

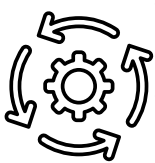
Monthly Updates- August 2026

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

GP-SHG Convergence

- **Jharkhand:** Revisited the **SHG-PRI Convergence guidelines** based on mentor inputs. The Action Plan for training Master Trainers and monitoring learning outcomes is being prepared.
- **Odisha:** Continued development of the **VPRP-GPDP Convergence Training Module**, including case studies and learning objectives for each chapter. The module was further refined and contextualised to the Odisha context. Preparations also began for the proposed September writeshop, including discussions with Panchayati Raj Department officials on jointly organising the event.
- **Karnataka:** Conducted a field visit to the VPRP pilot GP in Chikkaballapur to assess the realisation of VPRP demands over the past three years. The consolidated report covering all three pilot GPs was prepared. The VPRP capacity-building module was also revised based on feedback, incorporating Karnataka-specific case studies.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Selected 5 SRPs and 15 DRPs for VP-SHG Convergence across 15 districts and completed the **Two-Year Action Plan and Standard Operating Framework**. Designed the SRP/DRP induction programme scheduled for 1–3 September and initiated preparations for BRP training at RIRD from 7–12 September. Developed content for the VB-G RAM G and Immersion Site chapters and submitted a proposal for additional implementation resources to Living Landscape.

Localizing SDGs (LSDG)

- **Tamil Nadu:** Conducted a meeting with the **State Planning Commission (SPC)** and presented the **LSDG study to Member Secretary Mr. Kandavel Pandian, IAS**. It was agreed that CRISP will analyse lagging state-level indicators using Focus Block Development Programme data to identify priority areas. Based on the analysis, state-level priorities will be identified and five Gram Panchayats per district selected for the award process. The LSDG Guidelines are under review by the Commissioner, RD&PR, with additional inputs requested based on grants proposed in the State Budget.

FRA

- **Odisha:** CRISP Team Met with **Agriculture Secretary Shri Sachin Jadhav** and consulted the **Odisha Jackfruit Mission** on scheme convergence and logistics. The team also conducted field visits to Bishamcuttack, Rayagada (5–6 August) for institutional analysis and community-level PRA, and to Koraput (10–13 August) for pilot site selection and consultations with key stakeholders. The Pottangi field visit was impacted by heavy rainfall, but consultations with FES were completed. Proposed a State-Level Workshop on NTFP and IFR lands to bring together stakeholders and deliberate on policy challenges and recommendations. Consultations with ORMAS, SIRD, NGOs, and Kalahandi GSF are ongoing to develop the workshop concept note.

PESA

- **Jharkhand:** The CRISP team conducted a **Training Needs Assessment to identify gaps in PESA awareness and capacity across stakeholders, from communities to district-level officials**, while also assessing potential **GPs for development as Schools of Practice**. Engaged with traditional leaders to understand implementation challenges and participated in two VCs with Jharkhand divisions to discuss challenges faced by Circle and district officials. The team also met with the **Director, Panchayati Raj, to develop a practical plan for the PESA pilot and TNA**. Pilot GPs will be categorised as easy, moderate, or difficult based on the selection of the Chairperson, Gram Sabha account opening, and boundary recognition status. The PESA PMU Action Plan was approved by the Department, and the quarterly action plan was also prepared.

Key Learnings



- **GP-SHG Convergence:** Clear roles and responsibilities, state-contextualised content, practical case studies, participatory activities, and exposure visits are critical for making convergence guidelines and capacity-building programmes practical and effective.
- **Localising SDGs:** Early stakeholder consultation is essential to ensure LSDG guidelines and modules are practical, aligned with departmental priorities, and support Panchayat-level implementation.
- **Forest Rights Act (FRA):** Stronger convergence across departments, community institutions, and schemes, alongside market-oriented approaches to value addition and enterprise development, is key to sustainable NTFP-based livelihoods.
- **PESA:** Field interactions highlighted varied implementation challenges and the importance of categorising GPs by readiness while engaging traditional leaders to understand awareness gaps.

Way Forward

- **GGP-SHG Convergence:** Develop an advocacy strategy, share the Master Trainer training cascade with the department, and contextualise the SHG-PRI Convergence CBT module for the state.
- **Localising SDGs:** Analyse SPC data to identify state-level priorities, incorporate stakeholder feedback into the LSDG module, and revise the Guidelines for departmental review.
- **FRA:** Finalise the concept note and organise the State-Level Workshop, while identifying pilot sites with clear institutional roles, convergence mechanisms, and market-linked NTFP opportunities.
- **PESA:** Complete the Training Needs Assessment to inform the PESA curriculum and CSO workshop, followed by a workshop to establish roles and responsibilities for operationalising PESA.

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