

# Thriving Landscapes

## Conservation, Food Systems, and Sustainability

Dear Readers,

Thriving Landscapes Issue 2 presents steady progress led by communities across food systems, conservation, and livelihoods. The revival of rural haats and millet-based diets strengthens local economies and improves nutrition and wellbeing. Natural farming and community led forest management reduce costs while improving soil health and income security. Gram Sabha Samuh lead forest governance, wildlife protection, and fire response. Actions such as water support for birds and collective fire control show clear results. These efforts build ownership and long-term stewardship of natural resources. Youth engagement in governance and documentation is shaping the next generation of leaders. Initiatives such as mangrove restoration, seed banks, and direct farmer markets restore ecosystems and strengthen trust in local food systems. Field visits and shared learning help refine these efforts and guide the next phase of work. Impact at the ground level depends on strong community institutions, integrating local and Scientific knowledge, and sustained investment in nature-based solutions that link ecology with livelihoods.

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**NIRMAN is a not-for profit organization working on livelihoods, conservations, and climate action through climate resilient food systems and nature based solutions in Odisha, Assam and Chattisgarh in India**

## Millets & Local Foods Festival 2026: “Reviving Rural Haats & Promoting Safe Food, Healthy Living”



NIRMAN, in partnership with NCNF, organized the Millets & Local Foods Festival 2026 at CYSD, Bhubaneswar on 15th April 2026. The event brought together experts, practitioners, and community members to promote sustainable food systems and healthy living.



A panel discussion on “Importance of Desi Haat in Rural & Urban Areas for Agro-Ecological Promotion”, chaired by Sri Kirti Prasanna Mishra, highlighted the importance of local haats as age-old institutions of culture, trust, and exchange. With a legacy of over 5,000 years, haats support local agriculture, promote traditional crops, and strengthen circular economies. Panelists emphasized that reviving and strengthening these haats is essential, especially as corporatization continues to marginalize small farmers. Haats can play a key role in advancing agroecology through local produce, seed exchange, and knowledge sharing.

The event also marked the launch of NIRMAN’s campaign on Food, Lifestyle & Health, led by Dr. Ambika Prasad Nayak and others. The discussion stressed on the importance of balanced diet and digestion (agni) holistic well-being as emphasized in Ayurveda. The Panel stressed on the need for chemical-free, naturally grown food. They pointed out the risks of processed foods and the value of traditional diets. The campaign will engage both rural and urban communities to promote safe food and nature-aligned lifestyles are essential for long-term health.

## Millets & Local Foods Festival 2026: “Reviving Rural Haats & Promoting Safe Food, Healthy Living”

The festival reinforced NIRMAN’s commitment to natural farming, biodiversity, and landscape restoration. Farmers were felicitated for their vital role in sustaining traditional food systems. The felicitation ceremony honoured progressive farmers—especially women leaders—who have successfully adopted natural farming and agroforestry practices. Their contributions in preserving indigenous seeds, promoting millet cultivation, and strengthening local food systems were widely appreciated. This recognition not only celebrated their efforts but also inspired other farmers to adopt sustainable and climate-resilient practices.



## NIRMAN Logo Launch – New Identity for Change



NIRMAN unveiled its new logo on the occasion of its 29th anniversary, reflecting the organization’s renewed vision to reorient and redefine its role in addressing emerging societal needs and challenges. The logo was formally launched during the Millet & Local Foods Festival 2026 held in Bhubaneswar, in the presence of distinguished guests. The new design symbolizes unity, progress, and sustainable creation. The interwoven structure at the left represents collaboration and collective effort, highlighting the importance of working together for sustainable development. The balanced, cross-like form signifies stability, support, and a strong foundation—reflecting NIRMAN’s commitment to trust, structured growth, and a long-term vision.

## Field Visit of Parter Organisation – Assessing Impact and Planning Ahead



Field visits by partner organisation play a key role in assessing program quality, gathering community feedback, and ensuring that project objectives are being achieved. Visible improvements on the ground and positive community outcomes guide NIRMAN in planning the next phase of interventions. In Duda Panchayat of Daspalla Block, vulnerable communities are being supported with irrigation facilities and are adopting natural farming practices. The initiative focuses on promoting integrated farming to strengthen livelihoods, restore the landscape, and empower communities to sustainably manage their natural resources and shape their future.

## Leadership in Action: Strengthening Communities through Sustainable Livelihoods



The President of NIRMAN Executive Committee, Prof. Vishwa Ballabh, visited the Daspalla Field Office and Millets Processing Unit on 7th April 2026. During his visit, he interacted with staff and reviewed ongoing programme activities, seeking to understand the tangible changes in the region.

During the visit of President of NIRMAN's Executive Committee to Daspalla field Office the staff shared that farmers have largely transitioned to natural farming-based agroforestry models, with women farmers playing a leading role. Integrated farming practices, including livestock and poultry, have improved food security, while the involvement of SHGs and FPCs has contributed to increased household incomes and stronger farmer institutions.

In forest areas, communities have gained tenurial security and are actively managing resources through community-led forest management plans. These efforts are being driven by Gram Sabha Samuhas and village-level committees, strengthening conservation and local governance.

Prof. Ballabh appreciated the functioning of the millets processing unit and discussed its future plans. .

He encouraged the team to go beyond project targets and focus on long-term social and economic transformation of marginalized communities

The visit reaffirmed NIRMAN's commitment to community-led development, sustainable livelihoods, and inclusive growth.

## Community-led Conservation: Protecting Forests, Wildlife, and Controlling forest Fires

### Celebrating Forests, Strengthening Bonds



The Gram Sabha Samuha, Daspalla celebrated International Forest Day at Munduli village with active participation from 12 villages. The event began with traditional rituals and a forest visit, reflecting the community's deep cultural connection with forests, followed by a collective pledge for conservation. The formal session, chaired by Mr. Pramod Kumar Sahu, emphasized the importance of community stewardship in protecting forests. Representatives from various villages shared their experiences in forest protection and the positive changes achieved through collective efforts. In the concluding session, Mr. Nabakrishna Mallik highlighted the growing challenges of deforestation and stressed that protecting forests is essential for sustaining livelihoods, urging continued community commitment.

### Caring for Wildlife: Water for Birds



The weather is changing. Days are becoming hot and humid. Birds of the forests feel thirsty in such times. The forested communities of Daspalla block in Nayagarh district of Odisha hang pitchers in trees and regularly fill them up to serve as drinking water spots for their winged friends in the forests.



## Community-led Conservation: Protecting Forests, Wildlife, and Controlling forest Fires

### Forest Fire Response



With temperatures rising forest fires have begun in the jungles of Daspalla Block in Nayagarh district in Odisha. The villagers of Uparadikiri, Taladikiri, and Gundurubari have rushed to the affected areas and successfully controlled them with their collective efforts. They are also creating awareness and taking the required steps to prevent the fires from occurring and spreading.



## Grooming Young Leaders for a Sustainable Future

### Training Youth: Documenting Village and Forest Stories



An interactive session was conducted in Bankataila village with youth and community members on recording village history. The session highlighted the importance of preserving local heritage and guided participants on practical methods to collect and document traditional and historical knowledge of their village.

## Grooming Young Leaders for a Sustainable Future

### Youth Leadership for Community Transformation



A workshop on “Youth Leadership on Governance & Resource Management” was held at Daspalla with active participation from youth across five Gram Panchayats. Members of Gram Sabha Samuha and leaders from Community Forest Resource Management Committees attended and encouraged youth to take responsibility in protecting and managing natural resources. Participants shared their experiences and best practices in community forest conservation. Group discussions led to the development of action plans for future youth-led initiatives in governance and resource management. The workshop strengthened leadership skills among youth and enhanced their commitment towards sustainable community development and natural resource conservation.

### Restoring Mangroves, Reviving Coastal Ecosystems



NIRMAN is facilitating a community-led mangrove restoration program in Keutajanga village under Astaranga block of Puri district, Odisha. In the first phase, a nursery of 8,500 saplings was developed, out of which 4,500 saplings have been successfully planted across 3 acres of community land.

Building on this progress, the next phase was initiated on 18th April with the establishment of an additional nursery of 10,000 saplings, further strengthening efforts towards coastal ecosystem restoration and community resilience.

## Shared Learning, Stronger Communities: Development Workers Exploring NIRMAN's Experience

### Abhivyakti Foundation, Jharkhand visit to Dasapalla



A team from Abhivyakti Foundation visited NIRMAN's program area and interacted with leaders of Gram Sabha Samuha, Daspalla. Discussions focused on how the Samuha strengthens Gram Sabhas through coordination, collective decision-making, and capacity building. The team also visited Bidapaju village, where community members shared their experiences of community claim preparation under Forest Rights Act including mobilisation, mapping, documentation, and Gram Sabha follow up processes. They highlighted efforts in strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring inclusive participation, and implementing forest protection measures. The visit also covered the preparation and implementation of the Community Forest Resource Management Plan (CFRMP), emphasizing participatory planning and sustainable forest management.

### Aaina NGO, Bhubaneswar visit to Dasapalla



A team from the NGO Aaina at Bhanjanagar visited the Raisar Seed Bank, Daspalla, and interacted with the members regarding its establishment, history, and challenges faced during its formation. Discussions were held on community awareness for seed conservation, traditional seed preservation methods, and the seed exchange process among farmers. The Seed Bank preserves indigenous paddy varieties. The members explained that although production of indigenous paddy is comparatively lower than government varieties, it is tastier, provides straw, and is more climate resilient. The visiting team appreciated the systematic record keeping maintained by the Seed Bank members.

## Shared Learning, Stronger Communities: Development Workers Exploring NIRMAN's Experience

### Aviyan NGO, Kandhamal visit to Dasapalla



A team from Aviyan NGO, along with CFRMC members, visited Dasapalla to learn about community-led forest conservation initiatives. An orientation at NIRMAN's Takara field office explained the approach, objectives, and implementation strategies.

Field visits to Tilabadi and Bidapaju villages enabled interactions with Gram Sabha members on CFRMP preparation, forest protection practices, and recognition of community forest rights. The discussions highlighted participatory planning, challenges in coordination, and collective efforts for sustainable forest management.

### From Farm to Trust: Strengthening Local Food Systems



The Local Desi Vegetable Outlet by NIRMAN is more than a marketplace—it is a step toward transforming the food system at the grassroots. The initiative supports farmers in shifting to natural farming while ensuring better prices through direct market linkages. Bhimasena Mallik, a small farmer from Dasapalla, once struggled with high input costs and low returns from chemical farming. With NIRMAN's support—training in natural farming, crop diversification, and market access—his situation has improved. Today, his chemical-free produce is in high demand, his costs are lower, and soil health has improved. He now motivates other farmers to adopt sustainable practices. The Desi Market promotes safe food, fair pricing, and direct farmer–consumer connections. It serves as a platform for trust, awareness, and collective change.

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