

Reimagining District Planning in India: A Convergence-Based Framework for Rural Development, Tribal Welfare and Mining-Affected Areas

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Abstract: District planning in India has historically suffered from departmental fragmentation, inadequate fund convergence, and institutional bypass of community governance structures, particularly in tribal and mining-affected regions. This paper draws upon three years of consultancy experience across multiple departments of the Government of Jharkhand — including Rural Development, Tribal Welfare, Mines and Geology, and Social Welfare — to diagnose structural inadequacies in district-level planning and propose a convergence-based framework to address them. Jharkhand presents a uniquely complex governance challenge: it hosts 28 Scheduled Tribe groups constituting 26.2% of its population, contains some of India's most mineral-rich districts, and has significant PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996) jurisdictions where community governance rights remain substantially unrealised. Through field observations, departmental data analysis, and case studies from West Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Khunti, and Dumka districts, five critical convergence deficits are identified: (i) non-integration of District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds with mainstream welfare schemes; (ii) institutional bypass of Gram Sabha in tribal planning; (iii) beneficiary duplication across departments; (iv) absence of block-level coordination mechanisms; and (v) inadequate spatial targeting of mining-displaced communities. The proposed Convergence-Based Framework for District Planning (CBFDP) introduces a three-tier District Convergence Planning Architecture anchored at the Gram Sabha level in Scheduled V areas and integrating twelve major central and state schemes. The paper concludes with institutional, financial, and technology-enabled recommendations for scaling this framework across mining-affected tribal districts of Jharkhand and similar geographies across India.

Index-Terms: District Planning, Convergence Framework, Tribal Welfare, District Mineral Foundation, PESA Act, Jharkhand, Mining-Affected Communities, Rural Development, PMKKKY, JSLPS

I. INTRODUCTION

India's district is simultaneously the most functional unit of administration and the most overlooked unit of planning. While the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) envisioned a bottom-up planning architecture rooted in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and subsequent legislative milestones — the PESA Act (1996), the Forest Rights Act (2006), and the MMDR Amendment Act (2015) — progressively expanded the governance and resource rights of rural and tribal communities, the reality on the ground in mineral-rich, tribal-majority states like Jharkhand tells a starkly different story.

This paper emerges from the author's engagement as a development consultant supporting planning processes, programme implementation, and monitoring frameworks across multiple departments in Jharkhand between 2020 and 2023. Working across the departments of Rural Development (MGNREGS and PMAY-G wings), Tribal Welfare, Social Welfare, and Mines and Geology, and with JSLPS (Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society), the author observed a recurring structural failure: schemes that on paper appeared interconnected and mutually reinforcing were in practice operating as isolated silos — each with separate planning calendars, distinct beneficiary databases, incompatible monitoring frameworks, and disconnected field staff structures.

The problem is particularly acute in three intersecting contexts: (a) tribal habitations in Scheduled V areas where constitutional protections exist on paper but governance bypass is routine; (b) mining-affected villages where displacement, environmental degradation, and livelihood destruction co-exist with significant public funds from District Mineral Foundation Trusts (DMFTs) that remain unspent or misdirected; and (c) remote pockets housing Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) who fall through every scheme's targeting net due to lack of documentation, bank access, and programme awareness.

The paper argues that the solution lies not in creating new programmes, but in fundamentally reimagining how district planning is structured — from a departmental allocation model to a convergence-based community planning model, with the Gram Sabha as the primary planning unit, the block as the integration node, and the district as the resource-pooling and performance-monitoring level.

II. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: JHARKHAND AS A STUDY CASE

Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar in November 2000, primarily to address the developmental aspirations of its large tribal population. The state spans 24 districts across the Chota Nagpur Plateau and Santhal Pargana divisions, with a total population of 3.29 crore (Census 2011). Scheduled Tribe communities constitute 26.2% of the population across 28 recognised tribal

groups, including eight Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs): Birhor, Asur, Baiga, Birjia, Hill Kharia, Korwa, Mal Paharia, and Savar.

Thirteen of Jharkhand's 24 districts are notified under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, making PESA 1996 applicable to their village-level governance. These include Khunti, Simdega, Gumla, Lohardaga, West Singhbhum, Saraikela-Kharsawan, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Chatra, Hazaribagh, Palamu, Latehar, and Ranchi. Despite the PESA Act being in force since 1996, Jharkhand notified its State PESA Rules only in 2022 — a 26-year gap that profoundly weakened the operationalisation of community governance rights.

The state is simultaneously one of India's most resource-rich and developmentally deficient. It accounts for approximately 40% of India's mineral wealth, including 32% of coal reserves, 25% of iron ore, 18% of copper ore, and significant deposits of bauxite (Lohardaga, Gumla), mica (Giridih, Koderma), and uranium (Jadugoda, East Singhbhum). This mineral wealth has, however, produced what economists describe as a 'resource curse': high extraction but persistently low human development. As of 2021–22, Jharkhand's Human Development Index ranks among the bottom three states nationally, with child stunting at 45.3% (NFHS-5, 2019–21) and a primary school dropout rate of 3.7% (UDISE+, 2020–21).

Table 1: DMF Collections Across Key Jharkhand Districts (as of March 2023)

District	Primary Mineral	DMF Collection (₹ Crore)	Utilisation Rate (%)
West Singhbhum	Iron Ore	1,247	52%
Dhanbad	Coal (Coking)	782	44%
Bokaro	Coal / Iron	624	56%
Lohardaga	Bauxite	391	39%
East Singhbhum	Iron Ore	354	61%
Ramgarh	Coal	289	48%
Chatra	Coal	214	33%

Source: District Mineral Foundation Trust Annual Reports, GoJ Department of Mines and Geology (2022–23); CAG Report No. 3 of 2022.

III. REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The literature on district planning in India is rich but scattered across administrative science, development economics, and political sociology. Bandyopadhyay (2003) described the district as 'the pivot of development administration in India' yet argued that it is consistently undermined by both centralisation from above (state capitals) and political capture at the local level. The Planning Commission's Guidelines for Integrated District Planning (2008) prescribed consolidated district

plans, but these remained largely aspirational — with most states producing district plans that were little more than aggregated departmental budgets with minimal inter-departmental coordination.

Sivaramakrishnan (2006) documented the institutional vacuum between state governments and local bodies in tribal areas, noting that PESA had created rights without the accompanying administrative architecture to exercise them. More recently, the Accountability Initiative's study (2018) on MGNREGS implementation in tribal districts found that despite being the largest wage employment scheme in the country, MGNREGS works in Scheduled V areas were frequently planned without linking to the agriculture, forest, and watershed priorities of Gram Sabhas.

On mining and development, Sahu (2014) conducted pioneering analysis of mineral governance in India, arguing that revenue extraction was systematically divorced from area development due to the absence of a spatial planning framework that could capture mineral revenues and redirect them to affected communities. The Hoda Committee Report (2006) on mining sector reforms had recommended such spatial convergence but was largely unimplemented until the MMDR Amendment in 2015 which mandated DMFTs.

Roy and Nielsen (2021), in their analysis of DMF implementation across six Indian states, found significant variation in governance quality, with Jharkhand performing below the national average in fund utilisation and community participation. They identified 'departmental turf protection' as the primary barrier to convergence — a finding strongly corroborated by this author's field experience.

Baviskar (2005), in her influential work on adivasi–environment conflicts, theorised the 'politics of invisibility' affecting tribal communities in resource extraction zones — a construct that helps explain why mining-affected communities remain the hardest to target in welfare planning. Shah (2010), in her ethnographic study of PVTGs in Jharkhand, documented how development programmes systematically excluded the most marginalised tribal groups due to geographic inaccessibility, documentation barriers, and cultural mismatches in programme design.

The literature converges on a consistent diagnosis: the problem is not the absence of schemes or funds, but the absence of a coherent convergence architecture that can translate constitutional entitlements and financial resources into on-ground outcomes for the most marginalised communities.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper draws on a combination of field consultancy observations, secondary data analysis, and structured case studies from four districts. Primary data was gathered through: (i) participation in Block Development Officer (BDO) coordination meetings across West Singhbhum, Khunti, and Dumka districts (2021–23); (ii) review of DMFT Annual Reports, district plan documents, and scheme convergence data from the Rural Development and Tribal Welfare departments; (iii) structured interaction with SHG federations under JSLPS in approximately 30 blocks; and (iv) observation of Gram Sabha proceedings in PESA-notified villages across Khunti and Simdega districts.

Secondary data sources include: Census 2011 (tribal population data), NFHS-5 (2019–21), CAG Report No. 3 of 2022 (Performance Audit of DMF, Jharkhand), JOHAR Project progress reports (2020–22), JSLPS Annual Report 2021–22, the Economic Survey of Jharkhand (2022–23), and published academic literature.

The analytical methodology is primarily qualitative, employing a convergence gap analysis framework that maps scheme objectives, implementing agencies, beneficiary criteria, and spatial footprint across 12 major central and state schemes operating in the study districts. This is supplemented by a comparative utilisation analysis of DMFT funds across seven districts, drawing on the CAG audit findings and departmental data.

V. STRUCTURAL DEFICITS IN CURRENT DISTRICT PLANNING ARCHITECTURE

Through field observation and data analysis across 2020–23, five structural deficits in Jharkhand's district planning architecture were systematically identified:

5.1 The Departmental Silo Problem

The most fundamental structural problem in Jharkhand's district planning is that development departments operate as near-autonomous entities with minimal lateral coordination. Each major scheme — MGNREGS (Rural Development), Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (TRIFED/Ministry of Tribal Affairs), PMAY-Gramin (Rural Development), PMFBY (Agriculture), Sahiya/ASHAs (Health), PVTG Special Central Assistance (Tribal Welfare) — operates with its own field staff, monitoring mechanism, and beneficiary database.

During consultancy review of programme implementation in the Kolhan region of West Singhbhum (2022), a recurring pattern was observed: a single tribal village would have MGNREGS job card holders not receiving PMAY-G housing benefits they were entitled to, while simultaneously being missed by tribal scholarship schemes because the Education Department's village roster had not been updated since 2018. The same village contained a DMF-funded community hall lying incomplete for 18 months because supervising authority rested with the Mines Department while land clearance remained with the Forest Department. These are not isolated incidents — they reflect a systemic absence of lateral coordination.

5.2 DMF Fund Governance Gaps

District Mineral Foundation Trusts, despite holding enormous financial resources, suffer from a structural disconnect from mainstream development planning. DMFT Governing Councils are typically chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, but meetings are irregularly held and dominated by infrastructure projects (roads, school buildings, anganwadi centres) rather than comprehensive community development.

Review of DMFT Annual Reports for Dhanbad (2020–22) revealed that over 60% of DMFT expenditure was on construction works, with minimal investment in health systems strengthening, livelihood support for displaced families, or environmental remediation — all explicitly high-priority areas under PMKKKY guidelines. More critically, there was no mechanism to link DMFT civil works plans with MGNREGS labour budgets. Consequently, DMFT works were tendered to private contractors rather than deploying mining-displaced households as MGNREGS wage labour — a missed convergence opportunity estimated at approximately ₹38 crore in foregone wages in FY 2021–22 in West Singhbhum alone.

5.3 PESA Implementation Gaps

Jharkhand notified its PESA Rules only in 2022 — 26 years after the national legislation. Even with the rules in place, the administrative machinery to operationalise Gram Sabha rights remains nascent. In Khunti district, where the Pathalgadi movement (2017–18) was partly a reaction to prolonged governance exclusion of tribal communities, only 34% of Gram Sabhas had held meetings to discuss annual development plans in 2021–22, per data from the Panchayati Raj Department. The primary reasons cited by BDOs and elected Mukhiyas were: absence of a standardised agenda format, lack of trained facilitators conversant in PESA rights, and no formal mechanism to transmit Gram Sabha resolutions into district plan processes.

5.4 Beneficiary Data Fragmentation

Each scheme maintains a separate beneficiary database with different enrollment criteria, documentation requirements, and verification processes. No single integrated beneficiary registry exists at the district or block level. In Gumla district, during preparation of a Block Development Plan under the JOHAR Project (2021), it was found that of approximately 4,500 tribal households across four gram panchayats of Raidih block, only 23% were receiving their full entitlement bundle (MGNREGS + PM-KISAN + PMAY-G + priority ration card), while 41% were receiving only one scheme benefit and 12% had no registered entitlements despite being eligible for multiple schemes.

5.5 Mining-Affected Community Invisibility

Mining-displaced and mining-affected communities occupy a governance no-man's land. Families who have lost agricultural land and forest access to mining operations but remain in the vicinity of mines — rather than being formally 'displaced' and relocated — are typically not classified as 'mining-affected' for PMKKKY purposes. The absence of any official enumeration of mining-affected families (as distinct from formally displaced families) means that PMKKKY benefits flow disproportionately to less-affected peripheral communities. Field review in West Singhbhum

(2022) found that of 312 habitations officially within mining lease areas, only 67 had been surveyed for PMKKKY entitlements.

VI. THE CONVERGENCE-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR DISTRICT PLANNING (CBFDP)

Drawing from the field analysis above and from convergence models tested elsewhere in India — Andhra Pradesh's community-managed convergence model, Odisha's PVTG convergence approach under PVTG-PM — the author proposes a Convergence-Based Framework for District Planning (CBFDP) structured around three interlocking tiers:

Table 2: Three-Tier Architecture of the CBFDP

Tier	Node	Key Functions	Anchor Institution
Tier I	GRAM SABHA (Planning Unit)	Community Needs-Assets Mapping Gram Sabha Development Resolution PESA-compliant facilitation	Scheduled V villages PVTG habitations
Tier II	BLOCK CONVERGENCE INTEGRATION UNIT	Unified Block Beneficiary Registry Annual Block Convergence Plan Joint Review Meetings	Block Development Office +5 dept. liaisons
Tier III	DISTRICT CONVERGENCE PLANNING AUTHORITY	District Convergence Fund District Dashboard Scheme convergence mandate	Deputy Commissioner DPC Revitalization

6.1 Tier I — The Gram Sabha as Planning Unit

In Scheduled V areas, the Gram Sabha must be repositioned as the constitutional centre of the planning process — not its ceremonial beginning. This requires three enabling instruments:

Convergence Facilitation Teams (CFTs): Multi-departmental field teams (one per cluster of 5 Gram Panchayats) comprising staff from Rural Development, Tribal Welfare, Agriculture, Health, and Forest departments, jointly trained to facilitate PESA-compliant Gram Sabha planning processes in the appropriate tribal language.

Community Needs-Assets Mapping (CNAM): A participatory mapping exercise that simultaneously documents resource assets (land classification, forest, water sources, mineral presence), existing scheme coverage, and unfilled development gaps. CNAM outputs feed directly into DMFT plans, MGNREGS shelf of works, and state plan allocations.

Gram Sabha Development Resolution (GSDR): A formalised document recording Gram Sabha planning decisions that carries statutory weight in resource allocation for DMFT, MGNREGS, and TSP (Tribal Sub-Plan) funds. This instrument gives Gram Sabhas a formal voice in the district planning cycle — currently absent in Jharkhand's administrative processes.

6.2 Tier II — Block Convergence Integration Unit (BCIU)

At the block level, a Block Convergence Integration Unit should function as the central coordination mechanism. The BCIU should be housed in the Block Development Office but include liaison officers from Tribal Welfare, Agriculture, Forest, and Health departments; maintain a Unified Block Beneficiary Registry (UBBR) integrating all scheme data with Aadhaar seeding; prepare an Annual Block Convergence Plan (ABCP) allocating resources from MGNREGS, DMFT, TSP, and state Rural Development funds in a geographically coordinated manner; and hold mandatory monthly Joint Review Meetings across all departmental field staff.

This model was piloted in modified form in three blocks of West Singhbhum (Tonto, Manoharpur, and Chakradharpur) during 2022–23. The creation of block-level coordination meetings and quarterly convergence reviews resulted in a measured 34% increase in scheme saturation in target villages within 18 months, as verified through beneficiary household surveys conducted by this author in Q1 FY 2023–24.

6.3 Tier III — District Convergence Planning Authority (DCPA)

At the district level, the District Planning Committee (DPC), mandated under Article 243ZD of the Constitution but largely dormant across most Jharkhand districts, should be revitalised and restructured as a District Convergence Planning Authority. The DCPA should: (a) be chaired by the Deputy Commissioner with mandatory monthly meetings; (b) carry statutory power to coordinate resource allocation across all central and state schemes operating in the district; (c) manage a District Convergence Fund (DCF) formed by pooling a designated portion of DMFT funds, TSP funds, and state discretionary development allocations; and (d) maintain a public District Dashboard for real-time monitoring of scheme convergence, accessible to civil society organisations and media for accountability.

VII. FIELD EVIDENCE: DISTRICT-LEVEL CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1 — West Singhbhum: Iron Ore Belt, Ho Communities, and the DMFT-MGNREGS Convergence Gap

West Singhbhum (WSS) is Jharkhand's largest district by area and the heartland of the Kolhan region — one of India's most significant iron ore mining zones. The district's population includes a substantial Ho tribal community (approximately 24%) alongside Munda and Birhor

groups. Major iron ore miners including SAIL (Bolani, Barsua mines), NMDC, and several private steel companies operate here.

DMFT collections in WSS stood at ₹1,247 crore by March 2023, the highest in the state. During consultancy engagement with the Deputy Commissioner's office for preparation of the DMFT Annual Plan 2022–23, several convergence gaps were identified: (i) Of 312 habitations officially within mining lease areas, only 67 had been surveyed for PMKKKY entitlements. (ii) The DMFT had allocated ₹145 crore for drinking water infrastructure with no convergence with Jal Jeevan Mission pipelines already sanctioned for the same areas, risking duplication of approximately ₹60–70 crore. (iii) MGNREGS had unutilised labour budget in seven blocks while DMFT-approved construction projects were being tendered to private contractors — a missed wage-employment opportunity estimated at ₹38 crore for mining-area households.

Outcome: Following consultancy-supported advocacy, a formal DMFT-MGNREGS Labour Convergence Protocol was adopted by the DMFT Governing Council in Q3 FY 2022–23, committing to route eligible DMFT civil works through MGNREGS labour where technically feasible.

Case Study 2 — Dhanbad: Coal Displacement and the Administrative Classification Trap

Dhanbad's coal belt — covering Jharia, Sindri, Topchanchi, and adjoining areas — has been continuously mined for over 120 years. The underground coal fire in the Jharia coalfields, one of the world's largest, has displaced approximately 2.5 lakh people across multiple rounds of forced relocation (BCCL estimate). The Jharia Rehabilitation Development Authority (JRDA) has been managing relocation to Belgaria township since 2009.

Through engagement with the Social Welfare Department and JRDA in 2021–22, this author identified a governance paradox: families relocated to Belgaria township were administratively assigned to Dhanbad Municipal Corporation wards, making them formally 'urban' and therefore ineligible for rural welfare schemes (PMAY-G, MGNREGS, PM-KISAN) — even as their actual livelihoods (informal coal picking, marginal cultivation) were essentially rural in character. Simultaneously, BCCL's CSR budget for community development had no coordination mechanism with JRDA, DMFT, or the Social Welfare Department.

This administrative classification trap meant that some of India's most economically vulnerable and environmentally displaced people were simultaneously excluded from rural schemes (classified urban) and from targeted urban welfare (not meeting urban poverty thresholds). A recommendation was made for a special State Cabinet notification creating a 'Mining-Displaced Households' category that would carry cross-classification entitlement eligibility — independent of urban/rural administrative designation.

Case Study 3 — Khunti: PESA, the Pathalgadi Movement, and Trust-Deficit Planning

Khunti district, 40 km from Ranchi, was the epicentre of the Pathalgadi movement of 2017–18, in which tribal communities erected stone tablets asserting PESA rights and declared Gram Sabhas as supreme authorities, refusing entry to government officials. The movement was a symptom of deep alienation rooted in decades of land acquisition, forest rights denial, and governance exclusion of Munda communities.

Through engagement with the Tribal Welfare Department's district office in Khunti (2022–23) for design of a convergence planning pilot, it was found that community trust-rebuilding required fundamentally different process design. Gram Sabha meetings succeeded only when convened by elected Mukhiyas — not by government officials. The presence of multiple officials was perceived as surveillance. Plans prepared outside Gram Sabhas had zero community ownership.

A pilot in eight villages of Torpa block redesigned the process so that community members themselves led the needs mapping, supported by JSLPS SHG federations as facilitators with minimal official presence. The result was eight formally adopted Gram Sabha Development Resolutions submitted to the block office — the first such formal planning submissions in Torpa block's administrative history. This demonstrated that convergence is possible even in deeply alienated communities when process design centres community voice.

Case Study 4 — Dumka: Santhal Pargana, JOHAR, and the Livelihood Convergence Model

Dumka district in Santhal Pargana is the emotional capital of Jharkhand's Santali community. The JOHAR Project (Jharkhand Opportunities for Harnessing Rural Growth), a World Bank-supported programme, operated extensively in Dumka with explicitly designed inter-departmental convergence, offering a positive model for scaling.

JOHAR's architecture bridged Agriculture (farm productivity), Tribal Welfare (FRA and forest produce entitlements), and JSLPS (SHG institutions) through common community institutions — Village Producer Groups and Farmer Producer Organisations. During engagement with the JSLPS/JOHAR district team in 2021–22, two convergence success stories were documented: (i) Mahua Value Chain: FRA pattas facilitated through Tribal Welfare were combined with JOHAR market linkage support and MGNREGS-funded drying platforms to create an integrated mahua processing livelihood for approximately 3,400 women across 18 gram panchayats; (ii) Lac Cultivation: Tribal Welfare Department subsidies for kusumi lac host plants were combined with JOHAR technical support and MGNREGS-funded plantation works, generating additional household income of approximately ₹1.2 crore across target villages in FY 2021–22.

The JOHAR convergence model demonstrates that when community institutions serve as the common anchoring point across departments, scheme convergence becomes operationally tractable — and generates outcomes greater than the sum of individual scheme parts.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

For the CBFDP to be operationalised at scale, a phased three-year implementation pathway is proposed:

Phase	Timeline	Key Actions	Lead Agency
Phase I: Administrative Groundwork	Year 1	Notification of PESA Operational Guidelines; BCIU setup in Scheduled V blocks; District Convergence Mapping Reports; State Planning Guidelines notification	Panchayati Raj Dept. + Finance Dept.
Phase II: Piloting	Year 2	Select 5 pilot districts; Train Convergence Facilitation Teams; Conduct CNAM across all GPs; Prepare pilot Annual Block Convergence Plans	DRDA + District Admin
Phase III: Scale-up	Year 3+	Legislative strengthening of DPCs; DMFT–District Plan integration; Operationalise District Convergence Fund; Deploy Unified Beneficiary Registry platform	State Cabinet + NIC / MeitY

IX. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on field evidence and analytical findings, the following specific recommendations are proposed for the Government of Jharkhand and for similarly placed mining-affected tribal states:

1. Operationalise PESA through Convergence: Issue Operational Guidelines under Jharkhand PESA Rules 2022 that explicitly mandate Gram Sabha Development Resolutions as binding inputs to DMFT, MGNREGS, and state plan resource allocation decisions at the block and district levels.
2. Create a Unified Tribal Beneficiary Database: Commission a single integrated database covering all ST households in Scheduled V districts, mapping current scheme coverage and unfilled entitlement gaps, updated biannually and linked to Aadhaar — ideally hosted under the NIC's e-District platform.

3. Issue a DMFT–MGNREGS Convergence Protocol: A formal inter-departmental circular should mandate that DMFT-funded civil works in mining-affected gram panchayats be executed through MGNREGS labour wherever technically feasible, with the block-level BCIU serving as the convergence coordinator.

4. Establish Block Convergence Integration Units: In all 13 Scheduled V districts, establish multi-departmental BCIUs with dedicated budget and staffing drawn from state finance, replacing current parallel monitoring structures of individual schemes with a unified coordination mechanism.

5. Conduct Mining-Affected Families Enumeration: Commission a comprehensive survey to officially enumerate all mining-affected families (not merely formally displaced persons) within a 5-kilometre radius of active mine leases, establishing the first-ever spatial baseline for PMKKKY entitlement delivery.

6. Anchor All Schemes through Community Institutions: Require all tribal welfare and rural development programmes to route community engagement through existing JSLPS SHG federations and JOHAR-supported community institutions, rather than creating parallel institutional structures that dilute community capacity.

7. Revitalise District Planning Committees: Issue a Government of Jharkhand notification activating DPCs in all 24 districts with a mandatory quarterly meeting schedule, a standard agenda covering convergence review, and a public district dashboard as a transparency and accountability mechanism.

X. CONCLUSION

The gap between Jharkhand's constitutional promise to its tribal communities and the lived reality of those communities is not primarily a resource gap. Jharkhand receives substantial central scheme funds, holds significant DMFT resources, and benefits from progressive legislation in PESA and FRA. The gap is architectural: it lies in the absence of a coherent, community-anchored convergence planning framework that can translate disaggregated resources into integrated development outcomes.

The Convergence-Based Framework for District Planning (CBFDP) proposed in this paper does not require new legislation or additional funds. It requires institutional willingness to break departmental silos, political resolve to operationalise PESA's community governance promise, and administrative capacity to implement multi-scheme convergence at the block level. The field evidence from West Singhbhum, Dumka, Khunti, and Dhanbad demonstrates that convergence is achievable when community institutions are empowered, coordination mechanisms are

formalised, and district-level leadership treats planning as a cross-departmental, community-driven function rather than a departmental exercise.

India's tribal and mining-affected districts deserve not just schemes — they deserve a coherent governance architecture that converges all available resources toward their sustained, self-determined development. Reimagining district planning through the convergence lens is not merely an administrative improvement; it is the constitutional imperative of our time.

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