

Rooted in Unity, Growing with Purpose: Upper Kharkutta Four Brothers IVCS, NGH



Rural communities, despite their rich agricultural potential, often face critical challenges such as fragmented value chains, limited access to platforms that connect them directly with buyers and a lack of collective mechanisms to process and market their produce, resulting in unfair pricing and reduced income opportunities.

That narrative began to change on December 17, 2019, under Kharkutta Block in North Garo Hills when four villages, Upper Kharkutta, Makbilkol, Chiwakki, and Warima, joined forces to establish the Upper Kharkutta Four Brothers Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS). What started with just 16 representatives has since blossomed into a vibrant network of over 367 members, with 70% being women.

Upper Kharkutta Four Brothers IVCS under the support of the Meghalaya Livelihood Access to Market Project (MLAMP) engages in a range of business activities not only to support fellow farmers but also to ensure the sustainability of the IVCS itself. The primary focus is on integrating agricultural produce, particularly local ginger, black pepper, and turmeric, into value chain processing. In addition, the IVCS is involved in various non-farm business ventures.

Ginger Processing Summary (2025)

The IVCS received a ginger processing unit in 2024. Processing activities officially commenced on January 27, 2025.

Item	Detail
Project Support	Meghalaya Livelihood Access to Market Project (MLAMP)
Ginger Processing Machine received year	2024
Processing Started	January 27, 2025
Raw Ginger Collected	5 tons (5,000 kg)
Purchase Price	₹ 35/kg
Total Purchase Cost	₹ 175,000
Dried & Sliced Sold	455 kg
Sale Price (Dried & Sliced)	₹ 230/kg
Revenue from Sliced Ginger	₹104,650
Conversion Ratio (Raw to Dried)	5.5 kg raw = 1 kg dried
Raw ginger used for Sliced Ginger	2502.5 kg raw to dried consumed
Remaining Dried Ginger when its converted to powder	454 kg
Sale Price of Remaining(processed into powder)	₹ 500/kg
Revenue from Remaining(processed into powder)	₹ 227,000
Retail Price Examples	100g = ₹50, 200g = ₹ 100
Packaging Cost	₹ 10,000
Transportation Cost	₹ 10,000
Labour Cost	₹ 10,000
Total Expenditure	₹ 205,000
Total Revenue	₹ 331650
Net Profit	₹ 126,650

Black Pepper Processing Summary (2025)

In 2005, the IVCS ventured into the Black Pepper business activity, initially IVCS collecting three quintals of raw pepper at a rate of ₹100 per kg. During processing, approximately 4 kilograms of raw pepper yield 1 kilogram of dried pepper. The dried product, once packaged, sold at around ₹1,200 per kg.

Item	Detail
Project Support	Meghalaya Livelihood Access to Market Project (MLAMP)
Black Pepper Processing Machine received year	2024
Processing Started	2025
Raw Black Pepper Collected	3 quintal (300 kg)
Conversion Ratio from Raw to Dried	4 kg raw = 1 kg dried
Purchase Price	₹ 100/kg

Total Purchase Cost	₹ 30,000
Dried Black Pepper Sold	300 kg
Sale Price Dried Black Pepper	₹ 1200/kg
Revenue from Dried Black Pepper	₹ 360000
Consumption for Dried Black Pepper	75 kg (From raw to dried consumed)
Revenue from Dried Black Pepper	₹ 90,000
Packaging Cost	₹ 10,000
Labour Cost	₹ 10,000
Total Expenditure	₹ 50,000
Total Revenue	₹ 90,000
Net Profit	₹ 40,000

Turmeric Processing Summary (2025)

As part of its newly initiated turmeric business activity, IVCS collected only 1 ton of raw turmeric at a purchase rate of ₹25 per kilogram. After processing, approximately 5 kilograms of raw turmeric yield 1 kilogram of dried powder. The final product was sold at ₹300 per kilogram.

Item	Detail
Project Support	Meghalaya Livelihood Access to Market Project (MLAMP)
Turmeric Processing Machine received year	2024
Processing Started	2025
Raw Turmeric collected	1 Ton (1000 kg)
Purchase Price	₹ 25/kg
Total Purchase Cost	₹ 30,000
Dried-Powder of Turmeric	300 kg
Conversion Ratio (Raw to Dried)	5 kg raw = 1 kg dried
Sale Price dried powder	₹ 500/kg
Revenue from Dried Turmeric Powder	₹ 100,000
Consumption for Dried Turmeric Powder	200 kg raw to dried power consumed
Purchase Price of raw Turmeric (1 ton)	₹ 25,000
Packing Cost	₹ 10,000
Labour Cost	₹ 10,000
Total Expenditure	₹ 55,000
Net Profit	₹ 45,000

Support for Farmers through IVCS Procurement

The IVCS has been playing a vital role in improving the livelihoods of local farmers by offering better prices for their produce compared to the local market. Here's how it's making a difference:

Crop	Local Price (₹/kg)	IVCS Price (₹/kg)	Farmer Benefit	Farmers Benefited
Ginger	₹25–30	₹35	₹5–10/kg	200
Black Pepper	₹90–95	₹100	₹5–10/kg	250
Turmeric	₹20	₹25	₹5/kg	150

By offering higher purchase rates, IVCS ensures that farmers receive fair compensation for their hard work, directly boosting their income and encouraging sustainable agricultural practices.

Capacity Building in Spice Processing

In 2022, six members of the Managing Committee took part in four distinct one-week training programs centered on turmeric and ginger processing. These sessions were conducted at multiple locations: Lasken and Mawkyndeng in West Jaintia Hills, celebrated for producing the premium Lakadong turmeric along with Umran in Ri Bhoi and Bolmoram in East Garo Hills.

Seasonal Work Opportunities for Local Women in Spice Processing

IVCS engages approximately 40 local women workers during the seasonal processing of ginger, turmeric, and black pepper. Each worker earns a daily wage of ₹300. This employment typically spans three months, January, February, and March, with workdays scheduled from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, totaling seven hours of labor per day.

Seasonal spice processing extends beyond short-term employment; it serves as a pathway to empowerment. By providing structured, paid work, IVCS supports household incomes, strengthens local economies, and helps preserve traditional spice cultivation practices, while fostering greater participation of women in community development.



IVCS Retains Kharkutta Market Contract

In addition to integrating agricultural produce into value chain activities, IVCS is also engaged in market contracting. Beginning in 2024, IVCS successfully secured the operational rights for the Kharkutta Market through a competitive bidding process. They have managed the market continuously since then. In 2025, IVCS once again won the bid to operate the market, this time at ₹3.5 lakhs, an increase from the ₹3 lakhs bid in 2024. During the 2024 operations, IVCS generated revenue of ₹5 lakhs. For 2025, the organization projects a substantial growth in earnings, estimating annual revenue of ₹8 lakhs.

Bakery Processing Unit

In addition to these activities, IVCS is also involved in bakery, with biscuit production being one of their specialties.

IVCS operates a bakery specializing in butter biscuit production. Currently, the unit produces around 30 packets per day using three ovens. Each packet weighs 350 grams and is sold at ₹50. With a production cost of ₹40 per packet, including labor charges, the unit earns a net profit of ₹10 per packet.

This translates to monthly revenue of approximately ₹30,000, with a net profit of ₹6,000. Due to the limited scale of production, demand is primarily met by local residents who regularly visit the unit to purchase directly. As a result, there is no immediate need to market or distribute the products outside the locality.



Worker Engagement at the Bakery Unit

The Bakery unit employs a team of three individuals, including two support workers and one well-trained worker. They work five days a week. Each worker receives a daily wage of ₹300. This setup ensures consistent operations and provides stable employment for local workers.

Capacity Building & Training

To enhance skills and ensure quality standards, the well trained workers initially participated in a six-day training program held in Shillong. The training focused on advanced techniques and operational efficiency. It also aimed to strengthen the overall capacity of the processing unit through knowledge transfer.



Commercial Unit: Additional Asset

IVCS holds ownership of a commercial unit located within the Kharkutta Market premises. This unit is currently leased out, generating a monthly rental income of ₹4,000, amounting to an annual revenue of ₹48,000.

Although IVCS did not purchase the underlying land, a formal agreement was established with the landowner. Under this arrangement, IVCS agreed to finance the construction of a two-room building on the property. In return, permanent ownership of one of the two rooms was granted to IVCS.

To fulfill this agreement, IVCS invested ₹8 lakhs in the construction of the structure and now retains full ownership of one room, which serves as a revenue-generating commercial asset.

Agri Response Vehicle

The IVCS own an Agri Response Vehicle acquired through the Meghalaya Agriculture Response Vehicle Scheme (MRVS). To support the local community, the IVCS offers the vehicle for hire at rates lower than those typically charged in the local making transportation accessible to farmers and residents. Through this initiative, the IVCS has generated minimum annual revenue of ₹2, 50,000 and earned a profit of ₹1, 20,000 annually.



Hygiene and Safety Measures

Strict hygiene and safety protocols are maintained throughout the production process. All participants wear protective gear, including shower caps, gloves, and masks to ensure cleanliness and safeguard their health during operations.

Energy Efficiency

To enhance sustainability and minimize energy consumption, the unit utilizes modern dryer machines for processing ginger and turmeric. Designed for optimized energy use, these dryers enable quick, large-scale drying without excessive fuel or electricity demand, thereby reducing operational costs and environmental impact. The technology ensures consistent quality by preserving the natural color, flavor,

and nutritional value of the crops, while faster drying prevents spoilage, extends shelf life, and lowers greenhouse gas emissions. Overall, this approach reflects a strong commitment to sustainable production practices, effectively balancing productivity with environmental responsibility.

Waste Management

Organic waste, such as fruit peels and cores, is sustainably repurposed into livestock feed and compost, ensuring a zero-waste process. The compost produced is then applied as manure to support off-season vegetable cultivation.

Small leftover packaging fragments are safely incinerated at a designated site located well outside Upper Kharkutta village, where the Upper Kharkutta IVCS unit operates. This controlled burning process is carefully managed to protect villagers' health and prevent contamination of nearby water sources. The site strictly adheres to SECAP's environmental safety protocols, minimizing any potential impact on the surrounding land and water.

Because Upper Kharkutta is a rural village outside municipal jurisdiction, no formal waste collection system exists. To address this gap, the IVCS has implemented a responsible and controlled waste-management approach; ensuring production waste is handled sustainably and without harm to the community or environment.



Water Use and Efficiency

Currently, washing machines are employed in the processing of ginger and turmeric, bringing significant advantages to the IVCS. This mechanization enables large-scale operations, substantially increasing productivity to meet the growing market demand. At the same time, it improves product quality by delivering clean, uniformly peeled spices that hold greater market value. The integration of water recycling systems further enhances sustainability, reducing waste and minimizing environmental impact.

Operational Challenges

Limited Capital for Expansion: The IVCS currently faces a significant shortage of financial resources, which restricts its ability to scale operations. This limitation affects everything from procurement of raw materials to investment in infrastructure and technology, ultimately hindering growth and competitiveness in the market.

Scarcity and High Cost of Packaging Materials: Sourcing appropriate packaging materials locally remain a persistent challenge. The limited availability forces the society to rely on distant suppliers, often at inflated prices. This not only increases production costs but also disrupts timelines and reduces overall efficiency in preparing goods for market.



Lack of In-House Digital Printing Capabilities: The absence of a digital printer within the society severely limits its ability to create customized labels and branded packaging. This affects product presentation,

traceability, and market appeal, especially in competitive retail environments where branding plays a crucial role.

Dependence on External Printing Services: IVCS is entirely reliant on third-party printing vendors for its labeling and branding needs. These services are often unreliable, with delays and inconsistent quality. Additionally, the logistical inconvenience of coordinating with external providers adds to operational inefficiencies and increases the risk of missed market opportunities.

Collection of Produce: Convincing non-members to deliver their produce to the IVCS is challenging. Middlemen and buyers often visit farmers door-to-door on a daily basis, offering to purchase their produce directly. In many cases, they even provide advance payments before the fruits mature or the harvest season begins, making their offers more appealing to farmers.



Future Plan

Scaling Operations for Inclusive Farmer Benefits: IVCS is driven by a collective vision to expand its operations through large-scale aggregation of locally produced crops such as Black Pepper, Turmeric, and Ginger. This strategic move aims to empower more farmers by integrating them into a broader value chain, ensuring they receive fair compensation for their produce.

By eliminating exploitative middlemen and offering better prices directly to farmers, IVCS seeks to enhance rural livelihoods while simultaneously increasing its own operational scale and revenue. This

inclusive approach not only strengthens the local agricultural economy but also reinforces IVCS's role as a catalyst for equitable growth.

Strengthen Packaging Capabilities: IVCS aims to establish reliable and cost-effective sourcing channels for packaging materials to enhance production efficiency and reduce operational bottlenecks.

Invest in Digital Printing Solutions: Procuring a digital printer will empower the organization to improve product labeling and branding, allowing for faster turnaround and greater autonomy.

Build In-House Printing Infrastructure: To mitigate dependency on inconsistent market-based services, IVCS is exploring in-house printing options that promise greater reliability, control, and scalability.

Mustard Oil Processing: Since the local community actively cultivates mustard seeds, the IVCS plans to establish a mustard oil processing unit in the future. This initiative aims to add value to local agricultural produce and create sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Fruit Processing Unit: A fruit processing unit is also in the pipeline as the North Garo Hills region, including Kharkutta, is rich in diverse fruit varieties. To harness this abundance, the IVCS intends to set up a fruit processing facility that will support local farmers and promote agro-based units in the area.

Expansion of Biscuit Production Unit: In response to rising demand, IVCS is actively working to expand its biscuit-making unit. The society plans to scale up production to at least 500 packets per day, ensuring a steady supply that meets the enthusiastic demand of local residents.

This expansion is aimed not only at increasing revenue but also at strengthening community access to affordable, locally produced biscuits. By boosting daily output, IVCS hopes to serve every eager buyer while enhancing the unit's overall profitability.

Sustaining Local Control of Kharkutta Market: IVCS aims to retain the Kharkutta Market contract in the coming years to ensure continued local management of the marketplace. By keeping control within the community, IVCS seeks to preserve the circulation of local funds within the area, thereby promoting economic self-reliance and enhancing the livelihoods of residents.

This initiative reflects IVCS's commitment to empowering the local population and fostering inclusive, community-driven development.

Message to the People and Fellow IVCS Groups

"In the beginning, we knew little about IVCS or its purpose. It was only after awareness sessions by MBDA and the Cooperative Department that we began to understand its potential. With limited resources, we collected ₹2,550 from each of four villages to launch our IVCS, supported by community leaders who donated essential items.

At first, mistrust made people hesitant to join, but as Managing Committee members, we worked tirelessly, visiting villages daily to raise awareness and share the benefits. Gradually, confidence grew, and the initiative gained strength. Today, we are proud of our progress and hope our journey inspires others to believe in the power of community and cooperation." -Tengchang K. Momin, Secretary, IVCS.