

Annexure 1

**GRASSROOTS-LEVEL INSTITUTION STRENGTHENING AND
TRANSFORMATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION (GIST)**

Empowering Communities Through Sustainable Development



**Submitted to
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Introduction

The challenges posed by climate change reflected through extreme weather conditions devastate the livelihoods in the rural areas. The disappearance of common areas, which acted as a mainstay for the rural livelihoods, fast depleting groundwater, deforestation, and toxification of the air/water/soil due to chemical fertilisers – are destroying livelihoods and causing impoverishment.

The main actors for rescue from this problem are the grassroots level institutions: Gram Panchayats (the Constitutional Bodies), the Self-Help Groups (the people's bodies), and the institutions for delivery of nutrition, education and health. Achieving convergence between these institutions and spurring them for joint action is the only way to rescue the situation from an imminent disaster.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. They cover various social, environmental, and economic development issues. A critical goal under SDG 16 is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. This goal focuses on reducing violence, ensuring access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions.¹ It aims to create a world where everyone can safely live and have their rights upheld. SDG 16 underscores the need for transparent, responsible, and inclusive institutions for sustainable development. It recognises that strong institutions ensure that all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, can access critical services and participate in societal decision-making.

India context:

India, one of the largest democratic countries in the world, strives to establish peace, justice, equality, and liberty for all its citizens. The country's institutional framework is designed to be robust, transparent, and practical, ensuring its functionality across regional, national, and international levels. SDG 16 is directly related to fostering inclusive institutions at all levels of governance. Inclusive institutions such as Local governments, schools, health centres, Anganwadi centres, Judicial and Self-Help Groups are characterised by their commitment to providing services regardless of

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

socioeconomic status, physical or mental conditions and ensuring that no one is excluded due to any other form of differentiation. Such institutions are crucial in catering to all population segments, mainly focusing on the underserved and vulnerable groups. Moreover, the principles of accountability and transparency are integral to the functioning of inclusive institutions. These principles are essential not only for effective governance but also for building and maintaining public trust.

Relevance to Grassroots Level Institutions

As the world's largest democracy, India aims to uphold peace, justice, equality, and liberty for all its citizens. The institutional framework in India is designed to be robust, transparent, and effective across regional, national, and international levels. SDG 16 is vital for developing inclusive institutions, including:

1. Panchayat Raj Institutions
2. Schools
3. Anganwadi Centres
4. Community-Based Organisations, Including Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at Village Level.
5. Primary Health Centres (PHCs)

Hence, in India, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is to foster peaceful and inclusive societies, heavily relies on the strength of grassroots institutions.² These institutions are meant to be inclusive, providing services irrespective of socioeconomic status, physical or mental conditions, and other forms of differentiation. They play a crucial role in serving all segments of the population, especially the underserved and vulnerable groups. Accountability and transparency are critical to their functioning and essential for effective governance and building public trust. These local entities and community groups are not just foundational governance and service delivery elements. They are the primary actors in promoting peace, resolving conflicts, and ensuring justice for all members of society. By empowering and fortifying these grassroots institutions, we significantly enhance their

² https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Omprakash-Sahu-3/publication/379308888_Linking_between_Democracy_and_Sustainable_Development_Goals_Specific_reference_to_Goals_-16_in_India/links/6603c46b5c41c3139dae3cd2/Linking-between-Democracy-and-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Specific-reference-to-Goals-16-in-India.pdf

capacity to address local needs and challenges, laying a solid foundation for broader societal peace and stability.

This approach helps build resilient communities where practical, accountable governance can flourish from the ground up, supporting the broader goals of SDG. 16 and ensuring that peaceful and inclusive societies become a reality for everyone. By connecting the principles of SDG 16 with the operations of grassroots institutions, we can foster a more cohesive and effective governance system that promotes peace, justice, and inclusivity at the local level. This approach improves service delivery and builds community trust and cooperation, ultimately contributing to an equitable society. The strong grassroots-level institutions' convergence will lead to the localisation of SDGs and the taking up of causes that would preserve the environment and result in sustainable progress.

Key Connections

Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

Grassroots institutions, such as Panchayat Raj Institutions, are the closest governance bodies to the people. They are responsible for addressing local disputes, maintaining law and order, and fostering a peaceful community environment. These institutions can ensure that all community members, including marginalised groups, are heard and represented by being inclusive and representative.

Access to Justice for All

Local institutions like Panchayat Raj Institutions and SHGs play a significant role in providing access to justice. They often serve as the first point of contact for legal issues and disputes, offering mediation and resolution services. Additionally, they can facilitate access to formal legal systems by guiding citizens through the process, especially in areas with limited judicial infrastructure.

Building Effective, Accountable, and Inclusive Institutions

Grassroots institutions must be transparent and accountable to build public trust. Schools, Anganwadi Centres, and PHCs deliver essential services like education, nutrition, and healthcare. These institutions need to operate efficiently and effectively,

ensuring that services are provided equitably and that there is accountability for their actions and decisions.

Preserving commons and environment

The grassroots-level institutions working in convergence will address common issues affecting ecological balance and livelihoods. This would involve protecting commons, afforestation and groundwater recharge.

Challenges and Silos

One of the primary challenges faced by grassroots institutions is their tendency to operate in silos. For instance, there is often limited collaboration and data sharing between Panchayat Raj Institutions, schools, Anganwadi Centres, and PHCs. This lack of convergence can lead to inefficiencies and a fragmented approach to service delivery. For example, Panchayats may not have access to school attendance and health metrics data, hindering their ability to create child-friendly policies and programs.

Path Forward: Integration and Convergence

To fully realise the objectives of SDG 16, there is a need for a more integrated and collaborative approach among grassroots institutions. This can be achieved through:

Data Sharing and Communication

Establishing systems for data sharing and communication among institutions ensures that all relevant information is available for decision-making.

Collaborative Governance

Encouraging regular interactions and joint planning sessions among different institutions to align goals and coordinate efforts.

Capacity Building

Providing training and resources to enhance the capacity of grassroots institutions to deliver services effectively and inclusively.

Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms

Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks ensures institutions operate transparently and are held accountable for their performance.

The proposed plan for Grassroots-Level Institution Strengthening and Transformation (GIST) for Climate Action aims to enhance the functionality and inclusivity of these institutions, thereby improving the quality of life for all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. By strengthening these institutions, we can ensure that all citizens have access to critical services and can participate in societal decision-making, leading to a more peaceful and prosperous society.

Action plans for preserving ecological balance

These institutions will prepare action plans for preserving the ecological balance, including protection of commons, recharging groundwater, addressing climate effectively change issues.

Proposal for Strengthening Grassroots Institutions

The GRASSROOTS-LEVEL INSTITUTION STRENGTHENING AND TRANSFORMATION for Climate Action (GIST) initiative, proposed by the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP), aims to enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and inclusivity of grassroots institutions across India. This initiative is grounded in Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) principles, which focus on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective institutions. GIST seeks to address the challenges of siloed operations and lack of coordination among local governance bodies and community institutions.

Objectives

1. Create Convergence Among Institutions & Foster Collaborative Governance

Develop mechanisms to promote convergence and integration among grassroots institutions such as Panchayat Raj Institutions, schools, Anganwadi Centres, Communities based organisations, including Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at the Village level and Primary Health Centres (PHCs). This will involve establishing frameworks for data sharing, collaborative planning, and coordinated actions to break down operational silos and enhance overall effectiveness. Strengthen trust and cooperation

among local governance bodies and grassroots institutions. Encourage regular interactions, shared goals, and joint initiatives to build mutual respect and align efforts towards common objectives. This will support a more unified approach to community development and service delivery.

2. Planning for ecological security and sustainable development

There will be joint planning of grassroots-level institutions focused on environmental security and sustainable development. This initiative aims to address the challenges of climate change and improve livelihoods through the better utilisation of common resources. The collaboration will emphasise community participation, empowering local stakeholders to take ownership of sustainable practices involving common resources. Additionally, it will integrate innovative strategies for managing these common resources, ensuring that environmental and social outcomes are aligned. By fostering resilience and promoting equitable distribution and utilisation of shared resources, the initiative seeks to create a model for sustainable development that can be replicated in other regions.

3. Enhance Data Sharing and Integration & Strengthen Institutional Capacities

Implement systems for seamless data sharing and communication among institutions. Ensure relevant information is accessible to all stakeholders to facilitate informed decision-making and effective service delivery and by Providing targeted training and resources to enhance the capacities of grassroots institutions. Focus on developing skills and knowledge necessary for improving service delivery and governance practices.

4. Increase Transparency and Accountability & Inclusive Service Delivery

Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability within institutions. Promote practices that build public trust and ensure institutions operate effectively and inclusively. This will ensure equitable access to services for all community members, particularly marginalised and underserved groups. Address barriers to inclusion and promote active participation in governance processes.

5. Promote social justice through rights-based, equitable development of the excluded sections of society

Promoting social justice through a rights-based approach involves prioritising the equitable development of marginalised and excluded sections of society. This requires ensuring that all individuals have equal access to resources, opportunities, and services regardless of socio-economic background. Policies and programs can empower vulnerable communities to claim their rights by focusing on eliminating systemic barriers and addressing discrimination. This approach fosters dignity, reduces inequalities, and promotes social cohesion, ensuring that development efforts are inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with the principles of fairness and justice.

Significant Steps in GIST Implementation

I. Studying Existing Guidelines on Strengthening Local Institutions:

While the project recognises the importance of convergence among all five grassroots-level institutions, the initial phase will emphasise Communities based organisations CBO -VP collaboration. In the first phase of the GIST project, there will be a comprehensive review of existing guidelines from the Government of India and various states related to local institutions, including Panchayat Raj Institutions and CBOs at village levels. This phase will primarily focus on CBOs/ (SHG)-VP convergence for climate action and resilience activities, aiming to create sustainable livelihoods by better utilising shared resources. This will help understand current practices, identify areas for improvement, and align with Sustainable Development Goals for better rural and community development.

II. Initial Consultation Meeting:

Conduct a consultation meeting with officers and relevant stakeholders in the respective states to understand the dynamics between local institutions and identify areas for potential collaboration and improvement.

III. Field Visits to Local Institutions:

Perform field visits to selected local institutions (e.g., Panchayat Raj Institutions, SHGs) in consultation with the respective States. These visits will provide firsthand insights into current practices, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening institutional cooperation.

IV. Draft Action Plan for Institutional Strengthening:

Develop a detailed action plan based on studying best practices in institutional cooperation. This plan will outline specific areas of partnership and propose strategies for enhancing convergence and collaboration among grassroots institutions.

V. Write Shop with Key Stakeholders:

Organise a writing shop led by experts on bringing and enhancing the convergence between grassroots institutions. This session will gather insights and experiences from various stakeholders, laying a foundation for future collaboration and strategy development. The Writeshop will focus on creating a convergence model, with a specific example being the collaboration between Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Panchayats.

For example, Writeshop can organise for Self Help Group -Village Panchayat convergence. Different themes can be discussed for developing a convergence model:

- Theme 1: What SHGs can do for Village Panchayats
- Theme 2: What Village Panchayats Can Do for SHGs
- Theme 3: Policies, Processes, Procedures and Systems needed to bring about the partnership
- Theme 4: Capacity Building to bring about the Partnership
- Theme 5: Ways and Means for Realisation of Demands of VPRP Plan
- Theme 6: Strategies and Approaches for Achieving SDGs through Ensuring Ecological Security and Protection and Enhancing the Utilization of Commons
- Theme 7: Approaches and Strategies for Establishing and Enhancing Livelihoods through the Development of Sustainable Value Chain Products at the Village Level. This initiative will be primarily implemented in Odisha and Jharkhand, with support from the Common Ground Field Team.

VI. Pilot Implementation in Selected Institutions:

Implement the proposed strategies in selected villages in each state, with the exact number determined in collaboration with state authorities. This pilot phase will test the strategy's effectiveness and allow for real-world adjustments.

VII. Preparation of Initial Report and finalisation:

An initial, crucial document report will summarise the findings from consultations, field visits, and stakeholder inputs gathered during the CRISP pilot implementations. This report will document critical lessons learned, challenges encountered, and successes achieved throughout the pilot phase. Following the preparation of the initial report, a workshop will be conducted to present the findings and solicit stakeholder feedback. This feedback will be used to refine and finalise strategies for institutional

strengthening. Based on these insights, a plan will be developed for scaling up the successful methods to all the Grassroots institutions across the state.

VIII. Workshops for Implementation and Skill Enhancement:

Organise workshops to guide on implementing the strategies and enhancing skills for representatives from local institutions. This will ensure effective collaboration and management of joint initiatives.

IX. Ongoing Support and Handholding:

Offer continuous support and a safety net throughout the implementation phase, including regular check-ins, troubleshooting sessions, and additional training as needed to ensure the successful execution of the strategies.

X. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):

Establish a robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework to track the progress of the pilot Initiatives. Regularly assess the effectiveness of the strategies, gather data on outcomes, and make necessary adjustments based on findings.

Indicative expected outcomes

The design of the interventions should be such that any suggested change in policy or program is applicable for a state or agro-ecological region or across states by better utilisation of available common resources. Such interventions would focus on change in the function, role and practice at various levels of the government towards the desirable goal and impact. It would include measures to redirect financial flows or suggest innovative mechanisms to address crucial gaps or emerging requirements.

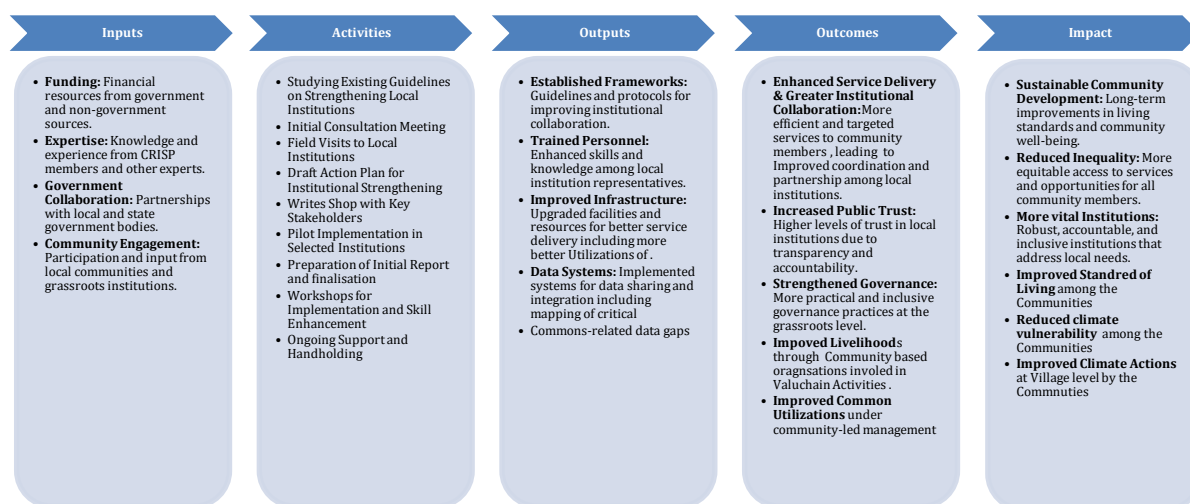
1. **Enhanced Convergence and Collaboration:** Improved integration and collaboration among institutions, leading to a more cohesive and practical approach to community development. This enhances trust and cooperation among local governance bodies and grassroots institutions, resulting in more unified efforts towards common goals.
2. **Improved Service Delivery:** More targeted and efficient interventions that address the needs of all community members, especially vulnerable populations.
3. **Increased Transparency and Accountability:** Higher levels of public trust due to transparent and accountable practices within institutions.
4. **Enhanced Management of Common:** Improved management and utilisation of shared resources under community-led initiatives, fostering ecological sustainability and community ownership.
5. **Improved Livelihoods:** Strengthened income opportunities through community-based organisations involved in value chain activities, ultimately leading to an increased standard of living in the long term through climate action and resilience initiatives at the village level.

6. Reduced Climate Vulnerability: Decreased climate vulnerability among communities through adaptive strategies and resilience-building measures.
7. Improved Climate Actions at the Village Level: Strengthened climate actions led by communities at the village level, promoting sustainable practices and ecological security.

Indicative Measurable Outcomes:

- Verifiable outcome indicator year 1: Better convergence of resources between GDPD and VPRP in at least one state.
- Verifiable Outcome indicator for year 1: Influenced at least two schemes related to natural resource management and eco-restoration under PRIs and other grassroots institutions
- Verifiable outcome indicator for Year 1: At least one SIRD improves the curriculum for different panchayat level functionaries, committees and leaders for better management of commons
- Verifiable outcome indicator: One program influenced for reducing climatic vulnerability and climate actions.

Theory of Change for GIST



This structured approach ensures that the GIST initiative effectively enhances the effectiveness, accountability, and inclusivity of grassroots institutions, aligning with the principles of SDG 16 and fostering holistic community development.

The GIST initiative is a strategic effort to create a more connected and accountable governance framework, ensuring that grassroots institutions work together effectively to support community development and uphold the principles of SDG 16. The GIST

initiative is not just another project but a powerful tool closely aligned with SDG 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. By providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, the GIST initiative significantly contributes to this goal's achievement. It focuses on enhancing governance structures, ensuring justice, and fostering inclusivity and accountability across all levels of society. This alignment is not a coincidence but a deliberate strategy to maximise the impact of our collective efforts. Other SDGs in focus under the project are:

- SDG 1: No Poverty
- SDG 5: Gender Equality
- SDG 13: Climate Change/Ecological Security

CRISP Advantage

The Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) is a unique organisation formed by ten former civil servants who served as Secretary to the Government of India. Dedicated to enhancing the delivery of social sector schemes for substantial welfare benefits, CRISP operates pro-bono, adhering to the principle of giving back to society. The organisation has assembled a highly skilled team that balances youth and experience, focusing on projects developed in close collaboration with state governments after thorough research.

The advantages of CRISP are summarised as follows:

- I. **Easy Access to State Governments:** CRISP's team, comprised of seasoned professionals with extensive government experience, facilitates smooth entry into state government systems.
- II. **In-depth Understanding of Field-level Issues:** The organisation's expertise enables it to identify gaps in implementing various schemes, ensuring targeted and effective interventions.
- III. **High Government Acceptability:** CRISP's work and approach are well-regarded within government circles, fostering a conducive collaboration and policy impact environment.
- IV. **Capability to Design and Redesign Large Schemes:** CRISP excels in crafting comprehensive solutions and adjusting existing programs to enhance effectiveness.

- V. **Rapid Mobilization:** The organisation can quickly mobilise resources and expertise, ensuring timely and efficient project execution.

Registered under the Societies Act in New Delhi (Reg Number: @/3007/SD/2022) with all-India jurisdiction, CRISP is active in various social sectors, including poverty alleviation, panchayat raj, rural development, education, and health. Additionally, CRISP partners with the Capacity Building Commission of India as a knowledge partner, contributing valuable insights and expertise to capacity-building initiatives.

Project area

In the first phase, the GIST initiative will be implemented in four states: Jharkhand, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. The pilot areas for the GIST initiative will be selected from the Aspirational Districts in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Odisha, where necessary. Ten Gram Panchayats will be chosen from each state for the pilot projects under the GIST initiative. These pilot villages will be selected based on transparent and fair criteria developed in consultation with the respective state governments. The learnings from these pilot projects will be shared with the respective governments to facilitate scaling up across the states.

In many cases, however, the initiative can leverage insights and best practices from similar efforts elsewhere. This allows for the implementation of proven strategies without the need for additional pilot testing, ensuring both efficiency and informed decision-making. Where pilots are deemed necessary, they will be conducted thoughtfully to validate specific approaches. By balancing targeted pilot programs with the adaptation of established solutions, the GIST initiative aims to achieve sustainable and scalable outcomes across all regions.

Tamil Nadu and Karnataka will focus on driving systemic changes by fostering convergence among all stakeholders to bring about primarily state-level transformations. This will involve better **utilisation** of common resources, strengthening community-based **organisations** (CBOs), promoting climate-resilient practices, and enhancing livelihoods through engagement in value chain activities. Implementing climate-resilient practices and livelihood creation initiatives will be carried out in the pilot villages, following carefully planned timelines and considering relevant factors. These efforts aim to create sustainable models that can be scaled up

across the states. While these two states strongly emphasise policy reforms, they will also include ground-level interventions where necessary, with the support of Common Ground. The initiative aims to ensure comprehensive and sustainable outcomes in both states by combining top-down systemic changes with targeted grassroots efforts.

In Jharkhand and Odisha, the GIST initiative will be implemented at the state and grassroots levels. The primary focus will be establishing and enhancing livelihoods through critical policies such as the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA). Additionally, the initiative will work on developing markets and supporting forest and tribal livelihoods, with Common Ground and CRISP collaborating in complete synergy to achieve these goals.

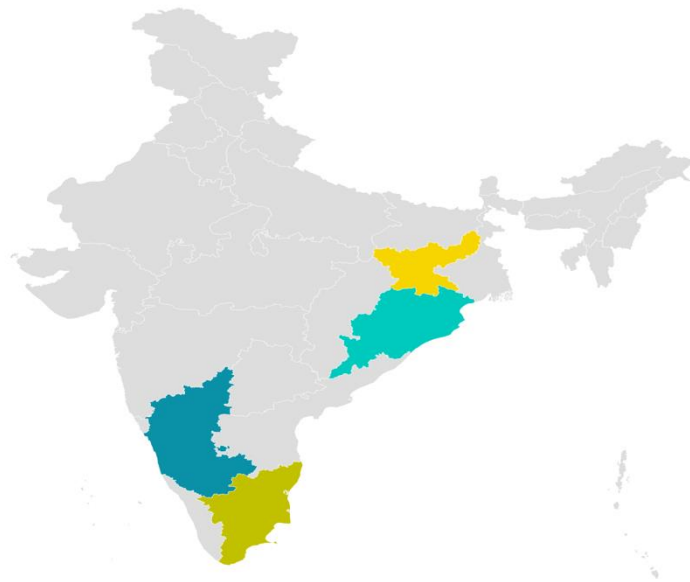
The initiative ensures a more unified approach by involving Common Ground in civil society engagement in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, alongside their integrated strategy in Jharkhand

and Odisha. This alignment balances systemic reforms and grassroots participation, combining CRISP's policy-focused efforts with Common Ground's community-level insights and partnerships. The result is a cohesive framework across all four states, reinforcing the importance of policy transformation and civil society involvement in driving sustainable change.

Both organisations aim to enhance the management and utilisation of common resources through community-led initiatives, fostering ecological sustainability and promoting community ownership. Additionally, efforts will be directed towards reducing climate vulnerability among communities by implementing adaptive strategies and resilience-building measures. Improved climate actions at the village level will be promoted, empowering communities to lead sustainable practices and ensure ecological security. This collaborative approach seeks to harmonise top-down

Selected States for GIST Implementations (Phase-1)

States
Jharkhand KARNATAKA Odisha TAMIL NADU

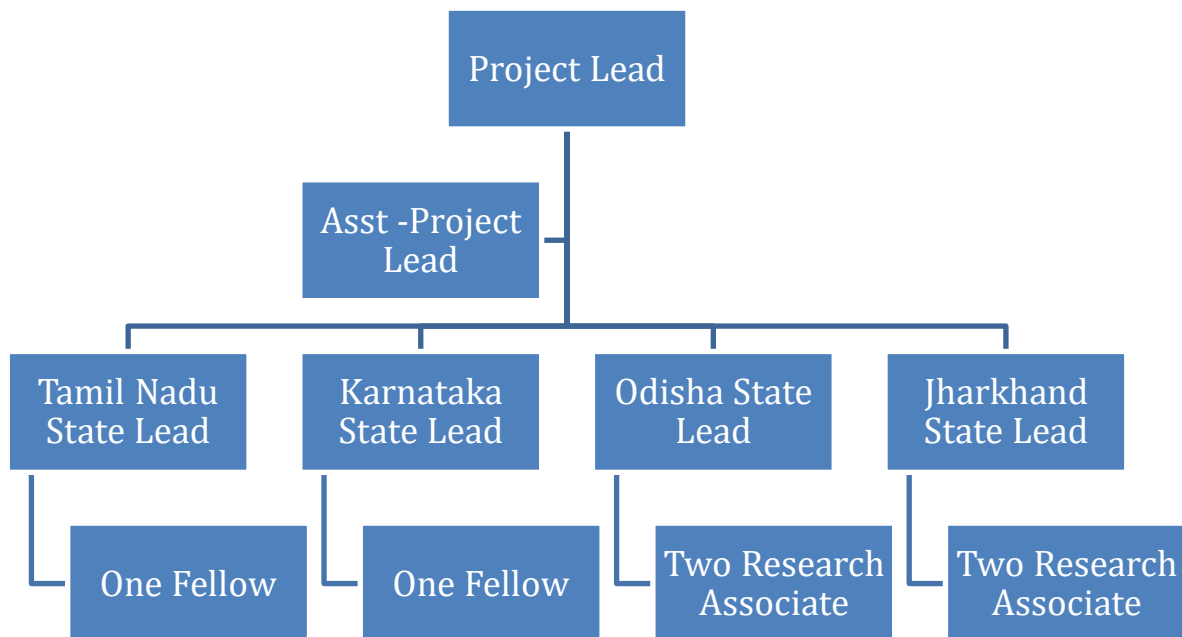


systemic changes with bottom-up grassroots actions, creating a comprehensive model that can be scaled up across both states for sustainable development.

Team Structure

The GIST initiative will be led by a Project Leader, supported by an Assistant Team Leader. In Jharkhand and Odisha, two State Leads will oversee the program, each with two Research Associates, bringing the total to four Research Associates across these two states. In Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, fellows will be recruited instead of existing State Leads. New State Leads will be appointed in Odisha and Jharkhand to manage and guide the program's activities. This structure is designed to ensure focused support and effective coordination across all states involved.

Proposed GIST -Team Structure



Budget

The proposed budget outlines the financial resources required for the project for the year 2024-2025, categorised by expense type, as detailed below. Additionally, it is essential to note that the project may be expanded in the future, subject to mutual agreement and both parties' approval of a revised budget.

Expense head	Rate	Units	Amount (in INR)	Proposed budget (in INR)
<u>Project Lead</u> - factoring in 50%-time allocation to the GIST	24 Lakhs p.a.	1	24,00,000	12,00,000
<u>Assistant Project Lead</u> - factoring in 100%-time allocation to the GIST	15 Lakhs p.a.	1	15,00,000	15,00,000
<u>State Leads</u> - New recruits in Odisha, Jharkhand (100%-time allocation to GIST) - Existing Leads in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka	20 Lakhs p.a.	2	40,00,000	40,00,000
- One additional Fellow for the existing teams in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka (100%-time allocation)	9 Lakhs	2	18,00,000	18,00,000
<u>Research Associates</u> Two associates each in Odisha, Jharkhand, to be recruited & placed starting from 1 st month of Year 1 (100%-time allocation)	6.4 Lakhs p.a.	4	25,60,000	25,60,000
<u>Transportation</u> Based on the number of districts and personnel in - Odisha & Jharkhand - Tamil Nadu & Karnataka	2.5 Lakhs p.a. 1.5 Lakhs p.a.	2 2	5,00,000 3,00,000	8,00,000
<u>Administrative Expenses</u>	6 Lakhs p.a.	1	6,00,000	6,00,000
<u>Monitoring & Evaluation</u>	6 Lakhs p.a.	1	6,00,000	6,00,000
Total Budget (in INR)				1,30,60,000/-

(workplan, responsibility mix and timelines shared in Annexure 2)