

# FEBRUARY 2025

# IN THE LOOP



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## Forest to Fortune:

### Village Women Transform Leaves into Livelihood

A group of women from Surpa Village in Deogarh District has found success by working together to collect and sell forest products. The Banasita Utpadaka Gosthi group sold 1,421 kg of Siali leaf plates for ₹38 per kg and 39 kg of wood mushrooms to traders in Rourkela.

The group has between 42-47 members who began collecting Siali leaves in January. By February, they had turned their work into a successful small business.

#### OVERVIEW :

- Women's Group Earns Money Through Forest Products.
- Forest Rights Coordinators Trained in Bhubaneswar.
- Women's Rights Workshops Empower Rural Villages.
- Eco-Friendly Leaf Processing Unit in Gunduribadi.
- Women Entrepreneurs Gain Valuable Skills at Regional Craft Fair.





"This is a great example of what women can achieve when they work together," said Dipen Chatria, Assistant Program Associate of Vasundhara. He said, "They are making money while also taking care of forest resources."

The women use natural materials from their area to create products that can be sold. Their work shows how groups can use local resources to improve their lives.

## Forest Rights Coordinators Trained in Bhubaneswar

Forest Rights Act coordinators from multiple districts attended a two-day training session on February 18-19, 2025, at CYSD, Bhubaneswar.

The program focused on web-based data management and strategy planning. Participants learned to use the Jangal Tathya app for better data handling while developing action plans for upcoming work.



During discussions, coordinators noted that while local-level meetings were happening regularly, district-level monitoring committees weren't meeting in many areas. The training addressed knowledge gaps about government guidelines and created monthly targets for field teams." Clear instructions from government officials are needed to improve FRA implementation," said Mr. Raj Kishore, who led the training alongside Mr. Aurobindo Rout and Mr. Biswajit Jena.



# Women's Rights Workshops Empower Rural Villages



A series of women's rights workshops held across Keonjhar District, Odisha, have drawn strong participation from local villages.

On February 11, 2025, more than 50 women from 10 villages gathered in Gonasikka for a workshop organized by Vasundhara and WHH (Welthungerhilfe). The event focused on legal rights education and sustainable livelihood opportunities. A 15-member committee was formed to develop business skills and create resource maps of their villages and forests.

On February 12 a similar program at Bayakumutia Panchayat attracted 105 women from 10 villages. Representatives

from Vasundhara, FES, Pradan, and the local government shared information, resulting in a 27-member committee focused on women's land rights and entrepreneurship.



In Talabali village, 60 women from 10 villages in Barhagada panchayat learned about forest-based livelihood opportunities specifically designed for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). This programme was on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

These workshops represent growing efforts to connect rural women with their legal rights and sustainable income sources throughout Odisha's tribal regions.



# Tribal Forest Products Find New Markets in Delhi



On February 10, 2025, the organization held a campaign at Gulmohar Garden in Noida's Sector 44, introducing residents to their "Vanajata" product line. The event showcased natural products like castor oil, honey, turmeric, and handmade soaps sourced directly from tribal communities in Odisha.

Following this success, Vasundhara opened a permanent Vanajata outlet at Gaur City Mall in Greater Noida on February 13. The store offers various forest-based products, including Kandhamal turmeric powder, wild honey, natural oils, and traditional lofa (gourd sponges).

"These initiatives help create sustainable income for tribal artisans while introducing urban consumers to authentic, ethically-sourced natural products," said a Vasundhara representative.



## Eco-Friendly Leaf Processing Unit in Gunduribadi



The women of Gunduribadi village achieved a significant milestone with the inauguration of their new leaf processing unit, marking an important development in local entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices.

The opening ceremony brought together key figures, including the President and Secretary of the Producer Group (PG), alongside Professor Annapurna, Director of Vasundhara, and representatives from the Ranpur team who supported the initiative.

"This project represents years of dedication from our women's collective," said Banashmita from the Gunduribadi women's group during the ceremony. "We've worked hard to create an enterprise that both respects our forest resources and provides sustainable income for our families."

The leaf processing unit will enable the community to add value to forest products collected locally, increasing their market potential while ensuring sustainable harvesting practices.

## Women Entrepreneurs Gain Valuable Skills at Regional Craft Fair



Members of the Sargiphal Women's Association recently participated in the Subhadra Shakti Mela, gaining valuable business insights and practical experience. Ten representatives from the association visited six different stalls featuring terracotta, Laghuban Zaat products, agriculture, food, handicrafts, and Hastantra items. During their visit, the women engaged in discussions about product quality, storage

techniques, sales strategies, and effective marketing approaches for regional products. The group met with President Sailendri to review recent sales records and learn about market pricing mechanisms from the manager.

"This was a wonderful learning opportunity for our members," said a representative from the association. "The hands-on experience was invaluable."

Several members also had the opportunity to assist at the Maa Bighra Devi PG stall, where they interacted directly with customers and shared stories about the products' origins and cultural significance.