

UDYAMINI CHRONICLES

NOVEMBER 2025

From Learning to Practice: A Collective Shift in Quality

In Sonamukhi and Jhalda-II, women involved in spice processing, oil extraction, and food products began applying quality and hygiene practices learnt during Training on quality standards with RWEs. At Nagarukhra-2 Livelihood Support Centre, RWEs handling Sonamukhi spices and groundnut oil connected quality maintenance with market acceptance, learning how raw material selection, clean machine operation, and packaging directly affect shelf life and buyer trust. Experiences shared from Purulia's millet processing groups added a peer-learning layer, making quality less abstract and more practical.

In the month of November 2025, several RWEs demonstrated how incremental support can translate into visible outcomes.



Capacity Building and Market Linkage **Strengthening the Daily Business Backbone**



In West Bengal, a **two-day Financial and Business Management Training** was organised by Digital Empowerment Foundation for **33 Rural Women Entrepreneurs** from Nadia, Bankura, and Purulia. The training was conducted for RWEs associated with livelihood centres and producer groups in Sonamukhi (Bankura) and Haringhata (Nadia), with participation from Purulia-based groups. The sessions focused on practical bookkeeping, daily record maintenance, understanding profit and loss, and calculating break-even points. For many participants, this was the first time financial concepts were directly linked to their everyday business decisions. By the end of the training, women reported greater clarity in reading their business performance and planning next steps for sustainability.

Alongside this, a **three-day residential Team Mentoring Training** was organised with Skill Green for 20 staff members. The focus was on mentoring techniques, market surveys with bulk buyers and wholesalers, seasonal calendars, and pricing calculations. This internal capacity building strengthened field teams' ability to handhold women-led enterprises more effectively.

In Assam's handloom clusters, **Product Development Programmes** continued across Kamrup and Goalpara districts. Sixty-two RWEs engaged in learning advanced techniques such as draw-boy mechanisms, graph-based design interpretation, and group-based production planning. Products under development included cushion covers, table runners, stoles, and yardage, with five new prototypes emerging during the month.



CRP training was organised in Goalpara district with 10 participants from blocks across the district. The CRPs were selected on the basis of leadership qualities demonstrated by the women. The training covered aspects of filling the weaver's diary, compilation of RWE data and CRP roles and responsibilities. This activity is expected to bring more transparency and learning to the project. Support was further provided to handhold the CRPs at the field level in villages of Niz-Bekeli, Narengapara, Dilinga, Kukurmara, Nathpara, Rangamati, Jiakur, Jambari, Chaikata, Pijupara and Nagabera in Kamrup district.

System-level strengthening under the livestock value chain continued with The Goat Trust (TGT) supporting the completion of **the CLTC cum Demo Retail Centre at Chamaria**, now ready for operational use as a space for training, demonstrations, and enterprise support. TGT's focus on preventive healthcare, regular monitoring, and documentation helped reduce risk in goat-based livelihoods and improve the predictability of income for women entrepreneurs. While changes were incremental, November reflected stronger systems, clearer tracking, and improved coordination around livestock enterprises.



In Assam's handloom value chain, Grameen Sahara operationalised the **Yarn Bank at Chhaygaon**, following its inauguration in the previous month. Managed by an RWE, the Yarn Bank began supplying yarn to women weavers, supporting uninterrupted production, reducing dependence on middlemen, and improving cost predictability. This marked a shift from setup to active use, strengthening collective systems around handloom livelihoods.



Ecosystem Engagement

Partnerships, Institutional Support and Programme Strengthening



A meeting was held by Transform Trade and its technical partner, **Grassroot Tea Corporation**, with **Tilottama Hasnu, Executive Member, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)**, at her residence in Diphu to discuss pathways for government recognition of Rural Women Entrepreneurs (RWEs). The **discussion explored potential financial and non-financial support mechanisms, identified opportunities for capacity-building assistance, and focused on strengthening future collaboration with the Council to enhance RWE development** and promote sustainable growth in the tea value chain.

Government and ecosystem engagement during November focused on helping Rural Women Entrepreneurs move steadily into formal systems, with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) playing a facilitative role across regions. Through coordinated field support, RWEs were assisted with Artisan Card applications, Udyam registrations, Trade Licences, PAN documentation, and onboarding to the e-NAM platform, enabling better access to markets and government-linked opportunities. **One RWE also secured a ₹47,500 loan from the West Bengal Minorities' Development & Finance Corporation, reflecting strengthening linkages with formal financial systems.** Institutional coordination with DRDC, DICO, WBSRLM (Anandadhara), MSME offices, and Women Development officials, supported by DEF's outreach and digital enablement, opened pathways for certification camps, national-level workshops, and wider market exposure.



Ecosystem engagement also included focused, location-specific interventions such as the Udyam Registration Camp at Chamaria Block, Kamrup district, facilitated by DEF and conducted by SBM Himakshi Kalita for RWEs from the livestock cluster supported by The Goat Trust (TGT). The camp provided on-the-spot guidance to help women formalise their enterprises and strengthen administrative and financial foundations. **In total, government and ecosystem initiatives benefitted 89 RWEs, improving access to schemes, legal documentation, and enterprise-related services while reinforcing the role of digital facilitation.**



Events and Collective Moments



Grameen Sahara organised an Annual Stakeholders' Meet in its HQ, under which a stakeholder meet was held for the Udyamini RWE, where Udyamini partners and buyers were invited. Among the present were members from Digital Empowerment Foundation, the Goat Trust, SELCO Foundation, Weavers Service Centre and the Department of Handloom and Textile. Also present were the RWEs from different blocks of Kamrup. The RWEs also shared their stories with the guests on the platform. The event was aimed at showcasing the work of the RWEs and marketing their products. The Handloom and Textile Department also expressed their interest in giving us a stall in an upcoming exhibition in Goalpara district.

Digital ecosystem engagement continued through national-level platforms. During the **Digital Citizenship Summit (DCS) held on November 13-14, 2025, in Hyderabad**, Udyamini RWEs participated as speakers and exhibitors. Two RWEs shared their enterprise journeys on the podium, reflecting how grassroots digital adoption is shaping livelihoods, while other RWEs showcased their products through stalls at the summit. Indranil Niyogi from the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation represented the Udyamini ecosystem as a panellist in the concluding session, contributing to discussions on digital inclusion and enterprise development.



RWEs from Assam and West Bengal participated in exhibitions such as the Nandini Exhibition in Guwahati, West Bengal Handicrafts Exhibition, Murshidabad Khadi Mela, Digital Artisans of India Exhibition in Hyderabad, and the Diplomatic Community Bazaar in New Delhi. While sales varied across platforms, the exposure allowed women to understand market preferences, pricing dynamics, and presentation standards. These events reinforced learning through experience, helping RWEs see how their products perform outside familiar local markets.

Systems and Technology **Small Changes with Long-Term Impact**

Several system-level interventions strengthened enterprise operations during the month.

A semi-automated Bio Resource Centre was installed at Haringhata, replacing a fully manual setup. This reduced workload, improved efficiency, and ensured more reliable bio-input preparation.



Machinery support from SwitchON included **oil extractors, filter machines, pulverisers, cookie-making machines, and salpata dice machines** across producer groups in Sonamukhi and Jhalda-II. These machines directly supported value addition, consistency, and production efficiency.

These interventions may appear incremental, but together they lowered risk, saved time, and built confidence, critical ingredients for sustaining women-led enterprises

Cross-Visit



The Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) conducted a field visit to the TGT RWE cluster in Balijana Block, Goalpara district, to assess existing digital readiness among women entrepreneurs. The visit focused on understanding current digital practices, identifying areas where digital tools could support business operations, and mapping training needs for effective implementation. This early-stage assessment laid the groundwork for future digital capacity-building interventions aligned with enterprise requirements.



Market linkage outcomes reflected gradual progress. Across agriculture and handloom value chains in West Bengal, sales reached ₹31.56 lakh and ₹16.34 lakh, respectively. These included bulk mustard sales by Nadi Producer Group in Haringhata, local spice sales by K.P Rangadi, and input sales by RWEs in Santipur block. While numbers varied, the common thread was sustained engagement with markets rather than one-time transactions



MEL Highlight | Learning from the Ground (Vrutti)

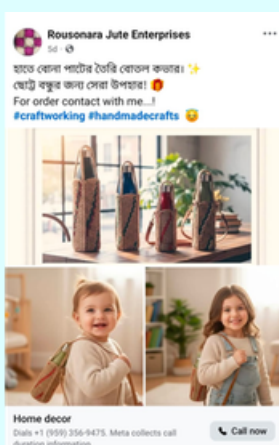
During November, Vrutti's MEL team focused on analysing qualitative findings from the first round of the Udyamini longitudinal study. The review looked at how change is unfolding for women across five areas: business performance, empowerment and agency, ecosystem support, social and gender norms, and inclusiveness. The exercise helped bring together insights from different partners and regions, allowing the programme to better understand what is working on the ground and where challenges continue.

The findings from this analysis will be combined with existing quantitative data to build a clearer picture of programme progress across value chains. In the coming phase, Vrutti will facilitate reflection and sense-making discussions with consortium partners, where the findings will be jointly reviewed and used to identify areas that need course correction. This process is intended to support more informed planning and ensure that learning from the field directly shapes future actions under the Udyamini programme



Communications

Building Digital Voices and Strengthening Field Coordination

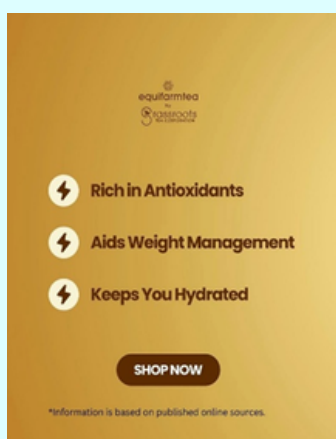


Digital communication during November translated into visible enterprise-level outreach, with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) supporting RWEs in West Bengal to use social media as a business tool. Women entrepreneurs began using platforms not only for visibility but also for direct marketing and customer engagement. A post by Rousonara Jute Enterprises, showcasing handcrafted jute bottle covers as utility and gift products in both Bengali and English, reflected growing confidence among RWEs in presenting their products, inviting customer interaction, and managing their own digital presence.

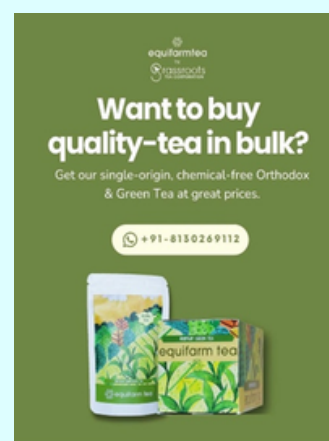
Communication in November also extended to long-form storytelling and documentation of field interventions. A documentary video titled "From Fields to Futures: Women in Bankura Cultivating..." was released as part of the SwitchON-Udyamini collaboration with Sonamukhi KVK. The film captured grassroots innovations and enterprise journeys of RWEs, using visual storytelling to highlight how women are adapting practices, technologies, and local knowledge to strengthen livelihoods. Shared across digital platforms, the documentary added depth to programme communication by moving beyond updates to narrative-led representation of women's work.



https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=from+fields+to+future%3A+women+in+bankura



Alongside this, communication efforts around value-chain branding continued in Assam through social media outreach for equifarmtea, highlighting single-origin, chemical-free Orthodox and Green Tea produced by small growers. Posts during the month focused on traceability, ethical sourcing, and bulk purchasing options, linking consumer choice with support to small tea producers in Assam. Messaging such as "Good tea supports good habits" positioned the product within a wellness narrative, while keeping claims limited to verifiable practices like chemical-free cultivation and direct sourcing from farmers.



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