



WEAVING DREAMS - A Tribute to the Inspiring Women of Nagaland

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Inspiring Women
of Nagaland*



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WEAVING DREAMS

A Tribute to the Inspiring Women of Nagaland



Message



Women have always been the silent pillars of strength in our society. Throughout history, the women of Nagaland have played pivotal roles within their families and communities, making significant contributions across various spheres of life. From the days of our ancestors to the prolonged struggle for self-determination, women have been instrumental in fostering community cohesion—often hailed as the torchbearers of peace - and advocating for progress. Over time, their roles have expanded into diverse areas and spheres significantly impacting our society's trajectory. Women leaders emerged during crucial historical moments, providing guidance and resilience during challenging times.

'Weaving Dreams - A Tribute to the Inspiring Women of Nagaland' coffee table book celebrates the extraordinary contributions of Nagaland's women, showcasing their inspiring stories and recognizing their significant influence in shaping various facets of our society. From trailblazing leaders and entrepreneurs to educators, artists, authors, and many more, these women have made a profound impact on our communities. Their dedication, resilience, and achievements not only highlight their individual journeys but also reflect the collective strength and spirit of all women of Nagaland.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in bringing this book to life. May it inspire and motivate many more to pursue their dreams and contribute to the progress and prosperity of Nagaland.

Neiphiu Rio
Chief Minister, Government of Nagaland

Date: 16 October 2024
Place: Kohima



Message



Nagaland has been making continuous strides in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the core of Nagaland's priorities lies SDG 5: Gender Equality. In this pursuit, the state has made remarkable progress through various policies, programs, and initiatives centred on women and girls of the Government of India and the Government of Nagaland.

Today, as reflected in 'Weaving Dreams - A Tribute to the Inspiring Women of Nagaland', women in Nagaland have not only shattered the glass ceiling but have also inspired countless others to dream big and achieve their goals. Their success stories are a testament to their relentless pursuit of excellence. They have excelled in various fields, proving that there are no limits to what women can achieve.

I congratulate Mr. R. Ramakrishnan IAS, Principal Secretary (Planning) & Development Commissioner, who has supported the team at the Sustainable Development Goals Coordination Centre of the Department of Planning & Transformation, led by Smt. Nayantara Sasikumar, IES, OSD (Planning) & SDG Nodal Officer, for spearheading the development of this significant document.

T.R. Zeliang,
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Nagaland

Date: 16 October 2024
Place: Kohima



Message



Fulfilling our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Nagaland SDG Vision 2030, the SDG Coordination Centre, Department of Planning and Transformation has come out with this Coffee Table Book 'Weaving Dreams - A Tribute to the Inspiring Women of Nagaland.' The book honours the exceptional women of Nagaland and development initiatives in the State led by them. Their unwavering dedication and achievements have shaped the very fabric of our society and propelled us towards a brighter future.

Within the pages of this book, we discover the stories of courage, resilience, and triumph of Nagaland's women across diverse fields. It goes beyond being a mere collection of narratives; it stands as a powerful testament to the power of women in wielding positive change in our communities and beyond.

While we honour their achievements, it is also important to acknowledge the challenges that women continue to face in our society. Recently, significant strides in women empowerment have been made in the Nagaland State by taking measures to enable the full participation of women in decision making at all tiers of the Government. Let us reaffirm our commitment to breaking down the barriers to gender equality and enable women to fully participate in decision-making processes at every level. Together, let us pave the way for a future where every woman is recognized, valued, and given equal opportunities to thrive so that SDG 5 i.e Gender Equality is realised in its true spirit in the State.

Dr. J. Alam, IAS.
Chief Secretary, Government of Nagaland

Date: 16 October 2024
Place: Kohima



Message



With profound admiration and gratitude, we honour the extraordinary women featured in this Coffee Table Book for their tireless efforts and steadfast commitment to making a meaningful difference in our society. Their journey has been filled with challenges and obstacles, which they have bravely overcome to reach where they are today.

What sets this Coffee Table Book apart is its commitment to capturing the diversity and complexity of the female narrative in Nagaland. From nurturing mothers to ground-breaking entrepreneurs, from heritage-preserving artists to policy-shaping leaders, each story is an encounter with the limitless potential of women when given the opportunity to thrive. It goes beyond the surface to explore the intersections of identity, culture, and aspiration. It challenges us to confront our preconceived notions and expand our understanding of what it means to be a woman in today's world.

As we reflect on their remarkable journeys, let us draw inspiration from their innovation, creativity, and boldness in championing important social causes. Let us rededicate ourselves to creating an environment where barriers are broken, stereotypes are challenged, and inclusivity thrives. Together, we can strive towards a future where gender equality is not only a reality but a cornerstone of sustainable development in Nagaland and beyond.

R. Ramakrishnan IAS,
Principal Secretary (Planning) & Development Commissioner

Date: 16 October 2024
Place: Kohima



Foreword



Across societies, women epitomize stability, compassion, progress and the development ethos of a community. In Nagaland, this is no different. Traditionally, Naga women, have held a high social position, actively partaking in their family responsibilities, cultural and community activities. The women of Nagaland also play a pivotal role in the preservation of indigenous and sustainable traditions and practices that are aligned to the SDGs. It is indeed heartening that in recent times the women of Nagaland have been excelling in varied spheres of activity at national/international levels, be it in professional and creative accomplishments, building global brands or acing competitive exams. Their valuable contributions continue to vitalize and fortify the bedrock of Naga society.

The SDG Coordination Centre, Department of Planning & Transformation is proud to present 'Weaving Dreams - A Tribute to the Inspiring Women of Nagaland'. This Coffee Table book celebrates the indomitable spirit and remarkable contributions of those women who have been harbingers of change in different sectors and also features a few women-led organisations who are doing exemplary services for the betterment of our State and communities. We are grateful to the women featured in this book for sharing their stories with us. We are also thankful to the UNDP for supporting this initiative.

One can never understate the power of role models in unleashing a positive and virtuous cycle of inclusive growth and well-being. The inspiring stories showcased in this book illustrate the transformative change in our society and the power of aspirations in overcoming barriers. This is of course not an exhaustive list and we hope to document the stories of more women and their initiatives in times to come. But in the first instance, this endeavour is an ode to the daughters of Nagaland and serves to ignite the minds of the young generation to pursue excellence.

Through this Coffee Table Book, we hope more people within and outside the State will be enlightened on the challenges faced by these women and the organisations featured, how they overcame their challenges, their accomplishments and the beautiful world of possibilities that remain to be explored for the future generation. It will also give us an opportunity to reflect on the road ahead, what remains to be done and how we might harness our collective energy to inspire and empower women on the road to 2030.

Nayantara Sasikumar, IES
OSD (Planning) & SDG State Nodal Officer

Date: 16 October 2024
Place: Kohima



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SDG 5 and Nagaland – the journey

In alignment with SDG 5 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and the Nagaland SDG Vision 2030, Nagaland is unwavering in its commitment to achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. This commitment is being actively pursued across the state through various women and girl-centric policies, programmes and initiatives under various Ministries of the Government of India and the State Government of Nagaland. The Transformative Livelihood Intervention (TLI) Project and the Myki Project are notable livelihood interventions by the State aimed at bolstering the economic participation and empowerment of women. Further there are numerous interventions aimed at strengthening the safety of women, reducing gender violence and promoting capacity building and upliftment of women. Over the years the State has also strived in mainstreaming gender sensitive policies across diverse sectors.

Remarkably, for the first time in 60 years since Nagaland attained statehood, two women legislators have been elected to the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (2023-2028), a 60-member house. This marks a historic step for gender equality in Nagaland. Additionally, the Nagaland Municipal Act 2023 provides 33 per cent reservation for women in Urban Local Bodies. In the recently concluded Urban Local Bodies Election in the State, 102 women have been elected to the ULBs signifying a crucial advancement in women's representation addressing longstanding gender disparities in decision-making in local governance.

This is of course just the beginning and there remains more to be done in economic, social and political spheres with the active collaboration of all stakeholders of the Naga society. The journey of the women in Nagaland toward advancing SDG 5 is a saga of grit, courage, persistence, resilience, triumph and hope. We hope to capture the varied nuances of this saga in the individual stories featured and also acknowledge the collective contributions of women spanning across generations in weaving together the story of Nagaland.



REINVENTING THE WHEEL - STORIES OF COURAGE





Differently
abled

Unbroken Wings



The Journey
of Resilience and
Transformation

**Diethono
Nakhro**

State Commissioner for
Persons with Disabilities,
Government of Nagaland

Recipient of

NCPEDP-
Lemontree
Helen Keller
Award in the
category 'Role
Model Person
with Disability'
2015.

Classic Award
in recognition
of her work to
empower
persons with
disabilities
2019.

A Kevichusa
Citizenship Award **2020.**

Diethono Nakhro is presently serving as a State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities at the Office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD). In 2006, Diethono's life took an unexpected turn following a car accident that left her with a spinal cord injury, leading to quadriplegia. The following months were marked by the challenges of rehabilitation, coupled with the uncertainty of what lay ahead. Yet, amid this period of profound reflection, Diethono emerged not only as a survivor but as a beacon of hope and inspiration.



Returning home with a newfound determination, she faced the harsh reality that society was ill-equipped to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Diethono encountered pervasive negativity, misconceptions, and a glaring lack of awareness and facilities. The disabled community seemed invisible, their voices unheard, and they were systematically excluded, leading to social isolation. It was a revelation that sparked the flame of activism and advocacy within Diethono.

A life-altering accident ignited Diethono's passion to champion the rights of persons with disabilities. In a society that often forgets "the world's biggest minority," Diethono became a relentless advocate to break down barriers and dismantle the misconceptions surrounding disability. People with disabilities have historically faced discrimination and exclusion from healthcare, education, employment, and community life. They face social, physical, and political barriers that prevent them from participating in various aspects of society.

Her advocacy for disability rights, both as an individual with disability and as State Commissioner, has led to the improved enforcement of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, fostering greater social inclusion within the state. Affirmative action initiatives are now being implemented

across various sectors to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. These efforts include enhancing accessibility in public spaces, transportation, and information and communication systems. Additionally, measures such as 4% reservation in government jobs and provision of reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities are being enforced. Steps are also being taken to ensure equal access to education, establish rehabilitation services, promote skill development and livelihood programmes, and strengthen social security for individuals with disabilities. As a result, there has been a noticeable increase in awareness surrounding disability and related issues.

As Diethono Nakhro continues her journey to address the inequities faced by disabled people, her story serves as an inspiration for all, urging society to embrace a future that is enabling and inclusive, leaving no one behind.

Vision: "My vision for the future is a world, a Nagaland, where no one is left behind. An inclusive Nagaland where all citizens have equal opportunities, achieve their potential and live in dignity, free from poverty, exclusion, stigma, discrimination and violence. A Nagaland where people with disabilities have a voice, choice, and control over the decisions that affect them; where they participate in and benefit equitably from everyday life, everywhere. The work that I do today, fighting for equal opportunities, accessibility, and inclusion of disabled people, is focused on building a future that we all deserve and need, one where all bodies and minds are accepted, and where access is a cultural value."



Message for aspiring individuals: "Embrace your disability. Disability is nothing to be ashamed about, it's just part of one's identity. I'm very proud of my identity as a disabled woman because I would not be who I am at this moment if it were not for my disability. Love yourself and be proud of who you are. And most of all, believe in your abilities. There will always be negative people in the world spreading negative vibes. Believe in yourself and never let anyone tell you that you can't do something. Remember, you are amazing and you are much stronger and capable of so much more than you know."



Education

Beyond Borders



A Saga of
Determination
and Unwavering
Values

**Dr. P.
Kilemsungla**
Former Member of the
Union Public Service Commission

Recipient of

Padma Shri for
Literature &
Social Science,
2014.

Senior Citizen
Award
Nagaland,
2019.

Dr. P. Kilemsungla was appointed as the first member from Nagaland to the Union Public Service Commission, from 2013 to 2016. Prior to this, she served as a member and also Acting Chairman of the Nagaland Public Service Commission. Her impact, however, extends far beyond administrative roles, Dr. P. Kilemsungla is widely recognised in the State of Nagaland for her contributions to the field of education.



Throughout her illustrious career, Dr. P. Kilemsungla has been a member of various national and state committees and has made vital contributions to the educational and social arena of the State. As an Expert Member of the National Committee on Capacity Building of Teacher Education, she worked to enhance the quality of education. Dr. P. Kilemsungla also spearheaded the 'Community Development through Polytechnics' project as the State Coordinator, ensuring education reached the grassroots. She served as a Member of the Nagaland State Women Empowerment Action

Committee for Women's Empowerment. She has served as a Member of the Executive Council and the Board of Undergraduate Studies, at Nagaland University and also as a Member of the Advisory Board of the National Curriculum Framework. She has also served as a Team Member for a World Bank Project on Technical Education in Nagaland. While she was in service, her quest for knowledge took her to Denmark in 2001 to study Danish Democracy and to Harvard University, USA, in 2003 for a program on Special Education. She is at present a member of Governing Council Member of North Eastern Christian University, Dimapur.

However, every ascent comes with its own set of challenges. Dr. P. Kilemsungla faced the uphill battle of fostering interest and inspiration among her co-workers. She turned challenges into stepping stones, relying on her core values of integrity, hard work, and the efficient utilization of resources available keeping in view the national goals and objectives. Dr. P. Kilemsungla's life exemplifies the power of determination and unwavering values in achieving greatness.

Vision: "In this era of knowledge explosion and technology, life is different from the past. I would aspire future vision to develop a sound foundation of good education, and strong values/faith by which the future citizens will be able to create a better society."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Integrity, hard work and positive attitude in life."



Nurturing Hope

Transformative
Power of
Grassroots Efforts



Recipient of

District Award
to Teachers
(Kohima), **2018.**

State Award
to Teachers,
2021.

National Awards to
Teachers, **2022.**

**Mimi
Yhoshii**

Head Teacher,
Government Middle School,
Officers' Hills (Thegabakha),
Kohima

Mimi Yhoshii currently serves as the Head Teacher of the Government of Middle School, Officers' Hills, Kohima. In 2015, when the school was upgraded to a Middle School, the biggest challenge was the need for more classrooms to accommodate all the students. Mimi initiated fundraising efforts with her colleagues, students, and parents. The efforts caught the attention of the then Governor of Nagaland, B.P. Acharya, who donated building materials, enabling them to construct two kaccha classrooms in 2018. In 2021, the community contributed resources once again to replace the two kaccha classrooms with concrete buildings. This remarkable effort not only redefined the school's physical landscape but also united the community in a collective pursuit of education.



Mimi's vision extends beyond conventional classroom learning. Recognizing the value of hands-on learning, she has created an environment where abstract concepts come to life through outdoor activities. Students are not just passive learners; they are active participants in the journey of understanding, fostering a deep connection between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Many of the students hail from families facing socio-economic challenges, with a significant number being domestic helpers. Nurturing these young minds holistically in a stress-free environment is not just an achievement, it's a testament to Mimi's commitment to shaping responsible, empathetic citizens. Lack of proper and adequate infrastructure and language barriers pose hurdles, but Mimi's resilience turns adversity into opportunities for

growth. She acknowledges the harsh realities of today, where teenagers are vulnerable to and indulging in substance abuse, and she confronts this concern with proactive measures, providing a supportive environment for her students. Through her efforts, she has not only built a school but a community united by the belief that education is the key to empowerment. Mimi's journey is a testament to the transformative power of grassroots initiatives.



Vision: "To mould and give justice to my students and bring them on par with the national level."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Stay positive, focused, sincere and believe in yourself. Challenges are our strength so we teachers need to think 'Out of the Box' to overcome those hurdles and bring innovation to our daily classroom interactions."



Entertainment

From Nagaland to the Global Stage



A Triumph in
Fashion and
Entertainment

Andrea Kevichüsa

Model and Actor

Recipient of

North East
Young Heroes
Award - Media
and
Entertainment,
2023.

Filmfare
Award - Best
Female
Debut,
2023.

TaFMA Excellence Award -
Ultimate Achiever, **2023.**

Vogue Forces of Fashion
Award, **2023.**

Golda Iron Woman Award, **2023.**

Andrea Kevichüsa, a renowned model and actor, has achieved international acclaim by working for multiple fashion brands and designers across the world. She is signed with modelling agencies in fashion capitals like New York, Milan, Hamburg and Tokyo. Her recent appearance at Milan Fashion Week marks yet another milestone in her burgeoning career. Notably, she made her acting debut in the film 'Anek', earning accolades with the prestigious Filmfare Award for Best Debut Female in 2023.

Her journey began at the tender age of 15 when she was scouted by a modelling agency based in Mumbai, catapulting her into the glamorous world of fashion. Driven by a deep sense of purpose and anchored by her roots in Nagaland, Andrea firmly believes in the untapped talent and potential within Nagaland's youth and strives to inspire and empower them to pursue their dreams on a global stage.



Despite the glitz and glamour, Andrea's journey has not been without its challenges. However, she learned to navigate the industry's challenges, acknowledging rejection as an inherent aspect of her profession. Grounded by her faith and supported by a strong network of family and friends, she navigates the highs and lows of her career with grace and determination.

Through her work, Andrea embodies values of resilience, authenticity, and community empowerment. As she continues to illuminate pathways for others, Andrea Kevichüsa's achievements also symbolise a triumph for her community, breaking barriers and paving the way for greater representation in mainstream media.

Vision: "To inspire other members of my community to pursue their dreams- to instil a sense of belief and possibility in those around me."

Message for aspiring individuals: "I believe in taking chances and giving your dreams a shot; however, it is also very important for young people who are interested in pursuing these professions to be able to self-reflect and understand their motivations and aspirations for entering the field- are they genuinely passionate or are they drawn in by the glamour that comes along with it? Self-reflection then plays a huge role in keeping a person grounded. It is also important to be realistic and be prepared for setbacks and challenges along the way."



Strumming Dreams



The Melodic
Odyssey of
a Guitarist

**Imnainla
Jamir**

Musician & Guitar Artist

Recipient of

H.E.R (Hope. Empower. Rise.)
Award, 6th edition of 'We the
Women Festival' Jaipur, **2024.**

Upcoming Talented Musician of
Nagaland, for Distinctive
Talent in Guitar by
Naga Musicians Collective, **2020.**

Task Force for
Music and Arts
(TaFMA)
Excellence
Award, **2023.**

Invited as
Global
Ambassador of
MasterPeace
COOLeaders,
2023.

From a young age, **Imnainla Jamir** harboured a fervent passion for music, ignited by her brother's introduction to the enchanting world of melodies. Nurturing her musical aspirations, she honed her skills through rigorous training at a music school. However, it was the invaluable mentorship from TaFMA that propelled her career to new heights, laying the foundation for her remarkable musical odyssey.

A defining moment in her journey came when she captured the hearts of millions with her soul-stirring rendition of the National Anthem on the electric guitar during the opening ceremony of the Hornbill Festival 2022. This captivating performance marked a significant milestone, etching her name in the annals of musical history.

Unfazed by the male-dominated landscape of guitar music, Imnainla has fearlessly forged her path, breaking barriers, and defying stereotypes. Her exceptional talent has paved the way for greater inclusivity and diversity within the music industry.

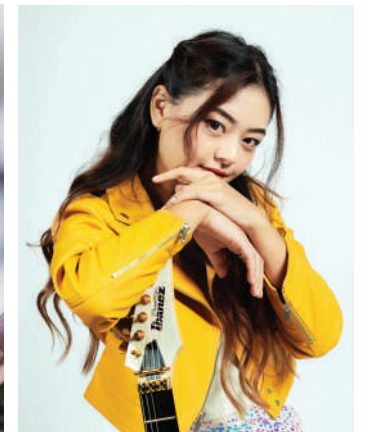
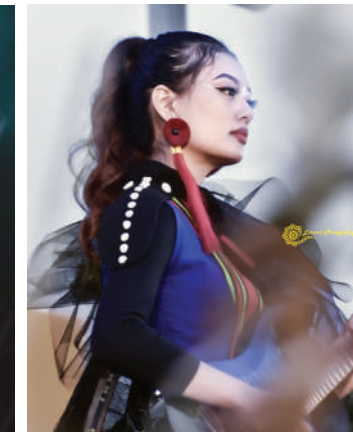
Beyond the stage, Imnainla actively engages in initiatives celebrating youth spirit and driving positive change. As a proud participant in a national project by the Times of India, her contribution to the music video 'Hum Ho Rahe Kamyab' uplifts young Indians under the age of 21, making their mark globally, inspiring countless individuals to embrace their potential and pursue their dreams.

As the Global Ambassador for Masterpeace COOLeaders — an environmental protection climate change initiative — she harnesses her platform to inspire change and empower the next generation of leaders. Through her music and advocacy, Imnainla has touched lives worldwide, instilling hope and belief in countless hearts.

Imnainla believes in transcending music to connect with youth and effect positive societal change. As she continues to captivate audiences with her melodic harmonies, she remains an inspirational figure, inspiring others to embrace their talents and strive for a better world.

Vision: “To connect with young people and positively impact the society through music.”

Message for aspiring individuals: “Work hard with determination and be persistent by acknowledging God in your journey to achieve your dreams.”





Entrepreneurship

Reinvigorating the Crafts Sector



The Legacy of
Heirloom Naga

Jesmina
Zeliang

Entrepreneur

Recipient of

Kamla Devi Award from Crafts Council of India, **2004**.

FICCI FLO North East Chapter Award for Entrepreneurship, **2006**.

Nagaland Governor's Award, for her contribution in the field of Arts and Crafts, **2014**.

Selected as one of the 40 small producers worldwide by the Dutch Government, **2008**.

Selected by the U.S. Government to represent India under the International Visitor Leadership program on the subject "Economic Integration through Women's Empowerment," **2013**.

Elected as the first woman President to preside over the Indian Handicrafts and Gift Fair, organised by Exports Promotion Council for Handicrafts, Autumn **2018**.

Awarded the JSW Award for Contemporary Craftsmanship, powered by Architectural Digest, **2019**.

Awarded Women Exporter of the Year from North East India, by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts, **2019/2020**.

Recognised by UNDP, India, as one of the stories inspiring India, **2023**.

Awarded by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, in the category of Entrepreneurship, **2023**.

Elected and serving as COA Member to Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts since **2012**.

Elected Convenor, North East, to Export Promotion Council of Handicrafts, **2012**.

Executive Member of Handicrafts and Carpet Sector Skill Council.

Jesmina Zeliang epitomises entrepreneurship as the visionary founder of Heirloom Naga, a textiles company nestled in Dimapur. Since its inception in 1993, Heirloom Naga has been at the forefront of reshaping the Naga textile industry. Collaborating closely with both skilled and unskilled home-based women weavers, the company infuses traditional handwoven motifs with contemporary elegance, captivating markets overseas with its exquisite designs. Complementing this venture is the Cane Concept, a handicraft brand partnering with male artisans and lately breaking gender stereotyping in this sector by creating job opportunities for several women artisans to create bespoke furniture and lifestyle products.

With a global footprint spanning from the US and UK to Australia, Japan Africa, Middle East and many European Countries, Heirloom Naga proudly represents Nagaland as the sole exporter of textile and handicrafts from the State. Her pet project Heirloom Naga Centre is an embodiment of her commitment to preserving heritage crafts and fostering sustainable livelihoods. This initiative not only champions traditional craftsmanship but also serves as a cultural hub, inviting visitors to experience the richness of Nagaland's artistic heritage.

Jesmina's entrepreneurial journey began in the early '90s when she identified a void in the market for Naga textiles beyond traditional merchandise. Determined to bridge this gap, she ventured into full-fledged business, pioneering exports, and elevating Naga crafts to the global stage.



Her passion for empowering women was ignited when one of the weavers revealed the heart-breaking reality of her children dropping out of school due to financial constraints. As a single parent herself, Jesmina understood clearly how critical it was to empower women financially. Thus began her missionary zeal to ensure fair wages and steady employment for local artisans, preserving traditional practices while uplifting her community.

Despite challenges ranging from market connectivity to logistical hurdles, Jesmina's dedication has propelled Nagaland's crafts to unprecedented heights. Her pioneering spirit continues to drive innovation, reviving ancestral skills and redefining indigenous craft for the modern era.

Vision: "I am deeply passionate about entrepreneurship and am committed to contributing by mentoring as many women as possible. I firmly believe that 'an empowered woman can empower many more women.' My vision extends to inspiring millennials and Gen Zs to value and preserve our cultural heritage. It is my hope that they will be motivated to make their mark in this sector, forging their own identities through our work instead of imitating other cultures. Our tagline, 'honouring hands,' encapsulates this sentiment."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Script your own stories by multiplying whatever resources you have."



Threads of Tradition



A Weaver's Tale

Neihunuo Sorhie
Handloom & Handicraft

Recipient of

Padma Shri Award, **2023**.

National Handloom Award, **2007 & 2022**.

State Awards to Master Craftsmen from the Government of Nagaland, **2001**.

Sant Kabir Award, **2018**.

Assam Balipara Foundation Award, **2014**.

Neihunuo Sorhie is a master weaver and artisan, celebrated for her exquisite handloom and handicraft creations. Renowned for her original art motifs and meticulous attention to detail, she has garnered recognition not only in Nagaland but also nationwide for her contributions to indigenous handicrafts.

Growing up as the only daughter in a single-parent household, Neihunuo faced financial constraints that led her to discontinue her formal education and assist her mother. It was during these formative years that she found her calling in weaving, learning the art form from both her mother and aunt. What began as a means of supporting her family evolved into a lifelong passion and profession, where weaving became not only a livelihood but also a medium for her creative expression and cultural heritage. Today, her repertoire extends beyond weaving to encompass knitting, beadwork, and decorative item production, each reflecting her boundless creativity and joy in craftsmanship.

Throughout her journey, Neihunuo has been dedicated to sharing her skills and knowledge with other women in her community. She has conducted training sessions for over 300 trainees in various aspects of weaving, knitting, and beadwork, providing them with the means to secure sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, her active participation in over 120 exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, has not only provided her with exposure but also enriched her craft through collaborative exchanges with fellow artisans.

At the heart of her endeavours lies a profound mission to preserve and revitalize the fading art of weaving, passing on this cherished legacy to future generations. Through her advocacy efforts and public engagements, she aims to elevate awareness and appreciation for indigenous crafts while safeguarding the traditional garments of her community. Above all, Neihunuo's commitment is fuelled by a deep-seated love for her cultural heritage, serving as a poignant reminder to cherish and preserve one's roots.

Despite challenges such as replicating original designs for mass production, Neihunuo remains undeterred, believing that public awareness holds the key to overcoming such obstacles. Her story stands as an enduring dedication to preserving indigenous art forms, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Nagaland's cultural heritage continues to thrive and inspire on a global scale.

Vision: "Work for the protection of indigenous crafts and pass the dying art to the next generation".

Message for aspiring individuals: "Love and protect your cultural heritage".





Environmental conservation

Wings of Change



The Amur Falcon
Conservation Triumph

Bano Haralu

Conservationist

Recipient of

Wildlife
Service Award,
2016.

True Legend
Awards, North
East, **2016.**

Nari Shakti Puraskar, **2016.**

Bano Haralu's journey embodies a profound shift from being a broadcast journalist to a conservationist, from reporting on issues to actively addressing them. Bano is presently engaged with Wildlife Conservation Society-India (WCS-India) as the Project lead for the IUCN/ITHCP Project Phase II titled 'Partnering with Communities to Strengthen Conservation of Critical Tiger Habitats in North East India'.

In 1989, amidst the devastating floods of the Brahmaputra River, Bano witnessed a painful scene of destruction. The impact of unplanned development models on the region's unique biodiversity struck her deeply. It was a moment of realization that our actions in one area could send ripples across the entire ecosystem. Fuelled by this insight, she embarked on a mission to reintroduce the interdependence of humanity with nature.



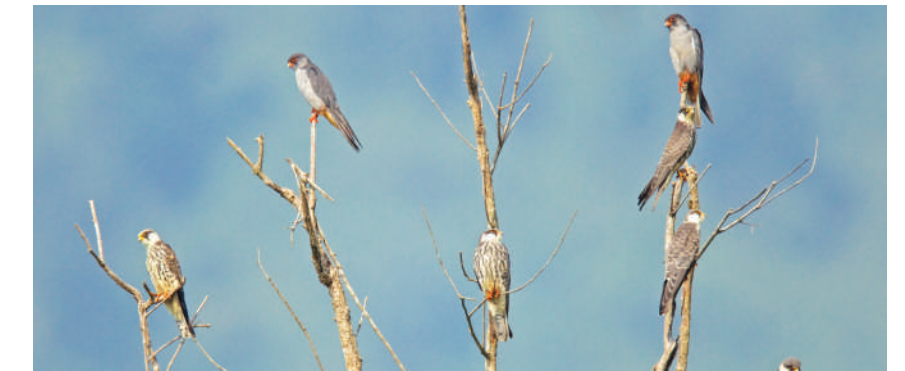
The year 2012 marked a pivotal moment for Bano when 'Friends of the Amur Falcon' Campaign, which she was associated with placed Nagaland on the global conservation map. In October 2012, a revelation emerged from the Doyang Reservoir in the Wokha district, exposing the mass trapping and sale of migratory falcons. The report unveiled on the Conservation India website sent shockwaves through the conservation community, unveiling the staggering scale of the tragedy.

Engagement with the hunting community in the landscape became a bridge for transformation. Eco clubs emerged like beacons of change, illuminating the path for the children across five villages in the landscape. What was uncovered shook the conscience – for more than five years, the Amur Falcons had fallen victim to relentless hunting.

The exposure sparked a collective movement. The State Government, Forest Department, and various NGOs intervened, culminating in a historic ban on hunting declared by the Pangti Village Council in 2013. The

once-persecuted migratory birds found safe passage to the landscape, but the impact didn't stop there. Pangti's decision became a catalyst for change, a ripple that travelled across Nagaland's villages and even beyond state boundaries. The campaign led to a ban on hunting Amur Falcons, turning the once-massacred raptors into conservation mascots. The ripple effect reached across borders, inspiring other communities to protect these majestic birds.

The story of Bano Haralu is one of resilience, adaptability, and a deep understanding that true conservation involves not just protecting wildlife but also empowering communities.



Vision: “The Amur Falcon conservation story was an opportunity for Nagas to collectively own this proud moment as our contribution to global conservation efforts. I hope and pray that we will find support in the collective attempts by the Forest Department, the fringe villages, and communities of Ntangki and the people of the state to have a thriving National Park in our state that becomes our pride and heritage. I see my role as a catalyst along with like-minded colleagues and friends to communicate not just the challenges of a sustainable life but also the potential for immense joy it brings, and hence the urgency to make this choice.”

Message for aspiring individuals: “Search out your God-given compass. Align it to a conviction the Lord puts in your heart and have an adventure.”





Healthcare

Transcending Boundaries



Changing
Lives Through
Holistic
Empowerment

**Phutoli
Shikhu
Chingmak**

Managing Director,
Eleutheros Christian Society

Recipient of

Governor's Gold Medal in the field
of Health and Development, **2024.**

Phutoli Shikhu Chingmak, a healthcare and development practitioner embarked on a transformative journey that touched the lives of over 200 indigenous villages across Nagaland. In the early 2000s, facing the stark realities of poor healthcare in remote villages, Phutoli weaved strategies that transcended health, environment, development, and education. Her focus was not merely on addressing health issues but on creating holistic solutions that uplifted communities. Under her stewardship, Eleutheros Christian Society (ECS) pioneered micro-finance institutions in the remotest corners, empowering over 600 self-help groups and establishing 20 'Edou Banks' managed by women. In the realm of healthcare, the organization ventured into uncharted territories, establishing community health centres for those living with HIV/AIDS between 2002-2008. To further meet the primary health needs of the rural people it established the Primary Health Care (PHC) at Longpang in partnership with Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Nagaland on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. ECS on the PPP model has undertaken 20 Sub-centres and Primary Health Centres (PHC) across 8 districts in Nagaland. These Sub-centres and empanelled PHCs now provide round-the-clock health services to the rural communities on Immunisation, Mother and Child Health care with nutritional support, institutional delivery, Geriatric care, and yearly eye and surgery camps.

The high mortality rate among the rural poor due to the absence of basic healthcare facilities was a driving factor behind ECS's efforts to strengthen rural healthcare facilities. Poor health service delivery is caused by many factors like poor health infrastructure, absence of proper diagnostic equipment, absence of medical staff, lack of awareness, and inability to access health services due to poverty. The organisation responded to the manifold factors hindering health service delivery by involving the community in demanding healthcare through education and awareness. This led to innovative models of convergence, forging partnerships with governments, NGOs, and funders, ensuring that basic healthcare reaches those who would otherwise be neglected.



The organisation had to face some initial challenges stemming from the socio-political situation in Nagaland as the result of armed conflict in the State. In Tuensang district, plagued by the absence of healthcare facilities and the highest HIV/AIDS rates among antenatal mothers, ECS faced an uphill battle. However, collaboration with tribes, communities, and various agencies slowly paved the way for the adoption of the PPP model, a community-driven initiative that became the cornerstone of rural healthcare programs.

The creation of the 'Edou Bank' and the 'Mothers Club' marked turning points, empowering women and becoming lifelines for thousands. Phutoli's leadership transformed non-functional health centres into beacons of hope, extending basic healthcare to over 120 villages. The PPP model, born out of necessity, evolved into a sustainable solution, a testament to the power of convergence, collaboration, and community partnership.



Her story inspires us to believe that transformative change is possible, even in the most challenging terrains. Through dedication, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to the well-being of rural communities, Phutoli has not just improved healthcare – she has illuminated a path towards holistic empowerment and sustainable change.

Vision: “A society that converges to address any challenges that impact the individual's well-being and health. My role will be to scale up best health service practices that have pragmatically worked on the ground through convergence and partnership to more rural areas in Nagaland.”

Message for aspiring individuals: “There is no substitute for integrity and hard work if you are committed to a cause, no matter how long it takes to achieve it.”



Patient to Provider



A Nurse's
Inspirational Path

**Khrielakhonuo
Angami**

Health Supervisor,
Naga Hospital Authority, Kohima

Recipient of

National Florence Nightingale
Award, **2019**.

Best Character and Efficient
Work from Health & Family Welfare
Department, **1990**.

Khrielakhonuo Angami, a health supervisor, was diagnosed with Birth Asphyxia at birth. Her chances of survival were very low, yet the doctors and nurses provided relentless care day and night. Through their unwavering dedication, she survived. This experience made her realize healthcare professionals' immense commitment to saving lives. From a young age, Khrielakhonuo admired nurses in their white dresses and caps, tending to patients with soft-spoken nature and smiles, even in harsh conditions. This admiration inspired her to pursue a career in nursing.

One experience that significantly influenced her was while she was posted at the Community Health Centre in Thonoknyu, under Tuensang district. She encountered a woman in labour on the verge of delivery at nightfall in the middle of a forest. Due to the urgent situation and lack of tools, Khrielakhonuo asked the woman's husband to make a fire with dried bamboo to light the area and to sharpen bamboo strips to cut the umbilical cord. The delivery was successful, with both mother and child in good condition.

Khrielakhonuo believes that she and her team address critical issues such as the importance of proper medication and immunisation, positively impacting their community. Often, the significance of regular and routine immunisation is overlooked, and hygiene and cleanliness are neglected. Additionally, there are instances where the community disregards vaccination advice, which is crucial for preventing various diseases.

One of the most challenging experiences during her nursing service was at Thonoknyu Community Health Centre, a remote place in the then Tuensang district. At that time, there were no means of transport beyond Shamator, which is 30 kilometres from Thonoknyu. Treading the 30 kilometres on foot was extremely challenging, and she often fainted during the walk. However, the opportunity to visit and provide care to patients in those remote villages stands out as one of the most fulfilling experiences of her career.



As Khrielakhonuo Angami continues to advocate for patient well-being, her work inspires many, demonstrating that dedication and heartfelt commitment can overcome even the most challenging obstacles and make a lasting impact on the community. Her journey serves as a symbol of hope and highlights the critical role healthcare professionals play in shaping healthier, more resilient communities.

Vision: "Society driven by upcoming generations who are well-equipped, well-informed, and highly qualified, fostering greater productivity and positive change."

Message for aspiring individuals: "To have the true passion to work for the people and society, if that passion is there it will bring you joy and happiness. Time may come when work seems endless, without sleep, you may be weary and hungry but without the struggle, we can never understand the pain of the people around us."



Womb to World



A Quest
for Hope and
Healing

**Renjano
Humtsoe**

Retired Auxiliary Nurse
and Midwife

Recipient of

The Governor's Gold Medal in
recognition of distinguished
service rendered, **2013.**

Renjano Humtsoe, a retired Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife, successfully delivered over 3,600 babies since embarking on her remarkable journey to date in and around Wokha, including Kohima and Dimapur districts of Nagaland. This extraordinary journey included the safe delivery of twins and triplets, averaging one to two babies daily. Her selfless commitment and dedication not only bring new life into the world but also strengthen the bonds within her community, making her a pillar of support and hope for generations to come.

For Renjano, it is a profound sense of accomplishment, marking not just a milestone, but a culmination of a lifetime dedicated to nurturing new beginnings. The tiny cries resonate as a testament to her career, leaving an enduring impact on both her professional and personal life.



One of Renjano's notable initiatives is her comprehensive prenatal education program, a beacon for expectant mothers in and around Wokha. By imparting knowledge, she reduces maternal and neonatal complications, fostering healthier pregnancies that ripple into the overall well-being of the community. Her impact even reached global platforms, as she shared her insights at an online world conference on food and nutrition in the United States in 2018 on maintaining a well-balanced diet for expectant mothers and babies to prevent health complications before and after childbirth.

Renjano's compassion extends beyond the delivery room. Financial support, typically INR 5,000, is offered to struggling couples to purchase

food, ensuring that economic constraints don't hinder the well-being of the mother and child. Her prayers, offered before each delivery, become a source of strength for the mothers in labour.

Word of Renjano's dedication has transcended borders. Expectant mothers from outside Nagaland, hailing from metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, seek her assistance, reaching Wokha in pursuit of her guiding hands. With medicines and essential items strategically placed near her pillow, she stands ready to respond promptly to calls, waking up at any time to attend to those in need.

In a world where maternal health and skilled attendance during childbirth are crucial, Renjano's work becomes a ray of hope. Her efforts contribute to reducing maternal mortality and address the larger economic, social, and developmental challenges that communities face. Through her selfless dedication, Renjano Humtsoe has become the embodiment of compassion, turning each delivery into a celebration of life.

Vision: "Nurturing mothers, nurture societies. I dream of a society where diversity is celebrated, and groups connecting mothers from all walks of life are supported. In this tapestry of inclusivity, every mother would feel seen, heard, and valued, regardless of their background. By empowering women and providing compassionate care, I see the ripple effect of kindness spreading outward. This, I knew, is the key to building a better world, one healthy family, one empowered mother, at a time."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Connecting with expectant parents goes beyond medical care – understanding their emotions and offering support can make a profound impact on their journey into parenthood."





Literature & journalism

Cultivating Love and Scholarship in Academia



Dr. Dolly Kikon

Professor of Anthropology,
University of California, Santa Cruz

Recipient of

Green Political Foundation (Germany), as one of twenty women leaders contributing to the UNSC Resolution 1325, **2020**.

Gender Security Project, as one of the 100 feminists from the global south contributing to gender justice and human rights, **2021**.

Locavore Champion, for her contribution to food and community engagement, **2022**.

In the bustling world of academia, **Dr. Dolly Kikon** emerges as a luminary, blending her ardour for research, pedagogy, and community engagement into a narrative of profound influence. As a distinguished professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Santa Cruz, Dr. Dolly's academic voyage is rich with experiences that transcend boundaries and shape the contours of societal discourse.

Dr. Dolly's academic voyage began with the pursuit of knowledge, culminating in a PhD from the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University in 2013. Her quest for understanding led her to traverse continents, serving as a post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University from 2013-2015. Today, she stands tall as a distinguished academician delving into diverse realms such as resource extraction, militarization, development, human rights, migration, gender, and political economy.

Driven by a deep-seated commitment to research and engagement, Dr. Dolly found her calling as a teacher and researcher. Her guiding principle - love for one another - forms the bedrock of her work, embodying a profound sense of empathy, compassion, and solidarity.



Dr. Dolly's journey is filled with impactful initiatives that resonate deeply within the community. As a pivotal member of the Recover, Restore and Decolonize (RRaD) team, she spearheads dialogues for the repatriation of Naga ancestral human remains, leaving an indelible mark on future generations.

Hailing from a milieu marked by adversity, she grappled with societal norms and cultural practices with resilience and determination. Overcoming the shackles of inequality and entrenched biases, she charted her course with tenacity, leveraging her scholarly pursuits as a catalyst for societal transformation.

For Dr. Dolly, the essence of achievement transcends public recognition and accolades. Each dawn, each breath serves as a poignant reminder of God's blessings, grounding her amidst the tumult of success and acclaim.



Vision: "To nurture a just society, free from the shackles of domestic violence and fear. The pursuit of this noble ideal encompasses self-care and preservation of mental and physical well-being which enhances our capacity to serve society more meaningfully."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Embrace curiosity, kindness, and humility; Keep learning; Ego blinds; Words and Success are fleeting; Apologies, and Gratitude matters; Let go of grudges; Respect deadlines; Offer blessings and prayers freely."

Weaving Naga Stories



into the
Tapestry
of
Literature

Easterine
Kire

Writer and Publisher

Recipient of

- The Hindu Lit for Life, **2015**. (Book: When the River Sleeps)
- The Tata Book of the Year, **2017**. (Book: Son of the Thundercloud)
- Bal Puraskar Sahitya, **2018**. (Book: Son of the Thundercloud)
- The FICCI award for fiction **2023**. (Book: Spirit Nights)
- Free Word, Catalan, Barcelona, **2013**. (For her writing)
- Nagaland Governor's award for Excellence in writing, **2011**.

Easterine, a prolific writer and dedicated publisher, has devoted her life to bringing the rich tapestry of Naga culture and heritage to the forefront of literature. Through her historical fiction and curated publications, she offers a window into the vibrant world of Naga life, drawing inspiration from local stories and experiences.

Driven by a passion for creating written literature accessible to all Nagas and beyond, Easterine embarked on a mission to fill the void of Naga literature in English. Her journey began with a simple yet profound realisation – the need to preserve and celebrate the unique and rich narratives of the Naga community.

A defining moment in Easterine's career came when she won a prestigious prize from Asiaweek for her first story. This recognition by an international news magazine nurtured her belief in a writing career.

Easterine's contributions extend far beyond the realm of literature; they offer a glimpse into the soul of Naga society serving as a beacon of cultural preservation and social change. By chronicling Naga history and culture through the lens of fiction, she makes these narratives accessible and engaging for readers of all ages. Through her work, she hopes to instil a sense of pride and identity in the younger generation, empowering them to embrace their heritage with confidence and dignity. She is driven by the desire to put back a sense of worth in our intellectual property, in our stories, our folk wisdom, and the profound philosophy that guided our people and helped us live admirable lives.

However, the lack of prior written records posed a significant challenge, compelling Easterine to rely on oral interviews and first-hand accounts to reconstruct the past. Despite the obstacles she faced, Easterine persevered, securing multiple publishers willing to bring her stories to life. Her resilience and determination have earned her prestigious awards and accolades, but her true reward lies in the impact of her words on readers, young and old alike.

Easterine's legacy transcends the pages of her books; it is a testament to the power of storytelling to preserve culture, inspire change, and unite communities. In celebrating Easterine's achievements, we celebrate the enduring spirit of Naga literature and the indomitable resilience of those who dare to share their stories with the world.

Vision: “Our children are the future. I will continue to give them good books to read about their history, culture, and their incredible wealth of stories.”
Message for aspiring individuals: “Be teachable and be humble”.z



Pioneering Pathways



Recipient of

The Media Foundation's Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Media person, **2009**.

The Poetry Society of India, for her remarkable contributions to Poetry in Nagaland, **2009**.

Nagaland Governor's Award for Distinction, for outstanding achievement and contribution in Literature, **2013**.

30th FICCI Women Achiever of the Year, for outstanding contributions as a journalist, **2013-2014**.

The Naga Students' Union Delhi (NSUD) Inspiration Award, for her esteemed accomplishments in the field of Literature, **2013**.

Recognized for outstanding achievements in the field of Journalism, on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of Mokokchung.

in Literature and Journalism

Tiamerenla Monalisa Changkija

Media Professional

As the sole woman proprietor, publisher, and editor of an English daily newspaper- Nagaland Page, in the North East, **Monalisa's** journey serves as a testament to the profound impact of staying true to one's passions and convictions, even in the face of adversity. Through her prolific writing, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to fostering a culture of literacy, Monalisa stands as a trailblazer, illuminating paths of creativity and truth.

Monalisa's multifaceted career spans the realms of literature and journalism, where she has made significant contributions as a writer, poet, and award-winning journalist. With four published books to her name and a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades, she has become a beacon of inspiration for aspiring writers and journalists alike. Her literary pursuits have not only enriched Nagaland's cultural tapestry but have also empowered voices in the North East. She has harnessed the written word to weave stories that resonate deeply with readers.

As the driving force behind Nagaland Page, soon to complete 25 years of publication, Monalisa has navigated the complexities of journalism in a region where the concept of the Fourth Estate is emerging. Additionally, she contributes a monthly column for The Assam Tribune, further extending her reach and influence in the journalistic community. In the face of numerous challenges, she has remained steadfast in her commitment to upholding journalistic integrity and providing a platform for diverse voices to be heard.

Beyond her professional accolades, Monalisa's impact extends to the realm of education and mentorship. Through engagements with educational institutions across India, she has nurtured the next generation of literary and journalistic talent inspiring countless young minds to pursue their passions and embrace the power of storytelling. Her mentorship of MA, MPhil, and PhD scholars reflects a deep-seated commitment to fostering a culture of literacy and empowerment.



Vision: "To be able to help even a single individual to be a better and enlightened human being every which way."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Do your own thing uncompromisingly and with conviction but ensure it is the right thing."





Science & technology

Championing the joy of science

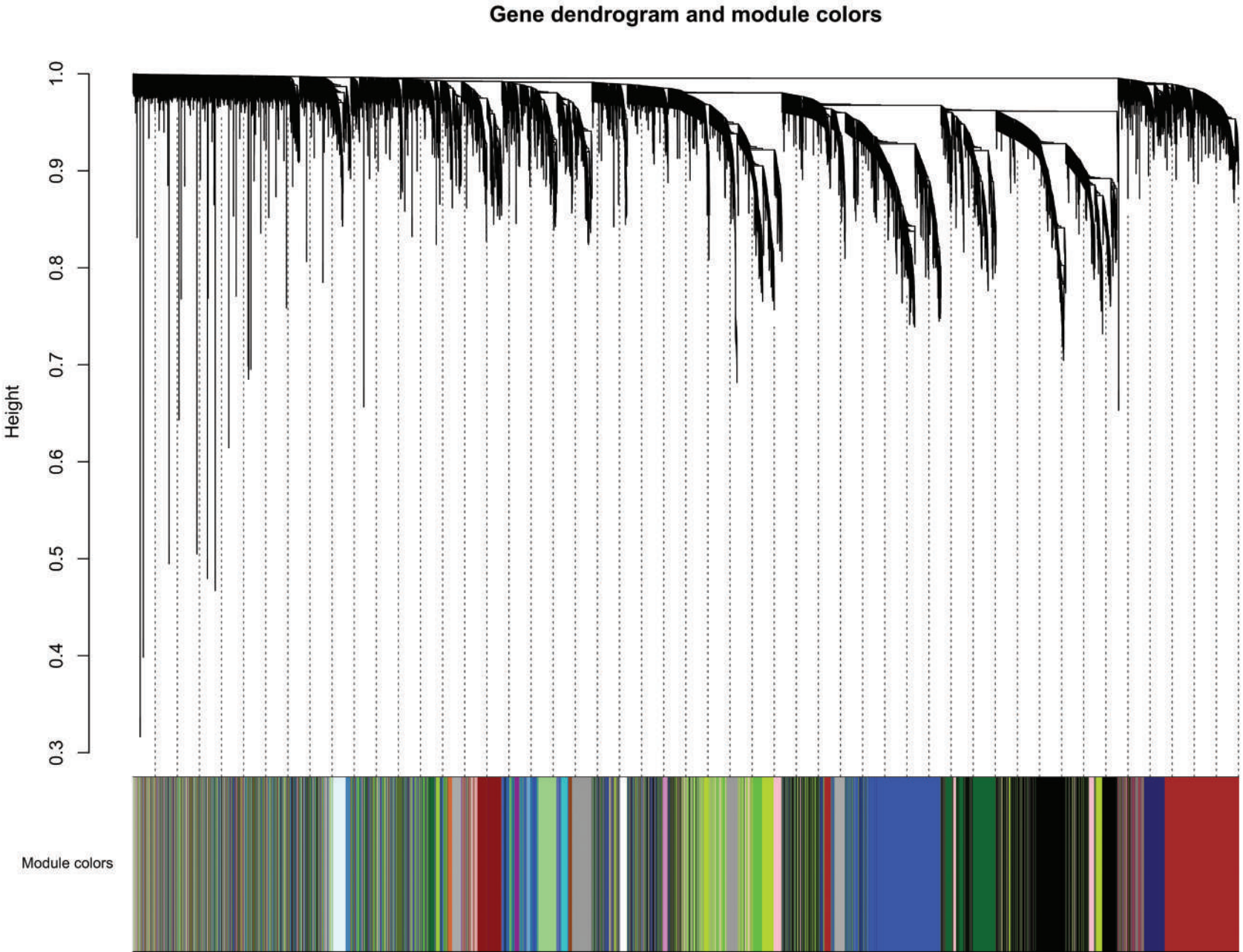


Driven by
passion

**Dr. Khyobeni
Mozhui**
Associate Professor,
Department of
Preventive Medicine,
Division of Epidemiology,
University of Tennessee
Health Science Center

“Pursuing a career in science can be a path to living a life in creativity. Sure, the sciences can be hard, technical, and require much dedication and hard work. At times, scientific research can feel like an uphill battle. But beneath all the technicalities, equations, and complex theories and concepts, science is fundamentally about seeing the deeper layers of beauty in Nature.

Try to foster a clarity of mind and an effort to learn as much as you can. And most importantly, make passion and curiosity your driving force. Then the hours you spend in the lab, or by the computer, or with pen and paper on your desk, will feel rewarding, enjoyable, and fulfilling... even if you don't always get the answers you seek! You are freed from the daily grind if it is a career that you enjoy.”



Scientific Research to Policy Advocacy



Striving
for Excellence

**Dr. Kilang
Yanger**

Business Development Specialist
(Bristol Myers Squibb)

Recipient of

Starr Scholarship:- Awarded only to the top 5% of all international students.

Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Undergraduate Fellowship:- Granted to top college students with high potential to develop into the next generation of scientists.

Presenter at Nobel Laureate Symposium:- The only student invited to present PhD work alongside 2012 Nobel Laureate, Dr. John Gurdon, on cellular reprogramming.

President Guttman Leadership Award:- Two-time recipient awarded to the top 5% graduate students.

North East Young Heroes – Global North East Indian:- Awarded by Leaders Connect and EastMojo, December **2020**.

Dr. Kilang Yanger is a seasoned professional with a PhD in Cell & Molecular Biology trained at numerous Ivy League universities in the US, currently driving innovation in the role of a Business Development Specialist at one of the leading global pharmaceutical companies. Leveraging her extensive scientific background, she identifies and evaluates new innovation opportunities, forming strategic partnerships to expand the company's portfolio and strategic goals. Her inspiration to pursue a career in biomedical research stems from experiencing the impact of cancer among family and friends leading to a profound passion for science and innovation, combined with a strong desire to positively impact healthcare.



A defining moment in her journey was being awarded the prestigious HHMI biomedical fellowship grant – one of the leading non-profit organizations dedicated to advancing biomedical research and renowned for its commitment to scientific excellence and its efforts to drive discoveries that improve human health - as an undergraduate at Carleton College to conduct research at Columbia University in New York City. This opportunity allowed her to undertake PhD-level graduate work in molecular biology, marking a significant shift from her initial focus on physics to biomedical research. This fellowship helped facilitate her acceptance into a biomedical PhD program at the University of Pennsylvania where she published several highly referenced papers on organ regeneration in top scientific journals, including a cover feature. She further pursued her postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University's Medical School under the tutelage of world-renowned experts in the stem cell field.

Some of her most impactful achievements at the University of Pennsylvania include leading the development and execution of a health program for over 20,000 students, to help facilitate seamless access to both mental and physical health. The program's success was sustained for numerous years and recognised in an academic, peer reviewed publication. While a student there, she was invited to present her PhD thesis work in the symposium to honor 2012's Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine – Dr. John Gurdon of Cambridge University, alongside other experts. She advocates for health equity and access in important forums including the Capitol Hill in Washington D.C where she has engaged with the elected members of the United States Congress underpinning the critical role of systemic changes for health care accessibility.

Dr. Kilang Yanger's journey has not been without its challenges. She left her home in Nagaland at a young age in pursuit of educational aspirations abroad navigating foreign systems and societies. However, she believes that the support of her family – especially her parents, friends, well-wishers from Nagaland and the North East, numerous churches, along with faith and self-belief, have been crucial for overcoming obstacles. Each challenge has been an opportunity for growth, strengthening her resolve to positively impact healthcare.

Through her work, Dr. Kilang Yanger embodies the values of hard work, need equity, innovation, and humility. As she continues to advance in her career, she remains dedicated to addressing critical challenges in the field, ensuring that her contributions lead to meaningful and lasting improvements in healthcare.



Vision: “Help foster medical, healthcare innovation and better access to healthcare in a more equitable manner in Nagaland and beyond to address the health needs of the local community.”

Message for aspiring individuals: “Never forget those who have helped you along the way to set you on your positive path forward; strive to become independent sooner rather than later to help your family, friends and the broader society.”



Social service

Empowering Voices



Nurturing Change in Nagaland

Sano Vamuzo

Chairperson of the Nagaland State Commission for Women & Social Workers

Recipient of

Padma Shri Award for distinguished service in the field of social work, **2024**.

Navyoti Award, Delhi Police Foundation, for outstanding achievement in social services for the youth in recognition of Naga Mothers' Association's (NMA) contribution to society, **1990**.

The Sadin-Pratidin Achiever Awards, in recognition of NMA's outstanding Dedication and Commitment in the field of Social Service, **2023**.

From the formation of the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) to the relentless pursuit of women's representation in decision-making bodies, **Sano Vamuzo** has dedicated her life to championing women's rights, fostering peace, and nurturing a brighter future for generations to come. With a fervent belief in the innate strength of Naga mothers, she spearheaded initiatives to combat drug abuse, promote education, conserve the environment, and advocate for gender equality in decision-making processes. Through advocacy, education, and grassroots mobilization, she has galvanized mothers across tribes and territories, empowering them to demand their rightful place in the socio-political landscape.

For over four decades, the NMA has been a driving force for change, advocating for women's rights, social justice, and peace in the region. Founded on February 14, 1984, with the motto "Human Integrity," NMA emerged as a powerful platform for mothers to address pressing social issues and uplift the status of women. Sano Vamuzo, the visionary leader, served as its pioneering President, steering the organization toward transformative action. Naga mothers are considered peacemakers starting from their homes, and in response to this situation, the NMA formed a Peace Team and appealed for peace and reconciliation to all Naga factional leaders to make peace with their opponents, as they are all brothers. The Peace Team has been working under the banner, "Shed No More Blood," to plead for an end to fratricidal killings. The NMA's efforts towards this end continue to this day.



Growing up amidst the political turmoil of Nagaland, Sano witnessed first-hand the challenges plaguing her community. Inspired by a deep-rooted sense of responsibility and fuelled by her faith, she embarked on a journey to effect positive change. Drawing from the teachings of her upbringing, she recognized the pivotal role of women in shaping society

and resolved to amplify their voices. Sano's journey has been fraught with challenges, from societal stigma to financial constraints. Yet, her unwavering faith in divine providence and the support of her community has propelled her forward, turning obstacles into opportunities for growth and learning.

Rooted in the timeless principles of love, compassion, and service, Sano's work reflects a deep commitment to her community's well-being. As a devout believer, she draws inspiration from her faith to serve humanity and foster a culture of respect, equality and unity.



Submission of Memorandum to Governor for the 33% Women Reservation (Municipal Council)- 18th August 2008.

Vision: "Freedom - a society free from corruption and isms, where everyone is treated respectfully and equally unlike the present day."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Know your rights – your God-given rights and Constitutional rights, Adam did not create Eve; she was created by God Himself, so women too are unique."





Sports

Championing Archery



A Tale of
Perseverance
and Inspiration

**Chekrovolu
Swuro
Nukhu**

Olympian and Archer
Deputy Superintendent of Police &
Assistant Commandant

Recipient of

Arjuna Award in Archery,
Government of India, **2013.**

Chekrovolu Swuro Nukhu embarked on an extraordinary journey through the world of archery, carving her name as the first Naga woman and the second Naga Olympian to represent Nagaland and the nation at the Olympics.

Chekrovolu's passion for archery ignited under the influence of her older sister, Vesuzolu Swuro Vadeo, an international-level archer. Witnessing her sister's remarkable achievements, especially at the 1993 World Archery Championship, sparked a fire within Chekrovolu. Inspired by international stars like Justin Huish and supported by her father's unwavering encouragement, she found her calling in the sport of archery.

Representing India on the global platform, Chekrovolu experienced the pinnacle of her career during the 2003 World Championship in New York. Securing victories in both team and individual rounds alongside her fellow Indian archers, she earned a coveted spot at the 2004 Athens Olympics, marking a defining moment in her journey. Participating in the 2012 London Olympics not only fulfilled a personal dream but also inspired countless young talents within the Naga community and across the country.

Despite facing setbacks, including being replaced for two consecutive Olympic Games despite qualifying, Chekrovolu remained resilient. She confronted challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and budget allocation for sports, persisting in her mission to pave the way for aspiring athletes in Nagaland and beyond.

Chekrovolu's commitment to creating opportunities for future generations remains resolute. As an Archery Coach within the police force, she nurtures young talents, striving to bridge the gap in sports development. Additionally, her roles as an Ambassador for the Nagaland Olympic Association and a Committee member of the Indian Archery Association exemplify her dedication to shaping the future of archery in India.



Vision: “To nurture young talents in Archery.”

Message for aspiring individuals:
“Keep working hard. When the time comes, you will reap your reward.”



Embracing Wellness



The Trailblazing Journey of a Yoga Champion

Recipient of

Bronze medal at the All India Yogasana Championships, **2017**.

Silver medal at the 18th North East India Yogasana Championship, **2018**.

Bronze medal at Virtual National Yogasan Sports Champion, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, **2020**.

Bronze medal at the National Online Yoga Competition, **2020**.

Recognised in the World Book of Records across the United Kingdom, India, and Switzerland for her participation in a marathon Organised by CYRUNS, **2021**.

1st position in the Women's Bicycle Day Nagaland state-level competition, **2022**.

Recognized for participating in and completing a 5km event in support of International Women's Day celebration, organised by the Inner Wheel Club, Dimapur, **2022**.

Orentsani Kikon

Yoga and Wellness Instructor

In the past decade, **Orentsani Kikon** embarked on a transformative journey into the world of yoga and fitness, becoming a champion of holistic wellness and empowerment. Her quest for healing led her to discover the profound benefits of yoga and fitness, igniting a passion to share its transformative potential with others.

As a dedicated yoga instructor and fitness enthusiast, her work spans over a wide range of activities, from leading group sessions to offering personalised training programs. Through the art of stretching, breathing exercises, meditation, mindfulness practices, and yoga for pregnancy, she empowers individuals of all ages and backgrounds to embark on a journey of self-discovery and renewal. Her expertise also extends to yoga for pregnancy, having guided forty expectant mothers through specialised sessions, with almost all experiencing normal deliveries.

Inspired by her own health challenges, she embarked on a mission to explore alternative healing modalities, ultimately finding solace in the ancient practice of yoga. Guided by esteemed athletes and fuelled by a desire for holistic wellness, she underwent formal training to become a certified yoga instructor. Today, her commitment to yoga extends beyond personal practice into a lifelong mission to share its transformative benefits with the world.

A defining moment in Orentsani's journey was witnessing the profound impact of yoga on one of her students struggling with health issues. Through targeted guidance, she alleviated her physical discomfort and



instilled a sense of poise and strength. Her journey from a student to a certified yoga instructor exemplifies the enduring impact of effective teaching and mentorship.

Despite facing challenges and resistance, Orentsani remained steadfast in her dedication to promoting yoga as a holistic practice open to all. Through perseverance and patience, she succeeded in fostering a newfound appreciation for yoga within her community, empowering individuals to embrace wellness in all its forms.

Beyond public recognition, her achievements hold special significance as symbols of dedication and resilience. From serving as a brand ambassador to leading yoga associations, each role has enabled her to make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. As she continues her journey, she remains committed to promoting the overall well-being of individuals.

Vision: “Developing a personalised fitness app represents a strategic move to leverage technology's influence on the personal fitness industry. Through this platform, I aim to cater to diverse health needs, including physical fitness enhancement, cardiovascular health, strength training, flexibility improvement, and mental well-being. By offering tailored workout routines, progress tracking tools, and access to educational resources, the app aims to empower users on their fitness journeys, fostering holistic wellness and enhancing overall quality of life.”

Message for aspiring individuals: “Remain open to new experiences. Explore various activities beyond traditional fitness programs or sports. Even starting with a simple walk can be beneficial, but the key is to find enjoyment in what you do. If you're not having fun, it's less likely you'll stick with it. So, prioritise activities that bring you joy and satisfaction, ensuring a sustainable and fulfilling fitness routine”.





Women-led organisations

Cradle of Love



Empowering
Generations,
Rebuilding Lives

**Cradle Ridge
Centre,
Naga Mothers
Association**

Orphanage for
HIV-Positive Children

Recipient of

Navjoti Award, **1990.**

In the spirit of 'human integrity', the **Naga Mothers Association (NMA)** emerged on February 14, 1984, as a voluntary organisation dedicated to providing a unified platform for Naga women. With a mission to combat societal ills and champion women's rights and the dignity of motherhood, NMA has since embarked on a remarkable journey.

Acknowledging the specific challenges faced by women and youth, and with a focus on sustainability, the NMA Youth and Women Welfare Organisation were officially registered under the Societies Act on October 28, 1986. This marked a strategic move to address the pressing issues affecting the youth and women of the community.



During the era of drug abuse and addiction among the youth, NMA mothers rallied against drug trafficking, which posed a significant threat as the Golden Triangle's route brought heroin and other drugs through Kohima from the 1970s onwards. Not content with merely combating drug trafficking, NMA recognized the imperative for treatment. Thus, on February 12, 1989, Mount Gilead Home was inaugurated at Zubza by the then Governor of Nagaland, Gen (Rtd) K.V. Krishna Rao. Supported by the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Nagaland, and sustained by donations from mothers and well-wishers, Mount Gilead Home aimed to rehabilitate those addicted to drugs.

The first case of HIV in Nagaland was identified in an inmate of Mount Gilead Home in 1990. This pivotal moment prompted NMA to actively engage in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Responding to the need for a Community Care Centre, NMA envisioned and, on July 18, 2000, established the NMA HIV/AIDS Care Hospice, operating independently from Kripa Foundation Mumbai. Funded by the Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS) and supported by numerous well-wishers, the hospice officially began operations in 2001. In recognition of their outstanding contribution to the field of de-addiction and rehabilitation, NMA received the 'Navjoti Award' on January 5, 1990.

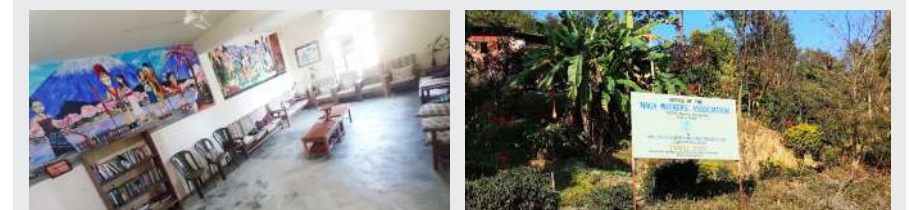
In a collaborative venture with the Kripa Foundation, NMA established the first Counselling and Information Centre in Kohima on September 18, 1992. Subsequently, on May 23, 2001, NMA HIV/AIDS Care Hospice, Cradle Ridge, was inaugurated by the then Nagaland Governor, His Excellency, O.P. Sharma.

In 2004, Mount Gilead Home expanded its impact with the inauguration of the Paper Recycle Unit by H.E. Shyamal Datta, Governor of Nagaland. This unit not only generated income to support the HIV/AIDS care hospice but also provided vocational training for hospice inmates.

Today, the NMA Cradle Ridge stands as a beacon of hope for orphaned children of HIV-positive parents, overseen by the NMA Youth and Women Welfare Society. The Cradle Ridge Management Committee, along with dedicated staff, ensures the smooth operation of the centre, which also offers a short-stay shelter home for HIV-positive women in the community. The inspiring journey of NMA continues, shaped by resilience, compassion, and a commitment to building a brighter and sustainable future.

Vision: "Human integrity and equality for all. Inclusive development in society and end discrimination of the HIV/AIDS community."

Message for aspiring individuals: "Every child is precious and deserves the best that we all can give. The girl child will one day hold up half the sky for you."



Vitalising Indigenous Artisans

Recipient of

- 4th National Handloom Day Awards by Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, **2018**.
- Award from Women Resource Development, Government of Nagaland for providing livelihood opportunities and employment generation, **2021**.
- Award from 'FICCI FLO' for Flo Women achievers award in excellence 2021-2022 in appreciation for the contributions in Indigenous handloom and jewellery, **2022**.
- Recognized by 7th Assam Rifles & Act of Kindness Society under the theme 'Gender Equality for Sustainable Tomorrow' for valuable service contribution towards society and in the
- 16th Indian Fashion Jewellery & Accessories Show Award from Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts, **2022**.
- Nagaland SDG Action Award in the 'Social & Community Upliftment' category, recognizing our exceptional dedication and outstanding contributions towards achieving SDGs, **2022**.
- SheThePeople Digital award presented by Google with the theme 'Access to Success, celebrating women entrepreneurs who have utilised technology and AI to achieve remarkable success in the digital realm', **2023**.
- National State Commission for Women Award for the commitment, leadership and impactful service in Nagaland, presented on the occasion of International Women's Day, **2024**.
- State Entrepreneur Award **2023**, from Department of Industries & Commerce, Government of Nagaland, for integrating Nagaland indigenous-inspired jewellery into mainstream fashion and promoting tribal arts, **2024**.



Putting the Spotlight on Art

Runway India

Jewellery and Handloom

In the heart of Nagaland, nestled within vibrant communities rich in tradition and culture, lies a beacon of hope and empowerment known as **Runway India**. Since its inception in 2011, Runway has been more than just a platform for indigenous artisans, it has been a catalyst for change and a testament to the power of preserving heritage through creativity.

At the helm of this visionary endeavour is Nengneithem Hengna with a dream, passion, and unwavering commitment to her roots. Her journey began with a simple aspiration jotted down in a friend's slam book during her school days—a desire to become an entrepreneur. Little did she know then that this aspiration would blossom into a movement touching the lives of numerous artisans and women.



With a mission to uplift and empower local indigenous artisans, Runway India set out to preserve and promote the age-old handicrafts culture of India. Since 2013, through a series of workshops, training sessions, and skill development programs, Runway India breathed life into the dreams of budding entrepreneurs and seasoned artisans alike. Runway India has provided skill development training to more than 700 people across Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, and Meghalaya, offering hand-holding support and market linkages.

Runway India's impact extended far beyond just providing employment, it created a sense of belonging, a community of like-minded individuals driven by a shared passion for art and tradition. With over 500 artisans touched by its initiatives, Runway India became a symbol of hope and resilience in a world that often overlooked the beauty of indigenous craftsmanship.



Yet, challenges loomed on the horizon—financial struggles, cultural barriers, and the daunting task of bridging the gap between artisans and

buyers. But with unwavering determination and a steadfast belief, Runway India paved the way, embracing technology. It weathered every storm, emerging stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Despite facing numerous obstacles, Nengneithem has always focused on the positives. Her mother's words “One needs to learn from every situation to become wiser and smarter in finding solutions” remain her strength in every challenge.

Nengneithem has dealt with the rigid and resistant mindset of artisans who were reluctant to embrace change and innovation in designs and were hesitant to adopt systems in the workplace. She has also faced personal attacks on her character and encountered tribalism. Despite these challenges, Nengneithem has always believed in herself and maintained a positive outlook, which has helped her grow wiser. She has adapted to the times, embracing technology early in her career to boost the handicraft sector in Nagaland and connect with buyers outside Nagaland. Believing in the power of collaboration and teamwork, she has invested her time and resources in creating a dedicated team, and providing opportunities to deserving individuals along the way.

From the lush banana plantations of rural communities to the intricate tribal jewellery of Nagaland, Runway India embraced diversity and celebrated the richness of India's cultural tapestry. Through its Runway Banana Community project and GTJ Runway Nagaland Jewellery initiatives, Runway India provided sustainable livelihoods and paved the way for cultural preservation and recognition.

Vision: “To open more platforms across the country, providing even more opportunities for artisans to showcase their craft. With each stitch and each bead meticulously crafted, Runway India weaves together the threads of empowerment, creating a tapestry of hope and opportunity for generations to come.”

Message for aspiring individuals: “Stay true to your passion and purpose. Embrace the journey, with all its challenges and triumphs, and let your dedication to your vision drive you forward. Your unique talents and perseverance can make a profound impact on the world, so never underestimate the power of your contribution.”

