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IN FOCUS



Top 20
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2025



NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE



Mahashakti Foundation was honoured to be recognised at the National Human Rights Conference held on 13th March at Mayfair Convention. The conference was jointly organised by **Hindalco Industries Limited & Human Rights Front**, bringing together diverse stakeholders to deliberate on key human rights concerns and emerging challenges. 21 speakers shared insights on evolving human rights trends, emerging issues, and collaborative approaches to address them

KIRAN BEDI VISITS SUBHALAXMI UDYOGINI OFFICE IN JHARSUGUDA



The Subhalaxmi Udyogini Project, supported by **Vedanta Limited - Aluminium Business** (Jharsuguda), had the privilege of hosting Ms. Kiran Bedi, India's first woman IPS officer, at the Subhalaxmi Cooperative office. She toured the product gallery and appreciated the quality and diversity of products developed by women entrepreneurs. The project has enabled over 5,000 SHG members across multiple sectors by promoting individual and cluster-based enterprises. She commended the collective efforts of the Subhalaxmi Cooperative in advancing women-led livelihoods. The visit was also attended by members of the Subhalaxmi Cooperative, including the Board of Directors, and was further graced by key representatives from the CSR leadership of Vedanta.

TERRACOTTA TRAINING PROGRAM INITIATED IN RAYAGADA



Aditya Alumina Refinery, a unit of Hindalco Industries Limited of Aditya Birla Group, has inaugurated a 30-day Terracotta Handicraft Training Programme at Handi Shaal, Kindiripadar village, Kasipur, Rayagada, Odisha. The initiative aims to enhance the skills of local potters, promote traditional terracotta handicrafts, and strengthen their livelihoods. The inaugural programme was attended by DEEPAK MOHANTY, Head - HR, IR, CSR & OHC, Mr. Tanmaya Mohanty, DH-CSR & R&R, Mr. Basanta Panigrahi, Mrs. Biswamohini Mohanty and Mr. Subhendu Gope from the Aditya Alumina Refinery Project. The programme has received strong applause from the villagers of Kindiripadar.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATED IN PAIKMAL



A program was organized at Paikmal to mark International Women's Day 2026, under Project IVDP, with the support of **LTM**, bringing together more than 150 women associated with ICDS, OLM, Mission Shakti, and various SHGs. The event was graced by Chairperson Paikmal Block - Ms Bhawana Singh as the Chief Guest, DSWO Bargarh Smt Sandhyarani Nepak, BDO Paikmal Sri Prafulla Odi and CDPO Paikmal Smt Basanti Prusti as honourable guests who highlighted the important role women play in shaping families and communities, and stressed the need to continue strengthening opportunities.

NEBRASKA UNIVERSITY DELEGATION VISITS AGRAHICHASI FPC



A delegation from University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA, comprising Mr. Jude Edmund Cobbing and Mr. Chitaranjan Ray, visited the vegetable crop fields of Agrahichasi FPC at Golamunda, supported by **NABARD**, under the Central Sector Scheme. During the visit, the delegation interacted with farmers and observed the vegetable cultivation practices adopted by the members of the Producer Company.

During the interaction, the Managing Director of the FPC, Mr. Krushna Chandra Nag, shared the journey, achievements, and operational model of the Producer Company with the visiting delegation.

TPCODL SUPPORTS TRAINING FOR DHOKRA ARTISANS



Under Project Samridhi, supported by **TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited**, 30 artisans at the Nuagaon Dhokra Cluster received training on institutional governance and financial management. Led by Mr. Mohan K Baliyarsingh of Mahashakti Foundation, the session focused on strengthening Self Help Groups and Producer Groups. Additionally, a Project Adhikaar Service Camp, organized for Tata Volunteer Week, facilitated essential linkages to government schemes including Krushak Odisha, CM Kisan, and Ayushman Bharat, ensuring direct welfare delivery for the artisan community.

JINDAL STAINLESS SUPPORTS AGARBATTI MICRO-ENTERPRISE



Under the IGA initiative of Project Sakhyam, supported by **Jindal Stainless Limited**, a specialized Agarbatti micro-enterprise unit was established at Jakhapura for the members of the Annapurna Producer Group. This comprehensive initiative included the provision of advanced machinery, intensive hands-on training, and high-quality raw materials, directly enabling the group to commence professional production and build a sustainable livelihood through self-employment. This micro-enterprise is expected to strengthen long-term economic stability and promote women’s entrepreneurship and leadership within the local community.

MLA VAMSI YADAV INAUGURATES BOX CRICKET STADIUM



Hon’ble MLA Shri Vamsi Krishna Yadav formally inaugurated the Box Cricket Stadium at Laxmi Talkies Park, Visakhapatnam. Established under Project Yuva, a key CSR initiative of **Vedanta VGCB** (Vedanta Group) and the IUSDP Project, this facility aims to promote sports engagement while creating safe, modern recreational infrastructure for local youth. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Ms. Sree Lekshmi J S, Head CSR - VGCB Port, alongside enthusiastic community members who joined in celebrating this significant milestone for the One Town area.

STRENGTHENING FPOS UNDER CENTRAL SECTOR SCHEME



A field exposure visit was conducted by the leadership of ADH Patnagarh to Maa Mahadasani FPC, Loisingha, under the Central Sector Scheme of the Government of India for the Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs, supported by **NABARD**. The visit focused on knowledge exchange, learning from best practices, and exploring collaboration among Farmer-Producer Organisations. The team reviewed the Solar Dryer Unit to understand its business model and interacted with progressive farmers cultivating tissue culture banana. They further had technical discussions on fertigation, drip irrigation, and efficient water management practices.

9,000 FARMERS ADOPT LCC TO REDUCE UREA OVERUSE



In partnership with **Precision Development (PxD)**, we distributed 9,000 Leaf Colour Charts to paddy farmers throughout the Kharif 2025 and Rabi 2026 seasons. This climate-smart initiative significantly reduces Nitrous Oxide emissions by preventing urea overuse and optimizing soil health. Utilizing the locally relevant NRRI-Cuttack LCC variant, our team led comprehensive farmer onboarding, technical training, and last-mile delivery through local FPOs. Reinforced by PxD’s digital voice advisory, we are now conducting surveys to evaluate the long-term effects on crop yields and overall GHG reductions.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026



Mahashakti Foundation organized a workshop on the theme "Entrepreneurship – A Pathway Towards Women's Empowerment: Give to Gain" to mark International Women's Day. The workshop brought together a diverse group of stakeholders including development practitioners, CSR leaders, entrepreneurs, academicians, and media professionals to deliberate on strengthening women-led enterprises and promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Session 1: From Aspiration to Enterprise – Opportunities and Challenges

The first session, moderated by Smt. Itishree Kanungo, Vice President of Mahashakti Foundation, explored the journey of moving from a simple idea to a thriving business. Ms. Kanungo, who has over 20 years of experience in microcredit and policy advocacy, highlighted the need for diverse sectors to collaborate in supporting grassroots women.

Smt. Smaranika Mohapatra (Founder, Maanvi Designs): A social entrepreneur who transitioned to the handicrafts sector to support traditional artisans. She emphasized maintaining high product quality and utilizing digital platforms like Instagram to reach wider markets. According to her, two principles have guided her journey:

- Maintaining high product quality
- Providing excellent customer service

Sri Pradeep Kumar Ghosal (Head CSR, TATA Power, Odisha): An expert with 30 years of experience in sustainability and ESG management. He noted that women's ventures often evolve from supporting families and stressed the importance of collectivization through self-help groups.

Smt. Itishree Nayak (Asst. Managing Editor, Prameya News 7): A veteran journalist who uses media to amplify the voices and success stories of women working at the grassroots level. She argued that true empowerment occurs when women gain decision-making power and visibility within their communities.

Sri Sukanta Kumar Rath (Head CSR, Jindal Stainless, Odisha): A leader in driving sustainable social initiatives with a background in the United Nations Development Programme. He introduced the "waste-to-wealth" concept and encouraged women to adopt collective business models like cooperatives.

A significant highlight of this session was the launch of the "Kala Punaruthan" website. Presented by Ms. Sushrita Rath and Ms. Muskan Agrawal, this digital platform aims to connect over 5,000 artisans, specializing in crafts like Dokra metal, Pattachitra, and Saura paintings to national markets.

Session 2: Strengthening Women-led Enterprises – Finance, Market, and Institutional Support

The second session was moderated by Dr. Debasish Mohapatra, President of Mahashakti Foundation and Associate Professor at KSRM. He opened the discussion by stating that entrepreneurship requires a structured ecosystem involving quality management and continuous learning.



WOMEN'S DAY 2026 (CONTINUED)...

Smt. Abha Mishra (Head, UNDP, Odisha): A development veteran who emphasized that women need consistent support from initial training to independent business management. The process should include training, research, market linkage, exposure visits, and diversification of products. She advocated for systematic business plans and "positive masculinity," where men support women as equal economic partners.

Smt. Debarati Ghatak (Private Sector Engagement Specialist, Palladium): A specialist in building partnerships between the private sector and development initiatives. She highlighted the need for "exit strategies" in NGO projects to ensure enterprises become self-sustaining after organizational support ends.

Smt. Chinmayee Panda (Author & Founder, Ankur Foundation): An entrepreneur who overcame traditional family restrictions to establish a play school in 2000. Her journey serves as a testament to how perseverance and education can help women build successful professional careers.

Shri Rajinder Singh (Reliance Foundation): He proposed a five-step approach to promote entrepreneurship, starting with understanding the local economy and building cluster-level institutions. He also emphasized that rather than creating new assets everywhere, organizations should use existing resources effectively and fill the gaps through partnerships.

The open discussions featured valuable contributions from audience speakers. **Sri Bishnu Panda** (Centre of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Incubation) reflected on the leadership roles women are increasingly occupying in India, citing the female Presidency as a symbol of progress. He emphasized that economic independence is the cornerstone of living with dignity.

Sri Narendra Nayak, CEO from OSAFII shared practical insights from the microfinance sector, noting that credit alone is insufficient. He provided evidence that women entrepreneurs, when supported by institutions like SIDBI with training and market linkages, could earn an additional monthly income of ₹5,000–₹6,000.

The workshop concluded with a unified consensus: empowering women entrepreneurs requires a holistic ecosystem. This includes not just skill development, but also mentorship, market access, financial literacy, and the adoption of modern technology. The panellists collectively agreed that traditional crafts must innovate to meet modern demand while maintaining their cultural essence.

The event ended with a felicitation ceremony and vote of thanks to the speakers for their contributions. Their shared insights are expected to inspire a new generation of women to take calculated risks and contribute to the economic development of their communities.



NON-PESTICIDE MANAGEMENT TRAINING CONDUCTED



A Non-Pesticide Management training was conducted at Maa Jharigudi Producer Group in Dhadumunda village under Jujomura block as part of the APC project supported by the **Government of Odisha**. The session engaged 27 PG members and focused on the adverse effects of chemical use in agriculture while highlighting the role of organic alternatives. A practical demonstration on the preparation of Handikhata was conducted, where members learned its preparation, benefits, and application in the field. The session was highly interactive, with participants raising questions and sharing their experiences, encouraging cross-learning among the members.

PROJECT JEEVIKA TRAINS WOMEN IN JUTE MANUFACTURING



The Jute Bag Training Centre under the Jeevika Project, a part of the IUSDP initiative of **Vedanta VGCB**, empowered eleven women from urban slum communities by providing structured training in jute product manufacturing. The participants are receiving hands-on exposure to advanced stitching, cutting, finishing, and design techniques, enabling them to produce a diverse range of eco-friendly jute bags aligned with market demand. The training goes beyond skill enhancement, focusing on quality standards, productivity improvement, and enterprise orientation.

HINDALCO CHRO INAUGURATES PROJECT SHAKTI SALES GALLERY



Mr. Samik Basu, CHRO of **Hindalco Industries Limited** of Aditya Birla Group, inaugurated the Project Shakti Sales Gallery in the presence of senior dignitaries including HR Head Mr. Krishna Kumar Padhi and Cluster Head Mr. Soumitra Roy. This dedicated gallery showcases high-quality SHG products, including Saura Art, traditional snacks like badi and papad, millet-based items, and handmade candles. The initiative aims to provide consistent market linkages and professional support in product design, packaging, and branding, empowering local women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses sustainably while preserving traditional craftsmanship.

BHUBAN BLOCK FARMERS ADOPT INNOVATIVE PEARL CULTIVATION



Under Project Chirantan, supported by **HDFC Bank Parivartan**, a demonstration-based pearl culture intervention has been initiated in two villages of Bhuban Block. Implemented in farm ponds of beneficiaries, the activity introduces pearl cultivation as a new livelihood option for local farmers. Around 3,000 mussels have undergone nucleus implantation through body surgery across two ponds. The initiative aims to build practical skills to encourage technology adoption, and promote pearl culture as an alternative income-generating opportunity for small and marginal farmers.

SUCCESS STORY

LTM



WOMEN-LED BIO-INPUTS REVIVING SOIL AND RURAL INCOMES

Bargarh district of Odisha is known for intensive paddy cultivation. However, the excessive and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, including hazardous substances such as Aldrin, Heptachlor, BHC, Paraquat, Dicofol, Methomyl, and Monocrotophos has led to severe environmental and public health concerns. These chemicals have degraded soil quality, contaminated crops, and disrupted local ecosystems. The district has also reported a growing incidence of cancer and other health disorders linked to prolonged exposure to toxic agrochemicals. Additionally, black marketing of pesticides has increased farmers' input costs without improving productivity, pushing many small and marginal farmers into financial distress. These challenges highlighted the urgent need for safe and sustainable farming alternatives. In response, Mahashakti Foundation established Bio-Input Production Centres under its Integrated Village Development Program (IVDP). Initially, five centres were set up in Paikmal Block of Bargarh district, adopting a dual approach promoting organic farming while creating livelihood opportunities for rural women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Over 800 farmers were sensitized through awareness drives, demonstrations, and trainings on the harmful effects of chemical farming and the benefits of organic alternatives. They were trained to prepare and use traditional inputs like Jeevamrut, Neemastra, and Brahmastra, which enhance soil fertility and act as natural pest repellents. Simultaneously, more than 60 SHG women received hands-on training in producing bio-inputs using low-cost, locally available materials such as cow dung, cow urine, jaggery, pulse flour, and plant-based extracts. The SHGs were further supported with essential infrastructure, including fermentation drums, mixing tanks, storage units, and packaging materials, enabling commercial-scale production.

The initiative has generated significant environmental, economic, and social benefits. Farmers adopting bio-inputs have reduced input costs by 25–35% per cropping season and decreased chemical pesticide usage by 40–50%, with many eliminating hazardous chemicals entirely. Improved soil health and safer farming practices are now visible across intervention areas. From a livelihood perspective, SHG women earn an additional ₹3,000–₹5,000 per month, rising to ₹6,000 during peak seasons. This has strengthened household incomes, increased savings, and enhanced women's participation in local economies. Following its success, the model has been expanded to Gudvella Block (Balangir) and Madanpur Rampur Block (Kalahandi). Currently, 15 centres are operational across three districts, engaging 109 SHG women. SHGs independently manage operations, including procurement, production, pricing, and sales. Farmers provide regular feedback to maintain quality. The use of local resources and simple technologies ensures cost-effectiveness and sustainability, while reinvestment of earnings supports long-term self-reliance. The initiative demonstrates how community-driven approaches can address environmental degradation, health risks, and livelihood challenges simultaneously. By promoting organic farming and empowering SHG women, it offers a scalable, sustainable model for eco-friendly rural development.

