

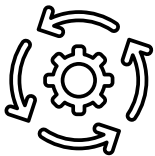
Monthly Updates- August 2025

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**, CRISP signed a three-year MoU with the Government to localize SDGs, strengthen tribal livelihoods through FRA, and regenerate commons with NGO partners; the team has prepared the pilot action plan, identified locations, and conducted a field visit to Pakur to study CLF roles in integrating VPRPs with GPDPs.
- **In Odisha**, work focused on pilot design and NGO engagement with WASSAN, WOSCA, CYSD, and SEWAK; a structured orientation package is being developed using GPDP–VPRP and Kudumbashree frameworks, with methodology restructured for practical rollout, while fellows provide field-level support amid challenges of NGO participation without direct funding.
- **In Karnataka**, NRLM approved the list of pilot GPs for VPRP; the team documented a district-level training in Chikballapur, field-tested the ‘Know Your Resilience’ tool, and is preparing orientation materials for localized SDG-aligned solutions.
- **In Tamil Nadu**, the team completed new chapters (MGNREGS, Social Accountability) and revisions for seven chapters of the PRI–SHG module, conducted field visits for insights, prepared for a national VP–SHG conference, and revised the GO in English and Tamil based on ACS feedback.

Localising SDGs

- **In Jharkhand**, the team prepared the pilot action plan, identified locations, and tested the LSDG scorecard in Pakur with Panchayat frontline workers and SHG members.
- **In Odisha**, the team engaged NGOs (PRADAN, CY) and began developing a mobile app for Panchayat data collection and monitoring; scoping visits in three GPs helped finalize indicators and check data accessibility.
- **In Tamil Nadu**, the first version of the mobile app was created, scoping visits conducted in Kancheepuram, and operations launched in Tirupurur Block to prepare an SDG status report; content for Poverty Free and Women Friendly Village modules was also completed, with a key review meeting scheduled on 30th August.

Protection of Commons

- **In Jharkhand**, the team prepared the pilot action plan for governance of commons, identified locations, and initiated discussions with landscape partners for finalization.
- **In Odisha**, the commons pilot advanced with finalization of implementation sites (with FES and SPREAD) and alignment discussions with NIRMANN; orientation handouts are being developed for NGOs and communities, focusing on BMCs, balancing protection from external pressures with community-led self-regulation and ecological restoration.
- **In Tamil Nadu**, the team conducted scoping visits in Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur to study coastal commons and water conservation models (including CSR- and MGNREGS-supported initiatives and Dhan Foundation’s Vayalagam), and prepared a one-year action plan based on these findings.

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- **In Jharkhand**, the team prepared the pilot action plan for FRA implementation, identified locations, and initiated discussions with landscape partners for finalization.
- **In Odisha**, the FRA pilot plan was shaped through consultations with NGOs (SPREAD, SEWAK, SEBAJAGAT), participation in an FES workshop on CFR governance, and mentor feedback for restructuring; discussions with SCSTRTI opened scope for a joint NTFP study with Living Landscapes to strengthen CFR–livelihood linkages.

Panchayats Extension to Schedule Areas (PESA)

- **In Odisha**, despite political uncertainties, the team engaged with SIRD, mapped institutional roles using the HR list of PESA coordinators, and explored piloting a PESA-compliant GPDP in Koraput; discussions also focused on integrating PESA training under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan to align with the state’s training architecture.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



Key learnings show that convergence works best when anchored at the Panchayat level with clear institutional roles, adapted frameworks, and early financial planning. Structured design and digital tools are vital for LSDG pilots. Strengthening BMCs, linking FRA with livelihoods, and embedding PESA training in state systems ensure sustainability and scalability.

Way Forward

- In **Karnataka**, the VPRP pilot will be launched with NRLM approval, stakeholder orientations, and an MoU with CAC. In Jharkhand, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu, pilots will advance through consultations, field visits, and module revisions, with preparations for the VP-SHG Partnership conference.
- In **Jharkhand and Odisha**, teams will strengthen pilots through consultations with officials, NGOs, and landscape partners alongside field visits. In Tamil Nadu, focus will be on creating the dashboard, implementing the action plan in 35 villages, and engaging RD&PR leadership.
- In **Karnataka**, CRISP and FES will support the department in rolling out finalized commons guidelines. In Jharkhand, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu, work will continue through NGO engagement, scoping visits, and field surveys to shape governance strategies.
- In **Jharkhand**, the team will consolidate FRA pilots through government consultations and field surveys. In Odisha, NGO engagement and field-level support will drive pilot implementation and CFR-livelihood linkages.
- In **Odisha**, the team will work with SIRD to align with state priorities for PESA rollout. Efforts will focus on using PESA coordinators to strengthen capacity-building and grassroots implementation.