

The AIDA **Chronicle**



stories from inspiring...enabling...empowering journeys

Solar Power Lights up 1800 Households in Remote NE Hills

(p.9)



Impact stories || **Projects updates** || **Team corner** || **Reflections**

Publisher

Dr. Fr. Roy George sdb
Executive Director
AIDA, Dimapur

Editorial Team

Joseph Mathew
Dr. Anna Lungbila Bibiana
Garrol Lotha
Shemang S Phom
(editor_tac@aidasdb.org)

Cover & Layout

Sebi Chacko

Distribution & Mailing

Lawrence Guria

Published from

AIDA, Don Bosco Campus, River belt Colony,
NN Gaon Dimapur – 797113 Nagaland India

Email aidasdb@gmail.com

Website: www.aidasdb.org

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Cover photo: Solar Lights have given a new dimension to life in rural NE Hills (Photo: T.P. John)

In this issue

- ☛ Piggery Units to Boost Economic Growth in Maram Villages (p- 4)
- ☛ Solar Power Lights Up 1800 households in Remote NE Hills (p- 9)
- ☛ Rural villages See Light through Solar Power (p- 14)
- ☛ News and Events (p-18)
- ☛ The Rongmei Community of Manipur Hills (p- 23)
- ☛ Four years of my journey with AIDA (p-27)
- ☛ CSR as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development (p- 29)

Random thoughts

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

- Unknown (on Importance of planning)

A note from the editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the fifth edition of the AIDA Chronicle!

This issue features diverse project updates, including the PULEM livelihood initiative in Manipur, solar electrification across four Northeast Indian states, and our Malaria Elimination Program in Nagaland. Our Impact Story highlights the change-making effect of the Rural Households Solar Lighting Programme.

In Team Corner, Shemang S. Phom from AIDA-CFD shares her valuable experiences. We also present an insightful reflection on Corporate Social Responsibility by Dr. Joji Valli.

Introducing a new segment, "Communities We Serve," we begin with an exploration of the Rongmei tribal community in Tamenglong and Noney districts of Manipur. Additionally, our "News and Events" section will keep you updated on AIDA's activities.

We trust this edition of the AIDA Chronicle will provide you with informative and engaging content.

Warm regards,



Joseph Matthew
Editor

Message from the Executive Director



I am pleased to present the First Quarterly Publication of 2025, which captures AIDA's continued journey of service and transformation in the rural communities of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Upper Assam. At AIDA, improving rural lives through impactful and meaningful programs remains at the heart of our mission.

The cover story of this issue features one of our most inspiring and impactful initiatives—bringing renewable energy to rural households. Over the past few years, AIDA has successfully provided free solar power to 1,800 households in remote villages. This intervention is twofold: it empowers rural women while also bringing sustainable development to their communities. Through a six-month training programme, illiterate women are transformed into semi-solar engineers—our proud Solar Mamas. In each village where 50 households have received solar power, a trained Solar Mama is present to install and maintain the system locally.

This not only lights up homes but also sparks hope, improves health, supports education, and promotes safety. The solar electrification of villages is creating a ripple effect of development, bringing dignity and opportunity to some of the most underserved populations.

In addition to this, the other stories in this issue reflect AIDA's holistic efforts to uplift the rural poor—through healthcare, livelihood, women empowerment, education, and environmental initiatives.

As a reader and supporter, your encouragement means the world to us. It is your belief in our mission that inspires us to continue our journey with faith and purpose.

May God bless us all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Dr. Fr. Roy George SDB". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Fr. Roy George SDB
Executive Director, AIDA

Piggery Units to Boost Economic Growth in Maram Villages

By Siiroula Lucy ph

In the hills of Manipur's Senapati district, where economic hardship is a daily reality, AIDA's PULEM initiative is empowering vulnerable Maram tribal households through sustainable pig farming, providing a pathway to financial stability. With a focus on community empowerment and long-term resilience, this project aims to facilitate their holistic development.



PULEM project beneficiary, Mrs. Hoila Helen (center), of Maram Ramlung village says she know has the opportunity to work towards a better future (Photo: S Lucy)

For Mrs. Hoila Helen, a resident of Maram Ramlung village, each day was a relentless struggle to provide for her family of three. Seasonal farming barely covered the most basic necessities, leaving their future uncertain. Then in December 2024 came a turning point, a ray of hope in the form of two piglets along with material support to construct a proper pigsty, from AIDA's

PULEM project. These weren't merely livestock but they represented a lifeline to her and her family This has ignited a spark to the prospect of their economic stability.

"It's still very new," she says, her voice tinged with cautious optimism, "but we are hopeful that this will be a starting point, a chance to work towards a better future."

The rough hills of Senapati district, while breathtaking in their beauty, present formidable, economic challenges.

Located in the northern part of Manipur, the district is largely dependent on rainfed agriculture, where traditional methods like jhum and terrace farming prevail. The limited use of fertilizers and machinery results in low yields, pushing many households into a cycle of financial instability.

Recognizing these pressing challenges, the ANMA Integrated Development Association (AIDA) launched the "Piggery Units as Livelihood Enhancement Means" (PULEM) project in December 2024. This three-year initiative, implemented across four villages—Maram Bazaar, Maram Centre, Maram Kabinam, and Maram Ramlung—aims to empower 200 of the most vulnerable families through sustainable pig farming.



PULEM project was launched in December 2024 (photo: S Lucy)

In the Mao-Maram subdivision, home to the Maram community, these economic struggles are even more pronounced. Approximately 89% of the population belongs to Scheduled Tribes, and 55% of households reside in basic bamboo dwellings. With an average annual income hovering around a meagre INR 60,000, the need for sustainable livelihood options is critically urgent.

"We selected these villages based on their accessibility, the expressed needs of the community, and our existing relationship with them," explains AIDA's Executive Director, Fr. Dr. Roy George SDB. "Our survey of 1,001 households revealed that 500 earned below INR 60,000 annually, and we identified the 200 most deprived to directly uplift them economically."



PULEM supported 60% cost of pigsty construction (Photo: S Lucy)

The project strategically leverages the region's inherent familiarity with livestock rearing and addresses the significant demand-supply gap for pork, particularly during festive seasons. The demand for processed pork products, primarily imported, underscores the immense opportunity for local pig farming to cater to both domestic and potential export markets. PULEM's implementation is structured in four distinct phases over three years, engaging 50 families in each batch. The project provides 60% financial assistance for constructing standardized pigsties, each measuring 144 square feet, along with two sows per beneficiary and one boar per village.



Project secured support of the Village Leaders. (Photo: P Marina)

A unique "give-back" model ensures sustainability: each beneficiary from the first batch donates two piglets to the next, creating a continuous cycle of support and community empowerment. Since its launch, the project has made steady progress.

To date, 42 beneficiaries have received 84 piglets, and 45 have completed the construction of their pigsties. The project team has also conducted an awareness program on pig rearing and pig insurance, facilitated by veterinary doctors, to equip beneficiaries with the essential knowledge for successful pig farming.



Project provided two sows per beneficiary and one boar per village. (photo: S Lucy)

Beyond providing livestock, the project delivers comprehensive training on crucial aspects such as proper feeding practices, disease prevention, and financial literacy, empowering beneficiaries to operate profitable pig farms.



Project ensured insurance for the pigs. (photo: P. Marina)

The union will also play a pivotal role in addressing challenges such as sustainable feed procurement, veterinary care, and strategic marketing. By working together, farmers can enhance their economic viability and contribute significantly to rural development and food security.

The project's progress is marked by several significant milestones. One of the initial steps was engaging local leadership, securing their support through meetings with village chairmen and secretaries. This resulted in a No Objection Certificate (NOC), ensuring collective Community Approval.

A comprehensive baseline survey across the four villages helped identify deserving households, leading to the selection of the first batch of 50 beneficiaries based on income levels, land ownership, and willingness to engage in pig farming.

The project was officially inaugurated on December 13, 2024, at Maram Centre, with local Veterinary Officer Dr. H.B. Warngam Anal presiding over the event, encouraging beneficiaries to maximize the opportunity and integrate government schemes like livestock insurance.

Training and capacity building are central to the project's success. Led by a veterinary expert, benefiting 54 participants.

A key component of PULEM is the formation of a "Pig Rearing Farmers' Union." This collective aims to empower beneficiaries by facilitating better pricing, resource-sharing, and access to government schemes. "The union is crucial for long-term sustainability," notes Fr. Dr. Roy George SDB. "It fosters leadership, financial independence, and community resilience."



Baseline survey was conducted to select beneficiaries (photo: S Lucy)

Pigsty construction for the first batch commenced after site suitability assessments, with 45 pigsties completed to date.

The project team also facilitated the procurement of high-quality piglets through local breeders, ensuring health checks before distribution.

The PULEM project is expected to bring about substantial socio-economic benefits. Beneficiaries are projected to boost their annual income by INR 1.48 lakh by the third year through pig sales and manure utilization.



(photo: P. Marina)

Awareness creation meetings conducted for beneficiaries (photo: S Lucy)

Further training sessions will enhance financial literacy, livestock management, and market navigation skills. The collective approach fosters resilience, collaboration, and a self-reliant rural economy.

With over 52% of the agricultural workforce being women, the project significantly contributes to gender-inclusive economic participation. "We expect a ripple effect," says Fr. Dr. Roy George SDB. "Improved livelihoods will enable families to access better education, healthcare, and financial Independence. The project not only changes individual lives but uplifts entire communities."

For beneficiaries like Mrs. Hoila Helen, this initiative is about reclaiming dignity and securing a brighter future. "This project has given us hope," she shares. "We're working together to build something meaningful for our children, a legacy of strength and resilience."

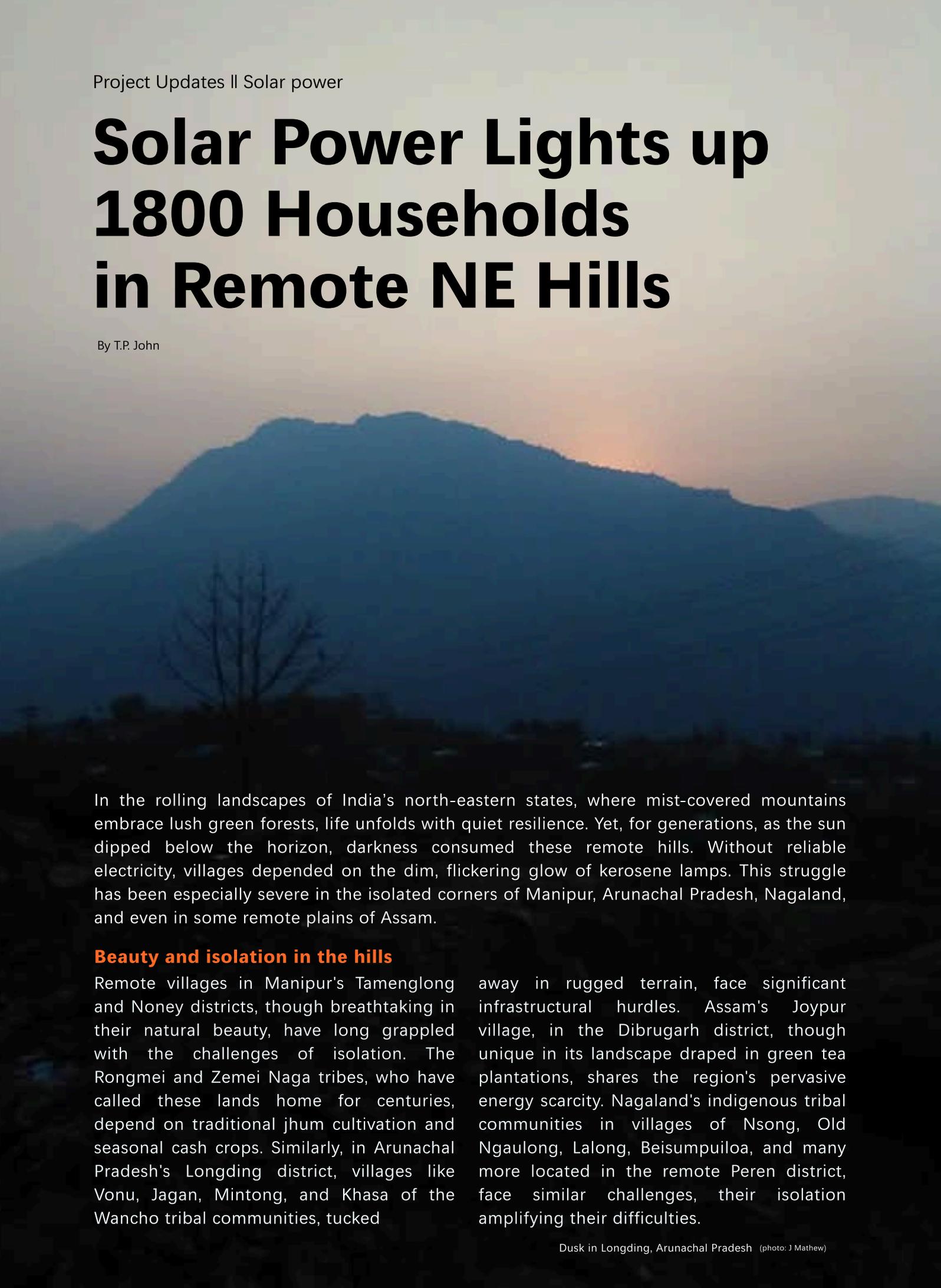
As the PULEM project moves forward, its impact will continue to unfold, potentially serving as a model for other livelihood enhancement programs in marginalized communities, proving that with the right support, even the most challenging circumstances can be turned around. ■



Siiroula Lucy Ph is Coordinator of PULEM project. She holds a Masters degree in Economics with NET.

Solar Power Lights up 1800 Households in Remote NE Hills

By T.P. John



In the rolling landscapes of India's north-eastern states, where mist-covered mountains embrace lush green forests, life unfolds with quiet resilience. Yet, for generations, as the sun dipped below the horizon, darkness consumed these remote hills. Without reliable electricity, villages depended on the dim, flickering glow of kerosene lamps. This struggle has been especially severe in the isolated corners of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and even in some remote plains of Assam.

Beauty and isolation in the hills

Remote villages in Manipur's Tamenglong and Noney districts, though breathtaking in their natural beauty, have long grappled with the challenges of isolation. The Rongmei and Zemei Naga tribes, who have called these lands home for centuries, depend on traditional jhum cultivation and seasonal cash crops. Similarly, in Arunachal Pradesh's Longding district, villages like Vonu, Jagan, Mintong, and Khasa of the Wancho tribal communities, tucked

away in rugged terrain, face significant infrastructural hurdles. Assam's Joypur village, in the Dibrugarh district, though unique in its landscape draped in green tea plantations, shares the region's pervasive energy scarcity. Nagaland's indigenous tribal communities in villages of Nsong, Old Ngaulong, Lalong, Beisumpuiloa, and many more located in the remote Peren district, face similar challenges, their isolation amplifying their difficulties.

Across these four states, the absence of consistent electricity has placed severe limitations on daily life. Children struggle to complete their studies before nightfall, businesses operate only during daylight hours, and emergency medical care is often dangerously compromised. Impassable roads and scarce healthcare facilities further compound these hardships, forcing residents to get by with hard work and determination

Solar power reaches remote communities

Recognizing the gravity of these challenges, AIDA Don Bosco embarked on a mission to bring light to these remote communities. The solar lighting initiative 'Rural Households Solar Lighting Programme' which began in Manipur's Tamenglong district in 2014 and reached 450 households across four villages, has now expanded significantly. The first four villages where the program started are: (1) Gaengluan (2)

Tharon-1 (3) Tharon-2 and (4) Tubung-Nungsai the program has so far illuminated 1,800 households across 31 villages in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland.

It is now expanding into more villages. Providing rural households with reliable, sustainable solar-powered home lighting systems demonstrates AIDA's unwavering commitment to transforming lives across the four states.

Key to long-term solar success

AIDA's approach extends beyond mere technological provision; it prioritizes community engagement. Each village has established a solar committee, comprised of dedicated men and women, tasked with overseeing the implementation and maintenance of the solar systems.

These committees work closely with local authorities, fostering accountability and ensuring long-term sustainability.



(photo: T John)

Solar Mamas

At the heart of the 'Rural Households Solar Lighting Program' are the 'Solar Mamas,' local women who have completed an intensive six-month training program at Barefoot College/Bindi International in Rajasthan to become skilled solar

'Rural Households Solar Lighting Program' at a glance				
	Name of state	Name of district	No of villages	No of households
1	Arunachal Pradesh	Longding	4	200
2	Assam	Dibrugarh	1	50
3	Manipur	Tamenglong-Noney	15	1000
4	Nagaland	Peren	11	550
		Total	31	1,800



(photo: T John)

Upon their return, these empowered women not only install solar units but also play a crucial role in educating their communities about proper maintenance and efficient usage.

Their efforts elevate the project beyond a typical development intervention, fostering a movement of self-reliance and empowerment. Within the project villages, 36 Solar Mamas are responsible for the installation and ongoing maintenance of the solar lighting systems, and they derive a decent livelihood from their work.

"I never imagined that I would become a solar technician. Now, I can repair solar units, earn an income, and help my village move forward," shares Sarai Pamei, a Solar Mama from Tamenglong, Manipur.

Real-World Impact

The impact of AIDA's solar initiative contributes to positive changes across all four states.

Children now study under bright, clean light well into the night, families complete household chores without the ever-present threat of fire from kerosene lamps, and small businesses extend their operational hours, boosting local economies.

"Before, our village would go completely dark after sunset. Now, with solar lighting, our evenings are no longer filled with fear. We can cook, our children can study, and we feel safer," says Apey Wangsu, a beneficiary from Longding, Arunachal Pradesh.

For agrarian communities, the benefits are far-reaching. Farmers process their produce after sunset, reducing post-harvest losses and increasing productivity.



(photo: T John)

In villages where communication was once a significant challenge, residents now charge their mobile phones, connecting with the wider world. Moreover, reliable lighting has enhanced healthcare services, enabling medical assistance at night without the dangers of dim, smoky lamps.

"Ever since our village got solar lighting, we have been able to hold meetings after dark, discuss village matters, and even plan

community activities in ways we never could before," says Lanthungo Zeliang, a village committee member from Peren, Nagaland.

Crucially, sustainability of the project is built on community ownership. Villagers contribute to a maintenance fund, ensuring repairs and replacements are managed locally.

Solar committees hold regular meetings, fostering collective responsibility and reinforcing the spirit of cooperation.



(photo: T John)

A Model for Grassroots Solar Initiatives

The success of the AIDA's **Rural Households Solar Lighting Program** serves as a model for sustainable rural development across the north-eastern region. What began as a localized intervention in Manipur in 2014 has now sparked interest in remote communities across four states seeking renewable energy solutions. By addressing immediate needs

while nurturing local leadership, this initiative exemplifies how grassroots movements can drive lasting changes.

In the heart of these remote villages, where the rhythms of life were once dictated by the setting sun, light now shines brightly into the night. The darkness that once stifled dreams and ambitions is being replaced by a steady glow – a glow that signifies progress, resilience, and hope. ■



T.P. John is Solar project Ground Coordinator, Manipur. He holds a Master's degree in Social Work (MSW)

Rural villages See Light through Solar Power

By Lanthau Mark Gonmei



For the first time in their history, project villages had a reliable source of light through the Rural Households Solar Lighting Program in 2017 (Photo: L Mark)

This article chronicles the journey of the Rural Households Solar Lighting Program, testifying that sustainable technology, community engagement, and equitable access can light-up not just homes, but lives of people as well.

Solar lamps are lighting up homes in a way that was once thought unimaginable, in remote villages of Tamenglong district in Manipur. **The Rural Households Solar Lighting Programme** demonstrates the powerful impact of combining sustainable technology, active community participation, and a commitment to equitable access.

Between 2014 and 2018, four villages in

Tamenglong district became beneficiaries of this Initiative, which provided solar home lighting systems to 450 households. The result was not just brighter homes, but a brighter future for these communities. The programme was a ground breaking one, as it ensured that every household in these villages, regardless of social, political, or religious affiliations, received equal access to this technology.



Before solar power system was installed, Villages like Tharon experienced power cuts lasting over 18 months. (Photo: L Mark)

Being the first of its kind in Manipur, this program demonstrated the effectiveness of community-driven projects. Its positive effects are still evident. The program's expansion includes a digital school in Tharon village and the provision of sewing skills and machines to eight 'Solar Mamas,' who continue to use them to this day, in 2025. Before the solar lighting system was installed, electricity was unreliable in these villages; available for only 10 to 20 days annually.

Villages like Tharon experienced power cuts lasting over 18 months. The constant absence of electric power restricted daily tasks, hampered children's learning, and diminished the community's well-being.

The introduction of solar power changed all of this. For the first time, families in these villages had a reliable source of light, which improved health, education, and the overall quality of life. The programme was not just about providing electricity, but it delivered fairness and chances that had long been absent in these remote villages.

Women empowered as 'Solar Mamas'

A cornerstone of the programme was the empowerment of women as 'Solar Mamas.' Selected from local villages, these women aged 25 to 45 and often with limited literacy, underwent rigorous six-month training at Barefoot College, Rajasthan. This training converted them into skilled solar technicians, enabling them to flawlessly install and manage solar lighting systems in 450 homes.



Solar Mamas underwent 6 months rigorous trg BFT College, Rajasthan (Photo: L Mark)

The challenges were formidable. These women, many venturing beyond their villages for the first time, faced a six-month separation from their families and the daunting task of mastering a new skill set in an unfamiliar environment.

Family resistance and spousal skepticism compounded their difficulties, with doubts swirling about the value of training at BFC. Yet, defying these hardships, they returned as solar technology experts. Their work was nothing short of life-changing. In 2017, the eight Solar Mamas installed 450 solar home lighting systems, not only illuminating their villages but also transforming their own lives and those of their families.

Collaboration for Impact

The project was a collaborative effort. It was implemented by AIDA in partnership with Barefoot College Tilonia Rajasthan, and supported by the Coca Cola Foundation and the Apple Foundation.

The programme was designed with the specific needs of the rural communities in mind. AIDA, working with guidance from BFC, set clear criteria for the beneficiaries, ensuring that the programme would be inclusive and equitable. Beneficiary households had to be permanent residents of the village, and the systems could not be transferred to other locations. This policy helped ensure that the benefits of the programme remained in the communities for which they were intended.

In April 2017, solar materials, including 450 home lighting systems, 232 lamps, and 4 Rural Electrical Workshops (REWs), were shipped from Rajasthan. By June, the Solar Mamas completed system installations, leading to inauguration ceremonies in

August. On August 6th, Mr. Armstrong Pamei (IAS), Deputy Commissioner of Tamenglong, attended the inauguration in Tharon village, and on August 8th, Mr. Dipu Gangmei, CEO of Tamenglong District, attended the inauguration ceremony in Gaengluan IV (Pinjang) village.



Every household in the project villages received equal access to this technology (Photo: L Mark)

The inauguration events were graced by key figures behind the project, including Mr. Bhagwat Nandan (Guruji), Director of the Solar Section at Barefoot College Tilonia, Mr. Ravindranath, SAMPADA Director of

Barefoot College, Rev. Bro. Sunny Joseph SDB, Executive Director of AIDA, Dimapur, and Fr. Nebu Mathew SDB, Provincial Economist of the Salesian Province of Dimapur.

The successful implementation of the project was led by the AIDA-Integrated Rural Development Programme (AIDA-IRDP) Project team: Mr. Lanthou Mark Gonmei (Project Facilitator), Mr. Gaisangam Lawrance Kamsuan (Project Coordinator), and Mr. Chingkiubi Gangmei (Project Supervisor). Their dedicated efforts and partnership with the villagers were vital to the program's outcome



Solar power materials were shipped from BFT College, Rajasthan. (Photo: L Mark)



Solara Mamas carry out maintenance of the system (photo: L Mark)

Impact of the project

The project's impact extended beyond initial installations, enabling sustainable growth in the villages. To ensure long-term functionality, rural electrical workshops (REWs) were established as training and repair centers, equipped with essential solar lamps and tools. These REWs empower villagers to maintain their solar power systems.

The Coca-Cola Foundation and the Apple Foundation played crucial roles, contributing solar sets, lamps, and REW units, enabling the program to reach 450 households across four villages.

The project has illuminated homes, empowered women, and brought light to

communities which were long trapped in darkness. The programme has created lasting social change, one solar panel at a time. As Huampou Gonmei of Tharon-1 village put it, "Before, night was just darkness. Now, we can see, we can work, our children can study. It's like the sun came inside our houses." ■



Lanthau Mark Gonmei was facilitator of the Rural Solar Home Lighting Programme. He is an enthusiastic social worker and holds a Post graduate degree in Business Administration

Tsithrongse Village Inaugurates New Council Hall

Tsithrongse Village in Nagaland's Chumoukedima district marked a significant milestone on January 11, 2025, with the inauguration of its newly constructed council hall. Hon'ble MLA Shri. H. Tovihoto Ayemi graced the event as chief guest, commending the village leadership for their dedication. The project, a collaborative effort



(Photo: M Jerome)

between the village and the AIDA-implemented SBI Gram Seva Programme, Dimapur, took 1 year and 7 months to complete. The facility includes a spacious council hall, offices, and guest rooms, addressing the village's need for a central community space.

Rev. Fr. Dr. Roy George SDB, Executive Director of AIDA, acknowledged the pivotal support of

SBI Foundation Mumbai and the collaborative spirit that brought the vision to reality.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Village Development Board Secretary, Mr. Thrilongse, highlighting the collective effort that made this achievement possible. This new hall shows how working together can make a real difference for rural communities. ■

AIDA Team Explores Child-Centered Initiatives in Shillong

The AIDA-Child Friendly Dimapur team of five embarked on an impactful journey to Shillong in November 2024, gaining vital insights into grassroots child welfare initiatives. Over three days, they connected with organizations redefining community development.



CFD Team at Faith Foundation, Shillong: (L-R) G Lotha, M Agnes, Sr. Jisha, S Phom (7), and G Kamei (9).

The visit began at Faith Foundation, where they learned about culturally sensitive approaches to combatting child sexual abuse through prevention and intervention strategies. Day two featured Kripa Foundation, Northeast India's sole juvenile de-addiction center, showcasing

holistic rehabilitation programs that address addiction's root causes. The final day was spent with SPARK, an organization empowering underprivileged children through innovative education and life skills training.

The team witnessed firsthand the transformative power of community-driven efforts, emphasizing cultural sensitivity, family involvement, and creative learning. These experiences reinforced the importance of

experiences reinforced the importance of grassroots action in fostering resilience and positive change, providing valuable lessons to implement in their own communities. ■

AIDA Launches Study Centre for Competitive Exams



(Photo: M Jerome)

Director of AIDA, highlighted the centre's potential to provide quality study materials and mentorship.

Participants received a guided tour of the facility, including the resource library and

The AIDA-Don Bosco Job Placement Network, Dimapur, inaugurated a new Study Centre for Competitive Exams on March 19th, 2025 at AIDA Head Office. The centre aims to provide vital resources and guidance to young aspirants preparing for competitive examinations.

Mr. Daniel Knable, Project Manager, Don Bosco Bonn, officially inaugurated the centre, emphasizing its role in youth empowerment.

digital learning tools, led by Mr. Sebi Chacko, Regional Coordinator, AIDA-JPN, and Rev. Dr. Fr. Roy George SDB. ■

AIDA and NEHHDCL Boost Rural Entrepreneurship



(Photo: S Chacko)

AIDA, in partnership with North Eastern Handicrafts and Handloom Development Corporation Ltd. and MSME, significantly boosted rural entrepreneurship in its project areas through two comprehensive programs in February and March 2025. The Entrepreneurship Awareness Program reached over 3,000 participants across Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh,

and Nagaland, with 50 training sessions focused on self-employment, financial literacy, and start-up strategies. Assam hosted 31 sessions, highlighting the region's strong entrepreneurial drive.

Simultaneously, the 7-day Management Development Program enhanced leadership and management skills for over 100 participants in Chumoukedima (Nagaland), Namsai, Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh), and Senapati (Manipur).



(Photo: M Jerome)

This program targeted local leaders, educators, and business professionals, providing interactive sessions and practical exercises. Regional newspapers highlighted the MDP's impact, with participants requesting expanded modules and mentorship. Both programs encouraged networking and strengthened community ties, particularly in rural areas

and tea estates. AIDA plans to conduct further workshops focused on advanced business management and funding access, building on the success of these initiatives to empower the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. ■

Five Students Awarded Rural Talent Scholarships

On 26 January 2025, during the Republic Day celebrations, five girl students from government schools in Piyong Circle, Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, received the SBI OJAS Rural Talent Scholarship. Circle Officer

Shri Kalen Saroh presented ₹6,000 along with certificates to Nang Wontani Chowpoo, Chau Kantasha Singkai, Basanti Urang, Nang Selina Kamhoo, and Nang Trishna Impoo.



(Photo: D Amit)

The scholarships were awarded as part of the developmental initiatives under the SBI-Gram Seva Programme, implemented by ANMA Integrated Development Association (AIDA) in Adi Ningroo, Ningroo Chariali, Nampong, Piyong Khampti, and Piyong Singpho villages under the Piyong Circle. ■

AIDA-DBJPN conducts ‘How to Become Career Guides’ seminar

Don Bosco Job Placement Network (DBJPN) is a national initiative committed to enabling underprivileged and underserved youth to access meaningful employment. By providing training and connecting young job seekers to diverse industries—from manufacturing and logistics to healthcare—DBJPN helps secure sustainable livelihoods and promote economic empowerment across India.



(Photo: M Jerome)

At the heart of DBJPN’s success is a robust system of walk-in interviews, job fairs, campus recruitment drives, and referrals. It also extends critical support to migrant workers as they transition into new workplaces. The network’s recognition by the National Career Services further highlights its credibility and contribution to India’s employment landscape.

DBJPN’s regional offices across the country play a vital role in localizing this impact. In northeast India, AIDA, based in Dimapur, is its regional partner for Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Upper Assam. Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Fr. Roy George SDB, AIDA-DBJPN is creating new opportunities for youth in these states.



On January 24, this year, AIDA-DBJPN conducted its first-ever seminar for educators titled “How to Become a Career Guide”. This one-day program conducted in Dimapur brought together 35 participants, including school principals, teachers, counselors, vocational trainers, and college placement officers. At the core of the program was the vision for how students are supported during their crucial post-school transitions.

It was coordinated by Sebi Chacko, AIDA-DBJPN’s regional coordinator, and facilitated by two key resource persons: Fr. Renigo Roy SDB of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, and Fr. Gabriel Karunaraj SDB, National Director of DBJPN.

The sessions focused on equipping participants with practical tools and frameworks to support students in making informed career choices, particularly during the critical post-school phase. They were introduced to updated career planning models, simplified decision-making tools like career charts and calendars, and the Multiple Intelligence approach for personalized guidance.

These resources are especially designed to include students from rural and marginalized backgrounds, ensuring no child is left behind.

The impact of the seminar was immediate. One teacher shared, “Our students often face anxiety about their future—this training has given us concrete ways to guide them more effectively.”



A key session introduced participants to DBJPN's powerful digital platforms: www.donboscojobs.org and the Jobs DBI mobile app. These tools serve as bridges between job seekers and verified employment opportunities across India, with a strong emphasis on ethical recruitment and safeguarding worker rights. The educators received hands-on training to incorporate these platforms into their school counseling practices.

Beyond job placements, the seminar expanded participants' understanding of the many academic and professional avenues open to students. Guidance was provided on competitive exams like NEET, JEE, and CLAT, as well as on vocational options after Class 10 and 12, such as ITIs, Polytechnics, and graduate-level programs. Government job opportunities through UPSC, SSC, and other state-level exams were also discussed in detail.



Importantly, the session shed light on various scholarship schemes accessible via the National Scholarship Portal and other government channels—empowering educators to help students find financial support for their aspirations.

What stood out most was the collaborative spirit of the training. Participants were encouraged to view themselves as community anchors for career guidance, extending their reach beyond their classrooms and creating a support network among peers. As Fr. Gabriel noted, “Career guidance is not a one-time interaction; it is a sustained commitment to walking with our students.”

Lanutula, a teacher from Gilgal School, reflected: “Fr. Gabriel's session was grounded in real-life experiences and deeply motivational. It's inspired me to rethink how we counsel students, especially those from disadvantaged families.”

Another participant, Toshirenila, a headmistress, added: “The insights into psychometric tools and government job options were eye-opening. We must now begin addressing the needs of differently-abled students too—career guidance must be inclusive.”

Through this initiative, AIDA-DBJPN is laying the groundwork for a more equitable future, where every student—regardless of background—has access to professional guidance and the confidence to shape their own path. ■

The Rongmei Tribal Community of Manipur Hills

By PM Joachim



AIDA REAP project team meets with a few villagers of M Khunou village in their jhum field (Photo: PM Joachim)

The Rongmei tribal community is one of the major Naga communities that form an integral part of the socio-cultural tapestry of Northeast India. The Rongmeis are a people rich in cultural heritage and deeply intertwined with their ancestral traditions. The hilly Tamenglong and Noney districts of Manipur are home to the Rongmei community. Looking at their history, culture, how they organize their society, and how they make a living gives us a real picture of a community trying to keep its identity as the world around them changes.

A Legacy of Ancestral Roots

The Rongmei people trace their origins to the broader Naga family, a diverse ethnic group scattered across Northeast India and

Myanmar.

They possess a distinct linguistic identity, with their language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family. Their history is meticulously preserved through oral traditions, folklore, and legends, passed down from one generation to the next.

These narratives speak of their migration from the ancient Zeliangrong region, a territory that includes parts of Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam. Historically, the Rongmei were known as good fighters and farmers, and they had strong social systems. They thrived in self-sufficient village communities, practicing shifting cultivation, a testament to their deep connection with the land.

Villages and AIDA's Intervention

For many years, AIDA has been working with the Rongmei community in their villages in Tamenglong and Noney districts. AIDA's projects have made a real difference in these communities. There are 24 Rongmei villages in Tamenglong and 35 in Noney. Places like Songpram, Kahulong, Namkaolong, and Luangchum show how AIDA has helped these communities grow and become stronger and more resilient.



Beneficiary students and others of AIDA's REAP project in Rangkhung-2 village pose for photos with AIDA team
(Photo: PM Joachim)

Festivals, Beliefs, and Crafts

The cultural life of the community is profoundly rooted in traditional beliefs and customs. Key festivals like Gaan-Ngai, Nchanu, and Tsingkaomei serve as vibrant expressions of their heritage, celebrating harvests, honoring ancestors, and fostering community harmony. The Rongmei are also skilled artisans, renowned for their intricate weaving, wood carving, and bamboo craftsmanship, with women playing a crucial role in weaving vibrant shawls and garments.



Rongmei traditional dance (internet image)

Clans and governance

The Rongmei society is structured around clans ("Kai-khuang"), based on lineage and ancestry. These clans, with their own customs and taboos, form the bedrock of their social organization. The Rongmeis follow a patrilineal system, with descent and inheritance traced through the male line. Clan exogamy, mandating marriage outside one's clan, promotes social harmony, while tribal endogamy preserves their cultural identity.

Elders hold a revered position, guiding the community through the Pei (village council), oral storytelling, and ritual leadership. Traditional youth dormitories, Khangchu and Luchu, serve as vital institutions for education, socialization, and skill development, ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge.



Morung students from AIDA's REAP project in Taosang Khullen village. (Photo: PM Joachim)

Agriculture and trade

Historically, the Rongmei are agrarian, relying on shifting cultivation for sustenance. Crops like rice, millet, maize, and vegetables form their staple diet. Recent years have seen a gradual shift towards settled farming and cash crop cultivation. Handicrafts, especially bamboo and cane products, are significant sources of income, with trade and barter with neighboring tribes playing a crucial role.

Contemporary challenges

The Rongmei people have a rich culture, but they face many challenges in today's world. These include keeping their culture alive, improving their economy, getting fair representation in government, and protecting their environment.

However, there are many efforts being made to help them. Community leaders, organizations, and the government are working on projects to keep their culture strong, improve education, boost their economy, and protect the environment.



Rongmei traditional ornaments (internet image)



Morung students of M.Khunou-3, Kaengbianpang village (Photo: PM Joachim)

A people in transition

The Rongmei people, with their long history and strong culture, are at a turning point. While the modern world brings new challenges, it also offers chances for growth. By keeping their culture alive and using sustainable practices, they can

move forward while staying true to who they are. AIDA's continued engagement with the community aims to support their journey towards a prosperous and culturally vibrant future. ■



P.M Joachim is Project Manager at Action for Protection of Environment in North East India Region (APENIR), AIDA

Four years of my journey with AIDA

By Shemang S Phom

From a hesitant first step into the world of social work to a confident advocate for children, Shemang S. Phom shares how her four years at AIDA have been an interesting journey of personal and professional growth.

A new chapter in my life opened in 2021 when I started working as a Children Mobilization Officer for the 'Child Friendly Dimapur' project at ANMA Integrated Development Association (AIDA). As a fresh postgraduate in social work stepping into the professional world, I felt both excited and unprepared.

Thankfully, I had the fortune of working under the mentorship of Rev. Fr. Dr. Roy George, Executive Director, AIDA. This experience at AIDA has shaped my professional journey in ways I never anticipated.

Rev. Fr. Dr. Roy George's guidance provided opportunities for both professional and personal growth, helping me negotiate the complexities of organizational life alongside experienced colleagues. I gained not just technical skills but



Shemang S Phom

also invaluable life lessons. I developed the ability to communicate effectively with different audiences, overcame my initial shyness in public speaking, and built confidence in my critical thinking skills. These lessons, especially as a newcomer, were invaluable. Working with children has been a profoundly moving experience in my life.

Their innocence, resilience, and enthusiasm have deepened my sense of compassion and patience. Looking into the eyes of these young ones has taught me the importance of creating an environment where they feel valued, supported, and empowered. My understanding of nurturing young minds now goes beyond education; it extends to fostering a space where they can thrive holistically.

An integral part of my growth has been the opportunity to share field experiences, challenges, and triumphs under the mentorship of Dr. Anna Lungbila Bibiana, HRD Manager. Our Monthly Review Meetings played a crucial role in my personal transformation.



(photo: Sr. Jisha)

The feedbacks I received there helped me identify areas for improvement, and their encouragement motivated me to embrace challenges with resilience and determination. The annual AIDA training week was another highlight, broadening my perspective and fostering a strong sense of teamwork and belonging.

Beyond professional development, Fr. Roy George ensured that growth of AIDA staff encompassed holistic well-being i.e. body, mind, and soul. Daily reflections and words of encouragement, along with monthly recollections, strengthened my spirituality and grounded me in my work's purpose.

Serving others has always been my aspiration, and I am deeply grateful to God for granting me the opportunity to work at AIDA. This has shaped my career, transformed my understanding of leadership and service, and taught me to view the world with compassion.



(photo: G Lotha)

I feel blessed to be part of the vibrant 'Child Friendly Dimapur' team along with Ms. Garrol Lotha, Sr. Jisha Joseph, Ms Mechietonü Agnes, and Mr. Gaisanglung Kamei. We have shared countless ups and downs, yet through every challenge, we have remained committed to our responsibilities. This shared journey has reinforced in me the values of self-discipline, perseverance, and teamwork.

I remain grateful to Mr. Sebi Chacko, Project Coordinator of AIDA-Don Bosco Job Placement

Network, for opening the doors of AIDA for me to begin this fulfilling journey. Four years ago I stepped into AIDA, as a fresh postgraduate filled with excitement and a sense of being utterly unprepared.

I am no longer that hesitant newcomer; I am now a confident professional, deeply rooted in compassion and driven by a commitment to service. As I reflect on this journey, I realize how profoundly AIDA has shaped me. ■

CSR as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

By Dr. Joji Valli

This article presents a picture of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that transcends traditional profit-driven models, highlighting its key role in shaping a sustainable and ethical business landscape. Dr. Valli argues that as companies increasingly recognize their societal footprint, integrating CSR becomes not just an obligation, but a strategic imperative for long-term value creation

In the ever-changing nature of business, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a key concept in the contemporary business landscape, transcending the traditional profit-centric paradigm. It encapsulates a company's commitment to operating in an ethical and sustainable manner, considering its impact on society, the environment, and other stakeholders.

Businesses generate profits from society, and CSR is a way for them to give back, contributing to the well-being of the communities from which they benefit. As businesses increasingly recognize their broader societal role, CSR has become a vital business strategy, driving positive change and fostering long-term value creation. CSR was made mandatory in India on April 1, 2014. This was implemented through Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.

As per the Companies Act 2013, companies with a net worth of ₹500 crore or more, turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or average annual net profit of ₹5 crore or more for the preceding three financial years are mandated to spend at least 2% of their average net profit on CSR activities, as required by the Act. At its core, CSR encompasses a wide range of initiatives that extend beyond legal and regulatory requirements. It involves



addressing social, environmental, and economic issues that may arise from a company's operations.

Key areas of focus often include environmental sustainability, ethical labor practices, community development, and consumer welfare. By integrating CSR into their business models, companies can not only enhance their reputation but also mitigate risks, attract and retain talent, and build stronger relationships with stakeholders.

CSR operates with the principle of "Tripple Bottom Line"(TBL) i.e, people, planet, and profit. One of the most significant benefits of CSR is its potential to drive sustainable development. By adopting environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, and minimizing

waste, companies can contribute to a healthier planet.

Furthermore, by investing in social initiatives, like education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation, businesses can empower communities and improve quality of life. This holistic approach to business operations aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a global framework for addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, inequality, and poverty.

Moreover, CSR can have a positive impact on a company's financial performance. Studies have shown that companies with strong CSR practices often outperform their peers in terms of stock price, profitability, and customer loyalty. This can be attributed to several factors, including reduced operational costs, enhanced brand reputation, and increased investor confidence.

Companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility can attract socially conscious consumers who share their values and are increasingly willing to support responsible businesses.

However, it is important to note that CSR is not merely a philanthropic endeavor. It requires a strategic approach that is integrated into a company's overall business strategy.

To be truly effective, CSR initiatives must be aligned with a company's core values and mission.

Additionally, it is crucial to measure and report on CSR performance to ensure accountability and transparency.



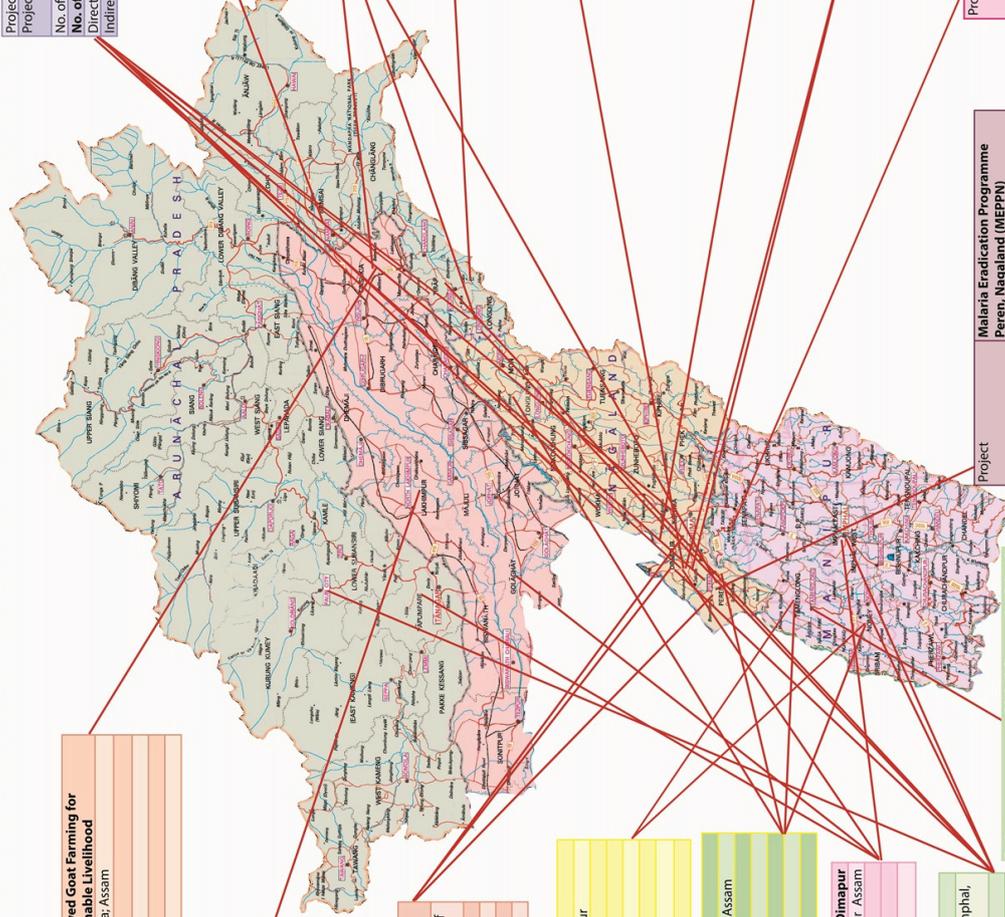
Companies can demonstrate their commitment to CSR and build trust with stakeholders through clear objective-setting, progress tracking, and transparent disclosure of relevant information.

In conclusion, Corporate Social Responsibility is no longer a mere buzzword but a fundamental aspect of modern business. Embracing CSR enables companies to create a positive impact on society, the environment, and their bottom line. As the world faces increasing challenges, businesses have a unique opportunity to drive sustainable development and contribute to a better future. Prioritizing ethical practices, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship enhances a company's reputation and ensures long-term success in a rapidly changing global landscape. ■



Dr. Joji Valli is a Pune-based author, speaker, and social entrepreneur with a PhD in CSR. He blends expertise in mindfulness and holistic living with extensive academic backgrounds in philosophy, psychology, and sociology. He can be reached at: jojivalli@gmail.com

AIDA'S PROGRAMME AREAS



Project	Improved Goat Farming for Sustainable Livelihood
Project Area	Tinsukia, Assam
No. of Villages	9
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	100
Indirect	500

Project	Integrated Development of Rural Communities of Lakhimpur District (IDRCL)
Project Area	Lakhimpur District, Assam
N. of Villages	25
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	8250
Indirect	41250

Project	Action for Protection of Environment in Northeast India Region (APENIR)
Project Area	Dimapur, Chumoukedima, Kohima, Peren, Nuland Districts of Nagaland
No. of Eco Clubs	200
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	10000
Indirect	50000

Project	Solar Mamas
Project Area	Tamenglong and Noney Districts, Manipur
No. of villages	15
No. of Households	750
No. of persons trained	15
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	15
Indirect	3750

Project	Solar Sakhi
Project Area	Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam
No. of villages	36
No. of persons trained	36
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	36
Indirect	180

Project	AIDA Don Bosco Job Placement Network, Dimapur
Project Area	Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Upper Assam
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	5000
Indirect	20000

Project	Frattelli Dimenticati
Project Area	Borduria, Mintong, Palin, Imphal, Khoupum, Dimapur
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	1079
Indirect	4316

Project	Digital Community School
Project Area	Tamenglong, Manipur
No. of villages	3
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	32
Indirect	192

Project	Malaria Eradication Programme Peren, Nagaland (MEPPN)
Project Area	Peren District, Nagaland
No. of villages	2
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	4512
Indirect	4512

Project	Backyard pigery units as a livelihood enhancement means for 200 vulnerable Maram tribal households of Senapati district of Manipur, Northeast India
Project Area	Senapati District, Manipur
No. of villages	4
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	200
Indirect	1000

Project	USHA Silal School
Project Area	Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Kohima, Wokha and Peren District, Nagaland, Longding and Trip District, Arunachal Pradesh
No. of villages	115
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	173
Indirect	865

Project	SBI Gram Seva
Project Area	Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh
No. of villages	5
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	3500
Indirect	3500

Project	Solar Mamas
Project Area	Longding District; Arunachal Pradesh, Tinsukia District; Assam, Peren District; Nagaland
No. of villages	9
No. of Households	450
No. of persons trained	9
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	450
Indirect	2250

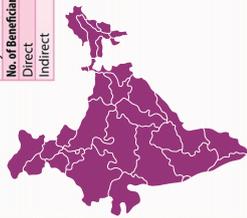
Project	Sanjeevani - Clinic on wheels
Project Area	Tirap District, Arunachal Pradesh
No. of villages	25
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	21,980
Indirect	25,000

Project	Bosome Slum School
Project Area	Dimapur, Nagaland
No. of Schools	6
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	418
Indirect	2090

Project	SBI Gram Saksham
Project Area	Chumoukedima, Nagaland
No. of villages	10
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	301
Indirect	1505

Project	SBI Gram Seva
Project Area	Chumoukedima, Nagaland
No. of villages	5
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	4500
Indirect	4500

Project	Child Friendly City Initiatives: Dimapur
Project Area	Dimapur; Chumoukedima, Nagaland
No. of Beneficiaries:	
Direct	4265
Indirect	18625





Training facilities available at AIDA

Type of facility	Details	Person capacity	Food available
Conference hall	A/C, LCD, PA system	50	Yes
Conference hall	Non-A/C, LCD, PA system	50	
Training hall	A/C, LCD, PA system	100	
Training hall	Non-A/C, LCD, PA system	100	
Guest rooms	A/C	2	
Guest rooms	Non A/C	4	
Dormitory	Non A/C	80	

Don Bosco Campus, P.B. -2, N. N. Goan, River Belt Colony, Dimapur Nagaland - 797113

For booking / Inquiry:

Mob / WhatsApp- 9402857561 / Email - aidasdb@gmail.com