Woodpecker's Nest, a 13-room guest house, since 2015. Employing about 20 people, mostly women, her business caters to tourists, government officials, and students, benefiting from its central location in the growing town of Namsai. Pamela ventured into this business to address the lack of decent accommodations in the area for her friends and family. Starting with just two rooms, she expanded her guest house gradually, reinvesting her earnings and maintaining its traditional architectural charm. A major boost came in 2022 when she secured financial assistance under the Deen Dayal Swavalamban Yojana (DDUSY), which allowed her to expand the business more efficiently.

Despite her current success, Pamela faced significant challenges in the early stages. The process of acquiring necessary permits, such as trading licenses and pollution clearance, was cumbersome, with little guidance from government officials. Additionally, she struggled with financial constraints and operated on a small scale for several years before receiving government aid. Her architectural background enabled her to create a distinctive and appealing guest house that reflects the local culture, adding a unique touch that resonates with her clientele.

Managing the business has required balancing personal and professional responsibilities, as her residence is two hours away from the guest house. Frequent travel poses challenges, particularly due to unreliable public transportation, prompting her to rely on her private vehicle despite the costs. On the digital front, Pamela is working to enhance her online presence through platforms like Instagram and Facebook but lacks formal training in digital marketing. Aware of the increasing competition in the tourism sector, she is planning to seek professional help to further refine her marketing strategies and sustain her business growth.

## Key Challenges:

1. **Financial Constraints:** Limited initial capital and slow business expansion until government support in 2022.
2. **Regulatory Hurdles:** Complex licensing processes and unclear business categorization for legal purposes.
3. **Operational Challenges:** Frequent travels were challenging due to unreliable public transportation and increased private vehicle costs.
4. **Digital Marketing:** Limited experience with online platforms and need for professional digital strategy development.
5. **Personal Balance:** Managing business responsibilities while maintaining family commitments and making strategic personal decisions.







## Tage Rita, Founder, Naara Aba

- Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh

**T**age Rita, a trailblazing entrepreneur from Arunachal Pradesh, has revolutionized India's wine industry with her brand Naara Aba, which produces organic kiwi wine alongside other fruit-based wines like plum, peach, and wild apple. Based in the scenic Ziro Valley, her venture was born out of a solution to the region's surplus kiwi production, which previously lacked a stable market. Her boutique winery not only supports over 300 farmers annually by purchasing their produce but also provides seasonal and permanent employment to many locals, including women and youth. Starting with a production capacity of 20,000 liters in 2017, her winery now produces 60,000 liters per batch, generating annual revenues of ₹10-12 crore.

Despite her success, Tage Rita has faced significant challenges in the alco-beverage sector. Regulatory hurdles and state-specific policies complicate market expansion, while entrenched industry syndicates limit distribution opportunities. She also overcame initial financial constraints, raising ₹4 crore through a bank loan and personal savings to set up her winery. Her contributions have earned her prestigious accolades, including the Nari Shakti Puraskar and the Women Transforming India Award. Today, Naara Aba is recognized globally, even serving as a case study for business schools, highlighting its sustainable practices and entrepreneurial innovation.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Regulatory Hurdles:** Complex alcohol policies across states make licensing, registration, and distribution lengthy and difficult.
2. **Market Barriers:** Limited access to distribution networks and cutthroat competition with established players restrict market expansion.
3. **Financial Constraints:** High stamp duties, collateral requirements for loans, and limited initial capital made scaling operations challenging.
4. **Logistical Issues:** Poor road infrastructure and harassment at police check gates increased costs and delays in transportation.
5. **Gender and Socioeconomic Barriers:** Lack of property inheritance rights and societal bias created additional financial and operational challenges for a tribal woman entrepreneur.
6. **Industry Perception:** Artisanal, locally sourced wines are often treated like traditional alcohol, limiting government support and market opportunities.
7. **Knowledge Gaps:** Early challenges in digital marketing, sales strategies, and e-commerce expertise slowed growth.
8. **Dependence on Imports:** Reliance on imported materials, like specialized bottles, led to delays and financial losses initially.







# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF ASSAM









## Anu Mandal - AVA Foundation

Anu Mandal is the visionary founder behind Ava Foundation, which began in 2016 and evolved into Ava Creation Social Impact Sectionate in 2021 to strengthen its mission. Starting with just three workers, the organization now employs 375 fixed-wage earners, all without external financial assistance from banks or the government, relying entirely on personal financing. Ava Creation focuses on empowering forest-dependent communities by providing training and marketing linkages, aiming to promote sustainable forest protection practices. Using only indigenous techniques, the organization produces eco-friendly products that generate less than 10% carbon emissions, are powered by solar energy, and have earned both ZED and GI certifications.

Anu's journey was deeply inspired by her personal experience when her daughter was born prematurely and spent 29 days in the ICU. This critical period made Anu realize the importance of clean air and the need to protect natural environments. She shifted her focus toward engaging forest fringe communities, encouraging them to become stewards of the forests rather than destroyers. Anu's mission is to transform the economic prospects of these communities through sustainable production techniques and environmental stewardship.

Over the last three years, Anu has particularly focused on empowering women in the Deepor Beel district of Assam. Beginning with 32 women weavers operating out of three rooms, she recognized that these communities lacked resources and ownership literacy to turn traditional weaving into a viable source of income. Despite the availability of government schemes like Mudra loans, many of these women were unaware of how to access or benefit from such policies. To address these gaps, Anu made skilling the core of her work, enabling the women not only to survive but to thrive by reviving environmentally friendly, biodegradable production techniques.

Today, Ava Creation's initiatives reach 385 women across 32 villages, with products featured in prestigious outlets like NEHHDC and five-star hotels across India. Anu has ambitious plans to further scale her impact by launching an app to increase access to their products and raise worker wages from ₹4,000 to potentially ₹40,000 or even ₹1 lakh. However, she highlights a key challenge in the existing exhibition policies, which fail to connect producers with consumers, limiting market surveys and feedback. Through her relentless dedication, Anu Mandal continues to lead a transformative movement toward sustainable development, aiming to empower forest communities and women with the skills and knowledge they need to build a sustainable future.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Financial Literacy:** Limited understanding of financial management and funding access among women artisans.
2. **Technological Barriers:** Restricted access to technology in remote, forest-dependent villages hindering market expansion.
3. **Educational Limitations:** High illiteracy rates among women artisans complicating training and skill development processes.







## Nurnehar Ahmed, Food Processing Business

**N**urnehar Ahmed is a remarkable entrepreneur who established her business, "Tista Industry," in 2013 with a modest loan of 5,000 rupees from a local Self-Help Group (SHG). Refusing financial help from her husband or others, she relied on her own resilience and determination to build her business from scratch. Initially focusing on handmade products, she steadily grew the enterprise and now owns machinery worth 8 lakhs. What began as a small operation in a single room has expanded into a large-scale industry, with her workspace increasing fivefold. From working alone, she now employs six workers, reflecting her success in creating job opportunities for others.

Her journey has been marked by her strong belief in gender equality and her desire to empower other women in her community. She faced societal challenges in her village, where women were often discouraged from working, but she remained undeterred in her mission to break these barriers. With the support of the Agriculture Department, she was able to showcase her products, such as banana shakes and black rice bhujia, at exhibitions across Assam, gaining widespread recognition. One of the key factors contributing to her success is her focus on packaging, which enhances the appeal of her products, although it requires more financial investment to maintain high standards.

Nurnehar's growth was further supported by a Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loan of ₹5 lakhs, which she secured through the District Youth Coordinator (DYC). This loan enabled her to purchase land, set up her industry, and procure machinery. With additional backing from the SHG and Agriculture Department, her business continued to thrive, though financial constraints have limited her ability to expand further. She aims to purchase more machinery and hire additional workers, particularly to provide opportunities for other women in her community.

Nurnehar has repaid all her past loans without any issues, a testament to her financial discipline and business acumen. Currently, she is seeking additional financial assistance, including a 5-lakh loan under the PMGAY scheme, to further expand her business. Despite applying for this loan over the past 2-3 years, she has yet to receive approval, though some bank officials have expressed willingness to assist. Her story is one of resilience, ambition, and perseverance, as she continues to fight for her vision, seeking the financial support needed to take her business to the next level. Nurnehar Ahmed stands as a shining example of empowerment, demonstrating that with determination and hard work, one can overcome challenges and create a lasting impact.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Societal Resistance:** Overcoming deeply entrenched social norms that discouraged women from pursuing independent business ventures.
2. **Financial Limitations:** Insufficient capital hindering business expansion, machinery acquisition, and workforce growth.
3. **Government Support Barriers:** Persistent difficulties accessing government aid and loan schemes despite repeated applications.
4. **Entrepreneurial Opposition:** Challenging gender stereotypes and societal expectations in a traditional community setting.









# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF MEGHALAYA







## Trinity Saioo, Founder Daia Processing Unit

- Mulieh Village, West Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya

Trinity Saioo, an entrepreneur from the serene hills of Meghalaya, has transformed her passion for agriculture and community welfare into a thriving business that impacts her entire village. Her motivation goes beyond profit; she aims to empower her fellow villagers by providing opportunities and a fair market for their produce. "My vision is to make everyone try our Lakadong turmeric and, in turn, uplift the whole society. I want all farmers to get a good price for their produce and set fair rates," she says. Her dream is to create an inclusive, prosperous community that benefits from local resources and skills.

In 2019, Trinity began her venture "Daia Processing Unit" with a small group of village farmers, many of whom were hesitant but inspired by her commitment. She took the time to meet with people already established in the spice industry, drawing from their experiences to set up her unit's operations. Her drive to learn and adapt became the foundation of her business. Starting with just a few farmers, Daia Processing Unit has now grown into a local industry that she proudly manages with a dedicated team and a network of suppliers.

Trinity started her processing unit focusing solely on Lakadong turmeric, a premium variety unique to Meghalaya. With time and growth, she expanded to processing other products such as ginger, cinnamon powder, rice flour, and bay leaf powder. The Daia Processing Unit supports 20-25 local farmers who cultivate and supply raw materials. Three women from the village are employed to operate and maintain the processing machinery. Ten collectors work closely with the farmers and the processing unit to gather high-quality spices, ensuring efficient production and distribution.

To turn her dream into a reality, Trinity needed substantial financial backing. She successfully secured loans from various sources, including:

1. **SBI Loan:** A primary loan to fund initial operations.
2. **Cash Credit Loan:** Helps with the business's daily cash flow and working capital.
3. **Personal Loan from an Urban Bank:** To further fund business activities, ensuring the venture remained sustainable during its growth phase.

Trinity is currently in the process of repaying these loans, demonstrating her commitment to financial responsibility and her confidence in the potential of her business. Her goal is to invest in advanced, specialized machinery to enhance production quality and efficiency, aiming to boost productivity and support more farmers and employees. Recognizing the global demand for quality, organic spices, she is working to obtain an export license. This would allow her to sell products internationally, connecting foreign consumers to Meghalaya's unique flavors and offering farmers an expanded market for their produce. Trinity's venture is driven by her deep commitment to community welfare. Her mission is to provide fair pricing and sustainable income opportunities for her fellow villagers. She envisions a future where the youth have meaningful work that keeps them rooted in their communities, preventing poverty and providing alternatives to migration.

### Key Challenges:

- **Community Buy-In:** Convincing farmers to join and trust the venture.
- **Industry Knowledge:** Overcoming a lack of initial experience in the spice business.
- **Financial Strain:** Managing loan repayments alongside business expenses.
- **Machinery Costs:** Need for expensive, high-tech equipment for expansion.
- **Export Compliance:** Navigating the process to obtain an export license.
- **Quality Control:** Ensuring consistent quality across various spice products.
- **Community Expectations:** Balancing social impact goals with business profitability.





## Olbina Marbaniang

- Kynrud, East and West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya

**O**lbina Marbaniang, a determined entrepreneur from Kynrud in Meghalaya's East and West Khasi Hills, is the visionary behind "C&O Crafts". She began her business from her home in 2009, creating handmade products that quickly gained popularity for their quality and traditional artistry. Seeing the demand grow, Olbina sought support and funding to expand, securing a government loan and attending various training programs offered to women entrepreneurs. This support, alongside guidance from a Self-Help Group (SHG), was instrumental in helping her refine her craft, scale production, and market her products more effectively.

Originally a solo endeavor, C&O Crafts now employs eight workers, providing steady jobs within her community. Her products are sold across Meghalaya, reaching a broad customer base, but Olbina's vision extends far beyond state borders. She plans to participate in trade fairs across India to showcase her products to a national audience and aims to create an online presence through a dedicated website. By establishing a digital platform, she hopes to make her craftwork accessible to customers beyond regional boundaries, bringing her unique products to the attention of a global audience.

In addition to growing her customer base, Olbina aspires to set up a full-scale industry and a dedicated office for C&O Crafts, offering a professional workspace for her team and a platform for further growth. Her family has been her steadfast support system throughout this journey, both morally and financially, allowing her to focus on expanding her business. Olbina is driven not only by personal success but by a strong desire to inspire other women in her community. She believes that every woman should have the opportunity to achieve financial independence and is committed to setting a powerful example of resilience and entrepreneurship for the women around her. Through her work and her story, Olbina embodies the spirit of empowerment, showing that with determination and support, women can transform their lives and communities.

### Key Challenges:-

- **Initial Setup:** Starting from home with limited resources.
- **Securing Funding:** Dependence on government loans to scale operations.
- **Skill Development:** Had to undergo multiple training programs to enhance business skills.
- **Operational Support:** Relies on Self-Help Group (SHG) support for business assistance.
- **Expanding Workforce:** Transition from working alone to managing a team of eight.
- **Market Reach:** Limited reach initially, now working to expand beyond Meghalaya.
- **Digital Presence:** Lacks a website and digital marketing platform for broader sales.
- **Scaling Infrastructure:** Aspires to establish a formal office and industrial setup.
- **Balancing Family and Business:** Managing business growth while supporting and relying on her family.





# Lamti Hazel Pohti, Founder of Hazel Creations

- Qualapatty, Shillong, Meghalaya

**F**ounded in 2020, amidst the challenges of the pandemic, Hazel Creations aims to revive the ancient craft of "Macramé", a traditional art form that involves intricate knotting techniques using cotton threads. Furthermore, Hazel Creations specializes in crafting a wide variety of macrame accessories using materials like cotton twine, jute, leather, yarns and more. Lamti's dedication to preserving this timeless craft is reflected in her entirely handmade product line, which showcases both her artistry and a commitment to sustainable, handcrafted goods.

In the past, Lamti has also employed five college students as part time workers, teaching them craftsmanship skills such as bag-making, mirror-making, and shelving. However, due to health issues, specifically a weakened shoulder from prolonged work, she took a year-long break to focus on recovery. Despite this hiatus, Lamti plans to resume work next year with a renewed focus: empowering children with disabilities. Many students, having completed Class 10, face challenges pursuing further education or employment due to personal issues or job scarcity. Lamti aims to provide these children with training and employment opportunities, fostering inclusivity and skill development.

As her business grows, Lamti is also looking ahead with plans to empower more women from diverse backgrounds. She is particularly focused on employing women with disabilities, providing them with training and meaningful employment opportunities, and further strengthening the social impact of her work.

In line with her vision of creating a socially responsible enterprise, Lamti plans to collaborate with NGOs to expand her workforce and bring further positive change to her community. By leveraging these partnerships, she hopes to scale her operations while supporting marginalized groups. Hazel Creations is not just a business for Lamti; it's a platform for reviving culture, creating employment, and making a difference.

Till date, Lamti has created over 700 products. Looking ahead, she aims to expand production with the help of new team members, fostering inclusivity and skill development among individuals with disabilities. She also has a second business, @mushroom\_creations, which focuses on handmade jewelry.

## Key Challenges:

1. **Health Constraints:** Lamti's health issues, particularly a weakened shoulder, have forced a temporary pause in her work, impacting production and potential growth.
2. **Balancing Work and Health:** Finding a sustainable balance between her entrepreneurial aspirations and personal health needs is a constant challenge.
3. **Market Fluctuations:** The fluctuating demand for handmade products, influenced by changing trends and economic factors, can impact sales and revenue.
4. **Talent Acquisition and Skill Development:** Recruiting and training skilled artisans, particularly those with disabilities, requires significant time and resources.
5. **Financial Sustainability:** Ensuring the long-term financial viability of the business, especially while investing in social initiatives, can be challenging.







# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF MIZORAM









## H. Lalnundawngi – Founder of Dumde Logistics

- Aizawl city, Mizoram

**H**. Lalnundawngi, a 24-year-old entrepreneur, founded Dumde Logistics in July 2024 with the support of Leyland Consulting Private Limited. Her business focuses on providing e-commerce and hyperlocal delivery services tailored to the needs of customers in Aizawl, Mizoram. Despite being at the nascent stage of her entrepreneurial journey, Lalnundawngi demonstrates remarkable enthusiasm, adaptability, and foresight in building her business.

Dumde Logistics is a service-oriented business that prioritizes flexibility and customer satisfaction. Unlike traditional logistics firms, Dumde operates on a demand-based model, sourcing and delivering various items as per customer requests. Services include parcel delivery, local hyper-delivery, and support for essential customer needs. The company's pricing is competitive, offering B2B and individual customer services at lower rates based on weight and location. For instance, parcels weighing 50g are delivered to cities like Mumbai for approximately INR 71-72.

Starting with just two employees, Dumde Logistics has gradually expanded to include two full-time employees, two part-time male staff members, and one contracted taxi driver for deliveries. The company manages its operations internally, reducing reliance on public transportation and ensuring better coordination. To address logistical challenges in a geographically diverse region like Mizoram, the company employs a mix of in-house resources and contract-based solutions.

Dumde Logistics is primarily funded by Leyland Consulting Private Limited, which provided initial investment and business development support. The funding, however, is limited to internal allocations, and the company is responsible for securing additional external resources. The current operational costs are managed efficiently within an estimated budget of INR 5 lakhs. A key aspect of the financial arrangement includes a security deposit requirement of INR 1.5 lakhs for certain contracts.

H. Lalnundawngi actively invests in personal and professional development. She attended cybersecurity training earlier in 2024 to enhance her understanding of digital risks and AI applications in e-commerce. This proactive approach positions Dumde Logistics to scale its services and adopt advanced technologies confidently.

### Challenges and Innovations

- **Delivery Delays:** Due to Mizoram's challenging terrain, occasional delays in parcel delivery occur. Lalnundawngi aims to overcome this by optimizing routes and exploring additional delivery options.
- **Cybersecurity:** With plans to expand into e-commerce, Dumde Logistics recognizes the importance of robust digital security. After an attempted account hacking incident in September 2024, Lalnundawngi invested in AWS cybersecurity tools to protect sensitive data and operations.
- **Scaling Operations:** As the demand for logistics services grows, the company is actively recruiting to strengthen its workforce and expand its capabilities.







## Puipui Hmar - Founder of Lawm from the Hills

- Aizawl city, Mizoram

**P**uipui Hmar is the founder of Lawm from the Hills, a beauty startup based in Mizoram, India. Her business is dedicated to creating effective beauty basics made from raw, natural ingredients sourced locally. With a focus on sustainability and authenticity, Puipui ensures that her products reflect the essence of Mizoram while maintaining high-quality standards.

The business operates on a hybrid model, serving both B2B and B2C markets. It caters to customers through its dedicated website, a physical outlet in Zobawk, and by distributing its products to approximately 25 stores across Aizawl. Led by an all-women team comprising two full-time employees and two part-time staff members, the startup emphasizes quality, sustainability, and a connection to the region's natural resources.

Before founding Lawm from the Hills, Puipui gained experience in the beauty industry by distributing Korean cosmetics through an office based in Bangalore. This role provided her with valuable insights into market dynamics and operations, which she now leverages in her own entrepreneurial journey.

As a founder, Puipui emphasizes in-house innovation and skill-building. For example, her staff have learned photography skills to handle product photo shoots and marketing campaigns themselves. She maintains flexibility within her team, allowing work-from-home arrangements for employees who are mothers, thereby fostering a supportive work environment. Additionally, Puipui's team is well-versed in digital tools and social media, ensuring effective online marketing and operations, and the business website operates smoothly, with no issues in management.

Puipui manages her entrepreneurial responsibilities alongside her role as a mother to a two-year-old daughter. She prioritizes her child's well-being and adapts her work schedule to meet her family's needs. Her supportive family, especially her husband, plays a crucial role in enabling her to focus on her business. Similarly, she extends this understanding to her staff, creating a family-friendly work environment.

Puipui's primary goal is to expand her business beyond Mizoram, tapping into larger markets while maintaining the unique identity of her products. She hopes to inspire more women in her region to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and believes that collective efforts and better support systems can significantly boost the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Mizoram.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Logistics Complexity:** Unreliable road infrastructure and high transportation costs causing significant product delivery and customer satisfaction challenges.
2. **Operational Scaling:** High raw material sourcing expenses and limited access to government support schemes impeding business expansion.
3. **Organizational Constraints:** Lack of established corporate infrastructure forcing founders to manage multiple roles simultaneously.







## Catherine Pudaite - Founder of Black Dalia Crafts

- Aizawl city, Mizoram

Catherine Pudaite is the founder of Black Dalia Crafts, a thriving home-based crochet business located in Aizawl, Mizoram. Founded in 2020, the business focuses on creating a wide range of handmade crochet products, such as sweaters, cardigans, flowers, and other bespoke crochet items. With a deep commitment to empowering women, Catherine primarily employs middle-aged women skilled in tailoring and weaving, offering them part-time work opportunities.

Operating entirely from her home, Catherine has built a loyal customer base both locally in Mizoram and out-of-state, including regions in South India like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Additionally, her products have gained international recognition, reaching customers in the United States. Despite these successes, Catherine's journey has been marked by numerous challenges that highlight the difficulties faced by small-scale entrepreneurs in the region.

One of the significant obstacles Catherine encounters is affordability. She has sought financial support through state government schemes but has yet to receive any assistance. Shipping costs further compound the issue; domestic shipping expenses average ₹500, while international shipping can range between ₹2,000 and ₹3,000 per kilogram via India Post. High raw material costs outside Mizoram also contribute to minimal profit margins, limiting her business's financial growth.

Accessibility remains another hurdle for Catherine. Neither she nor her employees have received formal training in business or marketing, and the limited availability of raw materials forces her to rely on online sourcing, often delayed due to logistical challenges. While Catherine has self-taught some digital marketing skills using Instagram's business tools, she lacks comprehensive knowledge in leveraging broader e-commerce platforms like Amazon, as the complexity of bulk shipping and maintaining inventory deters her from these ventures.

Seasonal road blockages during monsoons further disrupt supply chains, adding to the challenges. Additionally, as a new mother, Catherine faces the dual burden of unpaid care work and business responsibilities, which significantly curtails her working hours. Despite these constraints, her dedication has resulted in notable achievements. Catherine's participation in events like the Uttarpurvi Mahotsav at Rashtrapati Bhavan has provided her with valuable exposure, helping her craft reach wider audiences.

Looking ahead, Catherine aspires to overcome these barriers by seeking export subsidies to reduce shipping costs, accessing business training programs to enhance her marketing strategies, and expanding her inventory to utilize platforms like Amazon. Her vision is to scale her business while continuing to provide employment opportunities to local women, fostering economic empowerment within her community.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Financial Constraints:** Limited state government support and high shipping costs impacting business profitability.
2. **Operational Barriers:** Challenges in raw material sourcing, supply chain disruptions, and seasonal logistical issues.
3. **Skill Development:** Lack of formal business and marketing training for the entrepreneur and employees.
4. **Work-Life Balance:** Managing business responsibilities alongside personal caregiving duties.







## Juliet Tamdil – Hinside Health Foods

- Aizawl city, Mizoram

Juliet is the co-founder of Hinside Health Foods, an emerging health food start-up based in Aizawl, Mizoram. Established in 2024, the business is focused on producing and marketing healthy, organic products. Currently, Hinsite Health Foods offers two flagship items: sterilized butter and organic lime juice. Despite its infancy, the business demonstrates immense potential, driven by Juliet's entrepreneurial spirit and strategic vision.

Operating from her home, Juliet runs the business without any paid employees, relying on part-time workers—both men and women—for logistical support. Her target market primarily consists of local consumers within Mizoram, but she has ambitious plans for future expansion. Juliet's previous experience managing an FPO (Farmer Producer Organization) served as an inspiration and foundation for her venture, equipping her with the necessary skills and confidence to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape.

While Juliet has achieved financial stability through private investments such as Tengrung private investiture, she plans to scale production by applying for government schemes like PMEGP to fund the procurement of machinery. However, she recognizes a widespread lack of awareness among local women entrepreneurs regarding these schemes, highlighting a critical gap in resources and knowledge dissemination.

Juliet's relatively young age and tech-savvy background have helped her overcome digital barriers that many women entrepreneurs face. However, she observes that cultural expectations around unpaid care work persist, with women still expected to manage household responsibilities alongside their professional aspirations. Additionally, she notes societal disparities in how families support sons versus daughters in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

Despite these challenges, Juliet has already accomplished remarkable feats. Leveraging her professional expertise, she successfully launched two health food products within a short time frame. Her vision for Hinsite Health Foods includes diversifying the product line to incorporate value-added superfoods, enhancing marketing efforts to boost brand visibility, and securing the necessary resources to scale production capabilities. She is determined to transform Hinsite Health Foods into a prominent health food brand, not only expanding its market reach but also setting an example for aspiring entrepreneurs in Mizoram. Through her business, she aims to create a platform that promotes health-conscious living while inspiring more women to enter the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

### Key Challenges:

- **Limited initial capital** for scaling up production and marketing efforts.
- **Educating the local market** about the health benefits of millet-based products.
- **Competing with established snack brands** in the health food segment.
- **Establishing an efficient supply chain** to handle perishable ingredients.
- **Navigating regulatory requirements** for food safety certifications.









## Flora Khiangte, Owner of ZeroTru-Food Processing

- Aizawl city, Mizoram

**F**lora, a passionate first-generation entrepreneur, is weaving a story of tradition, empowerment, and wellness through her small manufacturing unit. Her company focuses on crafting authentic herbal products, working hand-in-hand with farmers and rural women.

Flora champions the preservation of traditional food processing techniques. She empowers rural women through training programs in transforming glutinous rice, medicinal herbs, and local harvests into delicious candies, jams, and rejuvenating juices. Since 2022, Flora and her dedicated team have been processing Roselle Hibiscus into tea and non-alcoholic beverages. By partnering with Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), she ensures the consistent quality of their organic and chemical-free goods. She also processes and sell other daily used spices, such as Cinnamon, Pepper, Turmeric, etc. Operating in a hilly region, achieving complete organic certification presents a challenge, but Flora and her team remain dedicated to sustainable practices.

Flora's dedication extends beyond production. Her employment model adapts to seasonal variations, fluctuating with harvest cycles. This ensures fair compensation for farmers while providing them with a reliable market for their crops. Her vision is to expand her reach, empower more communities, and elevate Northeast India's rich heritage of traditional medicine and food processing onto the national stage. By fostering sustainable practices and advocating for accessible financial resources, Flora aspires to create a thriving ecosystem that promotes both economic growth and well-being.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Seasonal Workforce:** Employment fluctuates due to seasonal crop cycles, making it challenging to maintain a consistent workforce year-round.
2. **Organic Certification:** Obtaining full organic certification in hilly regions is resource-intensive due to strict adherence requirements.
3. **Financial Constraints:** High-interest rates on working capital loans and immediate payment requirements for crop procurement strain resources, with limited government support.
4. **Logistical Challenges:** Inefficient postal services and limited access to efficient courier options result in unreliable deliveries and increased shipping costs, particularly in rural areas.











# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF NAGALAND









## Neitshopeu Thopi- Chizami Weavers

- Kohima, Nagaland

**F**ounded by Thopi in 2008, Chizami Weavers is a home-based enterprise rooted in Nagaland that has become a powerful platform for women's economic empowerment. By transforming traditional Naga weaving into a source of sustainable livelihoods, the organization connects over 900 women weavers while preserving the region's rich cultural heritage.

Chizami Weavers specializes in handcrafted textiles, contemporary garments, and home furnishings. Utilizing traditional looms and local production techniques, the enterprise maintains a decentralized model, allowing women to integrate weaving seamlessly into their daily lives. This approach not only empowers women in rural Nagaland but also revitalizes age-old weaving traditions, ensuring their continued relevance in a modern world.

The foundation of Chizami Weavers was made possible with initial funding from the Global Fund for Women, an international grantmaking organization that supports grassroots initiatives advancing women's rights. Founded in 1987, the Global Fund for Women has awarded over 12,000 grants totaling nearly \$185 million to organizations in 176 countries. It provides flexible funding and resources to empower women-led movements, focusing on economic security, education, health, and leadership.

At the heart of Chizami Weavers is a commitment to preserving Nagaland's textile traditions while fostering community-driven development. By connecting a network of weavers who work from their homes, the organization enables women to balance their domestic responsibilities with income-generating activities. This model ensures that rural women, often excluded from conventional employment opportunities, have access to dignified and flexible livelihoods.

The products crafted by Chizami Weavers are meticulously handmade, with machines used only for sewing. This dedication to craftsmanship not only upholds the integrity of traditional weaving techniques but also ensures high-quality output. The enterprise's emphasis on sourcing local materials and minimizing environmental impact reflects its commitment to sustainability, making each product both beautiful and eco-friendly.

Chizami Weavers has embraced digital platforms to expand its reach and amplify its mission. Through its Instagram handle, "Chizami Weaves," the enterprise showcases its products and promotes Nagaland's textile traditions to a broader audience. By selling products online, Chizami Weavers has successfully bridged the gap between rural artisans and urban consumers, creating new markets for handcrafted goods across India.

Under Thopi's leadership, Chizami Weavers exemplifies how tradition and innovation can coexist to create meaningful change. By prioritizing quality, sustainability, and empowerment, the organization has become a beacon of hope for women in rural Nagaland. Beyond providing economic opportunities, it fosters a sense of pride and purpose among its weavers, preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.

Chizami Weavers is more than just an enterprise—it is a testament to the transformative power of grassroots initiatives. By combining traditional craftsmanship with modern outreach strategies, it continues to inspire and empower, weaving a brighter future for women across Nagaland and beyond.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Raw Material Procurement:** Difficulty sourcing high-quality local materials
2. **Transportation Costs:** Expensive shipping of materials and products
3. **Infrastructure Limitations:** Poor road conditions hindering distribution
4. **Market Accessibility:** Connecting rural artisans with broader markets









# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF SIKKIM









## Reena Rai

- Pottery Business and the Secretary of Sikkim Women Entrepreneur Forum Society

**R**eena Rai is the secretary of Sikkim Women Entrepreneur Forum Society and an entrepreneur with a background in ceramics. Based in Pakyong, Sikkim, she is known for her innovative approach to pottery and her commitment to empowering rural women through skill development and sustainable economic practices. As a key figure in the Sikkim Women Entrepreneurs Forum (SWEF), Reena has been actively advocating for improved logistical infrastructure and greater economic opportunities for women in Sikkim and the Northeast.

Her journey began with her love for ceramics and a desire to blend her artistry with social impact. She established a small pottery unit in Pakyong, where she works with local clay to craft functional and decorative ceramic items. She promotes sustainability by integrating local resources, such as Sikkim's rich clay deposits, into her work.

A significant part of her work focuses on training and employing rural women. Leveraging various government schemes, she has conducted skill development workshops, equipping women with pottery-making techniques. After training, some participants are hired to work in her unit, creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

Reena Rai envisions a future where Sikkimese women are not only skilled artisans but also empowered entrepreneurs, contributing to the state's economic development. She hopes to expand her pottery unit, integrate more women into the workforce, and create a robust ecosystem for entrepreneurship in Sikkim.

### Key Challenges:

1. **Market Accessibility:** Limited ability to penetrate larger markets beyond local boundaries due to Sikkim's geographical location.
2. **Supply Chain Complexities:** Exorbitant transportation costs for raw materials like clay, particularly those sourced from distant locations like Delhi.
3. **Taxation Burden:** GST on interstate raw material transfers significantly increasing overall product costs.
4. **Subsidy Inequities:** Government financial support disproportionately favoring large-scale industries, thereby marginalizing small enterprises.









# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF TRIPURA









## Incubator Innovator

- Archita Roy, Founder, Kanup Hatchery, Agartala

**D**eep in the heart of Tripura, a state brimming with resilience, lives Archita Roy, a woman who defied societal expectations to chart her path to success. In 1989, freshly graduated from Amtali, on the outskirts of Agartala, Archita faced a life-altering decision. While her family encouraged her to marry or pursue a government job, she made an unconventional choice-entrepreneurship.

In 1995, inspired by transformative training programs for women entrepreneurs, Archita ventured into the hatchery business. Despite her father's initial reservations and societal norms that challenged her independence, she persevered. Today, she is one of Tripura's notable women entrepreneurs, running a thriving hatchery and providing employment to others.

Starting her poultry farm in a remote location posed significant challenges, but Archita embraced modern technology to revolutionize her business. She invested in a state-of-the-art incubator, which significantly increased her chick production. Her hatchery, a proprietor-run business with six employees (including one female worker), produces an average of 2,20,000 eggs at a time, generating monthly revenue of ₹2 lakh. While her primary market is Tripura, she occasionally explores opportunities in Guwahati. Her profit margin, influenced by market conditions and price fluctuations in feed and chicks, ranges from ₹18,000 to ₹1 lakh per month.

However, growth came with its own set of challenges. The local hatchery market became saturated, demanding innovative strategies to sustain her business. Archita's story is not only about navigating a competitive market but also about overcoming the unique hurdles faced by women entrepreneurs.

Securing finances was an arduous five-year journey, filled with bureaucratic delays and gender bias. Loans were disbursed in installments, forcing her to adapt her production capacity accordingly. Archita also faced a two-year legal battle to obtain a capital subsidy of ₹17 lakh from the Tripura Development Industry Corporation. Reflecting on her experience, she remarked, "To receive the capital subsidy, I engaged in a lengthy legal dispute. Ultimately, I prevailed, securing the funding."

Beyond financial challenges, societal norms often cast doubt on her prolonged absences from home. Yet, as her achievements gained recognition and her business flourished, those doubts gave way to admiration.

Archita's success caught the attention of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), a social organization empowering women across Eastern and Northeastern India. Supported by the US Consulate General in Kolkata, AWE has been fostering first-generation women entrepreneurs in nano-businesses such as food processing, garments, and beauty products. Over 24 years, AWE has worked with over 400 entrepreneurs, offering capacity-building programs focused on business development, digital marketing, and networking.

Through AWE, Archita gained invaluable knowledge and tools to expand her business. Participating in workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions, she enhanced her digital presence, created a professional logo, and accessed platforms like Her Entrepreneurial Network. State-level bootcamps and buyer-seller









meets facilitated investment pitches and market access, equipping Archita with the resources to scale her operations.

Today, Archita stands as a beacon of inspiration for aspiring women entrepreneurs. Her hatchery, a testament to her grit and determination, continues to thrive, defying limitations and showcasing the power of perseverance. By breaking barriers and embracing innovation, Archita has not only transformed her life but also inspired countless women in Tripura and beyond to dream big and pursue their goals

## Key Challenges:

1. **Market Saturation:** The increasing number of hatcheries in Tripura created a competitive landscape, making it difficult to differentiate and expand market share.
2. **Limited Market Reach:** Relying primarily on local markets in Agartala and Guwahati restricted customer base and potential for growth.
3. **Infrastructure Constraints:** Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, such as unreliable electricity supply and poor transportation facilities, could impact operations and increase costs.
4. **Access to Capital:** Securing loans and capital subsidies involved lengthy processes and bureaucratic hurdles, delaying business expansion and growth.
5. **Balancing Work and Family:** Juggling the demands of a hatchery business with family responsibilities could be challenging, especially for women entrepreneurs facing societal expectations.









## Crafting Opportunities, Bridging Traditions

- Akhyasree, Founder of Silpakarman, Agartala, Tripura

Amidst the vibrant cultural landscape of Tripura, Akhyasree stands out as a dynamic entrepreneur who merged her love for the North-East region with her passion for entrepreneurship. Graduating with a vision to do something unique, Akhyasree ventured into merchant exporting, seamlessly connecting with manufacturers and international buyers. However, her true calling came from a deeper connection to the handloom and handicraft traditions of the region, inspired by her mother's love for these artisanal crafts.

Her journey into entrepreneurship started with a proprietorship under her father's name, exporting furniture to Australia, Sweden, and Norway. But as she delved deeper, she saw a critical gap-local artisans, particularly in bamboo crafts, lacked consistent work and reliable production schedules. Realizing this challenge, Akhyasree launched \*Silpakarman\* in 2016 to streamline production and provide year-long work to artisans in Tripura and Assam, with a specific focus on bamboo products.

One of the key issues she identified was that while countries like China and Vietnam dominated the bamboo industry, India, with its vast species diversity, struggled with production consistency and lack of infrastructure. To overcome these gaps, Akhyasree worked closely with women artisans in clusters, especially in Tripura, to improve the supply chain and ensure that products met international standards.

In 2017, her venture took an innovative turn when she, along with her co-founder (her younger sister), developed a product called \*BeYouTea\*, a bamboo leaf tea rich in silica, calcium, and potassium-nutrients beneficial for skin, hair, and nails. This product has become one of Silpakarman's flagship offerings, drawing attention both domestically and internationally.

Despite facing several challenges, including inconsistent production quality and logistical difficulties, Akhyasree's meticulous planning and innovative strategies helped her navigate the complexities of running a social enterprise. She has collaborated with government organizations like Tripura Bamboo Mission and Bamboo & Cane Development Institute (BCDI) to support artisans and develop sustainable bamboo-based products.

In terms of finance, Akhyasree's story is a testament to foresight and careful planning. She leveraged funds initially intended for her higher education and approached her business with a disciplined financial strategy, securing grants and managing resources efficiently. Unlike many other entrepreneurs, she has successfully avoided the need for external funding or loans, despite the financial challenges inherent in running a social enterprise.

Her business now spans multiple verticals, including bamboo-based products for construction, industrial uses, and self-care. Akhyasree has recently started focusing on relocating parts of her business, such as warehousing and shipping, to Delhi for better logistical support. Her passion for empowering artisans, especially women, is evident in the way she handles social issues, offering digital literacy programs, shelter, and education for the children of her workers.











## Achievements and Innovations:

- Successfully launched **\*BeYouTea\***, a bamboo leaf tea product that has gained attention for its health benefits.
- Worked with **bamboo cellulose extraction technologies** to create innovative products.
- Secured consistent work for artisans through government support and streamlined production processes.

Recently, she and her company were onboarded into the **One District One Product (ODOP)** scheme by DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade), which has provided crucial support for their export operations. Through this initiative, Silpakarman continues to explore new markets and expand its global reach, all while staying rooted in the heritage of Northeast India.

Akshyasree has introduced an education support program at her production center. By providing tutoring services for women artisans' children, she is not only fostering a stronger sense of community but is also helping reduce the educational responsibilities that often burden working women artisans.

## Future Plans:

With an eye on growth, Akshyasree is moving part of her operations to Delhi to tap into larger markets, while continuing to focus on the North-East's rich craft traditions. She also plans to expand into new bamboo product verticals, including industrial applications and construction materials.

Akshyasree's journey, much like her products, is rooted in the resilience and creativity of the North-East. Through **\*Silpakarman\***, she not only preserves the region's artisanal heritage but also provides sustainable livelihoods to its people, especially women.

## Key Challenges:

- **Inconsistent Production:** Early struggles with local artisans led to delays and quality issues, requiring constant oversight.
- **Market Competition:** Competing with established bamboo markets like China and Vietnam, which have more streamlined production processes.
- **Logistical Issues:** In rural clusters, particularly near the Bangladesh border, transportation is unreliable and slow, causing delays in getting products to markets.
- **Partnership Compatibility:** Encountered challenges with certain partners due to misaligned attitudes and working styles, leading to difficult collaboration decisions.
- **Social Barriers:** Many of the artisans she works with, particularly women, face domestic challenges, including lack of mobile literacy and domestic violence, which she tries to mitigate through various programs.







# Weaving Dreams, Empowering Lives

- Lovely Baruah, Founder & Visionary of FitBird, Agartala, Tripura

**Mission Statement:** "Uplifting the artisans of Tripura by preserving traditional craftsmanship, enhancing sustainable practices, and empowering women through skills development."

## About Lovely Baruah

Lovely Baruah, an Assamese designer and former Hindustan Unilever corporate professional, made Tripura her home in 2013 after marrying a Tripura native. Upon moving, Lovely saw tremendous potential in the craftsmanship of local artisans, particularly women skilled in handloom and handicrafts. Inspired, she launched "FitBird", a self-funded enterprise dedicated to empowering these artisans, creating sustainable markets for their products, and preserving cultural heritage.

## The Birth of FitBird

Through FitBird, Lovely aims to address the gaps in production and market accessibility faced by local artisans. Her foundation offers artisans training in product finishing, quality control, and modern design, with a focus on sustainable, eco-friendly products created from locally sourced materials, including bamboo, straw, cane, and jute. Her mission prioritizes self-reliance, with FitBird only utilizing materials native to Tripura to reduce environmental impact and enhance regional pride.

## FitBird's Operations and Artisan Network:

- **Unit and Workforce:** FitBird has a dedicated unit in Tripura where products are finalized and prepared for market. This unit employs 7 salaried artisans trained directly by Lovely, focusing on quality and consistency across all items. These artisans not only produce goods but also help in finishing products from various districts, ensuring each piece meets FitBird's standards.
- **Raw Material Collection:** FitBird sources materials like bamboo, jute, and cane from across Tripura's districts, tapping into the region's abundant resources. By gathering raw materials directly from villages and rural communities, Lovely ensures fair compensation for artisans while preserving traditional techniques.
- **Product Range and Offerings:** FitBird's products include bags, home decor items, souvenirs, and other daily-use goods crafted with a blend of bamboo, handloom, and other natural materials. These products are carefully curated to connect consumers to Tripura's cultural legacy while also being sustainable and practical.
- **Physical and Online Market Presence:** FitBird products are available at their store on Sakuntala Road in Tripura, providing customers with the essential touch-and-feel experience. The foundation also leverages online platforms like Amazon, Meesho, and Flipkart to reach a wider market.







## Cluster-Based Expansion Plans:

Lovely is actively working on creating production clusters in various Tripura districts, allowing artisans to work collectively, streamline timelines, and increase efficiency. This model will help address issues around consistency and timely delivery, particularly important for orders with strict deadlines. Additionally, she has set up a hub in Noida to improve market access in North India, connecting Tripura's artisans with broader customer bases in Delhi and beyond.

## Key Milestones and Expansion:

- **Established Physical Store:** Located on Sakuntala Road, Tripura, offering a space to showcase products directly to customers.
- **Team of Skilled Artisans:** Seven salaried artisans at the unit ensure product quality and support in finishing work from other districts.
- **Cluster Development:** Plans for artisan clusters to optimize production timelines and foster collaboration.
- **North India Expansion:** A distribution hub in Noida provides broader market reach and better logistics for Tripura's artisans.

## Challenges Faced:

- **Market Awareness:** Many consumers are unfamiliar with incorporating handicrafts into daily life, limiting local demand.
- **Transportation and Logistics:** Transporting fragile products from Tripura poses risks of damage and increases delivery costs.
- **Funding Limitations:** Lovely relies solely on personal savings, having neither grants nor loans, which poses financial strain.
- **Consistency in Production:** Artisans working individually face difficulties with delivery timelines, necessitating cluster-based collaboration.
- With FitBird Foundation, Lovely aims to deepen market connections for Tripura's artisans, preserving cultural heritage and fostering a sustainable, community-centered model for traditional craft. Through her work, she continues to uplift local artisans, empower women, and enhance the reach of Tripura's traditional crafts across India.







# CONCLUSION

The stories in this book highlight the resilience and determination of women entrepreneurs in Northeast India. From traditional crafts to agri-business and emerging industries, these women have navigated systemic barriers to build their enterprises. Their experiences reveal persistent challenges—limited access to finance, bureaucratic hurdles in securing loans, and restricted digital and market access that hinder scalability. Infrastructure deficits, including poor transportation networks and a lack of childcare support, further constrain business growth. Societal norms continue to shape women's participation in trade and entrepreneurship, adding another layer of complexity to their journeys.

Despite policy efforts, significant gaps remain. While some northeastern states have made some progress in fostering an enabling environment for women-led businesses, others still struggle with regulatory bottlenecks and insufficient institutional support. A more targeted approach is needed—one that simplifies regulatory processes, expands financial inclusion and invests in key infrastructure such as logistics hubs, digital connectivity, and market linkages. Addressing these challenges is critical to unlocking the full potential of women entrepreneurs in the region.

This book serves as both a reflection of the entrepreneurial spirit of the region and a roadmap for future interventions—one that policymakers, business leaders, and support organizations can use to foster a more inclusive and dynamic economic landscape. The Government of India's emphasis on Nari Shakti and women-led development could meaningfully translate into action in the Northeast when policy efforts are region-specific and attuned to their ground realities. Addressing these gendered barriers are thus, not only necessary for gender equity but also for the broader economic growth of the Northeast and the country as a whole.











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