



# Upokpi Khunou

## Building Safety, Securing Futures

As climate change accelerates, disasters strike with greater frequency and intensity, bringing devastation to vulnerable communities. In Upokpi Khunou, Manipur, floods have become an all-too-familiar nightmare. With each deluge, families flee to temporary relief centres, only to return to ruined homes, lost livestock, and empty fields. Rebuilding becomes impossible.

But the people of Upokpi Khunou refused to remain victims of nature's wrath. A local youth group, alongside three Self-Help Groups, took action. Recognizing the urgency, they reached out to local authorities for support and secured 15 tarpaulins. LOCAL members stepped in as well, providing additional tarpaulins and mats, facilitating the construction of temporary relief shelters. However, the community quickly realised that temporary solutions were not enough. **They needed resilience, not just relief.**

With Saarathi support, they embarked on a journey, constructing **disaster-resilient shelters**. Today, three strategically located community shelters stand strong, ready to protect **101 families from 10 villages**.

These structures safeguard not only people but also their livestock, ensuring financial stability in the aftermath.

Yet, what makes this initiative truly remarkable is the **community's ingenuity**. The materials used - iron rods and GI sheets - are considered communal assets, not just static infrastructure. In flood-free months, the materials are rented out, generating a fund that fuels further community initiatives.

The fund itself is managed by the women of the community, who have been recognised for their efficiency and reliability.

The same materials have been used to construct a 'mandop,' a crucial structure for the 14-day death ritual in Meitei-Hindu tradition.

Previously, families were forced to borrow expensive materials from neighboring villages, straining their finances in times of grief. Now, they can honor their loved ones with dignity.

## Moral of the story?

The story of Upokpi Khunou is a powerful reminder that sustainable solutions do not come from the outside - they are forged by the communities, based on their lived experiences and unyielding determination to build a safer future.

