PVTGs of Jharkhand, with their diminishing numbers and widely dispersed population have been facing multiple marginalization due to geographic and socio-economic exclusion and service gaps. National Health Mission, Jharkhand in collaboration with Ekjut is engaged in the scale-up of a tested participatory process to improve the health of mothers and newborns under the Facilitated Learning Action Group (FLAG project) across the state through the sahiya-sathis (ASHA facilitators) and sahiyas (ASHAs). Initially the program started from September 2015, in 06 blocks of 06 districts, which are called ‘learning sites’ and is being rolled out to other districts from March 2017 onwards.

A unique module of mobilizing communities called ‘Participatory Learning and Action’ (PLA) is used to train sahiya-sathis for conducting meetings every month in their respective villages. The sahiyas from nearby villages learn the process of conducting the meetings through observation and do similar meetings in their villages during the same month. It was realized during the intervention in the learning sites that, the sahiyas working in the PVTG areas needed more support because of barriers and issues that are distinctive to the communities, like, issues of accessibility due to hilly terrain, poor road condition, remote locations and use of several different dialects. This has encouraged Ekjut to explore further to understand their situation better through few focus group discussions with three ethnic groups of men and women in Godda district which has a majority population of PVTGs. The analysis gave a fairly good idea about their needs and a separate PLA module was designed and piloted in Godda district of Santhal Pargana region. As part of pilot, selected sahiya-sathis and sahiyas were trained to conduct the meetings and the learning informed in the development and designing of a refined module for PVTGs across Jharkhand. The suggestions from NHM officials in Godda district and Ranchi helped to further modify the module.