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Submitted by

Dr.K. Ravichandran

Senior Professor/ Regional Coordinator

Regional Coordinating Institute

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

The Gandhigram Rural Institute (DTBU)

Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu.

drkravichandrangu@gmail.com

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Message from the Regional Coordinator

It gives me immense pleasure to present the *Annual Report 2025–2026* of the Regional Coordinating Institute (RCI) under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) at the Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed to be University), Gandhigram (GRI).

GRI, founded on the principles of Mahatma Gandhi and Nai Talim, has consistently upheld a strong commitment to integrating education with rural transformation. This foundational philosophy makes GRI strategically aligned with the objectives of UBA, which envisages Higher Education Institutions as catalysts for sustainable and inclusive rural development. The Institute's long-standing engagement with village communities, emphasis on experiential learning, and focus on livelihood-oriented interventions position it as a natural and effective anchor institution within the UBA framework. As a Regional Coordinating Institute, GRI has successfully operationalised this alignment by fostering convergence between academic knowledge, community needs, and development programmes.

During the year 2025–2026, the RCI–UBA–GRI demonstrated significant progress in strengthening the institutional ecosystem for rural development. The RCI coordinated UBA Programmes of 179 Participating Institutions covering 895 villages across eleven districts, thereby ensuring extensive grassroots outreach and engagement. Capacity-building initiatives benefited over 300 faculty members and stakeholders, enhancing competencies in project planning and outcome-based interventions. Structured workshops, field monitoring visits, and continuous mentoring improved the quality, accountability, and impact of UBA activities. The promotion of scalable livelihood models such as mushroom cultivation, millet-based enterprises, bakery units, and other value-added activities has contributed to income generation and women's empowerment. Further, the RCI played a proactive role in facilitating CSR convergence, policy engagement at national forums, and recognition of best-performing institutions, thereby strengthening motivation, innovation, and institutional performance.

The outcomes of these initiatives are reflected not only in quantitative achievements but also in qualitative transformations, including strengthened institutional capacities, improved community participation, enhanced convergence with development stakeholders, and increased adoption of sustainable livelihood models. The RCI–UBA–GRI has thus emerged as a model for academic–community

engagement, contributing meaningfully to the national vision of NEP 2020, SDGs 2030, and Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Dr.N.Panchanatham, Vice-Chancellor, GRI, Gandhigram, for his visionary leadership and continuous encouragement. I extend my thanks to the Dr.M.Sundaramari, Registrar, GRI, for the administrative support and facilitation extended for the effective implementation of UBA activities.

I also express my deep gratitude to the Prof.V.K.Vijay, National Coordinator, UBA, IIT Delhi, and his team for their constant guidance, support, and encouragement.

I place on record my appreciation to the UBA team members at GRI for their dedicated efforts and commitment in executing various programmes. I convey my heartfelt thanks to all Participating Institution Coordinators and their respective institutions for their active involvement and sustained contribution to rural development initiatives.

I would also like to place on record my sincere appreciation to the officials of NLC Tamil Nadu Power Limited, Thoothukudi, officials of the MSME Regional Office, KVIC Regional Office, Banks, and District Administration for their active collaboration and convergence support, which have significantly strengthened livelihood promotion and entrepreneurship development under UBA.

Above all, UBA embodies the vision of the NEP 2020, and provides a unique platform for students to engage with real-life rural contexts, thereby enriching academic learning through field-based experiences, social responsibility, and problem-solving skills. In this process, the active participation of students, guided by committed faculty coordinators, has been central to the success of the programme. I place on record my sincere appreciation to the student volunteers whose dedicated field engagement, along with the mentoring support of faculty members, has significantly contributed to making UBA initiatives meaningful, impactful, and truly community-centric.

I am confident that the collective efforts and partnerships established during the year will further strengthen the impact of UBA initiatives and contribute to sustainable and inclusive rural transformation in the years to come.

Dr. K. Ravichandran
Senior Professor & Regional Coordinator
RCI-UBA-GRI, Gandhigram

1. Introduction

The Annual Report for the year 2025–2026 of the Regional Coordinating Institute under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) at the Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed to be University) presents a comprehensive account of its strategic initiatives, institutional leadership, and measurable contributions towards sustainable and inclusive rural development.

As one of the leading Regional Coordinating Institute in the country, the Gandhigram Rural Institute (RCI - UBA- GRI) has played a pivotal role in mentoring and coordinating 179 Participating Institutions in eleven districts in southern Tamil Nadu. The RCI - UBA- GRI has functioned as a dynamic institutional anchor, facilitating effective convergence among Higher Education Institutions, Gram Panchayats, Government Departments, CSR agencies, and community stakeholders, thereby strengthening the ecosystem for participatory rural development.

During the year, the RCI - UBA- GRI adopted a multi-dimensional and outcome-oriented approach, integrating capacity building, project development, field-level implementation, continuous monitoring, and policy engagement. These efforts were closely aligned with national priorities, including the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

A major thrust of the RCI - UBA- GRI's interventions was on rural livelihood promotion, women's empowerment, and skill-based entrepreneurship. Key focus areas included mushroom cultivation, millet based products, bakery units, and community-level value addition activities, which demonstrated strong potential for scalability and replication across rural regions.

The RCI - UBA- GRI also exhibited proactive leadership in mobilising CSR partnerships, promoting innovation-driven rural development models, and strengthening institutional accountability mechanisms. These efforts have contributed to enhancing the effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of UBA interventions in the region.

Overall, the initiatives undertaken during the year position the RCI - UBA- GRI as a leading model of academic–community engagement, contributing significantly to the transformation of rural livelihoods and reinforcing the role of Higher Education Institutions as catalysts for inclusive and sustainable development.

2. Performance Highlights and Key Outcomes

The key achievements of the RCI - UBA- GRI during 2025–2026 reflect its strong institutional leadership in coordinating Higher Education Institutions and facilitating impactful rural development interventions. Through a structured and outcome-oriented approach integrating capacity building, institutional collaboration, field engagement, and policy alignment, the RCI - UBA- GRI significantly enhanced the effectiveness, outreach, and quality of UBA activities across southern Tamil Nadu. The major performance highlights and outcomes are as follows:

- 1) *Institutional Coordination and Outreach*: Successfully coordinated 179 Participating Institutions, extending outreach to 895 villages, thereby strengthening grassroots engagement and ensuring wider coverage of UBA interventions across the region.
- 2) *Capacity Building and Human Resource Development*: Built the capacities of over 304 faculty members, institutional coordinators, and stakeholders through structured capacity building training programmes, enhancing their competencies in project design, implementation, and outcome-based rural development.
- 3) *Workshops and Knowledge Dissemination*: Organised three major capacity-building workshops, focusing on project proposal development, innovation, and convergence strategies, which significantly improved institutional readiness for implementing sustainable rural development initiatives.
- 4) *Field Monitoring and Programme Strengthening*: Undertook five field monitoring visits across key districts, enabling real-time assessment, strengthened accountability mechanisms, and improved alignment of UBA interventions with Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs).
- 5) *CSR and Funding Convergence*: Facilitated multiple CSR-linked livelihood proposals (5 initiatives) in collaboration with industry, Participating Institutions and development partners, contributing to enhanced resource mobilisation and sustainability of rural livelihood interventions.
- 6) *Policy Engagement and National-Level Contribution*: Actively engaged with national-level institutions such as UGC, IIPA, and UBA, NCI, IIT Delhi, contributing to programme evaluation, policy discussions, and strengthening of UBA implementation frameworks.

- 7) *Recognition and Institutional Motivation*: Recognised 12 Best Performing Participating Institutions, fostering a culture of excellence, accountability, and innovation in community engagement and rural development initiatives.
- 8) *Strengthening Convergence and Partnerships*: Enhanced convergence with MSME Regional Office, CSR agencies, Government Departments, and financial institutions, leading to improved coordination, resource optimisation, and integrated rural development approaches

The above achievements collectively contributed to:

- 1) Strengthening the institutional ecosystem for rural development
- 2) Enhancing the quality and impact of UBA interventions
- 3) Promoting livelihoods and community engagement
- 4) Reinforcing the role of Higher Education Institutions in rural transformation

3. Workshops and Capacity-Building Initiatives

The RCI - UBA- GRI organised a series of structured workshops and capacity-building programmes during 2025–2026 to strengthen the competencies of Participating Institutions in planning, implementing, and managing outcome-oriented rural development initiatives. These programmes played a critical role in enhancing institutional capabilities, promoting knowledge exchange, and fostering convergence with national development priorities.

3.1 UBA Foundation Day – National Conference

The RCI - GRI organised an online National Conference on 11 November 2025 to commemorate UBA Foundation Day. The conference focused on the role of Higher Education Institutions in advancing sustainable rural development, community engagement, and alignment with the SDGs and Viksit Bharat @2047.

The conference featured six technical sessions, an inaugural address by Dr N. Panchanatham, Vice-Chancellor, GRI, and a keynote address by Dr Vivek Kumar, National Coordinator, UBA, IIT Delhi, emphasising the transformative potential of UBA in bridging academic knowledge and rural realities. Key resource persons and their presentations included:

- 1) Dr R. Ramesh (NIRD&PR, Hyderabad): *Leveraging Government Schemes for Creating Smart Villages under UBA*

- 2) Dr Rabindranath Pandaria (ICAR, New Delhi): *Integrating Community for Sustainable Rural Development*
- 3) Dr. Seema Sharma (IIT Delhi): *Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship as Drivers for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods under UBA*
- 4) Dr. G. Palanidurai (Professor (Retd), Department of Political Science, GRI): *Strengthening Panchayat–HEIs Partnerships through UBA*
- 5) Dr. Saket Bihari (Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi): *UBA Alignment with NEP 2020, SDGs 2030 and National Development Agendas*
- 6) Dr. T. Ravichandran (Faculty member, Department of Gandhian Thought and Peace Science, GRI): *Reinterpreting Mahatma Gandhi’s Philosophy in the Context of Modern India’s Journey Toward 2047*

The event brought together 196 academicians, policymakers, and practitioners to deliberate on participatory rural transformation, institutional collaboration, and integration of community engagement into higher education systems. The deliberations reinforced the importance of grassroots innovation, participatory governance, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and digital integration for self-reliant and inclusive rural development. The sessions concluded with a synthesis by Mr Ashish Chauhan, NCI, IIT, Delhi highlighting future strategies to scale UBA initiatives and strengthen community–HEI partnerships.

3.2 Advancing SDGs through Academic Synergy – Collaboration Dialogue

A collaborative workshop titled “*Advancing SDGs through Academic Synergy*” was organised on 17 December 2025 to promote institutional partnerships and localization of SDGs. The programme facilitated knowledge exchange among 18 faculty members belonging to Gandhigram Rural Institute and Sri Sairam Institutions, Chennai, focusing on best practices in teaching, research, governance, and community engagement. The sessions highlighted innovative UBA interventions, participatory extension models, and strategies for integrating SDGs into academic and field-level activities.

3.3 Two-Day Workshop on Orientation and Project Proposal Development

A two-day workshop on Orientation and Project Proposal Development under UBA was conducted on 27–28 February 2026 for Coordinators of Participating Institutions in southern Tamil Nadu. The workshop aimed to enhance competencies in

designing structured, evidence-based, and fundable rural development projects. Thirty-two UBA Coordinators / faculty members participated in this programme.

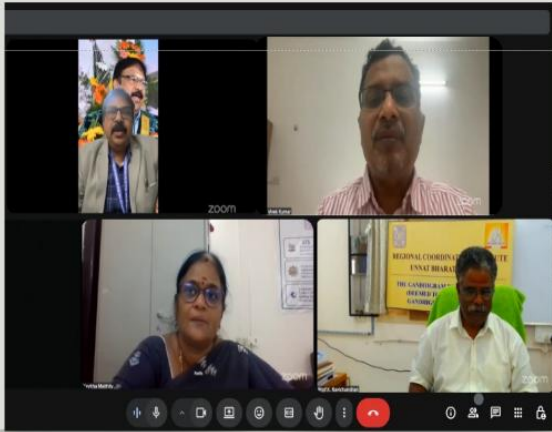
Technical sessions by eminent experts focused on innovation-driven development, start-up promotion, and research funding strategies. The sessions provided practical insights into proposal writing, funding convergence, and entrepreneurship development, with emphasis on aligning projects with Gram Panchayat priorities and national development frameworks.

A key technical session was delivered by Mr. Sundaramurthy T. K., Former Mission Director, Indian Space Research Organisation, Bengaluru, on the theme “Promotion of Start-ups for UBA Gram Panchayat Development.” Drawing from his extensive experience in India’s space programme, he highlighted the importance of innovation, dedication, and technological advancement in addressing development challenges. He encouraged participants to promote start-up culture in rural areas by transforming innovative ideas into viable enterprises aligned with Gram Panchayat development under UBA. Another important technical session was delivered by Prof. Sunil Nautiyal from the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru, on “Attracting Funding for Rural Health Sector Research.” His presentation highlighted the structural inequalities present in rural health systems and the need to integrate traditional medicinal knowledge with modern healthcare frameworks. He emphasised the importance of adopting interdisciplinary, mixed-methods research approaches that combine household surveys, participatory documentation, and qualitative analysis to generate context-sensitive evidence for policy and programme design. Prof. Nautiyal also provided detailed guidance on preparing strong and fundable research proposals, outlining essential components such as clear objectives, robust methodology, realistic budgeting, measurable outcomes, and sustainability planning. Overall, the technical sessions provided valuable insights into innovation-driven rural development, research proposal preparation, and funding convergence strategies. The workshop significantly enhanced the participants’ understanding of designing evidence-based, outcome-oriented projects and strengthened their capacity to implement impactful rural development initiatives under the UBA framework.

Above all, these workshops collectively contributed to:

- 1) Strengthening institutional capacities for rural development planning and implementation

UBA- RCI Workshops 2025-26



An online National Conference on 11 November 2025 to commemorate UBA Foundation Day

“Advancing SDGs through Academic Synergy” was organised on 17 December 2025 to promote institutional partnerships and localization of SDGs between GRI & Sairam Institutions, Chennai



A two-day workshop on Orientation and Project Proposal Development under UBA was conducted on 27–28 February 2026 for Coordinators of Participating Institutions in southern Tamil Nadu held at GRI

The Award Ceremony for Best-Performing Participating Institutions (2024–2025) was held on 22 December 2025 held at GRI.



- 2) Enhancing convergence with Government schemes, CSR agencies, and funding institutions
- 3) Promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, and evidence-based project design
- 4) Improving the quality and impact of UBA interventions across participating institutions

4. Recognition & Institutional Achievements

The Award Ceremony for Best-Performing Participating Institutions (2024–2025) was held on 22 December 2025 at the Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram (*Table – 1*). The event marked a significant milestone in recognising excellence in community engagement and rural development under the UBA

The ceremony brought together distinguished dignitaries, academic leaders, institutional coordinators, and stakeholders, reflecting a shared commitment to advancing inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven rural transformation. The recognition of high-performing institutions served as a catalyst for promoting quality, innovation, and accountability in UBA implementation.

In his address, Dr. K. Ravichandran, Regional Coordinator, articulated the transformative vision of UBA as a national initiative that leverages the strengths of Higher Education Institutions for holistic rural development. He emphasised experiential learning, interdisciplinary engagement, and technology-driven interventions aligned with the NEP 2020.

Dr. N. Panchanatham, Vice-Chancellor, GRI, highlighted the role of Higher Education Institutions as agents of change, capable of addressing grassroots challenges through the integration of academic knowledge, research, and extension activities.

The Chief Guest, Shri M. Venkatachalam, Director (Power), NLC India Limited, Government of India, Neyveli, underscored the importance of socio-economic empowerment as the foundation for sustainable rural development. He emphasised the need for technology integration, awareness creation, and inclusive growth rooted in Gandhian principles.

Table – 1 List of Best Performing UBA Participating Institutions

S. No	Name of the Participating Institutions	Name of the Coordinators
1	Holy Cross Home Science College, Thoothukudi	Dr. N. N. Krishnaveni
2	DMI Engineering College, Kanyakumari	Dr. S. Regupathy

3	Sethu Institute of Technology, Virudhunagar	Dr. K. Sivarama Sundaram
4	Arul Anandar College, Madurai	Dr. G. Ramkumar
5	Saraswathinarayanan College, Madurai	Dr. I. Vijayakumar
6	St. Xavier's College, Tirunelveli	Dr. M. Johnson Gritto
7	St. Mary's College, Thoothukudi	Dr. S. Bulomine Regi
8	Madurai Institute of Social Sciences, Madurai	Mrs. R. Rajalakshmi
9	Sarada Krishna Homoeopathic Medical College, Kanyakumari	Dr. N. V. Sugathan
10	Alagappa Chettiar Government College of Engineering and Technology, Sivagangai	Dr. K. T. Loganathan
11	Fatima College, Madurai	Dr. J. Asnet Mary
12	Holy Cross College, Nagercoil	Dr. S. Panimaya Mercy

The Guest of honour, Shri K. Anandaramanujam, CEO, NLC Tamil Nadu Power Limited, appreciated the commitment of Participating Institutions and stressed the importance of continued innovation, collaboration, and sustained engagement in rural transformation initiatives. Key outcomes of the Award Ceremony were:

- 1) Recognition of 12 outstanding Participating Institutions, promoting a culture of excellence in rural development initiatives
- 2) Strengthened institutional motivation and commitment towards outcome-oriented development interventions in villages.
- 3) Enhanced collaboration among Higher Education Institutions, CSR partners, and development stakeholders
- 4) Reinforced the integration of innovation, technology, and sustainable practices in grassroots interventions
- 5) Promoted experiential and community-based learning, aligned with NEP 2020

The recognition initiative has significantly contributed to:

- 1) Establishing benchmarks for quality and performance of UBA Participating Institutions
- 2) Encouraging replication of best practices across Participating Institutions

- 3) Strengthening the role of RCI - UBA- GRI as a facilitator of excellence and institutional development

5. Evaluation & Policy Engagements

The RCI - UBA- GRI submitted itself in evaluation processes and national-level policy dialogues during 2025–2026, contributing to the strengthening of the UBA framework. These engagements enhanced institutional credibility, ensured accountability, and facilitated evidence-based improvements in programme implementation.

5.1 UBA Evaluation Team Visit to Gandhigram

As part of the national evaluation process, Prof. Saket Bihari, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, visited the GRI, Gandhigram on 01 October 2025 to review the progress and impact of UBA activities implemented by RCI - UBA- GRI and its Participating Institutions. The evaluation process included:

- 1) Presentation of RCI - UBA- GRI achievements and regional coordination efforts
- 2) Showcasing of innovative and community-driven projects by Participating Institutions
- 3) Interaction with UBA Coordinators, faculty members, students, and stakeholders
- 4) Review of field-level interventions and institutional engagement mechanisms

The RCI - UBA- GRI presented its extensive outreach covering 179 Participating Institutions along with key initiatives in rural livelihoods, entrepreneurship development, and convergence with national programmes. The evaluation highlighted several innovative interventions, including:

- 1) Mushroom cultivation and value-added enterprises
- 2) Millet-based food production
- 3) Seaweed cultivation and orchid farming
- 4) Panchayat-level governance and participatory development models

Student engagement through field-based learning, village surveys, and skill development initiatives was recognised as a critical strength, contributing to both academic enrichment and community impact. The evaluation provided strategic directions for strengthening UBA:

- ✓ *Need for Enhanced Financial Support:* UBA, being a centrally funded initiative, requires increased financial allocation to expand its outreach and deepen impact.
- ✓ *Importance of Convergence:* Strong convergence with Government programmes was emphasised to optimise resources and avoid duplication.
- ✓ *Institutional Recognition Mechanisms:* The need to introduce academic credit and recognition systems for faculty contributions to UBA activities was highlighted.
- ✓ *Advancing Towards UBA 3.0:* Recommendations included expanding coverage, strengthening institutional mechanisms, and enhancing funding support while maintaining Gandhian principles of community engagement.
- ✓ *Promotion of Innovation and Technology:* Establishment of institutional innovation labs in UBA Participating Institutions was suggested to address grassroots challenges through technology-driven solutions.

5.2 Institutional Engagements

The RCI - UBA- GRI actively participated in national and regional platforms during 2025–2026 to strengthen institutional linkages, promote knowledge exchange, and enhance convergence with key stakeholders. These engagements contributed to expanding the visibility of UBA initiatives and reinforcing the role of Higher Education Institutions in rural development.

1) Devendra Bhai Centenary Celebrations

Dr. K. Ravichandran, Regional Coordinator, participated in the valedictory function of the Devendra Bhai Centenary Celebrations held on 31 August 2025 at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The programme commemorated the legacy and contributions of Devendra Bhai to education and rural development and served as a platform for intellectual deliberations among academicians, researchers, and institutional leaders. The event facilitated knowledge exchange and strengthened collaborative networks among institutions engaged in rural transformation initiatives. On this occasion, he presented a paper titled ‘Role of Science and Technology Institutions in Implementing Technologies for Holistic Rural Development’.

5.2.1 CSR Meet & Capacity Building Workshop

Dr. K. Ravichandran represented the Gandhigram Rural Institute at the CSR Meet and Capacity Building Workshop on “*Strengthening Grassroots Development through Science & Technology Interventions*”, held on 11–12 September 2025 at

CSIR–NIScPR, New Delhi. During the event, two UBA-based livelihood proposals were presented:

- 1) Income generation for women through oyster mushroom cultivation in Tirunelveli district
- 2) Promotion of millet-based value-added food enterprises for enhancing rural livelihoods

These proposals demonstrated sustainable, community-driven models aligned with CSR priorities and national development goals.

2) Regional Workshop on UBA: Prospects and Challenges – IIT Palakkad

The Regional Workshop on “*UBA: Prospects and Challenges*” was organised by IIT Palakkad on 25 September 2025 at Government Victoria College, Kerala. The workshop brought together UBA coordinators and faculty members from Higher Education Institutions in the region to discuss implementation challenges and future opportunities. Dr. K. Ravichandran served as resource person and highlighted the role of UBA in strengthening the interface between institutions and rural communities, with emphasis on village surveys, participatory planning, and entrepreneurship development.

3) Orientation Programme on UBA and Rural Development

An orientation programme was conducted at the Madurai Institute of Social Sciences (31.10.2025) to sensitise 30 faculty members and coordinators of UBA Participating Institutions, in and around Madurai District, on rural development approaches. The programme focused on motivating academic institutions to actively engage in rural development activities and strengthening their participation in UBA initiatives.

The institutional engagements during the year contributed to:

- ✓ Expanding national and regional networks for collaboration
- ✓ Enhancing the visibility and credibility of RCI - UBA- GRI at national platforms
- ✓ Facilitating knowledge exchange and adoption of best practices across institutions

4) UBA Workshop held at IIT Jodhpur on 02.12.2025

Dr. K. Ravichandran, Regional Coordinator, delivered a lecture on “Transformative Community Engagement by Higher Educational Institutions: The

UBA Model for Decentralized Rural Development” at a workshop organized by Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur on 2 December 2025. He emphasised that development interventions undertaken by UBA Participating Institutions should be aligned with Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) to ensure relevance and sustainability. He also highlighted the importance of convergence with schemes and programmes of government and non-government organisations to enhance the effectiveness and impact of rural development initiatives.

5) Resource Person Engagement in UGC–UBA – FDP - CBPR

Dr. K. Ravichandran served as a Resource Person in the UGC-sponsored Six-Day Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) on Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), organized at five universities across India under UBA. He delivered lecture in the programme held at MMTTC, Mizoram University from 13–14 March 2026 and also delivered an online lecture on 23.03.2026 for the FDP at BPS Mahila Vishwavidyalaya. His sessions focused on teaching the UGC two-credit course on “Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement,” designing student internships, and evaluating community engagement outcomes. He emphasized the role of HEIs in Gram Panchayat development through UBA, livelihood identification, and convergence with RGSA and Government initiatives. He also highlighted rural entrepreneurship models, institutional convergence, and the need for interdisciplinary, student-centric community engagement, while encouraging wider institutional participation in UBA

6) Resource Person Contribution in STTP on “Gyaan Setu 2047

RCI–UBA SVNIT, Surat organized a One-Week Short-Term Training Programme (STTP) titled “*Gyaan Setu 2047: The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan - Knowledge Bridge.*” Dr. K. Ravichandran served as a resource person and delivered an online lecture on “*Livelihood Mission under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan: Strategies for Strengthening Rural Livelihoods through Higher Education Institutions.*” He highlighted the potential role of UBA in promoting sustainable rural livelihoods, drawing on the experiences of Participating Institutions in the GRI region. He emphasized UBA as a convergence platform and encouraged institutions to align their initiatives with various mission programmes of the Government of India.

6. Field Visits and Monitoring

The RCI - UBA- GRI undertook a series of field visits during 2025–2026 to monitor the implementation of UBA initiatives, assess field-level outcomes, and

strengthen institutional and community engagement. These visits enabled real-time evaluation, facilitated direct interaction with stakeholders, and ensured alignment of interventions with local development priorities and Gram Panchayat Development Plans.

6.1 Field Visit to NTPL, Thoothukudi

Dr. K. Ravichandran, Regional Coordinator, visited NLC Tamil Nadu Power Limited (NTPL), Thoothukudi (25.06.2025), to explore avenues for CSR support for UBA initiatives. The discussions focused on identifying potential areas for collaboration, mobilising financial and technical resources, and aligning CSR interventions with sustainable livelihood development in UBA villages.

6.2 Field Visit to Kanyakumari District

A field visit was undertaken to Kanyakumari District (21.07.2025) to review ongoing UBA projects and assess their outcomes. The visit included monitoring of projects such as veterinary homoeopathy interventions and interactions with beneficiaries, faculty coordinators, and community stakeholders.

6.3 Field Visit to Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, and Virudhunagar Districts

The Regional Coordinator visited Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, and Virudhunagar districts (30 - 31.07.2025) to monitor ongoing UBA projects and strengthen institutional engagement at the grassroots level. The visit involved interactive sessions with faculty teams, coordinators, and stakeholders to review programme implementation, address operational challenges, and improve documentation and outcome orientation.

6.4 Field Visit to Salem District

A field visit to Salem District was undertaken to monitor village-level UBA interventions (*Government Arts College, Salem on 07.03.2026*) and strengthen institutional-community linkages. The visit included interaction with faculty coordinators, student volunteers, community representatives, and beneficiaries to assess programme effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. These field visits collectively contributed to:

- ✓ Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- ✓ Improving quality and effectiveness of programme implementation
- ✓ Enhancing community participation and stakeholder engagement
- ✓ Ensuring alignment of UBA activities with Gram Panchayat Development Plans

RCI - GRI Field visits 2025-26



Served as resource person on The Regional Workshop on “UBA: Prospects and Challenges” was organised by IIT Palakkad on 25 September 2025 at Government Victoria College, Kerala.

An orientation programme was conducted at the Madurai Institute of Social Sciences (31.10.2025) to sensitise faculty members and coordinators of UBA Participating Institutions,



Visit to Salem District was undertaken to monitor village-level UBA interventions (Government Arts College, Salem on 07.03.2026) and strengthen institutional-community linkages.

As part of the national evaluation process, Prof. Saket Bihari, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, visited the GRI, Gandhigram on 01 October 2025 to review the progress and impact of UBA activities implemented by RCI - UBA- GRI and its Participating Institutions.



- ✓ Reinforcing the role of RCI - UBA- GRI as a facilitator of field-level impact and institutional coordination

7. Impact

The quantitative (*Table – 2*) and qualitative (*Table – 3*) impact of the programmes of RCI - UBA- GRI is assessed across core functional domains, reflecting its effectiveness in mentoring institutions, addressing regional challenges, and strengthening rural development systems. This assessment is aligned with SDG frameworks, highlighting outcome-level transformations beyond quantitative outputs.

Table - 2 Quantitative Impact

Core Functional Domains of RCI	Indicator	Quantitative Achievement (2025–2026)	RCI - UBA- GRI Role Alignment & Remarks
Institutional Mentoring & Capacity Building	Participating Institutions Mentored	179	Direct fulfilment of RCI mandate to groom, guide, and build capacities of Participating Institutions
	Districts Covered	11	Ensuring balanced regional coordination and effective implementation across districts
	Faculty & Stakeholders Trained	304	Strengthening institutional competencies in project planning, implementation, and outcome-based rural development
	Capacity Building Workshops Conducted	3	Enhancing skills in proposal development, innovation, and convergence strategies

Regional Challenge Identification & Showcase Development	CSR / Livelihood Proposals Facilitated	5	Supporting development of scalable solutions addressing the identified regional sectoral challenge of sustainable rural livelihoods viz., Employment generation through skill training.
	Livelihood Models Promoted (Mushroom, Bakery, Millet-based, Local resource-based value-added commodities)	4 Key Models	Demonstration and diffusion of replicable, region-specific livelihood interventions across Participating Institutions
Monitoring, Coordination & System Strengthening	Villages Covered	895	Expansion of grassroots outreach through coordinated PI engagement and village cluster approach
	Field Monitoring Visits Conducted	3 visits (covering multiple PIs)	Strengthening monitoring, evaluation, documentation, and accountability in line with UBA framework
Performance Management & Institutional Motivation	Best Performing PIs Recognised	12	Promoting excellence, benchmarking, and performance-based evaluation among Participating Institutions

Convergence, Partnerships & Resource Mobilisation	Institutional / CSR Convergence Initiatives Facilitated	5 Skill Training Programmes	Strengthening convergence through CSR-supported skill training and collaboration with Government Departments and stakeholders
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Table – 3 Qualitative Impact

Core Functional Domains of RCI	Impact	Contribution to SDGs
Institutional Mentoring & Capacity Building	The RCI - UBA- GRI strengthened Participating Institutions in outcome-oriented project design, implementation, and documentation, enabling effective academic–community integration. Institutions have evolved into proactive rural development facilitators with enhanced capacity to design and implement sustainable interventions.	SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 17 (Partnerships)
Regional Challenge Identification & Showcase Development	The RCI - UBA- GRI identified sustainable rural livelihoods (Employment generation through skill training) as a key regional sectoral challenge and promoted scalable enterprise models such as mushroom cultivation, bakery units, and millet-based value addition. These interventions demonstrated replicable “RCI Showcase” solutions with strong potential for diffusion across villages and institutions.	SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry & Innovation)
Monitoring, Coordination & System Strengthening	Structured monitoring through field visits and institutional reviews strengthened accountability, documentation, and alignment with Gram Panchayat Development Plans. The RCI also improved reporting systems in line with UBA monitoring requirements, enhancing overall programme efficiency and transparency.	SDG 11 (Sustainable Communities), SDG 16 (Strong Institutions)

Performance Management & Institutional Motivation	Recognition of best-performing Participating Institutions fostered a culture of excellence, innovation, and outcome-driven performance. This has encouraged adoption of best practices and strengthened institutional accountability within the UBA framework.	SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 16 (Strong Institutions)
Convergence, Partnerships & Resource Mobilisation	The RCI – UBA - GRI enabled convergence through CSR-supported skill training programmes and collaboration with Government Departments and stakeholders. This facilitated integrated planning, improved resource mobilisation, and strengthened the ecosystem for sustainable rural development.	SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), SDG 8 (Economic Growth)

The RCI – UBA - GRI has effectively fulfilled its mandate under the UBA by demonstrating strong performance in institutional mentoring, regional challenge identification, and coordinated implementation across Participating Institutions. Through measurable outreach, scalable livelihood interventions, and strengthened monitoring systems, the RCI has operationalised its core roles as envisaged in the RCI Guidelines. Overall, the RCI – UBA - GRI has achieved a high degree of alignment with its prescribed functions, emerging as a model Regional Coordinating Institution contributing to sustainable and inclusive rural development. The RCI – UBA - GRI has effectively operationalised its mandate under the UBA by transforming Participating Institutions into catalysts of sustainable rural livelihoods through coordinated mentoring, scalable interventions, and convergence-driven development.

8. Strategic Priorities and Way Forward

The strategic priorities of the RCI – UBA - GRI are oriented towards strengthening impact-driven rural development and enhancing the role of Higher Education Institutions as catalysts for sustainable transformation. Building on the achievements of 2025–2026, the RCI – UBA - GRI will focus on scaling successful models, deepening institutional engagement, and strengthening outcome-oriented implementation frameworks.

8.1 Scaling of Proven Livelihood Models

The RCI – UBA - GRI will prioritise the expansion of successful livelihood interventions, particularly in areas such as (1) Mushroom cultivation, (2) Millet-based enterprises, (3) Bakery units and (4) Value addition to local resources. Efforts will be made to replicate these models across a larger number of UBA villages, with a focus on enhancing income generation, sustainability, and community ownership.

8.2 Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The RCI – UBA - GRI will develop and institutionalise robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure (1) Transparency and accountability in programme implementation, (2) Alignment with GPDP, and (3) Measurement of outcomes and long-term impact. This will include the introduction of structured indicators, periodic assessments, and digital monitoring tools.

8.3 Expanding CSR and Funding Convergence

The RCI – UBA - GRI will intensify efforts to strengthen partnerships with (1) CSR agencies, (2) Government Departments, and (3) Financial Institutions. The focus will be on mobilising financial and technical resources to support scalable rural development initiatives, particularly in livelihood promotion, skill development, and entrepreneurship.

8.4 Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Academic Integration

The RCI – UBA - GRI will continue to strengthen the capacities of Participating Institutions through:

- ✓ Advanced training programmes
- ✓ Exposure to best practices
- ✓ Integration of UBA activities into academic curricula

8.5 Strategic Direction

The future strategy of the RCI – UBA - GRI is guided by the principles of:

- 1) Scalability – Expanding successful interventions across regions
- 2) Sustainability – Ensuring long-term impact and community ownership
- 3) Convergence – Integrating efforts of multiple stakeholders for rural development
- 4) Innovation – Promoting creative and technology-driven solutions
- 5) Inclusiveness – Ensuring participation of all sections of society

9. Success Stories

9.1. Seaweed-Based Livelihood Development Project under NCDC–PMMSY

The Regional Coordinating Institution, The Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed to be University), Gandhigram, implemented a startup-oriented project titled *“Production of Seaweed-Based Plant Growth Promoters, Biopesticides and Edible Coating Blends for Fruits and Vegetable Preservation for the Livelihood Development of Fisherfolk”* with financial assistance of ₹50.05 lakh from the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), New Delhi, under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). Initiated on 07.01.2023, the project aimed to harness the economic potential of seaweed resources along the Tamil Nadu coast through value addition, technology transfer, and entrepreneurship development among fisherfolk and coastal communities.

Capacity building formed a core component of the initiative. A total of 15 training programmes were conducted, benefiting 619 fisherfolk and women SHG members, with a focus on seaweed processing, production of plant growth promoters, biopesticides, edible coatings, and entrepreneurship development. The project also facilitated exposure visits, stakeholder consultations, and technology demonstrations, resulting in enhanced awareness and readiness among beneficiaries to initiate seaweed-based enterprises. The infrastructure development and pilot operations were successfully completed by July 2024.

The project established a pilot-scale processing and incubation facility at GRI, enabling the production of eco-friendly agricultural inputs and post-harvest solutions. Through strong convergence with UBA Participating Institutions and coastal stakeholders, the initiative integrated training, technology demonstration, and enterprise promotion, thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities.

By 2025–26, the facility has been evolved into a functional Startup Incubation Centre, supporting more than 20 industries and startups, along with organic farmers. The Centre also serves as a hub for innovation, product development, and interdisciplinary research for students and research scholars, thereby demonstrating a sustainable and scalable model aligned with NEP 2020, the SDGs, and Viksit Bharat @ 2047. The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboard presented below highlights the major achievements of this project.

Core Domain	Indicator	Achievements	Remarks
Project Establishment	Establishment of seaweed-based startup facility	01 facility established and operational	Successfully upgraded into Startup Incubation Centre
Infrastructure Development	Installation of processing equipment (spray dryer, fermenter, pulveriser)	Fully installed and functional	Enables end-to-end processing and product development
Capacity Building	Number of training programmes conducted	15 programmes conducted	Exceeded target; strong outreach through UBA network
Beneficiary Coverage	Number of beneficiaries trained	619 beneficiaries trained	Includes fisherfolk and women SHG members
Geographical Outreach	Coverage of coastal districts through UBA PIs	Multiple districts covered (Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Kanniyakumari, etc.)	Effective convergence with UBA Participating Institutions
Livelihood Promotion	Adoption of seaweed-based enterprise activities	Multiple beneficiaries expressed readiness for enterprise	Indicates strong livelihood potential
Industry Linkages	Industries/startups utilized this facility during 2025-26	20+ industries/startups	Demonstrates industry relevance and demand
Research & Innovation	Utilization by students/research scholars	Regular usage by students, researchers, and farmers	Established as innovation and research hub
Technology Demonstration	Demonstration of seaweed-based products	Multiple products demonstrated (biofertilizers, edible coatings, etc.)	Supports technology transfer and enterprise development
Revenue Generation	Income from user charges and training	Revenue generated (approx. ₹30,000 as net revenue in initial phase)	Indicates movement towards financial sustainability

Institutional Convergence	Integration with schemes (UBA, PMMSY, Cooperatives)	Strong convergence achieved	Multi-stakeholder implementation model
Sustainability & Scaling	Transition to incubation model	Successfully operationalized incubation centre	Scalable and replicable model for coastal regions

9.2. Orchid Cultivation–Based Livelihood Development Initiative under TAHDCO

The RCI-GRI, Gandhigram, implemented a startup project titled *“Empowering Tribal Women in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, with Employment and Income Generation through Orchid Cultivation and Value-Added Activities”*, sponsored by Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation, Government of Tamil Nadu, with the financial assistance of 14.04 lakh. It focused on promoting orchid cultivation as a sustainable livelihood model among tribal women of the Paliyar community in hamlets in the Dindigul district.

Key interventions included hands-on training in advanced propagation techniques, distribution of orchid saplings, containers, trays, growth regulators, and maintenance kits. Continuous field monitoring and technical support ensured effective adoption of scientific cultivation practices, including disease management and post-harvest handling. Institutional convergence was strengthened through a formal MoU between TAHDCO and GRI.

A total of 480 tribal women were trained over one year through structured capacity-building programmes that included practical sessions, field demonstrations, and continuous mentoring. Each beneficiary received approximately 250 orchid saplings, which facilitated the establishment of decentralised cultivation units. The project also established market linkages with private traders and export-oriented agencies, ensuring sustainable income generation and forward market integration.

The initiative resulted in the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and the establishment of orchid cultivation units across the target region. It is estimated to generate an annual income of approximately ₹2.75 lakh per beneficiary, thereby significantly improving household livelihoods. Additionally, the project has created indirect employment opportunities for over 500 individuals across allied sectors such

as transportation, marketing, and agri-based services. A Model Orchid Training Centre has been established at GRI to support ongoing training, demonstration, and scaling of the initiative.

10. Conclusion

The RCI – UBA - GRI demonstrated significant progress and strategic leadership during the year 2025–2026 in advancing the objectives of the UBA. Through the effective coordination of 179 Participating Institutions, the RCI - GRI has strengthened the interface between Higher Education Institutions and rural communities, thereby enhancing the scope and impact of community-engaged development.

The RCI – UBA - GRI adopted a balanced and integrated approach encompassing capacity building, field-level monitoring, institutional collaboration, CSR convergence, and policy engagement. The successful organisation of capacity-building programmes, combined with systematic field visits and evaluation processes, has contributed to strengthening institutional capacities, improving programme implementation, and ensuring accountability.

The emphasis on rural livelihood promotion, women’s empowerment, and entrepreneurship development, has contributed to fostering sustainable and locally relevant development models. These interventions have enhanced community participation, strengthened institutional linkages, and promoted experiential learning among students.

The RCI – UBA – GRI’s active engagement with national institutions and its contribution to policy-level discussions have further reinforced its role as a key stakeholder in shaping the future direction of UBA. The integration of development interventions with national priorities such as the NEP 2020, SDGs 2030, and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 underscores the strategic relevance of its initiatives.

Overall, the achievements of 2025–2026 position the RCI – UBA - GRI as a leading Regional Coordinating Institute and a model for academic–community engagement in India. The Institute will continue to build on this momentum by scaling successful interventions, strengthening monitoring frameworks, and enhancing convergence with stakeholders to achieve sustainable and inclusive rural transformation.