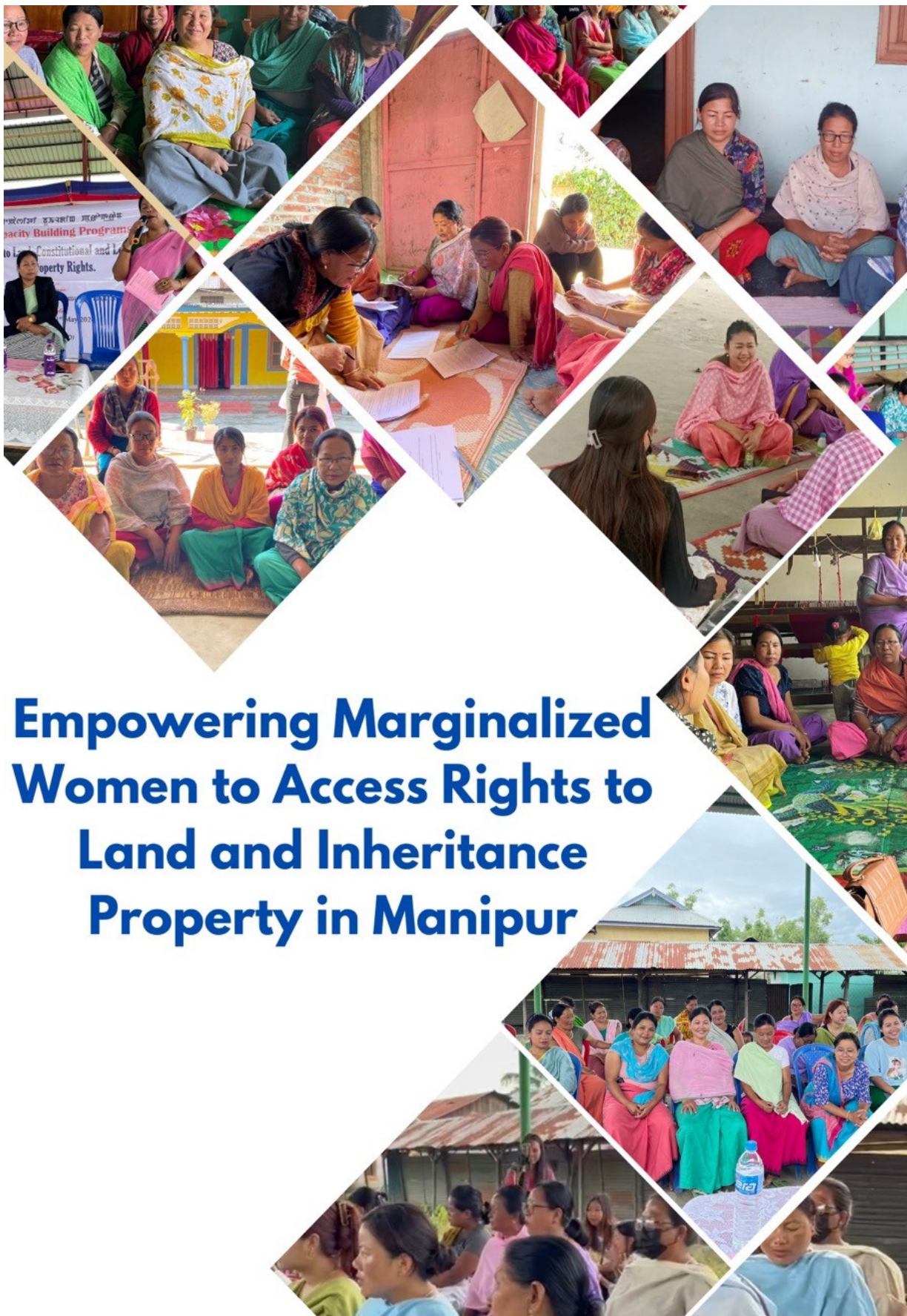




Empowering Marginalized Women to Access Rights to Land and Inheritance Property in Manipur

Section A:

1. Summary of the project:

Project Title: Empowering marginalized women to access rights to land and inheritance property in Manipur

The Empowering Marginalized Women to Access Rights to Land and Inheritance Property in Manipur project was launched to address the deep-rooted gender inequalities that prevent women from exercising their legal rights to property and inheritance. Supported by WWDP-Germany, this initiative aimed to bridge the gap between legal rights and actual implementation by raising awareness, strengthening community support, and facilitating access to legal aid services.

General Objective

The project aimed to enhance the capacities of 400 Meira Paibi (Women Torch Bearer) leaders to help bridge the gaps in women's property rights, including land ownership, across Manipur.

Specific Objectives

The project focused on three key areas:

- a. Empowering Women Leaders: Equipping 400 women leaders from four districts of Manipur with the necessary information, skills, and capacities to act as peer leaders, expanding their knowledge to another 1,600 people.
- b. Advocacy & Social Acceptance: Increasing social acceptance of women's rights through advocacy and engagement with various stakeholders, including community leaders, policymakers, and customary authorities.
- c. Access to Legal Remedies: Expanding access to legal aid by strengthening legal helpline services and ensuring that women can access free legal assistance to claim their inheritance and land rights.

In many communities, women face customary and social barriers that deny them access to land ownership, despite the legal protections granted by the Indian Constitution and other national laws. The project worked closely with local women's groups, Meira Paibis, legal service providers, and policymakers to create an enabling environment where women could claim their rights without fear of discrimination or backlash. By engaging with religious and customary leaders, district legal authorities, and grassroots women's groups, the project sought to challenge traditional norms that have long restricted women's access to property.

The project was implemented over a two-year period, beginning in Imphal-East and Imphal-West in its first phase before expanding to Thoubal and Bishnupur in its second phase. By the end of the initiative, the project had trained hundreds of women, facilitated multiple legal claims, and influenced broader community discussions on women's inheritance rights.

Although the project has officially concluded, its impact continues through trained women leaders, legal aid connections, and policy advocacy efforts that remain active in the community. The groundwork laid by this initiative provides a strong foundation for future advocacy and legal interventions, ensuring that women's inheritance rights remain a central issue in the fight for gender equality in Manipur.

2. Expected Outcomes:

- Outcome 1:** Increased awareness among women about their legal rights related to land and Inheritance.
- Outcome 2:** Poor, distress and marginalized women can claim their inheritance property rights including land which is guarantee by Constitution of India as a human right and
- Outcome 3:** Enhanced gender equity by expanding women's access to justice, women's rights to property, opportunities to exercise their rights in the workplace, community and home.

3. Duration: 2 years

4. Workplan:

[illegible]

Section B:

1. Activities carried out during the reporting period as per workplan.

Over the past two years, the project has worked closely with women from different districts, helping them understand and claim their inheritance rights. In the first year, we focused on Imphal-East and Imphal-West, working directly with 220 women and training 200 Meira Paibi groups (women's grassroots organizations) on legal property rights. These trained women then took the lead in their own communities, holding 80 group discussions and reaching out to 809 others, spreading awareness about women's right to own and inherit land.

A major milestone was the launch of a Legal Helpline (+91 6009427509) in January 2023, which provided free legal assistance. 233 women were connected to legal aid services, and six successfully claimed their land rights through legal intervention, while four more cases are still ongoing. To bring more voices into the conversation, we created a Gender Networking Forum in November 2023, bringing together 25 women leaders to push for better legal protections. We also used WhatsApp and Facebook to share information more widely, and our Facebook page, "Women Rights Movement," gained 74 followers in just a few months.

In the second year, we expanded to Thoubal and Bishnupur, working with 286 women while continuing to reach more people indirectly. We strengthened our community networks, training 205 more Meira Paibi groups and equipping them with knowledge of land rights laws. Through our efforts, these women reached out to 1,144 people, spreading awareness beyond their immediate circles. We also held five legal training sessions, helping 286 women understand their rights and navigate legal processes.

The legal aid work continued, and this year, 160 more women received free legal assistance, with 10 successfully securing their land rights. Another Gender Networking Forum was launched in August 2024, bringing together 30 women leaders to keep pushing for stronger legal protections. At the same time, we kept expanding our digital outreach, growing our Facebook community to 84 followers and strengthening our legal advocacy work at the state level.



2. Outcomes

Sl. No.	Activities Conducted	Timeline/Date/Month	Nos. of people/beneficiaries reach out	Expected outcomes
1	A PIMC comprising 10 members (Male: 3 Female: 7) constituted on 4 th February 2023. The Committee hold monthly meeting to assess gaps and challenges of the project.	4/02/2024	10	10 members
2	The project team mobilized 200 Meira Paibies from different 5 segments of the state as beneficiaries for the 1 st year.	1. Achanbigei on 18/01/2023 2. Khurai on 21/01/2023 3. Konthoujam on 27/04/2023 4. Thambalkhong on 16/06/2023 5. Naoremthong on 10/06/2023	200	200
3	As per workplan of the project, 220 women were capacitated through 5 nos of capacity building program.	1. Khurai on 19/03/23 with 48 participants 2. Achanbigei on 08/04/23 with 50 participants 3. Konthoujam on 01/05/23 with 40 participants 4. Naoremthong on 29/06/23 with 40 participants 5. Thambalkhong on 24/06/23 with 42 participants	220	200
4	Following the end of the capacity building program, each women's group held internal group meetings four times in a month. Through 80 internal group sessions, 809 non-group members were also contacted with accurate information and their capacities were boosted.	March-December 2023	809	800
5	On September 16, 2023, 30 women were trained in media reporting and the use of social media platforms for women-specific topics. On September 12, 2023, a WhatsApp group was formed, as well as a Facebook page called Women Rights Movement, which has 74 followers to date and highlights all of our activities. Trained women leaders are collaborating with other women in their villages to build a sufficient grasp of the women's perspective and to collect information from the ground up.	16/09/2023	30	30
6	On September 12, 2023, a WhatsApp group was formed, as well as a Facebook page called Women Rights Movement, which has 74 followers to date and highlights all of our activities. Trained women leaders are collaborating with other women in their villages to build a sufficient grasp of the women's perspective and to collect information from the ground up.	12/09/2023	73	N/A
7	On November 1, 2023, a Gender Networking Forum was formed with 25 women representatives from various groups as members, led by Ms. Irengbam Lenibala Devi Panel Advocate Manipur State Legal Service Authority, Mr. Sopin, Secretary All Trans Man Association, and Ms. Loitongbam	1/11/2023	25	25

	Sujata, Social Activist. The forum focuses on Women's Collective Efforts in Advancement of Women's Rights, Safe and Respectable Abortion Care, and Establishing a Proper Mechanism for Reaching Out to Hard-to-Reach Women Population and Linking Them to Constitutional Remedies.			
8	To find a proper mechanism for delivering justice, project team members established trust building and engagement from the ground up by engaging in one-on-one meetings with 7 local elected representatives and 3 officials of Law and Legislature Affairs to implement a toll-free women-specific helpline across the state.	July-December 2023	10	N/A
9	A PIMC comprising 15 members (Male: 5 Female: 10) constituted on 30 th January 2024. The Committee hold monthly meeting to assess gaps and challenges of the project.	30/01/2024	15	10
10	The project team mobilized 205 Meira Paibies from different 5 segments of the state as beneficiaries for the 2 nd year.	1. Athokpam on 16/01/2024 2. Charangpat on 08/02/2024 3. Leimaram on 05/03/2024 4. Keinou on 11/04/2024 5. Yumnam Khunou on 22/04/2024	205	200
11	As per workplan of the project, 286 women were capacitated through 5 nos of capacity building program.	1. Athokpam on 21/03/24 with 55 participants 2. Charangpat on 22/03/24 with 60 participants 3. Keinou on 14/04/24 with 53 participants 4. Leimaram on 28/04/24 with 73 participants 5. Yumnam Khunou on 01/05/24 with 45 participants	286	200
12	Following the end of the capacity building program, each women's group held internal group meetings twice/thrice times in a month. Through 57 internal group sessions, 1144 non-group members were also contacted with accurate information and their capacities were boosted.	April-November 2024	1144	800
13	On July 18 th , 2024, 30 women received training in media reporting and the use of social media platforms to address women-specific topics	18/07/2024	30	30
14	On August 18 th 2024, a Gender Networking Forum was formed with 30 women representatives from various groups as members, led by Ms. L Jayela Devi , Panel Advocate, District Legal Service Authority, Bishnupur, Ms. Chongtham Ibethoi, Senior Member, ETA Northeast Foundation Trust, and Ms Nandini Thokchom , Indigenous Perspectives, Human Rights Defender, State Resource Person, MSRLM. The forum focuses on Women's Collective Efforts in Advancement of Women's Rights, and Establishing a Proper Mechanism for Reaching Out to Hard-to-Reach Women Population and Linking Them to Constitutional Remedies.	18/08/2024	30	30
15	To find a proper mechanism for delivering justice, project team members established trust building and engagement from the ground up by engaging in one-on-one meetings with 7 local elected representatives and 3 officials of Law and Legislature Affairs to implement a toll-free women-specific helpline across the state.	July-December 2024	10	N/A

3. Findings from Project Activities

At the start, we realized that many women didn't even know they had a legal right to claim property. 90-95% of women supported inheritance rights, but they lacked the confidence to pursue them. Women's grassroots groups, like the Meira Paibis, played a crucial role in spreading awareness and encouraging others to step forward. While some women faced resistance from male family members, others were surprised to find that many men were actually supportive.



By the second year, we saw a shift. 100% of women who participated in our sessions said they felt more informed about their rights. 89% became aware of free legal aid services, though awareness about institutions like the National and State Women's Commissions remained low. We also saw that fear of social backlash was a big reason why many women hesitated to claim their inheritance—about 77% of women worried about being judged by society.

At the same time, we found strong community support for change. 100% of participants agreed that women's groups like Meira Paibis were critical in advancing inheritance rights, and 97% believed that securing land rights was a major step toward gender equality. Encouragingly, many participants felt that educating men was just as important as educating women, with 100% agreeing that men should also be included in awareness campaigns.

4. Plan activities of next year

Building on the progress made in advancing women's inheritance rights, the Institute of Social Research and Development (ISRD) will continue its commitment to gender justice by focusing on ending violence against women in Manipur. With the support of WWDP, Germany, ISRD will launch a new two-year initiative (2025-2026) aimed at addressing gender-based violence, with a special focus on internally displaced women.

The primary objective of this project is to combat violence against women while enhancing the capacities of 400 women and engaging key stakeholders to create a safer and more supportive environment. By the end of 24 months, the initiative aims to ensure greater access to legal protection, community-based support systems, and respectful care for survivors.

To achieve these goals, ISRD will implement a series of Capacity Building and Awareness Generation Programs, focusing on:

- Empowering women to recognize, respond to, and prevent violence.
- Enhancing access to legal remedies and strengthening linkages with legal service providers.
- Engaging with multiple stakeholders, including community leaders, policymakers, and law enforcement, to foster an inclusive and supportive ecosystem that upholds women's rights.

By prioritizing a human rights-based approach, this initiative will work towards long-term systemic change in addressing violence against women in Manipur.

5. Gaps and Challenges During the Reporting Period

The biggest obstacle we faced was political instability and communal violence, which disrupted our activities multiple times. In May 2023, a violent conflict broke out, leading to curfews and an internet shutdown across the state. This made it almost impossible to hold meetings, organize legal assistance, or even communicate with the women we were working with.



Again, in November 2024, another outbreak of violence in Jiribam District resulted in the killing of six individuals, forcing the government to impose another curfew and shut down the internet. This meant we had to pause many activities, delaying legal interventions and training programs. Women who needed urgent legal help couldn't reach lawyers, and meetings had to be postponed.

6. Mitigation Measures

The implementation of the project faced significant disruptions due to communal violence, curfews, and internet shutdowns, which restricted movement and delayed scheduled activities. Instead of attempting to conduct alternative outreach during these periods of unrest, the project team prioritized safety and waited for the situation to stabilize before resuming planned activities.



During the May 2023 conflict, the state-imposed curfew and restricted gatherings made it impossible to conduct scheduled training and awareness programs. Rather than compromising the quality and effectiveness of the project, the team delayed activities until normalcy was restored, ensuring that all planned interventions were carried out as intended once conditions improved.

Similarly, the November 2024 conflict led to another round of curfews and internet shutdowns, further delaying outreach and legal

aid services. However, once restrictions were lifted, the team resumed activities without altering the core objectives or reducing the planned scope of work.

While these delays affected the timeline, they did not compromise the overall impact of the project. The decision to wait rather than modify the approach ensured that women received full and effective training, legal aid, and advocacy support as originally envisioned.

7. Conclusion

The Empowering Marginalized Women to Access Rights to Land and Inheritance Property in Manipur project has made a meaningful contribution to advancing gender equality and legal empowerment. With the support of WWDP-Germany, the project successfully trained 400 Meira Paibi leaders, who further expanded awareness to 1,600 more people, creating a ripple effect across communities. Through legal aid, capacity building, and advocacy, women gained the knowledge and confidence to assert their inheritance rights, breaking long-standing social and cultural barriers.

One of the most significant achievements of the project was the successful legal intervention that enabled 20 women to claim their inheritance rights through the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA). These cases not only set a precedent but also demonstrated that legal empowerment is possible when women have access to the right information and support. Moreover, the project contributed to a gradual shift in societal attitudes, encouraging broader acceptance of women's property rights.

Although communal violence and government-imposed curfews delayed some planned activities, the team remained committed to ensuring that all aspects of the project were fully implemented once the situation stabilized. This approach ensured that women received the full benefit of training and legal assistance without compromising the quality of interventions.

While the project has officially concluded, its impact continues through the trained women leaders, strengthened legal aid networks, and increased awareness across communities. The lessons learned will serve as a foundation for future initiatives aimed at protecting and advancing women's rights.

As ISRD moves forward with its next phase (2025-2026)—focusing on ending violence against women through a human rights perspective—this project serves as a strong foundation for further advocacy and systemic change. The progress made through this initiative has shown that when women are empowered with knowledge, resources, and legal support, they can challenge deeply ingrained inequalities and create lasting change.