

Monthly Updates- May 2025

Grassroots Level Institutions Strengthening and Transformation (GIST)

Overview

GIST aim is to strengthen local communities by **empowering grassroots institutions such as Gram Panchayats, Self-Help Groups, and other Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) including School Management Committees, libraries, and clubs**, thereby fostering self-reliance and promoting inclusive development. It also focuses on promoting environmental sustainability through active community engagement in the protection and stewardship of common resources, integrating ecological considerations into village-level development. Further, the objectives include enhancing progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by aligning local development efforts with SDG targets and supporting states in effective localization of SDGs. Additionally, the initiative supports the **implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA)** to secure forest-based livelihoods and rights, while also empowering tribal communities in **Panchayats Extension to Schedule Areas (PESA)** to improve tribal representation in decision-making, safeguard traditional cultures, and ensure sustainable management of natural resources.

Strategy and Approach

Enhance policy coherence and convergence by refining existing policies across domains like natural resource management, climate resilience, biodiversity, and inclusive rural development—grounded in field testing, stakeholder inputs, and best practices.

Strengthen grassroots governance and planning by aligning institutions (Gram Panchayats, SHGs, etc.) with GPDP and VPRP, and promoting convergence across key schemes such as NREGA, PESA, FRA, SDGs, and Aspirational Districts.

Build capacity and responsive governance by empowering officials and communities through tailored training, circulars, guidelines, peer learning, and adaptive policy implementation based on local contexts.

Enhance financing for sustainable development by pooling public funds (e.g., CAMPA, DMF) and mobilizing private, CSR, ESG, and philanthropic contributions to support community, climate, and biodiversity priorities.

Leverage technology and cross-learning by using digital tools for data-driven planning and sustainable market practices, while facilitating write shops and innovation hubs for peer exchange and stronger policy-practice integration.

Photo Gallery



Key Highlights and Activities

- In **Tamil Nadu**, eight chapters were developed for a module on PRI-CBO Convergence which will be used for the pilot project. The team also conducted a meeting with TNSRLM and Kudumbasree to prepare a joint action plan for implementing SHG-VP partnership in 37 districts. Furthermore, the team is also developed a scorecard to assess the Panchayat status in SDG for Water Sufficient and Clean and Green Village themes.
- In **Karnataka**, the status report on RPP-GPDP integration was conducted across 18 gram panchayats. Guidelines and piloting plan for effective and participatory VRPR-GPDP integration was also prepared. With respect to study of Commons, a field visit was conducted with Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) in Chikballapur district.
- In **Odisha**, the team briefed Chief Secretary about action plan, progress of work and seek further interdepartmental support. The team also prepared the PESA Analysis Report and developed Forest Rights Act (FRA) Study Proposal.
- In **Jharkhand**, the draft MoU between Government of Jharkhand and CRISP is pending for approval from the cabinet. The team has conducted initial field visits with Living Landscapes to understand five components of GIST. Furthermore, the Jharkhand team also conducted PESA rules consultation and the consultation report is submitted to Ministry for necessary actions.

Challenges Faced



- **Internal Challenge:** Absence of a formal knowledge-sharing system risks duplication across GIST teams. Key tasks like the Stakeholder Engagement Plan in Odisha remain pending, requiring field visits, while NTFP analysis is currently deprioritized.
- **External Challenge:** There has been delay in signing of MoU between CRISP team and Rural Development Department, Jharkhand which has been tackled through continuous nudge from CRISP.

Key Learnings and Way Forward



- ✓ The Kendu Leaf trade Policy applies to many states with forest resources and can act as a guide for policy level recommendations on Kendu trade. In Karnataka, the guidelines on VPRP-GPDP integration proposes the local planning process to be made more participatory. It can act as a guide to other states to ensure holistic participation of SHGs in preparation of VRPR and GPDP.
- ✓ Key upcoming actions include field testing and finalizing the PRI-CBO module and lesson plan, developing a Panchayat Scorecard in Tamil Nadu, advancing VPRP-GPDP integration in Karnataka, conducting multiple field studies (Commons, FRA, PESA), and finalizing reports, guidelines, and action plans across Odisha, Karnataka, and Jharkhand with stakeholder engagement.
- ✓ The GIST Pilot will be launched in collaboration with Landscape Partners across Jharkhand. In West Singhbhum (Anandapur block), it will be implemented with WASSAN Foundation, focusing on SHG-GP collaboration, protection of commons, and localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In East and West Singhbhum (Dumaria, Chaibasa, and Khuntpani blocks), Kalamandir Foundation will lead efforts on the same themes, along with enhancing Forest Rights Act (FRA) implementation. In Lohardaga and Gumla, the pilot with PRADAN will focus on strengthening FRA implementation through Community Forest Resource (CFR) Management Planning.