

STRC NEWSLETTER



Science & Technology Resource Centre Gondwana University, Gadchiroli

A centre of excellence for sustainable value creation, conceived and funded by Rajiv Gandhi Science and Technology Commission (RGSTC), Mumbai, Govt. of Maharashtra.

TECHNOLOGY | ENTERPRISE | DEVELOPMENT



STRC Facilitate Certificate Course on Traditional Health Services for Traditional Health Care Practitioner's



From the CPOs Desk

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Chief Program Officer & Head, STRC



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Scientific Officer, STRC

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From the CPO's Desk

Medicinal Plant Conservation as a Pathway to Ecological Sustainability and Community Livelihoods in Gadchiroli

India's national framework for medicinal plant conservation—anchored by the NMPB's Central Sector Scheme, AVMP, MIDH, and e-CHARAK—provides a comprehensive policy foundation enabling community institutions (JFMCs, SHGs, BMCs) to participate across the value chain from cultivation to marketing. The framework supports conservation, research (DNA barcoding, GAPs, GFPCs, GSPs), and market linkages connecting over 100 species across 25 herbal markets with post-harvest infrastructure and certification systems. In tribal districts like Gadchiroli, this framework holds significant promise, yet the gap between policy intent and grassroots implementation remains the defining challenge requiring deliberate coordination and community empowerment.



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The Ground Reality: Opportunities for Strengthening Implementation

In Gadchiroli, a district rich in biodiversity and home to the tribal communities, the implementation of these policies presents both challenges and opportunities.

1. Awareness and Information Flow

Despite being legally empowered under PESA, many BMCs and Van Panchayats in Gadchiroli operate without clear guidance on accessing schemes, securing funding, or connecting to markets. Closing this awareness gap requires localized communication in Gondi and Marathi, ensuring cultural relevance at the village level. Gram Sabhas, strengthened as knowledge hubs, can regularize discussions on scheme details, application processes, and market linkages. At the district level, a centralized information platform aligned with e-CHARAK can deliver real-time updates on schemes, prices, and best practices, giving communities the consistent, actionable information they need to participate effectively in medicinal plant conservation and trade.

2. Technical Capacity and Training

Tribal communities in Gadchiroli have strong traditional knowledge of medicinal plants, but limited formal training in grading, drying, storage, and certification prevents them from meeting market standards and entering higher-value supply chains. This gap can be addressed through collaboration with institutions like Gondwana University, which can provide practical training in plant identification, documentation, and post-harvest management. Demonstration plots and nurseries can function as learning centres for cultivation and processing practices, while SHGs and JFMCs can be trained to operate drying units, warehouses, and packaging facilities. By combining

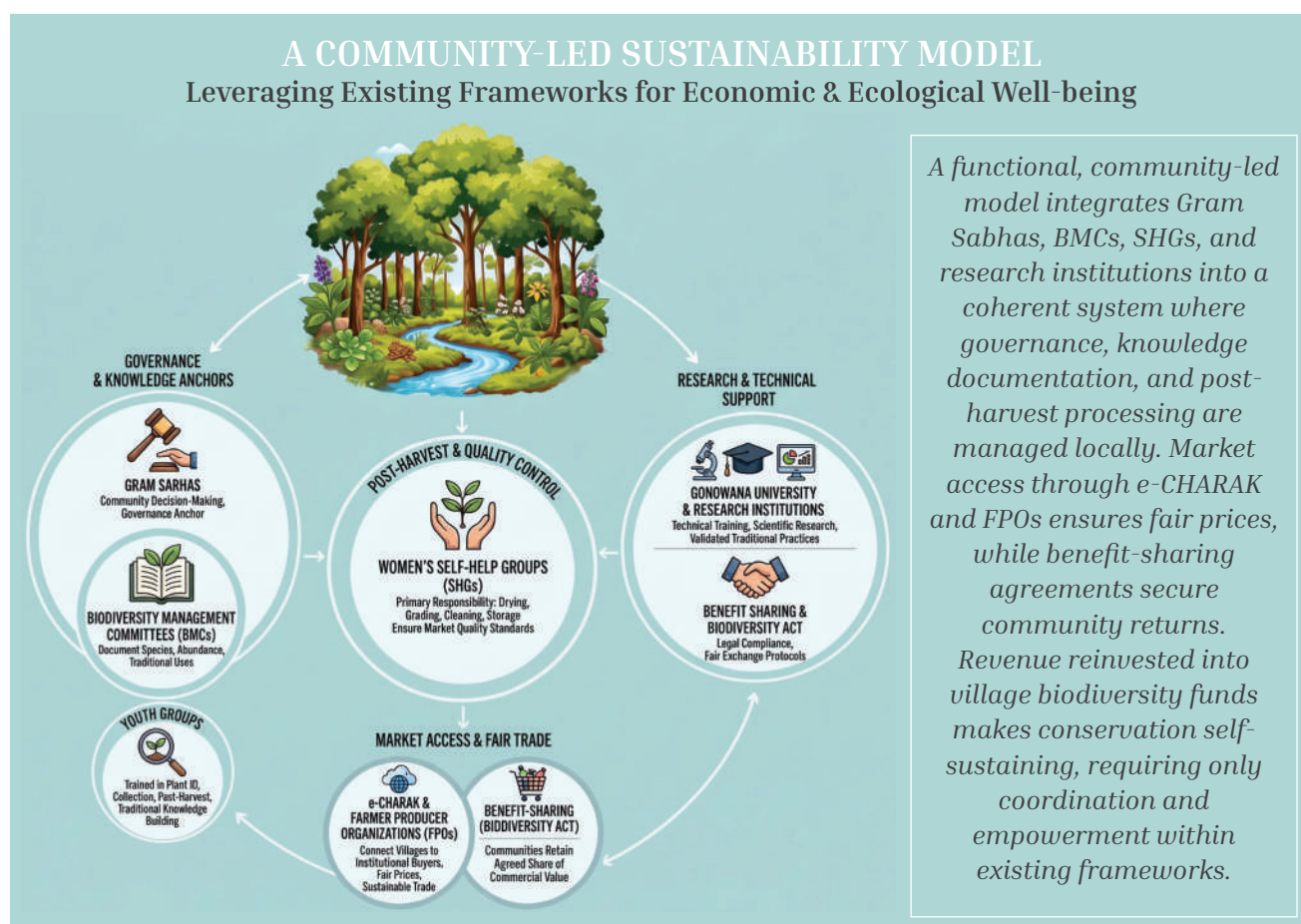
traditional knowledge with technical skills, communities can strengthen quality control, improve market readiness, and access the full economic value of their medicinal plant resources.

3. Market Linkages and Value Addition

Limited smartphone access and weak aggregation hinder e-CHARAK usage. Community-based aggregators can consolidate produce from multiple villages for bulk supply to institutional buyers. Strengthening FPOs can improve collective bargaining. Certification support for organic, GAP, and GFCP standards, delivered through NMPB's forward linkage schemes, can help communities meet industry standards and secure premium prices.

4. Convergence of Institutions

Multiple government departments (Forest, Tribal Development, Agriculture, and State Biodiversity Board) operate independently at the village level, creating duplication, missed opportunities, and community confusion. District-level task forces can align institutional efforts and streamline support delivery. Gram Sabhas should function as the nodal convergence point, channelling all schemes and resources through a single community-managed platform rather than multiple disconnected channels. University and NGO partnerships can provide technical expertise, enabling villages to leverage multiple schemes simultaneously—NMPB conservation funding, MIDH horticultural support, and forest department resources—without navigating bureaucratic complexity independently. Institutional convergence ensures tribal communities receive integrated support for sustainable medicinal plant enterprises.



Article

Wheels of Change:

The Mobile Demonstration Unit's Journey of Science, Community, and Empowerment

In the remote, forested terrain of Gadchiroli district, a unique vehicle has been quietly rewriting the rules of community engagement. The Mobile Demonstration Unit (MDU) - a van-based, audio-visual interactive platform developed by Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University, has become a significant channel of knowledge and opportunity for tribal communities across the Gadchiroli blocks. What began as a modest medicinal plant awareness initiative has blossomed into a powerful, multi-sector extension platform, proving that the most meaningful scientific communication happens not in laboratories, but in fields, community centres, and village squares.

Driven by the belief that technology adoption is most effective when communities can see, understand, and experience solutions first-hand, the MDU evolved from its early focus on medicinal plant conservation into a multidisciplinary science communication platform. Today, it supports dissemination across agriculture, aquaculture, Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), bamboo-based enterprises, digital literacy, and public health. The impact is tangible: 215 structured programmes across 179 villages, reaching over 13,940 community members, including farmers, tribal women, artisans, students, Self-Help Groups, Gram Panchayat representatives, traditional healers, and rural youth.

In an age of digital saturation, the MDU's relevance remains undimmed. For communities with limited access to formal education and digital infrastructure, it offers something irreplaceable, direct, visual, and participatory learning. Equipped with audio-visual systems, the van brings science to life through video modules, infographics, live tool demonstrations, and interactive exercises, making complex ideas visible, simple, and memorable. This relevance was most powerfully demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the MDU became a trusted vehicle for authentic public health communication, delivering scientifically validated information on hygiene, vaccination, and government advisories to communities with no other reliable source, and building critical community resilience in the face of widespread misinformation.

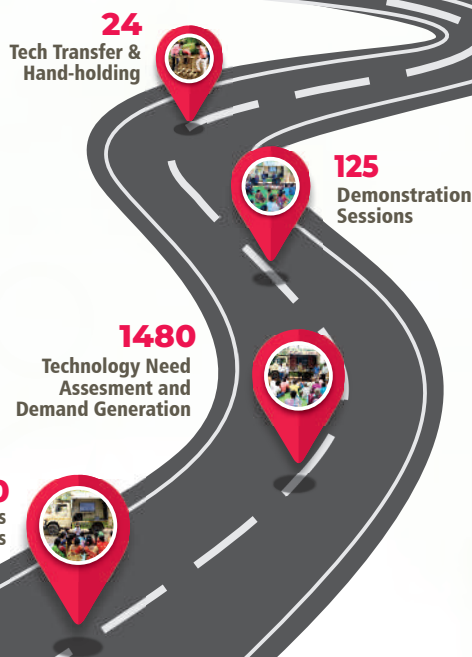
Central to the MDU's effectiveness is its "See-Understand-Adopt" framework - a participatory model where communities first see technologies through live demonstrations, then understand them through local-language explanations and interactive discussions, and finally adopt them through hands-on practice and peer sharing. This experiential cycle transforms communication from one-way information delivery into a shared journey of discovery, accelerating technology



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diffusion and ensuring that solutions are locally appropriate, culturally contextualised, and genuinely embraced.

The MDU is not merely a success story, it is a scalable, replicable model for last-mile science communication across India. Its true power lies not in the van itself, but in the philosophy, it embodies: that communities are active partners in learning, not passive recipients; that science must speak in local languages and local contexts to be truly meaningful; and that transformative development happens where knowledge, opportunity, and trust converge. What started as a van with a mission has grown into a movement, one that carries a singular promise as its wheels continue to turn across Gadchiroli: that no community, however remote, shall be left behind in the journey of knowledge, empowerment, and sustainable development.



Cover Story



STRC Facilitate Certificate Course on Traditional Health Services for Traditional Health Care Practitioner's



Gadchiroli / 2-4 June 2026

Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University in collaboration with the BAIF Institute for Sustainable Livelihoods Development (BISLD), Pune, successfully organized a three-day Certificate Course on Traditional Health Services for traditional healers (Vaidus) from 2 to 4 June 2026 at STRC. The programme aimed to strengthen the capacities of traditional healers by integrating indigenous healthcare knowledge with scientific approaches, promoting medicinal plant conservation, standardized herbal medicine preparation, and quality assurance practices.

The programme was inaugurated by Dr. Shriram Kawale, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Gondwana University. Other dignitaries present included Shri. Swapnil Girade, Chief Program Officer and Head, STRC; Dr. Poonam Patil, Coordinator, BISLD, BAIF, Pune; Dr. Bipin Parmar, AYUSH Expert; and Vaidya Manjulaben Patel. In his inaugural address, Dr. Kawale emphasized the importance of preserving, documenting, and scientifically validating traditional medicinal knowledge, while highlighting the vital role of traditional healers in improving healthcare access in rural and tribal communities.

The training covered key topics such as traditional healthcare systems, preventive healthcare, conservation, preservation and good storage practices for medicinal plants, naturopathy, Charak Kendra development, herbal medicine preparation, and certification process. The programme combined expert lectures, practical demonstrations, interactive discussions, experience sharing, and field exposure to enhance participants' knowledge and practical skills.

The certificate course strengthened the capacity of traditional healers to promote medicinal plant conservation, adopt standardized treatment practices, and establish community-based Charak Kendras. The initiative represents an important step towards preserving and formally recognizing India's rich traditional healthcare knowledge while improving healthcare services in tribal and rural regions.



What's Making News

STRC Organizes PM-NAPS Workshop Following Centre of Excellence Recognition



Gadchiroli / June 30, 2026

Following its recognition as a Centre of Excellence under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS), Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University, organized a workshop in collaboration with the Handicrafts and Carpet Sector Skill Council (HCSSC), New Delhi and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Government of India to strengthen industry-academia collaboration and enhance students' employability. PM-NAPS is a flagship initiative of the Government of India that promotes apprenticeship training by connecting educational institutions, industries, and students, enabling youth to acquire practical, industry-relevant skills while improving their employment prospects.

The workshop was inaugurated by Chief Guest Prof. Manish Uttarwar, Director, TRICEF, Gondwana University. Other distinguished guests included Ms. Mahima Deolia, Senior Manager, HCSSC; Ms. Preeti Kashyap, Deputy Manager, HCSSC, Mumbai; Dr. Palivela Bhargav Chandan, Assistant Professor, University Institute of Technology; Shri. Ananda Rathod, Senior Engineer, CIIT Centre; and Shri. Swapnil Girade, Chief Programme Officer and Head, STRC.

The workshop familiarized students with the objectives and benefits of PM-NAPS program, apprenticeship opportunities, evolving industry expectations, and government-led skill development initiatives. Ms. Shriya Pant from NSDC delivered a virtual session on the scheme, followed by a live demonstration of the apprenticeship registration process, eligibility criteria, application procedures, and benefits for both students and employers.

The workshop witnessed the participation of 65 students, who actively engaged in the question-and-answer session by raising queries related to career planning, employment opportunities, apprenticeships, and skill development. The expert guidance provided during the workshop helped participants gain greater clarity on career prospects and pathways to employment.



STRC Strengthens Student Engagement and Institutional Capacity Through Participation in Eklavya's Summer Science Workshop 2026

 **Bhopal, 22–27 June 2026**

To strengthen its academic capacity and adopt innovative approaches to science education, Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC), Gondwana University, actively participated in the Summer Science Workshop 2026, a one-week residential programme organized by the Eklavya Foundation, Bhopal. The workshop brought together around 65 participants, including school teachers, teacher educators, researchers, IISER students, and science education practitioners from across India to explore inquiry-based and experiential approaches to science learning.

STRC representative, Ms. Manjusha, Junior Scientific Officer participated in the workshop, engaging in technical sessions, collaborative discussions, hands-on activities, and investigatory projects. The programme covered key themes such as atomic structure, physics of sound, biodiversity, STEM teaching in the digital era, and scientific inquiry, led by eminent resource persons from institutions including IISER Pune, IISER Mohali, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Azim Premji University, and Mahindra University.

As part of the workshop, participants visited IISER Bhopal, where they interacted with faculty members and researchers to gain insights into scientific research, higher education, and innovative science teaching practices.

STRC's participation aligns with its ongoing Environment Education Programme for tribal school children across Gadchiroli district. The knowledge and practical experiences gained during the workshop will strengthen STRC's teacher training programmes, enhance student engagement through experiential and inquiry-based learning, and support the development of context-based STEM education initiatives. The participation also reflects STRC's commitment to building institutional capacity and adopting national best practices to improve the quality of science education in underserved communities.



STRC aims to develop the University's Medicinal Plant Nursery into a comprehensive repository of over 200 medicinal plant species, supporting biodiversity conservation, research, and academic learning



Gadchiroli / June 20, 2026

STRC aims to develop the University's Medicinal Plant Nursery into a comprehensive repository of over 200 medicinal plant species, serving as a valuable resource for biodiversity conservation, research, academic learning, and the preservation of traditional medicinal knowledge. As part of this ongoing initiative, the nursery is being systematically enriched with diverse medicinal flora, including rare and ecologically significant species. To date, 130 endemic, rare, threatened and endangered medicinal plant species have been successfully introduced into the nursery, marking an important step towards conserving threatened plant diversity. The strengthened nursery will provide a living laboratory for students, researchers, traditional healers, and other stakeholders while promoting awareness and sustainable utilization of India's rich medicinal plant heritage.



STRC Explores Potential Villages to Replicate Low-Cost Rural Technologies for Sustainable Livelihoods in Chandrapur



Saoli, Chandrapur / June 25, 2026

A team from STRC, Gondwana University, led by the Chief Programme Officer (CPO), visited Chak village in Mankapur Gram Panchayat of Saoli Block, Chandrapur district, to assess opportunities for replicating technology-driven livelihood interventions. The visit focused on understanding the community's existing livelihood practices, secondary income sources, and the availability of locally accessible natural resources that could be leveraged for sustainable economic development.

Based on discussions with the local community and an assessment of the region's forest resources, the team identified leaf plate manufacturing as a viable value-addition enterprise with strong potential for generating supplementary household income. The interaction also highlighted the community's willingness to adopt low-cost, locally appropriate technologies for livelihood enhancement.

To support this initiative, STRC plans to facilitate the establishment of a Leaf Plate Making Unit for a selected Self-Help Group (SHG) with technical and institutional support from the National Innovation Foundation (NIF). The proposed intervention aims to promote the productive utilization of non-timber forest resources, strengthen women-led rural enterprises, and create sustainable income opportunities through technology-enabled value addition.



The field visit forms part of STRC's ongoing efforts to identify scalable and replicable grassroots innovations that align local resource availability with appropriate technologies. By fostering community participation and technology adoption, STRC continues to advance its mission of promoting inclusive, sustainable, and innovation-led rural development across the region.

Creating green spaces on world environment day



Gadchiroli | June 5, 2026

On the occasion of World Environment Day, STRC organized a meaningful plantation drive reaffirming its commitment to creating greener and more sustainable campus spaces. STRC Staff actively participated in the initiative by planting native tree species in university campus. The celebration emphasized that environmental stewardship extends beyond a single day and requires consistent, year-round action. Through this initiative, STRC reinforced its vision of transforming the campus into a vibrant green ecosystem while fostering environmental responsibility among its community. The programme concluded with a shared commitment to continue collective efforts towards building a cleaner, healthier, and greener future.



Our Latest Publications

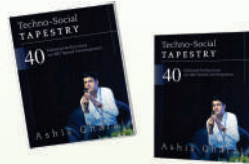
Monthly Newsletters



**STRC
Annual
Report
2024-25**



Techno-Social Tapestry
By Shri Ashis Gharai,
Former CPO & Head, STRC



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Chief Program Officer and Head, STRC

- Graphics and Design -

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Development through ICT, STRC

- Contribution -

Team STRC



Science & Technology Resource Centre Gondwana University, Gadchiroli

Conceived and funded by Rajiv Gandhi Science and Technology Commission (RGSTC), Mumbai, Government of Maharashtra, Science & Technology Resource Centre (STRC) is an autonomous institute established in concurrence with Gondwana University, Gadchiroli in 2014. As a centre of excellence for sustainable value creation, STRC is leveraging local resources, relevant knowledge and appropriate technologies for human capacity development. STRC acts as a catalyst to science and technology based development of the under-served tribal communities of the Gadchiroli region and as a bridge between knowledge activities of the University and enhanced livelihoods in the neighborhood.



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