

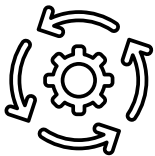
Monthly Updates- July 2025

Grassroots Level Institutions Strengthening and Transformation (GIST)

Overview

GIST aims to strengthen local communities by empowering grassroots institutions like Gram Panchayats, Self-Help Groups, and other Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), fostering self-reliance and inclusive development. It promotes environmental sustainability through community-led protection of common resources and integrates ecological concerns into village development. The initiative also supports SDG localization by aligning local efforts with national targets and aids in implementing the Forest Rights Act (FRA) to secure forest-based livelihoods. Additionally, it empowers tribal communities in PESA areas to enhance representation, preserve traditional cultures, and manage natural resources sustainably.

Project Goal



To empower over 40 Gram Panchayats and 200+ Women Self-Help Groups by enabling collaboration between local governance bodies and community organizations for joint planning and collective action, with a focus on driving climate resilience and promoting sustainable development at the grassroots level.

Component Wise Approach



Component 1: Gram Panchayat CBO Convergence

This component focuses on fostering collaboration between Gram Panchayats and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to enhance local governance and community development. It empowers SHGs in decision-making, aligns initiatives for livelihood generation, and ensures inclusive grassroots outcomes through coordinated efforts.



Component 2: Localization of SDGs

Promote community-led SDG localisation by building capacities of Gram Panchayats in collaboration with SHGs and CBOs. Engage higher education institutions through Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and Focused Block Initiatives. Foster village-level partnerships to drive sustainable and inclusive development.



Component 3: Identifying, Protecting, and Regenerating Commons

This component seeks to ensure the sustainable use of village commons—critical for rural livelihoods—by improving legal frameworks, mobilizing SHGs and MGNREGA for land protection, and promoting equitable access, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience.



Component 4: Operationalising PESA Act

GIST supports the effective implementation of PESA in tribal regions like Odisha and Jharkhand. The goal is to empower tribal communities, ensure their representation in governance, and promote sustainable natural resource management while preserving traditional rights and cultures.



Component 5: Enhancing Implementation of Forest Right Acts

This aims to strengthen the implementation of FRA by improving claim filing processes, empowering communities to secure individual and collective forest rights, and supporting state efforts through trained resource persons and robust institutional support mechanisms.

Progress this Month

VP-SHG Convergence

- In Jharkhand, plan for GP-SHG convergence was developed to identify key intervention areas, activities, and deliverables. A field visit to Hazaribagh was conducted with SUPPORT Foundation to understand SHG participation in Panchayat development.
- In Odisha, field learning reports captured key observations, challenges, and strategies. A pilot action plan was created with clear implementation steps, responsibilities, timelines, and expected outcomes.
- In Karnataka, scoping visits to Chamarajanagar and Chikkaballapur helped finalize GPs for the VPRP pilot, which will be implemented in Mysore, Chamarajanagar, and Chikkaballapur. The team initiated collaboration with Community Action Collab, and a draft joint action plan is being finalized.
- In Tamil Nadu, the first draft of the PRI-CBO convergence module was completed and shared with mentors and institutional partners. The team also attended a three-day VPRP training for DRPs, strengthening state-level engagement for the upcoming pilot.

Localising SDGs

- In Jharkhand, an action plan for LSDGs was prepared with mentor feedback, and the team consulted Tamil Nadu to understand their scorecard model, which will be tested in Jharkhand. Engagements were also held with SIRD on training and manuals to communitize SDGs.
- In Odisha, field learning reports informed a detailed pilot action plan to address gaps in localising SDGs, with clearly defined strategies and responsibilities.
- In Tamil Nadu, a Panchayat Scorecard was developed and is now being integrated into a mobile app to collect data from various stakeholders and monitor progress. Scoping visits across districts helped identify relevant indicators and assess data accessibility.

Protection of Commons

- In Karnataka, a report based on the previous month's field study was submitted to mentors and is being revised to include actionable recommendations, especially focusing on SHG involvement in commons management.
- In Jharkhand, a gist action plan for protection of commons was developed with mentor feedback, detailing activities and deliverables.
- In Odisha, the team participated in a workshop on Communicating the Commons, and field learnings were consolidated into a pilot action plan to improve implementation and outcomes.

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- In Jharkhand, an action plan for enhancing FRA implementation was developed with mentor inputs, identifying interventions and responsibilities.
- In Odisha, the team participated in a three-day writeshop organized by Common Grounds and SIRD, contributing toolkit materials for awareness and implementation. Field learning reports led to a structured pilot action plan.

Panchayats Extension to Schedule Areas (PESA)

- In Jharkhand, a gist action plan for operationalising PESA was prepared and reviewed by mentors. A detailed PPT capturing the essence of draft PESA rules and a tentative implementation strategy with a Gantt chart was also prepared.
- In Odisha, feedback was submitted on the draft PESA rules, highlighting constitutional alignment and tribal needs. Follow-up engagements are underway to track revisions and advocate for the inclusion of key recommendations.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



A key learning across states is that while communities and local institutions like SHGs, Gram Sabhas, and PRIs show strong intent and some good practices, these efforts often remain scattered or symbolic due to limited coordination, institutional support, and legal frameworks. Strengthening convergence, building local capacity, and ensuring ground-level ownership can help bridge this gap and make interventions more meaningful and lasting.

Way Forward

- In **Karnataka**, the VP-SHG convergence pilot will be launched in three districts, starting with stakeholder orientation. CRISP-CAC MoU will be signed, and the team will document VPRP training sessions.
- In **Odisha**, pilot implementation activities will begin across themes—VP-SHG convergence, Localising SDGs, Commons, and FRA—alongside discussions with NGOs and field visits.
- In **Jharkhand**, field visits will be conducted to PRADAN sites to develop case studies on GP coordination committees and community forest resource management.
- In **Tamil Nadu**, the PRI-CBO convergence module will be revised, field-tested, and expanded. App development for LSDG tracking will begin, with upcoming training planned for local functionaries.
- The **Commons report** in Karnataka will be finalised, with CRISP and FES supporting implementation of revised guidelines.
- Under **PESA**, engagement with SIRD Odisha will be initiated to align support for rollout of PESA Rules and strengthen the role of coordinators.