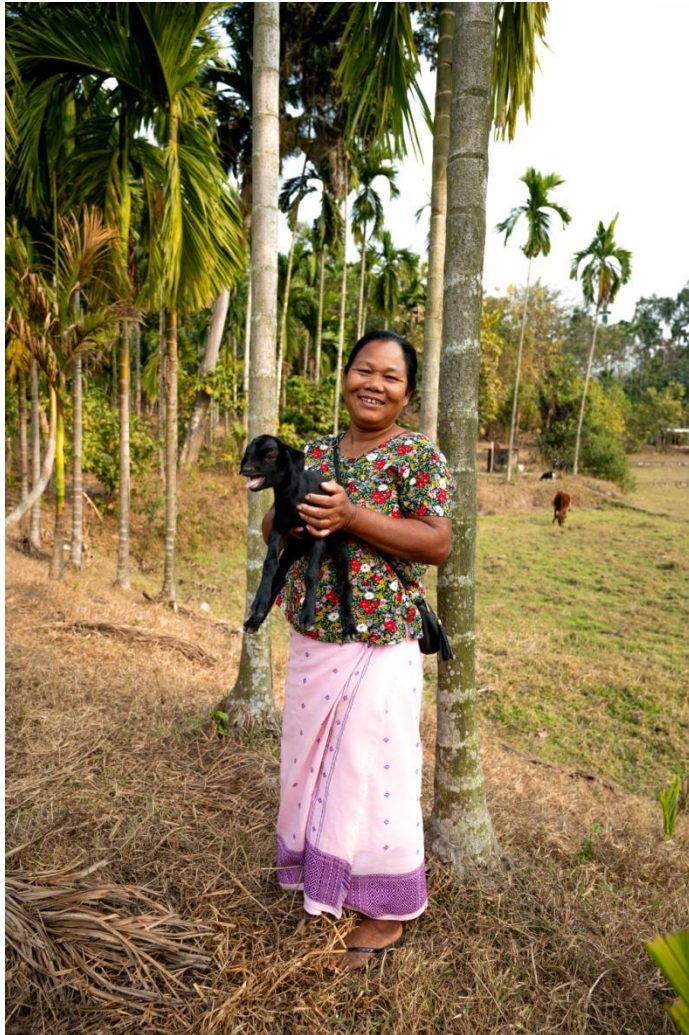


FROM STRUGGLES TO STRENGTH: THE JOURNEY OF LOLINDHA SANGMA

In earlier days, most families in rural areas relying on one sole earner to support everyone. Growing up in such an environment, Lolindha Ch. Sangma from Dabram in South Garo Hills developed a strong determination to ease her family's burden. From a young age, she looked for opportunities to contribute, always eager to do something meaningful that could bring in earnings and help her loved ones. Her spirit of initiative and willingness to shoulder responsibility set her apart, reflecting both resilience and a deep sense of family commitment.



From a young age, Lolindha Ch. Sangma sustained her livelihood through piggery, poultry farming, small business ventures, and daily wage labor. Despite her relentless efforts, her earnings remained meager, leaving her with little to no savings and barely enough to meet her family's basic needs. This was the reality before the establishment of the Dabram Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS) in 2017.

Even in those challenging times, Lolindha did not limit herself to personal survival. She actively took on leadership responsibilities within her community through Self Help Groups (SHGs). By mobilizing women and encouraging collective action, she demonstrated her commitment to community progress, even when resources were scarce. Her involvement in SHGs reflected her vision of empowerment, not just for herself, but for others in her village, showing that true leadership often begins in the most difficult circumstances.

The formation of the IVCS in 2017 marked a turning point in her life: she was appointed as a Secretary from its inception, Lolindha gradually built confidence by attending training programs and meetings organized by the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency (MBMA) and the IVCS. Over time, she developed strong communication and leadership skills, transforming herself into a capable leader and role model for her community. Today, she is recognized as one of the most dynamic women secretaries in the region.

Through the Dabram Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS), Lolindha Ch. Sangma gained valuable opportunities to participate in a wide range of training programs. These included mushroom cultivation, piggery, poultry, goat farming, vegetable cultivation, and vermicompost production. Each training not only broadened her knowledge base but also equipped her with practical skills that could be directly applied to improve her livelihood.

The trainings taught her modern techniques that enhanced productivity compared to traditional methods. For instance, she learned how to increase mushroom yields, manage piggery operations more effectively, and ensure the health of her livestock. Similarly, in poultry and goat farming, she adopted improved practices that reduced risks and boosted output. In vegetable cultivation, she applied sustainable methods by producing her own vermicompost, which not only enriched her crops but also became an additional source of income.



By engaging in these programs, Lolindha was able to move beyond subsistence activities and envision entrepreneurial ventures that could generate sustainable income. The exposure to diverse practices gave her confidence to experiment, diversify her sources of livelihood, and strengthen her role as a proactive contributor to her family's well-being and her community's development.

After completing the trainings, she began rearing pigs using the improved techniques she had learned. Her efforts were further supported when she received Rs. 25,000 from the Piggery Mission through IVCS, which helped her expand her enterprise. In vegetable cultivation, she not only grew crops but also produced her own vermicompost.

Lolindha's journey reflects how access to training, combined with determination and community support, can transform livelihoods. From struggling with meager income to becoming a diversified entrepreneur, she stands as an inspiring example of resilience and empowerment in rural South Garo Hills.

Diversified Farming Ventures

Lolindha began piggery farming in 2018 with a Rs 5,000 loan and now earns up to Rs. 2.6 lakhs annually. In 2023, she added goat farming, projecting Rs. 87,000 this year. With support in 2024, she earned Rs. 40,000 from poultry. Her vegetable cultivation also brings in Rs. 20,000 annually, showcasing her success through multiple income streams.



Building Markets at Her Doorstep

Lolindha does not need to take her piglets or fully grown pigs to distant markets. Farmers from her locality come directly to her, as piglets are sought for rearing and grown pigs are in high demand during festivals, weddings, and community gatherings.

Her goats are so popular that traders visit her home to buy them. This saves her time and transport costs while ensuring steady buyers right at her doorstep.

Her mushrooms, showcased at exhibitions in Baghmara by government departments, gained wide recognition. Their freshness and quality made them highly demanded, strengthening her income opportunities.

She doesn't need to sell her vegetables, strawberries, or even chickens in the market, local customers come directly to her to purchase, reflecting the trust she has built.

Buyers from Tura and Williamnagar regularly purchase her vermicompost, and many even visit her home directly to collect it. This eliminates the need for her to travel to markets, saving time and effort, while also creating a reliable and steady source of income. The growing demand highlights both the quality of her product and the trust she has built with customers.



Challenges

Challenges in Pig Rearing

Raising desi pigs is deeply tied to tradition but comes with hurdles

- **Slow Growth:** They take at least a year to reach market size.
- **Lower Returns:** Smaller size means less meat and reduced profits compared to hybrids.
- **Demand Gap:** Hybrids are more profitable, but cultural preference keeps desi pigs in higher demand during celebrations.

Challenges in Goat Rearing

Goat rearing often creates community issues, especially with grazing:

- **Crop Damage:** Goats eat neighboring plants, which regrow slowly.
- **Social Tension:** Free-grazing goats spark disputes between livestock and crop farmers.

Seasonal Grazing Rules:

- **Jan–Apr:** Goats roam freely under community traditions.
- **Post-April:** Grazing restrictions begin; farmers must stall-feed goats, adding labor, cost, and housing needs.



Future Plans

She intends to expand her livestock rearing by increasing the number of animals under her care. Alongside this, she is planning to broaden her vegetable cultivation to enhance both productivity and diversity of crops. In addition, she has ambitious plans to engage in large-scale vermicomposting, which will not only improve soil fertility but also create a sustainable source of organic manure. Furthermore, she is keen on venturing into mushroom cultivation, recognizing its potential as a profitable and nutritious agricultural enterprise.



“Being part of IVCS has greatly benefited me. Through various training programs, I have been able to gain extensive knowledge and practical skills. The support has also strengthened my financial capacity, enabling me to manage resources more effectively. Moreover, these experiences have helped me grow into a capable leader who can guide and inspire the community. For all these opportunities and growth, I sincerely thank IVCS and Megha LAMP”.-Lolinda Sangma

This achievement not only highlights her commitment and entrepreneurial spirit but also demonstrates how institutional support, when combined with individual effort, can create meaningful economic opportunities.