



# UDYAMINI CHRONICLES

September, 2025

## EDITORIAL NOTE

September 2025 saw the Udyamini Rural Women Entrepreneurship Program (RWE) press forward with its ongoing mission to empower rural women across Assam and West Bengal. Building on months of groundwork, rural women entrepreneurs (RWEs) continued to transform their skills into opportunities, from Kamrup's handlooms to Karbi Anglong's tea gardens in Assam and from Murshidabad's embroidered sarees to Purulia's climate-resilient agriculture in West Bengal. This chronicle reports their latest progress, offering a clear view of how sustained efforts are driving change. Read on for the latest updates on their journey.

### Women Leading Change from the Loom to the Field

In Morigaon, Assam, **Telimai Bordoloi** stood behind her stall at the Gosaikhanda exhibition, her table lined with handwoven Gamosas, cotton sarees, and soft Eri silk. A skilled weaver and self-help group leader, Telimai represented the handloom value chain supported by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) under Udyamini.



Her craftsmanship drew steady attention from buyers and cooperatives, leading to sales worth **₹1.48 lakh**, a clear example of how rural women are connecting tradition with opportunity.

Telimai's story captures what September looked like across the Udyamini landscape: women entrepreneurs strengthening local value chains, bridging culture and commerce, and driving community-led change.



## SKILLS MEET SALES: CAPACITY BUILDING AND MARKET LINKAGES

Training initiatives continued to **strengthen RWEs' market-ready skills**. In Kamrup, Assam, Grameen Sahara's Product Development Programme (PDP) trained 19 RWEs in Chhaygaon Block. Over three weeks, two trainers guided them in crafting cushion covers, table runners, and stoles, using graph paper for complex designs and draw-boy mechanisms for efficient weaving. By September 25, 2025, four new prototypes emerged, with participants reporting improved loom maintenance skills and confidence in meeting urban demand.



In North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, **exposure visits advanced RWEs' knowledge of jute yarn production and business management**. In Rajapur, West Bengal, 12 women from Haringhata and Hanskhali practised yarn-making, guided by an enterprise owner. In Nagarukhra, seven Hanskhali RWEs studied Self Help Groups' sustainability strategies, furthering the foundation for women-led jute ventures, facilitated by SwitchOn.

In Sonamukhi, Bankura, West Bengal, an **ATMA Farm School training enhanced RWEs' ability to use solar traps for pest control**. The session covered installing and monitoring traps, enabling an RWE from Panchal GP to adopt eco-friendly farming practices for better crop yields.



In Birbhum, West Bengal, **53 RWEs attended digital business training** led by Digital Empowerment Foundation. The sessions built on prior efforts, covering Meesho listings for Kantha stitch products and jewellery, alongside GST registration basics. Participants practised photographing products and drafting descriptions, with several preparing online listings by September 30, 2025, for an October launch.



A training session by The Goat Trust, led by Nayan Das from Digital Empowerment Foundation and Satyajit Das (Program Manager), was held on the **Kobo App** at Chaygaon. Participants Jitu Rajbhongshi, Kangkan Kalita, and Bidyut Nath learned how to use Kobo for real-time data collection and management, preparing for the upcoming Midline Survey.

In market linkage, the LBCs achieved a total turnover of ₹14,10,147 in September and ₹23,19,690 cumulatively till date, through the sale of input products such as Dana Mishran, Neem Oil, and Pachmola, along with livestock-related services like deworming and treatment.

On September 24, 2025, a **Gender Capacity Building Session attended by 19 participants from various partners**, explored **power dynamics through three faces (visible: authority in roles like village heads; hidden: women avoiding male-dominated markets; invisible: media shaping norms via algorithms)**, **three expressions (power to: individual action; power with: collective action; power within: self-confidence)**, and **three spheres (public, private, intimate)**. Real-life examples, like societal criticism of women in public roles, connected theory to RWEs' challenges, prompting reflection.



**Market linkages continued to deliver results. In Assam, on September 14, 2025, SBM Hemaprava Kalita led seven RWEs to supply Gamosas worth ₹1,10,000 to Srimanta Sankardev Sangha. On September 18, 2025, three RWEs sold cotton and Eri sarees worth ₹50,000 to Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi. RWE Telimai Bordoloi from Morigaon, Assam, earned ₹1.48 lakh by selling traditional Assamese textiles like Gamosas, cotton sarees, and Eri silk items at a September 20, 2025, exhibition in Gosaikhanda. In West Bengal, by September 30, 2025, Udyamini Tant PG and Joyhaba Selh Help Group sold sarees worth ₹5,92,000, while a Haringhata group earned ₹57,403 from jute, spice, and ghee sales. Sonamukhi's Udyamini Store added ₹3,786, and Haringhata's agri-machinery rentals generated ₹10,485. A September 22, 2025, Buyer-Seller Meet in Purulia secured 25 Letters of Intent worth ₹2 crore for millets, pulses, and honey.**



## ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT: PARTNERSHIPS POWER PROGRESS

Institutional collaborations continued to boost RWEs' efforts. In Assam **Grameen Sahara and SELCO Foundation held Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE) solution camps in Kukurmara and Jiakur**, offering 50% subsidies for weaving equipment. By September 28, 2025, discussions with Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) for Saras Mela advanced, with product catalogues prepared.



In West Bengal, **SwitchOn Foundation led several key initiatives to strengthen women's entrepreneurship and SHG development. Meetings were held in Sonamukhi with the Assistant Director of Agriculture (ADA), Deputy Director of Agriculture (DDA), Block Development Officer (BDO), Women Development Officer (WDO), and bank officials, focusing on SHG training and financing. A consignment letter signed with Biswa Bangla, opened new market avenues for the Joyhaba SHG. In Malda, 11 women artisans received their Artisan Cards through the District Industries Centre (DIC). Later, in Birbhum, a partnership with Visva-Bharati University paved the way for upcoming skill development workshops and collaborative initiatives.**

### Women Leading Change from the Loom to the Field

In Nadia, West Bengal, three RWEs, **Priyanka, Safali, and Susuma, made waves at a Kolkata market, securing ₹65,000 in sales.** The trio, part of a handloom and jute-focused SHG supported by the Digital Empowerment Foundation, showcased a range of products, including handwoven sarees, jute bags, and eco-friendly home décor items. Their stall attracted wholesalers and individual buyers drawn to the blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern aesthetics.





## MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

A longitudinal study was conducted across Assam and West Bengal to understand how women's enterprises are evolving within Udyamini's five value chains.

Fieldwork began on September 15, covering 200 RWE households across 10 districts. Through focus group discussions, the study explored economic progress, gender-related barriers, and community-level impacts. Data collection concluded by October 1, followed by an initial round of analysis from September 20 to identify emerging trends and challenges.



## EVENTS: SHOWCASING ACHIEVEMENTS, DRIVING DIALOGUE

Key events continued to highlight RWE's progress. In Purulia, West Bengal, the **District Consultation Meet** on September 22, 2025, facilitated by SwitchOn Foundation, **themed "Resilient Roots, Sustainable Futures,"** was a pivotal gathering for climate-resilient agriculture. Held at a community centre in Purulia, the event drew over 150 participants, including 60 RWEs, farmers, government officials from the Agriculture Department, civil society organisations, and private sector representatives. The meeting focused on sustainable farming practices, emphasising indigenous crops like millets, soil health management, and water conservation techniques. Interactive sessions included demonstrations of organic composting and drip irrigation, tailored to smallholder farmers' needs. A key outcome was a farmer-led value chain framework, co-developed by RWEs and local cooperatives, to streamline production and market access for crops like millets and pulses.



In Karbi Anglong, Assam, the **launch of commercial production for Premium Karbi Artisanal Green Tea** on September 19, 2025, marked a significant milestone. Hosted by Transform Trade and its technical partner Grassroot Tea Corporation, at a processing facility in Diphu, **the event celebrated the efforts of 30 RWE clusters who had undergone months of training in chemical-free tea cultivation and processing.** Over 200 attendees, including local officials, cooperative members, and buyers from Guwahati, witnessed the unveiling of the tea, packaged in eco-friendly materials emphasizing its single-origin, sustainable qualities. RWEs demonstrated hand-rolling techniques, and a tasting session highlighted the tea's subtle flavour and antioxidant properties. Orders placed during the event, worth ₹3 lakh, highlighted strong market interest and set the stage for expanded distribution.

In Murshidabad, West Bengal, the **Community Conclave**, supported by Digital Empowerment Foundation, held from September 12 to 14, 2025, was a vibrant showcase for four **RWEs: Sonali, Renuka, Khairunsha, and Nargis.** Held at a local fairground, the event attracted over 1,000 visitors, including urban buyers and cooperative representatives. The women's stall, adorned with their embroidered sarees and handicrafts, generated ₹27,000 in sales over three days. Their display featured live demonstrations of embroidery techniques, drawing crowds and sparking interest from local retailers. The conclave's success led to a commitment from organizers for a permanent market stall, ensuring sustained income opportunities for these RWEs.





## SECRETARIAT'S VISIT TO THE FIELDS AND PARTNERS IN ASSAM

In September, the Udyamini Secretariat visited field sites across Kamrup, Darrang, and Karbi Anglong, in Assam, meeting Rural Women Entrepreneurs (RWEs), partner teams, and observing ongoing studies under the Udyamini-RWEP programme.

At Trilochan village in Chamaria, the team joined Vrutti and The Goat Trust during a longitudinal study on goat rearing. Women shared how livestock care has become more systematic—with regular check-ups, use of herbal and veterinary medicines, and fairer pricing based on goat weight. While infrastructure and direct market access remain gaps, the women spoke with new confidence about their growing role in decision-making and group activities.



In Pijupara, Kamrup, the team, along with the Longitudinal team from Vrutti, met weavers supported by Grameen Sahara. Their traditional handloom practice has now taken the shape of small businesses reaching local markets. They discussed aspirations to manage exhibitions and sales independently and highlighted the need for more financial literacy and exposure visits.

The Secretariat also visited Dhula, Darrang, to meet Dulumani Kalita, who runs an SBM (Smart Village Business Management) Centre supported by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF). Her centre combines digital access with livelihood support—offering services like bill payments, PAN and certificate applications, while mentoring local women artisans in water hyacinth craft. The visit highlighted how digital inclusion can complement entrepreneurship, helping women manage both livelihood and service delivery in their communities.



The visit to Dolamara, Karbi Anglong, showcased the work of Grassroot Tea Corporation (GTC). Women entrepreneurs here have shifted from selling raw tea leaves to processing and packaging finished tea. The change has improved their income and control over production, supported by training on sustainable, locally suited methods.

### Women Leading Change from the Loom to the Field

In Dolamara, Karbi Anglong, Rural Women Entrepreneurs supported by Transform Tea and its technical partner Grassroot Tea Corporation (GTC) under Udyamini RWEP have transformed their small tea gardens into thriving enterprises. Earlier, **they sold raw tea leaves to agents at ₹15 per kilogram. Today, they process and market finished green tea at ₹300 per kilogram.**

**Using firewood-based tea processing machines** adapted to local conditions, the women manage every step, plucking leaves at dawn, boiling, rolling, drying, and packaging the tea themselves. They now use natural fertilisers and biopesticides, reducing costs and improving quality. On average, five kilograms of raw leaves yield one kilogram of finished tea.

Their brand, Eqifarm Tea, sells through both wholesale and online platforms, including Amazon and Blinkit. Each pack tells a story of skill and perseverance of women who have learned not just to grow tea, but to own the value they create.

The field visits concluded with a coordination meeting at Grameen Sahara's Chhaygaon office, where teams discussed study progress, pending compliances, and stronger collaboration between partners. The discussions reinforced that while progress is visible on the ground, collective action is key to strengthening entrepreneurship, market linkages, and digital access across the programme.





## COMMUNICATIONS: DIGITAL PUSH AMPLIFIES RWE REACH

The newest episode of **Udyamini Speaks podcast** featured Mr Loken Das, Chief General Manager of NABARD, in conversation with Sangeeta Bhattacharjee. The discussion explored how access to credit, digital tools, and confidence can help rural women turn small ideas into sustainable enterprises.

Mr Das shared how initiatives like Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), and Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs) have transformed women's financial inclusion. He also spoke about NABARD's efforts in clean energy, climate-resilient farming, and digital commerce through platforms such as ONDC, where Udyamini's women producers can reach wider markets.

His message was simple: when finance, knowledge, and digital access come together, women gain not only income but also independence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3-zrmHMF28&t=8s>



Digital platforms continued to empower RWEs to reach new markets with targeted campaigns. In Karbi Anglong, Assam, Transform Trade's social media campaign on September 19, 2025, marked the ongoing commercial rollout of Premium Karbi Artisanal Green Tea. **An Instagram and Twitter post, "Refreshing Brew | Subtle Flavour,"** showcased the tea's chemical-free quality with images of RWE's hand-rolling leaves, earning over 500 likes. A second post, "Chemical-free, single-origin tea," highlighted traceability, garnering 50 shares.

**Four Murshidabad women, Sonali, Renuka, Khairunsha, and Nargis, advanced their Instagram presence under Digital Empowerment Foundation's guidance.** Their posts, featuring high-resolution images of embroidered sarees and handicrafts, drew inquiries from Kolkata buyers within days. Using hashtags and stories, they boosted engagement, furthering their shift toward digital marketing for rural artisans.

**In Nadia, two RWEs, Priyanka and Safali, expanded their Facebook pages showcasing handloom and jute products.** Supported by DEF, they posted product photos and engaged with customers, securing small bulk orders from nearby towns. By joining local Facebook groups, they continued networking with other entrepreneurs, building on the groundwork for future deals.



**As October approaches, the foundation laid by these women and their partners promises continued growth, with RWEs leading the way in reshaping rural economies and challenging systemic barriers. For more updates, please visit:** [www.udyamini.org](http://www.udyamini.org) | [www.facebook.com/udyamini](https://www.facebook.com/udyamini) | [www.instagram.com/udyamini](https://www.instagram.com/udyamini) | [www.instagram.com/udyamini](https://www.instagram.com/udyamini)



As Udyamini's women light new lamps of opportunity across Assam and West Bengal, this festive season is a reminder of what shared effort and hope can achieve. Each enterprise, each story, and each step forward adds a spark to a larger light, one that continues to grow brighter with every passing month.

**Wishing everyone a very Happy Diwali** — a season of light, learning, and lasting change.

