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WIGC FOR WEAKER SECTION

WOMEN'S INCOME GENERATION CENTRE (WIGC)

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Background

In 1994 founded the Women's Income Generation Centre (WIGC) at Thoubal Ningombam, Thoubal District, Manipur. Since inception, the Organisation has been continuously working as a full service provider of programmes, products and services with the underlying objective of poverty alleviation through self-employment with various income generating activities. To this end, the handicrafts activities of WIGC especially in Kouna crafts along with other horticulture and agro-based initiatives in hill areas as a part of resource mobilization are of great importance.



Registered under the Manipur Societies Registration Act, 1989 (Manipur Act 1 of 1990), WIGC has some odd thousands of individual members and beneficiaries with whom the Organisation has been working over the years in various economic activities. The job-oriented lifeskill trainings are continuously conducted throughout the year in targeted areas. Through this specific activities, WIGC is taking a pivotal role in income generation among the rural poor, artisans and destitute women. In other words, WIGC is a common platform for the people of Manipur to build a vibrant society and strengthen the community people through hard work and dignity of labour with a dedication to provide safe, rapid and highly specialized economic sustainability livelihoods.



Hence, WIGC has become one of the leading establishments in voluntary sector in Manipur for producing world-class handicrafts products specially in Kouna and allied products, which are already acclaimed in domestic and international markets.

The immediate beneficiaries and target groups of the Organisation consist of marginalized families, destitute women and children, hill tribes (STs), SCs, minority communities, and people living in difficult circumstances. To

attain the desired results, WIGC closely works hand in hand with public and private agencies such as local clubs, community leaders, Meira Paibis (women pressure groups), parents, guardians, senior citizens, community health workers, professionals, intellectuals, etc.

Objectives

WIGC works with the following objectives:

- To uplift lives socio-economically for self-reliance;
- To protect destitute women and children;
- To alleviate poverty with income generating activities with special attention to rural areas and unorganized sector;
- To focus on groups which are disadvantageously placed in society, but having great potential for socially and economically productive activities; and
- To support the rural and suburban poor especially the minorities, people in the hills and border areas.
- To support and extend optimum service to people living in difficult circumstances.
- To explore natural resources and human capital of Manipur through land development and agro-tourism.



Motto

Service, Equality, Peace and Development.

Mission/Vision

The welfare, upliftment and empowerment of weaker section of society, particularly the poor and the underprivileged, destitute women and children with a relentless effort to ensure a life with dignity and prosperity by strengthening human resource and their other capabilities through advocacy, improved knowledge and life skill education.

Strategy

The strategy of the organization involves

- a) Making short, medium and long term goals to establish a close relationship between the organization and its different stakeholder groups.
- b) Mobilizing human capital to explore opportunities for social enterprise/ proprietary initiatives.
- c) Addressing important stakeholder needs promptly and efficiently.
- d) The identification of the scope of the activities or programmes through which those goals and objectives are to be achieved.
- e) Emphasizing on outcomes, rather than outputs.



Achievements

- The UNDP Award (2000)
- The State Youth Award (2004).
- The District Youth Award (1997-98)

Overview of the Programmes during the Year

In continuation of the previous years, this year too, undivided attention was given to the horticultural activities as a part of the ongoing WIGC agro-tourism project being taken up at its project areas located at Thoubal Khunou and Lishamlök hill areas. In this work, more improvement was witnessed in plantation activities in the farm land.

As usual, WIGC is making continuous inputs for strengthening the unorganized sectors such as SHGs, artisans and other underprivileged community people by helping them to identify their area-specific problems and remedial measures with need-based programmes of the organization.

While executing various programmes, WIGC makes every possible attempt to use judiciously both human and natural resources of Manipur.

PROGRAMMES

Children Home for Girls

The Children Home for Girls (also known as Ashram for Children) is run under the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur under the ICP Scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Having the intake capacity of 50 inmates, the Home provides food, accommodation and other support services for the inmate children. The Home is implemented within the framework of The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000/The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (No. 2 of 2016).



The Home aims to be a role-model. It is more than a Home; it is a centre for learning and development too. Apart from formal education and vocational training, the inmates are also facilitated with activities like games & sports, meditation, martial arts (self-defense techniques), outing, drawing and other extra-curricular activities to nurture creativity and personal growth of the children.

Swadhar Greh



Located at Oinam Bazar, Bishnupur District, the Swadhar Greh provides food, accommodation and other support services including vocational training programmes for the inmates with a provision for caring their children. The inmates of the Greh consist of widows, divorcees, etc. They are also provided counseling and behavioral training along with capacity building, socialization, spiritual classes, etc.

The Greh strictly adopts the basic principle to rehabilitate the inmates socio- economically as early as possible.

Support services are also extended to the rehabilitated ex-inmates with formation of SHGs, micro-credit with banks, skill upgradation programmes, advocacy and awareness generation on various women social issues. As a matter of fact, the socio-economic conditions of the rehabilitated women are fairly improved within short time. Hence, the role of the Greh is not only providing shelter but addressing the specific needs of the women in difficult circumstances through a home-based holistic and integrated approach to empower them.

Craft-based Resource Centre in Cane & Bamboo Crafts

The Resource Centre functions as a resource hub for cane and bamboo crafts. It extends various services to individuals and groups regarding the craft. Services available in the Centre include in-house training on skill designs, field training through experts, domestic marketing of artisans' products, conducting awareness camps, professional support for making projects for different projects, etc. In short, the Centre acts as a bridge between artisans/entrepreneurs and buyers. Also, it is an information centre for the chosen crafts.



Moreover, the Resource Centre is working as a link among different players of the craft environment by acting as an incubator for different developing enterprises for cane and bamboo and allied crafts. With the increasing awareness and concerns in all fields, this Centre functions more than just a depository or distribution center of information materials. Rather, the Center can actually take on more proactive role to create substantial resources and to improve access to information. Hence, the Resource Centre has strengthened the in-house and field trainings of skill development, soft skill development, design and technology with proper expertise and tools and equipment.

Plantation of Bamboo for the Resource Centre

As usual, the plantation of bamboos has been a regular activity for WIGC, particularly for the Resource Centre. The bamboo species include Kenokiya, Catabas, Catas, Moubi, Unan, Maribop, Shaneibi, Khokwa, Nonga, Oui, Utang.

WIGC Agri-Project:

Agro-based Tourism Centre under WIGC Agri-Project

In this project, WIGC covers an area of around 2,15,76,000 sq. ft. The project is underway in the hill and foothill areas of Thoubal and Lishamlok villages under Village No.19, Yaithibi, Thoubal Khunou, Thoubal District, Manipur. The main activities of the Centre are:

1) Kouna Plantation

Located at the foothills of Thoubal Khunou (SC) and Lishamlok (ST) villages, WIGC's Kouna Plantation has been successfully producing Kouna raw-material in every quarter of the year. A consistent supply of Kouna



raw-material to the artisans and entrepreneurs is the primary objective of this initiative. As an integrated mixed-farming, fishery is also done with this Kouna plantation.



As a matter of fact, there has been a tremendous increase in the demand of Kouna raw-material in Manipur primarily because of the demand of Kouna products in domestic and global markets. It is evident that the Kouna artisans and entrepreneurs have difficulties in supplying bulk purchases of Kouna products due to shortage of

Kouna raw-material. Hopefully, this deficiency can be minimized to a certain degree with the present Kouna plantation of WIGC.

Kouna and Kouna Crafts: A WIGC Part

Kouna craft has a unique place in the global handicrafts market. Kouna, which is locally called, is a class of reed usually growing wild in the shallow lakes and marshy land, ponds, canals, along the river and lake beaches in the valley area of Manipur. However, with the increasing popularity of Kouna craft products, the demand for Kouna raw-material has tremendously been increased. As a result, the Kouna farmlands have been developed in different parts of Manipur, particularly in the areas of Khangabok, Langmeithek, Sikhong of Thoubal District of Manipur.

During the last two decades, Kouna craft has become a highly potential craft in national and international markets. This crafts has now been taken up by many individuals, artisans and

entrepreneurs as a gainful economic activity by a large number of artisans/entrepreneurs. As a clear result, both



the plantation of Kouna and mass production of Kouna-made items are on the rise. Hence, a good number



of farmers have developed new Kouna plantation farms to meet the ever-increasing demand of Kouna raw material.

Evidently, the flourishing Kouna craft has made people more aware of the potential of Kouna plant in handicrafts sector. It is true that the surging demands for Kouna products surpass the current production in the state.



In the meantime, WIGC, as usual, has a firm determination to contribute its share in maintaining ecological balance and promoting eco-friendly products. This is the primary reason why WIGC has taken up the Kouna plantation project with its own resources with an additional objective to boost the overall Kouna productivity and to generate more employment among women of poor families.

At present, WIGC is producing a good number of diversified Kouna items for which the Organisation is working with a large number of artisans, especially women who belong to various communities of Manipur, both hill and valley. They are qualified trained artisans under WIGC to make internationally acclaimed items. The artisans are also provided relevant support services with special arrangements with nationalized banks for micro-credit.

2) Trees Plantation

Tree plantation is a regular activity of WIGC over the years. It is a part of the ongoing development works of Agro-based Tourism Centre. Apart from the collective plantation of medicinal plants in the area, several varieties of tress species are grown including Teak, *Usoi*, *Wang*, *Uningthou*, *Taimaren*, Pine, *Tera*, *Uyung*, etc.

3) Mixed Plantation

Mixed plantation includes the plantation of *Yendem*, *Umorok* (King Chilly), *Napakpi*, *Arum*, *Komprat*, *Samaroi*, Mustard, Pumpkin, Brinjal, *Torbot*, Sweet potato, Tongningkhok, Nakupi, beans, etc. It is widely taken up at the WIGC farm areas and WIGC Complex, Thoubal Wangmataba.

Mention may be made that WIGC always prioritizes the socio-economic development of the surrounding people of the project area while taking up projects. Hence, the optimum benefit first goes to the surrounding villagers.



Fish Farming

WIGC takes up fishery (pisciculture) in conjunction with the Kouna plantation. Most of the Kouna farms are also the fish farms. Selected fish varieties including local fishes are reared in most of the Kouna ponds. This activity of fish farming can to some extent generate revenue.

Animal Husbandry

As a part of income generation activities, WIGC has taken up piggery and cow-rearing. As many as 15 pigs and 17 milking cows are presently catered under this activity.

Skill Development Programme on Hospitality and Beauty Culture

As a new initiative, WIGC has taken up training programmes on hospitality and beauty culture as a part of skill development programme for youths. The initiative is mainly carried out for self-employment of the unemployed youths. WIGC is committed towards expanding the skill development programmes under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India.

Working Women Hostel with Day Care Centre

The Hostel is located inside WIGC Complex, Thoubal Wangmataba, near Thoubal College. With a 100 intake capacity, the Hostel has also Day Care Centre. It serves as a home-away-home for those working women and girls of various walks of life. The peaceful and homely environment around the Hostel with paddy fields, Kouna farms, nearby hillocks – represents a closure look with natural beauty with fresh air. Presently, craft persons, working women and students are staying in the Hostel with safety and comfort.



Rural IT Youth Development Centre (RITYDC)

The RITYDC works as a network for rural youths extending youth-oriented facilities like computer education, the Internet, library and information channels, etc. by providing newspapers and other periodicals. In short, the primary objective of the Centre is to facilitate opportunities for full participation of rural youth in the overall development of the nation right from community level with the spirit of voluntarism. In other words, the Centre works as a platform for rural youths to take part in nation building.

Handloom Activities

Apart from handicrafts, WIGC also strongly focuses on the promotion of handloom activities in Manipur. Over the years, WIGC has been putting considerable efforts to promote the handloom products of Manipur by developing its more weaving units with special attention to upgrade technical and design inputs of the weavers. To generate more employment among women, particularly rural and hill tribes, WIGC has renovated its looms with new design and technology inputs.



Tie-Dye



Since time immemorial, the practice of dyeing has been a traditional practice in Manipur with natural dye methods. Different types of clothes and traditional attires are normally dyed in this practice. To preserve the tradition with the new scientific inputs, the process of bio-dye or natural-dye is actively taken up by WIGC. It has a good effect when it applies to handicrafts products too, especially Kouna products. Presently, locally available plants such as Heibung (*Garcinia xanthochymus*), Heinoujom (*Averrhoa carambola*), Kusumlei (*Carthamus tinctorius*), Yaingang (*Curcuma*

domestica Valetton), Ureirom (*bixa orellana*), Yongchak (*Parkia roxburghii*), Kuhl (*Pasania pachyphylla*) etc. are used in dyeing process.

Shoe Making

The shoe making work of WIGC with Kouna and allied material has its own popularity in Kouna crafts. Right from the raw-materials used in the making of shoes up to the designs, WIGC has applied various innovative methods to make the products more attractive and user-friendly. Since Kouna shoes are quite new in its own way, the products are successfully sold in local and domestic markets.



Interestingly, this craft has benefited a large number of artisans. The comfort and durability of the products have made it popular amongst the crafts.

Doll & Toys Making

The making of dolls and toy has been developed by WIGC to generate income especially for young talented girls. Items of this crafts include both traditional and modern design products. Most of items made are small items and even this

work can be done indoors in well-lit rooms.

Promotion of SHGs

WIGC is synonymous with the promotion of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). To streamline the potential of women's groups in socio-economic development initiatives all the promotional programmes taken up by WIGC are mostly credit-based and skill-enhancement-oriented with a focus on poverty alleviation.

The Organisation has established SHGs at various parts of Manipur particularly at Lilong (Minority), Kabrang (ST), Lishamlok (ST), Oinam (OBC), Phoudel Keiranbi (OBC/Minority). This year too, new target locations for the formation of SHGs are identified specially at Phayeng (SC), Sandang Shenba Maring village (ST) and Phunal Maring village (ST).



In this promotional activities, support services are extended to SHGs including motivation, formation, capacity building and life skill trainings with micro credit facilities, etc. The undergoing activities have promptly addressed various issues faced by the women from time to time.

Interestingly, the SHGs under WIGC have got rapid stride in their economic activities. Apart from micro-credit facilities with SBI, members of the groups are also benefited with health insurance, registration with M&SEC, Imphal, field exposure, etc.

Evidently, women in groups have come forward to take part in social activities vis-à-vis their onus in the family, which is leading to self-sustainability.

Welfare Programme for Hill People



WIGC has put every possible effort for the development of the hill people of Manipur in the sense that the socio-economic development of the people in hills will be another major achievement in the developmental history of Manipur. Hence, WIGC is bringing out various welfare programmes such as life skill training programmes including handicrafts training, plantation of new cash crops, etc. in association with the villagers. In addition, WIGC also conducts awareness generation programmes on resource mobilization, ecological balance, and other similar

programmes in the hill villages.

Celebration of the 25th Foundation Day/ Children's Day Celebration

WIGC celebrated its 25th Foundation Day Celebration on the 7th November, 2021 with great joy and cheerful gathering. Distributions of certificates, children's variety programmes, etc. were the main items of the programme. Also, during the programme, felicitations and gifts were offered to widows, old women and children.

SPECIAL ONE-DAY PROGRAMMES

- Awareness Programme on HIV/AIDS
- Awareness Programme on Wasteland Development
- Promotion of Eco-friendly Products
- Awareness Programme Dry-flower making
- Awareness Programme Nursery Plantation
- Awareness Programme on Medicinal Plants
- Awareness Programme on Entrepreneurship Development
- Seminar on the Role of Youth in Nation Building
- Open Discussion on Employment generation through handloom and handicrafts
- Awareness Programme on Socio-economic Development in the hills.
- Awareness Programme on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.
- Awareness Programme on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

GENERAL PROGRAMMES (Days of Observance)

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| • Khongjom Day | • Road Safety Week |
| • May Day | • National Youth Day |
| • Gandhi Jayanti | • Mother's Day |
| • World AIDS Day | • World Environment Day |
| • Vigilance Day/Week | • Patriots Day |
| • International Volunteers Day | • Independence Day |
| • International Women's Day | • Irabot Day |
| • Martyr's Day | |

Conclusion

Since the beginning, WIGC has been a part of solution in terms of employment generation, care and protection of destitute women and children, and above all, sustainable livelihoods. The overall development of the society is the sum of the individual contributions from every angle. These contributions again are the integral part of the nation building. Considering this, WIGC has the obligation to be a part of nation building at its best level. Hence, WIGC has miles to go to together for a stronger country.

