

A SAREE, AN INSTAGRAM POST AND A GROWING ENTERPRISE



When Jinat Rehana attended a digital marketing training session under Udyamini's Digital Value Chain, she was not expecting that a single social media post would lead directly to a sale. Like many rural women entrepreneurs, she used Instagram occasionally but had never considered it a business tool. During the training, she learned how to photograph products, write effective captions, and use social media platforms to reach potential customers.

Soon after the session, Jinat posted a photograph of one of her handcrafted sarees online. The post caught the attention of Mina Parvin, a school teacher, who contacted her after seeing the product. The following morning, Mina visited Jinat and purchased the saree for ₹2,500.

The sale was more than a business transaction. It demonstrated how access to digital skills can create new pathways to markets that were previously beyond reach. What began as a training

exercise became an example of how women entrepreneurs are increasingly using technology to showcase their products, connect directly with customers and generate income on their own terms.

Jinat's experience reflects a larger story unfolding across the Udyamini programme. Whether through digital tools, enterprise training, market linkages or value addition, women entrepreneurs are steadily converting learning into opportunity. Across Assam and West Bengal, May was marked by this transition from capacity building to market participation, making Jinat's journey a fitting reflection of the month.



CAPACITY BUILDING & MARKET LINKAGES | FROM SKILLS TO SALES



In the Digital Value Chain, implemented by Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), **capacity-building activities were conducted across Assam and West Bengal, covering digital literacy, Artificial Intelligence, Udyam Registration, SkillBot LMS and business-oriented digital tools.** Women entrepreneurs from Darrang, Kamrup, Morigaon and Nagaon districts of Assam participated in **structured sessions that introduced them to online learning platforms, enterprise registration processes and practical applications of AI in business operations.** In Murshidabad, Nadia and Purulia districts of West Bengal, **handholding sessions on MeraApp and MeraBills helped women improve record-keeping, transaction management and enterprise tracking.** Special sessions explored how **AI tools could support photography, content creation and business communication, making emerging technologies more accessible for rural enterprises.**

The Handloom Value Chain witnessed continued investments in both technical and entrepreneurial capacities. In Assam, Grameen Sahara continued the **advanced Product Development Programme** in Jambari Milanpur, Kamrup of Assam, where **19 women entrepreneurs deepened their understanding of natural dyeing techniques in Eri textiles.** Participants experimented with colours derived from locally available materials such as manjistha, tea leaves, teak leaves, onion peel and iron, helping align traditional weaving practices with evolving market preferences.

Alongside this, foundational Entrepreneurship Development Programmes were completed in Maslang, Gohaibori, Udaypur, Kathalmuri and Charaimari villages in Assam. The sessions engaged **144 women entrepreneurs and introduced discussions on gender, labour, business fundamentals, income and expenditure tracking, and product costing.** The training aimed to strengthen entrepreneurial thinking while encouraging women to view their skills through a business lens.



In West Bengal, SwitchON Foundation launched the **second phase of the Udyamini Acceleration Programme with technical facilitation from Skillgreen**. Twenty-three women entrepreneurs from Bankura, Purulia, and Nadia participated in intensive sessions on market surveys, customer understanding, business planning, SWOT analysis, pitching, and group entrepreneurship. The programme brought together members of ten producer groups, creating a space for peer learning and practical problem-solving around enterprise growth.



The Tea Value Chain, led by Transform Trade with technical partner Grassroots Tea Corporation (GTC), continued strengthening production and business capacities. A two-day bookkeeping training in Golaghat brought together team members and Business Sakhis to improve record management systems. Participants worked through practical exercises covering procurement, processing, aggregation, pricing and enterprise expenditure, helping strengthen the operational foundations required for collective tea enterprises.

Market engagement accompanied these learning efforts.



In Nadia, West Bengal, women handloom entrepreneurs recorded saree sales worth ₹2.51 lakh during the month. Sales came through both the Udyamini Store and direct local market channels, reflecting growing customer demand and stronger local marketing efforts.

Women associated with the Cocoon Hub enterprise generated thread sales worth ₹69,472, while producer groups in Bankura, West Bengal, collectively marketed 5,460 kilograms of paddy, generating business worth ₹1.36 lakh.

A major market linkage achievement was secured when Dihipara, West Bengal Monalisha Women SHG obtained an order from Biswa Bangla Marketing Corporation Limited for 2,000 packets of Dhaki Rice, valued at ₹1.48 lakh. The order demonstrated growing market acceptance for value-added rural products developed by women entrepreneurs.



ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT | BUILDING CONVERGENCE FOR ENTERPRISE GROWTH

In Assam, six tribal women entrepreneurs associated with Grameen Sahara were empanelled with the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED), creating a new market channel for indigenous handloom products. The entrepreneurs collectively secured orders for 337 products including cushion covers, table runners, mats, stoles, pajar and mekhela chadors. Notably, the women independently negotiated product specifications and pricing with officials, demonstrating growing confidence in market engagement and business negotiation.



In West Bengal, SwitchON Foundation facilitated scheme convergence worth more than ₹1 lakh through engagements with the Animal Resources Development Department, Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Agriculture Development Authority. These collaborations enabled women entrepreneurs to access technical support, government resources and livelihood opportunities while strengthening institutional relationships at the local level.



INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY BRINGS COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

The most visible programme event of the month came through the observance of International Tea Day 2026 across Nilip, Bokajan and Rongmongve blocks of Karbi Anglong.



The celebrations brought together small tea growers, women entrepreneurs and community members to recognise the contribution of tea-growing communities while highlighting sustainable tea production and value addition. Discussions focused on strengthening awareness around tea production, market participation and the importance of women-led enterprises within the tea sector.

The event also provided a platform to showcase Premium Karbi Artisanal Green Tea produced by women entrepreneurs engaged in regenerative agricultural practices. Through community participation and local engagement, the observance highlighted how women producers are increasingly taking leadership roles within local tea economies.



UDYAMINI ANNUAL REVIEW AND REFLECTION MEET (ARM) 2026

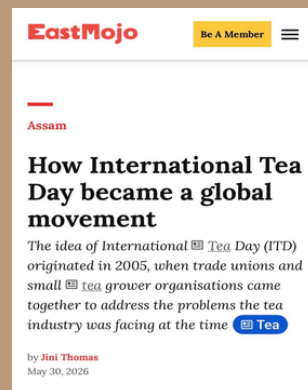


The Annual Review and Reflection Meet (ARM) 2026, held from 6–8 May in Hotel Arista, Guwahati, brought together implementation, technical, communication and MEL partners to collectively assess progress, reflect on field realities and identify priorities for the final phase of the programme. Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration across the consortium, improving reporting and learning systems, deepening ecosystem engagement, and ensuring that programme efforts translate into meaningful and sustainable outcomes for rural women entrepreneurs. The meeting also served as a platform for partners to share experiences, address implementation challenges and chart a common direction for the months ahead.



TAKING STORIES TO THE GROUND: COMMUNICATION THAT BUILDS VISIBILITY

The month's communication efforts centred around **International Tea Day**, highlighting the experiences of tea-growing communities and women-led enterprises in Karbi Anglong. The campaign extended beyond social media and entered wider public discourse through media coverage and feature stories. Articles exploring the evolution of International Tea Day and the role of women-led tea initiatives were published through regional media platforms, helping connect grassroots experiences with broader conversations around tea, sustainability and livelihoods.



Udyamini's communication partner ATVi amplified conversations around tea-growing communities through media outreach and storytelling. **Feature articles published in EastMojo and The Assam Tribune** traced the evolution of International Tea Day from a grassroots movement advocating tea workers' rights to a globally recognised United Nations observance. The stories highlighted contemporary issues shaping tea economies, including sustainability, women-led enterprises and farmer-owned value chains. The coverage also featured the work of small tea growers associated with the Udyamini programme in Karbi Anglong, bringing wider attention to efforts aimed at strengthening transparent and equitable tea value chains.

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