

# Market analysis and startup ecosystem in Ukhrul, Manipur

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## ABSTRACT

*The startup ecosystem in Ukhrul, Manipur, is emerging with significant potential, particularly in agriculture, floriculture, and handicrafts. Initiatives like the Ukhrul Startup Challenge and North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) support entrepreneurship, while startups such as Hill Wild and STEP North-East highlight local innovation. Hill Wild promotes sustainable farming and local products, whereas STEP North-East enhances rural education. Challenges include limited infrastructure, finance, and skilled manpower. Recommendations for growth include developing a supportive entrepreneurship ecosystem, fostering innovation, building local talent, promoting tourism, and supporting local industries. Addressing these areas can significantly enhance Ukhrul's economic development and entrepreneurial landscape.*

## MARKET ANALYSIS AND STARTUP ECOSYSTEM IN UKHRUL, MANIPUR

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### Introduction:

Ukhrul is a district in the state of Manipur in northeastern India. It is inhabited by various indigenous communities such as Tangkhul Nagas, Mao Nagas, and Kukis. The district is known for its scenic beauty and cultural diversity, and is home to the famous Shirui Lily and the Khanghui Cave. When it comes to the startup ecosystem and market analysis in Ukhrul, there are several factors to be considered.

**Economic background** - In terms of its economy generation, Ukhrul is an agricultural district, with a focus on horticulture and floriculture. The district produces a variety of crops such as potatoes, peas, beans, and oranges, and is known for its high-quality ginger and king chili. Apart from agriculture, Ukhrul also has a small-scale manufacturing sector, which includes the production of handloom and handicrafts. The district is known for its intricate traditional shawls and textiles, as well as for its bamboo and cane products.

The district has a relatively small urban population, with Ukhrul town being the only significant urban center. The town has a few small markets and shops, catering primarily to the local population. However, with the increasing demand for Ukhrul's agricultural and handicraft products, there is potential for growth in the local economy.

Overall, Ukhrul has great potential for growth in the agricultural, floricultural, and handicraft sectors. However, in order to realize this potential, the district will need to invest in infrastructure development and create a more conducive environment for businesses to operate.

The start-up ecosystem in Ukhrul is still in its budding stage. However, there are a few initiatives that have been taken to promote entrepreneurship and support start-ups in the district.

One such initiative is the Ukhrul Startup Challenge, which was launched by the Ukhrul District Administration in 2019. The challenge aims to identify and nurture innovative ideas and start-ups in the district, and provides mentorship, training, and funding to the winners. The challenge has received a good response from the local community, and has helped to create awareness about entrepreneurship in the district.

Another initiative is the establishment of the North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) in Ukhrul, which provides support to rural entrepreneurs and promotes rural livelihoods. The project provides financial assistance, training, and market linkages to entrepreneurs in the district, with a focus on women and youth.

However, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed to promote a thriving start-up ecosystem in Ukhrul. These include the lack of infrastructure, limited access to finance, and a shortage of skilled manpower. Addressing these challenges will require sustained efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society organizations to create an enabling environment for start-ups to grow and flourish in the district.

## **COMPANY ANALYSIS OF SOME STARTUPS IN UKHRUL**

### **1. Hill Wild:**



#### **Company overview :**

Hillwild is a vibrant startup that's picking up a lot of pace in Ukhrul, founded by Leiyolan Vashum and Zeinorin Stephen. Aimed at building healthier lifestyles and community through food, targeting fitness enthusiasts and youth who look forward to a healthier living. Hill Wild sells to retail stores and creates custom orders for events and weddings. But their biggest sales are still at festivals, where customers learn the ethos behind the product. Their goal is to promote natural and homemade food with 100% organic ingredients.

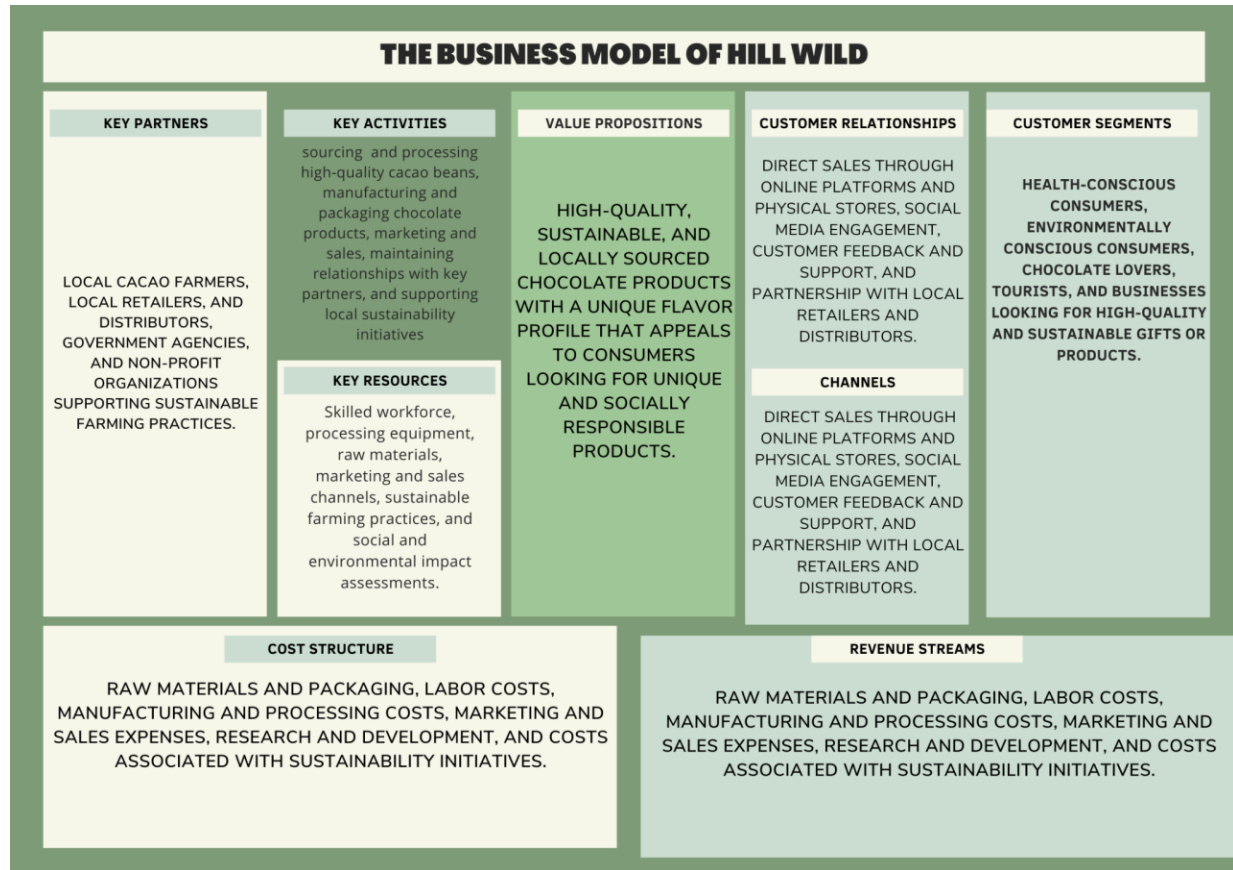
They began their journey with chocolates infused with locally found nuts and fruits which are indigenous to the region. They faced a lot of challenges as a home grown brand in the remote corner of the country. With constant struggle they managed to grow their brand not only for chocolates but venturing into spices and dried fruits. Because of their efforts and hardwork local commodities like wine, tea, blankets, and woven fabric enterprises have all sprung up in small villages.

**Vision :** To truly uplift farmers, artisans by promoting sustainable farming practices and supporting the local community and transform Ukhrul and make Hill Wild a global brand. Hill Wild now works with 200 farmers not only for chocolates but also for venturing into spice and dried foods. The company's commitment to sustainability extends beyond its farming practices. Hill Wild Chocolate also uses eco-friendly packaging materials and supports local initiatives to reduce waste and promote recycling.

Hill Wild Chocolate has received several accolades for its products, including the Best Chocolate Award at the North East Food Awards in 2019. The company has also been featured in various publications and has gained a strong following among chocolate lovers in India and beyond.

Overall, Hill Wild Chocolate is a great example of a start-up that combines entrepreneurship with social and environmental responsibility, creating a sustainable and delicious product that supports local communities.

#### **Business model of Hill Wild:**



**SWOT ANALYSIS:**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Award-winning products, which provide recognition for the quality and uniqueness of Hill Wild Chocolate's offerings.	Limited distribution channels compared to larger and more established chocolate brands.	Increasing demand for unique and sustainably sourced products among consumers.	Intense competition from larger and established chocolate brands, which may have greater resources for marketing, distribution, and R&D.

Strong commitment to social and environmental responsibility, which appeals to consumers who are increasingly conscious of these issues.	Higher price point may limit the accessibility of products to some consumers	Growing interest in Indian artisanal food products and unique regional flavors, which can give Hill Wild Chocolate a competitive edge.	Possible supply chain disruptions due to weather or other factors, which may affect the availability of locally sourced ingredients.
Unique and high-quality product offerings with a focus on locally sourced and sustainable ingredients.	Lack of skilled labor and advanced machinery	Opportunity to expand distribution channels through partnerships with online retailers, boutique shops, and hotels.	Economic downturns or political instability in the region, which may impact the companies operations and profitability.
Offers unique, natural and handmade products made from locally sourced ingredients such as honey, bamboo, and herbs. This gives the company a competitive edge over other businesses that offer generic products.	Lack of capital, investors, and proper transportation facilities.	Partnership opportunities with other socially responsible brands and organizations.	Fluctuating commodity prices, which may impact production costs and ultimately the price point of Hill Wild Chocolate's products.
Well-known brand in the region, with a loyal customer base. This	Dependence on local farmers for sourcing ingredients may lead to supply chain	Potential to expand their distribution channels, including online marketplaces and	Changes in consumer preferences and trends, which may impact demands for Hill Wild
gives the company an advantage in marketing and sales efforts.	disruptions due to weather or other factors	innovative chocolate flavors	chocolates products.

**Competition Analysis:**

Let's take a look at Amul, which is one of the largest dairy cooperatives in India and also produces chocolate products.

**1. PRODUCT OFFERING:**

Amul produces a range of chocolate products, including bars, truffles, and gift boxes, as well as other dairy products. The company offers a wide variety of flavors and packaging options for its chocolate products.

**2. PRICE POINT:**

Amul's chocolate products are priced competitively and are often lower in price than premium chocolate brands.

**3. DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS:**

Amul has a strong distribution network and is available in over 40 countries worldwide. The company has a large number of retail stores and franchises, as well as an online store.

**4. MARKETING STRATEGY:**

Amul's marketing strategy focuses on its brand image as a trusted and affordable dairy producer. The company has a strong social media presence and also runs advertising campaigns across various mediums.

**5. SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:**

Amul has implemented various sustainability initiatives, including waste reduction, energy conservation, and promoting sustainable farming practices among its members. The company also supports social initiatives such as education and healthcare programs for farmers.

Compared to Amul, Hill Wild Chocolate's product offerings are focused exclusively on chocolate products, with a strong emphasis on sustainability and locally sourced ingredients. Hill Wild's chocolate products are priced higher than Amul's products and are positioned as a premium product. Hill Wild's distribution channels are primarily through their website and a few select retailers, whereas Amul has a much wider distribution network.

In terms of marketing strategy, Hill Wild Chocolate emphasizes its unique and socially responsible product offerings, while Amul focuses on its trusted and affordable brand image. Both companies have implemented sustainability initiatives, but Hill Wild's initiatives are more closely tied to their product offerings and sourcing practices.

Overall, while there are some similarities between Hill Wild Chocolate and Amul, Hill Wild's focus on sustainable and locally sourced ingredients and their premium positioning differentiate them from Amul's more affordable and widely distributed products.

**DRAWBACKS:**

Here are some potential drawbacks of Hill Wild Chocolate:

**1. Limited product line:**

Hill Wild Chocolate has a limited product line compared to larger chocolate brands, which may make it harder to attract a wider customer base and retain customers who may be looking for a greater variety of options.

**2. Limited distribution channels:**

Hill Wild Chocolate primarily sells its products through its website and a few select retailers, which may limit its reach and market share.

**3. Higher pricing point:**

Hill Wild Chocolate's products are priced higher than some other chocolate brands, which may make them less accessible to some consumers.

**4. Dependence on local suppliers:**

Hill Wild Chocolate sources its ingredients locally, which may lead to sourcing and supply chain challenges if there are issues with quality, availability, or price fluctuations.

**5. Limited resources and funding:**

Hill Wild Chocolate is a start-up company, which means it may have limited resources and funding compared to larger chocolate brands, which may limit its ability to expand and scale operations.

**Recommendations:****1. Invest in marketing:**

As a rising company, it is essential to reach out to potential customers and create brand awareness. Investing in marketing campaigns such as social media marketing, email marketing, and influencer marketing can help reach a

wider audience.

## **2. Focus on customer service:**

Providing exceptional customer service can help build a loyal customer base and create positive word-of-mouth marketing. Ensuring that customers are satisfied with their purchase and promptly resolving any issues can help build a positive reputation for the company.

## **3. Expand the product line:**

Offering a diverse range of products can help attract more customers and increase sales. Conducting market research to identify potential gaps in the market and developing products to fill those gaps can help the company stay ahead of its competitors.

## **4. Emphasize sustainability:**

Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the impact their purchases have on the environment. Highlighting the company's commitment to sustainability can help attract environmentally conscious consumers and create a positive image for the company.

## **5. Optimize the website for search engines:**

Search engine optimization (SEO) is an effective way to increase visibility and attract more traffic to the website. This can be achieved by using relevant keywords, creating quality content, and building backlinks from other authoritative websites.

Overall, the key to success for any rising company is to focus on customer satisfaction, invest in marketing, and continually improve its products and services.

## **2. STEP North-East:**



### **Company overview:**

STEP North-East is a non-profit company with its headquarters in Imphal, Manipur. In November 2020, STEP North-East was established to democratize the provision of quality education and ensure it is accessible to children residing in even the most remote villages in North-East India. Many children in the region miss out on quality education opportunities simply because they were born in rural areas and face numerous challenges and obstacles. To address this issue, STEP strives to provide quality education to rural children through its three different segments or verticals.

### **Vision/goals:**

The goal is to reduce the educational and opportunity disparity between urban and rural regions of North-East India by providing high-quality education to even the most remote villages.

### **Mission:**

The objectives are to enhance the skills of teachers so that they can train the future leaders of North-East India, to give students an opportunity to experience different environments and broaden their perspectives, and to offer mentorship and guidance to rural students and youth through STEP's extensive network of mentors.



Their programs focus on improving access to education through initiatives such as:

**1)Teachers training workshops:**

- Most teachers in rural villages lack training and are therefore not adequately prepared to provide high-quality education to students. It is crucial to train these teachers and provide them with essential skills to be more effective in their roles.
- At STEP, the belief is that being a good teacher is not solely determined by one's educational qualifications, but rather by their ability to connect with and inspire students.
- STEP addresses this issue by conducting teacher training workshops that focus on enhancing communication skills to improve teaching delivery, content, and student interaction.

**2)Exposure programs:**

- Children in rural villages have limited exposure to the world beyond their schools and communities, which can stifle their creativity, imagination, and ambition. School can become a mundane and unexciting routine without any sense of liberation or opportunity for a better life. To combat this issue, STEP offers exposure programs that allow students to interact and learn from people from various backgrounds and professions.
- These programs expose students to diverse perspectives about academics, careers, and life, opening a window of possibilities and inspiring them to strive for their full potential.

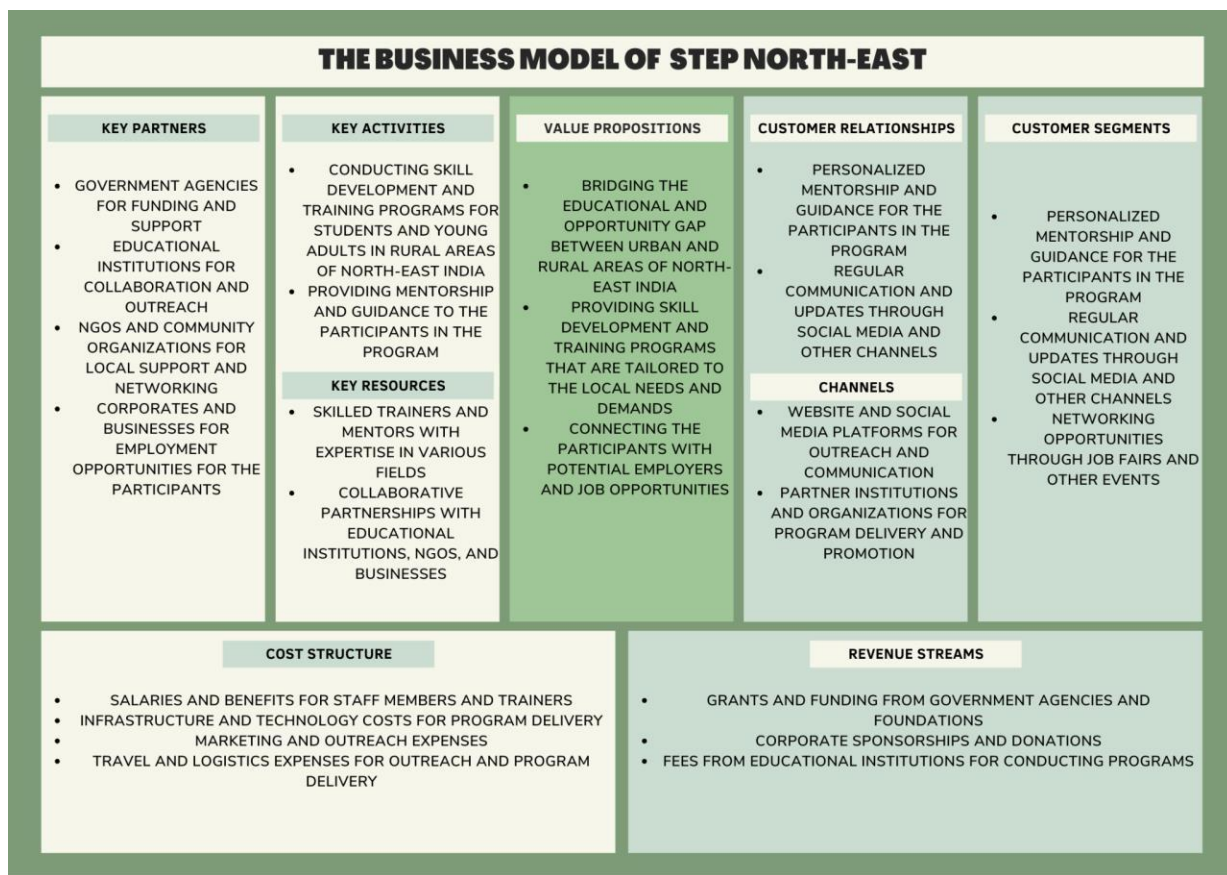
**3)Career counseling:**

A lack of adequate guidance and counseling in rural areas of North-East India has resulted in wasted talent among students. Schools are unable to afford career counselors, and teachers often lack sufficient knowledge and experience to guide students effectively. As a solution, STEP offers career counseling workshops for rural students, empowering them to make informed decisions about their future

**4)IMPACT:**

STEP North-East has made significant strides in the field of education services platform. At present, it is focused on serving three states in the North-East region and has established its presence in over 25 villages and towns, 35 or more schools, and has conducted more than 65 workshops. The organization has successfully trained more than 5000 students from the North-East states, which is a remarkable accomplishment within a short span of time

**Business model Of STEP North-East:**



**SWOT Analysis of STEP North-East:**

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Focus on bridging the educational and opportunity gap in rural areas of North-East India.	Limited resources and funding compared to larger organizations in the sector.	Growing demand for skill development and training programs in the region.	Competition from other organizations offering similar programs.
Tailored programs designed to meet the specific needs of the rural communities.	Dependence on government grants and funding for sustenance.	Opportunities for expansion to other parts of India with similar educational and opportunity gaps.	Political instability and conflict in the region that could disrupt program delivery.



Strong network and partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, and businesses.	Limited reach and impact due to the geographic constraints of the region.	Partnerships and collaborations with international organizations for knowledge exchange and funding opportunities.	Changes in government policies and funding priorities.
Personalized mentorship and guidance for the participants in the program.	Difficulty in finding qualified and skilled trainers for some specialized programs.	Increased investment in infrastructure and technology in the region.	Economic downturns and financial instability in the region that could affect funding and support for the organization.

**Competition analysis:**

Competition analysis of STEP North East with Career Point Ltd :

**1. Target Market:**

Both organizations target the education and skill development market in India, but Career Point primarily focuses on preparing students for competitive exams such as JEE, NEET, and Olympiads, while STEP North East focuses on bridging the education and opportunity gap in rural areas of North-East India.

**2. Programs Offered:**

Career Point offers a range of programs, including classroom coaching, online courses, and test series, while STEP North East offers skill development and training programs tailored to the specific needs of rural communities in North-East India.

**3. Revenue Streams:**

Career Point generates revenue primarily through student fees and coaching services, while STEP North East relies on government grants, corporate sponsorships, and donations.

**4. Brand Image:**

Career Point has a well-established brand and a strong reputation in the education sector in India, while STEP North East is a relatively new organization with a localized focus.

**5. Partnerships:**

Both organizations partner with educational institutions and other organizations, but Career Point also partners with industry leaders for placement opportunities and collaborations on research and development.

Overall, while both organizations operate in the education and skill development market in India, they have different focuses, geographic reach, and revenue streams. Career Point has a wider reach and a well-established brand, while STEP North East has a localized focus and relies on government grants and corporate sponsorships for revenue.

**Drawbacks:**

While STEP North East has many strengths and accomplishments, it also has some potential drawbacks, including:

**1. Limited geographic reach:**

STEP North East's focus on rural areas of North-East India may limit its impact and reach compared to larger organizations that operate across India.

**2. Dependence on government funding:**

As a non-profit organization, STEP North East relies heavily on government grants and funding, which can be unpredictable and subject to changes in government policies and priorities

**3. Limited resources:**

As a relatively new organization, STEP North East may have limited resources and capacity compared to larger and more established organizations in the sector.

**4. Limited program offerings:**

STEP North East primarily focuses on skill development and training programs, which may not meet the needs and demands of all potential customers in the education and skill development market in India.

**5. Difficulty in finding skilled trainers:**

STEP North East may face challenges in finding qualified and skilled trainers for some specialized programs due to the geographic location of the region and limited resources.

**Recommendations:**

Some recommendations for improving STEP North East:

**1. Diversify revenue streams:**

STEP North East could explore additional revenue streams beyond government grants and corporate sponsorships, such as charging nominal fees for some of their programs, or exploring opportunities for individual donor support.

**2. Expand geographic reach:**

While STEP North East's focus on rural areas of North-East India is admirable, the organization could consider expanding its reach to other regions of India with similar education and opportunity gaps.

**3. Increase program offerings:**

To better meet the needs of a broader customer base, STEP North East could consider expanding its program offerings to include courses and services beyond just skill development and training.

**4. Invest in partnerships:**

To strengthen partnerships with local educational institutions and community organizations, STEP North East could invest in building relationships and collaborations with key stakeholders in the region

**5. Focus on quality and impact:**

To compete with larger organizations and ensure its success over the long-term, STEP North East should prioritize quality and impact in its programs and services, continuously assessing and improving its offerings based on feedback and data

## CONCLUSION

To improve the startup ecosystem in Ukhrul, Manipur, the following factors should be considered:

### **1. Develop a comprehensive entrepreneurship ecosystem:**

The government and private sector should work together to establish a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem that provides support to startups in terms of mentorship, funding, infrastructure, and networking opportunities.

### **2. Encourage innovation:**

Startups should be encouraged to develop innovative products and services that address the unique needs of the local community.

### **3. Build local capacity:**

Local talent should be trained and developed to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the growth of the startup ecosystem.

### **4. Promote tourism:**

Ukhrul has immense tourism potential, and startups like Hill Wild can help to develop the sector by offering unique experiences to visitors.

### **5. Support local industries:**

Startups like Secrets Cosmetics can help to promote local industries by using locally sourced ingredients and providing a platform for local artisans and manufacturers.

In conclusion, to improve the startup ecosystem in Ukhrul, Manipur, it is essential to develop a comprehensive entrepreneurship ecosystem, encourage innovation, build local capacity, promote tourism, and support local industries.

