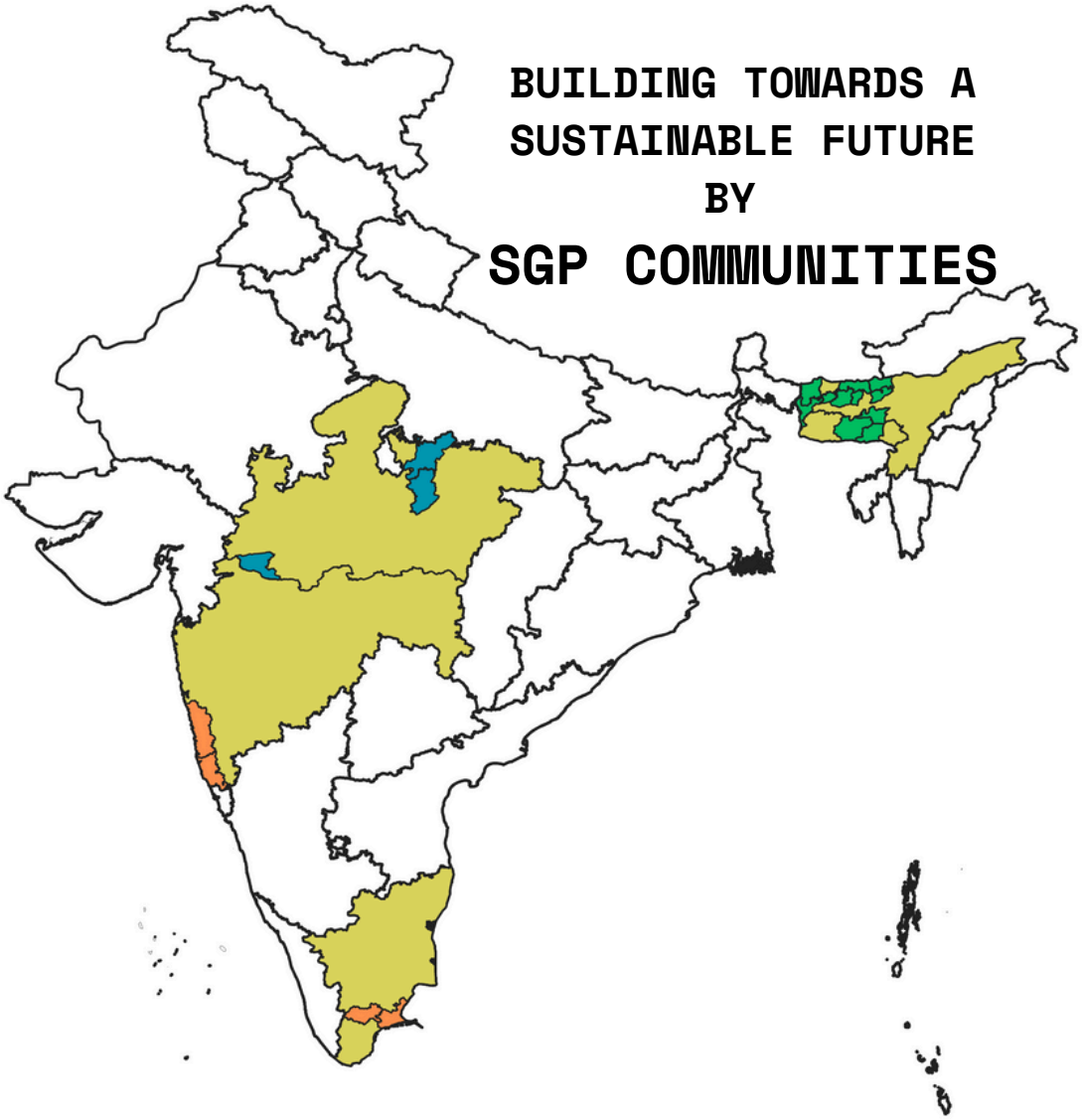
SGP INDIA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



BUILDING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE BY SGP COMMUNITIES

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PART I

LIVING LANDSCAPES:
BIODIVERSITY & SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN NORTH EASTERN REGION (NER)

SPREADNE

GREEN VALLEY SOCIETY

Estd. 1999

35 YEARS Aaranyak

NEHPAD
Society for North-East Handmade Paper Development

RE-IMAGINING FUTURES
TISS
GUWAHATI

PREFACE

Living Landscapes: Biodiversity and Sustainability in NER

The Northeast Region (NER) of India is home to some of the country's most diverse and fragile ecosystems. Rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage, this landscape plays a critical role in sustaining both ecological balance and community livelihoods. However, increasing environmental pressures–from climate change to resource degradation–demand innovative, community-led responses that align conservation with sustainability. It is within this dynamic and vibrant context that the theme of this newsletter, "Living Landscapes: Biodiversity and Sustainability in NER," finds its relevance and voice.

This newsletter is one of the outputs of India's participation in the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP). This program launched at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, supports grassroots efforts that address environmental challenges while enhancing local well-being of which India became a part in 1996. Under its Seventh Operational Phase (OP7), SGP India–implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and coordinated by TERI–currently supports 59 projects across three ecologically critical landscapes. Of these, 22 projects are located in the NER, where the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Guwahati Off-Campus, serves as the lead institution for knowledge management and communication.

The second issue of the quarterly newsletter highlights the contributions of five NGOs–Aaranyak, Lotus Progressive Centre, SPREADNE, Green Valley Society, and SNEHPAD–whose projects under SGP OP-7 concluded in July 2025. Working across different parts of Assam, these organizations have taken significant steps toward preserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable practices, and empowering local communities.

Also featured in this edition are snapshots from TISS monitoring visits, a capacity-building workshop for NGO partners, and media coverage of the outstanding work carried out by SGP grantees. Together, these stories reflect the spirit of resilience, collaboration, and innovation that defines the living landscapes of the Northeast.

We hope this newsletter offers meaningful insights into the inspiring efforts taking place across the Northeast Region. Thank You.

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HUMAN–ELEPHANT COEXISTENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

In the quiet embrace of Assam's Udalguri district, the fragile Bhabar belt—a dry, rocky terrain bordering Bhutan—has long been home to farmers and cattle herders, who once lived in harmony with their natural surroundings. However, recent years have brought an unexpected and devastating change. The installation of solar fencing along the Bhutan border, intended to prevent human-elephant conflicts, has blocked vital elephant migration routes.

As a result, elephants now enter these human settlements in search of passage and sustenance, damaging homes, trampling crops, and threatening lives. This growing tension has pushed many residents to abandon their ancestral land in pursuit of safety and stability elsewhere, leaving behind a community struggling under the weight of fear and loss. Yet, even amid this growing crisis, hope arrived in the form of

Aaranyak, an environmental NGO supported by the Small Grant Programme. Unlike emergency relief efforts, Aaranyak focused on long-term community empowerment. Their initiative, the Community-Based Integrated Approach to Facilitate Human-Elephant Coexistence and Biodiversity Conservation, sought to rebuild the Bhabar belt communities from within.

Through targeted training in vermicomposting, villagers began enriching their soil with organic fertilizer, reviving agricultural productivity while preserving ecological health. The establishment of homestead gardens further helped secure food sources, reducing dependency on external supply chains and enhancing household nutrition in the process.

Information, education, and communication (IEC) materials were also provided to raise awareness about coexistence and train villagers in conflict prevention techniques.

To directly address the elephant incursions, Aaranyak introduced practical yet sustainable strategies. Seasonal and circular fencing helped safeguard crops during peak migration periods, offering temporary but vital protection.

These efforts shifted the narrative from helplessness to resilience, fostering a proactive mindset among residents. People began to see themselves not merely as victims of wildlife conflict but as stewards of both their land and its natural heritage, working collaboratively toward peaceful coexistence. One of the most transformative outcomes of the project has been the restoration of 20 hectares of degraded forest in the region.

This reforestation initiative, aimed at reopening historic elephant corridors, not only aids in reducing crop raids but also breathes new life into the local ecosystem. Birds have returned, vegetation is thriving, and families who once feared displacement are now reconnecting with their roots. The fragile Bhabar belt, once overshadowed by anxiety, is gradually becoming a symbol of hope and resilience. As nature begins to heal, so too does the spirit of this landscape, illustrating how a community, when empowered and united, can reclaim its future.

SOIL, SAPLINGS, AND SISTERHOOD

CLIMATE JUSTICE FROM THE GROUND UP IN UDALGURI

Building on this renewal, in the Bhabar Belt, women are emerging as quiet architects of transformation. As communities face the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and disrupted livelihoods, many are turning to nature

With scientific enhancements such as soil testing, intercropping, and water management, these baris are evolving into resilient micro-farms that not only feed households but also anchor efforts toward ecological restoration and climate resilience.

and tradition to reclaim their land. Central to this revival is the age-old Assamese bari system, a traditional homestead model where families grow vegetables, herbs, and trees within their household compounds.

Backed by the Small Grant Programme and local NGO Aaranyak, this revitalized bari model has sparked a quiet revolution. Nearly 40 hectares of degraded land have been rejuvenated

through improved land-use practices rooted in this traditional system.

Managed scientifically—from sapling selection to pest control—these nurseries now supply native and climate-resilient species for agroforestry, ecological restoration projects, and even government plantation drives. Over 200 households, representing nearly 800 individuals, are now directly benefiting from this initiative. These nurseries not only green the landscape but also empower women with technical skills, economic opportunities, and a sense of ownership in climate action.

A striking example of this empowerment can be seen in the rise of scientific vermicomposting.

In one household, a pioneering woman began producing over 1,400 kilograms of high-quality compost annually using earthworms and organic kitchen waste. Her efforts soon gained attention, inspiring others in the community to adopt the method.

Today, vermicomposting has become a cornerstone of soil health across the region. This rich, organic fertilizer has not only improved productivity in homestead gardens but has also fostered a deep sense of self-reliance among small-scale farmers.

What began as a practical solution to reduce chemical dependency has grown into a regenerative practice, closing the loop between waste and nourishment.

The bari system, now revitalized through scientific practice and traditional knowledge, is showing that restoration here is not merely ecological—it is deeply cultural. In the Bhabar belt of Udalguri, where women are both cultivators and custodians of the land, this revival reflects a broader shift toward community-led stewardship. As native plants return and the soil heals, so does a legacy of resilience. The forest is slowly coming back, not through large-scale interventions, but through everyday acts of care—guided by wisdom, labor, and love.

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FORESTS

COMMUNITY-LED MITIGATION AND RESTORATION IN BHAIRABKUNDA

In the vulnerable forest fringes of Bhairabkunda Reserved Forest, once-flourishing biodiversity has been threatened by wildfires and invasive species. Under a collaborative model of Joint Forest Management, local villagers, women leaders, forest officials, and Aaranyak with GEF - SGP have come together to develop and implement an integrated forest fire mitigation and restoration strategy. This includes a dual approach of preventive infrastructure and active restoration, safeguarding both land and livelihoods. A key innovation has been the creation of 25 hectares of fire lines, not just as barren barriers, but as green firebreaks—lined with Aloe Vera, Lemon, and Banyan trees. These species are fire-resistant, multifunctional, and beneficial for local use, turning a safety measure into a productive ecological zone. The fire lines, 20–25 feet wide,

have been carefully maintained over two consecutive years, ensuring long-term protection from both wild and human-induced fires. In tandem with fire mitigation, a focused effort to uproot invasive alien species (IAP) —primarily Parthenium Hysterophorus, known for its aggressive spread and ecological harm—has begun across Bhairabunda Reserve Forest. This work, backed by a comprehensive fire management plan, aims to restore the natural balance of the ecosystem and prevent flammable invasive vegetation from escalating fire risks. The restoration does not stop at prevention. In 2024 alone, 10 hectares of degraded forest have been replanted with native tree species, contributing to a broader goal of 100 hectares of community-supported plantation. These initiatives reinforce two critical themes: forest protection and land restoration—not as isolated efforts but as interconnected parts of sustainable ecosystem management.

"This is not just about planting trees or removing weeds; it's about reclaiming our forests from neglect and recognizing our role as protectors,"
shared a community member involved in the fireline planting.

Local engagement has been the linchpin of this success. By blending scientific planning with traditional knowledge, the community has become a frontline defense against forest degradation. They understand that forest fires are not just environmental disasters they threaten identity, agriculture, and culture.

With this model of inclusive ecological governance, Bhairabkunda offers a replicable blueprint: when local people are empowered as co-managers, forests not only survive—they thrive.

SEEDS OF RESILIENCE

COMMUNITY-LED BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SEED SOVEREIGNTY IN ASSAM

Estd. 1999

In the rural landscapes of Nalbari, Assam, agricultural self-reliance, biodiversity, and community resilience is taking root. Through the collaborative efforts of local farmers, the Lotus Progressive Centre, and the Small Grants Programme, villages have initiated a dynamic model of conservation and food sovereignty rooted in traditional knowledge. Community biodiversity registers and decentralized seed banks have become the cornerstones of this movement, helping farmers document, preserve, and circulate indigenous seed varieties that have been nurtured over generations. These local seed repositories are stocked with paddy varieties like

Tulsi Joha, Mainagiri, Bonni, and flood-resistant strains, alongside a rich array of vegetables and spices. More than just storage units, these seed banks are hubs of knowledge and sustainability, supported by hands-on training in scientific seed storage, distribution of certified seeds, and the use of both traditional and modern storage tools such as bamboo containers and IRRI Super Bags. The environmental and economic impacts are significant. By reducing dependence on hybrid seeds and agrochemicals, the initiative promotes low-input, climate-resilient farming that safeguards oil health and strengthens crop resistance to floods and droughts. A robust seed exchange network reinforces genetic diversity and community bonds, particularly among smallholders and marginalized farmers. Women have emerged as key agents in this transformation, gaining technical knowledge, economic agency, and leadership roles in seed stewardship and cultivation of high-value crops like king chilli and turmeric. These grassroots efforts align closely with national biodiversity and agricultural policies, echoing the goals of the Biological Diversity Act and supporting People's Biodiversity Registers while contributing to Sustainable Development Goals related to hunger, climate action, and land conservation.

This model of community-led seed conservation is not only replicable but adaptable across agro-ecological zones. By centering indigenous knowledge and low-cost innovations, it offers a scalable blueprint for sustainable agriculture. Lessons learned emphasize that decentralization enhances resilience, traditional knowledge is a potent asset, and strategic capacity-building can catalyze significant change with minimal financial input. In Assam, the seed banks are more than a repository of crops infact they are a symbol of collective strength, ecological stewardship, and the promise of a food-secure future built from the ground up.

GOAT REARING FOR CHANGE

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN IN ASSAM

An innovative approach to goat rearing has been undertaken in Nalbari, Assam. Traditionally a low-output, backyard activity, goat farming in the region was limited by poor breeding practices, lack of veterinary care, and insufficient infrastructure. Recognizing the untapped potential of small livestock for rural livelihoods, the Lotus Progressive Centre partnered with GEF SGP and SHGs to launch a Scientific Goat Rearing Initiative. The program was aimed primarily at empowering rural women through modern husbandry techniques, sustainable practices, and microcredit support, turning a centuries-old tradition into a viable economic enterprise. At the heart of the initiative was a hands-on training model that equipped women with essential knowledge in breeding, animal health, and farm management. The construction of Chang Ghar—raised bamboo goat shelters—transformed the way livestock were housed, reducing disease and improving sanitation. Households received improved breeds and breeding stock, while loans of ₹20,000 to ₹50,000 enabled investments in infrastructure and feed. The integration of local knowledge with scientific methods paid off: mortality rates dropped, productivity improved, and many women reported earning between ₹25,000 and ₹1,00,000 annually through the sale of goats, manure, and breeding services.

The environmental benefits were equally impactful. The raised sheds curbed soil and water contamination during monsoons, while the promotion of manure as organic fertilizer reduced reliance on chemical inputs. The use of indigenous goat breeds ensured climate resilience and contributed to biodiversity preservation. Women began selling manure to local farmers, creating a circular economy that supports both livestock and crop production. By relying on bamboo and local materials for shelter construction, the program also promoted sustainable building practices, blending economic development with ecological stewardship. What began as a livelihood

enhancement effort quickly evolved into a platform for gender transformation.

As women took ownership of goat farms and began engaging with banks, veterinarians, and buyers, they emerged as local leaders and entrepreneurs. SHGs played a critical role in this transformation, offering peer support and accountability.

The social impact was visible: household dynamics shifted, with men increasingly supporting women-led ventures. Today, the program stands as a model of inclusive rural development —scalable, sustainable, and deeply rooted in community participation. With its alignment to national missions like NRLM and NLM, and its proven ability to generate income, empower women, and build resilience, the initiative offers a compelling blueprint for grassroots change.

FROM KITCHENS TO ENTERPRISES

EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN THROUGH LOCAL FLAVOURS

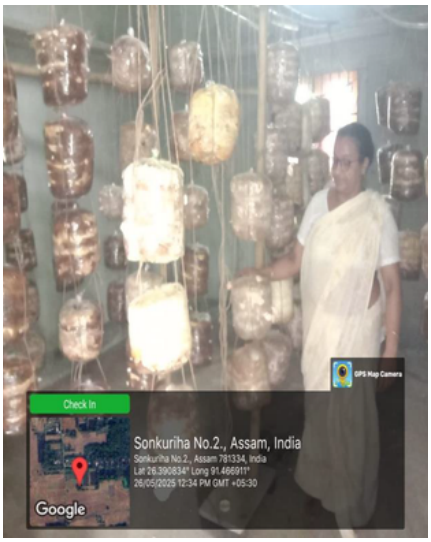
In the quiet villages of Assam's Nalbari district, women have transformed their kitchens into centers of economic productivity. Through the efforts of the Lotus Progressive Centre partnering with GEF-SGP, traditional household practices like making pickles, spice mixes, and snacks have evolved into structured, income-generating enterprises. Women from villages such as Bhadra, Ulabari, and Chandkuchi, many of whom had no prior business experience, are now running small food processing units, leveraging their cultural knowledge and local produce. The initiative, grounded in food preservation and entrepreneurship training, has enabled these women to gain technical skills, market insights, and a sense of ownership over their work and futures. The transformation was made possible through a comprehensive approach that includes hands-on training,

continuous mentoring, and essential infrastructure support. Training modules focused on local ingredients like Hog Plum (amara tenga), elephant apple (ou tenga), and banana flowers while also introducing mushroom cultivation and the preparation of ayurvedic powders. Participants were equipped with starter kits, guided in branding and pricing, and linked to local markets through fairs and exhibitions. With the support of the Project Implementation Unit, packaging and marketing became accessible skills, and for some even bank loans became viable, enabling further business growth. The initiative created a framework where skills translated into sustainable livelihoods rooted in culture and community.

The environmental and social impacts of this model are far-reaching. By emphasizing the use of seasonal and locally sourced produce, the program minimizes food miles and promotes efficient resource use, including the repurposing of by-products into ayurvedic items. Organic and chemical-free practices are encouraged, while recyclable packaging reduces waste. Socially, the steady income—ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 30,000 per month—has reshaped gender dynamics and improved standards of living.

Women now contribute significantly to household expenses and participate more actively in decision-making. The model has fostered self-help groups, peer mentorship networks, and even a growing local economy centered on women-led microenterprises.

This grassroots initiative exemplifies a replicable and scalable model of rural development and contributes directly to several Sustainable Development Goals, including those on poverty alleviation, gender equality, and sustainable economic growth. Its reliance on traditional knowledge, low capital investment, and community ownership makes it adaptable to other rural regions. The story of these women and their journey from subsistence producers to entrepreneurs not only inspires, but also highlights the power of community-driven, sustainable development anchored in local flavors and female leadership.



NATURAL FARMING IN ASSAM

A COMMUNITY-LED SHIFT

Assam's agricultural landscape, long grounded in traditional farming wisdom, has witnessed a growing dependency on chemical fertilizers and pesticides over recent decades. While these chemicals initially boosted crop productivity, their sustained use has led to soil degradation, contamination of groundwater, and an imbalance in local ecosystems, particularly impacting paddy and vegetable fields. Communities in Lower Assam have recognized the detrimental environmental and health effects, such as pest resistance and reduced biodiversity, prompting a grassroots movement toward eco-friendly farming methods.Supported by Lotus progressive Centre and GEF-SGP, farmers began exploring natural alternatives like bio-fertilizers and organic treatments, rekindling sustainable cultivation practices deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge. The project introduced bio-fertilizers such as Azotobacter, Azospirillum, and phosphate-

solubilizing bacteria, integrated with organic carriers like vermicompost, rice starch, and cow dung, across multiple treatment phases including seed, soil, and sapling care. These low-cost, locally sourced inputs have empowered resource-poor farmers to rejuvenate soil fertility, improve crop resilience, and enhance yields without relying on expensive synthetic chemicals. The hands-on approach emphasized seed coating, soil fermentation, and sapling dipping techniques tailored to crops such as paddy, turmeric, ginger, and various vegetables. The initiative's success lies in its accessibility, success lies in its accessibility and adaptability, enabling smallholder farmers to replicate and sustain these methods with minimal external support. Environmental benefits

from this transition have been profound. The natural farming practices have restored microbial diversity and soil organic carbon, improved water retention, and reduced harmful chemical runoff into rivers and ponds, thereby protecting aquatic biodiversity. These changes also contribute to climate resilience by enhancing the soil's carbon sequestration potential and mitigating the adverse effects of erratic weather patterns common in Assam's flood-prone areas. The circular use of farm waste, including cow dung and crop residues, has fostered nutrient recycling and minimized waste, further reinforcing sustainable agro-ecosystems. Additionally, by avoiding synthetic inputs, the carbon footprint of farming activities has diminished, aligning agricultural practices with broader climate action goals. Socioeconomic impacts have been equally significant, with

participating farmers reporting notable reductions in input costs and improvements in income stability due to enhanced crop health and yield consistency. Women's active involvement in training, input preparation, and community leadership has advanced gender equity in agricultural decision-making and economic participation. The success of community-led natural farming has also influenced local governance and extension systems, to support the project. This growing institutional recognition paves the way for scaling up the approach across Assam's diverse agro-ecological zones, promising a resilient and sustainable future for smallholder farming communities.

PHEROMONE TRAPS AND YELLOW STICKY CARDS

AGROECOLOGICAL PEST MANAGEMENT

Across the globe, agricultural systems are undergoing a necessary transition away from chemical pesticide dependence due to growing awareness of their harmful impacts on human health, biodiversity, and the environment. Agroecological pest control methods such as pheromone traps and yellow sticky cards promoted by initiatives like those of GEF-SGP and Lotus Progressive Centre offer viable alternatives that align with principles of sustainability. Pheromone traps, targeting specific pest species like moths, are installed at crop canopy height and emit synthetic sex pheromones to lure and trap male insects, thus interrupting mating cycles and reducing population growth. Yellow sticky cards, placed similarly above or within the crop canopy, use their bright color and adhesive surface to passively trap a wide range of flying insect pests, particularly whiteflies, thrips, aphids, and fungus gnats. Both tools serve as early warning systems

and reduce the need for reactive chemical spraying. Environmentally, these tools play a critical role in protecting ecosystems. Unlike synthetic pesticides that often contaminate soil and water and harm non-target organisms, pheromone traps and sticky cards have no toxic runoff and preserve beneficial insect populations such as bees and parasitoids. They help maintain ecological balance by supporting natural predator-prey relationships, reducing the development of pesticide resistance, and protecting biodiversity. Their continued use contributes to the regeneration of agroecosystems and the overall resilience of farming environments.

Economically, these methods are affordable and accessible, particularly for smallholder farmers. They reduce input costs by minimizing the need for chemical pesticides and improve crop marketability by avoiding pesticide residues—an important factor for accessing premium and organic markets. The reduction in chemical dependence also means fewer health-related expenses and a more stable yield, which translates into consistent income for farming households. Their simplicity and reusability make them a practical choice for low-input agricultural systems.

Socially and institutionally, pheromone traps and sticky cards promote safer farming environments and empower farmers with knowledge-based decision-making. Their integration into government programs and local farmer groups encourages widespread adoption and community cooperation. They align well with other sustainable practices such as intercropping and compost use, enhancing their relevance in integrated and climate-resilient farming systems. With adequate training and institutional support, these tools not only reduce chemical use but also strengthen the cultural and practical foundations of sustainable agriculture.

COMMUNITY NURSERY AND HOMESTEAD GARDENS

STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL RESILIENCE

The establishment of the community nursery was a strategic initiative aimed at reinforcing local agricultural systems and preserving biodiversity. Spearheaded by a collaboration between Lotus Progressive Centre, and GEF-SGP, the nursery was developed on approximately one hectare of land.

Comprehensive groundwork was undertaken to make the area suitable for nursery operations, including earth filling, land leveling, fencing, and the application of organic manure. This foundational work laid the path for a multifunctional nursery that serves

not only as a seedling production site but also as a demonstration and learning center for sustainable agriculture. Designed with a focus on inclusivity and long-term impact, the nursery features well-planned infrastructure and a robust implementation strategy.

Two polyhouses were constructed to enable year-round seedling cultivation, shielded from adverse weather conditions. Irrigation systems ensure consistent water supply, enhancing productivity. To promote organic farming, vermicompost units and earthen pits were introduced for producing high-quality bio-manure. These elements not only support nursery operations but also act as replicable models for farmers seeking to adopt organic practices in their own fields. The nursery emphasizes

capacity building by demonstrating how sustainable inputs and methods can directly contribute to soil health and crop resilience.

A key component of the nursery's success lies in its rich diversity of crops and seedlings. Indigenous varieties of paddy, a wide array of spices such as black pepper and cardamom, medicinal plants and a selection of fruit and vegetable species were cultivated. These seedlings were distributed to farming households throughout the project area, bolstering food security and promoting agro-biodiversity. Innovative techniques such as raised beds, floating beds, and biological pest control methods were showcased to visiting farmers and agricultural workers. These practices not only improve yields but also encourage environmentally sustainable agriculture in varied terrain and climatic conditions.

Community participation has been central to the project's success. More than 500 farm families across multiple villages benefited from regular access to quality planting materials. The nursery served as a dynamic center for outreach and knowledge exchange, drawing students, government officials, and extension workers to observe and learn. The distribution of mother plants to homestead gardens—particularly empowering women farmers—further decentralized propagation efforts, ensuring sustainability. Through its multifaceted approach, the community nursery has become a cornerstone of agricultural resilience and local empowerment.

FISH ENTREPRENEURS

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CONSERVATION AND INNOVATION

The fisheries sector holds immense potential not just for food security, but also for sustainable rural livelihoods. in Assam, a recent initiative involving SPREADNE and GEF-SGP, focusing on Fish Biodiversity Conservation and Utilization has demonstrated how targeted interventions can strengthen both ecological sustainability and community resilience—particularly for women in fish-farming households. The project reached around 1,000 community members, with 200 individuals receiving direct support in the form of training, inputs, and livelihood development activities. Significantly, over 80% of the direct beneficiaries were women, reflecting the project's commitment to gender-sensitive development and women's economic empowerment.

A key component of the initiative was the restoration of aquatic ecosystems. This ensured the work adhered to scientific and sustainable practices, ultimately supporting

long-term productivity. Restoration efforts were conducted in areas such as Thongthongia, Kheluwa Moneri, and Borbilla Beel, where a rich variety of indigenous fish species were identified. These included Anabas testudineus (Kawai), Channa striatus (Sol), Puntius ticto (Puthi), Monopterus cuchia (Cuchia), among others. Conservation of these native species is vital for preserving biodiversity and enhancing local aquaculture systems. The project emphasized value addition and post-harvest management to boost incomes.

Specialized training sessions were conducted on the preparation of fish-based products, such as fish pickles and dried fish.

Participants learned hygienic processing techniques, improved preservation methods, and packaging and marketing strategies. These skills enabled beneficiaries especially women to turn surplus fish into profitable products, reducing waste while tapping into higher-value markets. To further strengthen income generating capacity, the project introduced training on fish smoking, a traditional preservation method enhanced through modern smoking kilns. Beneficiaries received hands-on instruction in operating these kilns, pre-treating fish, maintaining hygiene, and using energy-efficient techniques. A total of eight smoking kilns were distributed among selected fish farmers and women entrepreneurs.

This intervention not only improved the quality and shelf life of smoked fish but also opened new avenues for local and regional sales,

contributing to enhanced household incomes. By combining traditional knowledge with scientific approaches, the project encouraged micro-entrepreneurship in the fisheries sector. It has created alternative livelihood options, reduced post-harvest losses, and promoted women's participation in natural resource management. This integrated approach highlights the potential of the fisheries sector to contribute meaningfully to rural development, ecological sustainability, and women's empowerment. As communities in Nalbari continue to build on this foundation, the model offers lessons for scaling similar efforts to other regions.

WEEDS TO NEEDS

TRANSFORMING WATER HYACINTH INTO A SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE

Vermicompost

In an inspiring example of innovation meeting sustainability, a visionary project by SPREADNE and GEF-SGP has successfully redefined the narrative around Water Hyacinth—an invasive aquatic weed. Under the transformative concept of "Weed to Need," what was once considered an ecological nuisance is now being repurposed into valuable community resources. Known for choking wetlands and threatening biodiversity, Water Hyacinth was creatively utilized through vermicomposting. These efforts not only mitigated the environmental impact of the weed but also created new opportunities for livelihood and ecological restoration. The first major stride in the project involved the production of vermicompost using Water Hyacinth. small farmers, were engaged in this eco-friendly initiative. A total of 200 vermibeds were distributed, and beneficiaries were trained to convert the weed blended with cow dung and organic waste

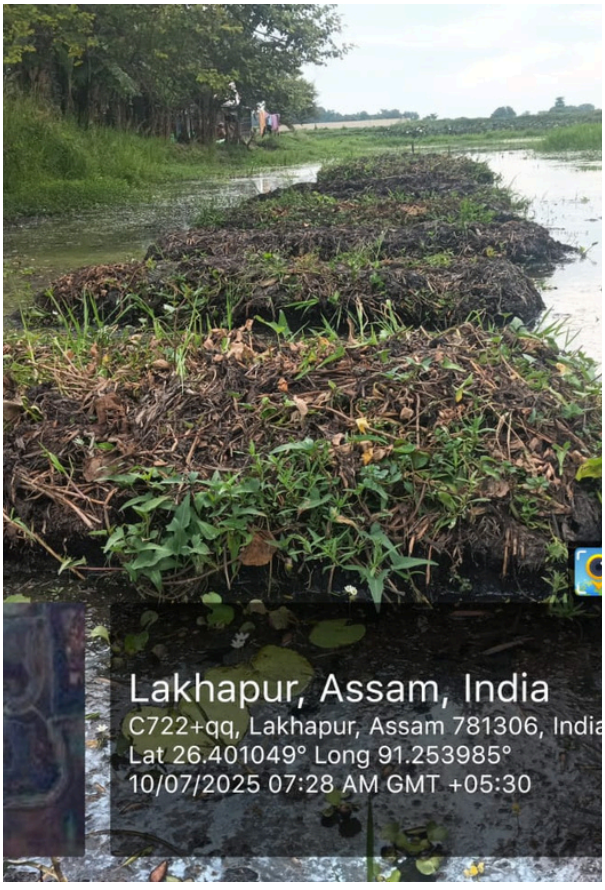
into nutrient-rich compost. This organic fertilizer improved soil fertility while reducing dependence on chemical alternatives. The process not only helped restore the health of wetlands by removing excess weed biomass but also generated a new source of income for rural households. By turning waste into wealth, the intervention significantly contributed to both environmental management and economic empowerment.

Dhakhala Khar and Handicrafts

Building on this success, the second phase of the initiative focused on reviving and scientifically standardizing Dakhala Khar, a traditional alkaline extract with deep roots in Assamese culinary and medicinal practices. Historically made from the ashes of dried Water Hyacinth stems, Dakhala Khar was known for treating stomach ailments and enhancing food flavor. The project documented indigenous knowledge, refined the production process, and introduced a scientifically validated protocol to ensure quality and safety. Controlled burning techniques were employed to reduce environmental damage, and field tests confirmed the efficacy of the final product. In doing so, the project preserved traditional knowledge while creating potential for small-scale enterprises based on a sustainably sourced, culturally significant product. Complementing these efforts, the initiative also provided training in Water Hyacinth-based handicrafts, further expanding livelihood options. What once degraded ecosystems is now a driver of rural innovation and economic resilience. By integrating scientific methods with traditional wisdom, the "Weed to Need" project stands as a powerful model of how environmental challenges can be transformed into community-driven solutions. It not only restored ecological balance but also empowered local communities with skills, income, and renewed pride in their heritage.

Seed bed

Communities in this region have long transformed the overgrowth of water hyacinth—an invasive plant that clogs waterways—into a resource for sustainable farming. By weaving the fibrous plants into rafts and layering them with soil and organic matter, farmers create floating seedbeds ideal for cultivating crops in flood-prone areas. These buoyant platforms rise and fall with water levels, protecting seedlings from submersion during floods, and turning a major ecological problem into a practical agricultural asset.



This adaptive method reflects generations of ecological insight and innovation. It not only addresses land scarcity and flooding but also contributes to environmental management by controlling water hyacinth spread through purposeful use. The practice embodies resilience and sustainability, offering a low-cost, locally sourced solution to food security challenges. Passed down through community knowledge systems, this technique reveals how traditional wisdom can offer answers to modern-day environmental and agricultural issues. As demonstrated by SPREAD NE in Nalbari, such practices deserve wider recognition and support, especially in a time when climate-resilient, resource-efficient farming is more crucial than ever.

NATURAL FARMING HUB

TRANSFORMING VILLAGES FOR ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

AZOLLA CULTIVATION

With the broader initiative promoting ecological farming, the project led by SPREADNE and GEF-SGP introduced Azolla cultivation as a sustainable solution to enhance livestock management. Azolla, a fast-growing aquatic fern rich in protein, is an effective natural feed supplement for cattle, poultry, and fish. To ensure its adoption at the grassroots level, farmers received hands-on training to cultivate Azolla in tarpaulin-lined pits which are affordable and easily replicable structures that fit within home spaces like courtyards and backyards. Once these beds are established, they require minimal maintenance yet produce a steady yield of nutrient-rich biomass, offering a reliable source of feed throughout the year.

The introduction of Azolla cultivation has delivered several tangible benefits for rural communities. Regular feeding of Azolla has led to better animal health, increased milk production, and overall improvement in livestock performance, helping farmers reduce their reliance on expensive commercial feed. This has not only boosted household savings but also improved farm-level resilience. Notably, women have actively taken the lead in managing Azolla beds, turning this intervention into a valuable source of supplementary income. By integrating ecological practices with livelihood enhancement, the initiative has strengthened food security and economic stability, especially for small-scale farmers and women-led households.

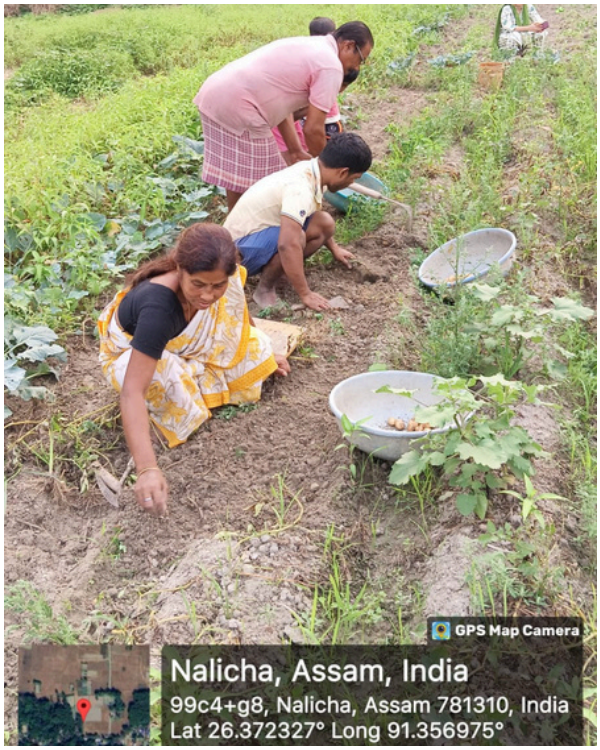
LEMON CULTIVATION

To enhance income diversification and boost horticultural practices, the project led by SPREADNE and GEF-SGP promoted lemon cultivation through the use of leaf bud cuttings—a method known for producing disease-free, uniform, and high-yielding plants. This vegetative propagation technique proved superior to conventional seedling methods by reducing time and costs. Farmers were trained in nursery management, including the selection of healthy mother plants and the preparation of cuttings. These practices ensured quicker plant establishment, early fruiting, and consistent yields. With hands-on knowledge and practical skills, farmers could propagate saplings independently, enhancing both productivity and self-reliance.

The initiative yielded significant results on the ground. Lemon farming gained popularity due to its adaptability to local agro-climatic conditions, offering farmers a reliable source of income either as a mainstay or side activity. Leaf bud cutting methods made propagation affordable, particularly benefiting small and marginal farmers who otherwise faced high costs for quality saplings. The rise of on-farm nurseries added a new dimension, allowing farmers to generate income by selling saplings. To support this further, each beneficiary received ten 60-day-old lemon saplings, giving them a head start in establishing plantations. Together, training and material support created a strong foundation for sustained horticultural development and rural livelihood improvement.

POTATO CULTIVATION

The initiative by SPREADNE and GEF-SGP, recognizing the vital role of potato farming in the region's rural economy, emphasized the promotion of advanced cultivation techniques to boost productivity and profitability. As a major cash crop, potatoes hold significant promise when cultivated with scientific precision. Farmers were introduced to a comprehensive set of best practices, including the use of certified seed tubers, optimal spacing, mulching with water hyacinth, and improved post-harvest handling. Using water hyacinth as mulch offered a dual advantage—suppressing weeds and conserving soil moisture while repurposing an otherwise invasive plant in an environmentally beneficial manner.



Through field demonstrations and close technical support from agricultural experts, farmers gained the confidence to implement these improved techniques. As a result, crop health and yields showed noticeable improvements. The area under potato cultivation expanded, and farmers began harvesting larger, more uniform tubers with extended shelf life, enhancing their value in the market. Empowered by training, local farmers became more self-reliant in managing their crops using modern methods. To further support this growth, market linkages were established with local buyers and aggregators, helping farmers secure better prices while minimizing dependence on exploitative middlemen. The initiative thus strengthened both the productivity and resilience of potato farming in the area.

ARECA NUT—AN ALLY

RENEWING HOPE THROUGH GREEN INITIATIVE

The NGO Green Valley Society and GEF-SGP has led an inspiring initiative to plant areca nut trees and introduce sustainable livelihoods through eco-friendly practices. By planting areca trees, the project not only reconnects the community with its natural heritage but also strengthens the resilience of a fragile landscape long vulnerable to degradation. As the saplings mature, they will help stabilize soil, improve groundwater retention, and provide habitat for local biodiversity—all crucial for the health of the region. Along with areca nut sapling distribution GVS has also distributed lemon, blackpepper and coconut saplings.

What sets this initiative apart is its blend of ecological restoration and livelihood generation. Alongside planting, the project has installed an areca leaf plate-making machine, offering villagers a sustainable income source by converting fallen areca palm leaves into biodegradable plates. This simple innovation taps into the growing demand for eco-friendly alternatives to plastic and simultaneously reduces waste. Though the innovation is still in its nascent stage, we remain hopeful that it will receive the necessary approvals for commercial sale in the near future.

FROM PONDS TO PROSPERITY

SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS THROUGH POND DEVELOPMENT FISHERIES TRAINING

The journey began with the Green Valley Society in partnership with GEF-SGP identifying and developing suitable ponds in Dhubri to promote local fish farming. These ponds were prepared with natural habitat considerations, focusing on long-term sustainability, water conservation, and community use. This foundational work created a solid base for the next phase: training local beneficiaries to manage these water bodies effectively through eco-friendly practices. The Green Valley Society, Dhubri, continues to make strides in sustainable livelihood initiatives by combining ecological conservation with community empowerment. In its latest effort, the society successfully conducted a one-day training program on natural interventions in fisheries, following the successful development of community ponds in the region.

The fisheries training brought together enthusiastic community members, grassroots organizations, and aquaculture experts. the event focused on natural interventions in fisheries—including organic pond management, native species cultivation, water health monitoring, and feed alternatives that reduce environmental impact.

A major highlight of the training was the distribution of fish seedlings to the participants. These seedlings were specially chosen to adapt to local pond conditions and provide a sustainable food and income source for the beneficiaries. With proper care and knowledge gained from the training, these fish are expected to significantly improve household nutrition and support small-scale livelihood generation.

WEAVING LIVELIHOODS

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH HANDLOOM WEAVING PROJECT

SNEHPAD, with co-finance support from Mission Samriddhi and GEF - SGP, has successfully implemented a Handloom Weaving Project by introducing high-yield Jacquard Handloom Technology to traditional women weavers, boosting productivity and meeting rising local and Bhutan border market demands for ERI Silk products. A Handloom Common Facility Centre equipped with Jacquard Looms and a Warping Drum was established, and 100 weavers received three months of training, followed by support for commercial production using Cotton and ERI Yarn. Additionally, an ERI Silk Yarn Spinning and Reeling Centre was set up, training 100 spinners now producing quality yarn mechanically.

As a further step SNEHPAD initiated the plantation of 1,000 Kecheru plants to support ERI Silk Worm Rearers in the project area, recognizing that Kecheru leaves are a vital food source for the worms which produce ERI Cocoons which is the raw material for ERI Silk Yarn. These scientifically grown and healthy plants were sourced from the Central ERI and Muga Research Institute and distributed to women ERI Rearers for planting on their own land. To supplement this, SNEHPAD also provided 10 kilograms of Castor Seeds to enable quick cultivation of additional worm feed, ensuring a steady supply of leaves.

GOLDEN LANGUR

CONSERVATION EFFORTS BEAR FRUIT IN ASSAM

Sprawling over 17.24 sq km in Assam's Bongaigaon district, Kakoijana Reserved Forest shelters one of India's most important colonies of the endangered Golden Langur. Approximately 450 of these striking primates swing through the canopy, sharing their arboreal world with an impressive array of butterflies and birds whose flashes of colour enliven the dense greenery. The forest's mosaic of sal, teak and bamboo stands provides shelter, but seasonal shortages of fruiting trees increasingly force langur troops toward fringe villages, exposing them to dogs, poachers and power lines increasing the risk of human-wildlife conflict and endangering their survival.. Preserving Kakoijana's fragile food web is therefore critical to safeguarding its flagship species. Responding to this urgent need, SNEHPAD launched a landscape-level food security drive under GEF -SGP, mobilising forest staff, local youth and women's self-help groups to plant 9,000 fruit-bearing saplings —such as fig, jackfruit, mango and wild guava—in natural gaps inside Kakoijana and on adjacent community lands. The enrichment planting covers roughly 52.5 hectares, creating green corridors that link canopy crowns and ensure the langurs can browse year-round without descending to the ground. As the trees mature, they will also stabilise soil, recharge groundwater, and enhance pollinator habitat, amplifying biodiversity benefits while demonstrating how community stewardship can reinforce protected-area management. The initiative enjoys strong local support. Reports from the area suggest a noticeable decline in Golden Langur road-crossing incidents and fewer intrusions into the forest for fuelwood or fodder, indicating a positive shift towards coexistence and conservation of this endangered species.

BEE VITAL

HONEYBEE APIARIES ARE TRANSFORMING ECOSYSTEM AND EMPOWERING FARMERS

The presence of honey bees is crucial for maintaining biodiversity across the globe, as their role in pollination supports the growth of many plants, fruits, and flowers. It is often said that if honeybees were to disappear, human survival on Earth would be limited to just four years due to the collapse of ecosystems dependent on them. Recognizing this critical importance, the GEF-SGP Project, through the implementing agency SNEHPAD, has introduced scientific beekeeping using low-cost bamboo bee boxes in villages near the Kakoijana Reserved Forest. SNEHPAD installed 100 bamboo bee boxes, each managed by a local farmer, to ensure proper maintenance and survival of the bee colonies. This initiative leverages the technology developed by CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat, promoting sustainable and scientific practices in the region. The introduction of these bee colonies is expected to yield multiple benefits, including the production of high-quality honey and the enhancement of local flora through improved pollination. This, in turn, will contribute to maintaining healthy biodiversity in the Kakoijana forest area by supporting flowering plants and fruit trees. Beyond ecological benefits, the project aims to increase farmers' income by providing them with an additional livelihood source through beekeeping. This harmonious approach not only strengthens the ecological balance but also empowers the local community, fostering a sustainable model that benefits both nature and people.

LOTUS PROGRESSIVE CENTRE

SPREADNE

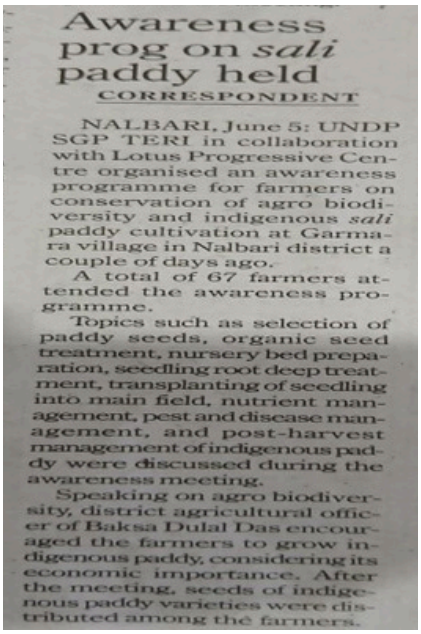
AARANYAK

NGO MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

মৰোৱাত কৃষকৰ
বাবে সৌৰচালিত যন্ত্ৰ মুকলি

ঢকুৰাবান্ধাত
র্জুন তালুকদাৰৰ
শ্ৰদ্ধাঞ্জলি অনুষ্ঠান
'সব্যসাচী' উন্মোচন

প্রতিদিন সেৱা, ৰৰভাগ, ১৬ মার্চ ঃ নলবাৰী কৃষি বিভাগৰ মুখ্য পৃষ্ঠপোষকতাত ইউ এন ডি পি, এছ জি পি, নাবার্ড, ল'টাছ প্ৰগ্ৰেছিভ চেণ্টাৰ তথা নবাৰুণ এগ্ৰিকালচাৰেল প্ৰডিউচাৰ এণ্ড মার্কেটিং কো-অপাৰেটিভ ছ'চাইটি লিমিটেডৰ উদ্যোগত তেৰ মার্চত ৰৰভাগৰ মৰোৱা শংকৰদেৱ ক্ষেত্ৰত সৌৰচালিত ধান আৰু সৰিয়হ শুকুৱাব পৰা যন্ত্ৰ এটা উদ্ঘাটন কৰা হয়। সৌৰচালিত যন্ত্ৰটো মুকলি কৰে প্ৰাক্তন বিধায়ক তথা গুৱাহাটী নগৰ উন্নয়ন প্ৰাধিকৰণৰ অধ্যক্ষ নাৰায়ণ ডেকাই। অনুষ্ঠানত নলবাৰী জিলাৰ আয়ুক্ত বৰ্ণালী ডেকাই বিশিষ্ট অতিথি হিচাপে উপস্থিত থাকে। সভাত নলবাৰী জিলাৰ জিলা কৃষি বিষয়া প্ৰবীণ মেধি, নলবাৰী কৃষি বিজ্ঞান কেন্দ্ৰৰ মুখ্য বিষয়া মনোজ কুমাৰ ভূঞা, ৰৰভাগ উন্নয়ন খণ্ডৰ খণ্ড উন্নয়ন বিষয়া অপূর্ব কুমাৰ চক্রবর্তী, কৃষি উন্নয়ন বিষয়া বিচা শইকীয়া, নলবাৰী কৃষি বিভাগৰ সহকাৰী পৰিদর্শক দিপুল কলিতা, খণ্ড কাৰিকৰী বিষয়া জিণ্টু বাজবংশী, আন্তঃৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় ধান গবেষণা কেন্দ্ৰৰ কনিষ্ঠ বিজ্ঞানী অঞ্জন দীপ শইকীয়া, শংকৰদেৱ নামঘৰ পৰিচালনা সমিতিৰ সভাপতি বিনোদ বৰুৱা, কৃষি বিপণন সমন্বয়ক সতোন তালুকদাৰ আৰু ল'টাছ গ্ৰ'গ্ৰেছিভ চেণ্টাৰসমূহ বিষয়ববীয়া উপস্থিত থাকে।



Awareness prog on *sali* paddy held

CORRESPONDENT

NALBARI, June 5: UNDP SGP TERI in collaboration with Lotus Progressive Centre organised an awareness programme for farmers on conservation of agro biodiversity and indigenous *sali* paddy cultivation at Garmara village in Nalbari district a couple of days ago.

A total of 67 farmers attended the awareness programme.

Topics such as selection of paddy seeds, organic seed treatment, nursery bed preparation, seedling root deep treatment, transplanting of seedling into main field, nutrient management, pest and disease management, and post-harvest management of indigenous paddy were discussed during the awareness meeting.

Speaking on agro biodiversity, district agricultural officer of Baksa Dulal Das encouraged the farmers to grow indigenous paddy, considering its economic importance. After the meeting, seeds of indigenous paddy varieties were distributed among the farmers.

জাগাৰাত পাঁচদিনীয়াকৈ পানী মেটেকাৰ পৰা বেগ বনোৱা কৰ্মশালাৰ সামৰণি

নগেন তালুকদাৰ, নলবাৰী, ২৬ জুন ঃ নলবাৰী জিলাৰ পশ্চিম নলবাৰীৰ অন্তৰ্গত জাগাৰা সৰৱ

কেলিবিজ'ৰ
াচন

জনগণৰ অপ্রতিৰোধ্য কণ্ঠ

গণ সংবাদ

গুৱাহাটী, কোকৰাঝাৰ আৰু ঘোৰহাটৰ পৰা প্ৰকাশিত

RNI : ASSASS/2008/27501

নলবাৰীৰ জাগাৰাত স্প্রেড এন ই স্বেচ্ছাসেৰী সংগঠনটোৰ দ্বাৰা মহিলা সকলোক মেটেকাৰ পৰা বেগ আৰু অন্যান্য হস্তশিল্প সামগ্ৰী বনোৱাৰ প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদান

আক্রাছুৰ বণ্ডাইগাঁও
জিলা সমিতি আৰু মহিলা সমিতি
গঠন; আন্দোলনৰ হুংকাৰ

Assam News

Assam: Aaranyak Guides Udalguri Farmers on Sustainable Livelihood Through Nursery Training

The farmers' active participation in discussions provided them with practi knowledge for improving their nurseries and gardens.

Human-elephant conflict-affected women in Assam's Udalguri trained on nursery management

by Northeast News — May 6, 2024 in Assam

Share on Facebook Share on Twitter

GUWAHATI: A group of community women affected by human-elephant conflict (HEC) in Assam's Udalguri district have received hands-on training in nursery management to enhance their skills in nurturing community-operated nurseries.

TISS TEAM FIELD VISITS

Aaranyak

Lotus Progressive Centre

Lotus Progressive Centre

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

DATE: 27-06-2025 VENUE: TISS, GUWAHATI

SGP INDIA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR NORTH EASTERN REGION

THEME:

Living Landscapes: Biodiversity & Sustainable Practices in NER

Issue: 2025/2 (April-June, 2025)

PART II

SGP-India Quarterly Newsletter for Coastal and Semi-Arid Landscapes

Theme: Conserving Earth-With SGP

PREFACE

The Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), launched at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, empowers communities to address environmental challenges while improving local livelihoods. India joined the programme in 1996, and over the years, it has grown from scattered initiatives into integrated, landscape-based interventions.

In its Seventh Operational Phase (OP7), SGP-India—implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and coordinated nationally by TERI—supports 59 projects across three ecologically critical landscapes: 22 in the biodiversity-rich Northeast Region (NER), 20 in the water-stressed Central Semi-Arid Region (CSAR), and 17 in the climate-sensitive Indian Coastal Region (ICR). The Council for Social Development (CSD) leads knowledge management and communication in the CSAR and ICR landscapes.

This second quarterly newsletter prepared by CSD showcases grassroots stories from CSAR and ICR, along with highlights of key events such as celebrating significant days, capacity-building workshops, review meetings, and SGP-grantee's media coverage.

With Earth Day, International Biodiversity Day, World Environment Day, and World Oceans Day falling within this quarter (April 22, May 22, June 5, and June 8), the theme for this issue is "Conserving Earth – With SGP". Although all 37 interventions in CSAR and ICR contribute to this theme, this edition spotlights on select stories from the two landscapes.

We thank you for reading and look forward to your continued support.

Dr. Susmita Mitra, CSD
Dr. Jayanti Saha, CSD
Dr. Dhiman Debsarma, CSD

Vasundhara ki Sanrakshan-SGP ke Sang (Conserving Earth-With SGP): Stories from the Ground

Empowering Ratnagiri's Women: HealingLand & Livelihood with Medicinal and Spice Plants in Mahrashtra

In the serene coastal villages of Ratnagiri's Sangameshwar block, women are discovering new ways to nurture their land and their livelihoods. Through the GEF Small Grants Programme, Shramjivi Janata Sahayyak Mandal has distributed medicinal and spice plants— turmeric, ginger, tulsi, and more—to women farmers across nine villages. These plants carry healing benefits, nutritional value, and income potential, while reviving traditional knowledge passed down through generations.

As the women tend to their new crops, they also learn to make herbal products, opening fresh livelihood avenues. Beyond boosting incomes, the initiative strengthens biodiversity conservation in the ecologically sensitive region. Each plant connects the women more deeply to their environment, reminding them that caring for the Earth is also caring for their families and community. In this shared journey of growth, the women of Ratnagiri stand as both knowledge keepers and environmental stewards—proving that when women flourish, the Earth thrives too.

Fragrant Fields, Greener Future in Mettu Thottiyangulam, Tamil Nadu

In the quiet village of Mettu Thottiyangulam, Tamil Nadu, farmer L. Vellaiyan has turned his Jasmine fields into a model of organic farming. With support from VIDIYAL and the GEF Small Grants Programme, he learned to replace chemical inputs with vermicompost, enriching the soil and nurturing healthier plants. Training sessions and quality compost provided under the initiative helped him improve soil fertility, retain moisture, and boost plant resilience.

The results are clear—his Jasmine now blooms with richer fragrance, lasts longer after harvest, and fetches higher prices in the market. This shift has lowered his farming costs, restored the ecological balance of his land, and increased demand for his flowers. Vellaiyan's journey shows how knowledge and eco-friendly practices can work hand in hand, creating livelihoods that care for the Earth while keeping traditions alive.

Ripples of Change: Community Unites to Clean the Sunar Riverbank in Madhya Pradesh

In Aslana village of Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, the Sunar River is more than just water—it is life for the community. But over time, waste and neglect had begun to choke its banks. This quarter, Gram Bharti Mahila Mandal, with support from the GEF Small Grants Programme, brought the village together for a riverbank clean-up.

Women, youth, and elders worked side by side, clearing debris and preparing the land for a monsoon plantation to revive the river ecosystem. The day ended with a collective pledge to protect local water bodies, turning the clean-up into a movement for change.

The success in Aslana has inspired similar actions in four neighboring villages, proving that when communities unite, they can restore nature's balance. Here, the ripples of change are not just in the river—they flow through the hearts and minds of the people, conserving Earth for generations to come.

From Dry Lands to Thriving Farms: Community Water Solutions in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh

In Khakariya Khurd, a small village in Madhya Pradesh's Bundelkhand region, farming once struggled under the weight of dry, unproductive land. With support from the GEF Small Grants Programme, TERI–UNDP, and Gramin Vikas Samiti, the community came together to change this story. Guided by the Gram Sabha and backed by strong Panchayat leadership, they excavated two farm ponds designed to store nearly 10,000 cubic metres of water each.

These ponds now keep 60 hectares of farmland moist, enabling better crop yields and reducing farmers' dependence on erratic rains. The initiative is also expected to raise groundwater levels by 2–3 metres, ensuring water security for years to come. What began as a village effort has grown into a model for the entire Tendu Kheda block—showing that when communities plan, participate, and work together, they can turn parched lands into fertile fields while conserving Earth's precious water resources.

Jal Sahelis Lead the Way to Water-Secure Villages in Madhya Pradesh

In the drought-prone villages of Bundelkhand, water is life—and women are leading the way to protect it. With support from the GEF Small Grants Programme, Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan launched the "100 Days of Voluntary Labour for Water Conservation" campaign on April 25, 2025. At its heart are the Jal Sahelis—women water leaders—who, alongside villagers young and old, are reviving traditional water sources.

From cleaning silt-choked ponds to deepening wells and streams, their work is restoring the capacity of these vital lifelines before the harsh summer months arrive. The campaign has already brought new life to 80 water sites across the Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Niwari, Jhansi, Lalitpur, and Jalaun districts. More than just infrastructure repair, this is about community spirit—people taking ownership of their water, their future, and their environment. With each restored pond and well, Bundelkhand moves closer to a future where every village is water-secure.

Sengenendal's Pond: A Well of Hope in Tamil Nadu

In Sengenendal, a quiet village in Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram district, water scarcity once limited farming and livelihoods. With support from the GEF Small Grants Programme, UNDP India, and TERI, the Sri Kannapiran Educational & Charitable Trust led the revival of the village pond. Guided by a community- led restoration approach, the pond was deepened by 1,000 m^3, now holding up to 10,000 m^3 of water.

The change is remarkable—about 200 acres of farmland are cultivable again, benefiting over 40 farmers with improved crop yields and stable incomes. Villagers proudly see their pond not just as a water source, but as the heart of their community's resilience.

The revival proves that when local stewardship meets sustainable support, landscapes can flourish, livelihoods can grow, and hope can return. In Sengenendal, the restored pond is more than water— it is a promise of a greener, more secure future.

Restoring Sacred Groves, Reviving Coastal Biodiversity in Tamil Nadu

In Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu, the once-degraded sacred groves are coming back to life. With support from the GEF Small Grants Programme, SPEED has led the restoration of 20 hectares of these ecologically and culturally significant spaces in the Indian Coastal Region.

A total of 22,340 saplings of native tropical evergreen tree species have been planted, creating the foundation for vibrant ecosystems that shelter diverse flora and fauna while strengthening resilience to climate change.

Sacred groves have long been community treasures—protecting biodiversity and nurturing cultural traditions—and their revival is reconnecting people with nature. This success is rooted in collaboration, with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Botanical Gardens Auroville, Isha Foundation, and others contributing technical expertise and saplings. Together, they have shown how local stewardship and partnerships can restore natural heritage, conserve indigenous species, and ensure that these green sanctuaries continue to thrive for generations.

Greening the Semi-Arid Heartland with Seed Balls in Madhya Pradesh

In the dry landscapes of Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, hope is taking root—quite literally. Under the GEF Small Grants Programme's OP7 initiative, Gram Bharti Mahila Mandal has begun an innovative afforestation drive using seed balls made by local women and volunteers.

Each seed ball, containing Neem and other hardy native species, is a tiny package of life. Once scattered across the land, they wait for the monsoon rains to awaken them, sprouting into trees without the need for constant care.

This simple, low-cost method restores green cover, improves soil health, reduces erosion, and strengthens climate resilience in the Central Semi-Arid Region.

Beyond planting trees, the initiative is planting awareness—encouraging the community to protect and cherish their natural resources. What started as 500 seed balls could grow into a forest, showing how small, collective actions can make a lasting difference for the Earth and its people.

Earth Day Celebrations

Greening Tomorrow: Vasundhara Day Celebration in Coastal Maharashtra

As part of the SGP-India OP7 initiative, Anubhav Pratishthan Trust marked World Earth/Vasundhara Day with an inspiring community-led celebration in Tiware village, Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra. The event brought together Self-Help Groups, Producer Groups, Farmers' Groups, and local residents for a series of eco-conscious activities, including tree plantation, plastic-free campaigns, and cleanliness drives.

Organized in collaboration with schools, colleges, social organizations, and local self-government bodies, the campaign aimed to instill environmental awareness, especially among students, and promote sustainable habits. This collective effort reflects a shared commitment to building a cleaner, greener, and healthier future for all.

Women Farmers Lead Earth Day Celebrations in Maharshtra

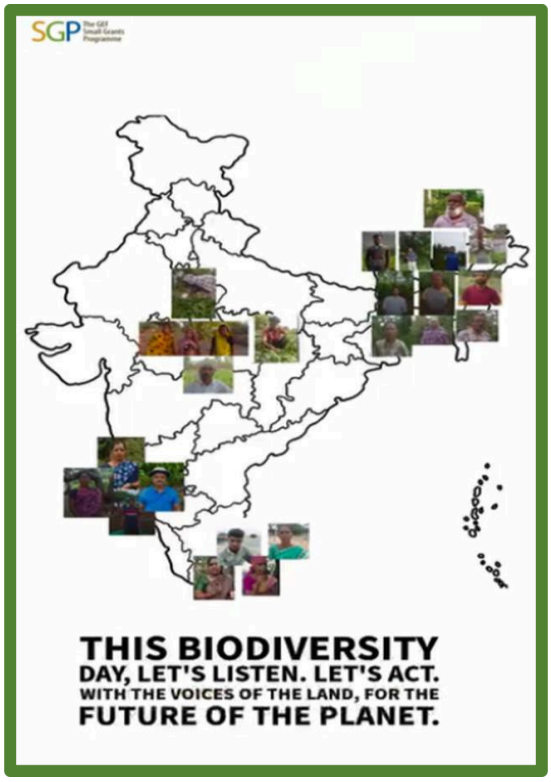
On the occasion of World Earth Day, SGP-India OP7 grantee Shramjivi Janata Sahayyak Mandal organized an inspiring workshop in Vighrawali village, Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra, to raise awareness about environmental conservation in the coastal region.

Women farmers actively participated in a vibrant tree plantation drive, symbolizing their deep-rooted commitment to protecting nature. The event also included a collective pledge to safeguard the environment for future generations. This community-driven initiative highlights Shramjivi's ongoing efforts to promote sustainable practices and empower local communities to become champions of environmental stewardship.

International Biodiversity Day Celebration

Voices for the Earth: Local Guardians from Five States Speak for Biodiversity

To mark International Biodiversity Day, SGP-India released a special video celebrating the voices of nature's unsung heroes—the local guardians of our planet. Community members from SGP-supported projects across five states shared, in their own languages and dialects, what biodiversity means to them and how they are working to protect it.



Filmed against the stunning backdrops of their unique landscapes—from coastal groves and riverbanks to forests and farmlands—their stories formed a vibrant collage of grassroots conservation in action. Each voice reflected deep knowledge, cultural connection, and personal commitment to safeguarding the Earth's natural wealth.

This collective message not only celebrated biodiversity but also highlighted the vital role of local communities in preserving it for future generations. By amplifying these voices, SGP showcased how everyday actions by ordinary people are making an extraordinary impact—keeping our shared planet rich in life, beauty, and resilience.

World Environmental Day Celebration

Pariyavaran ki Baat, SGP ke Saath: Voices of Grassroots Guardians of Conservations On World Environment Day, SGP-India launched a weekly YouTube series—Pariyavaran ki Baat, SGP ke Saath—to bring grassroots conservation stories to the forefront. The series aims to highlight how community-led actions are driving progress toward national and global environmental goals.

Through the Small Grants Programme, women, tribal communities, and smallholder farmers have emerged as true custodians of natural resources—reviving degraded lands, protecting biodiversity, and building resilience to climate change. Their work blends traditional wisdom with innovative practices, proving that meaningful environmental change begins at the grassroots.

Each week, Pariyavaran ki Baat, SGP ke Saath shares inspiring stories of resilience, innovation, and collective action from across India. These voices and visuals not only celebrate the communities safeguarding our planet but also remind us that conserving Earth is a shared responsibility—and that local action has the power to shape a sustainable future.

World Oceans Day Celebration

Protecting Blue Frontiers: MSSRF Leads Community-Driven Ocean Cleanup on World Oceans Day in Tamil Nadu

To commemorate World Oceans Day, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), under the Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), organized a focused shoreline and underwater cleanup drive along India's coastal stretch. The initiative aimed to retrieve abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear—often referred to as "ghost gear"—which poses a serious threat to marine life and biodiversity.

With active participation from local fishers, divers, and coastal community members, the event served as a powerful example of how collective community action can address the growing issue of marine pollution. By combining traditional knowledge with conservation awareness, the campaign not only helped clean the ocean but also encouraged sustainable marine practices. This World Oceans Day, MSSRF's effort highlighted the urgent need to protect our oceans, restore marine ecosystems, and ensure that coastal communities continue to thrive in harmony with nature.

Capacity Building Workshops

Capacity Building Workshop forRenewableEnergyandEnergyEfficiency Projects for NGO Partners under SGP India Programme in Goa

A Capacity Building Workshop on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects for NGO Partners under the SGP India Programme was organized on 9th April 2025 in Goa. Dr. Vibha Dhawan, Director General – TERI, reflected on humanity's evolving relationship with nature, reminding participants that we borrow the Earth from future generations rather than inherit it. She contrasted past sustainable living practices with today's consumer-driven culture, highlighting the adverse health effects of urban pollution. Citing India's natural advantage in solar energy, she noted that energy insecurity remains a significant barrier to rural development. She emphasized that reliable energy access is vital for rural prosperity and advocated for scalable, sustainable innovations that link environmental sustainability with economic empowerment.

Dr. Dipankar Saharia, Senior Director – TERI, highlighted the strategic objectives of the Small Grants Programme, spearheaded by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change with support from UNDP and GEF. He stressed the importance of delivering tangible economic

benefits to local communities and called for close coordination with advisory and technical committees to develop effective and impactful proposals.

Mr. Manish Kumar Panday, National Coordinator – SGP, emphasized the importance of the workshop and offered insightful recommendations to advance the projects, providing clear guidance for future planning and implementation. Mr. Sanjeev Kumar, Regional Coordinator – SGP, shared experiences from various schemes, outlining adaptable options suitable for the coastal region.

The workshop was inaugurated by Mr. Ankush Gaonkar, Superintending Engineer (SE), Water Resources Department. He underscored the vital role of solar energy and the five elemental forces—particularly fire—in maintaining ecological balance and safeguarding human health. Cautioning against the consequences of neglecting these natural elements, he advocated for greater awareness and shared responsibility. He also acknowledged Dr. Dipankar's leadership in driving the success of ongoing projects and emphasized the importance of adhering to timelines, maintaining accurate data, and ensuring transparent financial reporting under Operation 7.

Ms. Asha Hadkar, Regional Coordinator- SGP, concluded the session by expressing gratitude to all participants for their active engagement and contributions, officially marking the end of the workshop.

From Training to Action: Vermicomposting for a Greener Future in Tamil Nadu

In a small farming community, learning turned into action when the Covenant Centre for Development (CCD), with support from the GEF Small Grants Programme, trained 20 villagers in eco-friendly input production.

The training introduced compost and bio-fertilizers as natural ways to enrich soil and boost crop yields without harming the environment.

Inspired by the sessions, five trainees set up their own vermicompost units at home. CCD provided each with a compost bed and 5 kg of earthworms to get started.

Now, these farmers are producing rich, organic compost at low cost, reducing their dependence on chemicals.

The initiative is more than just about compost—it is about restoring soil health, creating extra income, and making agriculture climate-resilient.

With every handful of compost, these farmers are building a healthier future for their land, their families, and the planet.

Empowering Farmers with Climate-Smart Solutions in Madhya Pradesh

As part of the SGP-India OP7 initiative in the Central Semi-Arid Region (CSAR), TERI, in collaboration with the National Centre for Human Settlements and Environment (NCHSE), Bhopal, organized a hands-on training session on Zaid crop cultivation and stubble management in Devri Leeladhar village, Damoh district.

The training aimed to enhance farmers' knowledge of climate-resilient agricultural practices, promote resource-efficient farming, and reduce environmental degradation. This initiative marks a meaningful step toward sustainable agriculture and rural resilience in one of India's most climate-vulnerable regions.

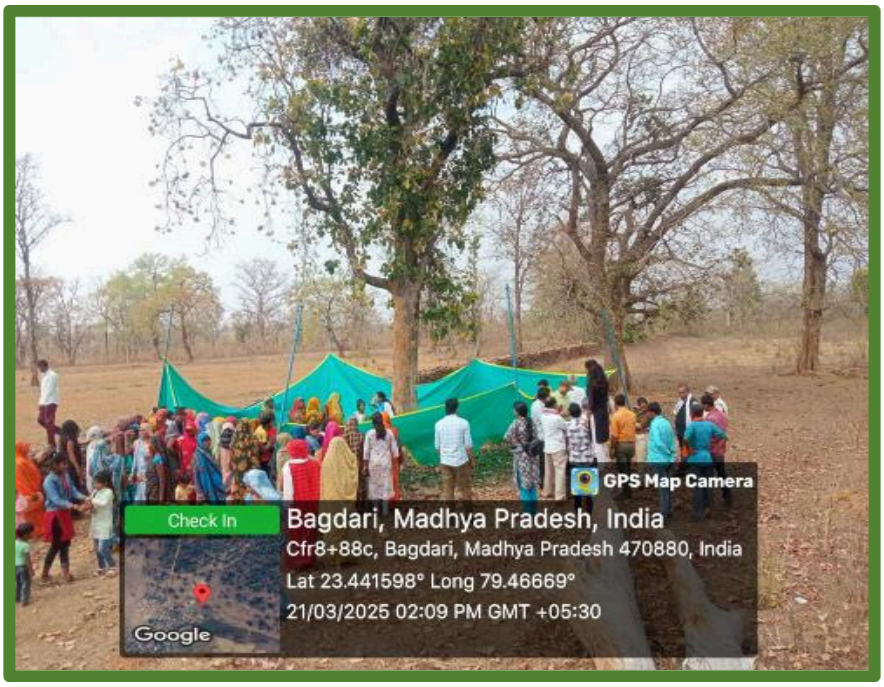
Sowing Sustainability: Exposure Visit Empowers Damoh Farmers with Climate-Resilient Practices in Madhya Pradesh

An exposure visit organized by NCHSE in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, under the GEF Small Grants Programme, empowered farmers to learn climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture practices. The visit focused on natural farming, resource conservation, and organic crop cultivation for the Kharif season.

Farmers gained practical insights from experts and were introduced to innovative techniques and improved seed varieties, encouraging them to adopt eco-friendly practices for long-term livelihood enhancement.

Women Lead the Way in Sustainable Harvesting Practices in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh

Through the GEF Small Grants Programme, implemented by UNDP India and supported by TERI, the The Society for Resource Planning, Development & Research (SRPDR), with support from the GEF Small Grants Programme (UNDP–TERI), organized a two-day workshop on "Sustainable Harvesting" in Bagdari and Dukarsata villages of Damoh district, Madhya Pradesh.



Focused on empowering forest-dependent women, the workshop equipped participants with practical skills in sustainable harvesting, NTFP value addition, and market access strategies. Through expert-led sessions and hands-on training, women gained tools to balance forest conservation with livelihood improvement. The initiative highlighted the importance of collective enterprises like SHGs and cooperatives, encouraging women to take leadership roles in resource management and local economic development.

Progress Review Meeting

Driving Impact Together: Ramanathapuram Reviews Progress of GEF SGP Projects through Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

On 5 June 2025, a multi-stakeholder meeting was convened in Ramanathapuram under the chairmanship of Thiru Simranjeet Singh Kahlon, IAS, District Collector, to review the progress of projects under the Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP). This initiative is being implemented under the guidance of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India. Officials from key line departments and partner organizations working at the grassroots level across the district attended the meeting. The discussion emphasized the current status, achievements, and future steps of both ongoing and completed UNDP-GEF SGP projects.

Currently, seven active projects in Ramanathapuram under the programme focus on critical themes: biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, marine ecosystem restoration, and building climate-resilient communities.

Addressing the gathering, the work of implementing partners and emphasized aligning community-level interventions with the district's strategic goals. He additionally underscored the importance of stronger inter-departmental coordination and active community engagement to enhance effectiveness and sustain results. The meeting concluded with all stakeholders reaffirming their commitment to work collaboratively towards inclusive and environmentally sustainable development in Ramanathapuram.

SGP-Grantees' Works Highlighted in Media

National Centre for Human Settlements and Environment (NCHSE) in News Article

जलवायु अनुकूल कृषि पद्धतियों के तहत ज़ायद फसल एवं पराली प्रबंधन पर प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम संपन्न

जन चिंगारी ब्यूरो चीफ सुरेन्द्र सिंह दमोह।स्मॉल ग्रांट प्रोग्राम(SGP) के 7 वें परिचालन चरण के अंतर्गत ऊर्जा और संसाधन संस्थान TERI (THE ENERGY RESOURCES INSTITUTE) के सहयोग से नेशनल सेंटर फॉर ह्यूमन सेटलमेंटस एंड एनवायरमेंट (एन.सी.एच.एस.ई) भोपाल द्वारा दमोह जिले की तेंदूखेड़ा तहसील के ग्राम देवरी लीलाधर में 17 अप्रैल 2025 कृषकों का जलवायु अनुकूल कृषि पद्धतियों के तहत ज़ायद फसल एवं पराली प्रबंधन कार्यक्रम कृषि वैज्ञानिकों एवं कृषि विभाग के अधिकारियों के मार्गदर्शन में किया गया, कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत श्री ब्रजेश सिंह किरार (कार्यक्रम समन्वयक) एनसीएचएसई भोपाल द्वारा कि गई जिसमें उन्होंने ऊर्जा और संसाधन संस्थान TERI व एन.सी.एच.एस.ई भोपाल द्वारा

चयनित ग्रामो में चल रहे स्मॉल ग्रांट प्रोग्राम के कार्यो के बारे में बताया तथा भूमिहीन स्वयं सहायता समूह (स्।ल) महिला समूहों की आजीविका को सुदृढ़ करने व नियमित आय में वृद्धि के लिए बकरी पालन, मुर्गी पालन, नस्ल सुधार, हस्तशिल्प, अन्य स्थानीय उद्योग एवं उन्हें स्थानीय बाजार तक पहुंच, प्रौद्योगिकी उपयोग, बाजार और व्यवसाय के विस्तार के लिए विस्तार से जानकारी दी 7

तत्पश्चात कृषि वैज्ञानिक बी.एल.साहू द्वारा ज़ायद सीजन में मूंग और उड़द की खेती के लिए, अच्छी भूमि चयन और तैयारी, बीज अंकुरण परिक्षण, उचित बुवाई, सही मात्रा में उर्वरक का उपयोग, और कीट एवं रोग प्रबंधन, बुवाई से पहले भूमि को तैयार करने के लिए गहरी जुताई करें और खरपतवारों को नियंत्रित एवं मूंग और उड़द दोनों के लिए बीज को उपचारित करना महत्वपूर्ण बताया और सही समय पर सिंचाई करने के लिए कहा गया, साथ ही शासन द्वारा दिये निर्देशों के तहत जिले में नरवाई में आग लगाने की घटनाओं पर प्रभावी नियंत्रण तथा कृषकों को जागरूक करने के उद्देश्य से श्री साहू द्वारा बताया गया की पराली (नरवाई) जलाने से होने वाले नुकसान जैसे लाभदायक सूक्ष्म जीव जलकर नष्ट हो जाते, मृदा में उपस्थिति जैविक कार्बन नष्ट हो जाता है तथा मृदा सक्त एवम् कठोर होकर बंजर हो जाती हैं साथ ही पर्यावरण पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव देखा जा रहा हैं, जिससे ग्लोबल वॉर्मिंग जैसे समस्याएं उत्पन्न हो रही है उन्होंने किसान भाईयों से आग्रह किया की फसल अवशेष / पराली को किसी भी स्थिति में नही जलानी चाहिए एवं कृषक बिना जुताई किये हुए गेहूं की फसल की कटाई के बाद खड़ी पराली (नरवाई) में सीधे हेप्पी सीडर / सुपर सीडर से बोनी कर सकते है जिससे मृदा में जैविक कार्बन की मात्रा में वृद्धि तथा लागत में कमी आती है।

Jan Madhyam's work activities in print media

बकस्वाहा में UNDP-SGP परियोजना के तहत ल्एफ्कऔर जनमाध्यम संस्थान द्वारा विशेष प्रशिक्षण शिविर आयोजित

दबंग बुन्देलखण्ड

बकस्वाहा। संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम (UNDP) के लघु अनुदान कार्यक्रम (SGP) के तहत ऊर्जा और संसाधन संस्थान (ल्एफ्क) द्वारा जनमाध्यम संस्थान भोपाल के सहयोग से बकस्वाहा विकासखंड में दो दिवसीय अंत्योदय नाटिका प्रशिक्षण शिविर का आयोजन किया गया। इस शिविर का उद्देश्य ग्रामीणों को जैविक खेती, जल संरक्षण, भूमि सुधार और आजीविका संवर्द्धन जैसे विषयों पर व्यावहारिक प्रशिक्षण देना रहा।

प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम में जैविक खाद एवं वर्मी कंपोस्ट निर्माण, उन्नत बीजों का चयन और बीज उपचार, जीवामृत व घनजीवामृत निर्माण, तथा नीम व अन्य औषधीय पत्तियों से जैविक कीटनाशक तैयार करने की विधियों पर विशेष जानकारी दी गई। कार्यक्रम का संचालन परियोजना समन्वयक द्वारा प्रसाद मिश्रा, मनीष और अरबंद विश्वकर्मा ने किया। प्रशिक्षण में एक्शन फॉर पब्लिक ऑर्गनाइजेशन (APO) के सीईओ राहुल शर्मा और उद्यानिकी विभाग से श्री अशोक पांडे ने भी सहभागिता की और जैविक कृषि से जुड़े विभिन्न पहलुओं पर मार्गदर्शन प्रदान किया। प्रशिक्षण के दौरान प्रतिभागियों को चार समूहों में विभाजित कर प्रस्तुतियाँ भी कराई गईं, जिससे स्थानीय स्तर पर ज्ञान का आदान-प्रदान और व्यावहारिक समझ विकसित हो सकी। कार्यक्रम का समापन एक प्रेरणादायक गीत के साथ किया गया, जिसने प्रतिभागियों में उत्साह और जागरूकता का संचार किया।

बकस्वाहा में NDP-SGP परियोजना के तहत TERI और जनमाध्यम संस्थान द्वारा विशेष प्रशिक्षण शिविर आयोजित

National Centre for Human Settlements and Environment (NCHSE) in News Article

प्राकृतिक खेती एवं खरीफ फसलों के लिए जलवायु अनुकूल कृषि पद्धतियों पर कृषकों का क्षमतावर्धन एवं एक्सपोजर विजिट कार्यक्रम संपन्न

प्राकृतिक खेती एवं खरीफ फसलों के लिए जलवायु अनुकूल कृषि पद्धतियों पर कृषकों का क्षमतावर्धन एवं एक्सपोजर विजिट कार्यक्रम संपन्न

जन चिंगारी ब्यूरो चीफ सुरेन्द्र सिंह दमोह ।संस्था एनसीएचएसई, भोपाल TERI (ऊर्जा संसाधन संस्थान) के सहयोग से लघु अनुदान कार्यक्रम (एसजीपी) के 7वें परिचालन चरण के तहत दमोह जिले के तेंदूखेड़ा ब्लॉक के देवरी लीलाधर और पतलोनी गावो मे 卐जलवायु अनुकूल पद्धतियों को अपनाकर क्षीण होती हुई कृषि/ कृषि-पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र की स्थिरता और उत्पादकता में सुधार卐 परियोजना को क्रियान्वित कर रहा है। इस परियोजना का उद्देश्य ग्रामीण समुदाय को ऐसी तकनीकें और पद्धतियां अपनाने के लिए जागरूक और प्रेरित करना है जो प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के संरक्षण, बदलती जलवायु परिस्थितियों के अनुकूल कृषि पद्धतियों को अपनाने, सतत कृषि विकास प्रणालियों के माध्यम से पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र सेवाओं में सुधार करने के साथ-साथ किसानों की आजीविका को बढ़ाने में मदद कर सके। इसी क्रम में, दिनांक 28 मई 2025 को परियोजना क्षेत्र के 40 से अधिक कृषकों के लिए एक एक्सपोज़र विज़िट का आयोजन किया गया। यह विज़िट दमोह स्थित 'मेहता ऑर्गेनिक ग्रीन' में सम्पन्न हुई। इसका उद्देश्य खरीफ सीजन की फसलों हेतु जलवायु अनुकूल कृषि पद्धतियों के अंतर्गत प्राकृतिक खेती को अपनाने के लिए कृषकों की क्षमता वर्धन करना था। इस अवसर पर कृषकों को प्राकृतिक खेती की नवीन तकनीकों, संसाधनों के संरक्षण, तथा जैविक उत्पादों के लाभों तथा खरीफ सीजन में किसानों को फसल के कौन से उन्नत बीज लगायें जिससे कम खाद और कम पानी में ज्यादा से ज्यादा पोष्टिक खाद्यान उगाया जा सके जिससे उनकी आमदनी में वृद्धि भी हो और कार्बन उत्सर्जन भी कमी कर सकें।

Society for Resource Planning and Development(SRPDR) Activities in Print Media

कृषि | 175 परिवारों को एनजीओ ने किया नेट का वितरण

महुआ का उत्पादन बढ़ाने ग्रामीणों को वितरित किए नेट

महिलाओं को दिया गया दो दिवसीय प्रशिक्षण

प्रशिक्षण के दौरान मौजूद महिलाएं। •नईदुनिया

नईदुनिया न्यूज, तेंदूखेड़ा: ब्लाक के ग्रामों की महिलाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के लिए सोसाइटी फार रिसोर्ट प्लानिंग डेवलमेंट एंड रिसर्च भोपाल द्वारा दो दिवसीय प्रशिक्षण दिया गया। यह प्रशिक्षण ग्राम बगदरी में आयोजित कार्यक्रम में सम्पन हुआ, कार्यक्रम में उपवन मंडल अधिकारी प्रतीक दुबे, तेंदूखेडा रेंजर मेघा पटेल, वर्षा, रिसर्च एसोसिएट एवं ट्रेनर पूनम तिवारी, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता उमाकांत राय, क्षेत्रीय समन्वयक मौजूद रही। जिन्होने ग्राम की महिलाओं को सुविधा सामग्री का वितरण किया और उन सामग्री का किस तरह उपयोग करे इसके संबंध में जानकारी दी। संस्था प्रमुख ने ग्रामीणों को बताया कि उनके लिए आत्मनिर्भर बनने के लिए ग्राम में ही ऐसे कार्य है जिनको करने से वह स्वय आय कमा सकते है और उसकी बेहतर रूप में कीमत भी ले सकती है। जैसे आप लोग इन दिनों महुआ बिनती है लेकिन यह जमीन पर गिरने के बाद कुछ मात्रा में खराब हो जाता है यदि आप लोग महुआ को जमीन की जगह नेट पर गिराए तो वह अच्छा रहेगा और खराब भी नहीं होगा। इससे आपकी एकत्रित की गई सामग्री की मात्रा बढ़ेगी और आपको दाम भी अच्छा मिलेगा। बाद में उन सभी महिलाओं को प्रमाण-पत्र का वितरण किया गया जो संस्था के माध्यम से कार्य कर रही है।

SGP-India Quarterly Newsletter for Coastal and Semi-Arid Landscapes

Theme: Conserving Earth-With SGP

Issue:2025/2
(April-June, 2025)

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