

ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 21





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Towards Building a Resilient Community

The year 2020 has been a testament of the fact that anthropogenic activities can cause global disasters and it is high time communities across the world develop resilience by judiciously using the resources available. Resilience in terms of economic, environmental and social adversaries. SwitchON Foundation believes that the community itself has the power to steer itself out of the pressing situation and in some places it is just about guiding them towards the right direction.

SwitchON Foundation's idea of resilience is very simple. We provide hand holding support to marginalised communities through training, workshop, research, advocacy and campaign and help them reach a point from where they are able to innovate and harness the true potential of the resources. The basic necessities of life in today's context are food, water, energy, habitat and livelihood. Through our programmes we try to build community resilience while balancing the need of today with the need of the future.





From the Director's Desk



The year 2020 has been a difficult year. While the pandemic hovered taking away lives and livelihoods of many, there were also drastic changes in climate that occurred taking the form of environmental disasters simultaneously. Doctors have called this phenomenon a 'Twindemic, that pushed humanity to the edge. One such environmental disaster that the state of West Bengal witnessed was the cyclone 'Amphan' in 2020, the worst ever witnessed by the state. As a duty to serve our fellow citizens during such a difficult time SwitchON Foundation, helped in conducting relief activities following the disaster. Further, in response to COVID-19 we helped SHG Women to train them and make masks during the pandemic and partnered with organisations to set up community kitchens, to serve food to people during the lockdown period. Like many, we stepped up as an organisation and took part in multiple initiatives apart from our core activities making sure we contributed to serving people in need.

Our end goal has been is serving people creating opportunities for them, while addressing climate change issues. Our ideas are in alignment to providing a sustainable livelihood and bridge the inequity and income gap that currently exists.

We at SwitchON are also firm believers of just transition and in order to do so and bring out farmers from the vicious cycle of poverty, we started with 'SEWA Program' in several districts of East India, which is Strengthening the Energy, Water and Agriculture nexus. This project helped marginal, more so women farmers come up and take the charge in moving to sustainable agriculture.

Our nature of work has evolved. Last year we strengthened our research team, worked on documents, created reports, and took up studies in the field of agriculture and climate change. Efforts have been made to replicate the findings of our research and field level work, thus ensuring practice influences policy. Finally, from a resolve perspective the last two years have made us much stronger and enabled us to grow better than ever as a team. Our recent work includes organizing flagship programs such as the 'Bengal Clean Air Initiative', and 'Sustainable Transport for All' that focuses on reducing air pollution in the state and building a safe bicycle infrastructure in West Bengal respectively. We are also planning to include open learning courses on environment and climate change offered alongside sustainable eco- friendly rewards on completion. Therefore, we have managed to bring in more members to our team to work and co-ordinate with people across states. Our work in fact doubled during the pandemic making it a successful 12 year run for our organisation, the success stories of which we are elated to share in our annual report.

Vinay Jaju

Managing Director
SwitchON Foundation

Mission

Sustainable and Equitable India

About SwitchON

Vision

Promoting sustainable livelihoods & addressing environmental challenges through innovative business models & technologies.

Goal

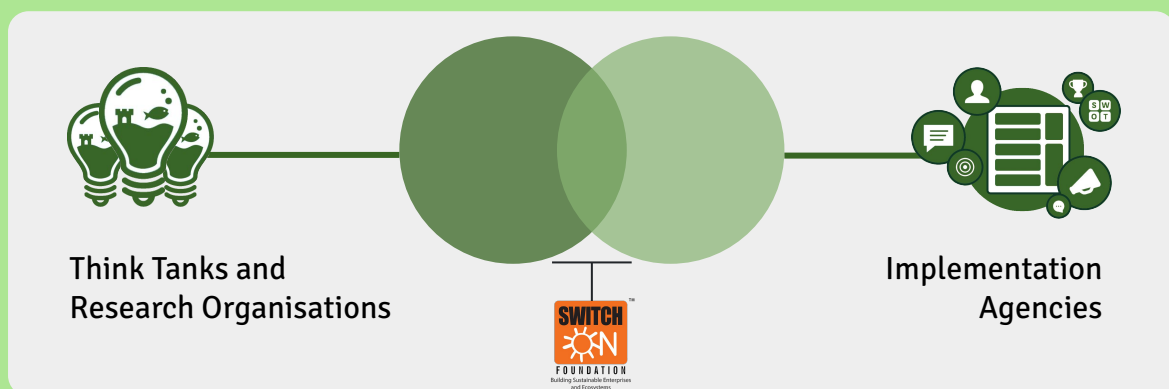
Create opportunities for 10 million underserved people by 2030



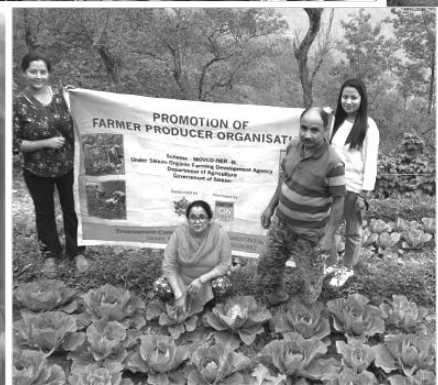
Overview

2008 was the year when a handful of passionate youth decided to take the words of climate change to the youth across the country. The project initiated to encompass this mammoth task was called the SwitchON Project. Over the years, the SwitchON project took the form of an organisation and came to be known as the Environment Conservation Society (SwitchON Foundation). With the vision of positively impacting people's lives across Bengal, we expanded our work from youth awareness to taking major projects in clean energy access across Bengal, promoting climate smart agriculture, training and skilling people to make them industry ready. In the pursuit we have incubated 3 organisations focussed on producing specific eco friendly products, helped built more than 500 micro enterprises, and setup 12 training centres.

SwitchON Foundation, much like its team members, is dynamic. Even after 13 years of existence, it takes up a new form every year. Initially implementation of projects to upgrade rural livelihood was the sole focus of the organisation, but over the years it has expanded its horizon to incorporate empirical research and policy advocacy as a part of its core working area. The benefit of integrating practice, research and policy is to create a holistic impact on the communities as well analyse first hand any gap which exists to be filled.

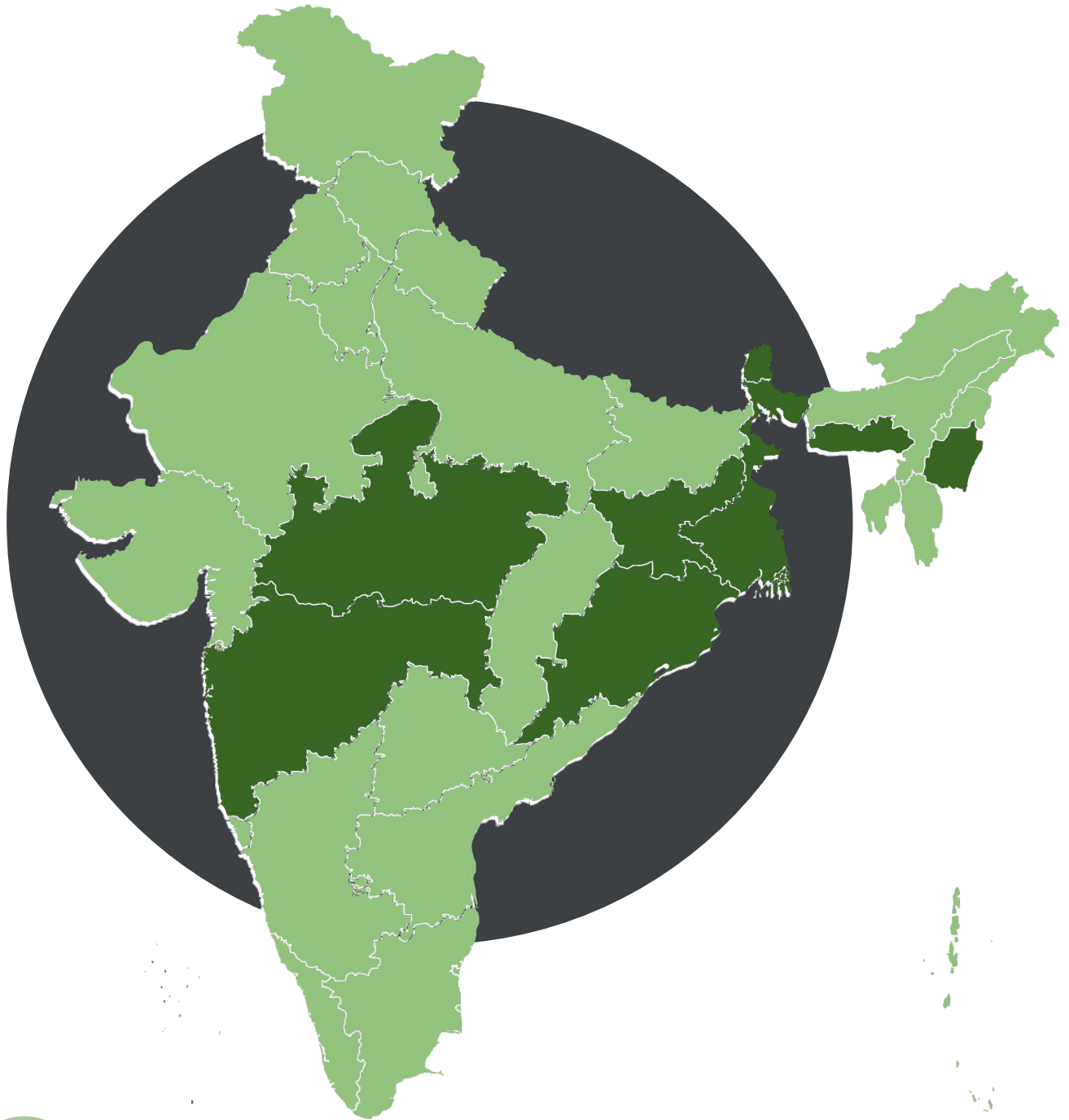


Currently, we work across 4 major verticals namely **Clean Energy Access, Climate Smart Agriculture and Livelihood, Skills and Training, and Environment and Climate Change** with the goal to work towards a country which judiciously uses resources. **In the past decade we have reached over 1 Million people** and induced the skills which will be required for self sustenance and growth of the community.



Overall Impact

2020-2021



10,00,000
Lives



5000
Trained individuals



5000
Villages



10,000
Youths form a network
of responsible citizens

Clean Energy Access Division

In 2008, SwitchON recognised that our country needs to shift its energy dependency to cleaner and sustainable energy sources. In 2013, after in depth research, we started promoting solar pumps as a viable alternative to diesel pumping systems used across rural India. Over time we realised the challenge towards acquiring solar pumps is the lack of financial access to small and marginal farmers with lack of credit history.

SwitchON remodeled its promotion techniques from strictly awareness based to holistic ecosystem development. For the past 3 years, we have not only promoted solar pumps to farmers but also linked them to suitable financial systems and subsidy schemes for acquiring the technology.

Impact of the division

11

Total
Projects

25,000

Lives
impacted



Project Overview

2020-2021

Promoting Guarantee Funds for Solar Pumps

Overview

This project looks into providing financial access to small and marginal farmers towards acquiring solar pumps and micro irrigation technologies. To remove the obstacles towards credit access we have come up with an innovative solution.

We park a guarantee fund with banks against which the farmers can take loans for buying solar pumps. More than 150 solar pumps have been financed through this method.

Impact

150



farmers got access to bank finance out of which 30 are women farmers

85



diesel pumps have been replaced

5000



farmers got reliable access to irrigation

375



Micro Irrigation Technologies (drip & sprinkler) installed

Partners

IWMI

International Water Management Institute

Good Energies
POWER FOR A BETTER WORLD

Solar Technology Adoption through Awareness and Capacity Building

Overview


This programme looks into creating an overall demand for solar technologies especially solar pumps. Through the several baseline studies conducted to understand awareness about solar technologies we found that there is a lack of knowledge and misconceptions among farmers and bankers about using solar pumps.

To help them understand it's reality and benefits, we initiated a campaign called 'Sulabh Solar Pump' across Bengal and Jharkhand. The major objective of the campaign is to not only promote and create demand for solar pumps but also promote climate smart agricultural practices which includes conservation and recharge of water.

Impact

1,00,000+ 
people has been reached through our campaign

22 
Campaigns have been conducted across East India

50+ 
communication materials have been disseminated

50+ 
workshops have been conducted

Partners

MacArthur Foundation



Location



Stories of Change

Higher return on investment from solar pump

In Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal, Koushik Majhi introduced solar pumps in his fields. This has not only increased the quality of his present yield but also helped him to expand the range of crops he grew. Currently, he also grows strawberries, apples and sweet lime. He has managed to increase his income by 40% of his income before installing a solar pump which has also led to him buying an additional *bigha* of land.



“Solar Pump has been my best investment. I never thought in my dreams that I could grow so many crops in such a short time”

Koushik Majhi

Additional income through selling water



In Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal, Nigam Chaitanya like many of his fellow farmers depended on the monsoon for irrigating his crops. The erratic monsoon led to huge loss in terms of his crop yield and income. He decided to install solar pumps in order to irrigate his field throughout the year. The solar pump not only helped him solve the issues with irrigation but also provided him with excess water which he sold to others. Annually he started earning 25,000 by selling water to others.

“Earlier I faced major issues due to irrigation, but now by selling water I have additional income. Solar Pump is indeed the wonder technology responsible for this turn of events”

Nigam Chaitanya

From single crop to multi crop

Motor Ghosh, a farmer from Nadia district of Bengal could only irrigate a small area of his entire land due to the high recurring cost of diesel pumps. He decided to install solar pumps and a micro irrigation system to irrigate the entire 5 acres of his land. This setup has been so beneficial for his yield and crop diversity that his income has increased to 1.5 times. Also, he now grows potatoes, mustard and vegetables along with rice.



“Earlier my focus was to grow paddy properly in 3/4th of my land area. Now, I not only grow paddy but also other vegetables”

Motor Ghosh

Climate Smart Agriculture & Livelihood Division

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood to over 70% of India's population. With technological advancement in the field along with the increasing demand for agricultural products, the farmers have been relying on ecologically detrimental methods such as using pesticides and Genetically Modified Organisms for better yield. Climate Smart Agriculture promotes practices that safeguards the environment and promotes organically produced crops. Using regenerative agriculture promotion,

SwitchON Foundation has been working with farmers by combining organic farming for crop production and promoting Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) to create products made from these organically grown crops. This has helped develop the entrepreneurial spirit of the farmers while increasing their income substantially and instilling the value of organic farming.

Impact at a Glance

32

Total
Projects

16,000

Lives
impacted



Project Overview

2020-2021

Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisation

Overview

FPOs in simple terms are companies created by the farmers, of the farmers and for the farmers. Motivated farmers form groups and bring their produce together and add value to it by creating a product ready for consumer usage. The entire process from raw materials procurement, production and market linkages are taken care of by the members of the FPO (also shareholders).

SwitchON through the FPO projects across 3 states in India have facilitated this process by providing handholding support from establishing 15 FPOs to creating viable business models and ultimately linking them to the market. The project has been so impactful that in the coming years we are expanding our reach to 3 more states in the country.

Impact



West Bengal

4

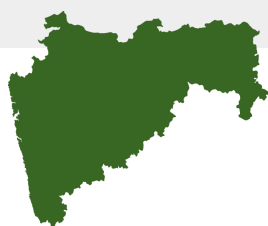
Districts

5

Number of FPOs

7000

Farmers



Maharashtra

1

Districts

8

Number of FPOs

2500

Farmers



Sikkim

2

Districts

5

Number of FPOs

1500

Farmers

Partners



Stories of Change

A little training for a long way

Namdev Tukaram Chede, a 32 year old farmer in Bhavinimgaon, Maharashtra was clueless about various government schemes and technologies required to improve his income through agriculture. SwitchON conducted training with the farmers of his village and connected him with the Department of Agriculture. As a BSc graduate in agriculture he picked up the intricacies of setting up his own agribusiness, polyhouses and nursery quickly. He also got trained in conducting baseline survey and data analysis, through which he has been able to help his fellow farmers grow their agri-business



“I was struggling to make proper income through farming in spite of my academic background in agriculture. The training provided by SwitchON has opened up my possibilities in this field”

Namdev Tukaram Chede

Traditional Farming to Climate Smart Agriculture



Renuka Sharma practices farming as her sole income source in South Sikkim. Like many of her fellow farmers she practiced traditional farming in her one acre of land to grow ginger. The yield was low and the income hardly brought in profit. After knowing about the FPO being created by SwitchON, she became part of the Farmer Interest Group (FIG) in her own village. After attending several training workshops, she shifted her farming technique and was also connected to the Pakyong Market. Currently, her income is much more than before, so much so that she has bought an additional acre of land and is looking to adopt modern technologies such as micro irrigation.

“I never thought that changing my farming technique could have so much impact on my yield and income. I completely trust SwitchON now for all their valuable inputs which has helped me so much”

Renuka Sharma



Skills and Training Division

India can be considered one of the youngest countries in the world owing to its average age of the population being 26 years. SwitchON recognises the importance of skilling and capacity building as one of the foundations towards creating resilient communities. Since 2017, we have run several projects in association with various governmental and non governmental institutions.

This was to provide skills which are in demand in the industry to anyone who requires them, so that they can be easily absorbed into employment. Over the years of providing training we have developed specialisation in solar related training skills. This has not only promoted renewable energy technologies at the core but also creates a workforce to create and maintain it in the long run.

Impact at a Glance

8

Total
Projects

4,649

Lives
impacted



Project Overview

2020-2021

Solar Skill Training Programmes

Overview

Through this project we conducted two residential programmes and trained the students about the detailed applications and maintenance of solar Photovoltaic. The programme took place across Bengal and Jharkhand.

The major objective of this programme was to create a workforce of youth who will be capable of taking ahead the renewable energy initiatives of the country.

Impact

120



Number of students trained

114



Number of students employed

1.5x

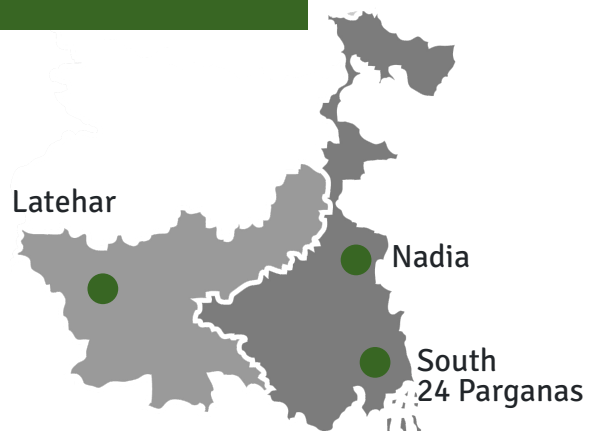


Average Increase in income

Partners



Location




Multi skill Training Programmes

Overview


We organise various skill training programmes to induce skills which are in industry demand. In 2020 - 21 we trained students to become Retail Managers and Tour Escorts.

This has been instrumental in inducing skills which has landed them jobs in these specific industries.

Impact

120 
Number of students trained

110 
Number of students employed

2x 
Average Increase in income

Partners



Location



Stories of Change

Bag a job

Anirudhha Sarkar from Bankura West Bengal was the student of retail trainee associate under Utkarsha Bangla PBSSD. He was from a farmers family and their total family income was 6000 per month. Just like any other students he was also clueless about the industry and was not aware of it before taking the course. He was a keen learner who worked hard to pursue the course. After successfully completing the course, he managed to bag a job of 11,000 rupees per month. He is working with an eminent brand as a retail associate in Durgapur. Now not only can he support his family but also he is independent.



“Solar Pump has been my best investment. I never thought in my dreams that I could grow so many crops in such a short time”

Anirudhha Sarkar

Working to achieve his dream



Raghunath Murmu of Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal hails from an economically marginalised background. His parents are daily wage labourers earning 3500 INR per month, which is not nearly enough to feed the entire family. From a very early age Raghunath had to hold the sails and started working in a hotel to make his ends meet. In the interim he joined the Suryamitra programme organised by SwitchON Foundation. After completing the course he was offered a placement in a Bangalore based company and he started earning 3 times more. Now he can provide a sufficient amount towards his family.

“I have always thought about a job as a means to make my ends meet but now I have dreams. Suryamitra gave me the hope that if I work hard enough, I will achieve great things. Now, I am working really hard to become a supervisor”

Raghunath Murmu

Environment and Climate Change

Climate Change has become one of the greatest challenges faced by humankind. It is not the responsibility of few but all, to take initiatives towards mitigating the climate crisis. It has been speculated that if we do not take strict measures by 2030, then the worst effects of climate change will become irreversible.

SwitchON Foundation has been working to tackle the brunt of Climate Change through responsive action, policy level advocacy and citizen engagement. We believe in a holistic approach in tackling an issue of such a magnanimous scale. The idea is to not only make changes in policies but also make citizens responsible and aware about their environment.

Impact at a Glance

6

Total
Projects

40 lacs

Lives
impacted



Project Overview

2020 - 2021

Bengal CAN

Overview

Bengal is one of the major contributors of air pollution across India. To tackle the issue of air pollution in the state, SwitchON initiated a network of active citizens, youth from schools and colleges, doctors and experts.

This project uses policy advocacy and behavioural shifts to reach its objective. The programme has been largely divided into two factions, i.e, Clean Air for all and Sustainable Transport for all.

Impact

10,000⁺

Citizens

200

Schools

64

Civil Society Organisation

200⁺

Doctors

22



micro projects initiated across Bengal

100⁺



visual materials such as posters, videos created for awareness

6



Campaigns

4



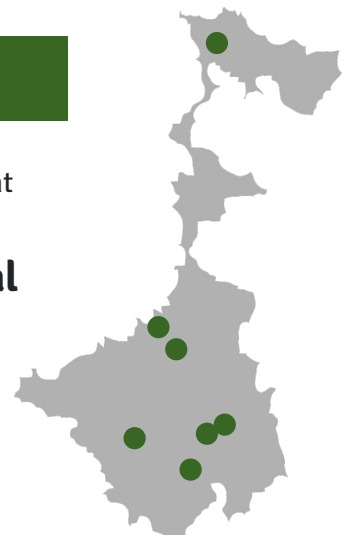
Stakeholder meet

Initiated which has resulted in awareness

Location

7 Non-attainment cities across

West Bengal

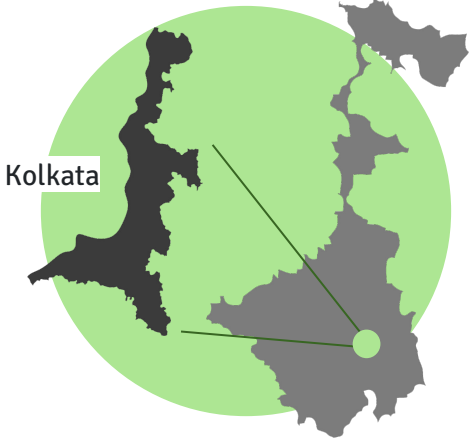


Through strong campaigns, all the political parties in West Bengal Elections have incorporated clean air plans in their manifesto

Sustainability Mobility Network

Overview

Transportation is the backbone of the city. The existing transportation system depends a lot on fossil fuels which is ecologically detrimental. To add on to this, cycles have been restricted on Kolkata roads since 2008. So as to promote a more sustainable form of transportation in the city, a network has been established. In the last year we have held several policy meetings with experts and citizens alike to ideate on a roadmap towards implementing sustainable transportation systems in the city.



#BENGAL

LOVES

CLEAN AIR

Rebuild Bengal

Overview

In May 2020, the biggest cyclone in decades to rise from Bay of Bengal made its landfall. The destruction was massive across the state. The project looked into providing immediate assistance to all the victims across the state.

The major focus was on Sundarban which had faced the major brunt of the calamity. The project was carried out with the help of many organisations and volunteers.


Impact


25,000⁺ 
Reliefs Distributed

100⁺ 
Trees Replantation

5000 
Saplings Distributed

2 
Houses Rebuild

30,000⁺ 
Dry Food Packets distributed

4400⁺ 
Ration Packets distributed

Partners



Multiple NGOs
Philanthropic organisation

Locations



West Bengal

Stories of Change

From an enthusiast to a practitioner

Aishwarya Das, a student of Zoology from University of Calcutta was always interested in working towards mitigating environmental degradation but was not able to implement any projects on ground. She was selected as the part of the Clean Air Champion Cohort, an initiative of Bengal CAN which supports youth to implement their own project. As a cohort member she took initiatives on important days on issues related to curbing air pollution in her vicinity. This has instilled in her the experience of creating hands-on impact and work towards mitigating climate change.



“I have learnt a lot from being a part of the cohort. Met like-minded people and got guidance from experts on how to convert theory into practice”

Aishwarya Das

From economically dependent to the sole bread earner

Ganita Das, of West Medinipur district of West Bengal was a homemaker and was economically dependent on his husbands income for her monthly expenditures. In March 2021 when the COVID19 lockdown wreaked havoc across the country, Ganita’s husband lost his employment during this time. It became impossible to make ends meet. At this juncture, SwitchON initiated Project Karuna and reached out to SHGs for making masks and face shields. Ganita took this opportunity and held the sails of her family during this tumultuous time.



“If it was not for Project Karuna, then we would have remained hungry for god knows when. The work of making masks came as a blessing in disguise”

Ganita Das



Ell
Dedicated to the
Police,

SILENT KILLER

...of air pollution ...

...with HEPA ...

...with activated charcoal ...

BENGAL LOVES CLEAN AIR

CLEAN AIR DAY

BENGAL LOVES CLEAN AIR

Clean

SWITCH FOUNDATION

Bengal-CAN

If you are facing acute asthamic symptoms, then install air purifiers with HEPA and/or activated charcoal filtration.

Building Resilience through COVID-19 Response

In 2020, West Bengal faced two major adversaries in the form of **COVID-19** and **Supercyclone Amphan**. At that point of time, SwitchON launched an all out multi pronged approach called **Project Karuna** which used a multi pronged approach to bring resilience to the affected people. The project can be divided into two major approaches, **Firstly, the Immediate response** and **Secondly, provide livelihood opportunities for longer stability**.

Immediate Response:

The immediate response was to tackle the crisis of people especially migrant workers who were not left with any food to eat and also devoid of the basic protection required to safeguard themselves such as masks and sanitisers.

SwitchON Foundation joined hands with the administration, police and more than 20 organisations across the city to provide food to the people in need. The procurement of raw materials was done from warehouses around **Kolkata** and **Howrah** which made it easier logistically. The cooking process was carried on by anyone who had the ability to do so, from cloud kitchens, roadside eateries, stalls who make chapatis, gurudwaras, etc. After the food was cooked, we had several vans, carts and rickshaws to deliver the food to the beneficiaries. For the entire distribution **we had immense support from 40 police stations across the city**, who made sure that there are no beneficiaries who are repeated in the process and the distributors maintain all the protocols required for their own safety as well as stop the spread of the virus.

Some of the wage workers who have access to cooking paraphernalias but were devoid of ration cards, were provided with basic raw materials to cook food such as rice, pulses, potatoes and soaps and distributed them through the same system.

We also distributed approximately 4 lakh masks to the citizens and more than 10 lakhs cooked food. Each day we distributed food to more than 15,000 people.

Livelihood Opportunities:

The second project we initiated looked at providing a sustained livelihood opportunity to the people and looked to relieve them of the financial impact of the COVID19 lockdown. The lockdown had claimed the livelihood of many people, some of them were the sole earning members of the family. We initiated a project where we trained 730 SHG members across Nadia, South 24 Parganas and Hooghly to make cotton face masks and face shields and sell them in the market. The restriction due to the lockdown created a major obstacle for physical training, so we created videos of training and disseminated through social media and whatsapp. After the training we created a Revolving Cloth Bank, which essentially was a place from where the members of the identified and trained SHG members could access cloth for making the products. Also, we facilitated market linkages for the dissemination of the produced mask and face shields. The Karuna Didis as we called them, made and sold more than 4.2 lakhs masks and face shields, increasing the average income of members to ten thousand per month. Most of their family income before the initiative was much lesser than this. The project not only helped in creating a ripple in the livelihood aspect but also promoted an integral product needed to curb the spread of COVID19.



COVID-19



**Supercyclone
Amphan**

West Bengal faced **2 major adversaries**

This initiative was challenging not only because of the responsibility we had during this tumultuous time but also in terms of the effort put in by the SwitchON family in bringing this together. Our effort was to bring resilience among the communities and we succeeded in doing so, much more than we envisioned initially.

Milestone

April 2020



Launch of Project Karuna

June 2020



Creation of SEWA Network

August 2020



Launch of ZINDAGI (Zero Interest Indian Grameen Incubation) Initiative which looks at providing startup capitals to the marginalised communities with zero interest.

May 2020



Launch of Rebuild Bengal

July 2020



FPO promotion expansion across Sikkim and Maharashtra

September 2020



Initiated a project with Network for Global Innovation (NGIN) for ecosystem

December 2020



Goldman Sachs



Goldman Sachs Analyst Impact Award

Stakeholder consultation held towards effective management of groundwater and sustainable agriculture in East India

February 2021



Launch of Clean Air Manifesto

April 2021



Signing MoU with Punjab National Bank

October 2020



Launch of Bengal Clean Air Network

January 2021



Stakeholder consultation meeting on Sustainable Urban Mobility in Kolkata

March 2021



Setting up of Sustainable Mobility Network in Kolkata

5 FPO in Sikkim

Team Speak



The year 2020 has indeed been challenging for everyone. Even more so for the economically marginalised communities across the country. To help the people in need, is something which drives us everyday and this year it was really difficult when our operations almost came to a halt. I handle the research aspect of the clean energy division in the organization. It was difficult to not think about the impact we could have created during this time. Climate Change is not waiting for anyone and each day we wait, it only gets worse. I decided to contribute towards community resilience through alternate ways. When Super cyclone Amphan made landfall and devastated many parts of Bengal, I actively designed campaigns and implemented them. Through the year we also initiated multiple projects towards solar pump promotion. This year taught me resilience, teamwork, belief in myself and above all the belief in the cause we work for everyday more than I would have learnt in a lifetime



Mahashweta Chakraborty

Deputy Manager,
Clean Energy Access Division



I joined SwitchON In 2019 after completing my Suryamitra Training. There is always a happiness for working for the place which have educated you. I have worked across all the divisions which gives me a different sense of pride In knowing the impact we have created across all the places we are working in. The year 2020, will be etched in my memory. I can very well recall the zeal I had, to work for the people were suffering in this tumultuous times. When Amphan had hit Bengal, I travelled across Sundarbans to serve the people and do whatever I can to help them. 2020 showed me what we are really working for and when problems are literally at our doors, we cannot step back.

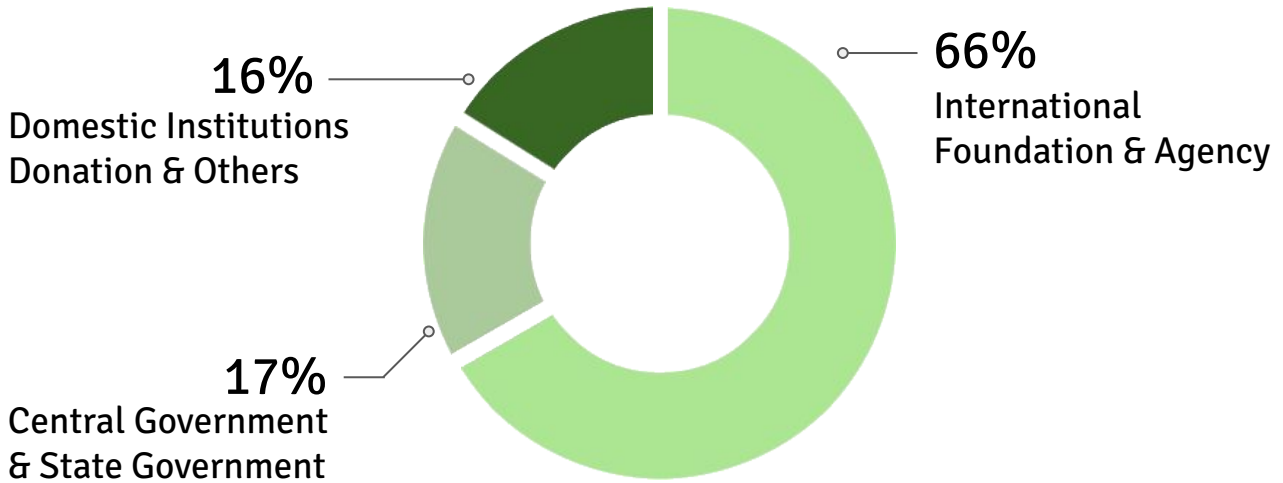


Subhankar Mallick

Project Coordinator

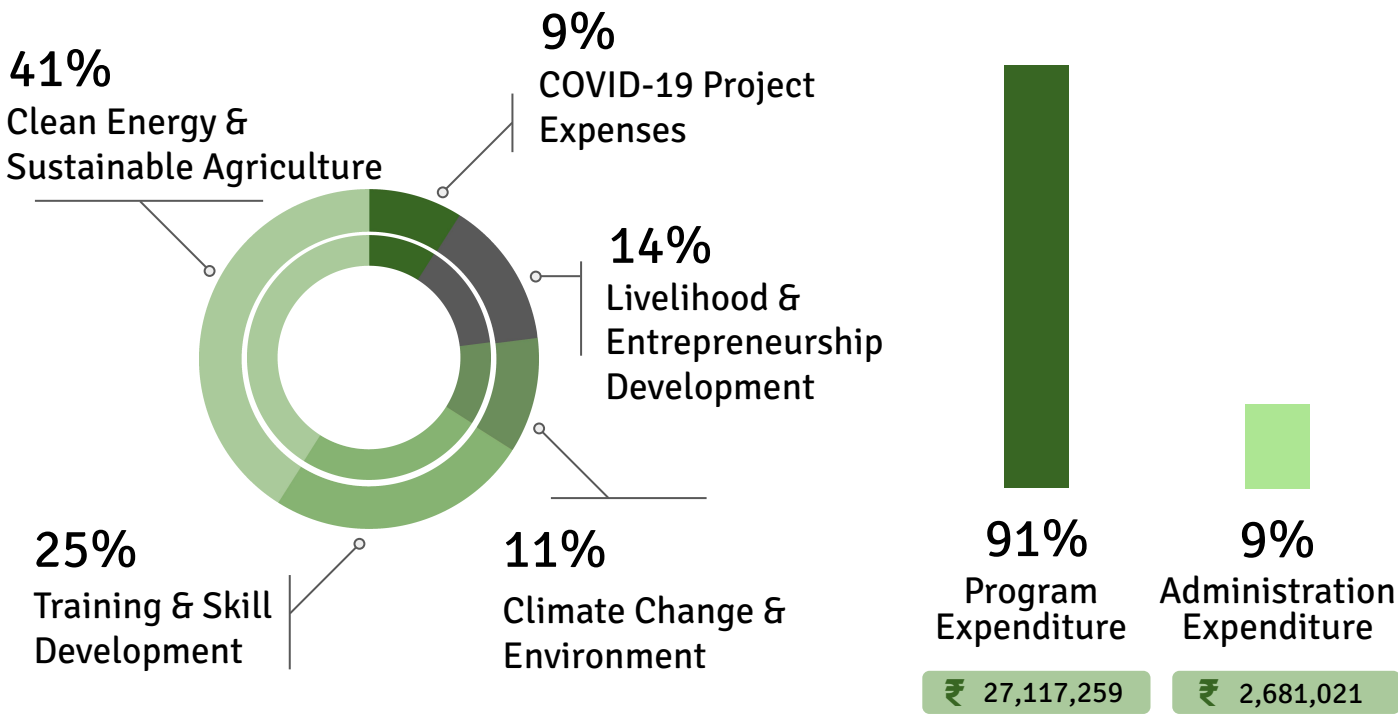
Financials

Fund Received



Total = ₹ 57,908,088

Fund Utilized



Total = ₹ 29,798,280

Way Forward

Working Harder everyday

*I have promises to keep and
miles to go before I sleep*

- as wonderfully penned down by Robert Frost, these lines from one of his most famous poems resonates with the belief system of the organisation.

Our objectives and vision are the promises we made to ourselves and the communities we work with. To reach our goal of a sustainable and equitable India, we have worked hard till now and will continue to do so well into the foreseeable future.





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