



### The Girl Who Dared to Dream: Sumana's Story of Change from "Nayantara-Kishori Bikash Program"

AUGUST 2025

Sumana, a spirited young girl from the remote riverside village of Sumatinagar in the Sagar Block, has always carried silent dreams in her heart. Her father, a dedicated farmer and daily wage labourer, is the sole earner of their family. Due to their fragile financial condition, Sumana never found the courage to share her aspirations with her parents. An average student in class, Sumana found joy in reading, painting, and—most passionately—sports. She once expressed her desire to play **football**. **Still, her words were lost amid the harsh realities of economic hardship and societal expectations, especially as a girl from a conservative rural background. Everything changed in April 2024, when Sumana learned about the Nayantara-Kishori Bikash Program being implemented in the Sagar Block.**



With new hope, she joined the program, which turned out to be a turning point in her life. For the first time, Sumana received structured coaching in academics, which helped her overcome confusion in studies and boosted her confidence. Even more importantly, the program gave her the platform to pursue her long-cherished dream of playing football. When she received her first football jersey, it was more than just a piece of clothing—it was a symbol of recognition and a step toward her dreams. Wearing that jersey, she stepped onto the field and began her journey in football with unmatched enthusiasm. Her talent bloomed quickly; it became clear she was a natural athlete.

In 2025, Sumana represented Kakdwip Sub-Division in the **District Council for School Games and Sports** held at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya Stadium, Narendrapur, where she secured 2nd position in **discus throw**, a moment of immense pride for her village and the program alike. Now in Class VIII, Sumana is not only excelling in her studies but also preparing for a national-level sports event in Delhi. With equal prowess in painting, academics, and athletics, she stands as a shining example of what rural girls can achieve when given the right support and encouragement. Sumana expresses heartfelt gratitude to the Nayantara - Kishori Bikash Program, which not only helped her realize her potential but also enabled her to dream big. Her story is a shining example of how timely support and opportunity can transform lives and awaken the dreams of young girls from the most remote corners.

(\* Names has been altered to maintain the privacy and ensuring safety as per our organizational policy)

#### Recent Updates:

### Empowering Rural Women: Livelihood Boost through Livestock, Poultry, and Fish Farming under Gram Seva Program



The Gram Seva Program is making remarkable strides in empowering women and promoting sustainable livelihoods in rural areas of Nadia district. Over the past few months, women from various Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have stepped up as entrepreneurs in livestock rearing, poultry farming, and fishery operations, transforming their villages into hubs of rural enterprise.

In **April 2025, 20 SHG members** were supported with **400 (RIR) birds, with each woman receiving 20 birds** to initiate poultry rearing. Building on this momentum, **June 2025** saw an even larger outreach. A total of **40 SHG members** received livestock support: **30 goats, 400 RIR birds, and 200 ducks.**

Meanwhile, a group-based poultry farming initiative has taken root in the villages of Atalia, Kumarpur, and Harishpur. Here, **18 women** from three SHGs (six in each group) have undergone intensive training and are now independently running poultry units. They've already completed two full cycles of poultry farming and are now entering their third—signaling not just success, but sustainability. These women handle everything —

from rearing to selling—demonstrating confidence, independence, and entrepreneurial spirit. In addition to livestock and poultry, the program has also turned its focus to fish farming. Four village ponds were rejuvenated through cleaning, excavation, and restocking with fish larvae. A total of **24 women** from four SHG groups are now managing these **fish farms**. In April, they successfully harvested fish and sold them in the local market. New fishlings were introduced again in recent months to maintain continuity. Moreover, **one new pond in Kumarpur** has been identified and rejuvenated for similar activities, with SHG members being mobilized for group-based fish farming.

These combined efforts aim to foster self-reliance among rural women, encouraging them to take charge of their livelihoods and build lasting economic resilience. Through livestock support, training, and collective enterprise, the Gram Seva Program is not just uplifting individual women—it's reshaping the economic landscape of their entire communities.

## Community-Led Mangrove Regeneration in the Sundarbans



In the face of rising climate threats, the people of the Sundarbans are fighting back—this time with roots, not walls. Under **Project Aranya**, a nature-based initiative supported by the **SBI Foundation**, over **7.15 lakh** mangrove saplings are being planted across 95 hectares of degraded land in the cyclone-prone blocks of **Namkhana, Sagar, Patharpratima, and Mathurapur II**.

The region, home to the world's largest mangrove forest, has long suffered from climate-induced displacement, salinity intrusion, soil and riverbank erosion. The destruction of mangroves—natural buffers against floods and storms—has left communities increasingly vulnerable. At the heart of this green revolution are local **women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, who are leading the preparation of **nurseries, land development, and plantation work**. Their efforts not only restore lost ecosystems but also create sustainable livelihoods and a sense of ownership over the land they protect. The nurseries nurture diverse native species such as **Kakda, Garjan, Sundari, Dhudul, Motgoran, Garan, Banbakul, Byne, and Golpata**, known for their resilience to salinity and role in reinforcing coastal stability.

By harnessing traditional knowledge, grassroots participation, and ecological restoration, the initiative not only rebuilds the natural barriers of the Sundarbans but also restores hope and resilience among its people—offering a sustainable model for climate adaptation in one of India's most threatened coastal landscapes.

## Computer Literacy Program for underprivileged children of South 24 Parganas, WB

Sabuj Sangha has been co-hosting the **Computer Literacy Program (CLP)** for underprivileged children in collaboration with IBM India Pvt. Ltd. for the past three years. As the primary technology partner, IBM provides technical expertise, learning resources, and dedicated volunteers to facilitate high-quality training in computer operations and digital literacy.

The program aims to cultivate children's interest in computer education and raise awareness of its importance in the modern world. It focuses on children from marginalized families in the remote villages of the Sundarbans and the urban slums of Kolkata. CLP 2025 is a 10-day weekend training program that started on July 13, 2025, at the **IBM Kolkata Office**. A total of **40** children participated, selected through a screening process conducted by IBM. The participants were nominated from four partner NGOs: **Calcutta Rescue, NiFAA – Konnagar, Champa Mahila Society, and Sabuj Sangha**.



From Sabuj Sangha, **14** children were chosen: **8** adolescent girls from marginalized families in the **Sundarbans** and **6** children from the railway squatter colonies of the **Champahati area** (South 24 Pgs). The event began with a lively cultural segment, where children displayed talents through recitations, songs, and other performances. IBM volunteers graciously hosted and actively participated in the sessions, fostering a supportive, joyful, and inclusive learning environment for the children. All participating children received a Start-up Kit, including a folder, pen, and notebook to support their learning during the program and the initial session of computer education. **Ms. Banashree Mandal**, Programme Coordinator of the **Nayantara Program**, who accompanied the **8** adolescent Nayantara girls to the event, explained this **flagship** initiative of Sabuj Sangha. **Ms. Kasturi Banerjee** discussed the **Aalor Disha Child Support Centre** and its functions.

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## Transforming Skills into Enterprises: A Step Towards Sustainable Livelihoods



In a ground-breaking initiative to foster women-led enterprises in rural Bengal, Sabuj Sangha, in collaboration with the International Management Institute (**IMI**), Kolkata, has launched an impactful Entrepreneurship Development Program (**EDP**) across five key clusters in Murshidabad district—Berhampore I, Berhampore II, Murshidabad Jiaganj, Beldanga, and Bhagwangola II.

For the first time, women from some of the most remote villages are receiving structured entrepreneurial support—an opportunity many had never imagined. These women, once confined within the boundaries of their homes, are now beginning to dream beyond limitations, embracing empowerment and self-reliance. The program began with Support Orientation Sessions, attended by 281 aspiring women entrepreneurs, demonstrating the untapped entrepreneurial potential at the grassroots. This initiative is part of a wider collaboration with the IKN Innovation Foundation, under the CSR initiative of L&T Finance, with the goal of nurturing 600 women entrepreneurs in total. A key focus of the program is to identify and incubate 60 high-potential Nano enterprises led by women. In the coming months, 125 shortlisted entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to pitch their business ideas before a jury panel. The top 60 will receive six months of intensive incubation support, including: Expert mentorship, Technical and business training, Market linkage facilitation, Access to financial and digital resources.

Murshidabad, known for its skilled women artisans—particularly in tailoring and garment-making—provides a rich foundation for developing sustainable and scalable business models rooted in local expertise. Through this initiative, Sabuj Sangha aims not only to empower individuals but to catalyse community-wide transformation. By harnessing skills and nurturing entrepreneurial mind-sets, the program envisions resilient rural economies led by confident and self-reliant women—true change makers in their communities.