



MOVE FOR EARTH SYMPOSIUM

Coming Together to **INSPIRE** Climate Action

KOLKATA

21st-22nd January | 2026

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Session Partner

Executive Summary

The **Move for Earth Symposium – Kolkata 2026**, convened in Kolkata, brought together policymakers, financial institutions, civil society organizations, private sector actors, market platforms, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), and grassroots institutions from across Eastern India.

The symposium featured key addresses and insights from senior leaders including **Shri P. K. Bhardwaj** (CGM, NABARD), **Shri Raman Wadhwa** (Dy. Director NRLM), **Shri Balber Singh** (General Manager, SLBC), **Dr. Chandrika Parmer** (SP Jain Institute of Management and Research), and **Mr. A. B. Chakraborty** (CEO, Upaya Social Ventures), highlighting the role of finance, innovation, and market linkages in driving sustainable rural transformation.

The two-day symposium served as a multi-stakeholder platform to advance **climate-resilient livelihoods, sustainable food systems, decentralized renewable energy, rural women's entrepreneurship, inclusive urban mobility, and market-led development pathways**. Discussions emphasized the need to move from fragmented interventions toward **integrated, scalable, and market-linked climate solutions** aligned with livelihood generation and economic growth.

The symposium featured:

- Inaugural and plenary sessions setting the agenda for climate-resilient and inclusive development in Eastern India.
- Hands-on workshops on farmer income diversification, agroecological practices, and communication, sales pitching, and market readiness for SHGs and rural enterprises.
- Thematic roundtables on sustainable food systems, decentralized renewable energy (DRE), rural women entrepreneurship, and sustainable urban mobility in Kolkata.
- **National Buyer–Seller Meet**, facilitating structured B2B engagement between FPOs, SHGs, and institutional and private buyers.

Key Highlights of the Symposium Included:

- Strong emphasis on cost reduction, income diversification, and agroecological approaches to enhance farmer resilience.
- Positioning decentralized renewable energy as livelihood-enabling infrastructure for agriculture, fisheries, processing, and women-led enterprises.
- Identification of market access, finance, insurance, and institutional convergence as key constraints and enablers for rural women entrepreneurship.

- Recognition of the need to shift from production-centric approaches to nutrition-sensitive and rights-based food systems.
- Focus on strengthening bus systems, low-emission strategies, and financial sustainability for inclusive urban mobility in Kolkata.

The Symposium Generated Concrete Outcomes Across Key Areas:

- **Greenovation Sustain Agri Challenge:** To promote Startups/NGOs towards sustainable and innovative agricultural solutions for long-term environmental resilience.
- **Livelihoods and Agriculture:** Promotion of diversified, low-risk livelihood models linked to markets and ecological sustainability.
- **Decentralized Renewable Energy:** Scaling DRE through blended finance, community ownership, skill development, and market integration.
- **Rural Women Entrepreneurship:** Advancing women-led enterprises through cluster-based, value-chain-led models and stronger market platforms.
- **Sustainable Food Systems:** Adoption of integrated agroecological design, improved market connectivity, and nutrition-sensitive planning.
- **Urban Mobility:** Policy and financing pathways for low-emission, affordable, and people-centric transport systems.

National Buyer-Seller Meet – Key Outcomes:

- Participation of **24 institutional and private buyers**.
- **36 stalls** by FPOs, SHGs, and farmer collectives.
- **67 Letters of Intent (LOIs)** signed, with an approximate value of **₹113 crore**.
- Strengthened direct market linkages and improved confidence of producer institutions.

The symposium concluded with a strong call for **collaborative governance, action-oriented partnerships, and sustained post-event engagement**, positioning **Eastern India** as a critical geography for advancing **climate-resilient, inclusive, and market-driven development pathways**.



DAY-1

Roundtable on Strengthening the Ecosystem for Rural Women Entrepreneurship

1. Brief Context

Rural women entrepreneurs across handloom, agriculture and allied sectors, livestock, tea, and emerging digital value chains have demonstrated strong enterprise potential. However, persistent gaps in **market access, finance, technology, infrastructure, and institutional convergence** continue to limit their scale.

To move beyond problem diagnosis, this Roundtable—anchored in a solution-oriented approach—focused on **identifying, strengthening, and scaling proven models of Rural Women Entrepreneurship (RWE)**. The event brought together **23 participants** representing four key stakeholder groups:

- **CSOs / NGOs / Rural Women Entrepreneurs (RWEs)**
- **Markets and Government Market Platforms**
- **Government Departments**
- **Banks and Financial Institutions**

The intent was to build **replicable, value-chain-led pathways** and foster long-term collaboration across the ecosystem.



2. Event Objectives

The Roundtable aimed to:

- Identify and refine **scalable and replicable women-led enterprise models**
- Enable **effective convergence** among government schemes, financial institutions, and technical partners
- Strengthen **market readiness and competitiveness** of women-led enterprises
- Promote **cluster-based and value-chain-led growth approaches**
- Establish **long-term collaboration frameworks** for sustained ecosystem support

3. Key Discussions and Insights from the Roundtable

Strengthening Foundations and Systems

Ms. Sreemantini Khote highlighted the scale of women's collectives in India, noting that over **1 crore SHGs representing nearly 10 crore women** are central to both climate action and economic growth. She emphasised the need to **systematize support structures** and build marketplaces that genuinely work for rural women entrepreneurs.

If these women stop working, the impact will be felt on GDP itself. The real challenge is building systems and markets that recognise and reward their contribution.

– Ms. Sreemantini Khote

Convergence, Resilience, and Enterprise Transition

Mr. Raman Wadhwa– NRLM, underscored NRLM's role since 2011 in connecting **social mobilisation with financial inclusion**, while stressing the need for deeper **inter-departmental convergence and partnerships**. Insurance, particularly **business- and livestock-linked insurance**, was identified as critical for enterprise resilience.

SHG women must move from livelihoods to enterprises. Skill transformation, digital systems, and institutional convergence are key to bridging this gap.

– Mr. Raman Wadhwa

Ecosystem Building and Market Integration

Mr. Mrinal Kanti De, General Manager, NABARD – West Bengal, highlighted NABARD's role in **de-risking women-led enterprises** and building an enabling ecosystem. He noted that while women constitute **around 60% of the agricultural workforce**, only **10% own land**, limiting their access to formal finance.

Sustainable business practices can enable women to build enterprises of ₹1–1.5 crore scale, but only a small percentage reach this today. Structured external support is essential.

– Mrinal Kanti De, GM. NABARD

He also pointed to **MEDP and LEDP trainings**, market demand surveys, and platforms like **ONDC** as key enablers for reducing logistics barriers and strengthening agri-market networks.



Ground Realities and Women's Voices

Representing grassroots leadership, **Ms. Mitarani Baidya, SHG Leader**, shared lived challenges around **packaging, pricing, market access, and digitisation**.

Today, digital systems are the biggest hurdle. But local markets offer strong opportunities if women get the right support.— Mitarani Baidya, SHG Leader

SwitchON Foundation, through the **Udyamini programme**, shared field-based learnings on **value-chain-specific enterprise development, product diversification, design inputs, and recognition of women entrepreneurs**, implemented in partnership with WBSRLM.

4. Our Goals

Drawing from the shared vision and programme framework, the goals articulated were:

- Build **enterprise readiness** through training, compliance, and access to working capital
- Enable **market integration** via B2B linkages, branding, packaging, and digital platforms
- Strengthen **institutional convergence** across government, finance, and markets
- Support **sustainable scale-up** through technology, insurance, infrastructure, and long-term finance
- Position rural women as **economic leaders**, not beneficiaries

5. Way Forward

The Roundtable reaffirmed that strengthening Rural Women Entrepreneurship requires a **phased, collaborative pathway**:

- **Short term:** Build strong foundations—skills, compliance, credit access, and digital readiness
- **Mid term:** Enable growth—market linkages, machinery upgradation, branding, and bank convergence
- **Long term:** Scale sustainably—e-commerce integration, certification, storage, insurance, and enterprise finance

Most importantly, the discussions called for **moving from dialogue to action**, with clearly defined roles for CSOs, government, markets, and financial institutions to collectively support women-led enterprises across growth stages.



Greenovation Sustain Agri Challenge

About the Challenge

SwitchON Foundation, in collaboration with EarthON Foundation, launched the Greenovation Sustain Agri Challenge in June 2024 with the objective of identifying and supporting sustainable innovation and business models in agriculture that can help place India's agricultural system on a long-term, environmentally sustainable pathway.

Applications & Screening

The challenge received an overwhelming response, with more than 600 applications from across the country. These applications went through a rigorous multi-stage evaluation process, which included several rounds of jury review to assess innovation, impact potential, and feasibility.

Shortlisting

- **Semi-finalists selected:**
 - 30 in Startup category
 - 20 in NGO category
- **Finalists selected after second jury review:**
 - 12 in Startup category
 - 8 in NGO category



Final Pitch & Awards

- **Final pitches held on:** 21st and 22nd January
- **Award ceremony:** 22nd January
- **Final outcome:**
 - 3 winners and 1 special mention selected in each category

Prize Structure

- Winner- INR 4,00,000
- First Runner-up: INR 3,00,000
- Second Runner-up: INR 2,00,000
- Special Mention- INR 1,00,000

Jury Members

- **Hemendra Mathur,**
Venture Partner, Bharat Innovation Fund
- **A.B. Chakravarthy,**
Co-CEO, Upaya Social Ventures
- **Anand Aravumudan,**
Ex-Villgro
- **Prof. Sujay Dixit,**
CEO, TISS Incube Foundation
- **Dr. Chandrika Parmar,**
Assistant Professor, DoCC, SPJIMR
- **Prof. C.D. Mitra,**
Founder, Pipal Majik
- **Subhadeep Sanyal,**
India Lead, Wavemaker Impact



Winners

Startup Category

- **Winner:**
BuzzWorthy Ventures – Monika Shukla
- **First Runner-up:**
KriSHE Carbon – Anjali Rose
- **Second Runner-up:**
Tuvai Nature Private Limited – Prerna Terway
- **Special Mention:**
Millets Now – Suraj Lawande

NGO Category

- **Winner:**
AGRO RANGERS Trust – Siddhesh Sakore
- **First Runner-up:**
Paribesh Unnayan Parishad – Amales Misra
- **Second Runner-up:**
Resilient Destinations Foundation – Dr. Sreeja KG
- **Special Mention:**
Aga Khan Foundation – India – Pallavi Gill



Shaping Sustainable Food Systems in Eastern India: CSO perspective and pathways for transformation

1. Session Context and Purpose

- **Participants:** Nearly 30+ representatives from diverse CSOs.
- **Purpose:** Identify key food system challenges and priority transformation pathways.
- **Agenda:**
 - Practice mapping of CSO work
 - Agroecology principles alignment
 - Scorecard self-assessment
 - Brief debrief on outcomes and next steps
- **Focus region:** Eastern India (WB, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Northeast).
- **Key issues:** Rainfed farming, soil-water stress, weak markets, malnutrition, climate risks.

The session recognised that these challenges cannot be addressed through isolated interventions, but require integrated, place-based and rights-based food system transformation.

2. Key Methodological Approach

The session adopted a participatory, systems-based methodology to capture diverse field experiences and translate them into coherent transformation pathways.



Four complementary methods were used:

- Practice-Based Mapping to document ongoing CSO work across land, water, markets, institutions, and knowledge systems.
- Alignment with FAO's 13 Agroecology Principles to connect local practices with a global transformation framework.
- Integrated Systems Mapping linking landscapes, food systems, and transformation processes.
- Agroecology Principles Scorecard as a self-reflective diagnostic tool to assess strengths, gaps, and priorities.

This approach enabled collective learning, honest self-assessment, and a shift from sectoral thinking towards holistic food system design.

3. Key outcomes from the Session

3.1 Strong Systems Orientation in CSO Work

The mapping exercise revealed that CSOs in Eastern India are already working across multiple food system components—natural resource management, livelihoods, institutions, and markets—even when not explicitly using “food systems” language.

Key insight: CSOs are contributing to food system transformation in practice, but need stronger conceptual framing and integration.

3.2 Natural Resource Governance as a Foundational Entry Point

A significant concentration of work was observed around:

- Access to land, water, and forests
- Watershed and landscape-level planning
- Soil health and water security

Key insight: Landscape-based natural resource management is the primary foundation for food system resilience in Eastern India.

3.3 Participation and Knowledge Co-Creation as Core Strengths

Across clusters, high emphasis was placed on:

- Participatory planning and implementation
- Respect for traditional knowledge and local practices

Key insight: Strong social capital and participatory processes are critical enablers of sustainable transformation.

3.4 Ecological Integration Needs Deepening

Principles such as soil health, biodiversity, recycling, and synergies showed moderate to strong engagement but were often addressed as isolated activities

rather than integrated agroecological systems.

Key insight: There is a need to move from activity-based ecological interventions to integrated agroecological system design.

3.5 Economic Diversification and Market Engagement as Key Gaps

Lower and uneven scores were observed for:

- Economic diversification
- Value addition and market connectivity

Key insight: Weak market linkages and limited value chains remain a major constraint on resilient livelihoods.

3.6 Nutrition and Consumption Remain Under-Integrated

While production-side interventions dominate, limited attention is paid to:

- Diet diversity
- Consumption patterns
- Nutrition outcomes

Key insight: Food system work remains largely production-centric, with insufficient focus on diets and nutrition.

3.7 Governance and Fairness are Critical but Challenging

Participants recognised the importance of:

- Land and natural resource governance
- Equity and inclusion

Yet these scored lower due to structural and policy constraints.

Key insight: Governance transformation requires long-term alliances beyond project cycles.

3.8 Connectivity Across Actors is Weak

Fragmentation across farmers, CSOs, markets, and policy systems was identified as a major barrier.

Key insight: Strengthening horizontal and vertical connectivity is essential for scaling impact.

4. Agroecology Scorecard – Strategic Insights

The agroecology scorecard proved to be a powerful planning tool by:

- Visualising strengths and weaknesses across 13 principles
- Identifying blind spots and priority areas
- Shifting discussions from activities to system redesign

High-performing domains included participation, co-creation of knowledge, biodiversity, and fairness. Low-performing domains included economic diversification, connectivity, and governance engagement.

5. Priority Pathways for Transformation

Based on the deliberations, five priority pathways emerged:

1. Integrated Agroecological Design:

Move towards holistic farm and landscape systems combining soil, water, biodiversity, recycling, and synergies.

2. Resilient and Diversified Livelihoods:

Shift from single-income activities to diversified livelihood portfolios linked to markets and ecology.

3. Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems:

Explicitly link production with diet quality, food diversity, and nutrition outcomes.

4. Nutrition-Sensitive Food Systems:

Explicitly link production with diet quality, food diversity, and nutrition outcomes.

5. Stronger Connectivity and Institutions:

Build robust linkages across farmers, FPOs, CSOs, markets, research bodies, and government systems.

Governance, Rights, and Equity:

Secure farmer rights over land, water, forests, seeds, and knowledge systems, with special focus on women and indigenous communities.

6. Strategic Recommendations

- Institutionalise participatory tools such as practice mapping and agroecology scorecards for continuous learning.
- Invest in co-creation of knowledge and local innovation systems.
- Strengthen market infrastructure, aggregation, processing, and value addition.
- Integrate food systems thinking into district and state planning frameworks.
- Align short-term projects within long-term, landscape-based transformation strategies.

Conclusion:

The session highlighted the need to move from fragmented initiatives to integrated, agroecology-based and rights-driven approaches for transforming food systems in Eastern India, with a focus on agro-biodiversity, farmer rights, market strengthening, and community-led solutions to build resilient and inclusive food systems.

Roundtable on Decentralised Renewable Energy (DRE) for Agriculture & Allied Sectors in West Bengal

Background:

India's energy transition has largely focused on grid-based solutions, while Decentralized Renewable Energy (DRE)—generated close to the point of use—remains underutilized in rural livelihoods. DRE technologies such as solar pumps, micro-grids, dryers, cold storage, and processing units provide reliable, clean, and locally controlled energy, enabling agriculture, agri-processing, fisheries, and small rural enterprises.

Energy poverty in rural India limits productivity, income, and resilience. Reliable energy enables crop diversification, multi-cropping, post-harvest processing, and value addition. DRE also has strong women-centric impacts: 70–75% of users are women, who benefit from reduced drudgery, lower costs, time savings, and increased income (35–50%).

Challenges in Adoption:

- High upfront costs and battery maintenance
- Limited access to finance and local technicians
- Low literacy and digital skills
- Inadequate market linkages and business training
- Policy and eligibility gaps for small/marginal producers



Key Insights:

- DRE supports irrigation, storage, processing, and value addition, reducing diesel dependence and enabling year-round economic activity.
- Sector-wise applications: agriculture (solar irrigation, milling, oil extraction), agri-processing (millet processing, cold storage, dryers), fisheries (solar dryers, refrigeration, water pumps), women-led enterprises (food processing, dairy, textiles).
- Successful models include community/FPO/SHG ownership, pay-per-use structures, technical + business training, and long-term handholding.

Panel Highlights:

- **Swati Bhogle:** “Adoption barriers include cost, lack of technicians, limited finance, and low literacy. Emphasis on literacy, awareness, and handholding for faster adoption”.
- **Antara Dey Bhowmik (Onergy Solar):** “Scaling DRE requires bank/finance engagement, blended finance, and shifting from pilots to mainstream livelihood assets”.
- **Preeti Kumari (WRI):** “Technology alone isn’t enough; market linkages, vendor reliability, and institutional support are critical for sustainable DRE adoption”.

Cluster-Based Group Discussions:

1. **DRE in Agriculture:** Expand applications, integrate solutions, explore carbon credits, IoT-based storage, scalable models, policy support, skill development, blended finance, community installations.
2. **DRE in Aquaculture:** Aeration, cold chains, feed storage, value addition, digitization, financing (NABARD, FIDF, GIZ), govt. schemes, certification, awareness/training.
- 3.
4. **DRE for Women:** Reduce upfront costs, risk guarantee funds, assured marketing, lower drudgery, support from SRLMs, MoRD/MNRE, MoAFW/MoFPI, Ministry of Textiles; challenges include low literacy, lack of decision-making power, no dedicated policy, and retrofitting gaps.

Critical Success Factors:

- Link energy access directly to income generation
- Market linkage and demand creation alongside technology
- Flexible financing, subsidies, and institutional support
- Community ownership, transparency, and conflict management

Conclusion:

Conclusion:

DRE can transform rural livelihoods by providing reliable, clean energy, boosting productivity, enabling value addition, and empowering women. Success requires technology plus finance, market linkages, training, and community ownership. With the right support, DRE can drive sustainable, resilient, and inclusive rural development.



Steel Industry Dialogue: Decarbonising Steel & Strengthening MSMEs

The Green Steel Roundtable, organised by SwitchON Foundation as part of the Move for Earth Kolkata Symposium 2026, brought together MSME steel manufacturers, industry experts, innovators, policymakers, and financial institutions to deliberate on the decarbonisation of India's MSME steel sector, which forms the backbone of the country's secondary steel production.

The roundtable was designed as a solution-oriented dialogue, shifting discussions from high-level decarbonization targets to the practical, operational, and financial realities faced by MSME steel units. The focus remained on identifying implementable, scalable, and MSME-appropriate pathways that can reduce emissions while strengthening industrial competitiveness.

Key Focus Areas

- Energy efficiency and process optimisation, as immediate and cost-effective entry points
- Renewable energy integration, including rooftop solar and Green Open Access
- Scrap utilisation and quality improvement to reduce waste and emissions
- Technology modernisation and monitoring systems to enhance productivity and efficiency



Key Challenges Identified

- Fragile plant infrastructure limiting rooftop solar deployment
- Regulatory and procedural complexity in accessing Green Open Access
- High upfront costs and production risks during technology upgrades
- Poor scrap quality due to unorganised collection, sorting, and grading systems
- Limited digital monitoring, safety systems, and skilled manpower
- Low awareness and capacity, particularly among micro and small units

Key Discussion Insights

- Establishing baseline emission measurements is essential for developing realistic, phased decarbonization roadmaps.
- Energy efficiency measures—such as compressed air system optimization and waste heat recovery—offer immediate emission and cost savings.
- Strengthening the scrap ecosystem emerged as a priority, with discussions around hub-and-cluster models for organized collection, processing, and manufacturing.
- Green skilling and workforce development are critical to support current upgrades and future technologies such as green hydrogen.
- Access to affordable and tailored finance remains a major constraint, necessitating risk-sharing instruments, concessional loans, and supportive policy frameworks.

Launch of the Greenovation Green Steel Challenge

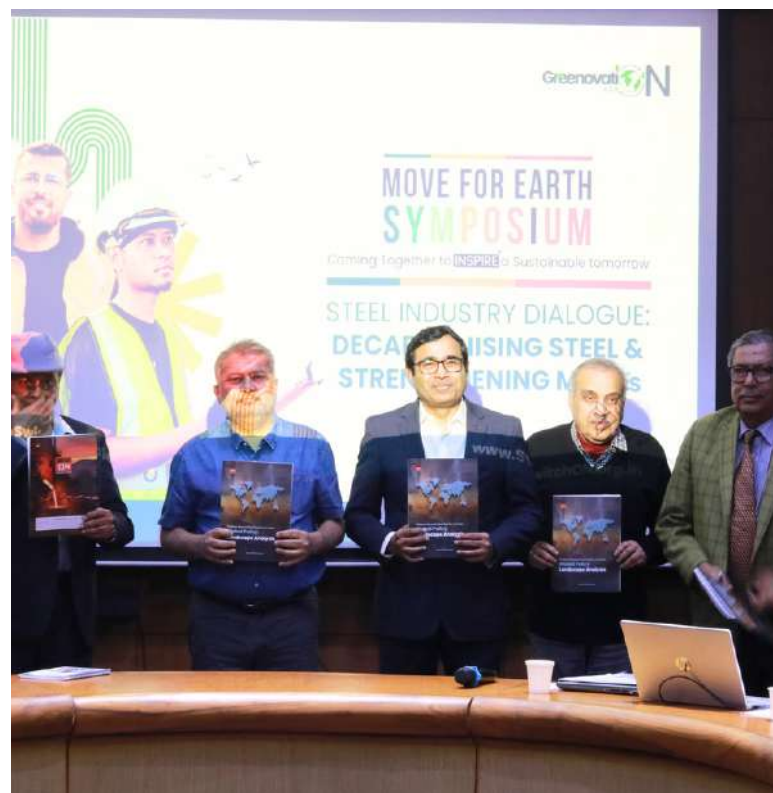
The roundtable marked the launch of the Greenovation Green Steel Challenge, an initiative aimed at accelerating MSME-led decarbonization.

- Organized by Greenovation Hub and EarthON Foundation, in partnership with WWF, IGSN, and the Rajiva Sinha Foundation.
- Invites MSMEs, innovators, technology providers, and academic institutions to propose practical, deployable low-carbon solutions.

Key Takeaways

- Decarbonization of MSME steel must follow a phased and ground-up approach, beginning with efficiency, scrap systems, and skills.
- Addressing basic operational resilience and infrastructure is a prerequisite for technology adoption.
- Long-term transition will require alignment of technology, finance, skills, and policy support.
- Collaboration among industry, innovators, policymakers, and financiers is essential to ensure an inclusive and practical green transition.

The roundtable concluded with a shared consensus that India's green steel transition must be rooted in MSME realities, combining immediate operational improvements with long-term decarbonisation strategies to ensure both sustainability and competitiveness.



Roundtable on Strengthening Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Mobility in Kolkata

The Roundtable brought together policymakers, transport practitioners, academics, and mobility experts to reflect on the future of Kolkata's urban transport system, with a particular focus on buses, sustainability, and low-emission strategies. Discussions highlighted the urgency of moving from fragmented, short-term interventions to integrated, financially viable, and people-centric mobility solutions.

Keynote Insights

In his keynote address, **Debashis Sen, IAS (Retd.)**, underscored that rapid urbanisation demands proactive and holistic planning, rather than reactive responses to congestion and emissions. He emphasized that piecemeal “smart” fixes are insufficient, calling instead for a transition towards intelligent, safe, and inclusive cities that work for all users.

State of Bus Transport in Kolkata

The release of *The Buses at Crossroads* report highlighted financial stress as the central challenge confronting Kolkata's bus system.

- WBTC operations currently span nearly 100 routes with a fleet of about 400–450 buses.
- Key service corridors include Shyambazar–Tollygunge, Behala, Salt Lake, EM Bypass, and Howrah.



- Planned service improvements are being explored along Diamond Harbour Road, Rashbehari Road, and the Girish Park corridor.
- PPP and franchise-based models were identified as promising pathways to address financial and operational constraints.

Rethinking Mobility and Service Design

Experts stressed that effective urban transport must be grounded in a nuanced understanding of commuter needs.

- Cities must differentiate user groups and design targeted services accordingly.
- Tiered service levels can allow those willing to pay for higher quality to do so, without excluding others.
- A balanced, multimodal transport mix is essential to cater to diverse travel patterns and affordability levels.

Financial Sustainability without Burdening Commuters

The discussion highlighted risks associated with fare hikes and explored alternative financing options.

- Raising bus fares often leads to ridership decline, especially when other cities are moving toward free or subsidised public transport.
-
- Viable alternatives include:
 - Digital and on-asset advertising
 - Green bonds to support electric bus fleets
 - Systematic monetisation of transport assets
 - These approaches can improve financial sustainability while keeping public transport affordable.

Low Emission Zones and Road Space Management

Road space management emerged as a critical enabler of sustainable mobility.

- Low parking charges encourage long-duration on-street parking, reducing effective road capacity.
- Encroachment on tram corridors and major roads worsens congestion.
- Higher parking fees and congestion pricing were suggested as demand-management tools.
- Low Emission Zones (LEZs) can be introduced in a phased manner—starting with restricted or safe zones, closely monitoring outcomes, and gradually scaling up.

Way Forward

The symposium reinforced that Kolkata's mobility transition must integrate planning, finance, technology, and behaviour change. Strengthening bus systems, rationalising road use, and adopting low-emission strategies—implemented thoughtfully and inclusively—are critical steps toward a cleaner, more efficient, and people-friendly urban future.



Workshop on

Communication/Sales Pitch and stakeholder interactions – RWE

Participants: SHG members from agri, jute, handloom, bamboo and rural enterprises

Workshop Overview

- Nearly 100+ SHG/FPO members participated.
- Purpose: strengthen communication, sales pitching, and buyer interaction skills.
- Method: short inputs, live product demonstration, interactive discussion, and debrief.



Key Learning Outcomes:

1. Sales Pitch and Buyer Interaction

- A sales pitch is clear, confident product introduction.
- Focus on trust-building and long-term relationships.
- Different buyers need different strategies: exporters, retail customers, traders.

2. Knowing Your Product

Participants learnt to clearly explain:

- What the product is and who made it
- Materials used and preparation time
- What makes the product special

3. Product-Based Demonstration

- Live case on jute products (bags, décor, accessories).
- Learning focused on:
 - Raw material sourcing
 - Craftsmanship and quality
 - Storytelling linked to livelihoods

Product knowledge builds confidence and buyer trust

4. Pricing and Bulk Orders

- Price based on cost, time, skill, and fair wages.
- Explain value, not only price.
- For bulk orders:
 - Check capacity before confirming
 - Clarify quantity, timeline, and specifications

5. Branding and Market Readiness

- Use simple branding tools:
 - Visiting cards, brochures, product cards
 - Social media presence
 - Professional display and packaging

6. Questions to Ask Buyers

Before confirming orders, ask:

- Required quantity
- Delivery timeline
- Acceptable price range
- Customisation needs
- Quality standards

Table 1: Professional Behaviour – Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don't's
Carry samples and visiting cards	Give wrong information
Speak clearly and confidently	Confirm without checking capacity
Listen carefully to buyers	Listen carefully to buyers Confuse the buyer by over-talking
Take notes during meetings	Feel shy about pricing
End meetings positively	Make unrealistic promises

Conclusion:

The workshop strengthened SHG members' skills in communication, sales pitching, pricing, branding, and buyer handling. Participants are now better prepared to engage with markets professionally and build sustainable income opportunities through stronger market linkages.

Conclusion:

The session highlighted that sustainable food system transformation in Eastern India requires a shift from fragmented projects to integrated, agroecology-driven and rights-based approaches. Key priorities include protecting agro-biodiversity, securing farmer rights, strengthening markets, and scaling community-led solutions.

With coordinated action by CSOs, institutions, and policymakers, Eastern India can advance towards food systems that are resilient, inclusive, and nutrition-sensitive.



Roundtable on

Growing Opportunities and Skills We Can Build

Background

The post-workshop discussion on “Growing Opportunities and Skills We Can Build” brought together training providers, industry representatives, and entrepreneurs to deliberate on the future of green jobs, skill development, and workforce readiness. The dialogue highlighted the urgent need to align awareness, training models, and industry expectations to build a skilled, motivated, and job-ready green workforce—particularly in the renewable energy and sustainability sectors.

1. Awareness as the Foundation for Green Jobs

Participants unanimously agreed that awareness-building is the first and most critical step in scaling green employment.

Key Insights:

• **Large-scale and continuous awareness programs are required to:**

- o Increase adoption of green jobs
- o Raise aspiration levels among youth
- o Improve understanding of career pathways

• **Awareness initiatives must target multiple age groups:**

- o School and college students
- o Rural youth
- o Migrant and informal workers



• **Programs should be location-based and interest-driven, reaching youth where they already engage.**

• **Effective awareness requires collective participation of:**

- o Academic institutions
- o Industry bodies
- o Training partners
- o Entrepreneurs
- o Subject matter experts

Awareness is the gateway to participation. Without sustained outreach, green jobs will remain underutilised despite growing demand.

2. Course Design and Customization

A strong consensus emerged on the need to move away from generic training models.

Key Recommendations:

- **Courses must be sector-specific and locally relevant**
- **Curriculum design should be co-created by:**
 - o Government institutions
 - o Industry partners
 - o Training providers
- **Existing frameworks (QP, NOS, NSQF) should be adapted to local contexts**
- **For rural and remote regions:**
 - o Short-term, modular courses (2–3 weeks)
 - o Local language delivery
 - o Livelihood-linked content
- **Long-duration courses (300+ hours) are often impractical in rural settings**

Outcome:

Flexible, contextual, and employment-oriented training leads to higher participation and completion rates.

3. Importance of Practical & On-the-Job Training

The workshop strongly emphasized learning by doing.

Key Points:

- **Practical exposure must take precedence over classroom theory**
- **Training models should include:**
 - o On-site exposure
 - o Industry internships
 - o Live project work
 - o On-the-job training (OJT)
- **Practical learning improves:**
 - o Technical confidence
 - o Job readiness
 - o Industry acceptance

Hands-on experience was unanimously identified as the most critical factor in employability.

4. Institutional and Non-Institutional Training Models

While formal institutions play an important role, participants highlighted the need to expand non-institutional learning pathways.

Effective Models Include:

- **Community-based solar and green energy projects**
- **Small demonstration installations**
- **Hands-on exposure through local projects**
- **Short-term field-based learning modules**

Such models were found to significantly enhance understanding, retention, and confidence among learners.

5. Best Practice Example – SwitchON Foundation

A successful case shared during the workshop was the SwitchON Foundation's 2024 initiative, which demonstrated:

- Customised solar training under a model sustainable village program
- Engagement of youth from remote and migrant backgrounds
- High learner satisfaction and retention
- Transition of trained youth into entrepreneurship and service roles

This example highlighted the effectiveness of:

- Community-based delivery
- Practical and project-linked learning
- Localised skill development models

6. Industry Perspective: Mindset, Skills & Employability

Key Observations:

- **Mindset is the biggest challenge**
 - o Youth are influenced by social media and unrealistic career expectations
 - o Technical and blue-collar jobs are often undervalued
- **Low awareness of:**
 - o Solar technology
 - o Career progression
 - o Long-term opportunities
- **Aspirations remain low, especially at entry-level roles**

Skills vs Degrees:

- Industry prioritises skills over certificates
- **Employability depends on:**
 - o Practical competence
 - o Market relevance
 - o Ability to deliver outcomes

Key Skill Gaps Identified:

- Installation and O&M
- Troubleshooting and repair
- System design and performance analysis
- Communication and documentation
- Customer and community engagement

7. Trainer & Curriculum Gaps

Participants highlighted critical challenges in the training ecosystem:

- **Shortage of trainers with real field experience**
- **Limited exposure to:**
 - o MW-scale projects
 - o PV simulation tools
 - o Robotic cleaning & O&M systems
 - o Solar structure design and tracking systems
- **Overemphasis on theory with minimal hands-on exposure**
- **Limited understanding of plant orientation and efficiency optimisation**

Needs identified:

Continuous upskilling of trainers and stronger industry-trainer collaboration.

8. Inclusion, Gender & Diverse Career Pathways

The green sector offers opportunities beyond engineering:

- Arts & Humanities – mobilisation, training, awareness
- Commerce – finance, procurement, marketing
- Social Sciences – policy, behaviour change, impact assessment

Women and non-technical learners can play key roles in:

- Community engagement
- Operations
- Enterprise development
- Awareness and outreach

Inclusive messaging and role models are essential to expand participation.

Way Forward

The workshop concluded with a clear roadmap:

Key Action Areas:

- Strengthen awareness and aspiration-building
- Promote skill-based, job-linked training
- Integrate practical exposure across all programs
- Foster industry-academia-training partnerships
- Use symposiums, competitions, and exposure visits as change agents
- Present green jobs as respectable, viable, and future-ready careers

Conclusion:

The workshop reaffirmed that green workforce development is not just about training—it is about mindset, exposure, relevance, and opportunity. A coordinated approach combining awareness, customised skilling, industry engagement, and practical learning can create a strong pipeline of skilled professionals ready to support India's green transition.



Interactive Workshop on Income Diversification and Livelihood Models for Farmers and SHGs

Workshop Overview

This interactive workshop brought together farmers, SHG members, and practitioners to tackle a critical reality: agriculture alone is no longer enough for sustainable livelihoods. Through discussions, demonstrations, and hands-on exercises, participants explored ways to reduce costs, diversify income, and make farming economically viable.

Key insight

Profitability Crisis:

Through group discussions and real-life sharing, participants highlighted the rising risks in farming—youth moving away, price volatility, and low returns leading to financial stress and, tragically, farmer suicides. Farmers voiced their concerns about having little control over market prices.

Green Revolution Limitations:

Interactive sessions examined how dependence on high-yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides has not translated into higher profits. Participants shared experiences of surplus production leading to price crashes, debt, and loss of indigenous seeds.



Environmental and Health Risks:

Using case studies and demonstrations, participants learned how chemical-intensive farming depletes resources, consumes massive amounts of water, and poses long-term health risks. Discussions included pesticide residues in food and their impact on health.

Key Strategy: Reducing Cost of Cultivation

Facilitators emphasized cost reduction as the fastest way to increase profits. Interactive exercises encouraged participants to analyze their own practices and explore organic and sustainable alternatives. Technical guidance was combined with mindset-changing discussions to prepare farmers for the transition.

Farmers' profits depend more on costs than yields. HYVs may boost harvests, but higher input costs often outweigh the gains.- Tapas Kumar Mondal- DRCSC

Exploring Income Diversification Models

Participants engaged in hands-on demonstrations and brainstorming sessions on low-risk, diversified livelihood options:

- Nutrition gardens and integrated farming
- Preparing organic manure and bio-inputs
- Community seed banks and zero-energy storage units
- Nurseries and sapling production
- Small ruminant rearing, group-based fish farming, and honey processing
- Multipurpose tree plantations

Farmer and SHG Insights:

Through group sharing, farmers and SHG members exchanged practical tips:

- Gradual reduction of chemicals is safer than sudden stoppage
- Regular soil testing is essential for sustainable yields
- Compost is more effective than raw cow dung
- Women are at the forefront of implementing diversified livelihoods
- SHG activities such as millet processing and integrated farming proved effective

Market Challenges and Solutions:

Interactive problem-solving sessions explored market realities: chemical-grown produce is visually preferred, while demand for organic products remains limited. Suggested strategies included:

- Establishing dedicated organic markets
- Linking conscious consumers directly with organic farmers
- Developing alternative marketing channels

Hands-On Assignments:

Participants applied what they learned through practical follow-ups:

1. Prepare a bio-input—Fish Amino Acid
2. Conduct soil testing comparing chemical vs. organic plots

Conclusion:

The interactive workshop reinforced that chemical-intensive farming is both economically and ecologically risky. Diversification, cost reduction, and sustainable practices are essential. With multiple low-risk livelihood models and active participant engagement, future farming can thrive on healthy soils, diversified incomes, and informed farmers.

DAY-2

Inauguration Session – Brief Overview



The Inauguration Session of the Move For Earth Kolkata Symposium 2026 was held on 22nd January 2026, marking the formal commencement of the two-day event. The session featured a welcome address by **Ms. Ekta Jaju**, Executive Director, SwitchON, followed by special addresses from senior representatives of SLBC, the Department of Panchayat & Rural Development, and Pallisree Ltd.

The session was graced by **Shri P. K. Bhardwaj**, Chief General Manager, NABARD, as the Chief Guest, who delivered the keynote address highlighting the importance of sustainable livelihoods, climate-resilient agriculture, and inclusive green growth.

The inauguration also included awards and recognitions, setting the tone for collaboration, innovation, and multi-stakeholder engagement throughout the symposium.

National Buyer Seller Meet

1. Background & Purpose

The National Buyer–Seller Meet (BSM) was organised as part of the Kolkata Symposium with the objective of strengthening direct market linkages between Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), farmers, and institutional/private buyers. The platform enabled structured B2B interactions, product showcasing, and business negotiations, with a focus on promoting sustainable sourcing, inclusive trade, and transparent market access

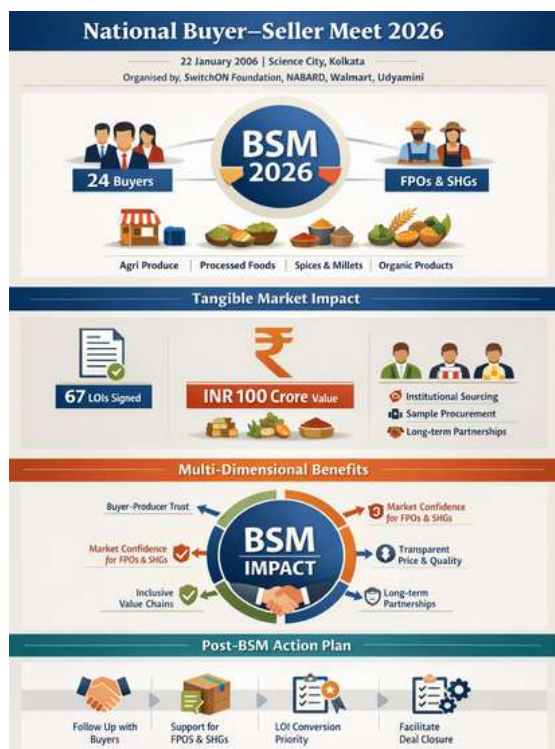


Fig. 1: National Buyer–Seller Meet 2026: Key Highlights, Outcomes & Strategic Impact



2. Participation Overview

The event witnessed strong participation from both demand and supply sides, reflecting high market interest and confidence in the FPO ecosystem.

- **Total Buyers Participated: 24**
- **Total Stalls Set Up: 36**

Key Buyer Organisations (indicative):



Sellers:

FPOs, SHGs, and farmer collectives from multiple states showcased agri-produce, processed food products, spices, millets, oilseeds, and natural/organic products.

3. Business Outcomes

The Buyer–Seller Meet generated strong and measurable commercial outcomes:

- **Total LOIs Signed: 67**
- **Approximate Value of LOIs: INR 113 Crore**

Nature of Engagements:

- Institutional sourcing commitments
- Sample-based procurement discussions
- Long-term supply relationship building

These LOIs represent concrete market opportunities, translating engagement into structured business pathways for FPOs and SHGs.

4. Strategic Impact

The BSM created significant multi-dimensional impact:

- Strengthened trust-based relationships between buyers and producer institutions
- Improved market confidence of FPOs and SHGs through direct buyer exposure
- Enabled transparent price discovery and quality benchmarking
- Promoted sustainable, traceable, and inclusive value chains
- Positioned FPOs as reliable business partners rather than beneficiaries

5. Way Forward

As a follow-up to the BSM:

- Structured engagement will be initiated with buyers who signed LOIs
- Support will be extended to FPOs for quality compliance, packaging, certification, and logistics

- NABARD-supported FPOs will be prioritised for conversion of LOIs into formal contracts
- A post-event facilitation mechanism will be developed to support deal closure and order execution

Conclusion:

The National Buyer–Seller Meet 2026 successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of structured market linkage platforms in converting dialogue into tangible business outcomes. With 67 LOIs signed and 24 buyers engaged, the BSM stands as a strong model for sustainable agri-market integration, reinforcing NABARD's vision of resilient, market-driven, and farmer-centric value chains.





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SwitchON Foundation, established in 2008, is a leading non-profit organisation focusing on Environment Sustainability and Equal Opportunities. Operating in 10 Indian states. It leads initiatives in Clean Energy Access, Sustainable Agriculture, Skilling, Clean Air and Sustainable Cities. Key strengths encompass innovative project implementation, capacity building, field support, awareness and advocacy.

