

Anupama's Journey Through Heat and Hurdles to Bring Women Farmers the Tools They Need (Story from the field MANDI-II)



It was 42 degrees in rural Uttar Pradesh. Dust clung to the air as Anupama Verma, District Project Manager (MANDI-II), navigated bumpy village roads. Her destination was a remote Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) lay 50 kilometers away, but it might as well have been a hundred in that scorching heat.

Her mission? To ensure that the support meant for women farmers had actually translated into action on the ground.

"I often said the heat was nothing compared to the resistance we faced in the field," Anupama later recalled with a wry smile.

In June, Anupama had made multiple field visits across Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The goal was to see how the FPOs who had won Catalyst Awards under MANDI-II were deploying the award monies.

At one FPO, she found that the FPOs were waiting for the delivery of women-friendly tools they had ordered using the award. At another, the equipment had been procured, but was lying unused as the women were yet to be trained. And in many places, she had to navigate layers of hesitation, logistical delays, and even misplaced paperwork as FPOs prioritized action to filing.

"It wasn't just about providing resources," Anupama explained. *"It was about pushing through operational bottlenecks, building trust, and helping FPOs make those small, practical decisions that actually move things forward."*

She shifted her approach. Instead of enforcing deadlines, she began co-creating action plans with FPO teams, and ensured women SHG members were involved from the start. By June end, women were using pedal threshers, solar sprayers, and irrigation tools that made farming easier and faster. SHGs began renting out these tools, turning them into extra income. With patience and teamwork, the hard work was paying off, showing that with the right support, women farmers can truly change the game.