

Thematic Track on “Women at the Frontlines of Climate Action: Biodiversity & Land Restoration – Community - Led Pathways to achieve SDGs”

Date: 26th February 2026, Time: 16:30-1800 Hrs
Venue: Jehangir Hall, Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi



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Thematic Track Summary

At a moment when the world remains significantly off track in meeting climate and sustainable development commitments, the Thematic Track convened by SGP-India at the Silver Jubilee edition of WSDS 2026 stood out as a powerful reminder that transformation often begins at the grassroots.

Framed within the Summit’s theme, “Transformations: Vision, Voices, and Values for Sustainable Development,” the session spotlighted women not as beneficiaries of development, but as leaders shaping climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and land restoration across India’s diverse landscapes. Drawing on experiences from the Seventh Operational Phase (OP7) of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), implemented by TERI under the guidance of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) with UNDP support, the track demonstrated how small grants have catalysed systemic change.

The Opening Session, led by Dr. Dipankar Saharia, underscored measurable ecological and social outcomes achieved across the Northeast, Coastal, and Central Semi-Arid Regions. The first panel, moderated by Ms. Nandita Hazarika, explored the deeper dimensions of women’s leadership—shifting power relations, embedding values in governance, strengthening bankability, and translating grassroots action into long-term resilience. Distinguished speakers from UNDP, TERI, academia, and implementing organisations shared insights that bridged global frameworks and lived realities.

Special remarks by Ms. Tanvi Garg, Joint Secretary & GEF-OFP, MoEF&CC, signaled strong policy interest in scaling community innovations, particularly through integration with national missions and climate action plans.

The second panel, moderated by Dr. Ashish Chaturvedi, shifted the focus from pilots to policy. Leaders from TERI, MoEF&CC, WRI, Forest Departments, and NABARD deliberated on institutional pathways—landscape governance, convergence with existing schemes, climate finance readiness, adaptation science integration, and embedding micro-plans into district and state planning frameworks. The discussion reinforced that scaling requires structured institutional mechanisms, credible documentation, and financial viability.

A major highlight of the session was the launch of the Compendium of Case Studies from SGP-OP7, documenting grassroots innovations across regions. The Best Innovation Awards celebrated outstanding green practices and Indigenous Knowledge Practitioners, recognizing both modern product innovation and traditional ecological wisdom.

Beyond the conference hall, the SGP exhibition stall became a vibrant space of engagement. Inaugurated by Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon’ble Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the stall showcased products and innovations by SGP grantees. Over three days, it attracted policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and citizens—many of whom purchased the products, affirming their market potential and scalability.

Together, the thematic track demonstrated that when women lead and institutions collaborate, small grants can generate large-scale, lasting transformations toward resilient and inclusive sustainable development.

Proceedings of the Opening Session

Welcome and Introduction

Dr. Dipankar Saharia

Senior Director- Social Transformation & Strategic Alliance, TERI

Dr. Dipankar Saharia welcomed the participants and emphasised that women across India’s forests, farmlands, and coastal ecosystems were not merely responding to environmental crises but were actively shaping resilient, community-driven solutions rooted in local knowledge and inclusive governance. He noted that climate action, biodiversity conservation, and land restoration became most effective when anchored in community leadership, particularly women’s leadership.

Reflecting on TERI’s role as the National Host Institution for the Small Grants Programme (SGP-OP7), implemented under the guidance of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change with support from UNDP, he highlighted that the programme was designed to strengthen social-ecological resilience and sustainable livelihoods across three ecologically significant landscapes: the Northeast, the central semi-arid region, and the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

He explained that OP7 was built on three interconnected pillars: building resilient landscapes, strengthening participatory governance, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure measurable and scalable impact. A multi-tier institutional architecture—including Regional Advisory Committees, a Technical Advisory Group, and a National Steering Committee—ensured transparent partner selection and oversight. Continuous engagement with 71 implementing partners, district-level platforms, and co-financing mechanisms strengthened accountability and collaborative execution. TERI’s approach emphasized partnership and handholding from proposal development through implementation, rather than a grant-disbursement model.

Dr. Saharia shared that OP7 generated measurable environmental and social outcomes, directly benefiting over 30,000 community members, including more than 14,000 women who played central roles in sustainable agriculture, fisheries management, renewable energy adoption, and local governance. These interventions demonstrably contributed to multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty reduction, zero hunger, gender equality, clean energy, climate action, and life below water.



Looking ahead to Operational Phase 8, he noted that the programme would expand into additional landscapes, including the Aravallis, the Western Ghats, and fragile Himalayan regions, requiring even deeper community leadership and institutional partnerships. He concluded by affirming that when women lead restoration and climate action, outcomes become more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, and called for continued investment in scaling such community-led pathways.

Programme Achievements under SGP-OP7 (India)

- **71 grassroots organisations supported** across three major landscapes
- **10,000+ hectares** of degraded land restored
- **23,000+ hectares** under improved sustainable land management practices (progressing toward ~60,000-hectare target)
- **749 hectares** of marine habitat under improved management, with projected spillover benefits exceeding 1,200 hectares
- **0.647 MW** decentralized renewable energy capacity installed (solar and biogas systems)
- **30,000+ direct beneficiaries**, including
 - **14,000+ women beneficiaries and leaders**
- Strengthened district-level governance platforms and co-financing mechanisms

Direct contributions to SDGs 1, 2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14

Panel Discussion on “Women at the Frontlines of Climate Action: Community - Led Pathways to achieve SDGs”



Moderator: Ms. Nandita Hazarika

Consultant-NRM & Environment, NER Regional Advisory Committee Member

Ms. Nandita Hazarika formally opened the panel discussion and reflected on her long association with the UNDP Small Grants Programme (SGP), having served earlier on the Steering Committee and as a grantee in the late 1990s. She noted the significant evolution of the programme over the decades, including the substantial increase in grant size, which has strengthened the capacity of community-based organisations working at the grassroots.

Emphasizing the central theme of gender inclusion, she observed that while SGP has



made measurable progress in advancing women’s participation—exceeding beneficiary targets in the current phase—only about 25% of implementing organisations were women-led, with notable regional variations. She stressed that while quantitative achievements are important, the deeper question remains whether interventions have translated into meaningful and sustained impact.

Framing the discussion, Ms. Hazarika highlighted key concerns: moving from women’s participation to genuine decision-making power; addressing persistent barriers such as limited access to finance and socio-cultural constraints; and ensuring that grassroots innovations led by

women inform and influence policy. She underscored the need for institutions to create enabling environments where women’s leadership can thrive and shape sustainable development pathways.

***Panelist: Ms. Isabelle Tschan,
Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP India***



The Moderator invited Ms. Tschan to reflect on how women-led SDG initiatives that demonstrate strong community-level results can move beyond time-bound projects to create lasting institutional change. What is the tipping point that ensures such interventions do not end with funding cycles but instead transform systems and governance structures?

Ms. Tschan emphasized that the critical shift lies in moving from participation and consultation to genuine decision-making power for women. Drawing on her international experience with UNDP and the Small Grants Programme across countries, she observed that while contexts vary, structural gender barriers—particularly unequal power relations—are strikingly similar worldwide. Sustainable transformation, she argued, ultimately requires a

redistribution of power.

Institutional change cannot be achieved within short project cycles; it demands long-term engagement, contextual understanding, and early-stage gender analysis embedded in project design. Beyond capacity building, women must gain economic agency and control over financial resources, as economic autonomy often translates into stronger voices within households, communities, and local governance institutions.

Illustrating this, she cited examples from Assam and Odisha, including women gaining access to government schemes during flood crises and the “Women Climate Champions” initiative in coastal Odisha. In these cases, women who initially faced resistance gradually emerged as

trusted knowledge leaders and resource mobilizers, strengthening their authority in both family and community decision-making spaces.

She further underscored the importance of strong partnerships, rigorous monitoring systems, and institutional mechanisms—such as those supported through UNDP’s collaboration with TERI—to ensure that local innovations are sustained beyond project timelines. Durable impact, she concluded, depends on embedding women’s leadership within governance systems, rather than treating it as an outcome of isolated projects.

***Panelist: Dr. Vibha Dhawan,
Director General, TERI***

The Moderator invited Dr. Dhawan to reflect on TERI’s leadership role and asked: How can an institution like TERI—combining research excellence with grassroots engagement—translate its knowledge, tools, and institutional experience into meaningful support for implementing agencies under SGP? How can such support ensure that projects remain sustainable beyond funding cycles?



Dr. Dhawan emphasized that institutional leadership begins with building confidence—especially among women—and creating environments where they can thrive. She noted that TERI’s long-standing experience has demonstrated that handholding is central to sustainable impact. Support begins at the proposal stage, where partners are guided to identify gaps, refine project design, and strengthen critical components that may otherwise be overlooked.

She clarified that monitoring under SGP is not about fault-finding, but about continuous learning—akin to periodic assessments rather than a final examination. Regular engagement enables mid-course corrections, helping partners adapt to emerging challenges, including market dynamics and external economic shifts. Such adaptive management ensures that projects evolve rather than stagnate.

Dr. Dhawan stressed that responsible withdrawal does not mean disengagement; instead, projects must be nurtured to become financially and institutionally self-sustaining, with replicable models that extend impact beyond the initial intervention. Capacity building, skill transfer, and knowledge sharing are therefore essential pillars of TERI’s approach.

She concluded by underscoring that institutions must generously share expertise rather than guard it. Empowering partners with knowledge and competence not only strengthens

grassroots organisations but also deepens institutional credibility and long-term developmental outcomes.

Panelist: Dr. Bhavani Rao R,

Dean -School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham

The Moderator invited Dr. Rao to reflect on the role of research and educational institutions in advancing women-led climate and SDG initiatives. Given her dual role as an academic and practitioner, she was asked: How can universities and research institutions build meaningful partnerships with grassroots organisations and implementing agencies to provide technical, research, and institutional support?

Dr. Rao emphasized that transformative partnerships must be anchored in values. Referring to the Summit theme—“Transformations: Vision, Voices and Values”—she argued that values must precede power, as shifts in power without an ethical foundation can reproduce inequalities. She highlighted Amrita Vishwa



Vidyapeetham’s commitment to “compassion-driven research,” where societal and environmental impact is embedded within the institution’s mandate.

She underscored the importance of expanding the base of women’s participation to strengthen leadership pipelines. Creating safe spaces, fostering sisterhood networks, and encouraging shared learning are essential to nurturing confident women leaders. Empowerment, she noted, thrives in environments free from insecurity and driven by inclusion.

Describing Amrita’s “Live-in-Labs” programme, she explained that students and faculty are required to engage directly with rural communities to co-design solutions. This immersion bridges the gap between research design and grassroots realities, ensuring that academic inquiry remains context-responsive and socially grounded.

Dr. Rao further observed that while grassroots organisations generate valuable knowledge, institutional pathways to translate these insights into policy remain weak. She called for stronger bridges between communities, academia, and policy platforms—facilitated by institutions and UN systems—to ensure that local voices meaningfully inform national and global decision-making processes.

Panelist: Ms. Kalpana Khare

Director, Gramonnati Sansthan

Ms. Khare was invited to share her experience from the ground, particularly the challenges faced during implementation and how her organisation navigated them to ensure impact at the community level.

Ms. Khare described the intervention as a clear example of “small grants creating big impact.” Under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana, the cost of installing a household solar system was approximately INR 2,00,000. Of this, INR 78,000 was provided through government subsidy, INR 30,000 through SGP support—along with induction cookers—and the remaining amount was accessed by families through bank loans.

She noted that initial resistance came primarily from men, who were reluctant to take additional loans due to existing agricultural liabilities. Recognizing this barrier, Gramonnati Sansthan worked directly with women, building their confidence and motivating them to advocate within their households. Women took the lead in navigating banking procedures, completing documentation, and securing loans—tasks that were initially unfamiliar and challenging. The organisation provided intensive handholding, capacity building, and administrative support throughout this process.

The intervention directly benefited 150 women—effectively transforming the lives of 150 families. With reliable solar energy, households experienced improved living conditions, reduced hardship during power cuts, and enhanced educational opportunities for children. As visible benefits emerged, neighboring families began expressing interest and applying for the scheme.

Ms. Khare emphasized that empowering women as primary implementers not only ensured successful adoption but also strengthened their agency within households and communities, demonstrating how targeted support can convert financial hesitancy into sustainable transition.



Special Remarks

Ms. Tanvi Garg

Joint Secretary & GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India

Ms. Tanvi Garg began by appreciating the depth and substance of the panel discussion, noting that it was both heartening and intellectually stimulating to hear about the tangible outcomes of the Small Grants Programme (SGP) at the grassroots level. Having recently assumed charge as Joint Secretary and GEF Operational Focal Point, she shared that her initial engagement with the SGP team had left a strong impression, particularly the energy and clarity with which the programme’s impact was presented.



She observed that while the scale of individual SGP projects may appear modest, their cumulative and demonstrable impact is significant. Referring to examples in coastal management and blue economy initiatives, she expressed keen interest in understanding how such successful pilots could be scaled and integrated into national missions, particularly within the framework of the National Coastal Mission.

Ms. Garg emphasized the importance of bridging the gap between grassroots innovation and policy formulation. Echoing earlier remarks from the panel, she acknowledged that local knowledge and community-driven models must find structured pathways into national-level planning. She expressed openness to exploring institutional mechanisms for convergence, particularly through stakeholder consultations with States and Union Territories, where SGP experiences could be presented as tested and scalable models.

She further highlighted the need for greater inter-ministerial convergence, referencing ongoing discussions under FAO-supported agricultural and food systems programmes. She noted that climate resilience, coastal restoration, sustainable agriculture, and livelihoods are deeply interconnected, and platforms such as WSDS provide opportunities to align these efforts.

Encouraging continued documentation and dissemination of case studies—particularly in sectors such as blue economy and coastal resilience—she reiterated the Ministry’s willingness to engage further with TERI and implementing partners. She concluded by commending the

Small Grants Programme for translating global environmental commitments into meaningful community-level action, and expressed her support for efforts to elevate such work to the national policy level through collaboration and structured dialogue.

Launch of Compendium of Case Studies of projects undertaken in SGP OP7 by Dignitaries



Presentation of Awards to SGP Partners

Best Innovation Awards

The Best Innovation Ideas on Green Practices awards were presented by Ms. Leena Nandan, Distinguished Fellow, TERI and Ms. Tanvi Garg, Joint Secretary & GEF-OFP, MoEF&CC, GoI, recognizing outstanding product and process innovations across regions.

From the Indian Coastal Region, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham was honoured for its scalable, women-led seaweed cultivation initiative that strengthened coastal livelihoods, enhanced income security for women’s collectives, and promoted marine biodiversity conservation. The model demonstrated how science-based innovation, community participation, and women’s leadership can converge to create resilient blue economy pathways with strong potential for replication across coastal landscapes.



From the North Eastern Region (NER), Sauramandala Foundation was recognised for advancing clean energy access through technology-driven, women-led rural enterprises. By integrating renewable energy solutions with local entrepreneurship models, the initiative strengthened livelihood opportunities, reduced energy vulnerability, and enhanced women’s leadership in community-level energy governance,

demonstrating a replicable pathway for sustainable and inclusive rural development.

From the Central Semi-Arid Region (CSAR), Gramonnati Sansthan was awarded for pioneering community-based solar cooking solutions that advanced clean energy adoption, reduced household fuel dependence, and strengthened local technical capacity. The initiative empowered women as adopters and ambassadors of sustainable energy practices, demonstrating how



decentralized renewable solutions can drive environmental sustainability while improving household well-being and community resilience.

Indigenous Knowledge Practitioners (ITK) Awards

The second set of awards, presented by Isabelle Tschan, Deputy Resident Representative at UNDP, recognized Indigenous Knowledge Practitioners for incorporating traditional local knowledge into project cycles, thereby reducing ecological footprints.



From the Indian Coastal Region (ICR), BAIF Development Research Foundation was recognised for revitalising the traditional moody grain storage practice—a chemical-free, climate-resilient technique developed by Konkan farming communities to safeguard seeds and reduce post-harvest losses. By strengthening indigenous knowledge systems and promoting low-cost, locally adapted solutions, the initiative enhanced

seed sovereignty, improved food security, and reinforced community resilience in the face of climate variability.

From the Central Semi-Arid Region (CSAR), Arunoday Sansthan was recognised for strengthening community resilience to environmental challenges such as soil degradation, water scarcity, and deforestation. Through integrated land and water management practices, community mobilisation, and sustainable livelihood interventions, the initiative restored degraded ecosystems while enhancing local adaptive capacity, demonstrating how grassroots action can address ecological stress and livelihood



insecurity simultaneously.

From the North Eastern Region (NER), SeSTA (Seven Sisters Development Assistance) was recognised for advancing natural farming through community-led training programmes and the promotion of locally prepared organic inputs.

By strengthening farmers’ knowledge systems and reducing dependence on



external chemical inputs, the initiative improved soil health, lowered production costs, and enhanced livelihood sustainability, demonstrating a scalable model for ecologically sound and economically viable agriculture.

Presentation on Innovative Practices under SGP by Mr. Manish Kumar Pandey, National Coordinator, SGP

Mr. Manish Kumar Pandey, National Coordinator, Small Grants Programme (GEF-UNDP), highlighted many key programmatic and implementation innovations introduced since the project’s inception.

At the programmatic level, the initiative adopted the landscape assessment framework aligned with the Satoyama Initiative, applying the socio-ecological production landscape and seascape toolkit to identify ground-level needs in collaboration with NGOs and stakeholders. A major institutional innovation has been the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms across districts, chaired by district collectors and involving department heads, NGOs, and experts to ensure convergence and prevent duplication of efforts. The programme also strengthened community engagement through local institutions such as Panchayats, JFMCs, BMCs, MPOs, and SHGs. An online monitoring system provides real-time, indicator-based progress tracking, enabling timely corrective action. Additionally, a digital knowledge portal documents innovations across landscapes, allowing cross-regional learning and replication.

At the implementation level, several field innovations demonstrate tangible impact. Coastal interventions include women-led seaweed enterprises supported by Amrita, QR-coded biodiversity saplings, and ghost gear upcycling led by M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation to reduce marine plastic while generating livelihoods. In semi-arid regions, solar-based incubators and routers have increased tribal women’s income by 20-fold. Solar fencing interventions reduced farmer costs from 15,000–20,000 to 3,000–5,000, significantly transforming local market dynamics. In the North-Eastern region, vertical composting systems and energy-efficient solutions for micro-entrepreneurs further demonstrate innovation in sustainable resource management. Overall, these 2–to 3-tiered programmatic and field-level innovations illustrate an integrated, scalable approach to biodiversity conservation, livelihood enhancement, and knowledge sharing across diverse socio-ecological landscapes.



Panel Discussion on “Pilots to Policy-Creating Institutional Mechanism for SGP Initiatives”



Moderator: Dr Ashish Chaturvedi,
Head- Action for Climate and Environment, UNDP

As Moderator, Dr. Ashish Chaturvedi, Head – Action for Climate and Environment at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), framed the discussion around a central challenge: how to move from successful pilots to scalable, institutionalised policy solutions. Reflecting on the three-decade journey of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), he observed that while the programme has generated strong community-led models, many remain localized rather than embedded within larger systems.



Referring to the transition from Operational Phase 7 to Phase 8, he noted that nearly 70 promising examples emerged in OP7 with measurable ecological and livelihood outcomes. The priority now is institutionalisation—ensuring that grassroots innovations inform district, national, and global policy frameworks.

Dr. Chaturvedi emphasized that effective scaling requires systematic documentation, alignment with national development priorities, and convergence with government schemes and climate finance mechanisms. He called for structured pathways and multi-stakeholder platforms that connect government, civil society, research institutions, and communities to avoid fragmentation.

Concluding, he stressed that scaling impact demands a shift from isolated experimentation to institutional learning—so that community-driven, women-led innovations meaningfully shape long-term policy trajectories for resilient and sustainable development.



Panelist: Ms. Tanvi Garg
Joint Secretary & GEF-OFP, MoEF&CC, GoI

Ms. Garg was asked: How can institutional mechanisms be created to replicate, upscale, and mainstream successful SGP initiatives within broader policy and governance frameworks?

Ms. Tanvi Garg emphasized that scaling grassroots innovations requires deliberate policy entry points and structured institutional pathways. Drawing from her administrative experience, including her work in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, she cited examples such as artificial coral reef restoration and removal of invasive species, where strong

community participation and Panchayat engagement produced measurable ecological outcomes. Such models, she noted, demonstrate clear potential for replication.

She stressed that systematic documentation, knowledge curation, and dissemination across States and Union Territories are essential to addressing information asymmetries and enabling cross-learning. Institutions such as UNDP and TERI, she observed, play a catalytic role in facilitating convergence, technical validation, and policy alignment.

Ms. Garg further underscored the importance of integrating proven grassroots practices into State Action Plans on Climate Change and relevant sectoral missions to ensure institutional uptake. Advocating a collaborative framework that bridges bottom-up innovation with top-down planning, she called for collective efforts to mainstream tested SGP models into national development and climate resilience strategies, ensuring that community-driven solutions inform long-term policy trajectories.

Panelist: Ms. Leena Nandan

Distinguished Fellow, TERI

Ms. Nandan was asked: What approaches can support the mainstreaming of bottom-up, community-led initiatives into national and global frameworks? Drawing from your nearly four decades of experience in the Government of India, how can such grassroots models move beyond pilots to contribute to long-term sustainability and policy systems?

Ms. Leena Nandan began by underscoring that successful pilots must move beyond proof-of-concept stages to achieve institutionalisation. For community innovations to scale, she emphasized, they must be embedded within government schemes, guidelines, and financing structures.

Citing examples such as seaweed-based livelihoods and solar-powered cold storage solutions, she noted that while these innovations demonstrate strong potential, their long-term viability depends on bankability. Without financial validation and access to credit, even well-researched and impactful models remain limited in reach. She stressed the importance of developing clear implementation guidelines that enable commercial adoption and facilitate integration into existing schemes at the state and national levels.

Ms. Nandan highlighted that institutions such as TERI and UNDP can play a catalytic role in bridging innovation with policy—working with ministries and state governments to align proven models with sectoral guidelines. She also emphasized community ownership as a critical pillar of sustainability. Successful models should be disseminated through Panchayati Raj institutions, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), cooperatives, and local collectives, ensuring that knowledge is translated into vernacular languages and widely shared.



Concluding, she observed that scaling requires convergence rather than siloed implementation. When successful community-led models become financially viable, institutionally embedded, and locally owned, they can meaningfully contribute to national development priorities and global sustainability commitments.

Panelist: Mr. Brij Mohan Singh Rathore

Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Madhya Pradesh, CSAR Regional Advisory Committee Chairperson



Mr. Rathore was asked: What institutional pathways can strengthen collaboration with Forest Departments to scale community-led initiatives, and where do SGP-type interventions find entry points within forest and landscape governance systems?

Mr. Rathore emphasized that scaling requires adopting a landscape governance approach, recognizing that forests, agriculture, water, and livestock systems are interconnected. Drivers of degradation often lie outside forests; therefore, interventions must integrate ecological, hydrological, and livelihood dimensions rather than operate in silos.

He noted that many SGP projects develop strong village-level micro-plans, but these must explicitly link adjoining ecosystems and resource flows. The key institutional pathway, he suggested, is embedding such micro-plans within Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) and aligning them with district and state planning processes, instead of creating parallel committees.

He stressed the importance of building capacity among community youth, civil society organisations, and frontline forest and departmental staff to operationalize landscape thinking. By mainstreaming integrated planning within existing governance platforms, SGP innovations can influence higher-level decision-making.

He concluded that durable scaling depends on integrating grassroots landscape models into established institutional frameworks through structured bottom-up policy alignment.

Panelist: Dr. Nambi Appadurai
Director, Climate Resilience Practice, World Resources Institute
ICR Regional Advisory Committee Chairperson



Dr. Appadurai was asked: How can SGP adaptation initiatives align with and inform national frameworks such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), and India’s Desertification Strategy?

Dr. Appadurai emphasized that strong community practices must be effectively documented and communicated in formats accessible to policymakers. While impactful adaptation models are emerging, many remain insufficiently represented in national and global platforms, including UNFCCC case repositories. Strategic communication and demonstration, he noted, are essential for influencing policy uptake.

He highlighted the importance of integrating adaptation science with grassroots practice to avoid maladaptation. Scientific validation, climate risk assessment, and technical guidance must complement local innovation. At the same time, traditional knowledge systems should be respected and integrated with modern science.

Scaling, he argued, requires early alignment with existing policies and schemes, enabling projects to “piggyback” on government programmes rather than operate independently. He cited examples from Tamil Nadu where small pilots evolved into larger funded programmes.

Concluding, he stressed that institutions such as TERI, UNDP, and research bodies play a critical role in bridging science, policy, and community action to ensure adaptation initiatives inform national climate and biodiversity strategies.

Panelist: Mr. Nabin Kumar Roy

General Manager and Officer-in-Charge, NABARD, New Delhi Regional Office

Mr. Roy was asked: How can greater domestic and international finance be mobilized for community-led initiatives? What evidence and readiness criteria are required for institutions like NABARD to scale such models?

Mr. Roy highlighted NABARD’s long-standing role as a development finance institution supporting watershed programmes, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), women-led enterprises, cooperatives, and climate-resilient livelihoods. Drawing from field experience, he emphasized that bankability is central to scaling grassroots innovations. Strong community ownership, clear revenue models, replicability, and demonstrable socio-economic impact are essential for attracting larger investments.



He noted that NABARD has evolved through continuous prototyping and course correction—supporting solar lighting systems for women weavers in Bihar, watershed-linked livelihood initiatives, and more recently, climate adaptation projects funded under the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund (GCF), where NABARD serves as a National Implementing Entity.

He underscored that convergence, technology integration (including solar systems, smart irrigation, and weather stations), and structured partnerships with institutions like TERI enhance project credibility. For scaling, pilots must demonstrate sustainability beyond grants, integrate with government schemes, and show measurable outcomes.

Concluding, he stressed that finance follows evidence—when community initiatives prove viability, adaptability, and institutional alignment, they become investment-ready and capable of attracting both domestic and global climate finance.

Vote of Thanks



Mr. Manish Kumar Pandey
National Coordinator, SGP

Mr. Manish Kumar Pandey, National Coordinator, Small Grants Programme, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to all panelists, partner NGOs, and community representatives for their meaningful participation and insights. He acknowledged the continued support of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change for enabling the effective implementation of the Small Grants Programme.

He extended sincere appreciation to the Regional Advisory Committee Chairperson and members, as well as the National Steering Committee, for their guidance and strategic direction. Mr. Pandey also recognized the dedicated collaboration of UNDP and the leadership and mentorship provided by senior colleagues at TERI.

Concluding, he thanked all participants for their engagement and commitment to advancing community-driven climate action, emphasizing that collective efforts remain vital for strengthening sustainable development and resilience initiatives across India.

SGP Exhibition Stall

Beyond the conference hall, the SGP exhibition stall emerged as a dynamic and interactive space that brought grassroots innovation to the forefront of the Summit. The stall was inaugurated by Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon’ble Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, at the Taj Palace, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.

During his visit, the Hon’ble Minister explored innovative product displays presented by SGP grantees including BAIF Development Research Foundation, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Manav Jeevan, and the Foundation for MSME Cluster. These exhibits ranged from sustainable livelihood products and climate-resilient agricultural innovations to eco-friendly value-added goods rooted in local knowledge systems. The Minister interacted with the National Coordinator, Mr. Manish Pandey, his team, and representatives from partner organisations who were demonstrating and marketing their products, appreciating the tangible outcomes achieved under the SGP framework.

Over the three days of WSDS (25–27 February 2026), the stall attracted a diverse cross-section of stakeholders – policymakers, development practitioners, researchers, private sector representatives, and citizens. The space served not only as a display platform but also as a marketplace and knowledge hub, facilitating direct dialogue between grassroots innovators and national-level actors. Many visitors purchased the locally developed products, reflecting growing consumer confidence and strong market potential for sustainable, community-driven solutions.

The exhibition thus reinforced a central message of the thematic track: that community-led innovations are not only environmentally sound but also economically viable and ready for wider replication and scale.

