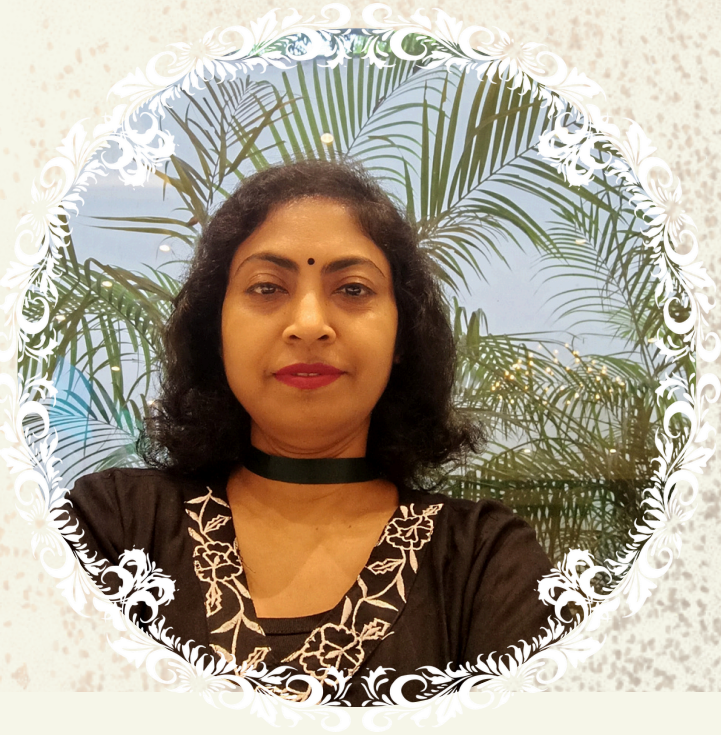




EDITORIAL NOTE



**Dr. Mahua Ghosh
Sengupta
(Deputy Director, MEAL
& KM)**

Welcome to Volume 8 (April–June 2026) of the 4S India Newsletter!

To begin, we are excited to share a major publication milestone: in response to growing readership and increased demand across our network, we are officially transitioning from our bi-annual format to an enriched, comprehensive Quarterly Newsletter. Moving from a twice-yearly publication schedule to quarterly editions allows us to bring you deeper insights, broader coverage, and more timely feature stories from our field initiatives.

Adding to the significance of this quarter, we proudly announce the appointment of Shri Manas Kumar Satpathy as our new Chairman in June 2026. We express our immense gratitude to outgoing Chairman Prof. Somnath Ghosh for his visionary guidance and dedicated stewardship. Under Shri Satpathy's leadership, 4S India remains deeply committed to advancing community-led development and institutional self-reliance across Eastern India.

This landmark edition weaves together five compelling narratives of grassroots transformation and climate resilience. We begin in Jehanabad with the UTTHAN Conclave 2026, where over 200 stakeholders gathered to champion regenerative, non-chemical farming practices and soil health rejuvenation. Building on this momentum, the UttHaN Phase-II Launch marks an exciting expansion into Purnea with Azim Premji Foundation support to empower 5,000 smallholder women farmers through climate-resilient cluster agriculture.

In individual achievements, we celebrate Kanchan Kumari's Recognition as she received the prestigious Karmayogi Samman 2026 for pioneering home-based mushroom cultivation and mentoring rural women entrepreneurs in Gaya. Moving to the climate-vulnerable Sundarbans, Arun Das's Water Security journey illustrates how transforming a stagnant domestic pond created a multi-crop year-round irrigation engine and steady livelihood source. Finally, our feature on Heatwave Climate Resilience highlights the inauguration of the Saifganj Library alongside CEED Ranchi while mobilizing community action against extreme heat stress through the EKAM platform. Together, these stories demonstrate how local wisdom and structured support drive lasting empowerment.

We hope you enjoy reading this first quarterly edition!

Beating the Heat: Strengthening Rural Resilience Through Community Action

On 5 May 2026, CEED (Center for Environment and Energy Development) Ranchi, in collaboration with 4S India, inaugurated the Saifganj Library Building at Banke Bazar, Gaya, creating a new space for learning, dialogue and community engagement. The inauguration began with the traditional lighting of the lamp, symbolising the beginning of a new chapter for the community.

The inauguration was followed by a community consultation workshop on heatwave awareness and sustainable practices, focusing on one of the most pressing climate-related challenges faced by rural communities today. With temperatures rising and heatwaves becoming more frequent and intense, the session highlighted the importance of awareness, preparedness and locally relevant adaptation measures.

The workshop also provided an opportunity to promote EKAM (Samvad to Nirman)—a platform that encourages communities to move from dialogue to collective action. Participants shared their experiences of extreme heat and discussed practical ways to reduce its impact, while exploring sustainable practices that can be adopted at the household and community levels.

The discussions demonstrated that building resilience is not only about responding to climate emergencies but also about enabling communities to understand risks, share knowledge and develop solutions together. Through initiatives such as these, CEED Ranchi and 4S India are working to strengthen climate awareness, community participation and local resilience, helping rural communities prepare for an increasingly uncertain climate future.



UTTHAN Conclave 2026: NPM, Grassroots Enterprise and Sustainable Agriculture

On 22 April 2026, Sarva Seva Samity Sanstha (4S India), with support from the Azim Premji Foundation (APF), organised the UTTHAN Conclave 2026 at Town Hall, Jehanabad, Bihar. Held from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM, the conclave brought together around 200 participants from Bihar and Jharkhand to celebrate grassroots innovations in sustainable agriculture and inclusive livelihoods.

The conclave marked the culmination of the three-year UTTHAN project (May 2023–May 2026), implemented across 8 villages in Jehanabad and Makhdumpur blocks, reaching over 3,100 small, marginal and landless farmers. The project promoted sustainable agriculture, livelihood diversification, financial inclusion, and health and nutrition.

Farmers and grassroots entrepreneurs shared experiences of Non-Pesticide Management (NPM), regenerative agriculture, mushroom cultivation, goat rearing, backyard poultry and Bio-Resource Centres (BRCs). The project enabled 1,815 households to adopt sustainable agriculture, increasing annual income by ₹16,000–18,000 and productivity by 18–20%. Around 480 Mahadalit households gained an additional ₹15,000 annually through livestock activities, while 210 households adopted mushroom cultivation, earning about ₹3,300 profit per 45-day cycle.

The Conclave provided micro-entrepreneurs a platform to share their journeys and achievements. Like, Chanchala Devi earns ₹46,000–51,000 annually from an NPM shop and mushroom cultivation; Leelawati Devi earns about ₹31,000 per mushroom season and repaid a ₹50,000 loan within six months; Sumitra Kujur's BRC serves more than 400 farmers.

With participation from 7 districts/regions of Bihar and 2 regions of Jharkhand, the conclave reinforced a powerful message: sustainable agriculture becomes meaningful when knowledge, enterprise and community leadership come together.



Union Minister Visits AROHI Project in Belgaria: Recognising Women's Entrepreneurship and Livelihoods

Belgaria, Jharia, Dhanbad, witnessed an important milestone in livelihood promotion with the visit of Shri Satish Chandra Dubey, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Coal and Mines, to the ongoing AROHI – Livelihood & Employment Generation Project. Implemented jointly by 4S India and Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) under a CSR initiative and the Jharia Master Plan, the project aims to create sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities for local communities.

During the visit, the Minister interacted with women entrepreneurs engaged in mushroom cultivation and eco-friendly bag production. He appreciated their products, entrepreneurial spirit and efforts towards self-reliance. Their experiences demonstrated how skill development and micro-enterprise promotion can help women strengthen their economic contribution and build confidence.

The programme was attended by Shri Rajiv Ranjan Sinha, Deputy Commissioner, Dhanbad; Shri Manoj Agarwal, CMD, BCCL; public representatives; and senior officials from the Ministry of Coal and Mines. The visit reflected the importance of collaboration among government, industry and development organisations in advancing community-level socio-economic transformation.

Under AROHI, 500 women and households have been reached through livelihood interventions, including 50 women trained in mushroom cultivation, 134 engaged in eco-friendly jhola production and 17 women given cloud kitchen training. The project has also formed 29 CBSG groups with 380 members, and participating women now earn a monthly net income of ₹500–1,000.

The emerging experiences from Belgaria highlight how livelihood promotion, women's empowerment and enterprise development can create renewed hope and open pathways towards greater economic independence.



Scaling Holistic Impact: UttHaN Phase-II Launches in Purnea

4S India is proud to announce the launch of UttHaN (Upliftment through Holistic ActionN) Phase-II, a new five-year programme (May 2026–April 2029) supported by Azim Premji Foundation. Marking an expansion into new geography, the programme will work with 5,000 small holder and sharecropping women farmers from poor and Dalit households, organised in SHG federations, across 10 villages in four Gram Panchayats (Jageli, Khokha North, Khokha South, and Khunti Haseli) in Srinagar block, Purnea district, Bihar.

Building on the strong evidence base of UttHaN Phase-I, which reached over 7,000 farmers (7,000 farmers????? Check the project scope... it is only 2,4000 S&M farmers and 600 HHs from vulnerable community) and delivered a ~20% productivity gain in paddy, wheat, and vegetables, this new phase adopts a cluster-based approach to sustainable agriculture. This new phase centres on four objectives: driving adoption of NPM/IPM-led practices through community-managed Bio-Resource Centres, reducing cultivation costs while boosting productivity, strengthening Producer Groups and FPOs for collective market access, and building institutional and livestock service models through trained Pashu Sakhis.

The programme aims for measurable change: 10–15% lower cultivation costs, 15–20% higher crop productivity, a 50% reduction in livestock mortality, and a 27–35% rise in net farm income by project end, alongside stronger convergence with government schemes for eligible households.

A predominantly women-led community cadre of 15 Community Resource Persons, promoted from experienced Krishi Sakhis, will anchor mobilisation, aggregation, and scheme convergence at the village level, ensuring strong local ownership from the outset.

With a proposed outlay of ₹4.94 crore, UttHaN Phase-II reflects 4S India's continued commitment to farmer-led, climate-resilient livelihood systems that are built to last well beyond the life of the project.



“From Bathing Pond to Bounty: How Arun Das Transformed Water Security in the Sundarbans”



Located in one of India's most climate-vulnerable coastal zones, Namkhana faces recurring cyclones, salinity intrusion, and prolonged post-monsoon dry spells that once left Arun's fields fallow for 5–6 months every year. Under the Water Resource Management component of the WASH Project of 4S India, his 10-decimal MGNREGA pond, earlier used only for bathing and washing, was revitalised through liming, bund strengthening, and scientific multi-species IMC fish stocking (IMC-Indian Major Carp like Rui, Katla, Mrigel).

A pump now draws pond water to irrigate the land for high-value vegetables, brinjal, pumpkin, chilli, and tomato, extending irrigation from just 4 months to about 9 months a year. Sixty-six fruit and nut trees planted along the embankments add a long-term income stream for years to come.

“From Struggle to Success: The Inspiring Journey of Sumita Devi”



Sumita Devi, a resident of Belgaria in Dhanbad district, Jharkhand, once faced severe financial hardship. Her husband worked as a daily wage labourer in house construction, yet the family's income remained limited to around ₹7,000–8,000 a month, making it difficult to meet even basic household needs. Determined to change this, she joined the mushroom cultivation component of the Livelihood Programme under 4S India's AROHI Project, which promotes self-reliance among rural women from displaced families.

After receiving training, she threw herself into every stage of mushroom production — filling the cultivation bags, maintaining them and ensuring proper watering and care — with a consistency that soon set her apart. With an initial investment of just ₹6,000, she began earning an additional ₹150–200 a day and went on to record the highest mushroom production under the AROHI Project. Motivated by her example, 5–7 other women have joined 4S India's livelihood programme, taking up mushroom cultivation and other income-generating activities. Today, Sumita Devi has become a symbol of women's empowerment and self-reliance in Belgaria, Dhanbad.

“From Spores to Success: Kanchan Kumari’s Path to Empowerment”



In the quiet village of Banke Bazar in Gaya district, Bihar, Kanchan Kumari once faced the same struggle as countless rural women- limited income, few opportunities, and a household depending on unpredictable seasonal wages. Before she began, her household of six — a father-in-law, her husband, three daughters, and a son — survived on her husband’s earnings as a mason, the family’s only source of income. That income was seasonal and irregular, with no other earning member to fall back on, and the household had no savings or safety net of its own.



That changed when she discovered mushroom cultivation, an enterprise that would go on to transform not just her income, but her identity as an entrepreneur. Starting without any prior experience, Kanchan navigated early operational hiccups, from fine-tuning indoor humidity and temperature control to preventing minor substrate contamination. Unfazed by these initial trial-and-error phases, she stayed committed. With technical guidance from 4S India, Kanchan quickly mastered compost sterilization, perfected moisture management, and built strong buyer trust in local markets. With patience and consistent effort, she also learned the techniques of managing pest-free growing conditions. What began as a small trial soon grew into a steady, sustainable source of income for her family. Her success didn't stop there; she became a source of guidance for other women in her community, encouraging them to see mushroom farming as a viable and dignified livelihood option — starting with an investment of just ₹30,000, she scaled up from a modest 25 bags to around 600 bags of button and oyster mushroom, producing close to 10 kg per bag each month and selling through local haats, schools, hotels, and directly in the village. Her enterprise today generates ₹35,000–40,000 in monthly net profit, roughly ₹4.2–4.8 lakh a year, while directly employing eleven people and helping 150 other women build mushroom businesses of their own, each earning ₹4,000–5,000 a month.

Her hard work and perseverance have now earned her well-deserved recognition. Kanchan Kumari has been honored with the prestigious “Karmayogi Samman 2026” by Prabhat Khabar, celebrating her outstanding contribution to mushroom cultivation and rural entrepreneurship.

Her story continues to inspire fellow women entrepreneurs across her community, proving that determination, paired with the right skills, can turn a small idea into a source of pride — not just for one family, but for an entire village.

"Mushroom farming showed me that determination and the right skills can turn a small trial into dignified independence for an entire village." — Kanchan Kumari

A REFLECTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK — MANAS SATPATHY

Stepping into the role of Chairman feels less like embarking on a new journey and more like continuing a path that I have admired for many years. What has always distinguished 4S India, in my view, is its quiet yet unwavering belief that meaningful development can only be achieved with communities and never merely for them. This respect for people's knowledge, aspirations and agency has shaped the organisation's work from the very beginning and it is this spirit that I hope to uphold and strengthen in the years ahead.

As I look at the organisation today, I am struck by the remarkable way it has evolved while remaining deeply rooted in its founding values. Over the years, 4S India has expanded its reach, built new partnerships and engaged with increasingly complex development challenges. Yet, despite this growth, it has not lost sight of where its most valuable insights originate. The field continues to be its greatest teacher. The experiences of farming families, women's collectives, community institutions and local leaders remain the foundation upon which ideas are tested, programmes are refined and strategies are shaped. Every policy, partnership and plan ultimately traces its origins to lessons learned through direct engagement with people and their realities. In an era when institutions can easily become distant from the communities they serve, this discipline is both rare and invaluable. It is a strength that deserves to be carefully protected.

Looking ahead, my hope for 4S India is both simple and ambitious. Success should not be measured solely by the number of villages reached, projects implemented or resources mobilised. More importantly, it should be reflected in the strength, resilience and independence of the institutions that remain long after a project's formal conclusion. Sustainable development is achieved when communities possess the confidence, capacities and collective structures to address their own challenges and shape their own futures. The true measure of our work lies in what endures when external support is no longer present.

I believe 4S India is uniquely positioned to meet this challenge. Its longstanding commitment to community-led development, institution building and learning from practice provides a strong foundation for the future. By continuing to nurture local leadership, strengthen community institutions and remain accountable to the people whose lives it seeks to improve, the organisation can deepen its impact while remaining faithful to its values.

I am grateful for the trust that has been placed in me and I look forward to working alongside colleagues, partners and communities as we collectively advance this vision. The years ahead will undoubtedly bring new challenges and opportunities, but they will also offer fresh possibilities to reaffirm what has always been at the heart of 4S India: empowering people to become the authors of their own development journey.



CHAIRMAN

From Mobilisation to Building Farmer-Owned Businesses

-Akhilesh Yadav



**District Manager cum
Marketing officer**

Working in the agriculture and rural development sector has been a journey of learning, adaptation, and meaningful engagement with farming communities. My experience with Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) and Integrated Farming Clusters (IFCs) across Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar districts has strengthened my understanding of grassroots development and the power of collective action.

In Jalpaiguri, I have worked closely with SHYAMDHENU Mahila FPC and supported IFC activities across Gadong-I, Sakoyajhora-II, and Jharalta-I Gram Panchayats, promoting sustainable agriculture, farmer participation, and improved livelihoods. In Alipurduar, my engagement with Moynajhora FPC in Madarihat block and Kalchini Pragati FPC in Kalchini block has further enriched my experience in farmer mobilization, field planning, and community outreach.

The journey has not been without challenges. Mobilizing farmers, developing market linkages, and coordinating among multiple stakeholders require patience, persistence, and continuous learning. These experiences have reinforced my belief that trust, collaboration, and strong community institutions are the foundation of sustainable agricultural growth.

Looking ahead, I remain committed to strengthening farmer collectives, promoting innovation, and supporting integrated farming approaches that enhance productivity, improve incomes, and build resilient rural communities.

A Journey of Learning, Listening and Responsibility

-Rajesh Mondal



Sanitation Coordinator

When I reflect on my journey in the development sector, I realise how much each experience has shaped my understanding of development—from studying agriculture in Ranchi and social work at TISS Mumbai, to working in tribal villages of Jharkhand and Assam, implementing district-level water programmes, and now working with 4S India on sanitation and livelihoods.

I have learned that rural development is deeply interconnected. Water, sanitation, health and livelihoods influence one another, while strong community institutions make development efforts more sustainable. My work with Farmer Producer Companies and rural communities has reinforced my belief that lasting change happens when communities own solutions rather than simply receive them.

Grassroots work has taught me the importance of presence, patience and listening. Trust grows through consistent engagement and follow-through. I have also learned that sustainability must be planned from the beginning, with local institutions, trained people and clear ownership.

My experience has shown me that coordination is as important as technical knowledge. Government departments, Gram Panchayats, field teams and communities need continuous communication and shared purpose, supported by good data, documentation and monitoring. I am particularly proud of taking responsibility for FSTP operations and leading district-level Jal Jeevan Mission implementation, strengthening VWSCs, Gram Panchayats and FTK users. For me, development remains a journey of learning, listening and responsibility.



Quarterly Newsletter

*Appreciate
you!*

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Thank you 

