

Climate Champions  
of Coastal Odisha

# Success Stories

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Enhancing Climate Resilience of India's Coastal Communities (ECRICC) Project



## Foreword

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Across India’s coastal regions, the impacts of climate change are no longer distant possibilities, they are urgent, lived realities. Communities are grappling with rising sea levels, increasingly erratic monsoons, saltwater intrusion into agricultural lands, and more frequent and intense cyclones. These disruptions are not occasional crises; they are becoming the backdrop of everyday life for millions. Yet amid this mounting adversity, something extraordinary is unfolding, not in conference halls or capital cities, but in the villages, farms, classrooms, and coastlines of Odisha. It is not just policies or infrastructure that are shaping the response to climate change, it is people. And at the heart of this people-led transformation are women.

Climate Champions of Coastal Odisha is a compelling collection of stories that shines a light on the remarkable women who are redefining resilience in the face of climate change. Through the ECRICC (Enhancing Climate Resilience of India’s Coastal Communities) project, we journey into the districts of Puri, Balasore, Ganjam, and Kendrapara, where women are not only adapting to change—they are leading it.

These women are regenerating mangroves to protect their coastlines, cultivating saline-tolerant crops to secure food and income, and organizing climate-smart collectives to train others in sustainable practices. They are leading awareness campaigns in schools, managing natural resources, restoring traditional knowledge systems, and turning crisis into opportunity—quietly, steadily, and with unwavering resolve. Their leadership

is rooted in lived experience, in their intimate knowledge of the land and sea, and in their enduring commitment to their families and communities. They may not wear formal titles, but they are leaders in every sense of the word—navigating complexity, mobilizing others, and creating lasting change.

This book is more than a documentation of success stories. It is a celebration of women’s agency, a reminder that the most profound transformations often begin in the margins. It urges us to broaden our understanding of what climate leadership looks like and to recognize that true resilience is built from the ground up—through compost pits, kitchen gardens, forest nurseries, and collective strength.

We hope these narratives inspire reflection, recognition, and most importantly, replication. Because in every vulnerable village, there is a woman ready to rise—ready to lead her community through crisis and into hope. Climate Champions of Coastal Odisha offers a glimpse into what’s possible when we invest in that rise—and why the future of climate action must be inclusive, local, and led by the people who know their landscapes best.

(Prem Kumar Jha)

# List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Form
CAA	Coastal Aquaculture Authority
CLF	Cluster Level Federation
DPMU	District Project Management Unit
ECRICC	Enhancing Climate Resilience of India’s Coastal Communities
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GPLF	Gram Panchayat Level Federation
KALIA	Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation
KVK	Krishi Vigyan Kendra
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MPEDA	Marine Products Export Development Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PM-KISAN	Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
SHG	Self Help Group
SWAD	Society for Women Action Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WSHG	Women Self Help Group



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Introduction



In the face of an escalating climate crisis, the most powerful responses often arise not from conference halls or policy think tanks, but from the ground up, led by individuals rooted in their communities. *Success Stories: Climate Champions of Coastal Odisha* brings to life the extraordinary journeys of everyday women who have risen as leaders in building climate resilience across some of India’s most vulnerable regions.

This book documents the real-life stories of women from Odisha’s coastal districts, Puri, Kendrapara, Balasore, and Ganjam, who transformed their lives and communities through the *Enhancing Climate Resilience of India’s Coastal Communities (ECRICC) project*. From traditional farmers and homemakers to widows, teachers, and youth, each woman featured here stepped into the role of a Climate Champion, overcoming social, financial, and environmental hurdles to become agents of transformation.

Through these stories, we witness how grassroots leadership, when equipped with knowledge, training, and institutional support, can drive sustainable agriculture, promote clean energy, conserve ecosystems, and enable community mobilization on an inspiring scale. These women, many of whom once had no income or public voice, are now respected leaders, connecting their villages to government schemes, empowering other women, and modelling practical climate adaptation.

More than profiles of change, these narratives are declarations of hope. They reaffirm that when women lead, communities thrive and when communities mobilize, the future becomes resilient. This collection stands as a testament to the quiet revolutions unfolding in India’s coastal heartlands, and to the promise that local action can spark global impact.





Champions of Change

**PURI DISTRICT**

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STORY **1****Bilasini Mallik**

Inspires 10 New Climate Champions in Odisha's Sustainable Shift



In the small, unassuming village of Naranpur in Odisha's Puri district, a quiet revolution is being led by an unlikely hero, Bilasini Mallik, a 48-year-old bamboo artisan who has turned climate warrior. With no banners or awards, she's changing lives not through speeches, but through action, one seed, one family, one field at a time.

Her journey began during a climate change training session held by the Humara Bachpan Trust. The issues discussed, unpredictable rainfall, water shortages, and crop failures, weren't abstract theories; they were the everyday challenges her village faced. With support from the ECRICC Project and local authorities, Bilasini plunged into learning about sustainable farming, waste management, and climate-resilient livelihoods. On March 1, 2023, she became an official Climate Champion, not with a title, but with a mission.

Since then, she has helped 170 farmers adopt the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), boosting yields while cutting costs. She's guided 104 families in setting up kitchen gardens, improved waste management in over 80 homes, and introduced horticulture and livestock practices to enhance incomes. But more than methods, it's her empathy and deep connection to her community that make her leadership so effective.

From earning just ₹30,000 a year, Bilasini has tripled her income. That change has helped her send both sons to university, both now working in government roles. Coming from a marginalized Scheduled Caste background, she's broken barriers that once seemed immovable. Once known as "Bilash," she is now respectfully called "Bilasini Didi", a symbol of dignity and strength.

Her work has already touched over 422 people directly, and 10 others have taken inspiration from her to become Climate Champions themselves. Awards may not line her shelves, but the trust and admiration of her village are priceless.

"There was a time I felt invisible," she says quietly. "Today, people see me, not just as a woman, but as a leader."

Bilasini's story isn't just about adapting to climate change, it's about rewriting what leadership looks like. In a world searching for solutions, she reminds us that sometimes, the biggest change begins in the smallest of villages, with a woman who dared to believe she could.



## STORY 2

## Coastal Odisha's Resilience Champion

Mamata Padhiary Turns  
Community Knowledge into  
Climate Action



In the coastal village of Talada in Odisha's Puri district, where the sea has long shaped both beauty and hardship, a quiet force for change is rising. At just 33, Mamata Padhiary is leading her community through the storm, not with grand gestures, but with steady, purposeful action. Once known simply as a community worker, she is now recognized as a Climate Champion, a voice of resilience in a region marked by rising tides and recurring cyclones.

Mamata's journey didn't begin in a formal training room. It began in the fields, homes, and lived struggles of her village. As a Community Resource Person, bank Mitra, and women's federation president, she was already rooted in the daily rhythms of her people. When climate awareness efforts reached Talada, her leadership naturally rose to the surface. With support from SWAD, UNDP, and the ECRICC Project, she officially became a Climate Champion on February 1, 2023, a title that only affirmed what her community already knew.

Since then, Mamata has become a catalyst for practical, lasting change. She has trained farmers in climate-resilient rice cultivation, promoted sustainable fishing practices, and helped revive coastal mangrove belts, nature's frontline defense against cyclones. Her community campaigns have rallied over 300 women, addressing not only environmental awareness but also health, safety, and income generation. One of her proudest moments was helping make her Gram Panchayat alcohol-free, an initiative powered by 50 women leaders she helped mobilize.

It hasn't been easy. Mamata navigated skepticism, financial hardship, and a lack of technical resources. But with each challenge, she grew, gaining skills in sustainable farming, waste management, and pest control. More importantly, she gained the trust of her people.

From an annual income of ₹12,000, she now earns ₹70,000, enough to support her family and invest in future plans. Yet, it's not the numbers that define her success. It's the shift in how she's seen: not as just a helper, but as a leader. "I am a strong woman, a mobilizer, and a bridge between my people and the government," she says with quiet confidence.

Mamata Padhiary's story is a reminder that real leadership grows from the ground up. In a village shaped by the sea, she is helping shape a future rooted in strength, hope, and community.



## STORY 3



## Rashmita Parida

Turns Climate Awareness  
into Collective Action



Not long ago, Rashmita Parida's world revolved around her home in Patasundarpur, a quiet village tucked away in Odisha's Puri district. Her days were filled with routine tasks, her voice rarely heard beyond family walls. Today, at 32, she's helping her entire village find its voice, through climate action, sustainable livelihoods, and the power of women's leadership.

Rashmita's journey didn't begin with ambition. It began with questions: How can I contribute? How can women lead change here? The answers came gradually, through hands-on training in sustainable farming, organic manure, and the SRI (System of Rice Intensification) method. With the support of SWAD and the ECRICC Project, those questions became a mission. On April 2, 2023, Rashmita officially stepped into the role of Climate Champion and never looked back.

Her leadership has touched many corners of village life. She's promoted climate-smart agriculture, introduced bio-fortified paddy, and encouraged beekeeping and eco-friendly fishing. Beyond agriculture, she's led mangrove awareness drives, organized beach cleanups, and linked nearly 200 women from self-help groups to government schemes, securing crucial resources like Farmer and KoP IDs and farming equipment. Her work even extended to coordinating livestock vaccination drives, ensuring both livelihoods and food security.

Yet, this transformation wasn't easy. Rashmita began with limited exposure, little income, just ₹6,000 a year, and plenty of doubt. But with the support of her husband, her community, and her own quiet grit, she overcame every hurdle. Today, she earns around ₹60,000 annually, not just feeding her family, but fueling her community's growth.

The change is deeper than numbers. Rashmita is no longer seen as just a homemaker, she's now a problem-solver, a guide, a leader. Villagers turn to her for everything from starting kitchen gardens to accessing government aid. "I didn't expect people to rely on me," she says. "Now, their trust gives me strength."

Already, her story has sparked others, two more women in her village have stepped forward as Climate Champions. Change, it turns out, spreads one voice at a time.

Rashmita Parida didn't set out to be a leader. She became one by showing up, again and again — with knowledge, compassion, and courage. And in doing so, she's helping her village not just survive climate change, but rise above it.



STORY **4****Sarojini Swain**

Turns Adversity into Action,  
Empowering Women  
Through Climate Leadership



In Asan, a coastal village in Odisha's cyclone-hit Astarang block, survival often feels like a daily act of resilience. Yet, amid salt-laced winds and unpredictable tides, one woman is turning survival into strength. At 40, Sarojini Swain is not just enduring climate change, she's helping her community rise above it, one initiative at a time.

Once a Community Resource Person under Mission Shakti, Sarojini's life took a sudden turn when she lost her job. Faced with financial uncertainty, she was searching not just for income, but for meaning. That's when the ECRICC Project arrived, and with it, a new beginning. Supported by SWAD, UNDP, and local government partners, she became a Climate Champion on February 2, 2023.

What she lacked in formal training, Sarojini made up for in drive. "Circumstances pushed me," she says, "but I stayed because I wanted women to stand strong, financially and socially." She immersed herself in trainings on sustainable agriculture, organic practices, pest management, ornamental fisheries, and more. Each session didn't just sharpen her skills, it solidified her sense of purpose.

Her leadership now echoes across the community. She introduced the SRI method and organic farming to smallholder farmers, cutting costs and improving yields. She promoted beekeeping and ornamental fish farming, creating income streams for women. From mangrove awareness and beach cleanups to livestock vaccinations and insurance drives, her efforts have addressed both environmental and economic vulnerabilities. More than 100 women have been mobilized under her guidance, and many are stepping into leadership roles themselves.

Sarojini's rise wasn't smooth. She started with no income, limited technical know-how, and skepticism from neighbors. But she earned trust the hard way, through patience, persistence, and results. Today, she earns ₹60,000 a year and stands as a pillar of strength in her community.

The greatest shift, however, isn't just in her income, it's in how she's seen. Once overlooked, she's now respected as a mobilizer, a connector, a woman who listens and acts. "Sarojini doesn't seek credit," one villager says. "She just gets things done."

In a village weathered by storms, Sarojini Swain has become a calm force of change. Her story reminds us that true leadership isn't given, it's earned through service, and it grows stronger with every life it touches.



## STORY 5



## Sujata Patra

Leads by Example,  
Inspiring a New Wave of  
Women Climate Leaders  
in Odisha



**S**ujata Patra didn't grow up dreaming of public speaking or government service. She was a quiet girl from Nuagarh, a coastal village in Odisha, more comfortable behind a computer screen than at the front of a room. At 26, her world was spreadsheets and silence, until climate action gave her a reason to raise her voice.

Back in early 2023, Sujata was working as a data entry operator, earning ₹36,000 a year. Reserved by nature and unsure of her future, she never imagined she'd soon be leading awareness drives or teaching sustainable farming techniques. But when she joined the ECRICC Project as a Climate Champion, supported by SWAD, UNDP, and government partners, something shifted. The training she received in organic farming, SRI paddy, beekeeping, and mangrove conservation didn't just build her skills; it awakened her purpose.

She started small: helping local farmers apply for government IDs, guiding fishers toward eco-friendly practices, and conducting awareness campaigns. Slowly, her confidence grew. She no longer hesitated to speak, whether in village meetings or training sessions. In less than a year, Sujata had directly impacted 68 people, not just with her knowledge, but with her growing conviction.

In 2024, she achieved something once unimaginable: securing a government post as a Junior Fisheries Technical Assistant. Her official posting in Gop Block begins in February 2025. Today, Sujata earns ₹60,000 annually, but more than income, she has gained recognition, purpose, and self-respect.

Her climb wasn't smooth. Learning complex technical subjects, overcoming social expectations, and breaking out of her own shell took time. But Sujata embraced the challenge with quiet determination. Her transformation has already encouraged three other young women to become Climate Champions, proving the ripple effect of real, relatable leadership.

**Sujata didn't set out to lead a movement, she simply stepped up when her moment came.** Her story isn't about sudden change; it's about steady growth, quiet courage, and the unexpected ways climate work can change lives. In a village where the sea often steals more than it gives, Sujata is offering something rare in return: direction, dignity, and hope for a better future.



## STORY 6



## Amita Jena Connects Climate, Community, and Governance

One Household at a Time



Before she was called “Didi” by villagers seeking help or advice, Amita Jena was simply a young woman trying to find her place in the world. In the coastal village of Nanapur, Odisha, where rising tides often mirror rising uncertainties, the 31-year-old has carved out a bold identity, as a Climate Champion, SHG leader, digital service provider, and a force of grassroots change.

Her turning point came in February 2023, when she joined the ECRICC Project. With support from SWAD, UNDP, GCF, and government partners, Amita dove into training on sustainable agriculture, SRI paddy cultivation, organic practices, crab fattening, and climate awareness, even conducting sensitization sessions in schools. What set her apart wasn’t just how quickly she grasped these skills, but how deeply she believed in their purpose.

Amita soon became a lifeline for her community. She helped 250 households adopt climate-resilient rice farming methods, supported crab farmers in building sustainable livelihoods, and led environmental education for students. Through her Jana Seva Kendra, she enabled access to essential government services: facilitating over 450 KoP IDs, 15 SHG Farmer IDs, 60 crop insurance enrollments, 10 CAA license applications, and organizing a livestock vaccination drive for 100 families.

But Amita’s greatest strength lies in how she connects two worlds, technology and tradition. As a service center operator and Climate Champion, she has bridged the gap between government systems and rural citizens, bringing dignity and access where it was once lacking. Her efforts have directly impacted more than 500 people, and sparked the involvement of 13 to 15 other women who are now exploring their own paths in climate leadership.

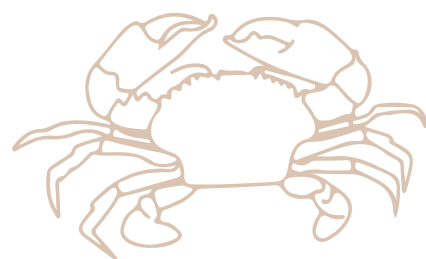
Just over a year ago, Amita had no stable income and little direction. Today, she earns ₹85,000 a year, but more than that, she holds a leadership role that carries weight, visibility, and respect. The challenges she faced skepticism, limited resources, and self-doubt didn’t stop her. They sharpened her.

“I am a woman, SHG leader, social entrepreneur, and Climate Champion,” Amita says with quiet pride. But she’s also something more, a living example that rural women can be both digital navigators and ecological stewards.

Her story reminds us that real transformation doesn’t always start with big movements sometimes, it begins with one woman, one village, and one decision to lead.



## STORY 7



## With Mangroves

Clean Beaches, and  
300 Women Mobilized,  
Babina Kandi Transforms  
Balabhadrapur



**I**t started with a pair of sandals and a stubborn belief that she could do more. Not exactly the origin story of most climate leaders, but Babina Kandi isn't most leaders.

In Balabhadrapur, a coastal village in Odisha where the sea has a habit of taking more than it gives, Babina was once best known for teaching classical dance and helping children with their homework. She didn't speak at village meetings, didn't have a science degree, and certainly wasn't thinking about climate change. But when the ECRICC Project came to her doorstep in February 2023, she saw something different, a way to serve her community with both her head and her heart.

Backed by SWAD, UNDP, and the Government of Odisha, Babina began attending training sessions on everything from sustainable farming and mangrove conservation to waste management and climate education. What she lacked in formal experience, she made up for in energy and empathy. The same focus she once gave to her choreography, she now gave to leading awareness campaigns and coordinating beach clean-ups.

In just over a year, Babina helped organize mangrove plantations, forest protection efforts, and household-level waste segregation initiatives. She reached more than 300 women, strengthened local SHGs and Van Suraksha Samitis, and became a go-to source for community climate knowledge, without ever giving up her tutoring or tailoring work.

Her income, once ₹24,000 a year, has now grown to ₹74,000. But the bigger transformation is how people see her. No longer just a dance teacher or a neighborhood helper, Babina is now a trusted problem-solver. Someone who understands the terrain of both government systems and village dynamics.

She still faces challenges like resource limitations, gaps in infrastructure, the occasional dismissive remark. But she also sees progress. Today, a dozen women in her village are exploring their own climate journeys because of her example.

**Babina Kandi didn't need to change who she was to become a leader, she just needed the right moment to step forward.** And when it came, she walked straight into it, sandals on, head high, carrying the rhythm of a more resilient future with every step.



## STORY 8

## From Zero Income to Climate Hero

Mamina Swain's Journey of Resilience and Leadership in Coastal Odisha



In Gundalba, a coastal village where storms write their history in salt and wind, the name “Rana” carries a different kind of force which is quiet, grounded, and determined. At 30, Mamina Swain, affectionately known as Rana, is reshaping what leadership looks like in rural Odisha, not with fanfare, but with steady and persistent impact.

For years, Mamina lived like many women in her village managing her home, supporting her family, but with no formal income and few opportunities to grow. But when the ECRICC Project came to Gundalba in early 2023, it offered something more than training, it offered purpose. With support from SWAD, UNDP, GCF, and the governments of India and Odisha, she stepped into her new role as a Climate Champion on February 1, 2023.

What followed was not overnight transformation, but a deliberate climb. Mamina completed more than 15 rigorous training sessions on everything from SRI farming and organic composting to mangrove restoration and climate education. She didn't just absorb information, she activated it. She led beach cleanups, promoted seed ball campaigns with schoolchildren, guided SHG women in sustainable agriculture, and introduced organic, bio-fortified crops to local farmers.

Her work has already touched over 500 people. But the true measure of her leadership lies in the quiet shifts: women who now segregate household waste, farmers adopting eco-friendly practices, and SHG members who say, “If she can do it, so can we.” Dozens of women are now exploring their own role in climate action, sparked by Mamina's example.

Her challenges were real: lack of resources, limited education, financial pressure. But she met them with grit and humility. Today, she earns ₹60,000 annually and is recognized across the Chhuriana Gram Panchayat, not just for what she's done, but for how she's done it.

**“I just connected what I learned in management to what my village truly needed,”** she says, blending her training with instinctive community care. That quiet insight is what makes her so effective and so trusted.

Mamina Swain didn't need a stage to lead. She needed a reason. And now, with every compost pile, seed ball, and inspired neighbor, she's proving that climate resilience is as much about people as it is about policy and that real leadership often begins at home.



## STORY 9

## From Chalkboard to Climate Champion

How Sasmita Mishra is Leading a Green Revolution in Rural Odisha



Sasmita Mishra didn't start her climate journey with a protest sign or a podium, she started with a chalkboard. In the heart of Bamadeipur village in Odisha's Puri district, this 40-year-old educator, homemaker, and mother of a joint family quietly turned her knowledge into action and her classroom into a launchpad for change.

For years, Sasmita earned just ₹20,000 annually through home tuition classes while juggling the needs of a 10-member household. She taught children about environmental science and watched her village grapple with the very threats in their textbooks, poor soil health, unpredictable rains, waste accumulation. When the ECRICC Project arrived in February 2023, she didn't hesitate. Backed by SWAD, UNDP, GCF, and the Odisha and Indian governments, Sasmita stepped into the role of Climate Champion with a vision: to educate not just students, but her entire community.

Through intensive training in organic farming, SRI paddy cultivation, beekeeping, and ecosystem restoration, she built a new skill set rooted in both science and sustainability. But her real superpower was government convergence. Sasmita has helped women from Self Help Groups (SHGs) tap into public schemes, bridging the gap between grassroots needs and institutional support.

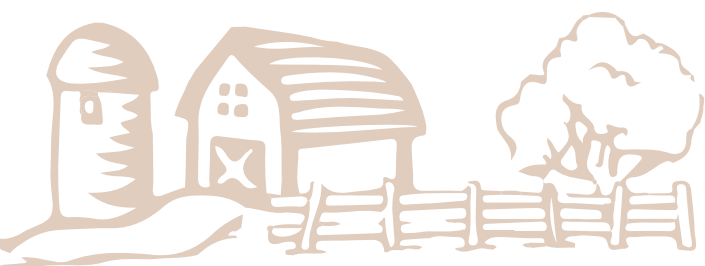
She's led waste segregation drives, trained farmers in climate-smart practices, and conducted environmental awareness sessions, always with an educator's touch and a listener's patience. As a result, over 500 women have started income-generating, climate-resilient activities. Her work has given rise to a network of changemakers who are now charting their own paths toward sustainability.

Sasmita's climb wasn't effortless. Financial pressure, gender roles, and community hesitation stood in her way. But with the support of her husband, in-laws, and project mentors, she turned every challenge into motivation. Today, she earns ₹80,000 a year and even more importantly, she has carved out a respected identity as a connector, mobilizer, and mentor.

**"To shift society, start with your own home," she says a mantra that's become her method.** Six to seven women have already followed in her footsteps as future Climate Champions.

From tuition teacher to transformative leader, Sasmita Mishra is proof that education, when rooted in empathy and action, doesn't just inform, it inspires. In a village shaped by tradition, she's teaching everyone what progress truly looks like.



STORY **10**

## Leading Against the Tide

Puspanjali Pradhan  
Empowers Women  
Through Climate Action



In Rebananuagaon, a coastal village where sea winds whisper stories of survival, Puspanjali Pradhan has quietly become the village's most unexpected source of strength. At 48, she's a widow, a mother, a shopkeeper and now, a Climate Champion whose work is reshaping lives and land alike.

For years, Puspanjali lived in quiet perseverance, earning just ₹30,000 annually from a small shop while raising her children and caring for her elderly mother-in-law. Life was marked by struggle, but not surrender. When the ECRICC Project reached her village in March 2023, supported by Humara Bachpan Trust, UNDP, and government partners, she didn't hesitate. She saw it not just as training, but as a turning point.

Through the project, she built knowledge in climate-resilient agriculture, disaster preparedness, water conservation, and more. But it wasn't theory she was after, it was impact. Puspanjali mobilized 157 farmers to shift to organic, SRI-based paddy cultivation, distributed green manure seeds to 65 families, and helped 55 households start kitchen gardens. She introduced ornamental fish farming in community ponds, guided women's SHGs in floriculture and nutrition-focused farming, and promoted wastewater reuse and waste segregation at the household level.

Her reach now spans across generations, from adolescent girls trained in climate awareness to 130 SHG women producing their own bio manure and bio pesticides. She played a pivotal role in reviving three local ponds, boosting sanitation and aquaculture-based livelihoods. Always the bridge between systems and people, she's helped her community access vital government support for farming, horticulture, and animal health.

It wasn't easy. Puspanjali faced water shortages, social stigma, and doubts about her capacity as a woman leader. But every obstacle became an opening. Through consistency, empathy, and action, she earned not only results but deep-rooted trust.

Today, her annual income has more than tripled to ₹110,000, sourced from climate-smart farming, her rejuvenated shop, and project-related opportunities. Her neighbors now refer to her as a "mini package of resources", a testament to her depth and dependability.

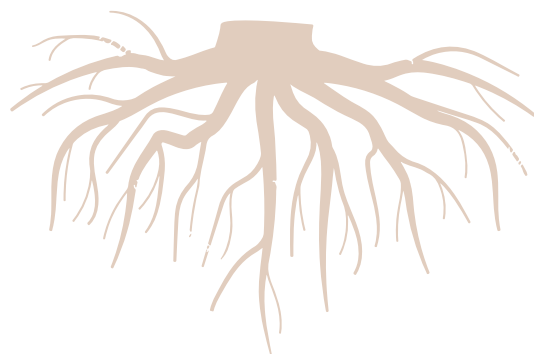
**"Empowering others is how I healed myself,"** she says. Puspanjali's story isn't just about climate resilience, it's about rewriting the narrative of what a rural widow can become. In every seed she sows and every woman she lifts, she's not just adapting to change, she's leading it.



## STORY 11

## Rooted in Resolve

How Rajalaxmi is Building a Greener, Fairer Future in Rural Odisha



When Rajalaxmi Pradhan walks through Kathuaedy village today, people no longer whisper about her, they call her by name, with respect. At 37, this once-overlooked single mother from coastal Odisha has become a force of grassroots climate leadership, rewriting both her own story and her village's path toward resilience.

Life didn't hand Rajalaxmi many advantages. As a single mother from a marginalized background, she lived under the weight of social judgment, financial strain, and isolation. Earning just ₹40,000 a year through odd jobs, she faced daily uncertainty, but never gave up on the idea that something better was possible. That "something" arrived in the form of climate training sessions organized by Humara Bachpan Trust and the DPMU, Puri. On March 1, 2022, she took the leap and became a Climate Champion.

Rajalaxmi wasted no time turning knowledge into impact. She introduced SRI and organic farming practices to local farmers, led clean-up campaigns, and launched 12 awareness programs that reached over 500 people. Under her guidance, 500 forest trees and 792 fruit plants were planted. She supported backyard poultry, vegetable gardening, and horticultural schemes, and helped connect households to programs like MGNREGA, KALIA, and PM-KISAN. Her work even extended to collecting data for greenhouse gas emission samples, bridging local action with global insight.

She overcame barriers that would have stalled most: digital illiteracy, limited funds, and skepticism from her peers. But with determination and self-learning, she trained 93 women in SRI and 240 SHG members in organic farming techniques. Through mushroom cultivation, poultry, digital surveys, and project honorariums, her income has now reached ₹1,20,000 annually.

But perhaps her greatest success isn't measured in numbers, it's in perception. Once doubted, Rajalaxmi is now a trusted voice in village meetings, a connector between government schemes and rural women, and an example for over 30 new Climate Champions inspired by her story.

**"I started with nothing, just a vision," she reflects. "Now I've become the person people turn to when they want change."**

Rajalaxmi Pradhan's journey proves that leadership doesn't come from titles, it's built from resilience, rooted in service, and grown through trust. In every clean field, every trained woman, and every empowered voice, her legacy is already taking root.



## STORY 12



## In the Eye of the Storm, She Found Her Voice

### Rasmita's Story of Climate Leadership



Before she led clean-up drives or taught climate literacy, Rasmita Sitha was better known for staying quiet in meetings. Not because she lacked concern, but because she doubted her voice would matter. Today, in the coastal village of Gurubai near Odisha's Chilika Lake, that same voice is helping hundreds reshape their future.

At 36, Rasmita's transformation from a soft-spoken homemaker to a Climate Champion is not one of overnight change, but steady growth rooted in resilience. Living in a cyclone-prone region where saltwater intrusion and shifting seasons threaten daily life, she saw the risks firsthand in her family's fields, her neighbors' losses, and her children's uncertain future.

Her turning point came in March 2023 when she joined training with Humara Bachpan Trust under the ECRICC Project. With no personal income and limited technical knowledge, she took on the challenge anyway. What she lacked in experience, she made up for in purpose.

Since then, Rasmita has helped introduce sustainable farming through SRI techniques to 24 women farmers. She's established 50 compost pits that turn household waste into organic fertilizer and led 10 village clean-up campaigns, making sanitation a shared responsibility. She also launched climate education sessions with women and youth, making topics like disaster preparedness and water conservation part of daily conversations.

Her promotion of kitchen gardens has been a game-changer, 110 families now grow their own food, boosting nutrition and lowering food costs. And with the distribution of hundreds of fruit and forest trees, including 120 Casuarina planted for erosion control, Rasmita has made visible environmental change take root literally.

Her challenges were real: low confidence, gender barriers, and no prior technical background. But through training, mentorship, and persistence, she emerged as a connector, between policy and people, between information and impact. Today, she earns ₹60,000 annually, supports her household, and is recognized as a local leader.

**"She didn't just help us plant trees," a neighbor says, "she helped us grow stronger together."**

Rasmita Sitha's story reminds us that leadership doesn't always begin with boldness. Sometimes it begins with listening, learning, and showing up again and again until your actions speak louder than any doubt. From compost to confidence, her journey is planting more than crops; it's planting hope.



## STORY 13

## Not Just a Farmer, a Force

Rashmita Das  
Cultivates Hope  
and Sustainability



In Podadiha, a village tucked away in Odisha's Puri district, the change didn't arrive with headlines or government orders, it arrived quietly, in the form of Rashmita Das. At 39, this once-unnoticed housewife has become a guiding force for climate action, turning silence into leadership, and uncertainty into impact.

Until 2023, Rashmita had no income, no formal training, and no public presence. But the shifting seasons, water shortages, and declining crop yields around her weren't abstract warnings, they were daily struggles. When she joined the ECRICC Project in March 2023 through training by Humara Bachpan Trust, she didn't see herself as a leader. She just knew something had to change and that she could be part of it.

With no prior experience, Rashmita immersed herself in learning. She studied sustainable agriculture, composting, irrigation management, and community mobilization. What she lacked in credentials, she made up for in clarity of purpose.

Her work has since transformed two villages. She introduced 50 farmers to the SRI method of paddy cultivation across two seasons, emphasizing fully organic practices. Under her leadership, 112 compost pits were constructed, enabling every household to sustain its own kitchen garden. She promoted water-saving techniques like Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD), helping farmers protect both yields and groundwater.

Rashmita's efforts didn't stop at farming. She organized village clean-ups, led school awareness sessions, and engaged Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in climate education. Slowly, she became more than a farmer, she became a connector, a facilitator, and a trusted voice in her community.

The road was steep. Skepticism, gender bias, and resistance from those battling poverty and addiction tested her resolve. But she stayed the course supported by project mentors and driven by her own commitment to see her village thrive.

Today, Rashmita earns ₹60,000 a year, a leap from zero, and leads climate training sessions in front of crowds she once feared. Her work has inspired other women and young people to believe in their own potential.

**"I used to sit in the back, unsure if I had anything to offer," she says. "Now, people come to me for answers."**

Rashmita Das's journey is a reminder that leadership doesn't require power just purpose. In her hands, climate resilience isn't just a concept, it's a daily practice rooted in courage, soil, and hope.





Grassroots Climate Action

## BALASORE DISTRICT

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STORY **14****Kanchan Jena**

From Margins to Mentor  
in Odisha's Climate  
Resilience Movement



**C**hange didn't come to Jayrampur with fanfare, it came with a woman quietly turning compost in her backyard. At 35, Kanchan Jena, once earning just ₹14,400 a year, has become a pillar of grassroots climate leadership in Odisha's Balasore district. Her tools? Curiosity, courage, and a deep commitment to her land and people.

Kanchan's journey began through the ECRICC Project, led locally by the Balasore Social Service Society. When she attended capacity-building sessions on SRI (System of Rice Intensification), organic manure, and climate awareness, something clicked. Her hunger to learn pushed her beyond the classroom, watching tutorials online, experimenting on her own plot, and asking questions.

On May 1, 2023, she officially became a Climate Champion.

Since then, Kanchan has guided dozens of farmers toward low-input, high-yield methods like SRI, introduced composting and waste segregation, and led hygiene awareness campaigns among schoolchildren. Her advocacy for handwashing, home composting, and sustainable coconut plantations has helped link climate action with everyday well-being.

What sets Kanchan apart is her ability to bridge knowledge and trust. She trains WSHGs, GPLFs, CLFs, and individual farmers alike, not with lectures, but with real-life demonstrations and patience. Over 214 villagers now follow organic practices or contribute to climate-friendly initiatives because of her.

Convincing others wasn't easy. Her ideas were once dismissed as impractical or unnecessary. But Kanchan met resistance with proof, showing what worked on her land, sharing short motivational videos, going door to door to answer questions. Slowly, her neighbours stopped doubting and started doing.

Today, her income has grown to ₹60,000, but more importantly, she has her influence on the community. She's respected by local institutions, invited to lead trainings, and looked at for guidance, not just on farming, but on resilience itself.

**"Real change," she says, "starts with listening, to the land, to each other, and to ourselves."**

Kanchan Jena didn't wait for permission to lead. She began with a compost pit and a belief that things could be better and proven that they could. In the quiet strength of her work, a climate movement is growing green, and led from the ground up.



## STORY 15

## Sabita Singh's Green Mission

Turning Climate Crisis into Community Action



**S**abita Singh was just 26 when she stopped waiting for change and decided to become it. In Jayrampur village, where floods wash away crops and hope in equal measure, her voice has become a steady call for resilience, action, and climate awareness.

Growing up in Odisha's Balasore district, Sabita witnessed the fallout of a warming world, failed harvests, rising water stress, and community anxiety. But it wasn't until she joined capacity-building workshops under the ECRICC Project, facilitated by the Balasore Social Service Society, that she began connecting those local realities to a global crisis. On September 29, 2023, Sabita stepped into her new role as a Climate Champion not with fanfare, but with fierce purpose.

She quickly set to work, applying her training in sustainable agriculture, organic inputs, and village mobilization. She introduced the SRI (System of Rice Intensification) method, promoted organic manure use, and encouraged smallholder farmers to reduce chemical reliance. Through her outreach, over 120 villagers have shifted to more sustainable practices.

But Sabita didn't stop at fields. She organized climate literacy sessions in schools, led community campaigns, and used storytelling and dialogue to demystify climate science. Her efforts helped link SHGs, GPLFs, CLFs, and local farmers with government schemes for livelihood and environmental support bridging policy and practice with clarity and care.

The journey came with hurdles: erratic weather, limited resources, and resistance from those hesitant to abandon familiar habits. But Sabita stayed grounded, introducing wetland restoration and soil conservation efforts, and championing alternative livelihoods like handicrafts to diversify incomes.

What makes her leadership stand out is not just her knowledge, but her relatability. She's young, local, and committed and because of that, people listen. Especially women and youth, who now see in her a mirror and a mentor.

Though she hasn't received formal recognition yet, Sabita's impact is unmistakable. Her leadership has inspired others to ask questions, seek training, and step forward in their own ways.

**"You don't need a position to lead, just a reason,"** Sabita says. Her reason is clear: a healthier, stronger, more informed community.

From silent fields to shared futures, Sabita Singh is helping Jayrampur move from climate vulnerability to climate vision, one idea, one action, and one determined young woman at a time.



STORY **16**

# Where the Soil Was Divided, She Planted Unity

## Sandhyarani Dalai's Climate Story



**I**n Jayrampur village, where caste lines once defined who could speak and who would be heard, Sandhyarani Dalai is gently redrawing them with seeds, soil, and self-belief. At 35, this Dalit woman has emerged not just as a Climate Champion but as a symbol of quiet, determined leadership in Odisha's Balasore district.

Sandhyarani's concern for the worsening environment began with observation parched fields, polluted ponds, and the creeping uncertainty of climate change. Her breakthrough came when she joined capacity-building sessions under the ECRICC Project, led by the Balasore Social Service Society. Trained in sustainable farming, organic pest control, climate literacy, and small-scale fisheries, she stepped into her new role on November 1, 2023, with little fanfare but fierce resolve.

Back then, her income stood at just ₹24,000 a year. Today, she earns ₹60,000 from a mix of honorariums and small eco-entrepreneurial work. More importantly, her work is generating value far beyond money.

She introduced SRI techniques and organic farming to local farmers, helping them cut costs and reduce chemical use. She distributed homemade organic inputs, supported fruit tree planting, and led community clean-up and composting initiatives. Her climate education sessions from motivational videos to group discussions have helped shift not just practices, but perspectives.

What truly sets Sandhyarani apart, however, is her courage to confront deeply rooted social discrimination. Facing caste-based exclusion and quiet resistance, she didn't protest with anger, she led with example. Her own plot became a demonstration site, showing success speaks louder than prejudice. Slowly, skepticism turned to respect.

**"I didn't just want to grow crops," she says. "I wanted to grow dignity for myself and for other women like me."**

Her influence has reached over 100 people, many of whom now practice organic farming, composting, and better waste management. She hasn't officially mentored new Climate Champions yet, but her example is already inspiring women who've long been told to stay silent.

Sandhyarani Dalai's leadership is rooted in both earth and equity. Her work is not only about adapting to a changing climate, it's about challenging the social conditions that made her leadership unlikely. In doing so, she's proving that climate justice isn't just environmental, it's human, and it starts at the margins.



## STORY 17

## Once Unheard, Now Unstoppable

Santilata Jena Champions  
Grassroots Resilience



In Sanausa, a coastal village where sea winds shape both the land and its people, Santilata Jena walks from home to home not with authority, but with answers. At 42, she's not a politician, a scientist, or a celebrity. She's something more powerful in her context: a trusted neighbor who has helped her village face climate change with knowledge, care, and practical solutions.

Santilata's journey didn't begin with formal education. It began with watching her fields wash away, her crops fail, and her neighbors worry. The devastation from floods and rising tides wasn't a theory, it was survival. In May 2023, with support from the Balasore Social Service Society and training under the ECRICC Project, she officially became a Climate Champion. For someone who once had no income, her current ₹60,000 annual earnings mean stability. But her impact is worth far more.

She promoted organic farming and SRI (System of Rice Intensification), guiding farmers away from chemical dependency and toward healthier, more resilient yields. She trained community members in preparing natural fertilizers and pest solutions, and spearheaded fruit tree plantations to restore both nutrition and ecological balance.

Her influence stretches beyond farming. She led waste segregation drives, encouraged home composting, and organized climate education sessions using local stories and simple metaphors to explain a global crisis. She even promoted low-carbon lifestyle shifts like walking, cycling, and mindful consumption. As a result, 207 villagers now embrace some form of climate-conscious living.

Change didn't come easy. Many resisted at first, unsure, uninterested, or simply overwhelmed. But Santilata persisted. She didn't argue; she showed. Through small demonstrations, shared successes, and inclusive conversations, she turned abstract fears into achievable actions.

Today, she is seen as both a knowledge source and a morale booster. Local officials consult her. Neighbors seek her advice. Children listen when she speaks. "She doesn't push," says one community member. "She invites you into the change."

**Santilata Jena's story reminds us that the climate movement isn't only built on bold declarations, it grows in compost pits, seed beds, and the quiet courage of women who rise for their communities.** Her leadership may be quiet, but its echo is lasting. And in that steady rhythm, a more resilient future is being sown.





Local Leadership for Climate Action

## GANJAM DISTRICT

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## STORY 18

## Leading Beyond Limits

Physically Challenged  
Bhagyabati Builds Climate  
Resilience in Odisha



**S**he never wanted sympathy. What Bhagyabati Nahak wanted was to grow food, raise her children, and prove, mostly to herself, that her physical disability would never define her limits.

In Jharedi Radhagobindapur, a small village in Odisha's Ganjam district, she spent years watching her crops struggle and her community bend under the weight of climate unpredictability, too much rain, then none at all. The land was changing, and so was her resolve.

Her turning point came not through a major event, but a quiet invitation: a training session offered by NGO Pallishree under the ECRICC Project, supported by DPMU Ganjam. She showed up. Listened. Asked questions. Returned. And then she acted.

On February 1, 2023, she formally became a Climate Champion not a title she chased, but one she has embodied ever since.

Bhagyabati introduced organic farming and SRI methods not as a campaign, but as a conversation, often beginning in the field, over a handful of soil. She taught farmers to make their own bio-nutrient solutions, helped households reduce plastic use, and planted fruit trees that now promise shade, food, and stability.

292 people neighbors and supporters have changed something in their lives because of her. Sometimes it's a compost pit. Sometimes it's a mindset.

She still walks with difficulty. Some days, the pain is sharp. But she doesn't talk about that much. What she will talk about is how her income has doubled, how her children now see her as more than a caregiver, they see her as a changemaker.

**"I'm not someone who waited for help," she says. "I became the help."**

Bhagyabati faced resistance. Not the loud kind, the quiet kind. Dismissal. Doubt. But she answered with proof. Her land produces more now. Her waste is reused. Her neighbours compost. Her voice carries weight.

She hasn't won awards, not yet. But she has won something deeper: influence, respect, and the right to be seen not as a woman with limitations, but as a woman with vision.

**Bhagyabati Nahak didn't change the world overnight, she changed the rhythm of her village, and that's how revolutions begin.**



STORY **19**

## Cultivating Courage

Barsha Badatya's Journey  
from Homemaker to  
Resilient Leader



**Barsha Badatya didn't set out to be a leader, she just refused to settle.** At 26, in the coastal village of Langaleswor in Odisha's Ganjam district, she's proving that climate action doesn't need a loud voice, just a clear purpose.

Just a year ago, Barsha was a daily wage worker juggling household duties and seasonal work, like many young women in her village. The climate shifts weren't abstract for her, they were personal. Crop failures, water shortages, and shrinking job options were constant reminders that something had to change.

Her turning point came when she joined climate awareness sessions under the ECRICC Project, led by Pallishree NGO. The ideas clicked. Climate resilience wasn't just about the planet, it was about dignity, income, and security for her family and community. On February 1, 2023, Barsha officially became a Climate Champion and she's never looked back.

She brought sustainable agriculture to the forefront, introducing the SRI method to improve paddy yields while conserving water. She coordinated with government schemes to support green chilli and brinjal cultivation, giving local farmers an edge in both income and food security.

But her impact didn't stop at the farm. Barsha led trainings on fish farming, crop-cutting techniques, and climate adaptation for 153 villagers, most of them SHG women. She made complex processes feel accessible and turned government linkages into practical tools for change.

She didn't walk into leadership unchallenged. Barsha faced skepticism, public speaking anxiety, and the familiar question: "Can a young woman really lead here?" Her answer came in actions, not arguments. Every successful harvest, every mobilized scheme, every training session won her credibility.

Her income has grown from ₹1,20,000 to ₹1,56,000 but more important is the shift in how her community sees her. "Her discipline towards her duty has earned her respect and acceptance," says a local leader. That respect is the harvest of her quiet, consistent work.

**"I enjoy being with my community," Barsha says. "This is where real change happens."**

Barsha Badatya isn't just cultivating crops, she's cultivating confidence, climate-smart futures, and a new definition of leadership. One rooted not in age or authority, but in commitment, clarity, and care.



STORY **20**

## Sugyani Pahan

### Leads SRI Intervention with Purpose



Widowhood in Kanaka village often means retreat from opportunity, from public life, from possibility. But Sugyani Pahan chose something else: visibility. At 30, she stepped forward not just for herself, but for a future she wanted to help shape greener and stronger.

She wasn't trained in agriculture. She wasn't fluent in technical jargon. But she was observant, watching the soil grow tired, the rains shift, and the prices rise. When awareness programs from ECRICC, DPMU Ganjam, and NGO Pallishree came to her village, Sugyani listened. And then, she acted.

On February 1, 2023, she became a Climate Champion, not by title alone, but by conviction. She went from knowing little about farming systems to pioneering the **first SRI (System of Rice Intensification) intervention in the region under ECRICC**, a quiet milestone, but a bold one.

Her influence expanded fast. She connected farmers with support for brinjal and green chilli cultivation, facilitated mango plantation schemes through the state horticulture program, and trained alongside Krishi Vigyan Kendra in fish farming and greenhouse gas (GHG) monitoring. Every workshop she attended wasn't just for herself, it became knowledge for others.

To date, she's directly supported 155 people: women, young people, and farmers once as unsure as she had been. And still, she shows up answering questions, helping fill out forms, organizing meetings that feel more like collective planning than top-down instruction.

It wasn't easy. "Widow" still carries weight in rural India, the kind that closes doors. But Sugyani met silence with consistency. Slowly, the questions changed: from *"Why her?"* to *"Can she help me too?"*

Her income, once ₹25,000 a year, has climbed to ₹85,000, a practical sign of progress. But her pride isn't in the number. It's in the shift she's made possible. A neighbor recently asked her how to become a Climate Champion. That, she says, was the real moment of arrival.

Sugyani Pahan didn't wait for permission to lead. She built her credibility one field, one workshop, one conversation at a time. Her story isn't just one of recovery, it's one of reinvention. And in the quiet rise of her voice, a community is learning to hear itself differently.



STORY **21**

## With Knowledge and Courage

Indu Das Grows a Greener Future for Her Village



**A**t sunrise, Indu Das walks through the fields barefoot, not just to check the soil but to listen. The earth, she says, tells her everything: when it's tired, when it's ready, and when it needs something different.

In the village of Palurgada, Odisha, where monsoons no longer keep their promises and chemical fertilizers have drained the land's patience, Indu, 32, is doing what few expected: rewriting the rules of farming, and leadership.

Until last year, she was like many others, a traditional farmer, wary of change, unsure of policy, unaware of potential. What changed? A training session organized by ECRICC, DPMU Ganjam, and NGO Pallishree. She didn't just attend. She stayed late. She asked questions. And when the others hesitated to try what they'd learned, Indu tried it first.

That's how she became Palurgada's first woman to champion SRI (System of Rice Intensification), a method that requires less water and fewer inputs, yet yields more. Her plot became her proof. Her success drew others in.

She didn't stop there. She brought organic pest control methods to neighbouring farms. Supported mango plantations under the state horticulture scheme. Took part in fish farming trainings. And learned GHG monitoring, the kind of technical work typically reserved for outsiders.

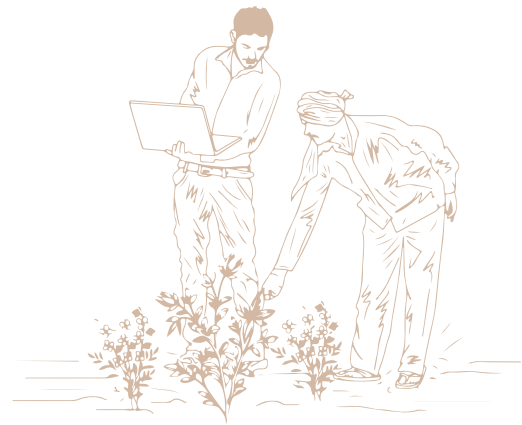
Her impact isn't loud. It's steady. Over 300 people, mostly farmers, many women now compost, plant better, save water, and believe they have options.

Still, the hardest part wasn't the farming. It was speaking up. Coming from a Scheduled Caste background, Indu was expected to work hard, not lead. **"I was afraid of speaking in front of groups,"** she admits. That fear faded with each training session, each result, each woman who told her: **"If you can do it, maybe I can too."**

Her income rose from ₹40,000 to ₹1,00,000. But that isn't what lights up her voice. It's when she talks about women sitting together after sunset, sharing what they've learned from her.

**Indu Das doesn't call herself a changemaker.** But she is one. Not because she's the loudest in the room, but because she shows up, understands what's needed, and stays rooted. And sometimes, that's exactly what climate leadership looks like.



STORY **22**

## Purnabasi Das

### Aligns Tradition with Climate Action



**26**-year-old Purnabasi Das is charting a quiet but powerful course toward climate resilience. In the coastal village of Pathara in Odisha's Ganjam district, she has risen as a Climate Champion, transforming personal hardship into leadership and community empowerment.

Purnabasi's journey began with awareness sessions under the ECRICC Project, facilitated by Pallishree NGO and supported by DPMU Ganjam. Observing the growing impacts of climate change declining fish stocks, erratic weather, and rising uncertainty, she felt a strong responsibility to act. On February 1, 2023, she officially became a Climate Champion. Since then, her annual income has more than doubled, rising from ₹50,000 to ₹1,10,000 through honorariums and livelihood diversification.

Her leadership is grounded in practical action. She promotes climate-smart agriculture and organic SRI paddy cultivation, reducing the use of chemical inputs. She's also actively involved in convergence programs focused on fish farming, ornamental aquaculture, and fish value addition, aligning traditional livelihoods with sustainability.

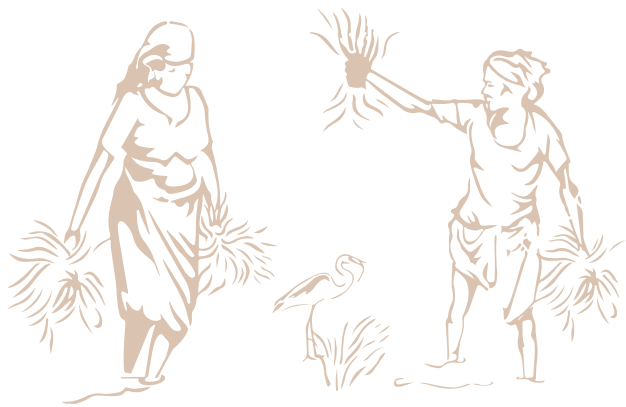
Purnabasi's community work is equally impactful. She has led awareness drives on plastic pollution, encouraging behavioral shifts away from single-use plastic bags. Through public talks and local mobilization, she has helped build a culture of climate adaptation in Pathara. Her extensive training from KVK sessions in Golanthara to hands-on workshops in crop-cutting, ornamental fisheries, and paddy cultivation has equipped her to educate and empower. She has influenced 264 villagers, particularly SHG members and women, to adopt climate-resilient practices.

Her journey wasn't without resistance. As a young woman in a traditionally male-dominated space, she faced skepticism. But she overcame it through consistent fieldwork, humility, and a strong willingness to learn. Her collaborative spirit and effective communication have earned her trust and admiration across age and gender lines.

"I am a good community mobiliser," Purnabasi says and the community agrees. Known for her confident public speaking and hands-on support, she has become a go-to figure for guidance and motivation. Though she hasn't received formal awards, her influence is undeniable. She is inspiring others especially women to consider climate leadership roles themselves.

Purnabasi Das's story is one of resilience, growth, and quiet leadership. With knowledge in her mind, compassion in her heart, and her feet firmly in the field, she is helping build a future that is not only climate-resilient but also inclusive and full of hope.



STORY **23**

## Sagarika Balla

Breaks Barriers and  
Builds Climate Hope  
in Coastal Pathara



**B**efore she learned about climate change, Sagarika Balla only knew that the water was changing. It came in too fast some days. Didn't come at all on others. The fish were fewer. The illnesses more frequent. And somehow, it felt like her village of Pathara was drifting into uncertainty and no one was steering.

At 31, Sagarika was already familiar with limits of income, of opportunity, of what people expected from a fisherwoman like her. But when a series of awareness sessions from the ECRICC Project, supported by DPMU Ganjam and NGO Pallishree, came to her coastal village, she sat through every one. Not just listening, but connecting dots between polluted water bodies and children's health, between erratic rains and failed crops.

She didn't have a background in science. She had something else: clarity.

On February 1, 2023, Sagarika became a Climate Champion. What that meant, at first, was simple: she had a reason to act, and the training to back it. Her education included hands-on sessions from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) in Golanthara, and workshops in fish value addition, ornamental aquaculture, and sustainable farming. But her learning didn't stay in her notebook, it moved through her village, in conversations, field demos, and shared solutions.

She promoted SRI techniques to reduce chemical use in rice farming, advocated for organic composting, and organized plastic-free campaigns. Her audience: women like herself, often overlooked, but closest to the impact. Her strength: speaking plainly, acting consistently, and refusing to shrink back when dismissed.

Today, 245 villagers, farmers, fishers, and homemakers have adopted at least one practice introduced by Sagarika. Her income has tripled, from ₹30,000 to ₹90,000, and her role has expanded from learner to leader.

**"They used to ask why I was speaking," she says. "Now they ask when I'll speak again."**

She has no awards. But she has respect not just for being right, but for showing up, every time, with humility and resolve. And she has something else: a new generation of women watching her and wondering what's possible.

**Sagarika Balla isn't just responding to climate change, she's responding to silence, in a place that once asked women to stay quiet.** And through her, the tide is turning one voice, one action, one village at a time.



STORY **24****From Widow to  
'SRI Dhana Didi'**Swarnalata Sahu Champions  
Sustainable Farming and  
Climate Awareness

**T**hey call her “SRI Dhana Didi,” but her real gift is sowing belief in soil, in self, and in second chances.

In Mandiapalli, a quiet village in Odisha’s Ganjam district, 46-year-old Swarnalata Sahu moves through the fields not just as a farmer, but as a force. A widow and mother of two daughters, she’s spent years navigating financial uncertainty. Yet in just over a year, she has emerged as a Climate Champion whose influence now stretches across four villages reshaping practices, shifting mindsets, and building resilience where it’s needed most.

Swarnalata’s turning point came in March 2023, when she joined the ECRICC Project through LIPICA NGO in Berhampur. With no formal training in agriculture beyond lived experience, and an income that remained modest at ₹60,000 annually, she wasn’t the obvious candidate for leadership. But what she lacked in resources, she made up for in resolve.

She immersed herself in training everything from SRI paddy cultivation and crab farming to dry fish value addition and organic composting. What she learned, she applied. What she applied, she shared. Backed by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and supported by government convergence efforts, she brought 125 farmers into SRI cultivation, introduced low-input organic techniques, and helped households transition from chemical to climate-friendly practices.

And it didn’t stop in the fields.

Swarnalata took the idea of “waste” and flipped it into opportunity. She initiated waste segregation and composting drives in two villages, encouraging families to turn kitchen scraps into soil nutrition. She led awareness campaigns that reached more than 500 people not through loud speeches, but through real conversations rooted in everyday life.

Her leadership style is quiet, participatory, and fiercely consistent. She builds bridges between farmers and frontline officers, between SHG women and untapped schemes, between what is and what could be. Every barrier she’s faced from financial strain to technical gaps, she’s answered with one core belief: change starts by standing up.

Though she hasn’t yet formally mentored others into the role of Climate Champion, her path is already a blueprint. Young women in her village watch her with something new in their eyes, not pity, not doubt, but possibility.

**Swarnalata Sahu didn’t set out to be a leader. She just refused to stand still.**

And in doing so, she has shown that even with modest means, one woman’s steady hands can turn vulnerability into strength and rice fields into fields of change.



## STORY 25



## With Training and Tenacity

Duna Sai Kumari Builds a Climate-Ready Coastal Village



In a modest tailoring shop tucked into a narrow lane in Deegipur, Ganjam, a woman once known for stitching blouses now stitches together something far bigger - climate resilience.

At 31, Duna Sai Kumari has transformed from a quiet seamstress earning ₹6,000 a year into a Climate Champion leading her community toward sustainable change. Her rise isn't marked by loud slogans or big stages — it's in borewells that finally flow, SHGs that now farm crabs, and women who believe that leadership can look like them.

Her journey began with training under the ECRICC Project, facilitated by Pallishree NGO. By the time she officially took on the Climate Champion role on 10th February 2023, Sai Kumari had already begun translating learning into action — one farmer, one field, one meeting at a time. Today, her annual income has risen to ₹66,000, supporting a household of seven and bringing not just money, but confidence and credibility.

Her footprint is everywhere. In the fields, she introduced the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) to 80 farmers — a method that cuts water use and raises yields. At the coast, she helped four SHGs embrace crab farming and fish value addition, sparking new income streams from age-old skills. In village corners and community halls, she organized awareness drives, led mushroom cultivation demos, and mobilized over 300 villagers for tree plantations and scheme access.

What makes Sai Kumari's leadership special is how deeply it's embedded in the everyday. She doesn't just inform — she follows up. She doesn't just link schemes — she walks farmers through the paperwork. Her coordination with departments like horticulture, fisheries, and agriculture has unlocked irrigation, training, and real support for families who had long given up hope.

Events like Vanamahotsav and World Disability Day became more than symbolic under her watch — they became entry points for learning, solidarity, and inclusion.

The path wasn't easy. Technical jargon, government complexity, and financial strain could've slowed her down. But Sai Kumari tackled each challenge with persistence, sharpening her facilitation skills and building a reputation as someone who gets things done.

"She brought us irrigation," one farmer said. "She gave our SHG purpose," added another woman. Even government officers praise her as "a natural extension worker."

**Sai Kumari hasn't just changed her job, she's changed her role in the village.**

No longer just a tailor, she's become a thread between people and possibility. Her story is a reminder that change doesn't always arrive with noise. Sometimes, it shows up quietly with a clipboard in hand, listening first, then leading.



STORY **26**

## From No Income to 600 Lives Touched

Krishna Behera's Rise as a  
Young Climate Champion



**B**efore the sun rises over the Bay of Bengal, Krishna Behera is already at work not casting nets, but casting hope.

In Sunapur, a small fishing village on Odisha's Ganjam coast, the 25-year-old has become an unlikely but unstoppable force for climate resilience. No cape, no office, just a clipboard, muddy sandals, and a vision for change.

A year ago, Krishna had no income, no technical training, and no reason to believe she could lead. But when she joined the ECRICC Project on 1st February 2023, supported by LIPICA NGO and DPMU Ganjam, something clicked. Curiosity turned into commitment. The daughter of a fisher family, she saw what climate change was doing to her people, saltwater intrusion, dying fish stocks, plastic-choked shores and decided to act.

Her impact now ripples far beyond her home. Krishna introduced the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) to 180 farmers bringing down input costs while lifting yields. But her work doesn't stop at the field's edge. In fish ponds, she promotes scientific crab farming, applying training in water quality testing and sustainable feed ratios. Families who once depended solely on uncertain fishing trips now have alternative, thriving incomes.

She doesn't shy away from difficult conversations. Krishna leads plastic pollution cleanups, teaches schoolchildren about cyclone preparedness, and ensures that her sessions include not just SHGs but also people with disabilities. Her message is simple: climate resilience must be for everyone, or it's for no one.

Behind her work is a staggering range of skills from mushroom cultivation and crop-cutting experiments to climate redressal meetings and fish value addition. More than 600 people in her Gram Panchayat have learned from her, whether about preparing a raised nursery bed or accessing a government scheme.

And yet, Krishna's greatest strength may be her authenticity. She shows up. She listens. She stays late to help troubleshoot a brackish pond. In a system where change often feels distant, Krishna is right there on foot, on call, and on purpose.

Her income now stands at ₹60,000 a year. But the real gain is collective in awareness, in adaptation, and in the quiet rise of a woman leader who never planned to be one.

**Krishna Behera's story isn't just about climate action. It's about reclaiming agency for herself, for her village, and for a future where resilience begins at the grassroots and grows outward.**



STORY **27**



**Puspalata**  
Bridges Policy  
and Practice,  
Empowering 800+



**W**hen the rains didn’t come, P. Puspalata didn’t wait for miracles, she built solutions.

In Kirtipur, a coastal village in Odisha’s Ganjam district, the 44-year-old farmer has redefined what leadership looks like in times of climate crisis. Once living on just ₹30,000 a year, she now stands as one of the region’s most respected Climate Champions, earning ₹90,000 and transforming hundreds of lives along the way.

Puspalata’s rise wasn’t scripted in textbooks, it began with grit, lived experience, and a deep worry for her land. When she joined the ECRICC Project on 1st February 2023, supported by LIPICA NGO, she soaked in every bit of knowledge from trainings in SRI (System of Rice Intensification), crab and ornamental fish farming, organic cultivation, mushroom production, and convergence schemes. She didn’t just learn, she applied, taught, and mobilized.

She trained 430 farmers in SRI and organic methods, facilitated vegetable farming for 50 others, and helped build 12 farm ponds turning water scarcity into water security. Her hands-on approach extended to access: she helped farmers claim PM-KISAN benefits, obtain IDs, and complete digital land surveys, bridging government schemes and the people they were meant to serve.

Puspalata’s work also touches classrooms, coastlines, and kitchens. From Vanamahotsav tree-planting to beach clean-ups, from plastic waste reduction to school awareness drives, she is building not just farms, but future citizens of a more climate-aware Odisha.

Her impact has reached over 800 people, including 263 new SRI farmers and earned her the “Best Climate Champion” award from DPMU ECRICC Ganjam. But for Puspalata, the real reward is the growing resilience of her village. “Lata Madam is our change maker,” say the farmers who now earn and grow more because of her.

The road wasn’t smooth technical gaps, limited finances, and the usual resistance to change. But Puspalata broke through each one with strategy and spirit. Today, she is not only a progressive farmer, but a trusted guide, connector, and visionary for her region.

**In a place where climate change threatens everything, P. Puspalata has planted something stronger than crops, she has planted belief. And it’s growing.**



STORY **28**

## Santoshi Maharana

Plants Seeds of Change in Every Corner of Her Village



“You dig the pit, I’ll show you why it matters.”

That’s how Santoshi Maharana, 38, introduced herself to skeptical villagers in Satyanarayanpur, Odisha. Not with speeches, but with a shovel in her hand and a mission in her heart.

In this coastal village where storms arrive uninvited and opportunities are hard-won, Santoshi is not waiting for change, she’s building it. A long-time social worker and mother of seven, she became a Climate Champion on 1st February 2023 through the ECRICC Project, supported by LIPICA NGO. With no prior income and no formal training, she stepped into the role with just one asset: her deep trust within the community.

Over the past year, Santoshi has trained 100 farmers in organic SRI techniques, helped build 60 soak pits to recharge groundwater, and introduced plastic waste segregation across the village. Her work isn’t confined to fields, she’s also revived hope. Through strategic convergence with government schemes, she’s helped hundreds access pensions, ration cards, housing, and land rights.

She leads from the ground up literally. Whether planting trees during Vanamahotsav or guiding schoolchildren through a cyclone preparedness drill, Santoshi’s approach is practical, inclusive, and deeply personal.

Recognized with the **Best Social Worker Award** by the District Collector, she’s affectionately called “**Lakhpati Didi**”, not just for improving incomes but for creating a mindset of dignity and self-worth among SHG women.

Still, she sees herself not as a hero, but as a connector. “I didn’t bring the change,” she says. “I just showed people where it was waiting.”

Santoshi Maharana’s story is a living blueprint for climate justice, from below the poverty line to the frontlines of action. And as long as the soil is still soft, she’ll keep planting resilience.



STORY 29



# From Threads to Fields

Sumanti Maharana  
Weaves a Future of  
Climate Hope



The hum of a sewing machine once filled Sumanti Maharana’s days. Now, it’s the rustle of rice stalks and the buzz of community meetings that define her life. In the village of New Kamalapur, Odisha, this 44-year-old former tailor has stitched a new identity from quiet worker to Climate Champion, guiding her community through the uncertainties of a warming world.

When Sumanti joined the ECRICC Project on 1st March 2023, she wasn’t seeking recognition. She simply wanted to learn. With support from LIPICA NGO, she dived into training programs of SRI farming, fish value addition, crab cultivation, floriculture, climate change, and coastal livelihoods. Each session added to her confidence, each exposure visit expanded her vision.

But learning was just the beginning. On the ground, Sumanti has trained 190 farmers in water-saving SRI techniques and helped over 500 individuals shift toward organic, climate-resilient farming. Schoolchildren know her as the woman who taught them about composting and cyclone safety. Adolescent girls admire her for turning challenges into opportunity. SHGs trust her guidance on sustainable inputs. And government officials commend her for her “outstanding performance” in mainstreaming climate-smart agriculture.

Her journey hasn’t been easy. With only INR 12,000 annual income as a tailor, she faced deep financial and technical limitations. But through relentless learning and grassroots persistence, her income has now climbed to INR 72,000 and more importantly, her influence has become priceless.

Sumanti is not loud, not political, not in the spotlight. But she is everywhere planting ideas, strengthening roots, and quietly proving that climate resilience isn’t built in a lab or office, but in the everyday acts of ordinary people who care.

From thread to field, from uncertainty to impact, Sumanti Maharana’s story is one of transformation woven with grit, grown through knowledge, and carried forward by hope.





Empowering Communities  
for Climate Action

**KENDRAPADA DISTRICT**

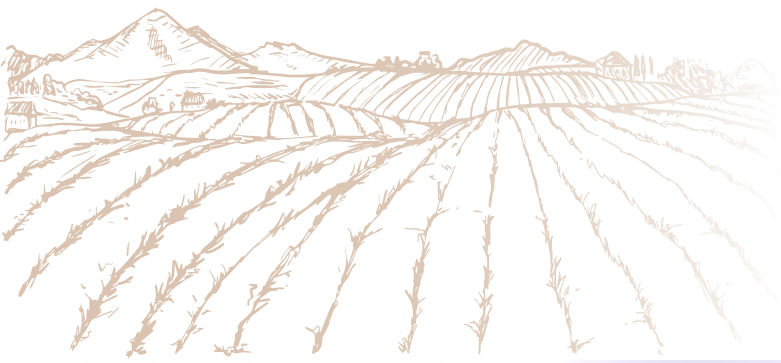
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STORY **30**

## Anusaya Das

### Champions Women-Led Climate Action in Coastal Odisha



**“I didn’t wait for a perfect moment. I just started with a packet of mushroom spores and a question, what if this could feed more than my family?”**

In the coastal village of Ramnagar, Odisha, 33-year-old Anusaya Das is neither a scientist nor a politician. But among women’s self-help groups, farmers, and schoolchildren, she’s something more important: a doer.

A tailor by trade and a micro-entrepreneur by instinct, Anusaya once earned ₹35,000 a year. But when floods disrupted farming and plastic choked the drains near her house, she didn’t look away. She leaned in.

With support from the ECRICC Project and Nature’s Club, she dove into training sessions on sustainable farming, SRI, organic composting, and climate education. But it was mushrooms that changed her path. In just ten days of training, she saw not just fungi but opportunity.

Today, Anusaya grows mushrooms, teaches others to grow them, and runs eco-awareness drives for everyone from children to sarpanches. Her income has nearly tripled. So has her influence.

She doesn’t talk in jargon. She shows people what’s possible holding workshops on the school veranda, rallying women to turn food waste into fertilizer, handing out seedlings with stories instead of instructions. Over 150 villagers have adopted new habits. Some have started kitchen gardens. Others have reduced plastic use. A few have begun teaching what she once learned.

She faces resistance, some still smirk at the idea of a woman talking “climate.” But she answers in results. Healthier crops. Cleaner homes. Confident daughters.

Anusaya hasn’t won a national award. She doesn’t use PowerPoint. But if you walk through Ramnagar, someone will point to her and say, “Ask her how to save water,” or “She’ll help you start composting.” In a village once unsure about what climate change even meant, she made it local, real, human.

**Not all change begins with a revolution. Sometimes it starts with mushrooms in a cloth bag and the courage to knock on a neighbor’s door.**



STORY **31****Priyanka Lenka**

Turns Lessons into Action,  
Leading a Grassroots  
Climate Movement



In a modest home tucked between paddy fields and schoolyards in Sikhar village, Kendrapara, 25-year-old Priyanka Priyadarsini Lenka starts her day not with a syllabus, but with seeds.

She's a tuition teacher by morning, a farmer by afternoon, and a Climate Champion around the clock.

What makes Priyanka different isn't just what she does, it's how she connects dots others overlook. She saw that plastic waste around the school was choking more than the drains, it was choking awareness. That's when her journey began, not with a grand plan, but with a simple question: "What if I teach climate like I teach math, one step at a time?"

After joining the ECRICC Project and being mentored by Nature's Club, she soaked up knowledge from books, workshops, and even YouTube. Her curiosity turned into a mission: from understanding erratic rainfall patterns to training farmers in the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). She took climate talk off the blackboard and into the backyard demonstrating composting, promoting kitchen gardens, and showing how leftover flower petals can become useful products.

Today, she earns nearly three times what she did as a part-time teacher, thanks to her organic vegetable patch, mushroom cultivation with SHGs, and her role as a trainer. But her real impact is harder to count: over 400 people now think twice before burning waste or using plastic. Children chant hygiene songs she taught them. And her friends? Three of them are now Climate Champions too.

Of course, not everyone welcomed her ideas at first. Older farmers scoffed. Some villagers dismissed her as "just a girl with a notebook." But Priyanka didn't argue. She showed up. She explained. She planted. She listened. Slowly, opinions shifted.

Her mantra? **"The soil listens when you respect it. So should we."**

With no formal award and no big title, Priyanka Priyadarsini Lenka is quietly becoming the kind of leader every village needs. One who teaches, plants, and builds not just resilience but belief.



## STORY 32



## Priyanka Mandal

Turns Local Action into  
Lasting Change for  
Climate and Community



In Petchhela, a quiet village cradled by rivers and rice fields in Kendrapara district, Odisha, 24-year-old Priyanka Mandal doesn't just plant crops, she plants conviction.

Once a young woman selling homegrown vegetables with little income and even less recognition, Priyanka has now become a Climate Champion under the ECRICC Project, transforming skepticism into support and hesitation into hope. Her journey began not with a speech or a stage, but with a question: "If I can change how I farm, can I change how others live?"

Through orientation sessions by Nature's Club and deep self-learning, Priyanka discovered how climate change was quietly tightening its grip on her village, ruined crops from unseasonal rains, tired soil, and water that didn't last the season. On 4th February 2023, she officially became a Climate Champion. Since then, her income has jumped from ₹24,000 to ₹90,000, thanks to a thriving mushroom unit, organic farming, and eco-friendly products.

But numbers alone don't define her success. Priyanka's real power lies in how she connects, with adolescent girls learning composting, farmers attending her SRI demonstrations, and children joining her plastic-free drives. From bio-fertilizer production to recycling workshops, she teaches not by lecturing, but by doing.

In a place where people once said, "Organic farming is risky," she simply said, "Watch me try." And they did. Over 100 villagers now follow her lead, and even her friends have joined the movement—proof that climate action can be contagious when rooted in community trust.

She's never received a formal award. But ask the SHG women she mentors, the kids who chant "No more plastic," or the elders who now plant trees, and they'll tell you: **Priyanka changed how we think.**

Her voice isn't loud, but it's clear. Her ambition isn't fame, it's a greener tomorrow.

**In a world chasing big solutions, Priyanka Mandal reminds us that real change often starts with one small hand planting a seed and the courage to believe it will grow.**



STORY **33**

## Samikshya Nauri

### Becomes “Climate Change Didi” and Leads Her Village Toward Resilience



**I**n a world where climate warnings often fall on tired ears, 22-year-old Samikshya Priyadarsini Nauri from Chhedakani village, Kendrapara, is speaking a language her generation understands that is clear, hopeful, and urgent.

She didn’t grow up with plans to lead a movement. As a student, she was more familiar with textbooks than training manuals. But when erratic rains started affecting her family’s crops and plastic waste began to choke village streams, Samikshya realized something had to change and someone had to lead it. “Why not me?” she thought.

That question set her on the path to becoming a Climate Champion under the ECRICC Project. With training from Nature’s Club NGO and knowledge from books, workshops, and online platforms, she stepped into action on 25th January 2023. She now earns ₹60,000 annually, a first for someone with no prior income, through climate-related facilitation, eco-entrepreneurship, and training support.

Samikshya’s work bridges education, agriculture, and awareness. She teaches farmers how SRI (System of Rice Intensification) can increase yields while using less water. She runs school campaigns on handwashing and leads rallies against single-use plastic. She doesn’t just tell, she shows. Her mushroom cultivation demos, compost-making sessions, and photo documentation projects turn theory into tangible action.

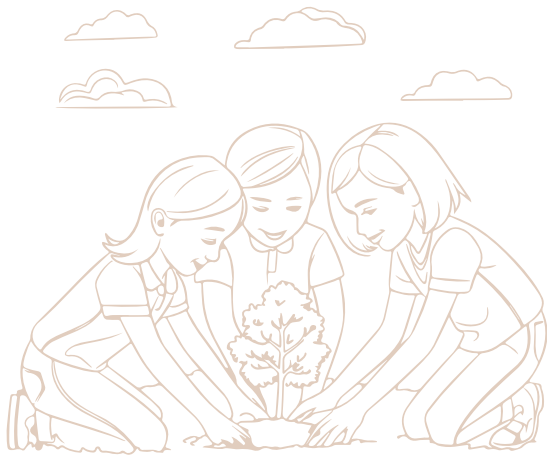
What makes her different isn’t just her age, it’s her relatability. Children call her “Climate Change Didi.” Peers follow her lead not because they’re told to, but because they see her living it, planting trees, cleaning up public spaces, and confidently speaking at village meetings. So far, she has influenced over 200 people across age groups.

Challenges? Plenty. Some dismissed her as “just a girl,” too young or too idealistic. But Samikshya met skepticism with visuals, science, and consistency. “People won’t always believe your words,” she says. “But they believe what they can see and what they can grow themselves.”

Today, she’s not just a Climate Champion, she’s a movement starter. Her friends have joined her in organizing campaigns, and younger students now say they want to be “like Didi” when they grow up.

**Samikshya Priyadarsini Nauri is not waiting for the future to act, she’s shaping it. And in every compost pit, mushroom bed, and reusable bag, she’s showing her village that climate resilience begins with one brave, informed voice.**



STORY **34**

## More Rice, Less Methane

How Sulekha Barik is  
Growing Resilience  
One Crop at a Time



In a corner of Odisha where climate change usually goes unnamed, 32-year-old Sulekha Barik from Tantiapal village is calling it out and doing something about it.

A homemaker, tutor, and mother, Sulekha didn't begin with big plans or a platform. Her journey started with quiet observations: vegetables wilting faster, water drying sooner, her children falling ill more often. These everyday changes made climate change deeply personal. And once she named the problem, she refused to ignore it.

Through capacity-building sessions and field visits led by Nature's Club under the ECRICC Project, she immersed herself in learning. Books, YouTube, and documentation became her after-hours university. On 4th February 2023, she stepped into the role of Climate Champion and never looked back. Her income rose from ₹48,000 to ₹70,000 annually through a mix of organic farming and project engagement, but the real gain was confidence and credibility.

Sulekha's work is practical, visible, and growing. She promotes the SRI (System of Rice Intensification) method in paddy fields, trains others in organic manure use, and has made her home a demonstration site for water-saving and waste-reducing practices. Mangrove plantation techniques from CIFA and exposure to ornamental fisheries added depth to her knowledge, while creative recycling sessions helped her design school-level campaigns that catch attention.

Armed with a camera, slogans like "More rice, less methane" and "Cut the plastic," and a solid understanding of climate science, she has influenced over 120 villagers, especially women and youth. Her sessions with SHGs, farmers, Eco Clubs, and adolescent girls are interactive and relatable. Change hasn't been instant, many resisted organic methods at first, but seeing her results has shifted opinions, and even earned her praise from local leaders and Panchayat members.

What sets Sulekha apart is not just what she teaches, but how she lives it. Her peers now follow her example, some even stepping up as voluntary Climate Champions. She hasn't won awards but she has won something rarer, that is trust.

Sulekha Barik's story reminds us that the fight for climate resilience doesn't always start in offices or meetings. Sometimes, it starts in a backyard garden, a kitchen table, or a village where one woman simply decides: this can't wait.



