



UDYAMINI CHRONICLES

July-August, 2025

Editorial Note

Over July and August, RWEs dealt with monsoons, busy farming days, and the push to blend old ways with new ones. Whether it was women in tea gardens mixing bio-pesticides or weavers launching online pages, the stories show a common thread: small, practical moves that build toward steadier incomes and stronger voices. In this bimonthly chronicle, these glimpses offer a sense of how rural entrepreneurship isn't just about business, it's about women finding space to lead in their own communities, one step at a time. In these months, the Udyamini Program kept connecting women to tools and networks across agriculture, handloom, tea, livestock, and digital value chains. These accounts highlight how everyday decisions like joining a group training or setting up a pop-up stall add up to real change in rural lives.



Weaving Skills and Sales: Capacity Building Meets Market Realities



In the handloom clusters of Goalpara, women from Bamunpara and Siluk villages came together for Grameen Sahara's Product Development Programs (PDPs), where around 40 Rural women entrepreneurs (RWEs) transformed graph paper sketches into vibrant table runners, cushion covers, and stoles that blend traditional patterns with contemporary appeal. These sessions evolved beyond technical training, sparking conversations about collective planning for weaving and selling. This momentum built on earlier mobilisation efforts in Kamrup and Goalpara, where over 430 weavers engaged with Udyamini's approach to group sales and consistent quality.

In these gatherings, natural leaders emerged, guiding others to see how shared efforts could lighten individual burdens and strengthen their collective voice in the marketplace.

SwitchOn Foundation in Nadia, Bankura, and Purulia districts of West Bengal, continued with Basic Entrepreneurial Development Plans and 12 sessions on climate-smart farming, drawing in 155 RWEs. They practised making bio-inputs, figured out pricing, and explored branding, which soon showed in better daily records and bolder market outreach. By August, the women had moved into advanced training. They learned water-saving methods to prepare stronger jute retting, experimented with vermicompost in Bankura for commercial production.



At Haringhata's Kastodanga, 17 women from the Nadi Producer Group focused on jute bags, fulfilling an order of 100 pieces for ₹10,500 and learning styles to reach more buyers.



The Digital Empowerment Foundation has been steadily adding digital layers to rural entrepreneurship, beginning in July with sessions across Assam on mobile use, government schemes, Mera Bill for financial tracking, and Facebook for marketing. Standout SBMs like Binita Rabha in Kamrup showed how digital tools can be seamlessly woven into everyday livelihoods, from livestock advice to online promotion. In West Bengal, trainings across Murshidabad to Nadia reached 278 women, many of whom created social media profiles to showcase their work. The momentum grew in August with a residential workshop at SIPRD Kahikuchi, where SoochnaPreneur Business Mitra Centres (SBMs) and

Rural Women Entrepreneurs (RWEs) learned about roles, reporting, and Customer Support Centre tools, culminating in online exams and certificates from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Meanwhile, "Click to Customer" programs in Kamrup and Goalpara engaged 50 women in hands-on practice of e-commerce and branding, while ten pop-up centres in Khokapara turned into hubs where products were tagged and posted online, making digital access part of the value chain.

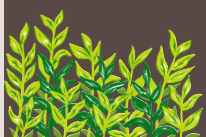
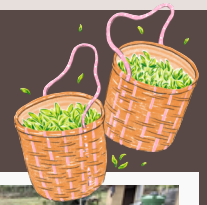


For livestock value chain in Chamaria and Balijana, The Goat Trust managed rain setbacks with 78 video shows in July on health and operations, reaching 375 despite paddy work pulling people away. Group meetings drew 589 for talks on loans and benefits. August's 41 sessions and 14 health camps kept momentum, as CLTC sites neared readiness for training.

Key Highlights: Tea Area Initiatives

In tea areas, GTC's work in Rongmongve and Nilip, Karbi Anglong, Assam, had 62 RWEs in July, preparing bio-pesticides against common pests, setting aside garden patches for natural tea

- Bio-pesticide Preparation: In Rongmongve and Nilip, 62 RWEs learned to make bio-pesticides, protecting tea gardens naturally.
- Dedicated Tea Patches: Women set aside garden patches to grow chemical-free tea, promoting sustainable practices.
- Firewood Dryers & Woodstoves: 41 clusters received dryers and stoves, adapted for local fuel, making processing more efficient.
- Expansion Despite Challenges: By August, 116 women installed processing units, navigating river crossings and rugged terrain.
- Green Tea Processing Training: 74 women attended three sessions on hygiene and quality for home-based green tea production.



From Fields to Fairs: Udyamini's Integrated Sales Cross ₹75 Lakh

Sales across agriculture, handloom, and livestock showcased strong performance in recent months, with SwitchOn recording **₹48.83 lakh in July** and **₹26.83 lakh in August**, including notable contributions from Biswa Bangla products, Tarulata SHG honey, and Haringhata's spices and ghee. DEF Fair earnings rose **from ₹3.15 lakh in July to ₹7.5 lakh in August**, driven by Murshidabad fairs. September saw **₹3.5 lakh in livestock sales**, adding to a **cumulative ₹40 lakh**. These figures highlight the integrated progress of production, digital engagement, and market linkages, underscoring the Udyamini's program's growth.

In the area of communication, ATVI added a hands-on layer by conducting an intensive training session with the Grameen Sahara team on media photography, content creation, and narrative building. This was followed by Grameen Sahara's National Handloom Day campaign, jointly planned with ATVI. The campaign ran for eight days, using reels, carousels, short videos, infographics, testimonials, and articles. It culminated on Handloom Day with active engagement from stakeholders, including NABARD and ASRLM, and gave the GS communication team valuable experience in content creation and digital storytelling.



A gender integration capacity-building session was held with 34 staff members from across partner organizations. The discussion began with the Chameli Tiger Story, which encouraged participants to reflect on how social conditioning and gender norms shape behaviour and opportunities from childhood. Groups then explored how these norms play out across agriculture, livestock, and handloom value chains. While women contribute consistently in these sectors, their roles often remain undervalued, with men retaining greater control over resources, markets, and decisions.

The session was anchored in the 3S framework:

- Soch (Mindset): shifting perceptions that confine women to limited roles.
- Sansadhan (Resources): ensuring women's independent access to land, credit, technology, and markets.
- Satta (Power): creating space for women's voices in household, community, and institutional decision-making.

As a way forward, participants agreed on the need to map gendered roles within value chains, expand women's access to resources and technology, and strengthen leadership training and awareness sessions to challenge stereotypes and foster equal participation.



Building Bridges: Ecosystem Engagements That Open Doors



In Murshidabad, West Bengal, RWEs gained structured access to Bima Sakhi insurance training through LIC coordination. In Malda, 15 Artisan Cards were issued, formalising the craft businesses of local women. Birbhum RWEs benefited from Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) scheme access and university-supported training opportunities. In Purulia and Bankura, 16 RWEs secured MSME loans through Punjab National Bank, while 37 participants joined block-level training programs in Baghmundi, directly enhancing skills and credit access. In Nadia, two RWEs received Customer Service Centre IDs, and another applied for a Tech Exam, expanding their digital footprint.

In Nadia, Bankura, and Purulia, meetings Assistant Director of Agriculture (ADA), Block Development Officer (BDO), Women development officer (WDO), and Krishi Vigyan kendra (KVK) managers, and bank representatives led to financial assistance and scheme linkages for Producer Groups and SHGs. A partnership with the National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC) secured subsidised cotton thread, reducing input costs for weavers. Further agreements facilitated Udyam registrations and collaboration with the Weavers Service Centre in Kolkata for advanced training, providing a structured pathway to enhance skills and market reach.



In Assam's Karbi Anglong region, Transform Trade, and technical partner Grassroot Tea Corporation, alongside SELCO, assessed dryer and woodstove efficiency for green tea processing in Dakiram Ronghan Village. A trial run of solar-assisted equipment marked progress in local adaptation, though full installation is pending further SELCO communication, reflecting the gradual pace of technical integrations.



SUCCESS
STORIES



Everyday Heroes: Success Stories from the Ground



In Dakiram Ronghang, Rongmongve, Karbi Anglong, **Maloti Terangpi** emerged as a leader among 11 women who formed a tea-processing cluster with the tea value chain technical partner Grassroots Tea Corporation's (GTC) guidance. Crossing a narrow, rickety bridge daily to sell leaves became a shared struggle until a July focus group discussion shifted their approach. With GTC's support, they installed dryers and woodstoves, adapting designs for local firewood use. By late August, their first batch of handcrafted green tea was ready, a milestone Maloti described as moving from isolation to a collective strength, with earnings of ₹8,000 shared among the group, easing household pressures.

In Murshidabad, **Sahanaz Begum's** journey with jute crafts leapt at the Nari Kuthi Fair in early August. Selling ₹15,000 worth of bags and mats, she secured a ₹22,385 order from a Kolkata retailer, a step that built on her June training with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). Balancing weaving with caring for her two children, Sahanaz used the earnings to buy a second-hand phone for online orders, marking a shift toward independence and market reach.





Moments That Matter: Events Bringing Communities Together

The SwitchOn Foundation’s Agri & Food Processing Growth Meet, held on July 20 in Haringhata, Nadia, drew members from the Nandini and Tarulata Producer Groups. The event showcased ghee, honey, and spices, with RWEs like Sarbani Das presenting products and gathering feedback from local buyers and NGOs. This interaction planted seeds for future collaborations, with notes taken on packaging tweaks to suit market tastes, showing how feedback loops can refine efforts.



World Indigenous Peoples’ Day, observed from August 9 to 14 across Bankura and Purulia, focused on millet cultivation and sustainability. Workshops led by local agriculture experts covered seed saving, groundwater management, solar pump use, and organic certification, linking traditional practices to schemes like PM-KSY. With 45 RWEs attending, discussions included how subsidies could offset costs, while hands-on demos on millet processing offered practical skills, reinforcing community resilience.

The Cocoon Hub inauguration on August 26 in Patrasayer, Bankura, marked Women’s Equality Day with a new space for silk thread procurement. Organised by SwitchOn, the event saw 30 RWEs, including Soma Mukherjee, explore collective sourcing to bypass middlemen. Group decisions on quality checks emerged, with plans to rotate leadership roles, signalling a shift toward shared governance and reduced costs.



A Jute Corporation of India Scheme Awareness Camp, held on August 18 in Hanskhali, Nadia, brought together 42 RWEs for a demonstration of the Paat Mitra app, which tracks jute production and market links. Led by a JCI volunteer, the session included sign-ups for the app and discussions on yarn model plans, with three women registering for a follow-up training. The event bridged tech and tradition, offering a tool to streamline sales.

On August 7, **National Handloom Day** in Nadia brought together Rural Women Entrepreneurs who displayed sarees and stoles, with branding insights shared by a Visva-Bharati expert. Sales reached ₹5,000, and sessions on labelling and online listings provided women like Kalpana Roy with ideas for connecting with city buyers, underscoring the cultural and economic relevance of their work.



Grameen Sahara marked the day through a week-long campaign with Atvi, creating reels, posts, and stories that highlighted handloom traditions. The outcome was greater visibility for artisans, new stakeholder interest from NABARD and ASRLM, and improved digital skills for the GS communication team.



Strengthening Udyamini: MEL in action with Data-Driven Insights

Between July and August, the Vrutti Value Chain MEL team strengthened the Udyamini Program's ability to track progress and learn from the field by dashboard data analysis from April to June highlighting growth pattern across agriculture, handloom, tea, livestock, and digital value chains, while also flagging challenges such as equipment delays and weak market linkages.

In preparation for the Longitudinal Study, the team finalised qualitative tools and trained moderators from Assam and West Bengal for ethical, standardised data collection. As fieldwork is about to begin, stories and evidence will be gathered to complement dashboard findings, which will then be analysed and validated. The reflections will guide the annual review—reinforcing Udyamini's commitment to responsive, evidence-based programming, translating field realities into meaningful action for women entrepreneurs.



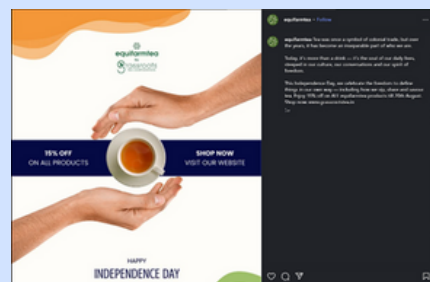
Voices Amplified: Communications That Connect and Inspire

SwitchOn Foundation shared a video titled "**From Lost Dreams to New Hopes: Mousumi's Story of Strength,**" spotlighting Mousumi's transition from setbacks to building a small enterprise. Available at <https://youtu.be/sKGC326dg7I>, the video captures her challenges and triumphs, providing a personal narrative that invites viewers to see the real stakes behind each training session or market step. It's a story that lingers, showing how determination can reshape a life.



Grameen Sahara added depth with a **podcast exploring microfinance's role in supporting RWE-led businesses.** Featuring **Sarat Chandra Das, founder of Grameen Sahara** with decades of experience in rural finance, and **Iaishah Rymbai of Eeri Silks, a handloom entrepreneur from Meghalaya,** the discussion offered practical insights into how small loans and guidance can fuel growth. Accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PR1ezZtW_Hs, the podcast blends expert perspectives with Rymbai's firsthand account of scaling her business, making it a resource for anyone curious about the financial backbone of rural entrepreneurship.

The tea value chain marked Independence Day with a social media post that reframed tea from a colonial trade symbol to a part of everyday freedom and culture. The post drew engagement by linking the drink to identity, resilience, and the growing role of women-led enterprises.



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