

she the change

15 years 15 stories





ABOUT US

SwitchON Foundation is a leading organisation established in 2008 committed to Climate Action by promoting Sustainable Agriculture, Clean Energy, Clean Air Advocacy and Sustainable Cities. Our extensive team operates across ten states of India.

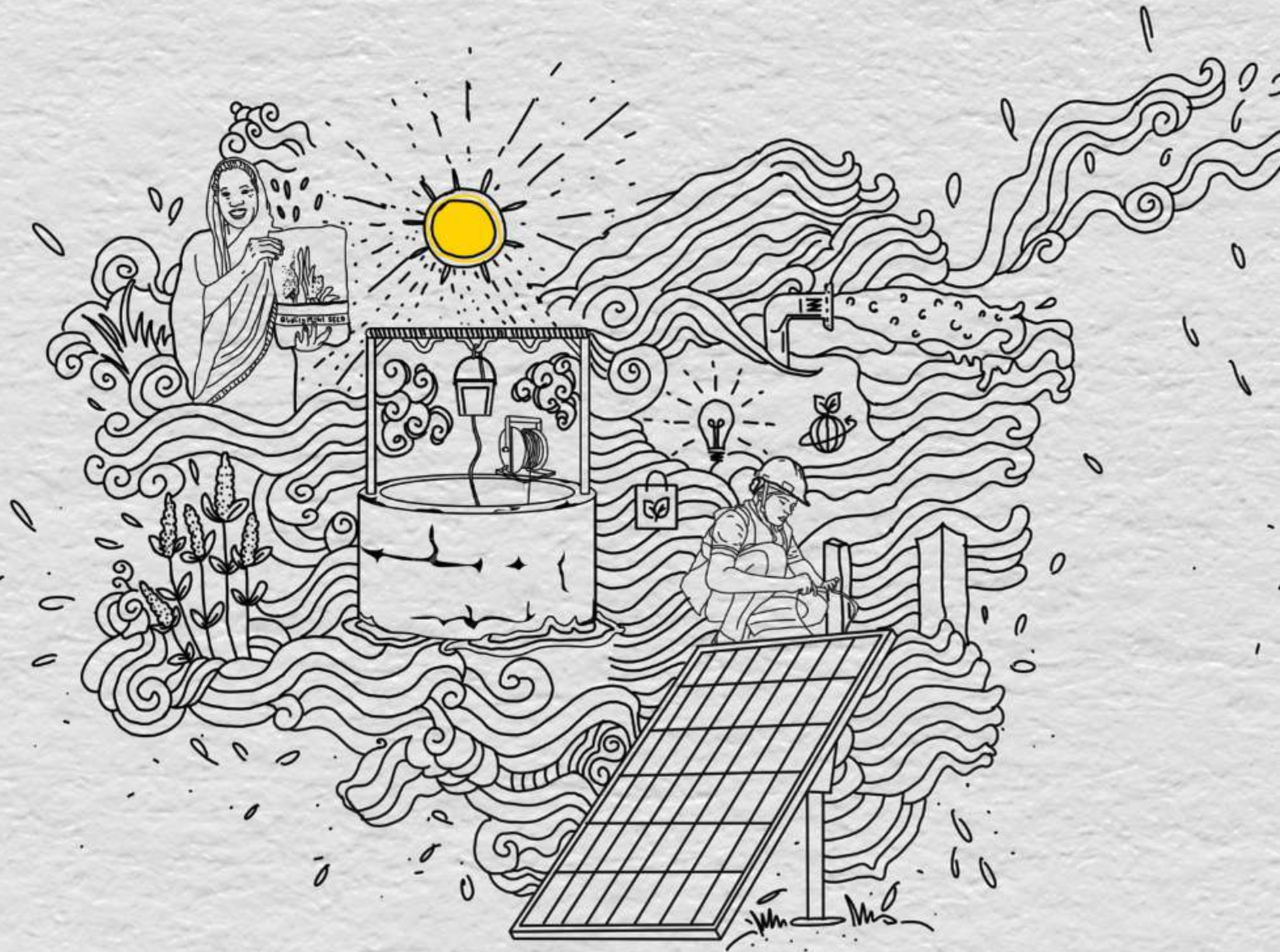




years stories

Completing our 15 years, we are delighted to highlight the incredible journeys of 15 powerful women stories. These stories epitomise resilience, strength, and empowerment, reflecting the impact of our work over the past 15 years. Join us in celebrating their achievements and the enduring spirit of the communities.







EEWA

EMPOWERING ENERGY WATER AGRICULTURE

Lighting up lives

Cultivating dreams

Where innovation meets compassion

Where technology jigs with nature

Where every sunrise marks a new beginning

Where Earth smiles and humanity thrives

FROM A HOMEMAKER TO AN ENTREPRENEUR —

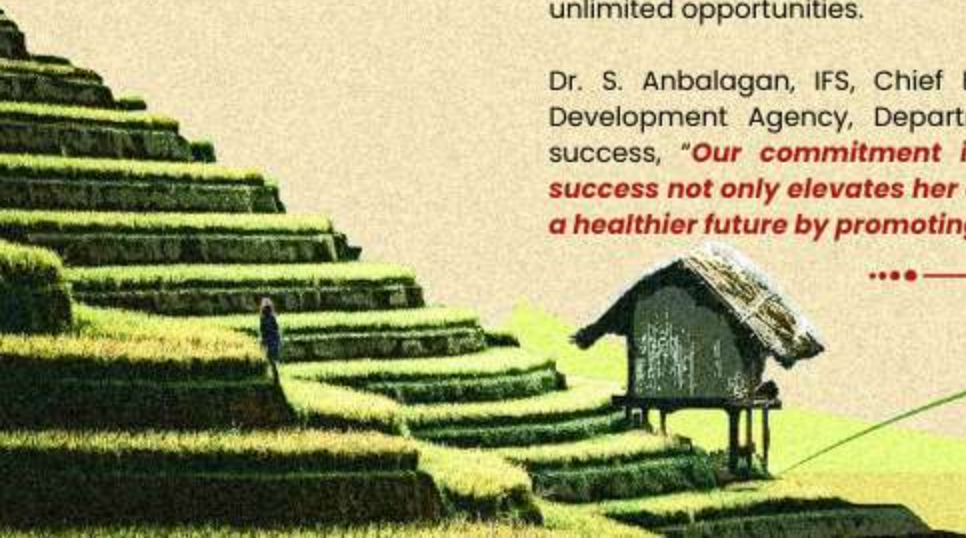
Breaking through the glass ceiling, Devi Ghimeray, has proven that a homemaker too has an undiscovered entrepreneur within. She hasn't attended school beyond Class VII. Today she introduces herself as an Entrepreneur with a confident grin. Devi Ghimeray owns a food processing unit.

Devi Ghimeray proudly says, "I may have only completed Class VII, but I've shattered limits. As an entrepreneur. From homemaker to board member, my journey proves that with determination you can achieve anything".

She married young, balancing household responsibilities while cultivating turmeric. Today she is also a **board member of Tarku Namphing Organic Growers Cooperative Society Ltd.** Despite challenges in selling organic produce leading to distress sales, active participation in the FPO through SwitchON, transformed her confidence. Annually **she earns Rs 2-3 lakhs.** She now prioritises her children's education, aiming to provide them with unlimited opportunities.

Dr. S. Anbalagan, IFS, Chief Executive Officer, Sikkim Organic Farming Development Agency, Department of Agriculture, commented on her success, **"Our commitment is to empower individuals like her. Her success not only elevates her economic standing but also contributes to a healthier future by promoting organic farming practices".**

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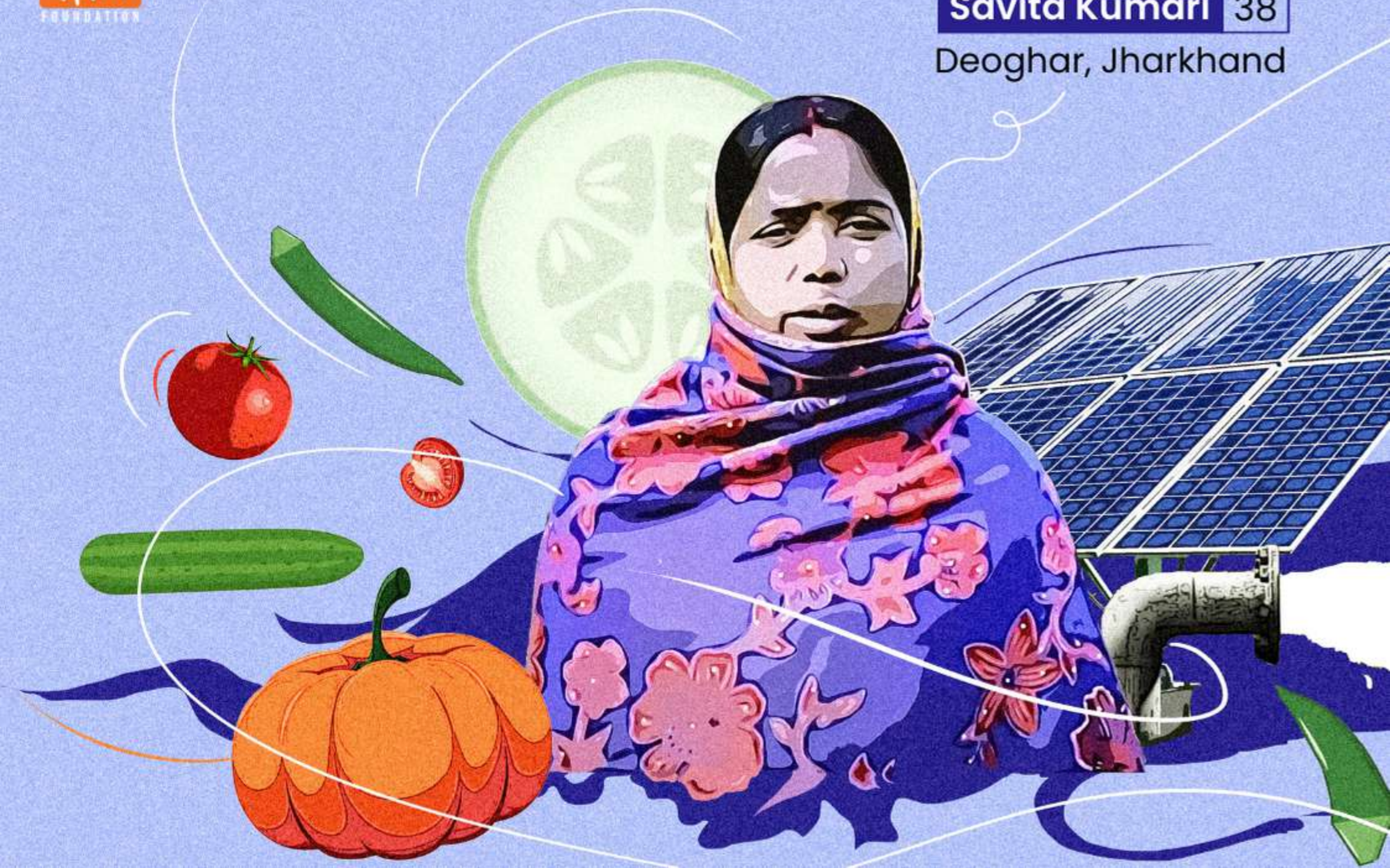
Devi Ghimeray 39

Temi Block, Sikkim



Savita Kumari 38

Deoghar, Jharkhand





SOLAR SPARKS: A THRIVING TRANSFORMATION

Embracing a shift towards sustainable farming, Savita Kumari, a resilient marginal farmer transitioned from conventional to solar-powered pumps. Overcoming escalating costs and other challenges, she achieved newfound independence, raising her **monthly income by a double**. It enabled **year-round cultivation** of diverse vegetables, **expanding the farm's productivity**.

This transformation not only diversified crop variety but also **facilitated the establishment of a successful dairy business by her husband**. Wisely investing savings in her son's education, it symbolises the positive impact of embracing sustainable farming practices.

Savita happily says, *"This independence has increased my decision-making authority in the household. With more time available, my husband has now started his own business too. Solar has made agriculture profitable."*

Vijay Kumar Sinha, Project Director, JREDA emphasises, *"JREDA installed 12,985 solar water pumps, benefiting 2,105 women farmers (16.2% of total beneficiaries). The growing demand reflects benefits like increased income from reduced fuel consumption. Appreciate efforts aligning women's empowerment with the PM-KUSUM scheme through your campaign."*

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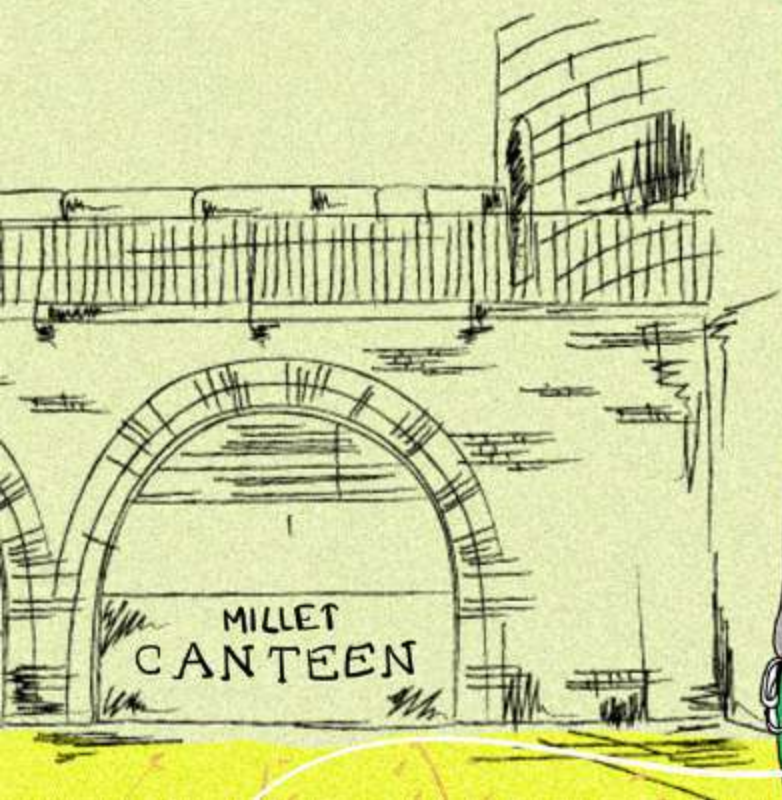
MILLET TRANSFORMING LIVES —

Nurturing her dreams on 2 acres, Dipali Mahato, a marginal farmer, once faced meagre returns for her diverse crops. However, a transformative journey unfolded after she delved into millet cultivation training, **dedicating just 0.35 acres and reaping a harvest of 37 kgs of finger millets.** Fueling her newfound passion for entrepreneurship, **millet cooking sessions** became her muse.

In a collaborative endeavour, the Hura block of Purulia witnessed the inception of the **first women Self-Help Group (SHG)-led Millet Canteen.** Dipali actively contributes to food preparation and café management. The canteen not only **enriched her livelihood,** but it also provided a platform for the **community to gain insights** into the **various ways millets can be incorporated into daily meals.**

Dipali Mahato expressed her happiness, *"I am happy to prepare and serve different millet recipes. I want to thank Anandadhara Prakash under WBSRLM and SwitchON Foundation for training us and giving this opportunity to showcase our abilities."*

Shri Arikul Islam, WBCS(Exe)- BDO Hura said, *"We are thrilled to have the Millet Cafe at our block office, run by the SHG women entrepreneurs. I congratulate Palli Sebika Mahila Samiti SHG group and SwitchON Foundation for their efforts. An integrated approach is required to promote these wonder grains."*



Dipali Mahato 34

Purulia, West Bengal



Shyamoli Dolui 40

Hooghly, West Bengal



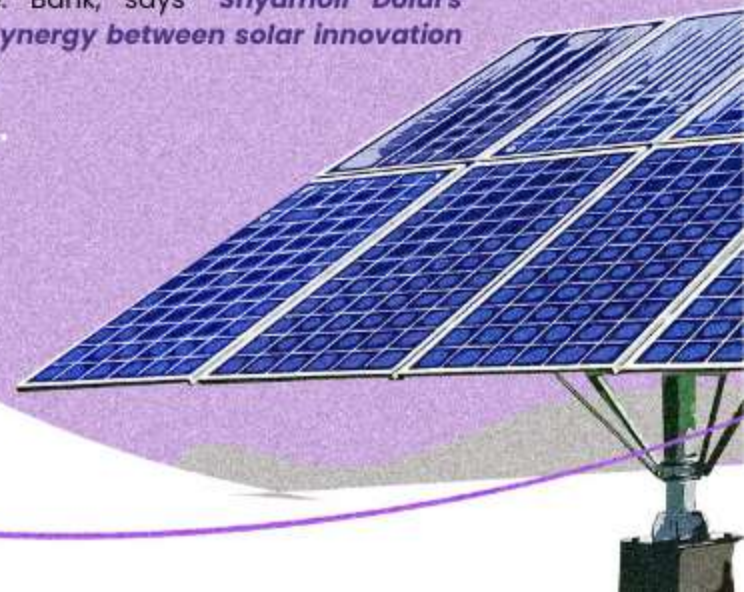
TRIUMPH OVER WATER SCARCITY

For years, Shyamoli Dolui, a 40-year-old farmer, remained oblivious to the untapped potential of the sun's golden rays. As a sharecropper focused on potatoes and vegetables, she grappled with persistent **water scarcity issues**, **annually spending INR 12,000 on water procurement**.

The turning point came with the **adoption of solar pumps**. On her 3 bigha land, once limited to potatoes and veggies, Shyamoli **now exclusively cultivates vegetables**—an unimaginable feat before. Eggplant cultivation, previously negligible, **surged by an impressive 60%**. What was once only 20% of her land bearing vegetables **skyrocketed to 80%** post the introduction of solar energy, marking a transformative shift in her farming landscape.

Shaymoli exclaims, *"Due to water issues we were unable to cultivate vegetables while it gives us more profit. After installation of the solar water pump we are freed from the risk of not getting water when required and this season vegetable cultivation has increased by 60%."*

Sujan Sarkar, CEO, Hooghly Central Cooperative Bank, says *"Shyamoli Dolui's agricultural transformation is a testament to the synergy between solar innovation and our support for sustainable farming initiatives."*



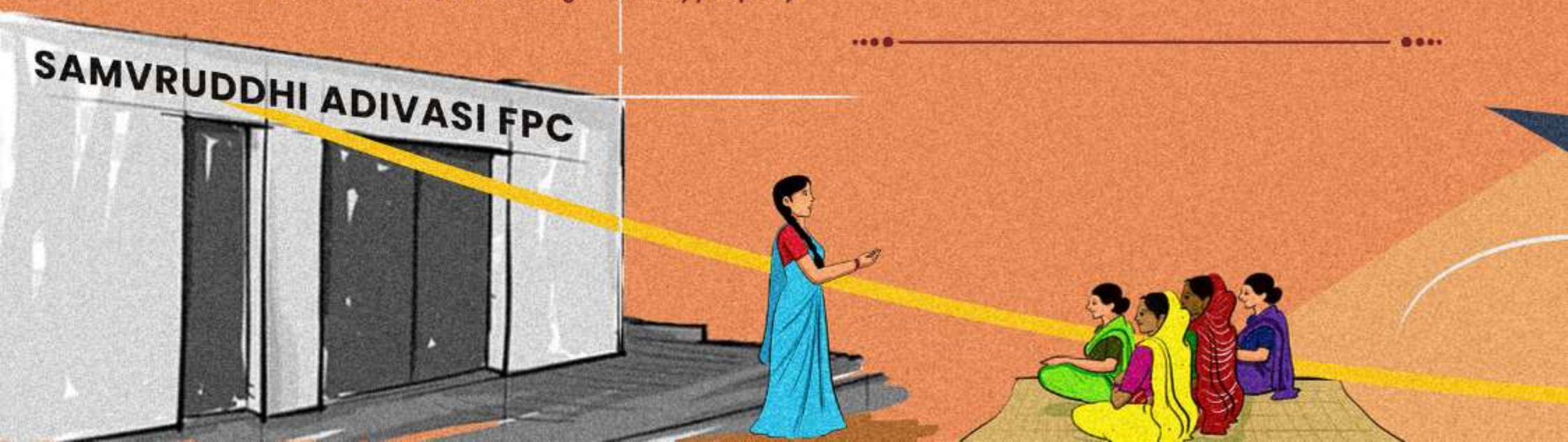
JOURNEY TO SUSTAINABILITY

Driven to escape the cycle of inadequate prices for her hard-earned produce, Jayshree transformed from a traditional farmer to a progressive cultivator. Her journey from humble beginnings to a beacon of change embodies a new era for her community.

Formed in 2021, **Samvruddhi Adivasi FPC empowered local farmers** and reshaped the narrative for **tribal communities**. Her role as an **accountant within the FPC** became a catalyst for change. **Training sessions and exposure visits through SwitchON** shaped the roles of FPC members. By harnessing government schemes effectively and collaborative efforts, profits once lost to intermediaries found their way back to the hands of the farmers, changing the economic landscape of Akole. Her income has also **risen significantly**.

Jayshree, shares, *"I believe in the transformative power of collective effort. Our FPC reshaped the narrative for tribal communities, promoting sustainable agriculture. This ensured financial stability in my life too, inspiring others for a more fulfilling life."*

Mr. Rajendra Binnar, Circle Agriculture Officer, Samsherpur, Tal-Akole, Ahmednagar: *Farmer Producer Companies (FPC) unlock growth. Processing produce through FPCs amplifies its value, securing increased profits, elevating farmers' socio-economic status, and fostering community prosperity*



Jayshree Dattatray Zole 25

Ahmednagar, Maharashtra



Nadia, West Bengal





BREAKING BARRIERS WITH SKILLS

Her journey unfolded against the backdrop of a world grappling with the uncertainties of the COVID era. Armed with a master's degree, she faced the stark reality of job insecurity. The **Suryamitra Skill Development Programme facilitated by SwitchON** emerged as a lifeline during these challenging times, offering a **three-month residential training** in Nadia.

Sarada emerged from the program equipped with **solar expertise and soft skills**. Her triumph in **securing a green job** at a reputable solar-based firm in Hyderabad, with a Rs 16,600/- salary, became a poignant tale of resilience.

Sarada delightfully says *"Learning solar expertise and soft skills through the Skill Development Programme was my bridge from uncertainty to a fulfilling job. It's proof that acquiring new skills opens doors and turns dreams into reality."*

Priyanka Pal, Sub-Divisional Project Manager Ranaghat Sub-Division, Nadia says, *"Through green jobs we can minimise waste and pollution and also protect our ecosystem. Joining this process, we can contribute ourselves to protect our mother nature. The inspiring journey from uncertainty to a green job exemplifies the transformative impact of skill development. When a student gets placed, it is also an inspiration for others here."*

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ORGANICALLY GROWN HARVEST OF HOPE

In the quaint village of Vivara in Maharashtra's Akola district, Vandana Dhotre is transforming agriculture. Leading a family of five, she **shifted to organic farming, merging exotic and local vegetables for a sustainable income.**

As a **champion farmer at Jay Sankatmochan FPC**, a **women-led organisation** in Akola. Her journey evolved through the Jaivik Sheti Mission, **enhancing her skills**. She envisions empowering fellow farmers, especially women, within the FPC. Her commitment to self-reliance and **nutrition-rich organic produce** has not only changed her life but is inspiring a change among the communities.

Vandana underscores, *"I shifted to organic farming, finding a better future for my family. My goal is to empower every farmer, especially women, within our community. Together, we're not just cultivating crops; we're cultivating a resilient and self-reliant community."*

Mr. Sunil Choudhary, State Coordinator, Organic farming, Commissionerate of Agriculture, Pune, says, *"Her commitment to organic farming exemplifies the transformative power of sustainable agriculture, echoing our shared vision for a resilient and self-reliant community in Maharashtra."*



Vandana Tai Devidas Dhotre 47

Akola, Maharashtra



FIELDS OF CHANGE: A FARMER'S TRIUMPH

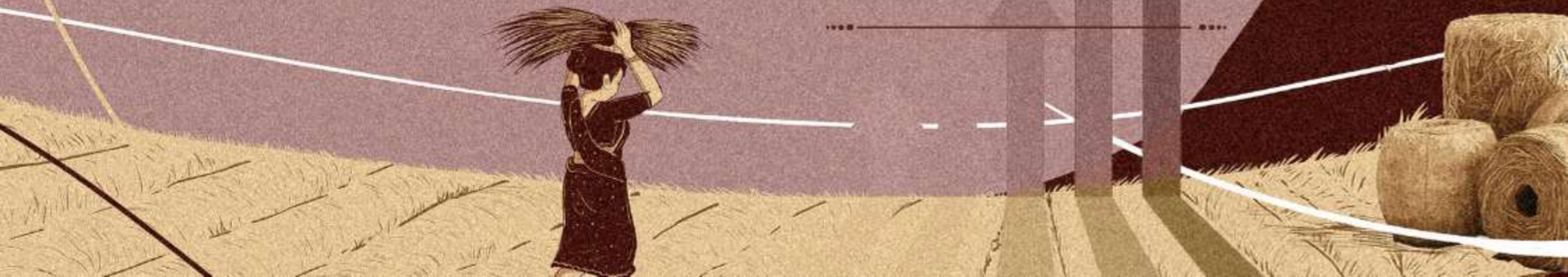
Her journey as a dedicated farmer unfolds with both challenges and triumphs. At 35, she has cultivated the land for 23 years, facing familial hurdles that interrupted her education after the 9th grade. The turning point arrived in July 2022 when **she joined the Integrated Farming Cluster (IFC) program.**

Previously troubled by low yields, Halima now embraces sustainable farming practices on her 5-kantha plot. With training from SwitchON on **homemade fertilisers like "Drobojibamrito" and "Amritojol,"** she **streamlined cultivation expenses,** witnessing a **significant boost in her annual income.** With crop diversification and additional income from livestock her **annual income increased from 1,00,000 to 1,43,480 rupees,** marking a **43% increase in income.**

Halima Bibi expressed her gratitude, saying, *"The IFC program has been my beacon of hope, transforming my farming practices with technology and support. It's my prime source for operating an agriculture system within a technical periphery."*

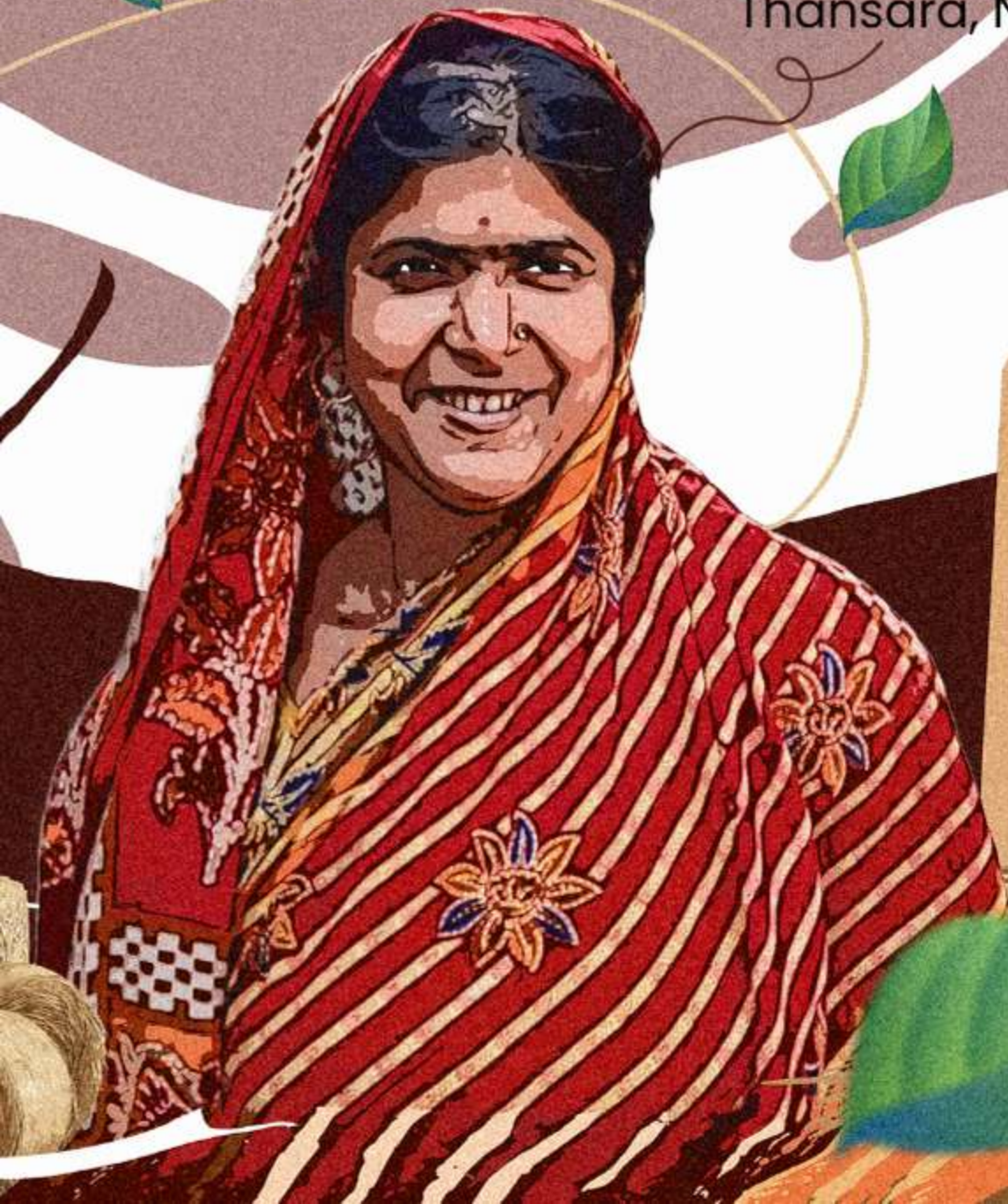
With crop diversification and additional income from livestock her **annual income increased from 1,00,000 to 1,43,480 rupees, marking a 43% increase in income.**

Mr. Tridib Mukherjee, State Project Lead, Sustainable Livelihoods stated, *"The success of Halima Bibi exemplifies the transformative impact of our Integrated Farming Cluster program. Her journey showcases not only the potential for sustainable agriculture but also the power of empowering individual farmers."*



Halima Bibi /35

Thansara, Nadia, West Bengal







CASC

CLEAN AIR SUSTAINBLE CITIES

A collective quest

A conscious act

Where citizens' rise as the stewards of the land

Where youth and children together join hand

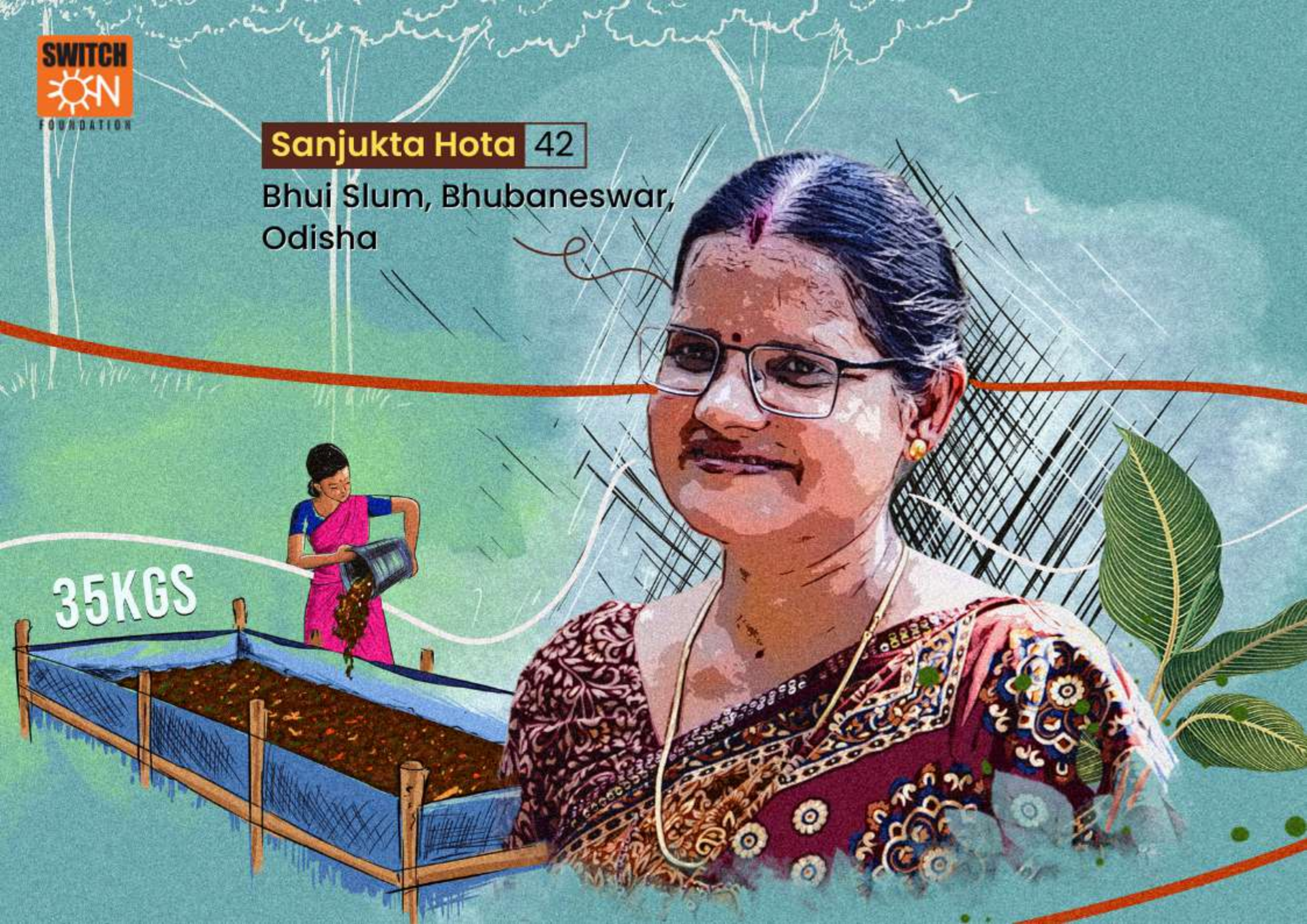
Where positive actions tell their tale

Where clean air and blue skies prevail

Sanjukta Hota 42

Bhui Slum, Bhubaneswar,
Odisha

35KGS



TURNING KITCHEN WASTE INTO GOLD

Witness the inspiring journey of Mrs. Sanjukta Hota who **transformed her kitchen waste into rich fertiliser through composting**, not only nurturing her plants but also **saving money every month by ditching store-bought manure**.

Earlier she only knew that kitchen scraps are waste and disposed it off outside her house which attracted pests and rodents making the entrance of the house dirty and unhygienic. Training on composting did wonders as she now uses those wet waste into something meaningful. In her humble kitchen, Mrs. Hota's composting journey not only resulted in thriving plants but also served as a beacon of sustainability in Bhui Slum. Sanjukta has made around **35 Kgs of compost** and continues. Her dedication has inspired neighbours to adopt similar practices, creating a green revolution within the community.

Sanjukta Hota says, *"After undergoing a training on composting by SwitchON Foundation, I realised how mindlessly I disposed of the precious resource that was easily available at our home. Using the kitchen waste to make compost, was the best practice I followed. Now my kitchen garden thrives with a variety of vegetables and spices."*

Ashwini Sundaray, Corporator, Ward 49, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, says *"By turning the kitchen scraps into a precious resource for plants and soil, Mrs. Sanjukta Hota has proved the spirit of sustainability. Her dedication sets a shining example for our community to recycle waste to the best."*

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NURTURING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS —

Driven by a commitment to environmental education, **SwitchON Foundation installed an Air Quality Monitor (AQM)** in St. Michael's High School, Ranchi. Amidst the hustle and bustle of the city, the **school had long been affected by roadside pollution and relentless traffic**. Little did they know that this installation would mark the beginning of a transformative journey led by an inspiring teacher, Ms. Akanksha. She saw an opportunity to turn this **AQM data into a powerful educational tool**. Equipped with knowledge about air pollution and climate change by SwitchON Foundation, she became a catalyst of change.

Ms. Akanksha encouraged them to not only grasp the severity of the issue but to become advocates for change in their community. During the **high pollution days, the students stayed indoors** and avoided going out. **The students used masks** to protect themselves from the pollutants. To make the nearby people aware about the implications of air pollution, the students organized **awareness campaigns**, urging their fellow students and community members to adopt sustainable practices. **Planting trees, promoting carpooling, and even petitioning local authorities for cleaner air initiatives** became part of their arsenal against pollution. The impact of Ms. Akanksha's efforts rippled beyond the school gates. Parents, inspired by their children's actions, joined the movement.

Ms. Akanksha says, *"Small actions can make a difference. I have transformed my classroom into a hub of environmental exploration. With training from SwitchON, we are able to interpret AQM readings, understand the implications of air quality, and most importantly, take proactive steps during days of heightened pollution."*

Pankaj Narayan, Sr. Finance Manager(CSR), Central Coalfield Limited said, *"Ms. Akanksha's dedication to educating her students about the air quality has not only enhanced the awareness amongst the students but also translated it into tangible actions. St. Michael's school is an inspiration to other schools in Ranchi."*



Akanksha 25

Teacher, St. Michaels School,
Ranchi, Jharkhand





Ipshita Prosad 24

R.G. Kar Medical College
Kolkata, West Bengal

HEALING COMMUNITIES

A passionate **medical student** emerged as a proponent of change after enrolling under the **Medical Students Ambassador Program of SwitchON Foundation**. Ipshita dedicates herself to **community advocacy** extending her influence beyond traditional healthcare. Through **health camps, awareness sessions, talks, and conferences**, she shares crucial knowledge on the harmful effects of air pollution, aiming to create a healthier environment for all.

Ipshita's advocacy even goes beyond talks and conferences. Through projects like **organising tree-planting drives, walking for clean air, taking awareness sessions for school kids**, she actively contributes to mitigating the impact of air pollution, making Kolkata a healthier place to live.

Ipshita says, "As a medical student, I believe our voices are instruments of change. I want to make people aware of the devastating health impacts of air pollution, which affects all, from the newborns to the elderly."

Dr. Soirindhri Banerjee, Senior Resident, Radiation Oncology, IPGM&R & SSKM Hospital, Kolkata says, **"Ipshita's dedication to raising awareness on air pollution's health impacts is commendable. It's inspiring to see young minds like hers actively promoting public health."**

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I BELIEVE
OUR VOICES
ARE
INSTRUMENTS
OF CHANGE

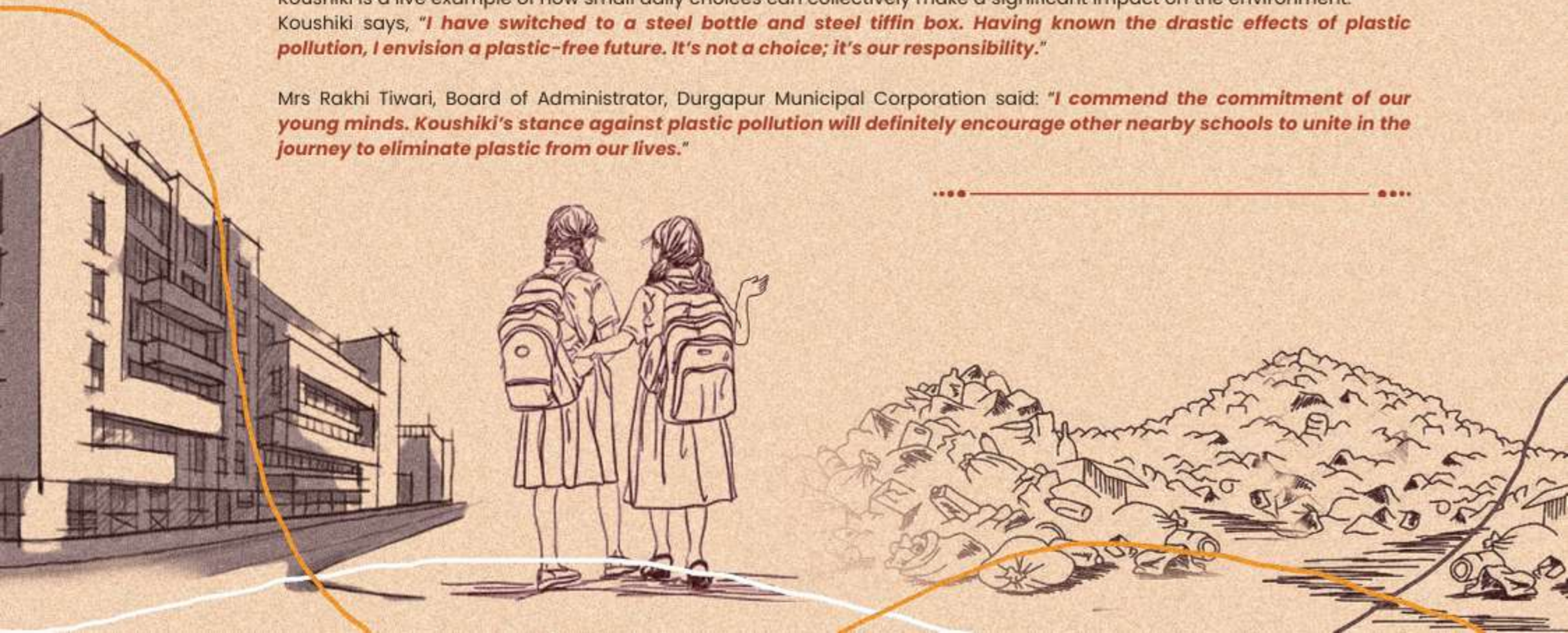


TEENAGE ECO-WARRIOR

Little did Koushiki know that the plastic bottle and the plastic tiffin box that she carried everyday to her school silently affected her health as well as the environment. After **attending several trainings and workshops on waste management and plastic pollution, by SwitchON Foundation, Koushiki Chatterjee is now on a mission against plastic usage.** Having pledged **not to use plastic**, Koushiki is determined to **spread awareness among family and friends. She conducts workshops and plastic pick up drives encouraging children and the community to embrace eco-friendly alternatives.** Till now **28 kgs of plastic waste has been collected** by her school mates and handed over to the recyclers. Her efforts ripple through the school, fostering a generation committed to sustainable living.

Koushiki is a live example of how small daily choices can collectively make a significant impact on the environment. Koushiki says, *"I have switched to a steel bottle and steel tiffin box. Having known the drastic effects of plastic pollution, I envision a plastic-free future. It's not a choice; it's our responsibility."*

Mrs Rakhi Tiwari, Board of Administrator, Durgapur Municipal Corporation said: *"I commend the commitment of our young minds. Koushiki's stance against plastic pollution will definitely encourage other nearby schools to unite in the journey to eliminate plastic from our lives."*



Koushiki Chatterjee 15

Sagarbhangha High School,
Durgapur, West Bengal



GREEN INNOVATION REVOLUTION —

The transformative journey of Royal Bengal Greentech, led by Pallavi Laharuka is an epitome of Women empowerment. In 2022, Royal Bengal Greentech **embarked on a mission to combat plastic pollution** by crafting **low-cost bioplastics from agri waste**. Their journey led them to **SwitchON's Green Bengal Innovation Contest**, where they shared their eco-friendly vision. Selected among the top **20 finalists**, the startup witnessed a showcase of green solutions from like-minded innovators. Their straightforward approach and commitment earned them the Green Bengal Innovation Contest victory. This win symbolised a step forward in addressing the pressing issue of plastic pollution, proving that simple yet impactful initiatives can make a significant difference in creating a cleaner, sustainable environment. **They got a prize money of 2 lakhs.**

Pallavi says, *"Winning the Green Bengal Innovation Contest was a game changer for RBG, as it brought our innovation to light in the eyes of the larger community looking for sustainability. The prize money helped perform some additional testing and further refining our product for multiple applications. We are now working with industries like feminine hygiene, paper cup coatings and plastic emulsion paint to transform them into sustainability in a cost effective manner."*

Mr. Hari Balasubramanian, member, Indian Angel Network, said, *"I commend RBG's contribution to combating plastic pollution through innovative and eco-friendly solutions."*

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Pallavi Laharuka 27

Founder, Royal Bengal
Greentech, Kolkata



Arpita Agarwal 40

Dhanbad
Jharkhand



CATALYST OF CHANGE: WASTE TO WONDERS

Arpita is a dedicated woman who has woven a compelling narrative of change in her community. From a small town in Dhanbad, Arpita initiated a journey towards upcycling and minimising plastic usage. Armed with creativity and a passion for sustainability, she turned discarded materials into beautiful, functional items, from repurposed plastic art installations to reusable bags made from old fabric.

Arpita's enthusiasm radiated, inspiring neighbours to join her in reducing single-use plastics. Through workshops and community events, she educated residents on eco-friendly practices, emphasising the importance of waste reduction and responsible consumption. Arpita has made around **200 upcycled items** from waste. She along with other community members put stalls and exhibits during festivals and exhibitions which in turn gives her creativity a value for her hard work.

Arpita says, *"I see utility in every piece of waste. As responsible citizens, we should embrace upcycling and reuse waste and help our planet maintain its ecological balance."*

Mr. Sumeet Tigga, City Manager, Dhanbad Municipal Corporation stated, *"Arpita's dedication to upcycling exemplifies the spirit of sustainability. Through her work on converting waste into useful items, she is an inspiration for others to follow."*



CYCLING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals reevaluated their lifestyles and sought ways to stay healthy and active. This is the story of Debjani, a 41-year old woman living in Kolkata, West Bengal. Debjani, like many others, faced health challenges during the pandemic.

Concerned about her health, she decided to take up cycling as a way to regain her strength and improve her overall well-being. After joining a cycling event on sustainable mobility by SwitchON Foundation, she realised that cycling not only is good for health but also is the most sustainable means of transportation. During the Cycle with Lights event with SwitchON Foundation, she connected with other women in a nearby area. Soon she formed a group of 30 women who are now advocates of sustainable mobility. She is on a mission to promote sustainable transportation, emphasising cycling as an eco-friendly mode of travel. She encouraged her cycling group to spread awareness about the benefits of cycling and its positive impact on the environment. Debjani has embraced cycling as a lifestyle choice. Today along with her group, she organises cycling events, workshops, and awareness campaigns and uses public transport to commute.

Debjani says, "Cycling keeps the environment clean and free from pollutants which are harmful for our health. I choose sustainability. Col. Indrajeet Roy, General Manager, New Town Business Club says, "We commend Debjani for embracing pedal power contributing significantly in carbon reduction. Her commitment to eco-friendly commuting is an inspiration and we encourage more individuals to join her in this movement."



Debjani Lahiri 41

Cyclist, Kolkata,
West Bengal





a testament to the res
diversity of the



Years Stories

silience, strength, and
their experiences





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