

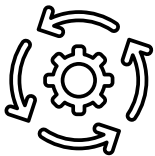
Monthly Updates- December 2025

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

GP–SHG Convergence

- **Jharkhand:** Field visits were conducted in Giridih and West Singhbhum to review pilot progress and provide implementation support. Based on field assessment, Anandpur Panchayat (West Singhbhum), supported by WASSAN Foundation, was finalised as the pilot GP. Active SHG members from the VPRP process were consolidated, and an orientation on the GIST pilot was conducted with the BDO to strengthen block-level ownership. The CEO, JSLPS and Nodal Officer for CRISP (Jharkhand) issued a formal communication to the DC/DDC seeking administrative support for convergence.
- **Odisha: Draft VPRP–GPDP** orientation materials were prepared and are under revision.
- **Karnataka:** NLM–Karnataka provided formal approval to initiate the pilot to strengthen VPRPs in three GPs across three districts. Orientation programmes were conducted for GP-level SHG Federations.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Additional chapters were developed for the PRI–SHG Partnership module (Gender, FNHW, Menstrual Hygiene, Mental Health, Palliative Care). The first draft of the Tamil translation was completed, with design finalised for seven chapters. Discussions were held with TNSRLM on organising a VP–SHG Partnership conference.

Localising SDGs

- **Odisha:** The LSDG needs-assessment checklist and questionnaire were contextualised for Odisha. A field visit was conducted to Sirtiguda GP, Kandhamal, with PRADAN for data collection, followed by meetings with GPLF members, ICDS, MGNREGS, and other departments.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Meetings were held with BRCPs to initiate SDG status reporting in five districts. Checklists and questionnaires were prepared for pilot Panchayats. A Mahila Sabha was conducted in Thiruvudanthai Panchayat, along with field visits, participation in an SMC meeting, and social and resource mapping exercises in Kanchipuram and Chengalpattu districts.

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- **Jharkhand:** A draft proposal is being prepared to enhance income and livelihood opportunities for post-IFR title holders, informed by cross-state learning and a consultative workshop with landscape partners.
- **Odisha:** Pilot monitoring and baseline mapping continued, with Phase 1 progressing to Week 4. A policy advisory is being drafted on pending CFR issues. Field visits were conducted to Sundargarh (17–19 December), including baseline profiling of three Panchayats linked to VDVK Ganga and meetings with ITDA.

Commons

- **Jharkhand:** Based on field assessment, Anandpur Panchayat (West Singhbhum), supported by WASSAN Foundation, was finalised as the pilot Panchayat. The CEO, JSLPS and Nodal Officer for CRISP (Jharkhand) issued a formal communication to the DC/DDC seeking administrative support for implementation and convergence.

PESA

- **Odisha:** The team collaborated with SIRD to refine draft PESA Rules following comments on steels and minor minerals. On PESA Day (24 December), grassroots-level training sessions were facilitated to strengthen local capacities.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



- **Stronger grassroots ownership and follow-up mechanisms are critical**—limited SHG-level participation in VPRP processes, lack of accessible materials at Panchayat level, block-driven SDG decision-making, and seasonal delays in FRA implementation highlight the need for simple, localised communication, systematic demand-tracking, and flexible timelines aligned with community realities.

Way Forward

- **GP-SHG Convergence:** Complete inclusive, time-bound VPRP processes and roll out the refined VPRP-GPDP framework while facilitating SHG-led PRA, resilience assessment, and demand prioritisation for GP planning.
- **Institutional Capacity Building:** Strengthen GP and SRLM capacities through targeted workshops and completion, translation, and dissemination of updated PRI-SHG partnership modules.
- **Localising SDGs:** Prepare SDG status reports, map community needs, and develop SDG-aligned GPDPs for submission at upcoming Gram Sabhas.
- **FRA:** Develop livelihood and income-enhancement scheme documents for post-IFR households and undertake field visits, baseline documentation, and follow-up research.
- **Commons:** Identify Common Property Resources for protection and regeneration, integrate plans into GPDPs, and initiate pilots in coordination with partner organisations.