

FROM A SMALL WOMEN'S GROUP IN SONAMUKHI TO RECOGNITION AT RAJ BHAVAN: THE JOURNEY OF CHHABITA PRAMANIK

In Sonamukhi block of Bankura district, Chhabita Pramanik's journey began over two decades ago with a small women's self-help initiative formed by just 10 women seeking livelihood opportunities through collective savings and local enterprise activities. Over the years, the initiative grew into a grassroots network involving more than 3,500 women engaged in rice processing, vermicompost production, mushroom cultivation, fishery, tailoring and other rural enterprises.

Associated with the Agri and Allied Value Chain implemented by SwitchON Foundation under the Udyamini programme, Chhabita played an active role in encouraging women's participation in livelihood activities and strengthening community-led enterprises. One of the key developments under her leadership was the promotion of Dheki Chata rice processing, which later connected women-led products to organised market platforms such as Biswa Bangla.

In April 2026, her work received statewide recognition when **she was honoured by the Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal at Lok Bhavan** for her contribution to women empowerment and inclusive community development. Her journey reflected how grassroots women entrepreneurs are gradually gaining visibility not only within their communities, but also within larger institutional and market spaces.



নারী স্বনির্ভরতার এক অনন্য প্রতীক
হয়ে উঠেছেন ডিহিচাতার ছবিতা



CAPACITY BUILDING & MARKET LINKAGES | FROM SKILLS TO SALES



As the implementation partner of the Agri and Allied Value Chain in West Bengal, SwitchOn Foundation organised a **Practical food processing session** in partnership with Paustik Life, focusing on millet-based cookie production under the Agri and Allied Value Chain. Fifteen RWEs participated in hands-on training that covered hygiene standards, ingredient handling, quality control, packaging, and labelling. Participants prepared millet cookies themselves during the session, helping them improve product consistency and understand consumer-facing production standards.

In Assam, Grameen Sahara continued strengthening the Handloom Value Chain through **Product Development Programmes (PDPs) focused on natural dyeing in Eri textiles**. Two new batches involving 20 RWEs started in Jambari Milanpur village in Kamrup district. The training introduced women to **natural dye extraction methods using materials such as tea leaves, teak leaves, onion peels, iron and manjistha**. The initiative aimed to help women develop contemporary, market-oriented products while reducing dependence on synthetic dyes.



Meanwhile, in Karbi Anglong district, Assam **13 tea clusters under the Tea Value Chain resumed artisanal green tea processing after months of disruption caused by dry weather**, with women entrepreneurs restarting hand-rolling and slow-drying processes using woodstove-based dryers introduced during last year's initiative. During the month, 63 RWEs collectively produced 15.860 kilograms of Premium Karbi Artisanal Green Tea through chemical-free cultivation practices.



Under the Digital Value Chain led by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), **structured digital literacy and enterprise support activities continued in Assam and West Bengal**. In Darrang and Nalbari districts of Assam, Rural Women Entrepreneurs (RWEs) participated in sessions on **Udyamini SkillBot LMS and Udyam Registration**. The sessions introduced women to digital learning systems while also helping them understand the importance of enterprise formalisation. The training brought together 35 RWEs and focused on improving digital confidence among first-generation entrepreneurs.



FROM LOCAL TO LARGER PLATFORMS: EVENTS THAT OPEN MARKETS



In Assam, RWEs participated in exhibition platforms such as Bohagi Mela, where women from Darrang district collectively generated sales exceeding ₹1 lakh through handloom, handicraft and food products. In Kamrup Rural district, entrepreneur Runuma Das earned around ₹12,000 through exhibition-based sales.



In West Bengal, local enterprise centres and exhibitions continued to support income generation. In Birbhum district, entrepreneur **Fatema Bibi** generated around ₹75,000 during a seven-day exhibition. In Malda, **Soma Das** earned ₹17,500 through sales at her handicraft stall in Kanirmore, while **Nusrat Jahan** generated approximately ₹22,500 from her handicraft centre at Sersahi.



Participation of RWEs under the Handloom Value Chain in Assam, supported by Grameen Sahara, in Rongali Mela organised by **NEDFi** in Guwahati, also acted as a market exposure platform, where RWEs directly interacted with buyers and understood customer preferences and product expectations.



ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT | BUILDING CONVERGENCE FOR ENTERPRISE GROWTH

- In Assam, a major development under the DEF-led Digital Value Chain came through the facilitation of frame looms for women weavers in Darrang district. Supported by the Weavers Service Centre, Guwahati, 63 RWEs from Sipajhar block received frame looms under the guidance of SBM Hemaprava Kalita. The intervention is expected to improve production capacity and strengthen income opportunities for handloom entrepreneurs.
- In Hanskhali, West Bengal support worth ₹21,200 under the MIDH scheme from the Horticulture Department benefited 21 SHG members. Additional support included vermicompost beds worth ₹6,000 for four women entrepreneurs, while schemes facilitated through Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya and Krishi Vigyan Kendra reached more than 70 women collectively.
- In Sonamukhi, West Bengal two women entrepreneurs received support worth ₹1 lakh under the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (WBCADC) project through the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) for setting up permanent vermicompost units. Six RWEs also received shade nets through support facilitated by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) under the West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (WBSRLM).



TAKING STORIES TO THE GROUND: COMMUNICATION THAT BUILDS VISIBILITY

Communication efforts during the month highlighted stories of grassroots entrepreneurship, sustainable livelihoods and community leadership through collaborative social media posts. One of the featured stories introduced Junumani Rabha, a Community Resource Person (CRP) with Grameen Sahara under Project Udyamini, who is supporting 36 Rural Women Entrepreneurs in developing market-ready handloom products and strengthening entrepreneurship skills. The posts focused on how women-led village clusters are gradually evolving into spaces of collective enterprise, creativity and livelihood development, while also sustaining audience engagement around field-level interventions and community stories.



One such story also featured SoochnaPreneur Rakhi Biswas from Jitpur Palpara in Nadia district, who led a focused bootcamp on enterprise formalisation and access to digital and government services for Rural Women Entrepreneurs. Through the intervention, women received support on services such as Udyam Registration and Trade Licences, while Rakhi's own journey from a homemaker to a local digital resource person reflected the growing role of women as community-level digital leaders under the Udyamini initiative.

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