

The Year Begins with Markets Showing Results

The year 2026 began with promising indicators, as Udyamini RWE saw market access begin to translate into real earnings for rural women entrepreneurs. RWEs from Murshidabad, Malda, Birbhum, Nadia, Purulia, and Bankura showcased handicrafts, jute, and agri-allied products across fairs, exhibitions, and buyer-seller platforms, converting exposure into measurable income. **Individual earnings ranged from ₹2,400 to over ₹2,00,000**, reflecting both early-stage participation and growing enterprise scale.

Khairunnessa Bibi from Murshidabad earned ₹66,000 at the district-level Sristishree Mela, while Shakuntala Chowdhury from Malda generated ₹43,000 through similar platforms. Maksuda Mamotaj recorded ₹2,400 at the Buyer-Seller Meet in Kolkata organised by SwitchON Foundation, marking an entry point into formal market spaces. Pakhi Haldar and Iti Mandal together earned ₹24,000 from district fairs, and Ajija Khatun reported ₹55,000 from her participation in the SARAS Mela.

A notable shift was observed in **Masuma Khatun's journey, who earned ₹89,000 at the Berhampore Sristishree Fair and later crossed ₹2,00,000 at a national-level exhibition in Mumbai**, indicating a shift from local to larger markets. Additional earnings included **Anita Sutradhar at ₹70,000, Kalpana Banik at ₹90,000, Susama Biswas at ₹1,47,910, and Sadhana Das at ₹15,000 through facilitated exhibition participation.**

In total, 12 RWEs directly benefited from structured market linkages during the month. Repeated participation in fairs beyond home districts suggests growing product acceptance and increasing confidence among women entrepreneurs, with market exposure gradually contributing to more stable and sustained household incomes.

This momentum sets the context for the month's activities across value chains, where training, digital enablement, ecosystem engagement, and collective platforms continued to build on this market shift.



CAPACITY BUILDING & MARKET LINKAGES | FROM SKILLS TO SALES



Under the Agri and Allied Value Chain led by SwitchON Foundation, multiple training sessions addressed both production and enterprise management. In Santipur, West Bengal, a hands-on financial training helped SHG accountants and producer group members understand bookkeeping, daily expense tracking, and profit calculation. This addressed a core gap where enterprises often operate without clear financial records. Skill development extended to production systems. In Purulia, West Bengal, RWEs received training on millet cultivation and value addition in collaboration with WASSAN and government agriculture officials. The session connected climate-resilient agriculture with income opportunities, highlighting how millets can support both nutrition and enterprise diversification.

Exposure-based learning under the Agri and Allied Value Chain, led by SwitchON Foundation, played an important role as members from a producer group in Jhalda-II, Purulia, West Bengal visited a dal processing unit in Ranchi (Bero), Jharkhand, where they closely observed processing workflows, machinery use, and day-to-day enterprise management practices. Interactions with women managing the unit provided practical insights into operational challenges and solutions.



In the Handloom Value Chain, led by Grameen Sahara in Assam, capacity building focused on product development and technical upskilling. A Product Development Program in Goalpara engaged 47 RWEs in designing new, market-oriented products such as cushion covers, table runners, and stoles. Training included interpreting designs using graph paper and improving loom efficiency through technical enhancements like draw-boy mechanisms.

Capacity building under the livestock value chain focused on building technical and business-oriented skills among RWEs. A five-day training programme in Balijana, Goalpara, Assam, engaged 50 RWEs on scientific goat rearing practices, covering resource planning, breed selection, nursery management, herd health, and basic enterprise economics. The training emphasised moving from traditional practices to more structured, productivity-oriented livestock management.

Market linkage outcomes during the month reflected the impact of these efforts. SwitchON Foundation reported total sales of ₹58.53 lakh, with ₹37.40 lakh from agriculture and allied products and ₹21.13 lakh from handloom. Sales ranged from local store transactions to participation in district-level melas, showing both grassroots and external market engagement. On the market side, LBCs strengthened a localised enterprise model by producing and selling livestock input products such as feed mixtures, herbal solutions, and tonics, while also offering paid services like deworming and treatment. The combined turnover from products and services crossed ₹3.08 lakh during the month, indicating a growing shift towards a service-based, income-generating model within the livestock ecosystem.



ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT | BUILDING CONVERGENCE FOR ENTERPRISE GROWTH

Scheme linkages during the month translated into tangible, ground-level support for rural women entrepreneurs across multiple districts of West Bengal, with a total facilitation of ₹7.33 lakh. These were not broad, one-time linkages but targeted interventions aligned to the specific enterprise needs of RWEs across agriculture and allied activities.

- In Sonamukhi, West Bengal, 10 RWEs received vermicompost kit bags worth ₹20,000 from Krishi Vigyan Kendra under the Agri-Entrepreneurs for a Sustainable Future initiative, enabling organic input production and reducing dependency on external fertilisers. Additional convergence with the Assistant Director of Agriculture facilitated access to sesame seeds, boron, and zinc fertilisers worth ₹1,44,120 across clusters, supporting improved crop productivity and quality.
- In Patrasayer, West Bengal, a work order was secured from the Sub-Division Office for the construction of permanent vermicompost units under RKVY 2025–26. A total of 23 farmers benefited with a sanctioned amount of ₹2,30,000, indicating a shift towards more stable and long-term production infrastructure.
- In Jhalda-II, Purulia, West Bengal, RWEs received 30 packets of vegetable seeds, including pumpkin, brinjal, bottle gourd, tomato, and ridge gourd, valued at ₹24,000. This supported crop diversification and strengthened both household consumption and market-oriented production.
- In Santipur, West Bengal, ₹3,06,000 was sanctioned under the Bhabishyat Credit Card and Enterprise Development scheme, improving access to working capital for RWEs to expand or stabilise their enterprises.
- In Hura, West Bengal, 90 Campbell duck (Hans) chicks were distributed with support from the Animal Resources Development department, valued at ₹9,000, contributing to livelihood diversification through livestock-based income.
- Across West Bengal, institutional convergence was strengthened through engagements with DRDC/Anandadhara, WBSRLM, MSME departments, Department of Social Welfare, Jute Corporation of India, Handloom Department, LIC, and local administrative bodies. These efforts enabled RWEs to access certifications such as Udyam registration, trade licences, and artisan cards, facilitated joint training initiatives on enterprise development and compliance, and improved participation in government-supported market platforms like district and state-level melas, creating a more coordinated support ecosystem.



FROM LOCAL TO LARGER PLATFORMS: EVENTS THAT OPEN MARKETS

January brought together multiple platforms that connected rural women entrepreneurs with markets, institutions, and each other across value chains.



The National Buyer-Seller Meet, organised by SwitchON Foundation with NABARD, translated these discussions into direct market opportunities. With participation from 25 buyers and 50 sellers, including FPOs, SHGs, and CSOs, the platform enabled direct product showcasing, price negotiations, and business interactions. The outcome was reflected in 12 Letters of Intent (LOIs) signed, amounting to ₹19.28 crore for Udyamini groups, indicating the scale of demand and potential for enterprise expansion when structured market linkages are facilitated.

The Move for Earth Symposium, organised by SwitchON Foundation in Kolkata, brought together stakeholders from multiple value chains including agriculture, handloom, livestock, tea, and digital sectors to discuss pathways for strengthening rural women entrepreneurship. The symposium featured roundtable discussions, workshops, and a buyer-seller interface, creating space for dialogue on market linkages, training systems, access to government schemes, and enterprise development. Participation from partner organisations, RWEs, and institutions enabled cross-learning and exchange of practical insights, while also linking grassroots enterprises with larger ecosystem actors, reinforcing a more coordinated approach to sustainable and women-led rural livelihoods.



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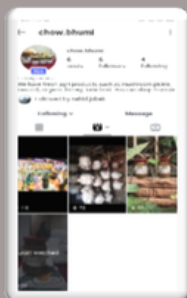


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In Assam, the Tea-RWE State-Level Convention held at Moniram Langneh Auditorium, Karbi Anglong, brought together over 500 women entrepreneurs from the tea value chain. Organised by Transform Trade with Grassroots Tea Corporation as the technical partner, the event combined cultural engagement, technical demonstrations, and institutional dialogue. Interactions with stakeholders such as Tea Board of India, NABARD, ASRLM, and taxation authorities addressed issues related to market access, licensing, and enterprise scaling, while also creating space for RWEs to share their own experiences and learning, enabling stronger market linkages.



At the district level, platforms such as Shrishtisree Mela in Nadia, West Bengal, provided RWEs with opportunities to directly engage with customers, display their products, and generate sales while also interacting with artisans from other regions. These events served both as market spaces and learning environments, where entrepreneurs could observe product trends, pricing strategies, and customer preferences.



Across West Bengal, DEF enabled RWEs to build and manage social media business pages, improving how products are presented and how customers are engaged. This shift is gradually helping entrepreneurs move from local, word-of-mouth sales to wider, direct-to-customer interactions. Over 22 RWEs strengthened their digital presence during this period, supported by continuous guidance on content creation, product showcasing, and safe digital practices.

In parallel, communication training took a more practical turn through a joint intervention by DEF and SwitchON Foundation. Ahead of the National Buyer-Seller Meet, over 50 RWEs were trained on negotiation, sales pitch, and product storytelling. The focus remained on clarity, confidence, and real buyer interaction scenarios, allowing women entrepreneurs to present their products more effectively in formal market spaces.



Communication efforts also extended to public messaging. In Assam, Transform Trade and its technical partner Grassroots Tea Corporation used social media to position chemical-free, ethically sourced tea not just as a product but as part of a sustainable lifestyle narrative, linking enterprise with consumer awareness.



The Udyamini Communication team, ATVI, through the Udyamini Facebook Page, shared key moments from the Tea-RWE State-Level Convention in Karbi Anglong, Assam, bringing visibility to the scale and collective strength of women entrepreneurs in the tea value chain. Through social media posts, the team highlighted not just the event, but the larger shift towards value-added tea production, women-led enterprises, and ecosystem collaboration.



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