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PRAGATI

Platform for Rural & Agro Growth, Advancement & Technology Integration

Incubation Proposal

**Development of Agro-forest & Rural
Entrepreneurship**

(Registered as a Section 8 company under The Companies Act, 2013)

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Executive Summary



Dharanidhar University Platform for Rural & Agro Growth, Advancement & Technology Integration (DDU-PRAGATI SANSTHAN) is proposed as the **district's first rural incubation centre**, aimed at transforming Keonjhar's natural and human resources into sustainable enterprises.

The initiative will focus on forest-based economy, agro-innovation, tribal enterprises, and rural livelihoods, creating a structured ecosystem for entrepreneurship, skill development, and employment generation.

DISTRICT REVIEW KEONJHAR



Primary Occupation
Agriculture & forest-based livelihoods dominate beyond mining



Agriculture Profile
Paddy (~70% of cropped area)
Millets & Pulses (~20–25%)



Forest & NTFP Economy
~40%+ Forest-dependent households



Key Products:
Sal leaves
(plate industry potential)
Lac production
(Export-grade)
Kendu leaves
Bamboo Related forest produce

Keonjhar District Data

Data that throws light on the untapped potential beyond mining



Forest Covered Land

Full of raw Non-Timber Forest Products, which is the major occupation of the Tribals



Rainfed Agriculture

The majority of Agriculture depends on rain, vs 35% of irrigated lands



Raw Sourcing

Sales from Raw NTF Products are way higher than the processed product, leading to thinner margins

Untapped Potential

NTFP Economy

(Sal leaf, lac, bamboo)

Off-season vegetables

(<20% utilized)

Organic farming

(<5% certified)

Agro & forest processing

(Minimal presence)

Despite strong natural and human resources, Keonjhar operates at low productivity and low value realization, highlighting the need for structured enterprise development.

SWOT Analysis Keonjhar

Finding out the Strengths, weaknesses, and the potential opportunities from the threats of the current ecosystem

STRENGTHS

Rich forest resources & tribal knowledge

Strong agricultural base

Availability of youth workforce

WEAKNESSES

Lack of structured incubation ecosystem

Low value addition and market linkage

Limited entrepreneurship exposure

OPPORTUNITIES

NTFP value chain development

Agro-processing and organic farming

Rural and tribal startups

THREATS

Overdependence on mining

Migration due to lack of local opportunities

Resource underutilization

Key Problems in Keonjhar



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Overdependence on Mining Economy

The district's economy is heavily dependent on mining, despite the majority of the population relying on agriculture and forests, resulting in low livelihood diversification. This also results in loss of traditional handicrafts and culture.

Lack of Processing & Market Linkages

Raw NTFP sold without processing = minimal margins. No direct access to urban markets or organized buyers. State government earns Rs 2000 million per annum from NTFP trade through royalty and licenses, but tribals see minimal benefits.

Certification & Technical Gaps

Tribal farmers lack access to certification processes due to a lack of direct market channels, premium pricing for organic produce doesn't reach tribal farmers. Compost, biofertilizers, and natural pesticides either too costly or unavailable at scale

Environmental Contamination

Open-pit mining and transportation of minerals generate large amounts of dust and particulate matter, significantly affecting the local environment and public health

There is a lack of adequate safety gear and protective equipment, leading to severe health consequences

About the Mission



“PRAGATI” implies progress rooted in soil, rising as enterprises, empowering every hand.

DDU PRAGATI SANSTHAN

(Platform for Rural & Agro Growth, Advancement & Technology Integration) is a first-of-its-kind **rural incubation centre** tailored to the socio-economic context of Keonjhar district.

Located in one of Odisha’s most resource-rich yet underserved districts, DDU PRAGATI will work across sectors such as agro-innovation, forest-based enterprises, tribal crafts, rural livelihoods, and sustainable technologies.

TARGET BENEFICIARIES KEONJHAR



Tribal Farmers

Helping Tribals adopt advanced techniques of efficient farming



Handicrafts Artisans

Creating economical paths for the promotions of traditional art & crafts



Rural Youth & Students

Brining grassroots level innovation mindset in Schools & Institutions



SHG & Women Employment

Creating economical paths for the promotions of traditional art & crafts

Targeted Domains



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**NTFP &
Forest**

**Rural
Livelihood**

**Tribal
Organic
Farming**

**Tribal
Craft &
Cultural**

**Mining
Safety
Tech**

Targeted Domains



NTFP & Forest

Supporting enterprises in sal leaf processing, lac cultivation, bamboo products, and herbal value chains through technology integration and market linkage.

Tribal Organic Farming

Promoting millet-based products, off-season vegetable cultivation, and organic certification to improve farmer income and productivity.

Rural Livelihood Startups

Enabling SHG-led enterprises, food processing units, and micro-enterprises with business training and incubation support

Tribal Craft & Cultural

Reviving and commercialising indigenous crafts and cultural assets through branding, packaging, and digital platforms.

Mining Safety Tech

Encouraging innovation in safety solutions, monitoring systems, and worker welfare technologies relevant to mining regions.

Project Mapping



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3 Pillars to develop an Incubation Centre in Rural and Social Innovations.



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Establish an incubation centre within the university campus and Satellite Centres across the District.

Co-working spaces, cabins, meeting rooms, and training areas are to be developed to support the incubated startups.



PROGRAM EXECUTION

Pre-Incubation and Incubation for Idea validation, training, and product-market fit.

Monthly bootcamps and bi-annual competitions for awareness campaigns across district colleges and communities.



FUNDING & MARKET ACCESS

Onboarding of 50+ mentors from industry, academia, and government.

Facilitate access to Government schemes, CSR funding, Market linkages and buyer networks.

Proposed Timeline - First Year

P1

Foundation & Ground Activation

Conduct district-wide **outreach programs, village scouting, and baseline data collection** for opportunities mapping.

Initiate **student awareness campaigns** across affiliated colleges and identify potential local promoters to enable implementation of the Hub & Spoke Model in targeted zones.

P2

Ecosystem Setup & Pipeline Creation

Activate the **Hub & Spoke Model** through selected promoters and establish spoke-level camps across districts.

Conduct **bi-weekly localised bootcamps** focused on rural innovation and regional D2C brands, while identifying and preparing high-potential participants for the first Pre-Incubation cohort.

P3

Program Execution & Startup Onboarding

Launch a **4-week Pre-Incubation Program** for ~25 selected startups focusing on rural innovation and national market access.

Post evaluation, onboard **high-potential ventures** into the incubation program under DDU PRAGATI with structured mentorship, business development, and market entry support.

P4

Scale, Showcase & Institutionalization

Incubating **10 high-potential startups**.

Organise 2 **District-Level Student Innovation Challenges** to strengthen grassroots engagement.

Conclude with a flagship **Tribal & Rural Entrepreneurship Summit (TRES)**, bringing together startups, investors, policymakers, and community stakeholders to showcase outcomes, enable partnerships, and position DDU PRAGATI as a regional innovation hub.

Existing Infrastructure



Brainstorming Hall - 1000 sq ft.

Functions as an interactive amphitheatre where budding entrepreneurs engage directly with seasoned industry mentors, alumni founders, and domain experts.

Idea Design Room - 900 sq ft.

Serves as the epicenter for ongoing internal hackathons, product sprints, and continuous creative experimentation.

Digital Lab - 1,500 sq ft.

An applied business intelligence studio where founders acquire hands-on data analytics skills, formulate digital go-to-market strategies, and test market traction.

Co-Working Space - 2,000 sq ft.

Bridges grassroots rural enterprise with contemporary corporate infrastructure by offering dedicated startup offices, focused work cubicles, private meeting cabins, and shared breakout lounges.

FP & QC Lab - 1000 sq ft.

Access to certified processing equipment, these twin labs help transform localised, raw forest produce into high-margin, shelf-stable commercial products compliant with national food standards.

Total Space - 6400+ sq ft.

Infrastructure Pre-Incubation Brainstorming Hall

To serve as the primary collaborative springboard for early-stage student founders, innovators, and pre-founders. Designed with an open, minimalist aesthetic, this dynamic environment fosters uninhibited creative thinking, peer-to-peer exchange, and structured problem validation. The space functions as an interactive amphitheatre where budding entrepreneurs engage directly with seasoned industry mentors, alumni founders, and domain experts.

- **Total Area:** 1,000 sq. ft. (Dimensions: 25 ft × 40 ft)
- **Capacity:** 60-seater flexible seating layout
- **Aesthetic & Design:** Liberal, open-plan, minimalist design with modular seating configurations
- **Audio-Visual Tech:** Ceiling-mounted high-definition projection system, integrated sound engineering, and smart hybrid conferencing peripherals, projector, and recording equipment.
- **Core Activities:** Founder-mentor office hours, sector masterclasses, interactive seminars, pitching clinics, and cohort-level workshops

Existing



Proposed



Infrastructure Pre-Incubation Idea Design Room



This experimental maker space and design workshop turns early conceptual models into tangible, tested prototypes. Outfitted with robust workbenches and ergonomic seating, this facility gives early-stage student teams the practical infrastructure to build rough mockups, test core product assumptions, and pressure-test product-market fit before formal pitching. The room serves as the epicentre for ongoing internal hackathons, product sprints, and continuous creative experimentation.

- **Total Area:** 900 sq. ft. (Dimensions: 36 ft × 25 ft)
- **Capacity:** 50-seater ergonomic capacity
- **Workspace Setup:** Heavy-duty modular workbenches and writeable collaborative surfaces
- **Facility Utilities:** Dedicated tool chests, prototype staging bays, and high-speed multi-access charging hubs, Interactive Display
- **Core Activities:** Rapid prototyping, internal ideation sprints, product hackathons, design thinking workshops, and user journey mapping

Existing



Existing



Infrastructure Digital Lab



The Digital Lab delivers intensive computing, software architecture, and venture-building capabilities to support digital transformation across Keonjhar. Spanning 1,500 square feet, this tech-enabled environment gives student ventures and tech startups hands-on access to the computational resources needed to design Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), engineer scalable cloud architectures, run financial models, and build investor-grade pitch decks. Beyond core software development, the lab functions as an applied business intelligence studio where founders acquire hands-on data analytics skills, formulate digital go-to-market strategies, and test market traction.

- **Total Area:** 1,500 sq. ft.
- **Capacity:** 50 dedicated high-performance workstations
- **Computing Infrastructure:** Modern workstations with dual-monitor capabilities, gigabit internet, and secure sandbox development environments
- **Software Tooling:** Prototyping software suites, code development toolchains, data analytics modules, and presentation design kits
- **Core Activities:** MVP architecture, digital product testing, UI/UX workflows, financial modelling, and venture deck compilation

Existing



Existing



Infrastructure Incubation Co-Working Centre



The Incubation Co-Working Centre provides a professional corporate base for graduate startups, growth-stage ventures, and grassroots enterprise collectives. Spanning 2,000 square feet, this facility bridges grassroots rural enterprise with contemporary corporate infrastructure by offering dedicated startup offices, focused work cubicles, private meeting cabins, and shared breakout lounges. With a 40-seat wing operational and an expansion roadmap reaching 150 seats, the center provides a business-ready platform for ventures scaling operations across Northern Odisha.

- **Total Area:** 2,000 sq. ft.
- **Capacity:** 150-seater planned capacity (Initial 40-seater phase approved and to be operational)
- **Office Typology:** Dedicated private cabins, semi-private team cubicles, hot-desking rows, and formal meeting boardrooms
- **Shared Amenities:** Enterprise-grade printing hubs, secure private lockers, high-speed fibre connectivity, and client discussion pods
- **Ecosystem Diversity:** Built for incubated alumni ventures, local micro-enterprises, SHG corporate offices, and rural business federations

Existing



Proposed

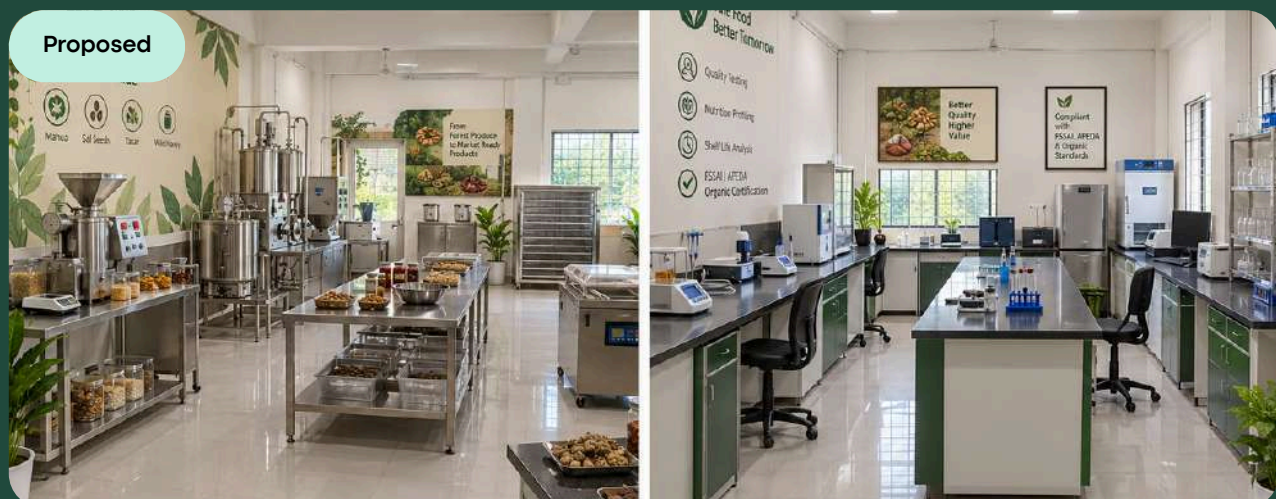
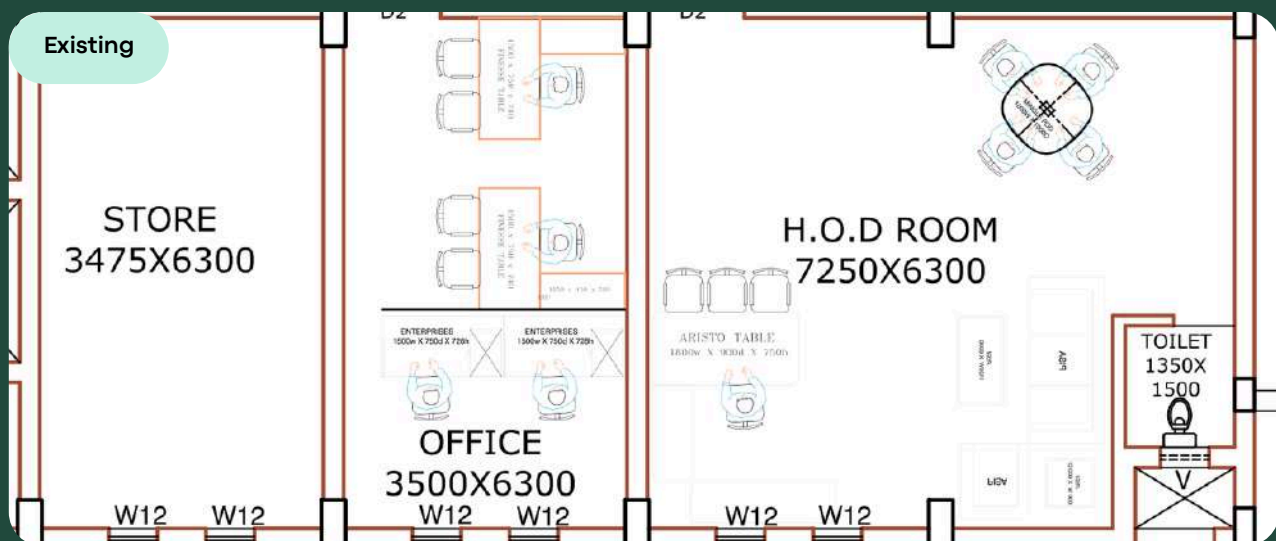


Infrastructure Food Processing & Quality Lab



The Lab comprises two dedicated 500-square-foot facilities engineered to unlock commercial value from Keonjhar's agricultural and Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) reserves. The primary laboratory focuses on advanced value-addition processes—such as extraction, drying, sorting, and packaging protocols for forest treasures like Mahua, Sal seeds, Tasar by-products, and wild honey. The adjacent analytical lab handles quality control, shelf-life testing, nutritional profiling, and certification requirements. B

- **Total Area:** 1,000 sq. ft. cumulative (Twin labs: 500 sq. ft. NTFP Processing + 500 sq. ft. Quality Control & Testing)
- **Processing Capabilities:** Extraction chambers, pilot distillation units, solar dehydrators, pulverizers, and vacuum packaging systems
- **Analytical Instruments:** Moisture meters, digital refractometers, automated titration benches, spectrophotometers, and microbial incubation units
- **Compliance & Standards:** Designed to align with FSSAI, APEDA, and organic export quality benchmarks
- **Target Sectors:** Value-added NTFP, millets, wild forest honey, indigenous spices, and tribal agro-products



Initiatives Tribo- Organic Farming



Convert 500+ tribal farmers to certified organic farming with direct market linkages

- Establish 5 farmer-producer organisations (FPOs) across 5 blocks
- Provide organic certification training + group certification pathway
- Create direct-to-consumer marketplace partnerships
- Women-led farming groups get priority (₹2L subsidy per group)



Initiatives

NTFP

Value

Processing

Plant



Eliminate middlemen, create market-ready products, 5x margins for collectors

- Design a standardised SOP for collection (quality, timing, sorting)
- Build 2 processing units (Ghatgaon + Banspal) with:
 - Drying facilities** - Sal seeds, Harida, Amla
 - Value-added Production** - Jams, Powders, Oils
 - Packaging & labeling facility**
- Create District personalised NTFP brands
- Link to e-commerce + premium organic food retailers



Initiatives Heritage Art Villages



Transform craft villages into tourism destinations + improve artisan income 3-5x

Kaimatin Dokra Art Village

- Renovate 20 artisan workshops with modern tools
- Create shared facility: design studio, kiln, finishing centre
- Build artisan homestays (3-4 units) for craft tourism
- Establish a craft school for generational knowledge transfer
- Master **Craftsman Residency Program**
- E-commerce + direct artist sales platform



Initiatives Tribal Festivals & Adventure Economy



Create sustainable adventure + culture tourism and monetize Keonjhar's Juang and Bhuyan tribes' unique traditions, different dance forms, and tool-making art,

- Geological Education Centre to learn mining history, geology, and safety practices
- Design "Adventure Geology" trekking routes through former mine sites
- Build 5-unit eco-tribal homestays
- Train 80 tribal youth as event managers, performers, and artisans
- **Keonjhar Tribal Craft Fest:** Curated fests to showcase Ho/Bhuyan tools, ornaments, textiles

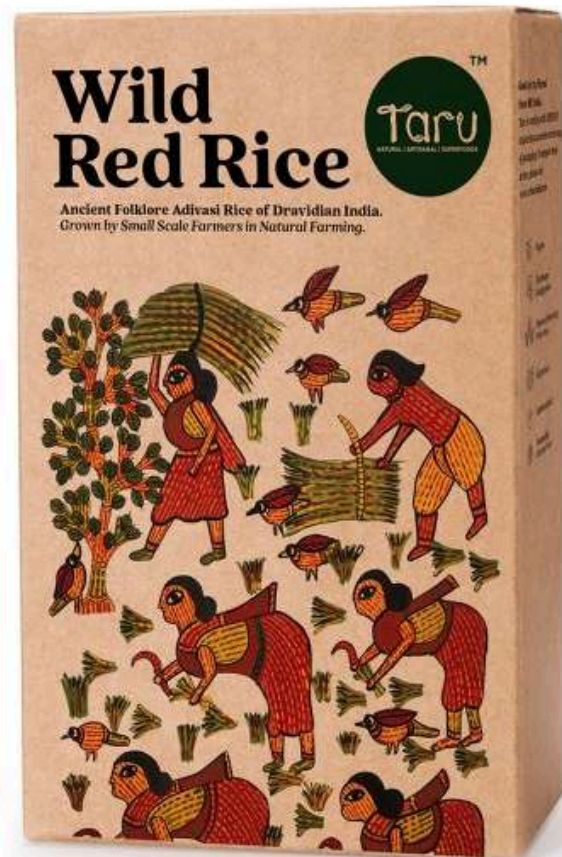


Initiatives Women Founder & SHG to Startup Pipeline



Convert 200 SHGs into viable income-generating enterprises with ₹50L annual revenue

- Identify 200 existing SHGs across 5 blocks
- Conduct financial literacy training (savings, borrowing, book-keeping)
- Business plan training + market research
- Mentorship from successful women entrepreneurs
- Create Women Entrepreneur Network (peer learning, support)



Proposed Projects (Upcoming)

Proposed to Various departments, such as DHE, Govt. of Odisha, TRIFED, DMF to be developed to support the ecosystem.

CoE in Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning

The proposed CoE in Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning positions Keonjhar at the intersection of deep-tech computing and regional problem-solving. Located adjacent to the central incubation hub, this facility will host GPU-accelerated computing clusters to build, train, and deploy machine learning models targeting public and commercial challenges.

CoE in Biotechnology, Synthetic Biology & Bio-Informatics

This facility will house molecular biology laboratories, genomic sequencing setups, and high-performance bioinformatics pipelines to study, document, and utilize regional microbial, fungal, and plant strains. The CoE aims to transition empirical tribal ethnobotanical knowledge into scientifically validated, patentable bio-solutions.

CoE in Climate Tech & Environmental Sustainability

The center focuses on industrial decarbonization, circular economy breakthroughs, air and water mitigation systems, and green mine rehabilitation protocols. Startups and university researchers will build solutions such as low-carbon building materials using mine tailings and fly ash, localized carbon-capture systems, and distributed water-treatment kits for heavy-metal runoff.

Proposed Projects (Upcoming)

Proposed to Various departments, such as DHE, Govt. of Odisha, TRIFED, DMF to be developed to support the ecosystem.

CoE in AgriTech & Precision Farming

The centre brings together agronomy, Internet of Things (IoT) hardware, satellite telematics, and drone technologies to help marginal and tribal farmers increase yields, preserve soil health, and reduce input costs. The centre bridges smallholder farmers' challenges with scalable hardware and software applications.

Biodiversity Research Park for Agro-Based Food Processing

The Biodiversity Research Park is an integrated, dual-campus agro-innovation research complex designed to anchor regional sustainable agriculture, featuring a 6-acre living bio-laboratory, integrating commercial hydroponic towers, recirculating aquaponic aquaculture bays, and open pollinator-conservation sanctuaries.

OCAC Data Centre (District Edge Node)

The proposed OCAC (Odisha Computer Application Centre) Data Centre establishes a Tier-III-standard edge computing facility directly on campus. Engineered to bridge Northern Odisha's digital divide, this facility will provide low-latency server infrastructure, sovereign cloud capacity, and secure data storage



Proposed budget

FOR FISCAL 2026-27

Project and Initiative	Cost	Phase
Infrastructure & Setup • Incubation space (basic setup, cabins, co-working) • Furniture, IT systems, branding • Meeting & training rooms (Existing infrastructure can reduce the cost)	₹2.00 Cr	Phase 1- 3 (One- Time Cost)
Human Resources • 1 Program Head • 2 Operations & 1 Admin • 10 Field coordinators • Project Consultants & Advisors	₹0.70 Cr	P1 - P4
Programs & Bootcamps • 30+ district bootcamps • Pre-incubation & incubation programs • Trainers, mentors, logistics	₹0.50 Cr	P2 - P4
Events & Outreach • 2 Innovation Challenges • Annual Rural Entrepreneurship Conclave • Demo days, networking events	₹0.30 Cr	P2,P4
Startup Support Fund • Prototype grants/seed support • Travel, pilot implementation • Market linkage support	₹1.50 Cr	P4
TOTAL	₹5.00 Cr	For the First Year



Impact Projections

Category	FY'26-27	FY'27-28	FY'28-29
Startups Supported	50	150	300
Startups Incubated	10	20	35
Farmers / SHGs Impacted	300	800	1500
Students Reached	1000	2500	5000
Bootcamps Conducted	15	25	40
Employment Generated	50	100	250
Patents Filed	2-3	4-7	15+
Social Mentors Created	25	60	120
Women-led Enterprises Supported	5	15	50



OUTCOMES

**3,150+ Tribal
Beneficiaries with
Dignified Livelihoods**

**Sustainable income
flowing directly to
tribal communities**

**Distributed
employment reducing
urban migration**

**1,000+ women
earning through
SHGs**

**5 cooperative brands
launched**

**Art villages become
tourism hubs for all
initiatives**



Conclusion



DDU PRAGATI SANSTHAN (DPS)represents a strategic step towards transforming Keonjhar into a self-reliant, enterprise-driven district by leveraging its rich natural resources and human potential. By fostering innovation, supporting grassroots entrepreneurship, and enabling sustainable livelihood creation, the initiative will bridge critical gaps in value addition, market access, and skill development.

With a structured incubation ecosystem anchored at Dharanidhar University, DDU PRAGATI aims to create long-term economic resilience and serve as a replicable model for rural development across similar regions.



Regards,

Prof. Sanjaya Kumar Patro
Vice-Chancellor,
Dharinadhar University, Keonjhar