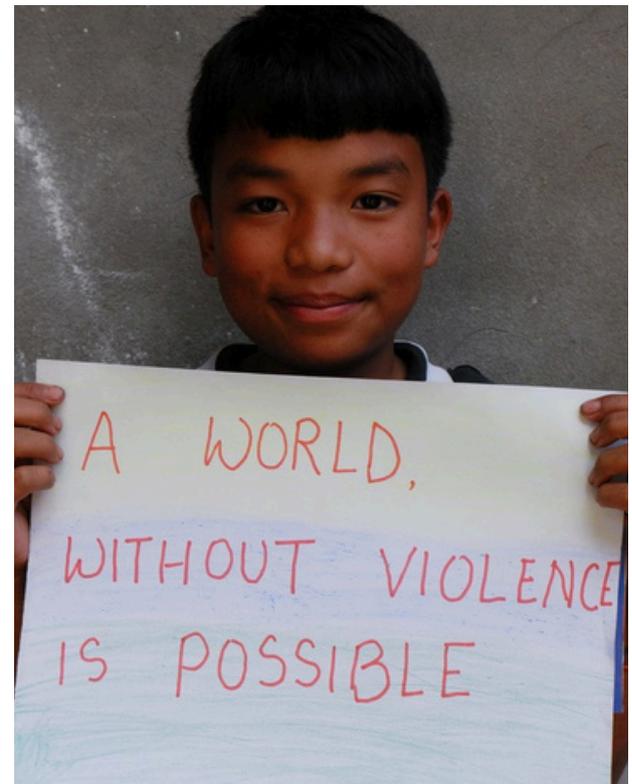
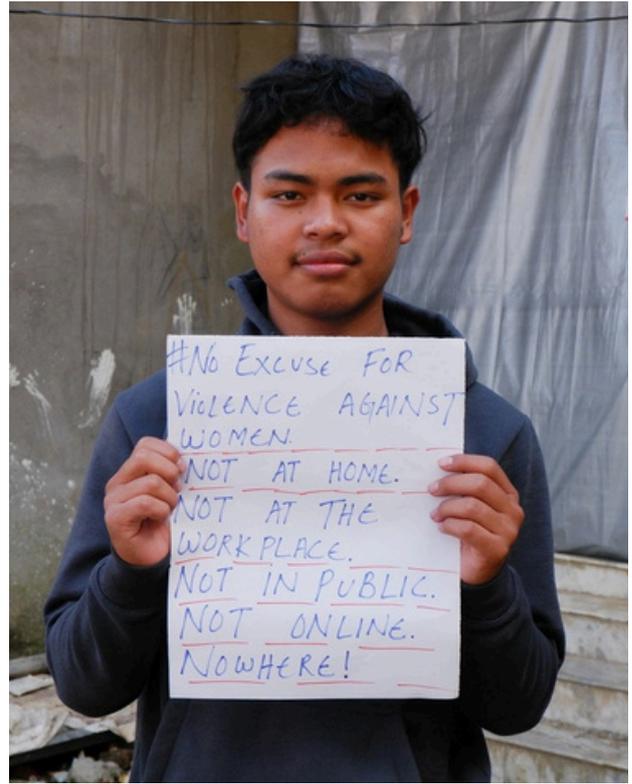




# Annual Report 2023-2024



Above: Children participate in 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Cover page: A prayer for peace at a relief camp in Manipur.

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## VISION

*An equitable society,  
with peaceful coexistence,  
where individuals thrive.*



## MISSION

*To work with different ethnic communities in Manipur,  
primarily in the hill districts of Chandel and Tengnoupal.*

*To foster child rights, gender equity, and psychosocial  
wellbeing.*

*To work with communities at the grassroots—by way of  
children clubs, women self-support groups, and youth  
cohorts—as well as stakeholders at levels ranging from the  
Village-level Child Protection Committees to the district  
authorities.*

# About Us

Centre for Women and Girls (CWG), estd. 2006, is a non-profit organization working in Manipur's southern hill districts of Chandel and Tengnoupal, which also border Myanmar.

We are staffed by people from different Kuki and Naga ethnic communities hailing from the hills.

Our work helps foster child rights consciousness, gender equity, and psychosocial wellbeing.

**We engage with different segments of the population—children, youth, and elders.**

**Striving to address short-term issues while also pursuing long-term change, we try taking a holistic approach to problems using a systems thinking lens.**



CWG team during a 5-day gender workshop with Nandini Rao.

## 2023-24: A Most Difficult Year

On 3 May 2023, as ethnic conflict erupted in Manipur, several of our team members had been attending training in the state capital. They fled to seek safety in the nearest security camp, where they were marooned for days on end with little food.

Escorted eventually by a military convoy to the southern foothills—which we call home and where our office is located—they returned sick.

Meanwhile, a demographic separation had ensued. The foothills, where both the warring communities have long resided, were designated as ‘buffer zones.’ Military bunkers came up, and a curfew was imposed.

We soon got to work. Food rations for IDPs in makeshift relief camps were arranged with severe logistical difficulties as the Asian Highway-1, our main supply route, was blockaded.

A medical camp was arranged in the border town of Moreh that was hit by violence and arson; and a consignment of medicines

was procured for the district’s Chief Medical Officer amidst a shortage.

Blankets, warm clothing, and sanitary pads were distributed at camps, as was children’s play material. Our relief effort reached over 16,000 individuals.

Then, on a September morning, the foothills of Pallel, where our office and a number of our staff members’ houses are located, came under a violent attack. Widespread arson was prevented, but at least two lives were lost.

For safety, we relocated our office 15 km south to Chandel. And some of our team members also relocated here, renting houses.

**The year for our team was one of financial hardships and anxieties, but also perseverance.**

**We drew strength from the purpose we found in our work.**

In time we resumed some regular activities: children club meetings, women group meetings, and youth workshops.

When our Kuki colleagues could not access their project villages as access routes weren't safe, their Naga colleagues stepped in. Our mixed-ethnic team allowed reallocation of responsibilities.

In the coming two years, we have planned to particularly focus on building our capacities to begin interventions in the field of mental health—an area of growing urgency for both our team as well as the communities we are a part of.

“

**My colleagues and I narrowly escaped a mob that chased us for about a kilometre. But our relief work helped me manage my immediate anger, emotional turmoil, and anxiety—gradually bringing me back to some normalcy.**

**Then my wife delivered a baby girl, I caught dengue, and I had financial expenses. I felt hopeless, but my organization stepped in for me—my team members are my true friends.**

**A month after the delivery, my village was attacked, forcing me to abandon it. Even as life became extremely difficult, I got together with my team and decided not to stop our work.**

**The children club I used to meet weekly for a joyful Conscious Citizenry program was displaced. I followed the children to their relief camps. Resuming these meetings brought me happiness, seeing children's smiles and laughter. We shared our difficulties. Their resilience inspired me, helping me find strength amid chaos. I've learnt that in the darkness, there's always a glimmer of light.**

— Seitinthang Haokip, Field Facilitator at CWG

## **I. Child Rights**

- Children Clubs
- Community Learning Spaces:  
Learning Amid Conflict
- Working with Adults:  
Capacity Building + Parenting Workshops

## Children clubs

Once conflict erupted in early May, several children who were part of our village-level clubs in the foothills were displaced and had to move deeper into the hills.

While we continued conducting meetings in unaffected villages, we also followed our displaced children to conduct weekly meetings at their new locations in the hills, including 3 relief camps.

Such meetings followed the Conscious Citizenry module wherein children explored aspects of their personalities, and appreciated the uniqueness and diversity among themselves.

**Over 125 children club meetings covered 200 children in the 9-14 age group.**



A children club meeting at a relief camp in Tengenoupal district.



Children at Leipung Tampak make a promise tree during a session on our relationship with the environment.

Children used imaginary scenarios they were presented with to come up with creative responses.

Activities involved problem-solving which helped them understand the importance of awareness (What is this problem? Why is it so? Who is affected by it?) and combining perspectives.

They learnt about teamwork, equitable distribution (after fun filled treasure hunts), the significance of listening well, and not shying away from apologies.

They engaged in activities that involved sharing past incidents that made them feel sad and then sharing how it felt to share.

They recognised the urge to help others as a superpower.



A relief camp treasure hunt leads to a discussion on how to share the finds equally.

A workshop was also conducted to formulate demands for a future manifesto for submission to village level authorities.

Children articulated their wishes with respect to their families, schools and communities: their desire for unbroken and financially secure families, functional schools, affordable education with kind teachers, an end to corporal punishment, libraries and buses, more trees in their environment, sanitation, healthcare facilities closer home, and organic farming practices.

These demands will be further refined and taken to the village authorities in the coming year.



A child digs into a book issued during his club meeting.

# Community Learning Spaces - Learning amidst Conflict

Amidst curfews and demographic separations, many children in the foothills found their schools either shut for several months or unsafe to access.

Overseen by youth, these spaces included younger kids learning by way of reading, writing, arithmetic and art.

This disruption risked imposing losses in foundational learning. After consultations with district-level stakeholders, CWG initiated Community Learning Spaces at 6 locations, including 4 relief camps.

**Over 200 Community Learning Sessions for more than 200 children were conducted.**



A displaced youth whose village was burnt down oversees a Community Learning Space at a relief camp in Tengnoupal district.



Above and below: An art session at a relief camp in Tengnoupal district.





A displaced youth who found purpose in leading a Community Learning Space and grew in confidence.

For the youth, age 15 and above, who led these Community Learning Spaces, it was “an opportunity to teach but also learn something from the children.” A small honorarium helped them meet family needs.

In addition, 126 special coaching sessions were held by math and science teachers for 129 children studying in classes IX and X, with 80% of the syllabus being covered. This addressed the fatalist thinking among children worried about school reopening and careers. While many schools eventually reopened, some children had to relocate to continue schooling.

School fee was supported for over 50 children, including 33 girls, who were identified as most vulnerable.

“

**Coaching classes were a saving grace as I was traumatized and filled with fears... But these classes provided us with a feeling of normalness about the situation. We could meet up, talk and have fun in the meantime.**

— A girl who attended special coaching classes

**Over 125 special coaching classes for more than 125 class IX and X students were held.**

# Working with Adults

## Capacity Building on Child Protection Mechanisms

Of 3 sessions, one was used to discuss child rights issues at the village-level and children's participation in village-level decision-making.

The tendency of village authorities to discourage cases of violation of child rights moving beyond their village courts was also addressed.

The other two sessions covered laws and institutions pertaining to child protection including the POCSO Act, the Child Welfare Committees, observation homes and adoption centers.

The heightened risk of child trafficking—amid promises of education and jobs—was also highlighted in the context of the ongoing ethnic conflict.

**While villages, on their own initiative, have conducted programs to motivate youth towards a 'morally accepted life in society', we tried to highlight the absence of a rights-based perspective and the lack of written village-level child protections policies.**

A lawyer leads a session on institution of child protection mechanisms.





Above and below: Participants in a discussion during a parenting workshop.

A parenting workshop, apart from covering the four parenting styles, emphasized children's needs for love and compassion. The need to care for one's own mental health as well as that of the child was discussed, as was the impact of parental behavior upon a child's self-esteem.

Parents reflected on the harms of shouting and corporal punishment, how their anger feeds into their children's anger, and the benefits of continual affirmation and encouragement.



## **II. Gender Equity**

- Gender Sensitization Workshops
- Outreach for Victims/Survivors
- The Stars: All-Girl Ultimate Club

# Gender Sensitization

3 inclusivity workshops for youth were conducted using Kamla Bhasin's book *Rainbow Boys and Rainbow Girls*.

Participants reflected on similarities and differences amongst them, and the need to value such diversity.

They discussed gender-stereotypical comments they commonly hear in their communities, and different societal expectations from boys and girls.

2 more storytelling workshops used a short story, one of the *Feminist Fables* by Suniti Namjoshi, to again discuss societal expectations from women, and parse out differences between three scenarios encountered by the story's woman protagonist: a world where men subjugate women; a world with benevolent men who treat women kindly; and a world with women who have agency and are not dependent on male benevolence.



A storytelling workshop using Suniti Namjoshi's *Feminist Fables*.

“

**We should follow our dreams even if it is disapproved by people around us. We shouldn't discriminate against others based on the way they act or appear.**

— A youth participant

# Outreach for Victims/Survivors

CWG extends comprehensive legal aid to victims/survivors of gender based violence. It is the state-appointed Service Provider under the PWDV Act 2005.

In 2023, CWG continued to administer the Chandel district's One Stop Centre until December, when government policy for it being administered by the government itself was implemented; even so, since January 2024 CWG continues to support this OSC on ground.

In September 2023, CWG undertook the responsibility of administering the Tengenoupal district's One Stop Centre.

As the conflict overshadowed the pursuit of gender equity within ethnic communities—which were overwhelmed by the urgent needs for food, shelter, safety, and livelihoods—the number of victims/survivors wishing to seek judicial recourse dropped.

Our existing clients with pending cases continued to be supported in addition to the 4 new clients we took on during 2023-24.

## **Comprehensive assistance for GBV**

### **victims/survivors:**

- **rescue**
- **temporary shelter**
- **legal counseling**
- **medical aid**
- **lawyer support**
- **therapeutic counseling**
- **accompanied visits to police stations and courts**
- **documentation for interim compensation**
- **follow-ups**

## SELF SUPPORT GROUPS

For 10 village-level women Self Support Groups—spaces created in previous years for initiating conversations on gender—we decided to take up the issue of child marriages. We discussed the consequences of criminalizing such marriages (broken families, financial distress, and shaming the young), including the deleterious health impacts (pregnant teens skipping antenatal appointments, and unsafe home births and abortions).

The goal was to appreciate the alternative: gender sensitization for parents, age-appropriate sexuality education, free and quality education, educational infrastructure, free transport, and job opportunities for women closer home.

Over the course of our meetings, women began bringing along their daughters, finding discussions pertinent to them as well.



A Self Support Group meeting at Chandonpokpi.

# The Stars: An All-Girl Ultimate Club



After introducing Ultimate to our villages in 2022 with a month-long visit by an Assamese coach, we held another camp in March-April 2023 with 2 players from the Belgian club *Flying Rabbits*. After the *Rabbits* left, we hoped to begin conducting frequent practice sessions.

Unfortunately, a month later, ethnic conflict erupted. Amidst curfews and militarisation, several players were displaced.

In Nov 2023, with curfew lifted, we regrouped with the players to explore initiating a club with weekly practice sessions. The environment around us was one of parochialism, misinformation, militarization, and fear.

The girls, from different ethnicities, were looking for a way to come together.



A match to close the practice session.

To us, Ultimate’s potential—a non-refereed sport, played in mixed-ethnic teams, with in-built dispute resolution mechanisms that prioritized values of mutual respect and kindness—seemed just ripe for the moment.

The sessions, led by one of our players who attended a Coach-in-Training program at Auroville, became a joyful space for girls to come together, even as many displaced Kuki players couldn’t attend practice, and neither could our lone Meitei player. But the players who could and did join the club formulated rules to abide by in a workshop facilitated by us. They named themselves: The Stars.



The weekly sessions, 20 in all during 2023-24, averaging 17 players per session, began with a warm-up, followed by a series of drills, a couple of matches, and finally a spirit circle.

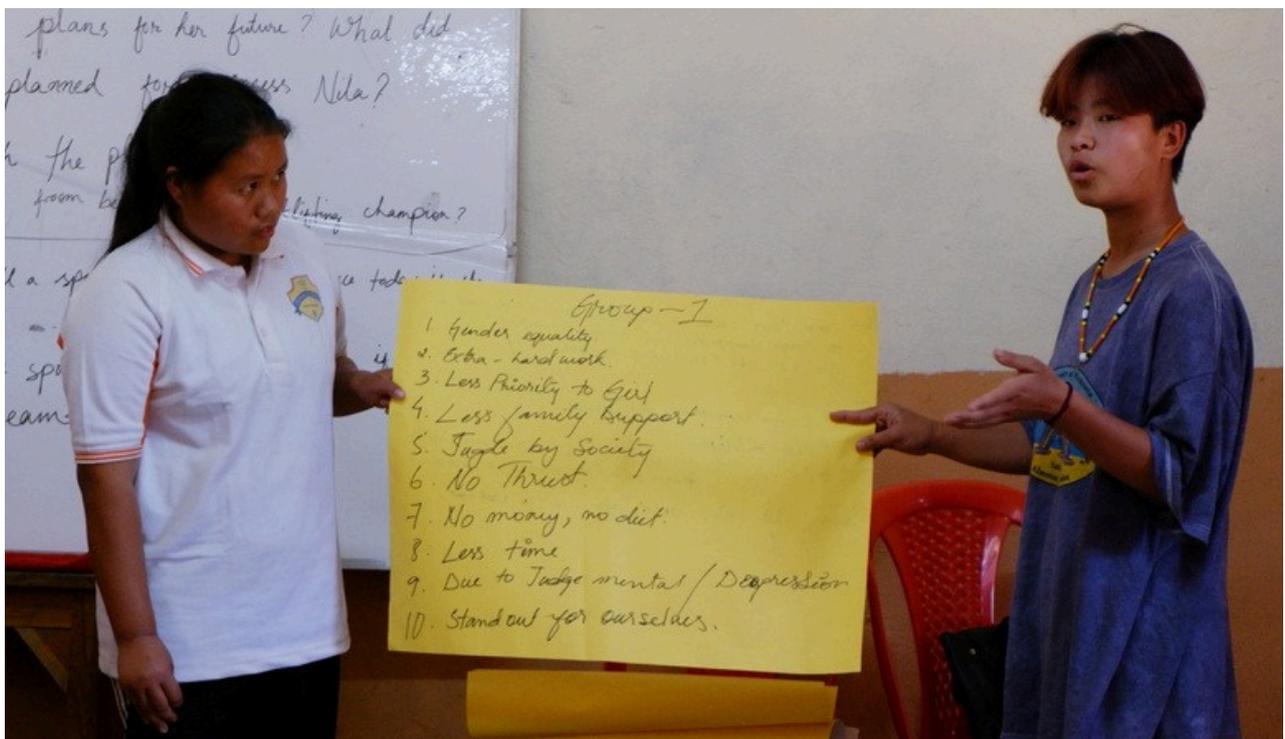


**Every practice session ends with the spirit circle.**

**Players express how they felt about the day’s play, talk about what they liked, and apologize for any missteps—in essence, this spirit circle underlines the values that The Stars live by.**



L - Saneidam, a Coach-in-Training leads the spirit circle; R - a player during a drill.



Players lay out challenges faced by girls and women who pursue their dreams of playing a sport, during an indoor workshop on International Women’s Day. The workshop was conducted using a picture book *The Weightlifting Princess*. Hurdles faced by contemporary women sportspersons like the pay gap and media focus on looks and relationships instead of sporting abilities were also highlighted. The session was rounded off with distribution of jerseys with names for the more regular players.

### **III. Psychosocial Wellbeing**

- Emergency Relief
- Medical Relief
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Livelihoods



A man feeds his chickens amidst his destroyed homestead.



Youth take stock of burnt vehicles.

# Emergency Relief

The displaced fled with nothing but clothes on their backs, often as they saw their villages burning. Whether sheltering in camps, or being hosted by their kin in neighboring safer villages, distress followed them.

With supplies unable to reach them on account of a highway blockade, prices of essentials soared even as all economic activity came to a halt.

CWG undertook intensive emergency relief work that entailed procuring supplies with much difficulty. Relief material was taken to different camps and villages in several rounds.

**Our relief efforts reached over 16,000 individuals.**



Distribution of food rations at a village that hosts IDPs from several other villages. IDPs fled either in the face of attacks on their villages or fearing their imminence.



Villagers await distribution of food rations.

**Relief material distributed by CWG included food rations that needed regular replenishing, medicines, sanitary pads, as well as stationery and play material for children.**



Relief distribution in the foothills of Pallel before it was attacked on 8 September.



Clockwise from top: Preparing for an uphill drive; supplementing rations at Tenguoupal; relief distribution in the foothills; relief distribution at a remote hill village; Naga women in a buffer zone collecting rations (price rise affected all, not just the warring communities).





Above and below: Distribution of blankets & warm clothing at relief camps in the hills before the onset of winter.



# Medical Outreach

After months of conflict, as demographic separations became entrenched, a health emergency arose in the face of a highway blockade that cut off the main supply route for the southern district of Tengenoupal.

As medicine supplies ran low, CWG arranged medicines and a health camp.



A handover of a consignment of medicines, procured with great logistical difficulty, to Tengenoupal's Chief Medical Officer.



Health camp at the remote border town of Moreh, which was struck by violence very early on.

**Over 3500 persons accessed medical aid, and the Tengenoupal One Stop Centre addressed shelter and medical needs for 6 pregnancies.**

# Emotional Wellbeing

The ethnic conflict affected all, not just the displaced who witnessed their villages set aflame as they fled, but also ‘neutral’ communities who had to contend with militarization, curfews, citizen vigilantism, and fear.

3 counseling sessions with adults were used to talk about facing fears, overcoming tragedies, and managing anger at both the individual and societal levels.

Ethnic polarization was discussed, and the wholesome values of kindness and empathy encouraged. The scope for dialogue in conflict was also appreciated.

2 meetings with Village-Level Child Protection Committees were used to discuss the conflict’s disruptive effects on children, with increased risks of child trafficking and substance abuse.



A meeting at Sajik Tampak to discuss protection of human rights amidst militarization and conflict.



Above and below: A roundtable with youth to talk about their experiences of the conflict.



Two roundtables with youth, apart from being platforms for them to express their feelings and struggles, were an opportunity for us to urge restraint on social media in this charged atmosphere.

**Youth's lives upended: academic institutions shut, career plans halted, restricted movement, militarization, and internet bans.**

# Livelihoods

Livelihood support was extended to 44 individuals.

A group of IDPs who lost their village to arson reached out saying farming was the only way they could sustain themselves.

We extended an interest-free loan to their farmers' club, which did well, helping them not just earn but also get through their days in the aftermath of trauma.

A few villages were supported by way of seeds.



Distribution of seeds at Phalbung



IDPs, their village lost to arson, were supported with interest-free loan to take up farming.

- No complaints were reported to CWG's Internal Committee constituted under POSH Act, 2013 during the reporting period.

# Donors





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