

Capacity Building of the MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness



End Term Evaluation- May 2021

Project Title: Capacity Building of MSMEs in North East for Export Competitiveness

Evaluation time frame and date of evaluation report: March 8th 2021- April 30th 2021

Date of Evaluation Report- 20th May 2021

Region and countries included in the project: North East India (Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland), India

Implementing Partner and other project partners:

UNDP and Exim Bank, India

Other Project Partners- Central Government Agencies, Local Government Agencies in Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland, Entrepreneurs/ Produce Organization/ NGOs/Think Tanks (For a detailed list of partners refer **Annex 3**)

Evaluation team members- Rahul Barkataky

Acknowledgements

UNDP Project Team, all Entrepreneurs and Enterprises and government bodies for providing relevant information related to the evaluation



Map of India's North East

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| List of Abbreviations | 4 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Introduction | 11 |
| Purpose of the Evaluation | 11 |
| Scope and Methodology | 11 |
| Structure of the Report | 12 |
| Project description and development context..... | 12 |
| Project Title | 12 |
| Capacity Building of the MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness | 12 |
| Project Start and Duration | 12 |
| Problems that the project sought to address..... | 12 |
| Immediate and development objectives of the project | 13 |
| Baseline Indicators established | 13 |
| Main Stakeholders | 13 |
| Objectives and Results | 13 |
| Expected key results under the project are | 14 |
| Project Outcomes and Outputs | 14 |
| Project Design and Formulation | 15 |
| Analysis of LFA/Results Framework..... | 15 |
| SDGs Directly Linked to | 16 |
| Assumptions and Risks..... | 16 |
| Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project design | 17 |
| Planned stakeholder participation | 17 |
| Replication approach | 17 |
| UNDP comparative advantage | 17 |
| Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector | 17 |
| Management arrangements | 18 |
| Project Implementation..... | 18 |
| Adaptive management..... | 18 |
| Revised Strategy of the Project..... | 18 |
| Revised Objectives of the Project | 18 |
| Revised Expected key results..... | 18 |
| COVID and its Impact on the Project | 19 |
| Revised Stated Project Outcomes and Outputs | 19 |
| Partnership arrangements (with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region) | 20 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management..... | 20 |
| Project Finance | 20 |
| Monitoring and evaluation: design at entry and implementation | 20 |
| Project Results..... | 21 |
| Project Evaluation based on the revised Outcomes | 21 |
| Project Performance | 29 |
| Evaluation Ratings based on Stated Criteria's | 30 |
| Evaluation cross-cutting issues | 33 |
| Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons | 33 |
| Challenges and Learnings..... | 34 |
| Lack of well-developed Clusters in North East..... | 34 |
| Nascent Entrepreneurial Ecosystem | 34 |
| Lack of Managerial and Institutional Capacities | 34 |
| Lack of clarity on nature of the organisation..... | 35 |
| Human Resource Challenges | 35 |
| Lack of Innovation and Obsolete technologies..... | 35 |
| Access to Markets | 35 |
| Value Creation and Addition..... | 35 |
| Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives | 35 |
| Scaling up Strategy..... | 36 |
| Road towards a Scalable and Sustainable Journey | 37 |
| Mapping and Strengthening Clusters..... | 37 |
| Enhance Entrepreneurial and Managerial Capabilities..... | 37 |
| Facilitate Access to Market..... | 37 |
| Facilitate Access to Capital | 38 |
| Convergence with existing Export Promotion Schemes and other Government schemes for MSME's | 38 |
| Conclusion..... | 38 |
| Annex 1: Key Evaluation Matrix used to measure Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact..... | 39 |
| Annex 2: Monitoring Plan | 41 |
| Annex 3: Evaluation Plan..... | 43 |
| Annex 4: Rating Scales | 44 |
| Annex 5: List of Partners and collaboration entered into for Project Implementation | 45 |
| Annex 6: Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form | 48 |
| Annex 7: Itinerary | 49 |
| Annex 8: ToR | 50 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AIMA: | All India Management Association |
| ASEAN: | Association for South East Asian Nations |
| BIMSTEC: | Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation |
| CII: | Confederation of Indian Industries |
| ER: | End Term Evaluation |
| EXIM: | India Exim Bank |
| FPC: | Farmers Producer Company |
| FPO: | Farmers Producer Organisation |
| GIS: | Geographic Information System |
| GoI: | Government of India |
| MSME: | Micro Small and Medium Enterprises |
| Nabard: | National Bank for agriculture and Rural Development |
| NeDFI: | North East Development Finance Institute |
| NER: | India's North East Region |
| SAARC: | South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation |
| SC: | Scheduled Caste |
| SHG: | Self Help Group |
| ST: | Scheduled Tribe |
| SSC/TrC: | UNDP South-South and Triangular Cooperation |
| UNDP: | United Nations Development Programme |
| M&E: | Monitoring and Evaluation |

Executive Summary

Project Summary Table

| Outcomes | Stated Outputs | Project Deliverables and Impact |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Outcome 1: Capacity of the selected MSMEs for export competitiveness enhanced using a cluster-based approach (as per the Project Document)</p> | <p>Providing entrepreneurship training to FPOs/entrepreneurs enabling them to develop concrete, feasible and bankable business ideas to scale up their existing business</p> <p>Organizing exposure visits for entrepreneurs to help them identify lessons and good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and export promotion.</p> <p>Identification of relevant and effective soft and hard interventions through liaisoning with state governments in Assam and Mizoram</p> | <p>Managerial capacity of 221 weavers, artisans and Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) members was built across verticals such as costing of products and services, organization of finances and legal forms of business.</p> <p>14 entrepreneurs from Assam and Mizoram were taken on a 3 days exposure trip to three food processing facilities around Pune in order them to identify good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and exports.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Knowledge ecosystems for faster replication and scaling strengthened and knowledge platform for export promotion in the region established (as per the Project Document).</p> | <p>Development of analytical technical reports/value chain case studies/Cluster Resource Book/knowledge repository for export-oriented entrepreneurs</p> | <p>Development and launch of 4 reports related to value-chain of potential products from NER, export strategy for the region and export-oriented schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act East: Giving North East MSMEs a Leading Edge: Resource Book for Export Oriented Entrepreneurs • Sustainable and Profitable Bamboo Value Chain Management in Assam • Unlocking Export Potential in the North East: The MSME Way • Development of 2 value chain case studies from Mizoram- Turmeric and Ginger |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Launching of a Knowledge Portal and Mobile Application for the MSMEs of North-East India with an aim to provide a proper market linkage for the entrepreneurs of North-East as well as provide a knowledge repository for them.</p> <p>Creation of database of enterprises and entrepreneurs from the two states across the three sectors of handloom, handicraft and agriculture by conducting primary and secondary research.</p> <p>Photo documentation by capturing successful social entrepreneurs/clusters in the area of Agriculture, Handloom and Handicraft clusters across Assam and Mizoram.</p> | <p>Development and launch of Coffee Table Book related to the MSME sector of NER- 22 successful entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland were documented</p> <p>Portal and app named AgroLoomCraft (https://agroloomcraft.in/) developed to house information and data related to MSME clusters and provide support in accessing market linkages to enterprises and producer groups of the region</p> <p>Extensive mapping of around 100 handloom clusters in BTAD, Assam and around 50 agriculture, handloom and handicrafts clusters across Assam and Mizoram</p> <p>Development of a GIS-enabled cluster map to store and share information of the mapped clusters (the cluster map is a part of the knowledge portal)</p> <p>200 high quality photographs from 18 successful social entrepreneurs/clusters from the two states were captured for the web portal and knowledge products.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 3: Institutional ecosystem of North-East Region for export promotion strengthened.</p> | <p>Stakeholders' Consultation on MSME Sector in North-East India</p> | <p>Day-long stakeholders' consultation on MSME sector in NER (August 2018) to better understand the status of MSME sector in North-East and to provide a platform to all the stakeholders in the region to put forward their views and ideas and discuss about the prevalent challenges and gaps in the sector</p> |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Workshop for the Export Promotion agencies from Assam and Mizoram</p> <p>Creation of UNDP-EXIM Bank Network of Social Entrepreneurs</p> <p>Building of partnerships with Ministries, Central Government agencies and other like-minded organizations</p> | <p>Day-long consultation on social entrepreneurship for Agriculture, Handloom and Handicrafts sector in Assam and Mizoram (June & July 2019) to provide a platform to entrepreneurs for discussing sector-specific challenges and issues faced by them and deliberating on opportunities and best possible solutions.</p> <p>25 enterprises with export potential were imparted knowledge on important aspects such as Foreign Trade Policy, Emerging Trade Regimes and Operational Aspects of Export Trade</p> <p>Virtual network of around 60 entrepreneurs across the three sectors was established to provide a knowledge-sharing platform to facilitate exchange of technical know-how among the members</p> <p>Partnership with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) for online handloom and handicrafts for East and North East India, Hastakaari- 19 Handloom & Handicrafts entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland participated</p> <p>Technical Partner, North East MSME Summit for SC/ST Entrepreneurs organised by CII and Ministry of MSME, GoI- 11 handloom and handicrafts entrepreneurs from Mizoram attended</p> <p>Development Partner, consultation on Creating Innovative SMEs in NE organised by All India Management Association (AIMA)</p> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Outcome 4: Bankable proposals based on local resource availability and comparative advantage of the identified clusters prepared and disseminated to prospective entrepreneurs</p> | <p>Development of bankable proposals for the social entrepreneurs in Assam and Mizoram</p> | <p>Development of Bankable proposals for 2 clusters dealing in mushroom and Eri silk handloom products</p> |
| <p>Outcome 5 (In response to COVID): Developing an effective COVID-19 response strategy to support the MSMEs of NER across the sectors of Agriculture, Food Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts</p> | <p>Identification of issues faced by MSMEs due to COVID-19 and assessment of the needs of enterprises across the various sectors.</p> <p>Development of a coping strategy based on the identified issues and needs in order to provide support to MSMEs for revamping value chains and reviving businesses.</p> <p>Support in providing immediate market linkages to the MSMEs</p> | <p>A scoping study was undertaken covering 90 enterprises, FPOs, FPCs and SHGs from the states of Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur in order to assess the economic impact of the pandemic on the MSMEs of the region and identify the issues and challenges</p> <p>Skill upgradation training in Handloom product diversification for 20 weavers in Aizawl, Mizoram for producing PPE Kits for local supply</p> <p>A webinar was organized to better understand the challenges and opportunities in the post-COVID world in the context of the MSME sector of NER.</p> <p>A product catalogue covering around 207 export potential products from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland developed</p> <p>Market linkage creation through 'Haastakaari' online platform developed by CII. 19 Handloom & Handicraft entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland participated</p> <p>Two day buyer sellers meet organised in Guwahati in March 2021 to connect MSMEs with institutional buyers. 20 buyers were connected with 13 sellers across Handloom, Handicrafts and Agribusiness</p> |

Project Description

MSME occupies an important role in directing the development process of growth and prosperity in the North East region of India. About 70 per cent of such manufacturing units are located in the rural areas of the North-east with six lakh workforce. Such rural-based manufacturing activity is primarily in the informal category with handloom and handicraft units, which is traditional in nature with low capital base, playing an important role in the region's economy. However the sector is facing tough competition not only against its own counterparts from outside the region, but also from large and organized sectors. Poor infrastructure, lack of capital and inadequate market linkages are some of the factors that have constrained growth of the sector.

The key objective of the project was to overcome some of these challenges by promoting export potential of the existing MSME clusters of Assam and Mizoram. The expected results under the project were-

- Export potential of the existing MSME clusters enhanced
- Export promotion ecosystem of the region with all the relevant stakeholders strengthened

Evaluation Rating Table

Based on the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, a the performance of the project is ranked based on the rating scales provided in the Terms of Reference. Please refer to **Annex 4** for the rankings interpretation.

| Evaluation Ratings: | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Monitoring and Evaluation | <i>rating</i> | 2. IA& EA Execution | <i>rating</i> |
| M&E design at entry | 5-S | Quality of UNDP Implementation | 6-HS |
| M&E Plan Implementation | 6-HS | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | 6-HS |
| Overall quality of M&E | 5-S | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | 6-HS |
| 3. Assessment of Outcomes | <i>rating</i> | 4. Sustainability | <i>rating</i> |
| Relevance | 2-R | Financial resources: | 3-ML |
| Effectiveness | 6-HS | Socio-political: | 3-ML |
| Efficiency | 6-HS | Institutional framework and governance: | 3-ML |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | 6-HS | Environmental : | 4-L |
| | | Overall likelihood of sustainability: | 3-ML |

KEY: HS: Highly Satisfactory- no shortcomings, S: Satisfactory- minor shortcomings, R: Relevant, ML: Moderately Likely- moderate risk, L: Likely- negligible risk to sustainability (For detail interpretation refer Annex 4)

Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons

For the North East to be able to create large scale local employment, MSMEs need more support for modernisation, technical expertise and investments, which have the potential to revive local markets and can also attract global players in the long run. UNDP's work with MSMEs has shown that in order to be competitive and stay relevant, there is a need for the large number of micro enterprises to scale up by building robust value chains and supply chains – with strong systems and processes in place. They need to understand and follow the industry standards in productivity and quality and also have access to state of art technology. There is a need to reach entrepreneurs at an early stage to enable them to incorporate funding in their planning process as identifying and planning for the most appropriate financial and ownership structure for the business is critical to the potential future success of the business.

Unlike other parts of the country, there is no structured support system available for micro -entrepreneurs from the North East to help them scale their business. Although institutions like NeDFI and Nabard has been providing financial support to businesses over the years, but the challenge is to create an enabling ecosystem to encourage a large number of small and medium scale business to embark on an entrepreneurial journey by tapping the vast potential that the region provides and in the process create large scale social impact.

There is a need for a structured program targeting micro and small enterprises to facilitate their growth and expansion through **technical assistance** and **integrated business support services** thus **increasing their sustainability** and make them **investment** and **market ready** so that some of them may be able to expand to South East Asia and have an impact on a wider scale than just the North East.

Introduction

Purpose of the Evaluation

The overall objective of the Terminal Evaluation (TE) is to review the achievements made to deliver the specified objectives and outcomes of the project in terms of its **effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, performance** and **success** of the project, including the **sustainability of results**.

Since the project is aligned with GENDER MARKER 2, the evaluation also took a deep dive at how the project has catered to the livelihood related aspects with a special focus on gender equity and women empowerment. It also evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of project design, implementation, monitoring and adaptive management and sustainability of project outcomes, including the project exit strategy. In the end the evaluation also collated and analyzed specific lessons and best practices pertaining to the strategies employed, and implementation arrangements, which may be utilized to inform future programming of other livelihood related projects within UNDP.

Scope and Methodology

Since the main purpose of the evaluation is to review the delivery of the stated objectives and outcomes as specified in the project document in terms of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact**, a set of key questions against each of the evaluation criteria were framed to capture each of the relevant evaluation criteria (see **Annex 1**). Building on the evaluator's experience in conducting terminal evaluation, this study was structured to assess the impact of the project on both the individual entrepreneurs and the overall MSME ecosystem. The researcher also combined this assessment with data shared by UNDP to holistically analyse the intervention's model.

The study began with an extensive review of existing project documents including the signed project document, presentations, interim reports, and project completion reports. The project-specific research and the evaluation guidance note provided the necessary background and context on which to structure the qualitative data collection phase.

Review of Documents on the Project: This was done to

- (i) get the background and context to the project;
- (ii) be apprised of the objectives and expected deliverables of the project;
- (iii) to understand strategy deployed / approach adopted to achieve desired impact;
- (iv) assess progress against planned actions;
- (v) be aware of changes made, if any, to planned strategies and actions

For the qualitative data collection, the objective was to capture a variety of MSME's, Producer Groups, and individual entrepreneur's perspectives on the impact of the project's efforts. A mix of individual interviews and field visits to project location were used as primary means of data collection. Primary Research focussed on understanding the impact of individual entrepreneurs, in particular the changes it made to their businesses in terms of building managerial capacities and providing a platform for the entrepreneurs to network and access markets and capital.

Additionally, discussions were also held with UNDP project team, Export Promotion Agencies, Government Bodies and other service providers involved in the project to clarify processes and understand major achievements, learnings and challenges faced while implementing the project.

Limitations- Due to the Covid related restrictions, the evaluator had to rely more on secondary data and virtual interactions with beneficiaries and project partners for relevant data collection. Since in virtual mode, it's difficult to create a personal rapport with the interviewees due to distance, patchy network, there might be instances where necessary information that which might be important for the evaluation might not have been properly captured. In order to mitigate it, the evaluator incorporated field visits where ever possible with one to one interviews, developing specific case studies and virtual interactions so as to capture a larger set of viewpoints to mitigate the information asymmetry problems.

Structure of the Report

Previous desk research was combined with the analysis of the qualitative data to form the basis of this report. This report summarizes the projects efforts from 2018 to 2021 as part of EXIM Bank's support, outlines conclusions around the impact of the activities, and closes with a section on learning outcomes and opportunities for all stakeholders involved with the implementation of the project. The report is presented based on the **Table of Contents** provided in the 'Terms of Reference for End Term Evaluation'.

Project description and development context

Project Title

Capacity Building of the MSMEs in North East India for Export Competitiveness

Project Start and Duration

The original project start date was November 2017 and end date was October 2020. The actual project activities were initiated from June 2018 and due to Covid was extended till March 2021. This was further extended by another two months to finally end in May 2021.

Problems that the project sought to address

MSME occupies an important role in directing the development process of growth and prosperity in the North East region; although the region only accounts for 1.5% of the country's MSMEs, the NSSO data shows that in the industrial output of North Eastern States, the informal manufacturing sector, contributes nearly 62%. However the sector has been facing a tough competition, not only against its own counterparts from outside the region, but also from large and organized sector of the country. Poor infrastructure, lack of capital and inadequate market linkages are some key factors that have constrained growth of the sector.

Although the region shares international borders with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan summing up to a total length of 4,500 km. But despite the region's geographical proximity to these countries, the share of North East India in this trade has been consistently hovering in the range of 1% to 2% while contributing only

5% of the total exports to Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan. It is estimated that approximately 1 million¹ registered MSMEs are present in NE Region of India providing employment to more than 3 million² persons.

There is a need for physical infrastructure development, policy intervention for export promotion, greater facilitation of border trade, promotion of local industries and entrepreneurs, capacity building need to be worked out for developing the north east into an economic hub.

Immediate and development objectives of the project

The project looks at creating stronger MSMEs in the region to boost export, generate employment and provide livelihood opportunities to the youth and women. The key strategy would be to take advantage of the emerging opportunities under the government of India's 'Act East Policy' through a cluster based approach. The rationale for cluster-based approach is that it offers critical mass for customization of interventions; economies of scale in operation; better access to technology and information; greater access to customers, market channels and cheaper access to inputs and raw material.

Key objective is to overcome some of these challenges by promoting export potential of the existing MSME in the region to boost export, generate employment and provide livelihood opportunities to the youth and women via partnership with National and Local training institutions.

Baseline Indicators established

The project had clearly defined the intended outcomes, indicators and targets based on the UNSDF Country Programme Results and Resource Framework

Main Stakeholders

The main implementing partners were United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP) and Exim Bank, India. Other project partners included Central Government Agencies, Local Government Agencies in Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland, Entrepreneurs/ Produce Organization/ NGOs/Think Tanks (For a detailed list of partners refer **Annex 3**)

Objectives and Results

The project proposes to achieve the objectives through the following strategic inputs:

- Value addition to the primary products exports like tea, horticulture, food processing, traditional cottage industry, sericulture, etc.
- Cluster based approach to strengthening export capabilities of MSME in theregion;
- Benchmark industrial clusters of the region to country's best export cluster in similar product category and develop appropriate indicators for measuring progress;
- Encourage peer to peer interactions for sharing of good practices for exportpromotion
- Use ICT tools for operationalizing an interactive platform for knowledge exchange

¹ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=124164>

² Page No 15, Annual Report 2013-14, Ministry of MSME, Government of India

Expected key results under the project are:

- Capacity of the selected MSMEs for export competitiveness enhanced using a cluster based approach. The relevant sectors such as tea, horticulture, food processing, traditional cottage industry, sericulture, etc would be the focus of the project;
- It is expected that the project would benefit at least two clusters each in the States of Assam and Mizoram in the first year. By the third year, at least twenty bankable models are created in the selected states (Assam and Mizoram);
- Bankable proposals based on local resource availability and comparative advantage of the identified clusters prepared and disseminated to prospective entrepreneurs;
- Knowledge ecosystems for faster replication and scaling strengthened and knowledge platform for export promotion in the region established; additionally, the institutional ecosystem of North-East Region for export promotion strengthened.

Project Outcomes and Outputs

The project had four outcomes as summarized below:

Outcome 1: Capacity of the selected MSMEs for export competitiveness enhanced using a cluster-based approach (as per the Project Document). Outcome 1 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Providing entrepreneurship training to FPOs/entrepreneurs enabling them to develop concrete, feasible and bankable business ideas to scale up their existing business
- Organizing exposure visits for entrepreneurs to help them identify lessons and good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and export promotion.
- Identification of relevant and effective soft and hard interventions through liaisoning with state governments in Assam and Mizoram

Outcome 2: Knowledge ecosystems for faster replication and scaling strengthened and knowledge platform for export promotion in the region established (as per the Project Document). Outcome 2 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Development of analytical technical reports/value chain case studies/Cluster Resource Book/knowledge repository for export-oriented entrepreneurs
- Launching of a Knowledge Portal and Mobile Application for the MSMEs of North-East India with an aim to provide a proper market linkage for the entrepreneurs of North-East as well as provide a knowledge repository for them.
- Creation of database of enterprises and entrepreneurs from the two states across the three sectors of handloom, handicraft and agriculture by conducting primary and secondary research.
- Photo documentation by capturing successful social entrepreneurs/clusters in the area of Agriculture, Handloom and Handicraft clusters across Assam and Mizoram.

Outcome 3: Institutional ecosystem of North-East Region for export promotion strengthened. Outcome 3 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Stakeholders' Consultation on MSME Sector in North-East India
- Workshop for the Export Promotion agencies from Assam and Mizoram
- Creation of UNDP-EXIM Bank Network of Social Entrepreneurs
- Building of partnerships with Ministries, Central Government agencies and other like-minded

organizations

Outcome 4: Bankable proposals based on local resource availability and comparative advantage of the identified clusters prepared and disseminated to prospective entrepreneurs. Outcome 4 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Development of bankable proposals for the social entrepreneurs in Assam and Mizoram

Project Design and Formulation

Analysis of LFA/Results Framework

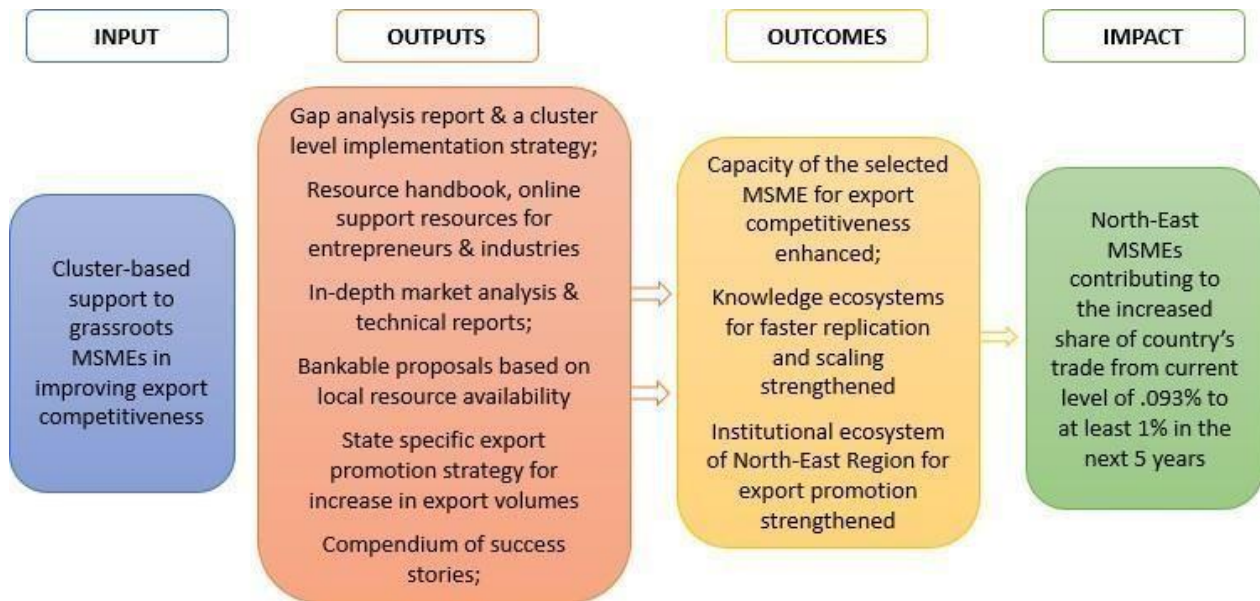
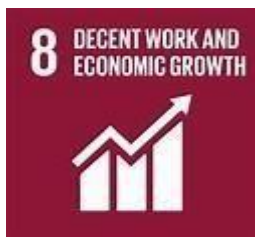
The project had well-defined results framework with indicators based on the UNSDF Country Programme Results and Resource Framework. It developed a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to track the progress of the above interventions in terms of approved results, outcomes and targets. The monitoring and evaluation plan was clearly defined with purpose, responsibility spelt it. It was an ongoing activity and relevant changes incorporated based on the learnings from the ground.

One of the objectives of the results framework was to help identify lessons and good practices with potential for policy advocacy and replication/scaling up in other states. The monitoring tools were also used as a means to capture and promote learning including identification of factors that impede the achievement of outputs.

The multiyear work plan also incorporated the activities, outputs and deliverables against each outcome very clearly. This also helped the evaluator in assessing the impact of the project based on the five define criteria.

Table 1: Proposed Evaluation Plan according to Project Document

| Evaluation Title | Related Strategic Plan Output | UNDAF/CPD Outcome |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mid-Term Review | Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded. | By 2022, institutions are strengthened to progressively deliver universal access to basic services, employment, and sustainable livelihoods to the poor and excluded, in rural and urban areas. |
| Terminal Evaluation | | |

Figure 1: The Theory of Change Diagram**SDGs Directly Linked to****Assumptions and Risks**

The project had clearly specified assumptions and risks which include the importance of government and private sector participation in implementation, the ability to identify MSME clusters in North East, unexpected policy and regulatory changes, mobilisation of sufficient financial support for implementation and given the socio-political sensitivity in the region, restricted mobility of UNDP staff. This has helped the project team in redrafting some the strategy and outcomes as the project progressed. One of the unforeseen risk that was not identified was natural factors like floods, earthquakes, landslides given the geographical location of the region. But since the team had a strong local presence, these factors didn't hamper in implementation of the project.

This was also clearly visible during the ongoing pandemic where the project team fast tracked its efforts in reaching out the MSMEs who were badly affected and come up with coping mechanisms like building capacities of MSMEs to help them undertake product diversification, developing a product portfolio and linking with buyers.

Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project design

UNDP had been working in the North East focusing on range of diverse issues and stakeholders since 2004. This includes small and micro enterprise, local governments and institutions. These learnings and network were incorporated into the project design and implementation strategy and also in identifying risks and the best way to mitigate it. The project also builds on UNDP South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSC/TrC) in drawing good practices and learning from these countries and other South Asian and South-East Asian countries.

Planned stakeholder participation

The project brought together a range of stakeholders besides Exim Bank and the state government of Assam and Mizoram. Subsequently National and Local training institutions engaged in Entrepreneurship programmes, industry associations and export promotion agencies and civil society organisations were brought on board. The identified target groups were primarily the grassroots MSMEs in the states of Assam and Mizoram and few MSME representatives from the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.

Replication approach

With resources at its disposal being the main constraint, the project focused only on two states Assam and Mizoram by working with the existing MSME clusters to strengthen their capacities; develop value chains for products, goods and services; provide customized training on entrepreneurship, skill development, export facilitation to select MSME and support to existing and potential entrepreneurs in securing access to finance, technology, raw materials. Based on the outcomes and the learnings, the project plans to replicate in other states of the North East subject to availability of resources. Since 2020, another state Nagaland was added to the project interventions, specifically for creating required market linkages and mapping the challenges that the MSMEs out there faced during Covid.

UNDP comparative advantage

UNDP has worked in India since 1951 in almost all areas of human development, from democratic governance to poverty eradication, to sustainable energy and environmental management. UNDP's programmes are aligned with national priorities and are reviewed and adjusted annually. It primarily works with governments to help develop policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results. With over 30 projects on the ground in almost every state, today UNDP India works to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by transforming traditional models to do development differently. UNDP has been active in the North East since 2004 and has worked on issues relevant to the region in partnership with local governments. With its focus on value for money; this translates in quality services for a minimum cost where the organization needs to cover its direct costs but brings also added value beyond the strict terms of reference agreed with governments.

Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

The project has cross cutting themes across SDGs 5, 8 and 9 and has strong linkages with existing UNDPs work in North East. Since the project is aligned with GENDER MARKER 2, the evaluation also looked at how

the project has catered to the livelihood related aspects with a special focus on gender equity and women empowerment.

Management arrangements

The project was directly implemented by UNDP in close collaboration with Exim Bank. UNDP, as the implementing partner for this project, was responsible for all financial management, reporting, procurement and recruitment services in line with UNDP rules and procedures. For day to day management, a project support team was set up with a Project Manager for overall implementation and supervision and Project Support for providing administration, management and technical support to the Project Manager.

Project Implementation

Adaptive management

Revised Strategy of the Project

The project activities were initiated from June 2018 and based on the initial learnings from the ground and need analysis of the selected entrepreneurs, UNDP realised that there is a need for the project to modify its initial strategy so that its able to deliver maximum value to the targeted audience. Some of the major learnings during the first year of operation were-

- Non-existence of well-developed and unorganised MSME clusters
- Out of the identified enterprises, very few had the necessary scale or managerial capabilities to export their products to other markets
- Majority of the enterprises are informal in nature and the entrepreneurs lack managerial capabilities to scale their businesses to access capital
- Lack of an MSME and entrepreneurial ecosystem in the North East region hindering their ability to interact, share learnings, access schemes and best practices

Based on these learnings and outcomes the project team broadened the initial objectives and key results.

Revised Objectives of the Project

- Strengthen the export ecosystem of the region
- Build and enhance the technical know-how of MSMEs of the region
- Strengthen managerial capacities and business acumen of producer groups and entrepreneurs
- Develop knowledge ecosystems for MSMEs of the region
- Preserve indigenous wisdom of local communities

Revised Expected key results

1. Capacity Building of entrepreneurs, producer groups, primary producers and other stakeholders
2. Development of Knowledge Ecosystems for enterprises, producer groups and other stakeholders
3. Strengthening Institutional Ecosystems by building partnerships with like-minded organizations such as government agencies, CSOs, social enterprises and academic institutions

COVID and its Impact on the Project

The situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, not only challenged health systems but also toppled economies and businesses. All of the MSMEs that the project was working with was hit hard and the project team felt that there is a need to re-align the project's interventions in order to provide aid to the crumbling MSMEs of the North East. In this context, the following outcome and outputs were planned and implemented in the year 2020 in addition to the four outcomes that were stated in the project document.

Outcome 5: An effective COVID-19 response strategy developed and strengthened to support the MSMEs of NER

Revised Stated Project Outcomes and Outputs

Outcome 1: Capacity of the selected MSMEs for export competitiveness enhanced using a cluster-based approach (as per the Project Document). Outcome 1 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Providing entrepreneurship training to FPOs/entrepreneurs enabling them to develop concrete, feasible and bankable business ideas to scale up their existing business
- Organizing exposure visits for entrepreneurs to help them identify lessons and good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and export promotion.
- Identification of relevant and effective soft and hard interventions through liaisoning with state governments in Assam and Mizoram

Outcome 2: Knowledge ecosystems for faster replication and scaling strengthened and knowledge platform for export promotion in the region established (as per the Project Document). Outcome 2 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Development of analytical technical reports/value chain case studies/Cluster Resource Book/knowledge repository for export-oriented entrepreneurs
- Launching of a Knowledge Portal and Mobile Application for the MSMEs of North-East India with an aim to provide a proper market linkage for the entrepreneurs of North-East as well as provide a knowledge repository for them.
- Creation of database of enterprises and entrepreneurs from the two states across the three sectors of handloom, handicraft and agriculture by conducting primary and secondary research.
- Photo documentation by capturing successful social entrepreneurs/clusters in the area of Agriculture, Handloom and Handicraft clusters across Assam and Mizoram.

Outcome 3: Institutional ecosystem of North-East Region for export promotion strengthened. Outcome 3 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Stakeholders' Consultation on MSME Sector in North-East India
- Workshop for the Export Promotion agencies from Assam and Mizoram
- Creation of UNDP-EXIM Bank Network of Social Entrepreneurs
- Building of partnerships with Ministries, Central Government agencies and other like-minded organizations

Outcome 4: Bankable proposals based on local resource availability and comparative advantage of the identified clusters prepared and disseminated to prospective entrepreneurs. Outcome 4 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Development of bankable proposals for the social entrepreneurs in Assam and Mizoram

Outcome 5 (In response to COVID): Developing an effective COVID-19 response strategy to support the MSMEs of NER across the sectors of Agriculture, Food Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts. Outcome 5 was to be achieved through the following outputs:

- Identification of issues faced by MSMEs due to COVID-19 and assessment of the needs of enterprises across the various sectors.
- Development of a coping strategy based on the identified issues and needs in order to provide support to MSMEs for revamping value chains and reviving businesses.

Partnership arrangements (with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region)

The project entered into a number of partnership arrangements with different stakeholders within the country and region. A detailed list of partners and kind of collaboration entered into is listed in **Annex 3**

Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management

As mentioned in the M&E design component, M&E was not only used to measure progress of the interventions in terms of approved results, outcomes and targets, but also help identify lessons and good practices with potential for policy advocacy and replication/scaling up in other states. The feedback from the M&E activities was also used to promote learning (including identification of factors that impede the achievement of outputs). Such learnings were effectively used to adapt strategies accordingly and avoid repeating mistakes from the past.

Project Finance

The ground level implementation of the project was co-funded by UNDP and Exim Bank on a ratio of 51:49. For the three year project duration, UNDP supported the ground-level work in the first year and Exim Bank supporting the subsequent two years of implementation and also supporting the export competitiveness of the grassroots MSMEs through its GRID Initiative. In addition, UNDP provided quality assurance and management support for the project.

Monitoring and evaluation: design at entry and implementation

The project has a well-defined M&E system in place with Outputs mapped to each Outcome. The project team continuously tracked the outcomes and ensured corrective steps are undertaken so that the project outcomes are not affected. The outcomes were reported annually to both the stakeholders.

Project Results

Project Evaluation based on the revised Outcomes

In order to understand the effectiveness of the interventions and its impact each Deliverables and Impact has been mapped to the revised project outcomes and stated outputs (refer Table 2). The evaluator also mapped each intervention in the project duration and its impact based on the Annual Reports and other documents provided (refer Table 3)

Table 2: Achievements and Impact mapped against Project Outcomes and Stated Outputs

| Outcomes | Stated Outputs | Project Deliverables and Impact |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Outcome 1: Capacity of the selected MSMEs for export competitiveness enhanced using a cluster-based approach (as per the Project Document)</p> | <p>Providing entrepreneurship training to FPOs/entrepreneurs enabling them to develop concrete, feasible and bankable business ideas to scale up their existing business</p> <p>Organizing exposure visits for entrepreneurs to help them identify lessons and good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and export promotion.</p> <p>Identification of relevant and effective soft and hard interventions through liaisoning with state governments in Assam and Mizoram</p> | <p>Managerial capacity of 221 weavers, artisans and Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) members was built across verticals such as costing of products and services, organization of finances and legal forms of business.</p> <p>14 entrepreneurs from Assam and Mizoram were taken on a 3 days exposure trip to three food processing facilities around Pune in order them to identify good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and exports.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2: Knowledge ecosystems for faster replication and scaling strengthened and knowledge platform for export promotion in the region established (as per the Project Document).</p> | <p>Development of analytical technical reports/value chain case studies/Cluster Resource Book/knowledge repository for export-oriented entrepreneurs</p> | <p>Development and launch of 4 reports related to value-chain of potential products from NER, export strategy for the region and export-oriented schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act East: Giving North East MSMEs a Leading Edge: Resource Book for Export Oriented Entrepreneurs • Sustainable and Profitable Bamboo Value Chain Management in Assam |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Launching of a Knowledge Portal and Mobile Application for the MSMEs of North-East India with an aim to provide a proper market linkage for the entrepreneurs of North-East as well as provide a knowledge repository for them.</p> <p>Creation of database of enterprises and entrepreneurs from the two states across the three sectors of handloom, handicraft and agriculture by conducting primary and secondary research.</p> <p>Photo documentation by capturing successful social entrepreneurs/clusters in the area of Agriculture, Handloom and Handicraft clusters across Assam and Mizoram.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlocking Export Potential in the North East: The MSME Way • Development of 2 value chain case studies from Mizoram- Turmeric and Ginger <p>Development and launch of Coffee Table Book related to the MSME sector of NER- 22 successful entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland were documented</p> <p>Portal and app named AgroLoomCraft (https://agroloomcraft.in/) developed to house information and data related to MSME clusters and provide support in accessing market linkages to enterprises and producer groups of the region</p> <p>Extensive mapping of around 100 handloom clusters in BTAD, Assam and around 50 agriculture, handloom and handicrafts clusters across Assam and Mizoram</p> <p>Development of a GIS-enabled cluster map to store and share information of the mapped clusters (the cluster map is a part of the knowledge portal)</p> <p>200 high quality photographs from 18 successful social entrepreneurs/clusters from the two states were captured for the web portal and knowledge products.</p> |
| <p>Outcome 3: Institutional ecosystem of North-East Region for export promotion strengthened.</p> | <p>Stakeholders' Consultation on MSME Sector in North-East India</p> | <p>Day-long stakeholders' consultation on MSME sector in NER (August 2018) to better understand the status of MSME sector in North-East and to provide a platform to all the</p> |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Workshop for the Export Promotion agencies from Assam and Mizoram</p> <p>Creation of UNDP-EXIM Bank Network of Social Entrepreneurs</p> <p>Building of partnerships with Ministries, Central Government agencies and other like-minded organizations</p> | <p>stakeholders in the region to put forward their views and ideas and discuss about the prevalent challenges and gaps in the sector</p> <p>Day-long consultation on social entrepreneurship for Agriculture, Handloom and Handicrafts sector in Assam and Mizoram (June & July 2019) to provide a platform to entrepreneurs for discussing sector-specific challenges and issues faced by them and deliberating on opportunities and best possible solutions.</p> <p>25 enterprises with export potential were imparted knowledge on important aspects such as Foreign Trade Policy, Emerging Trade Regimes and Operational Aspects of Export Trade</p> <p>Virtual network of around 60 entrepreneurs across the three sectors was established to provide a knowledge-sharing platform to facilitate exchange of technical know-how among the members</p> <p>Partnership with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) for online handloom and handicrafts for East and North East India, Hastakaari- 19 Handloom & Handicrafts entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland participated</p> <p>Technical Partner, North East MSME Summit for SC/ST Entrepreneurs organised by CII and Ministry of MSME, GoI- 11 handloom and handicrafts entrepreneurs from Mizoram attended</p> <p>Development Partner, consultation on Creating</p> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | Innovative SMEs in NE organised by All India Management Association (AIMA) |
| Outcome 4: Bankable proposals based on local resource availability and comparative advantage of the identified clusters prepared and disseminated to prospective entrepreneurs | Development of bankable proposals for the social entrepreneurs in Assam and Mizoram | Development of Bankable proposals for 2 clusters dealing in mushroom and Eri silk handloom products |
| Outcome 5 (In response to COVID): Developing an effective COVID-19 response strategy to support the MSMEs of NER across the sectors of Agriculture, Food Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts | <p>Identification of issues faced by MSMEs due to COVID-19 and assessment of the needs of enterprises across the various sectors.</p> <p>Development of a coping strategy based on the identified issues and needs in order to provide support to MSMEs for revamping value chains and reviving businesses.</p> <p>Support in providing immediate market linkages to the MSMEs</p> | <p>A scoping study was undertaken covering 90 enterprises, FPOs, FPCs and SHGs from the states of Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur in order to assess the economic impact of the pandemic on the MSMEs of the region and identify the issues and challenges</p> <p>Skill upgradation training in Handloom product diversification for 20 weavers in Aizawl, Mizoram for producing PPE Kits for local supply</p> <p>A webinar was organized to better understand the challenges and opportunities in the post-COVID world in the context of the MSME sector of NER.</p> <p>A product catalogue covering around 207 export potential products from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland developed</p> <p>Market linkage creation through 'Haastakaari' online platform developed by CII. 19 Handloom & Handicraft entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland participated</p> <p>Two day buyer sellers meet organised in Guwahati in March 2021 to connect MSMEs with</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | institutional buyers. 20 buyers were connected with 13 sellers across Handloom, Handicrafts and Agribusiness |
|--|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 3: Major Activities undertaken against each Outcomes and its Impact (2018-2021)

| Calendar Year | Name of the Activity | Objective | Impact |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2018 | 3 days exposure visit to Food Processing Plants in Pune | Identify good practices for their business with potential for policy advocacy, replication/scaling up and exports. | 14 entrepreneurs from Assam and Mizoram |
| | Entrepreneurship Training for Primary Producers | Enable the entrepreneurs to develop concrete, feasible and bankable business ideas to scale up their existing business | 221 weavers, entrepreneurs and Farmer Producer Organisations |
| | Value Chain Case Studies | To have a better understanding of the existing value additions being done in some of the key export promotion products in north east region | 4 bamboo-based value chain case studies in Assam 8 value chain case studies of Jute and diversified Products- Eri silk, Ginger, Jackfruit, Lac, Mushroom, Red rice and Pineapple |
| | Day-long stakeholders' consultation on MSME sector in NER | To understand the present status of MSME sector in North-East and to provide a platform to all the stakeholders in the region to put forward their views and ideas and discuss about the prevalent challenges and gaps in the sector. | A multi-stakeholder consultation which was attended by entrepreneurs, Civil Society organizations and Govt. counterparts across all north eastern states |
| | 2-day sensitization workshop for export promotion agencies and entrepreneurs | To understand existing Government export schemes and operational aspects of Export Trade and to impart knowledge on important aspects such as Foreign Trade Policy, Emerging Trade Regimes and Operational Aspects of Export Trade. | 25 export promotion agencies |
| | Day-long consultation on social entrepreneurship for Agriculture, Handloom | It was organized to provide a platform to entrepreneurs for discussing sector-specific challenges and issues faced by them and deliberating on opportunities | Assam: A network of social entrepreneurs across the sectors of handloom, handicraft and |

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | and Handicrafts sector in Assam and Mizoram | and best possible solutions. | <p>agriculture was created through this consultation. More than 70 entrepreneurs from across Assam participated in the event.</p> <p>Mizoram: About 70 participants in the events, they are basically entrepreneurs, Government Agencies, FPOs, Government Departments and other stakeholders.</p> |
| 2019 | Mapping the handloom and handicraft clusters in four districts of BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Area Districts), Assam and development of a Cluster Resource Book | To 26 analyse and gain a complete understanding of the craft ecosystem from an artisan's perspective | <p>Mapping of around 100 handloom clusters in BTAD, Assam</p> <p>Mapping of around 50 agriculture, handloom and handicrafts clusters across Assam and Mizoram</p> <p>Development of a GIS-enabled cluster map to store and share information of the mapped clusters (the cluster map is a part of the knowledge portal)</p> |
| | Photo documentation of cluster activities across the sectors of Agriculture, Food Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts in Assam and Mizoram | For the web portal and knowledge products. | 200 high quality photographs from 18 successful social entrepreneurs/clusters from the two states |
| | Creation of UNDP-EXIM Bank Network of Social Entrepreneurs | Facilitate the interaction of entrepreneurs with their peers and help them to identify common issues, possible solutions and share new ideas. | Network consisting of 60 entrepreneurs |
| | North East MSME Summit for SC/ST Entrepreneurs organized in November | Disseminating information on the opportunities in various MSME sector with wider knowledge on financial linkage of various Government schemes, NBFCs, | 11 handloom and handicraft entrepreneurs from Mizoram |

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | 2019 by CII in partnership with Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India, in Assam | Loan schemes from Banks etc | participated |
| | 9th National MSME Convention- AIIMA | Consultation on Creating Innovative SMEs in the North East organized | UNDP supported AIIMA for the convention by providing a platform for 4 entrepreneurs to bring up their voices from the grassroots. |
| | Rapid Scoping Study of MSMEs in North East | Identify the issues faced by MSMEs due to COVID-19 | Assessment of the economic status of 90 enterprises , covering Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland was undertaken across the various sectors of handloom, handicraft and agro and allied. |
| | Support for providing market linkages for agri entrepreneurs | Aim to create and strengthen the forward market linkages for the agriculture and food processing entrepreneurs in Assam and Mizoram | 30 institutional buyers mapped |
| 2020 | Virtual interactive Q&A session for MSMEs in the region 2020 in partnership with the MSME Development Institute, Govt Of India, Min of MSME and India Exim Bank | Disseminating information on various schemes and policies in response to COVID. | 22 entrepreneurs attended |
| | Skills upgradation training and providing market support to MSME clusters of the North East | Provide market access and help increase their livelihood during pandemic | 20 weavers of Aizawl District were being trained on diversifying their skills and manufacturing PPE Kits to meet the local demand of the same |
| | Building the capacities of artisans in | Preserve and promote the indigenous knowledge | 20 handicrafts artisans in Chite Veng & Edenthur |

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | traditional crafts | | clusters (Mizoram) |
| | Training in Organic Farming for farmers in Assam | To preserve and promote the indigenous knowledge as well as help communities move towards self-sufficiency | 30 women farmers and aspiring agri-entrepreneurs |
| | Development of Bankable proposals | To develop bankable proposals by to help connect prospecting enterprises with financial institutions | 2 clusters dealing in mushroom and Eri silk handloom products |
| | Market linkage creation through 'Haastakaari' online platform developed by CII | Hastakaari is an online platform for buyers and sellers to connect and promote arts and crafts of the region. Our entrepreneurs benefited by connecting with potential buyers and through virtual exhibitions & online mentorship | 19 Handloom & Handicraft entrepreneurs from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland participated |
| | Development and launch of Coffee Table Book related to the MSME sector of NER | Documentation of success stories of successful enterprises from North East | Story of 22 successful enterprises from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland across the sectors of Agriculture, Food Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts was documented. |
| 2021 | Sensitization Training on Functioning of Farmer Producer Company for CEOs/Consultants and leaders of FPOs/FPCs under Mission Organic Mizoram | To build capacities of top management on the functioning of FPOs including legal, financial and managerial aspects | 18 members participated |
| | Training on Entrepreneurship for returning migrant workers of Mizoram due to COVID has been imparted to 18 migrant workers returning to Mizoram due to COVID 19 on 23rd – 26 th March, 2021 | Impact skills to migrant workers from Mizoram who has lost their jobs and livelihoods | 18 migrant workers benefitted |

| | | | |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Development of a knowledge portal and mobile application for entrepreneurs and other stakeholders | Host information and data related to MSME clusters and provide support in accessing market linkages to enterprises and producer groups of the region | Portal and app named AgroLoomCraft (https://agroloomcraft.in/) was developed |
| | Product Catalogue | To connect the MSMEs of the region to institutional buyers. | 207 export potential products from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland were catalogued Product Catalogue : MSME in North East India (thesochproject.com) |
| | Buyer Sellers Meet-Guwahati | Connect both national and international buyers with MSMEs in North East India | Mizoram: 3 enterprise for Handloom, 2 FPC and 1 Enterprise for Agro Nagaland: 1 enterprise for Handloom & Handicrafts & 2 enterprise for Agro Manipur: 2 enterprises from Agro Sector Assam: 4 from handloom and handicraft and 6 enterprises from Agro Buyers (Handloom & handicraft): 10 Buyers (Agriculture): 9 |

Project Performance

Except the **UNSDF Country Programme Results and Resource Framework**, the project didn't have a well-defined results framework with base line defined for each stated outcomes. At the start of the project the team identified activities for each outcome and the outputs and indicators were reported in the Annual Report submitted to Exim Bank. The evaluator has relied on the annual reports and other project documents including individual interviews of project beneficiaries and program staff and field visits to while reporting on the ratings.

Evaluation Ratings based on Stated Criteria's

Relevance

The eight North East States (NE) which cover 2,63,179 sq. km of area that is 8% of India's total area face a number of critical developmental challenges. The region is characterized by low per capita income, low capital formation, inadequate infrastructural facilities, communication bottleneck and geographical isolation from the mainstream. The region is industrially backward and all the states, with exception of Assam, have topographical drawback to support big industries. The lack of industrialization in the area is reflected in poor per capita income of the region which is 30% lower than the national average. Also North East India contributes only 1 - 2% of India's total trade with its eastern neighbours despite being in close proximity

There are about 40,000 MSMEs in the North East which is quite significant comparing to other parts of the country. About 70 per cent of such manufacturing units are located in the rural areas of the North-east with six lakh workforce. Such rural-based manufacturing activity is primarily in the informal category with handloom and handicraft units, which is traditional in nature with low capital base, playing an important role in the region's economy.

As stated in the objectives, over the duration of three years the project was able to strengthen MSME's through a series of interventions to help them **build capacities, strengthen knowledge ecosystem** for faster replication and scaling and **strengthening institutional ecosystem** for export promotion.

As can be seen from the

Since majority of the enterprises in the North East are informal in nature, so the challenge for the project during the initial period was to identify entrepreneurs and enterprises which have the potential to scale and create impact. As on March 31st 2021, the project has been able to impact around 221 weavers, artisan and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) which have the potential to scale and replicate. The Covid pandemic has further demonstrated the need to strengthen small and micro enterprises so that supply chain disruptions and loss of livelihood can be compensated by these enterprises.

For North East as a whole where large scale industrialisation will always be a challenges, only way to bring prosperity is facilitate and promote policies to strengthen MSMEs for inclusive growth and development.

Effectiveness

With the limited resources in hand and with a large geographical spread, the project focused only on two states, Mizoram and Assam so that instead of spreading thin, the project can reach out to a large number of entrepreneurs within these states. Also the project team focused on only three verticals- agriculture, handloom and handicrafts based on the large number of beneficiaries especially women who are dependent on them for their livelihood.

As can be seen from Table 3, the project has gone beyond its initial scope to make an impact on the larger MSME ecosystem in the entire North East. By focusing on strengthening the entire ecosystem, the project not only was able to reach out to a large number of MSMEs and help **build both managerial and entrepreneurial capacities** through trainings, exposure visits, workshops and symposiums and mentoring support, it also focused on **strengthening capacities** of different players across the value chain including export promotion agencies and government bodies. By focusing on **strengthening the knowledge ecosystem**, the project created a platform for entrepreneurs from the North East so that they are able to share experiences and learn from others. At the **policy level**, the project was able to map around 150 agriculture, handloom and handicrafts clusters in Assam and Mizoram and developed a GIS enabled cluster

map so that it enables policy makers in developing focused cluster strategies for strengthening MSME clusters in North East.

Through development of a MSME Coffee Table Book and Product catalogue and through its buyer seller initiatives, the project was able to fulfill a much needed requirement for all MSMEs in North East, **market access**.

Going ahead, the above achievements will act as a strong base to further strengthen the MSMEs and connect them with global markets.

*The exposure visits was a big revelation in making me think the best way to scale up my business. By observing and learning from well-established food processing units, made me realise the need to invest further in my business and diversify my product portfolio. The immediate result is setting up of a cold pressed mustard unit- one of the very few in North East India- **Malamoni Hazarika, Founder, Kamdhenu Industries, Guwahati***

Efficiency

Taking into consideration the challenges that North East as a whole poses to any implementing agencies in its ability to deliver the project objectives efficiently within the said duration of the project, UNDP has demonstrated that with the right strategy even one can not only achieve the desired outcomes within limited resources at its disposal, but went beyond its original mandate to incorporate an action plan to tackle the unprecedented pandemic that hit MSMEs the hardest. As can be seen from Table 3, for each outcome, the project devised a series of activities with defined outputs which in turn had a significant impact on the entire ecosystem.

In order to compensate for the limited resources in hand, the project team entered into a string of partnerships with organisations and institutions-both government, private and non-governmental with shared mission to further enhance project deliverables. This also helped in strengthening the overall MSME ecosystem by bringing different entities and entrepreneurs with a shared goal together in one platform. Going ahead these partnerships will play a crucial role in strengthening MSME in the entire North East.

Sustainability

The intervention that has been initiated not only is highly relevant for the nascent MSME ecosystem of the North East, but has been effective in its ability to deliver on the project outcomes. During interactions with entrepreneurs, FPOs and other project stakeholders it has strongly come out that there is a sense of optimism on the ability of these enterprises being able to scale and create sustainable businesses. By focusing on building managerial and entrepreneurial capabilities of entrepreneurs/FPOs, strengthening value chains, creating knowledge platforms and network of different stakeholders and organising buyer seller meets the project focused on the entire value chain from the producer to the customer so that the enterprises can continue on their journey towards financial sustainability beyond the project duration. There are of course challenges around scalability, governance and access to capital.

In terms of environmental sustainability, North East is renowned for its magical beauty and bewildering diversity and is one of Asia's last great natural and anthropological sanctuaries. The focus of the project were on products where the North East has a distinct advantage like natural fibre, organic, handloom and handicrafts. The geographical remoteness, natural diversity and difficult topography has played a major role in enterprises using raw materials easily available within their vicinity. This has in turn helped strengthen the

local economy by circulating capital within the community. If these enterprises can achieve scale, it will have a positive impact on the overall economic development of the entire community and create local employment opportunities.

One of the objectives of the project was the preservation of traditional knowledge through skills upgradation training and product diversification.

The entire North East region also prides itself with strong participation of women in the workforce. In fact most of the rural ventures that deal with weaving, agriculture/food processing, tourism and allied industries are driven by women labour. Almost 80% of the project beneficiaries were women.

Relative under-development of the NE region is a plus that can be leveraged to put forth a strategy for environmentally aligned development.

Impact

As stated in Table 3, the project has made a significant impact on all the outcomes as stated in the project proposal. A total of 221 artisans, weavers and entrepreneurs were impacted during the project life cycle. With almost 80% of the beneficiaries were women or women owned and managed enterprises, the interventions focused on building skills, creating shared knowledge products and platforms and providing market access. This in turn has provided confidence to the women entrepreneurs in their ability to scale their businesses. With strong women participation in the workforce, this will have a profound impact on the the lives of the women and help build sustainable and scalable business models. One of the unintended impacts was the interventions that were carried out by the project team in terms of Covidresponse.

Hliappui Ginger FPO and Champhai Organic Producer Company Ltd

Mr.H.Thantluanga, Chairperson- Hiliappui Ginger FPO and Mr.C.Vanlalruata, Chairperson- Champhai Organic Producer Company Ltd. after their return from the exposure visit to three Food Processing factories in and around Pune, came up with an idea of setting up a processing plant for ginger and Chilli to move up the value chain. In order to build managerial and institutional capacities, UNDP trained 25 leaders of both the FPOs in 'Entrepreneurship' and the Chairperson and Accountant in 'Functioning of Farmer Producer Company' which helped both the FPOs in bringing clarity on how to go about running it as a sustainable venture. Champhai Organic has already set up a processing unit and have started making chilli powder and dry chilli. They will soon diversity into making Chilli flakes.

Hiliapui Ginger FPO has started planning to set up a ginger processing plant with support from Organic Mizoram.

Evaluation cross-cutting issues

Human rights and Gender Equality

Majority of the project beneficiaries were the most vulnerable in the entire value chain. Majority of them were women for whom it was the only source of livelihood. With women constituting a major workforce especially in handloom, handicrafts and agriculture value chain in North East, the project focused on these three so as to target the most vulnerable. Out of the total number of beneficiaries almost 80% were women producers and entrepreneurs.

The project focused on training and building capacities, creating livelihoods and value chains to support long term economic growth, and ensuring institutional sustainability through organising and collective action within these programs. To reach out to the most marginalised producer groups, UNDP in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Ministry of MSME, GoI, organised a North East MSME Summit for SC/ST Entrepreneurs. Eleven handloom and handicrafts entrepreneurs from Mizoram attended the summit.

Given the myriad of social and cultural barriers that these women face, all stakeholders interviewed described a dramatic change in themselves- going from isolated and lost to confident and optimistic.

*The UNDP-Exim Bank program challenged me to think how best I can reach out to more weavers across Mizoram and share my experience of running my own handloom unit. With this objective I have organised 12 different weaver groups and set up a producer company. This will help us to achieve scale and reach out to new buyers- **Lalrinsangi Chawngthu, Chawndeng Handloom, Aizawl***

Table 4: Evaluation Ratings

Based on the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, the performance of the project is ranked based on the rating scales provided in the Terms of Reference (ToR). Please refer to **Annex 4** for the rankings interpretation.

| Evaluation Ratings: | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Monitoring and Evaluation | <i>rating</i> | 2. IA& EA Execution | <i>rating</i> |
| M&E design at entry | 5-S | Quality of UNDP Implementation | 6-HS |
| M&E Plan Implementation | 6-HS | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | 6-HS |
| Overall quality of M&E | 5-S | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | 6-HS |
| 3. Assessment of Outcomes | <i>rating</i> | 4. Sustainability | <i>rating</i> |
| Relevance | 2-R | Financial resources: | 3-ML |
| Effectiveness | 6-HS | Socio-political: | 3-ML |
| Efficiency | 6-HS | Institutional framework and governance: | 3-ML |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | 6-HS | Environmental : | 4-L |
| | | Overall likelihood of sustainability: | 3-ML |

KEY: HS: Highly Satisfactory- no shortcomings, S: Satisfactory- minor shortcomings, R: Relevant, ML: Moderately Likely- moderate risk, L: Likely- negligible risk to sustainability (For detail interpretation refer Annex 4)

Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons

Challenges and Learnings

Some of the major learnings which will be relevant for any follow up or to reinforce initial benefits from the project are-

Lack of well-developed Clusters in North East

Clusters exist where the economic activities in a set of related industries in a given location reach critical mass. This pooling of talent produces a snowball effect as, in turn, more companies make the decision to set up there. Since majority of the enterprises in North East are small and micro in nature, they lack volumes to be able to attract ancillary units which can support their growth. Also due to lack of infrastructure and topography, majority of the enterprises are dispersed across a large area which acts as a deterrent for formation of clusters.

The handloom and handicrafts sector in North East unlike rest of India is highly unorganised. Although North East has this unique tradition of each house having at least one loom, but weaving is seen more as a personalised activity to take care of the needs of the household. The non-commercial mind set across North East hampers any form of aggregation of weavers into a cluster to make them sustainably viable.

This is one reason why the existing project was not able to focus its efforts in strengthening clusters as envisaged in the original objective.

Nascent Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

The entrepreneurial ecosystem in North East India is at a nascent stage and the stakeholders are at various stages of formation. Although different states have released start-up policies, incubation centers are being launched and NE focused funds are being announced but when it comes to quality of entrepreneurs there is a lot of handholding that will be required. Also there is a need for local entrepreneurs to look beyond traditional business models.

Unlike other parts of the country, there is no structured support system available for micro -entrepreneurs from the North East to help them scale their business. Although institutions like NeDFI and Nabard has been providing financial support to businesses over the years, the challenge is to create an enabling ecosystem to encourage a large number of small and medium scale business to embark on an entrepreneurial journey by tapping the vast potential that the region provides and in the process create large scale social impact.

Lack of Managerial and Institutional Capacities

For an enterprise to achieve scale, it needs to have sufficient managerial and institutional capacities. Majority of the enterprises in the North East are informal in nature and run as a proprietorship with the entrepreneur donning multiple hats. They don't have any vision statement, viable business plans, legal or governance structures, financial statements, systems and processes which make them ineligible to access institutional capital and also approach buyers for market access. This was visible during the development of Business Plans. This affects the ability of enterprises to raise formal capital and in turn act as a barrier to scale.

Lack of clarity on nature of the organisation

For profit, non-profit or hybrid? There is a lack of understanding when it comes to registration of their entities as a legal entity. Entrepreneurs are confused due to lack of information on different forms of organisations, tax implications and compliance costs. As a result one can see a diverse range of organisations from proprietorship to trust or society, cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organisations. This creates hurdles in terms of ability to raise capital for expansion and also connect with markets.

Human Resource Challenges

Due to the remote location and micro nature of their businesses, majority of the enterprises are not able to attract and hire qualified professionals, which hinders their overall growth. This will be a major challenge for all of these enterprises in the near future also. Due to lack of opportunities, majority of professionals who are from the NE leaves the region in search of greener pastures elsewhere. Similarly very few skilled professionals would like to relocate to the North East due to its remoteness and also negative perception as a region not safe for outsiders.

Lack of Innovation and Obsolete technologies

Due to nature of their small scale of operations and lack of capital, majority of the MSMEs are stuck in obsolete technologies. As a result there is lack of innovation which affects quality of their products and delivery schedules.

Access to Markets

Lack of critical mass in a particular industry and geography leads to challenges in accessing markets. Due to the remote location of the region from mainstream India markets, enterprises are dependent on local markets. This is also a major reason why entrepreneurs are not willing to invest in their businesses to scale.

With the Government of India's Act East Policy, there is a need to quickly build capacities of North East based MSMEs so that they are export ready and access the large South East Asia markets.

Value Creation and Addition

Due to infrastructural challenges in North East and lack of critical storage and transport facilities, majority of the enterprises don't have the desire to scale beyond certain volumes. There is a need to focus on creating low cost local storage facilities so that producers can target the market based on the right price.

Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

UNDP's work with MSMEs across the North East has shown that in order to be competitive and stay relevant, there is a need for the large number of micro enterprises to scale up by building robust value chains and supply chains – with strong systems and processes in place. They need to understand and follow the industry standards in productivity and quality and also have access to state of art technology so that they are able to attain certain critical mass to scale.

It was observed during the development of bankable proposals that there exists a lack of understanding within the MSMEs on how to be investment and market ready. Although their products are widely recognized across the state, what remains a challenge is the scale of funding required by them, lack of a legal status of their enterprise, inadequate human resource and absence of a long-term strategy and vision for their venture. These factors make it difficult for such enterprises to be investment ready and act as an obstacle in approaching financial institutions. There is a need to reach entrepreneurs at an early stage to enable them to incorporate funding in their planning process as identifying and planning for the most appropriate financial and ownership structure for the business is critical to the potential future success of the business.

Scaling up Strategy

One of the major finding from the evaluation is that majority of the entrepreneurs supported during the first phase, in spite of the challenges they face, has in place innovative business models. Majority of them wants to scale their businesses. What they lack is scale and viability. This is due to the present structure of their enterprises, lack of access to markets and capital and obsolete technology. There is a huge potential for employment generation impacting the lives and livelihood opportunities if we are able to strengthen these enterprises so that they are able to scale.

Going ahead, UNDP should continue its focus on **building entrepreneurial and managerial capabilities** of existing entrepreneurs so that the momentum gained during the first phase can be sustained and some of the enterprises can build sustainable businesses and create large scale impact. This should be undertaken through a combination of providing **technical assistance** and **integrated business support services** thus **increasing their sustainability** and make them **investment and market ready** so that some of them may be able to expand to South East Asia and have an impact on a wider scale than just the North East.

Bengsa Organics LLP

Hemanta Nath, is a small entrepreneur from Nalbari, Assam who is into Mushroom cultivation. With an annual turnover of around INR 40 lakhs, it was one of the ventures that was selected to develop a Bankable Proposal for expansion of this unit to achieve a turnover of INR 1 crore within three years. During the proposal development phase it was realized that except for an MSME registration, the business is not registered and has no separate financial statements to substantiate its turnover. Based on the suggestions provided by UNDP, Hemanta has registered his business as an Limited Liability Partnership (Bengsa Organics LLP) and has implemented systems and processes including allocating work responsibilities to different teams.

'I am very confident that in ability to scale up my operations. Market for mushroom is there. Only help I will need is in raising capital. For that I want UNDP to help me in developing a business plan and also facilitate connecting with financial institutions'- Hemanta Nath, Partner, Bengsa Organics LLP

Road towards a Scalable and Sustainable Journey

Mapping and Strengthening Clusters

Agriculture, Handloom and Handicrafts sectors are highly unorganized in the region because of which detailed mapping of clusters is crucial. Already as part of the project a number of clusters have been mapped and GIS enabled. This can be a good starting point of identifying and focusing on verticals where the North East has a competitive advantage like Natural Fibre, Medicinal Plants, Handloom and Sustainable Tourism. Within these verticals the focus should be on mapping clusters based on availability of skilled producers, access to raw materials and markets and number of active entrepreneurs. Within these clusters efforts should be undertaken to create an aggregators who can focus on quality control and management, aggregation of products, market linkages, value creation, etc.

Focus should be on strengthening of the entrepreneurial ecosystem within these clusters.

Enhance Entrepreneurial and Managerial Capabilities

Within these clusters there is an urgent need to enhance technical as well as management proficiency of the entrepreneurs who have taken up with the idea of not just building the businesses but also sustaining them. There is a need to reach entrepreneurs at an early stage to enable them to incorporate funding in their planning process as identifying and planning for the most appropriate financial and ownership structure for the business is critical to the potential future success of the business. This will also help raise the quality of investment opportunities for the entrepreneurs in North East India.

This can be done through by creating a strong Incubation and Mentoring Support program targeted at those entrepreneurs with innovative business models and ability to scale.

Facilitate Access to Market

Product Diversification and Innovation

One of the major learnings from the buyer-seller interactions is the need for product diversification and innovation. Since the products cater to a diverse market efforts should be undertaken for design interventions, quality and certification carried out by professionals who understand markets.

Strengthen existing Border Trade

The region shares only 2% of the border with the mainland of the country, and more than 98% is linked with the international border i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. This feature makes export from the region very attractive. The NER's locational advantage and rich natural resources provides a backdrop to its development as a base for cooperation not only with ASEAN but also with neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. And through Myanmar, Regional Cooperation Center, the NER can be extended to Mekong region, comprising Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam. The NER can emerge as a strategic base for foreign/domestic investors to tap the world's largest market in SAARC, BIMSTEC, and ASEAN. At the same time, it has certain peculiarities and problems, which, if tackled and leveraged in the right perspective, could yield rich dividends. The region will need to build on the existing networks and harness the individual strengths and complementarities at both the enterprise as well as the state level to create a brand North East to make a significant dent in the global marketplace.

There is a need to identify and build export competitiveness amongst select micro and small enterprises with products that have demand in its immediate neighbourhood markets.

Facilitate Access to Capital

One of the major needs of entrepreneurs that came out during the evaluation was the need for access to capital to invest in their businesses. At present lack of an appropriate business and organisational structure and markets is a major impediment or them to raise capital for institutional investors. There is a need to build on these capabilities and provide a platform to present their business plans to financial institutions, venture funds, etc. so as to scale their businesses.

Convergence with existing Export Promotion Schemes and other Government schemes for MSME's

Since already under the Department of MSME, there are a number of schemes in the areas of exploring market potential, export promotion, participation in international trade fair exhibition the project should build upon the existing networks that it has already created and actively facilitate the participation of the export worthy enterprises in these schemes.

Conclusion

For the North East to be able to create large scale local employment, MSMEs need more support for modernisation, technical expertise and investments, which have the potential to revive local markets and can also attract global players in the long run. UNDP's work with MSMEs has shown that in order to be competitive and stay relevant, there is a need for the large number of micro enterprises to scale up by building robust value chains and supply chains – with strong systems and processes in place. They need to understand and follow the industry standards in productivity and quality and also have access to state of art technology.

There is a need to reach entrepreneurs at an early stage to enable them to incorporate funding in their planning process as identifying and planning for the most appropriate financial and ownership structure for the business is critical to the potential future success of the business.

Unlike other parts of the country, there is no structured support system available for micro -entrepreneurs from the North East to help them scale their business. Although institutions like NeDFI and Nabard has been providing financial support to businesses over the years, but the challenge is to create an enabling ecosystem to encourage a large number of small and medium scale business to embark on an entrepreneurial journey by tapping the vast potential that the region provides and in the process create large scale social impact.

There is a need for a structured program targeting micro and small enterprises to facilitate their growth and expansion through **technical assistance** and **integrated business support services** thus **increasing their sustainability** and make them **investment** and **market ready** so that some of them may be able to expand to South East Asia and have an impact on a wider scale than just the North East.

Annex 1: Key Evaluation Matrix used to measure Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact

| Relevant evaluation criteria | Key questions | Specific sub questions | Data sources | Data-collection methods/tools | Indicators/success standard | Methods for data analysis |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Relevance | The extent to which the activities are suited to local and national development priorities and policies; the analysis includes an assessment of changes over time. | Did the project achieve the desired outcome in context of its relevance? How does it fit into the priorities of North East India's development trajectory? | Govt of India policies for the North Est, Reports | Secondary sources-reports, internet, project document | GDP Per capita income MSME numbers Relevant Policies for NE MSMEs Project Objectives vs Gol strategies for NE MSMEs | Qualitative and Quantitative |
| Effectiveness | The extent to which the results have been achieved or how likely they are to be achieved. | Extent to which the program achieved the intended outcomes in the short, medium and long term To what extent the program producing worthwhile results (outputs/outcome) and or meeting each of its stated objectives | Project Proposal Log Frame Annual Reports Evaluation Report | Secondary and Primary-Interviews, Visits | No. of entrepreneurs and collectives reached No. of interventions carried out No. of entrepreneurs/enterprises with innovative business models | Quantitative |
| Efficiency | The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also | To what extent the relationship between inputs and outputs timely, cost effective and meets standards | Project proposal Annual Reports | Secondary | No. of activities proposed vs achieved No. of targeted | Quantitative and Qualitative |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | called cost-effectiveness or efficacy. | Is there a significant impact in term of the achieved outputs and outcomes | | | collectives reached Budget figures vs utilisation | |
| Sustainability | The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable. | Levels of capabilities gained by the intended beneficiaries to continue their operations beyond the life of the project Has the project focused on the areas of financial and environmental sustainability | Annual Reports Presentations | Primary and Secondary Site Visits Interviews | No. of entrepreneurs with scalable business models No. of enterprises with sustainable value chains No. of Enterprises focusing on use of natural fibres/raw materials/natural dyes | Quantitative and Qualitative |
| Impact | Verifiable long-term effects produced by the intervention, intended or unintended, direct or indirect on the female segment of the target population. | Compared to the initial baseline, has the project being able to achieved intended outcomes How it has impacted women beneficiaries | Annual Reports M&E documents Presentations Site Visits Interviews | Primary and Secondary Site Visits Interviews | No. of women entrepreneurs targeted No. of women collectives strengthened | Quantitative and Qualitative |

Annex 2: Monitoring Plan

| Monitoring Activity | Purpose | Frequency | Expected Action | Partners (if joint) |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Track results progress | The project progress data against the results indicators in the RRF will be collected and analysed to assess the progress of the project in achieving the agreed outputs. | Quarterly | Slower than expected progress shall be addressed by project management. | To be directly done UNDP |
| Monitor and Manage Risk | The project will identify specific risks that may threaten achievement of intended results. Identify and monitor risk management actions using a risk log. This includes monitoring measures and plans required as per UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards. Audits will be conducted in accordance with UNDP's audit policy to manage financial risk. | Quarterly | Risks are identified by the project management and actions will be taken to manage risk. The risk log will be actively maintained to keep track of identified risks and actions taken. | UNDP |
| Learn | The project will regularly capture knowledge, good practices and lessons as well as actively source from other projects and partners and integrated back into the project. | Annually | Relevant lessons will be captured by the project team to inform management decisions. | UNDP |
| Annual Project Quality Assurance | The quality of the project will be assessed against UNDP's quality standards to identify project strengths and weaknesses and to inform management decision making to improve the project. | Annually | Areas of strength and weakness will be reviewed by the project management to inform decisions and improve project performance. | UNDP |
| Review and Make Course Corrections | The project will undertake internal review of data and evidence from all monitoring actions to inform decision making. | Annually | Performance data, risks, lessons and quality will be discussed by the Project Steering Committee to make course corrections. | Exim Bank, State Govts |
| Project Report | A progress report will be presented to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and key stakeholders, consisting of progress data showing the results achieved against pre-defined annual targets at the output level, the annual project quality rating summary, an updated risk log with mitigation measures, and any evaluation or review reports prepared over the period. | Annually, and at the end of the project (final report) | | UNDP |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Project Review (PSC) | <p>The project's governance mechanism (i.e. PSC) will hold regular project reviews to assess the performance of the project and review the Multi-Year Work Plan to ensure realistic budgeting over the life of the project. In the project's final year, the PSC will hold an end-of project review to capture lessons learned and discuss opportunities for scaling up and to socialize project results and lessons learned with relevant audiences.</p> | <p>Once in six months</p> | <p>Any quality concerns or slower than expected progress would be discussed by the PSC and management actions will be agreed to address the issues identified.</p> | <p>Exim Bank and State Govts</p> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Annex 3: Evaluation Plan

| Evaluation Title | Partners (if joint) | Related Strategic Plan Output | UNDAF/CPD Outcome | Planned Completion Date | Key Evaluation Stakeholders |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mid-Term Review | Exim Bank | Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded. | By 2022, institutions are strengthened to progressively deliver universal access to basic services, employment, and sustainable livelihoods to the poor and excluded, in rural and urban areas. | May 2019 | Exim Bank |
| Terminal Evaluation | Exim Bank | | | October 2020 | Exim Bank |

Annex 4: Rating Scales

| Ratings of Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution | Sustainability Ratings | Relevance Ratings | Impact Ratings |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>6: Highly Satisfactory (HS): no shortcomings</p> <p>5: Satisfactory (S): minor Shortcomings</p> <p>4: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)</p> <p>3. Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): significant shortcomings</p> <p>2. Unsatisfactory (U): major problems</p> <p>1. Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe problems</p> | <p>4. Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability</p> <p>3. Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks</p> <p>2. Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant Risks</p> <p>1. Unlikely (U): severe risks</p> | <p>2. Relevant (R)</p> <p>1.. Not relevant (NR)</p> | <p>3. Significant (S)</p> <p>2. Minimal (M)</p> <p>1. Negligible (N)</p> |

Annex 5: List of Partners and collaboration entered into for Project Implementation

| Partners | Kind of Collaboration |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| South Asia Bamboo Foundation | Training on Bamboo crafts |
| NERCOM | Training on Ginger and Pineapple processing |
| Grameen Sahara | Training on Eri and Jute cultivation |
| Mushroom Development Foundation | Training on Mushroom Cultivation |
| Mizoram Organic Mission, Govt of Mizoram and Mission Organic Value Chain Development in Assam (MOVCD) | Identification of entrepreneurs for Exposure visits |
| <p>List of Agencies (as panellists):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) • Department of Agriculture and Horticulture, Government of Assam • Directorate of Handloom and Textiles, Government of Assam • IMCS Interstate (Marketing Co-operational Services) Agribusiness in Mizoram Farmer's Implementing Agency, Khatla, Aizawl • Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) • Mission Organic Value Chain Development in Assam (MOVCD) • Assam Government Marketing Corporation Limited • Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Assam • Plant Quarantine Station, Guwahati, Assam • Airport Authority of India – North Eastern Region • Exim Bank • Research and Information System for Developing Countries, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India • Customs Division, Guwahati | 2 Days Export Promotion Orientation Workshop for Agencies and Entrepreneurs in Assam and Mizoram |
| SeSTA and South Asia Bamboo Foundation | Creation of UNDP-EXIM Bank Network of Social Entrepreneurs |
| Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) in collaboration with Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India | North East MSME Summit for SC/ST Entrepreneurs |
| All India Management Association (AIMA) | 9th National MSME Convention |

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ava Creations | Providing technical assistance to women farmers in Eri value chain in Rani |
| In collaboration with MSME Development Institute, Govt Of India, Min of MSME and India Exim Bank | Virtual interactive Q&A session disseminating information on various schemes and policies in response to COVID |
| Pabhoi Greens | Providing training to women farmers and aspiring agri-preneurs in organic farming, Assam |
| <p>List of partners/agencies as panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Eastern Council (NEC) • UNCTAD-EMPRETEC Mission Assam • India EXIM Bank • NEDFi • Anu Mandal, AVA Creations • Mr. Laldiniana, King Industries • Mr. Rahul Barkataky, General Partner, Next Impact LLP • Mr. Mark Laldusaka, One Organic • Mr. K. Kathi Chishi, Secretary & MD, Toka MPCs Limited; Coordinator, Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce Industries (DICCI)- North East, and President, Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce Industries (DICCI)- Nagaland Chapter • Ms. Neelam Chhiber, Co-founder and Managing Trustee, Industree Foundation & Co-founder and Managing Director, Mother Earth | A webinar on the 'Impact of COVID 19 in MSME Sector in North East India: Challenges and Opportunities' |
| In collaboration with CII | Online Buyer-Seller Meet through the <i>Hastakari</i> initiative |
| Global Synergizers | 2- day Buyer-Seller Meet in Guwahati |

List of local Government Agencies engaged with-

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)
- Department of Agriculture and Horticulture, Government of Assam
- Directorate of Handloom and Textiles, Government of Assam
- IMCS Interstate (Marketing Co-operational Services) Agribusiness in Mizoram Farmer's Implementing Agency, Khatla, Aizawl
- Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC)
- Mission Organic Value Chain Development in Assam (MOVCD)
- Assam Government Marketing Corporation Limited
- Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Assam
- Plant Quarantine Station, Guwahati, Assam
- Airport Authority of India – North Eastern Region
- Exim Bank
- Research and Information System for Developing Countries, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

- Customs Division, Guwahati

List of Entrepreneurs/ Produce Organization/ NGOs/Think Tanks engaged with-

- Global Entrade
- Mushroom Development Foundation (MDF)
- Rural Technology Centre, IIT Guwahati
- Arinova Exim Private Limited
- Udyog Vikash Kendra, Assam
- M/s. R.G. Global Trading Company
- Abad Agro Producer Company Limited
- Green Cover Overseas Pvt. Ltd.,
- North East Organics
- Heritage Mizoram
- Hnam Chhantu Pawl, Upper Republic Veng, Aizawl, Mizoram
- King Marketing
- National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP)

Engagement with the following Central Government Agencies

- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) and Development Commissioner
- Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)
- National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC)
- National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC)
- Office of Development Commissioner – MSME
- Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI)

Annex 6: Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: Rahul Barkatky

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): NA

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.



Signed at Mumbai on 9th March 2021

Annex 7: Itinerary

| Date | Itinerary |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 09/03/21 | Mumbai to Guwahati |
| 10/03/21-14/03/21 | Guwahati |
| 15/03/21 | Guwahati-Tezpur |
| 16/03/21 | Tezpur – Bishwanath |
| 17/03/21 | Bishwanath-Guwahati |
| 20/03/21 | Guwahati-Nalbari-Guwahati |
| 25/03/21 | Guwahati-Mumbai |

Annex 8: ToR

Attached

Signatures:



Mallika Adhikari

Mr. John Borgoyary, Regional Head, NER,
UNDP, India

Mallika Adhikari, MSME Specialist