# GIS for Indian Renewables 2026: Site Selection, Land Risk, Yield and ROI

By Sudarshan Karweer · 18 September 2026 · growthifye.com

*How GIS platforms help Indian renewables cut land risk, improve siting, speed approvals and raise project ROI in 2026.*

India's renewable market in 2026 is no longer constrained only by module prices or debt availability. For many utility-scale and C&I projects, the earliest and biggest value leak sits upstream: poor site selection, weak land diligence, fragmented geo-data, and delayed evacuation planning. A solar or hybrid project can look attractive in a teaser deck and still fail in execution because the land parcel has title complexity, forest proximity, access-road gaps, substation congestion, flood exposure, or lower-than-expected generation once real terrain and curtailment factors are modelled.

This is where GIS software for energy companies has become commercially material. In India, GIS is no longer just a mapping layer used by survey teams. It is turning into a decision platform that combines land records, irradiation and wind layers, transmission infrastructure, topography, hydrology, environmental restrictions, logistics access, satellite imagery, and project-commercial assumptions into one workflow. For renewable developers, lenders, C&I offtakers, utilities and policymakers, the payoff is simple: fewer dead-end sites, faster approvals, better yield confidence, and lower development cost per MW successfully commissioned.

This article looks at how GIS platforms are being used in Indian renewables in 2026, the business case by stakeholder, the implementation model, and what ROI looks like in practice.

## Why GIS matters more in India in 2026

India's renewable build-out is scaling into more constrained geographies and more complex use cases. Standalone solar parks remain important, but growth is now spread across C&I open access, hybrid plants, wind-solar-storage combinations, repowering, distributed portfolios, transmission-constrained states, and projects requiring sharper environmental and social diligence.

Several 2026 market realities make GIS especially relevant:

- Land prices have risen sharply in high-demand renewable corridors of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- Evacuation readiness varies materially even within the same district depending on CTU/STU plans, bay availability, line loading and substation augmentation schedules.
- Open access economics for C&I buyers depend heavily on state-specific wheeling, banking, CSS and AS treatment, making location strategy more financially sensitive.
- Extreme weather scrutiny has increased after repeated flood, cyclone, heat and dust-loss events affecting generation and O&M assumptions.
- Lenders and investment committees are demanding tighter pre-FID diligence on land aggregation, encumbrances, terrain and permitting pathways.

A 250 MW solar project that loses six to nine months due to land-title defects or underestimated cut-and-fill costs can see a major hit to IRR even if capex per MW looks competitive on paper. Likewise, a C&I open-access portfolio spread across multiple states can destroy expected savings if projects are sited without

proper load-centre, network and policy overlays.

GIS reduces these errors before they become balance-sheet problems.

## What a modern GIS stack for energy companies includes

A useful GIS setup for an Indian renewable business is not just a map viewer. It should support a full development and diligence workflow. In practice, the stack usually combines:

- Base map and satellite imagery layers
- Cadastral and parcel-level land maps where available
- Revenue village boundaries, khasra or survey overlays depending on state systems
- DNI/GHI, wind-speed, temperature and soiling-risk layers
- Slope, elevation and terrain models from DEM data
- Floodplain, drainage and hydrology layers
- Forest, eco-sensitive zone, wildlife and CRZ proximity checks where relevant
- Road, rail and port access for logistics planning
- CTU/STU substations, transmission lines and planned evacuation corridors
- Load centres and DISCOM boundaries for C&I strategy
- Internal commercial layers such as target tariff, land cost, capex assumptions and expected CUF/PLF
- Workflow tools for site scoring, document capture, field-survey integration and management reporting

The strongest implementations also connect GIS to enterprise systems. For example, a developer may use [Data & analytics platforms](/coreservices/itconsulting/dataandanalyticsplatforms) to combine geo-spatial screening with commercial models, while integrating approved parcels into [ERP & asset management systems](/coreservices/itconsulting/erpandassetmanagementsystems) for downstream EPC, contracts, O&M and compliance workflows.

This connection is what turns GIS from a planning tool into an operating system for project origination.

## High-value use cases across the renewable lifecycle

### 1. Early-stage site screening

At origination stage, GIS helps teams screen hundreds of parcels or zones against technical and commercial filters in days rather than weeks. Instead of dispatching teams physically to every lead, developers can shortlist sites using criteria such as:

- Irradiation above project threshold
- Slope below grading threshold, often less than 3% to 5% depending on design
- Distance from substation within evacuation-cost limit
- Outside forest, wetland, flood-prone or protected zones
- Contiguous parcel potential adequate for target AC capacity
- Road access sufficient for module, transformer and crane logistics
- Low visible habitation or resettlement risk

This reduces the cost of false starts. If a company screens 50 candidate zones for a 100 MW project and only conducts detailed legal and physical diligence on the best 5 to 8, it can save substantial time and advisory

spend.

### 2. Land aggregation and title-risk management

Land aggregation remains one of the most difficult tasks in Indian renewables. Parcel fragmentation, inheritance claims, conversion issues, tenancy complications and mismatch between digital and ground records can all derail a project.

GIS does not replace legal diligence, but it improves control. Teams can map parcel adjacency, owner clusters, access corridors, right-of-way issues and no-go overlaps before negotiations go too far. This helps avoid a common failure pattern: acquiring a majority of a site but later discovering blocked access, missing internal connectivity or excluded high-ground parcels that compromise layout.

For lenders, geo-tagged land diligence creates a more auditable record. Credit teams increasingly value a parcel-level visual trail showing boundaries, ownership documents, site photos, restrictions and evacuation assumptions in one place.

### 3. Yield and design optimisation

Many feasibility models still use broad resource assumptions that understate terrain and micro-siting effects. GIS improves energy-yield confidence by combining topography, shading, drainage and weather history with plant layout options.

For solar, slope and aspect affect earthwork, row spacing and drainage design. For wind, access roads, crane paths and turbulence constraints can materially alter turbine positioning. For hybrid projects, GIS helps optimise the combined land layout, shared infrastructure and storage siting.

Even a 1% to 2% improvement in net generation estimate can be meaningful. For a 100 MW AC solar plant generating around 190 to 210 million units annually depending on location and DC ratio, a 1.5% gain could mean roughly 3 to 4 million additional units per year. At an effective realised tariff of Rs 2.8 to Rs 3.5 per kWh in many utility-scale contexts, that is around Rs 0.8 crore to Rs 1.4 crore of annual revenue impact before considering degradation and curtailment.

### 4. Evacuation and transmission planning

A technically strong site can still fail if evacuation planning is weak. GIS platforms now help developers and utilities evaluate:

- Distance to nearest feasible pooling station or substation
- Terrain and right-of-way risk for line routing
- Congestion indicators from known network conditions
- Planned transmission augmentation by CTU or STU
- State boundary implications for open access and offtake structuring

This is especially important for interstate sale projects and for C&I portfolios where delivered savings depend not only on generation cost but also on network charges and scheduling realities. A site that looks marginally cheaper on land may be inferior once line routing, bay augmentation and approval lead times are priced correctly.

### 5. ESG, permitting and policy screening

Environmental and social diligence has become more structured. GIS helps flag proximity to forests, eco-sensitive areas, wetlands, coastal zones, archaeological sites, dense habitation and competing land-use patterns. This enables developers to route projects away from probable conflict zones early.

For policymakers and utilities, GIS can support better renewable zoning. State agencies can identify lower-conflict renewable corridors, cluster evacuation planning and reduce speculative land banking in unsuitable areas.

## ROI: where the business case actually comes from

The ROI case for GIS in Indian energy is usually not about software licence savings. It comes from avoided mistakes and faster conversion.

Typical value levers include:

- 20% to 50% reduction in early-stage site visits through remote screening
- 30% to 60% faster shortlist creation for greenfield opportunities
- Lower legal and diligence spend on infeasible sites
- Fewer land aggregation surprises after term-sheet stage
- 1% to 3% capex reduction from better grading, layout and access planning in suitable cases
- 0.5% to 2% generation uplift from better siting and design assumptions
- Reduced schedule slippage from earlier permitting and evacuation risk visibility

Consider a 150 MW solar project with all-in capex of roughly Rs 4.0 crore to Rs 4.6 crore per MW in 2026 depending on scope and location. Total project capex may range around Rs 600 crore to Rs 690 crore. If GIS-led planning avoids even 1% avoidable capex through improved line routing, earthwork planning and parcel selection, the saving could be Rs 6 crore to Rs 6.9 crore. If it also avoids a four-month delay on commissioning, the financing and revenue-protection value can be significantly larger.

For C&I portfolios, the ROI often comes from portfolio strategy rather than one project. A developer serving manufacturing loads in states with varying open-access charges can use GIS to align generation zones, substation access and offtake clusters more intelligently. That can improve savings realisation and reduce the risk of stranded pipeline.

For lenders, ROI is indirect but real: stronger diligence lowers downside risk. Better maps and parcel intelligence will not rescue a weak project, but they do improve underwriting discipline.

## How Indian companies should implement GIS without creating another silo

The mistake many firms make is buying mapping software without redesigning the workflow. The better approach is to define GIS as a cross-functional decision system spanning business development, land, legal, engineering, finance and risk.

A practical rollout typically follows these steps:

- Define priority use cases: site screening, land diligence, evacuation planning, yield review, or policy zoning
- Build a standard layer architecture by state and technology
- Establish data quality rules, version control and update frequencies
- Create a scoring model for site ranking with technical, legal and commercial criteria
- Link field surveys, drone outputs and document repositories to geo-tagged records
- Integrate outputs into investment committee memos and lender data rooms
- Connect approved projects to downstream systems for EPC and O&M execution

This is where [IT strategy & roadmaps](/coreservices/itconsulting/itstrategyandroadmaps) matters. Most energy companies already have pieces of the puzzle: spreadsheets, consultant reports, AutoCAD files, drone imagery, land-document folders and SCADA resource studies. The task is to turn these fragments into one governed process rather than adding another standalone application.

Cloud-based deployment is increasingly preferred in 2026 because development teams, legal advisors, lenders and engineering consultants often work across locations. But governance matters. Access rights, audit trails and document security should be designed upfront, especially where sensitive land negotiations or utility network information is involved.

## What stakeholders should ask before investing

Different stakeholders should evaluate GIS differently.

For renewable developers:

- How much of our origination pipeline dies due to avoidable land or evacuation issues?
- Do we have a parcel-level view or only broker-led site narratives?
- Can investment committees compare sites on a standard scorecard?

For C&I energy consumers buying through open access or group captive:

- Is the proposed project location optimal after wheeling, banking, curtailment and delivery risk?
- How transparent is the developer's land and evacuation diligence?
- Can the siting strategy support long-term supply reliability?

For lenders and investors:

- Is land aggregation geo-tagged and cross-referenced to title documents?
- Are generation and capex assumptions grounded in terrain and access reality?
- Is transmission readiness evidenced spatially, not just narratively?

For utilities and policymakers:

- Can GIS support renewable zoning and coordinated transmission planning?
- Are there opportunities to reduce conflict by publishing better geo-data layers?
- Can subsidy, open-access or renewable park decisions be informed by spatial analytics?

In 2026, GIS is becoming foundational digital infrastructure for renewable origination in India. It is not as visible as trading systems, ERP or cybersecurity, but it can influence project economics before a rupee of construction capex is spent. In a market where land complexity, evacuation constraints and policy variability can make or break returns, that makes GIS one of the highest-leverage IT investments available to energy companies.

The winners will be firms that use GIS not as a visual dashboard but as a disciplined decision engine tied to development workflow, risk governance and investment approvals.

If your organisation is evaluating GIS-led digital transformation for renewable siting, land diligence or project development workflows, contact Growthifye's advisory desk. We help energy companies shape the operating model, system architecture and delivery roadmap for scalable results.

## Explore Growthifye's related capabilities

This analysis connects directly to our advisory practice: [IT strategy & roadmaps](/coreservices/itconsulting/itstrategyandroadmaps) · [ERP & asset management systems](/coreservices/itconsulting/erpandassetmanagementsystems) · [Data & analytics platforms](/coreservices/itconsulting/dataandanalyticsplatforms) · [Cloud migration](/coreservices/itconsulting/cloudmigration).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Sudarshan Karweer — Chief Executive Officer, Growthifye**

Over 23 years in management consulting — concept to scale — building and scaling new-age digital and energy businesses. An EY alumnus, Sudarshan leads Growthifye's renewable energy & storage advisory, EPC, transmission engineering and green-financing practices for developers, utilities and C&I consumers across India.
Contact: info@growthifye.com · +91 84510 99371 · growthifye.com