



Clean Hands, Strong Hearts: The Bakrime IVCS Soap Production Journey

In today's generation, even in rural communities, women are emerging as leaders at the forefront of societal transformation. One such inspiring figure is Senge R. Sangma, a member of the Bakrime Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS), based in Chima Apal village in the North Garo Hills.

A Humble Beginning

In 2022, Senge began making handmade soap purely for personal use at home, a simple hobby she enjoyed in her free time. The process was straightforward, easy enough to do alongside cooking. However, when visitors tried her neem-tulsi soap, many found it highly beneficial for their skin, especially those suffering from conditions that hadn't responded well to conventional treatments. Some individuals experienced noticeable improvement, and soon, people began requesting more and encouraged her to sell the product.

From Hobby to Enterprise

What started as a home-based activity evolved into a community-driven initiative. Encouraged by feedback, Senge began creating a variety of soap types tailored to different skin needs. Her neem-tulsi soap was so versatile it could even be used as a skin cream. Among her innovations, black rice soap gained significant popularity due to its rich antioxidant and anti-aging properties. After researching its benefits, she incorporated black rice into her formulations, enhancing her product line and opening new earning opportunities.

Self-Taught and Self-Made

Senge worked entirely on her own, without financial assistance or external support, relying solely on her determination and resourcefulness. Without formal training, she taught herself the craft by reading books and watching instructional videos on YouTube. Her personal activity gradually evolved into a mission to empower others.

Empowering Women through IVCS

By March 2025, as a committed member of IVCS, Senge began training and supporting women through soap-making. With IVCS supplying materials and Senge leading production and training, her vision of helping women earn, learn, and lead came to life. The initiative flourished into a powerful model of skill development and financial independence.



Crafting with Purpose

Her IVCS handmade soaps, infused with black rice, neem-tulsi, and lemon zest; embody a deep commitment to purity, sustainability, and community spirit. Crafted using only natural ingredients and colors, and strictly avoiding artificial mica, these soaps are gentle on the skin and consistently appreciated for their quality and authenticity.

Beyond Soap: A Ripple of Empowerment

This initiative goes beyond soap, it's about sharing knowledge, fostering livelihoods, and igniting a ripple effect of empowerment. As Senge mentors fellow IVCS members, she's not just imparting a craft; she's cultivating confidence, capability, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Pearls Naturals: A Brand with Heart

Senge's brand, Pearls Naturals, is steadily gaining recognition. She named it as a heartfelt tribute to her son, Pearl. Inspired by the purity of natural ingredients used in her handcrafted soaps, she wanted the name to reflect both personal significance and the essence of the products. Although she does not take payment for her services from IVCS, she labels the packaging boxes with "Manufactured by Pearls Naturals."

Independent and Visionary

In addition to making soap for IVCS, Senge continues producing soap for her own commercial purposes. She remains actively involved in creating and selling her products independently. Her journey from local markets to regional acclaim is a testament to the power of vision, collaboration, and grassroots leadership.

Source of ingredients, Raw Materials and Packaging materials

Category	Item	Source & Details
Raw Materials	Soap base	Sourced from Galaxo Enterprise, Delhi; delivered via courier.
	Fragrance Oils	Procured from Nashik, Maharashtra.
	Neem & Tulsi	Personally cultivated by Senge in her garden for fresh.
	Lemon & Black Rice	Locally sourced from markets in Dudhnoi and Damra via Trisama Cooperative Society(Assam-based Society)
	Goat Milk	Source online
Packaging Materials	Soap boxes and labels	Sourced from Arpana Packaging Co. Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata; samples sent for customization.
	Cling Film Wrap	Source online
Mold	Soap Mold	Source online

Detailed Cost Table for Materials and Ingredients Used

Category	Item	Cost & Source Details
Ingredients	Black Rice	₹200 per kilogram; locally sourced.
	Lemons	₹20 for 4-5 lemons; locally sourced.
	Goat Milk Powder	₹500 per 500 grams.
	Fragrance Oils	₹1,800 per kilogram; sourced from a Nashik-based company in Maharashtra.
Material	Soap base	₹240 per kg (including the shipping cost)
	Packaging boxes	₹ 9000 for 2000 (including the shipping cost)
	Cling Film Wrap	₹250. For 100-meter roll

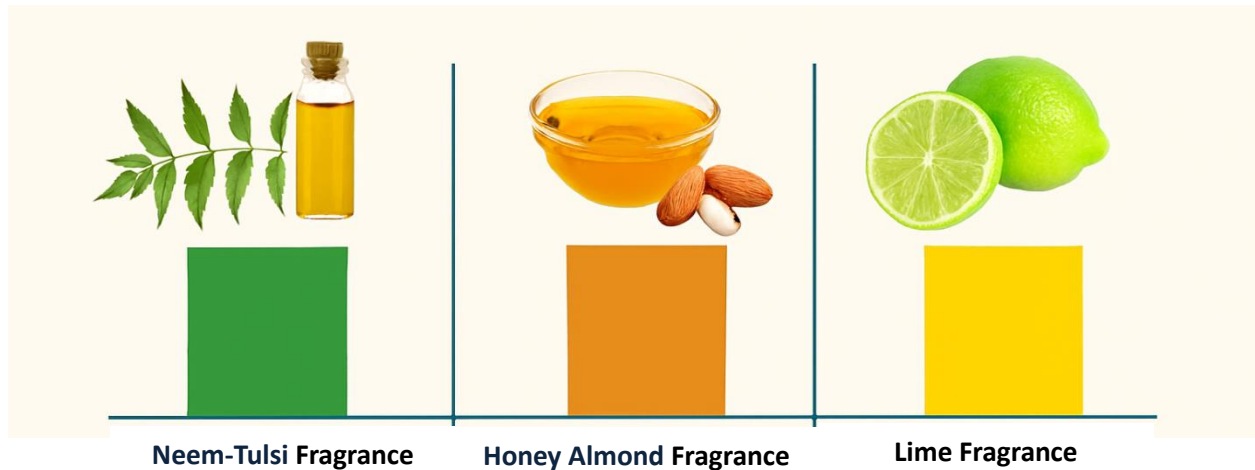
Quantity of material usage for Soap Production

Material	Quantity Used	Usage Context / Notes
Black Rice	2 kg	Produces 400 soaps
Lemon Zest	1 large lemon	Produces ~6-7soaps
Fragrance Oils	100 g	Usage for 30 soaps
Tulsi Leaves	1 bunch	Usage for 50 soaps
Neem Leaves	1 small branch	Usage for 50 soaps
Goat Milk Powder	25 g	Usage for 30 soaps
Cling Film Roll	100 meters	Usage for Wrap 30 soaps
Soap Base	100 g	Produces 20 soaps
Firewood	200 pieces/month	Used in soap-making process

Material Order System

Packaging materials, including soap boxes and labels are bulk orders typically ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 units. She regularly sends product samples to the company to ensure the packaging meets her specific requirements.

Used of various fragrance oils



For Neem Soap Infused with Neem-Tulsi fragrance oils, for Goat Milk, blended with a soothing honey and almond fragrance, for Lemon soap enhanced with refreshing lime fragrance oil.

Worker engagement for assistant and work Schedule

A minimum of two women assist in the soap production process and are paid daily wages of ₹200. They typically work three days a week, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, for about 3 to 4 hours each day.



Process

1. Begin by heating water in a pot.
2. Place a heat-safe bowl over the pot, ensuring it sits securely without touching the water — this creates a double boiler setup.
3. Add the soap base to the bowl and allow it to melt gently from the steam below.
4. Do not place the soap base directly on the heat, as it may burn or degrade.
5. Once the soap base has fully melted, you can add your desired fragrance or ingredients. For example, to make neem soap, add finely ground neem leaves that have been properly prepared in advance.
6. To make Lemon Zest soap, start by peeling the outermost layer of a lemon, this zest is packed with aromatic essential oils. Finely chop the zest into small pieces and mix it into the melted soap base along with your chosen fragrance oil. Once thoroughly combined, pour the mixture into a soap mold. Silicone molds are highly recommended, as they make it much easier to remove the soap once it has set.
7. After pouring the soap mixture into the mold, wait 5 minutes. You may notice small bubbles forming on the surface. Gently remove these bubbles using a spatula or spoon. The collected residue can be shaped into small soap balls for later use.
8. Allow the soap to set for approximately 20 minutes. Once it has fully hardened, carefully remove it from the mold. Your handmade soap is now ready for packaging or personal use. Each soap is wrapped in Cling Film wrap and then placed inside the packaging boxes.

Hygiene and Safety Measures in Soap-Making

During the soap-making process, strict hygiene and safety protocols are followed. Participants wear protective gear including a shower cap, gloves, apron, and mask to ensure cleanliness and safeguard their health throughout production.

Training and Skill Development for IVCS Members

Senge initiated training sessions when she began supporting IVCS in soap-making activities. Under her guidance, members have been learning the entire production process, gaining valuable hands-on experience and practical skills that strengthen their confidence and capabilities. She has successfully trained 10 women IVCS members in soap production. Within just a month, they nearly mastered the process and are now capable of producing soap independently, without requiring her direct supervision.

Monthly Soap Production and Profit Overview

Soap Type	Quantity Produced	Cost per Soap (Rs.)	Selling Price (Rs.)	Profit per Soap (Rs.)	Total cost (Rs)	Total Revenue (Rs.)	Total Profit (Rs.)
Black Rice Soap	200	28	50	22	5,600	10,000	4,400
Lemon Zest Soap	100	28	50	22	2,800	5000	2200
Neem-Tulsi Soap	200	28	50	22	5,600	10,000	4,400
Goat Milk Soap	100	28	50	22	2,800	5000	2200
Weekly Total	600	-	-	-	16800	30,000	13,200
Monthly Total	2400	-	-	-	67,200	120,000	52,800

Encouraging Guidance for Growth

The Block Development Officer offered pivotal support, recommending that Senge pursue product testing and certification. This strategic move would empower both her and the IVCS to broaden their market reach, enabling soap sales across wider regions—even beyond state borders.

Challenges

- The soap base is not locally available and must have to be sourced from Delhi.
- Shipping costs exceed the actual cost of the material.
- Irregularity of electricity, as she need to grind the neem-tulsi leaves

Ingredient Strategy & Efficiency

Although all varieties of the soap are priced the same, the cost of ingredients varies significantly, for example, black rice is more expensive than ingredients like lemon or neem. To maintain a uniform price

across the range, she adjusts the quality and quantity of each ingredient accordingly, ensuring a balanced formulation while keeping the price consistent.

Utilizing Every Element of Soap Production

After five minutes, bubbles naturally rise to the surface of the soap base. Instead of discarding them, they are carefully collected and repurposed to create soap balls. This thoughtful reuse ensures that no part of the soap-making process goes to waste. Every ingredient and byproduct is utilized efficiently, reflecting a commitment to sustainability and resourcefulness.

Marketing and Distribution

The soaps are primarily ordered as return gifts due to their premium quality and natural ingredients. Shipments are made almost weekly to Williamnagar and Tura. The business consistently sells a minimum of 300 soaps per month.

- Williamnagar: The most popular variety is Black Rice soap.
- Tura: Goat Milk soap is highly preferred.
- Local Market: Neem soap is the top choice, especially among farmers who seek skincare products to protect their skin from daily exposure.



Customer Feedback

Most customers appreciate the soaps for their skin benefits, particularly their soothing and nourishing properties.

Many customers have requested that the packaging clearly indicate the place of manufacture and include a contact number for inquiries.



Sustainability and Future Plans

Continued Production: Soap-making will continue beyond the current project phase, ensuring long-term viability.

Training for Women: All women members of the Bakrime IVCS will be trained in handmade soap production, empowering them with valuable skills for independent income generation. Among the women trained so far through her, four members have already become proficient in handmade soap production.

Meeting Demand: Production will be scaled up to meet rising customer demand for natural, high-quality soaps.

Product Certification: Plans are underway to have the soaps tested and certified by the District Commerce and Industries Centre (DC&IC), enhancing credibility and marketability.

Market Expansion: Certification will enable the products to reach broader markets, including regions outside the state.

Empowerment through Enterprise: The initiative aims to foster financial independence, skill development, and community empowerment among rural women.



Senge's Words

"I started making soap in 2022 as a personal hobby, it was simple and enjoyable. When visitors tried my neem-tulsi soap, many saw improvements in skin conditions that hadn't responded to other treatments. Their feedback encouraged me to make more and consider selling it.

I'm self-taught, learning from books and YouTube. What began as a solo activity became a community effort. By March 2025, as part of IVCS, I began training women in soapmaking. IVCS



provided materials, and I led production and training, helping women gain skills and financial independence.

Though I don't charge for my services, I brand the soaps as 'Manufactured by Pearls Naturals.' I continue making and selling soaps independently. With support from MeghLAMP, Bakrime IVCS was formed, giving us funding and opportunities to grow. I'm truly grateful for the empowerment this journey has brought." — *Senge R. Sangma, Member, Bakrime IVCS*

Senge's journey is more than soap, it's a spark for grassroots change. From Chima Apal to Pearls Naturals, she's turned passion and resilience into purpose. Through IVCS, she's empowered women as artisans and entrepreneurs, blending natural ingredients with ethical production. Each bar of soap reflects dignity, self-reliance, and shared growth. Pearls Naturals now stands as a symbol of what's possible when one woman dares to dream—and helps others do the same.