

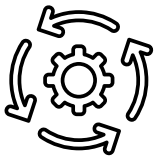
Monthly Updates- February 2026

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.

GP-SHG Convergence

- **In Jharkhand**, the VPRP planning process was concluded in Anandpur Panchayat, with entitlement and livelihood planning at the SHG level and PGSRD and SDP plans at the VO level. The pilot process also informed the drafting of state-level guidelines.
- **In Odisha**, VPRP orientation materials were translated into Odia and are under proofreading. An orientation was conducted in Bankapatuli village, Pipilia GP, Keonjhar, where drinking water emerged as the primary demand under PGSRD. Resource and social mapping, transect walks, and Jal Jeevan Mission data validation were undertaken.
- **In Karnataka**, SHG-level plan preparation was completed across all pilot GPs, including resilience assessment and demand prioritisation. VPRPs were consolidated at WLF and GPLF levels, ranked using a pair-wise tool, and submitted to Gram Panchayats.
- **In Tamil Nadu**, the VPRP module lesson plan and study methodology were finalised, field visits were conducted in four districts, and meetings and orientations were held on VP-SHG Partnership and VPRP-GPDP integration.

Localising SDGs (LSDGs)

- **In Tamil Nadu**, in the pilot Panchayats, the team, along with BRCPs from Chengalpattu and Kancheepuram districts, prepared the draft Village Panchayat Development Plan (VPDP) for FY 2026–27. The draft VPDP was based on needs identified through social mapping and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) activities conducted in the previous month. Field visits were undertaken to Kizhambi Panchayat (Kancheepuram district) and Azhagusamuthiram Panchayat (Chengalpattu district) to discuss the draft VPDP with GPPFT and PRI members.

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- **In Jharkhand**, as part of the ongoing study on gaps in post-claim support to IFR titleholders, field visits were conducted to Digha and Raidih Panchayats in West Singhbhum district. Interviews with IFR titleholder households assessed livelihood changes, land use patterns, access to schemes, and institutional support following title recognition.
- **In Odisha**, field visits were conducted from 10–15 February in Kalahandi district to undertake the planned micro-study on post-recognition outcomes. The visits were carried out in collaboration with the KKDA microproject and included a detailed household survey in Podapadar village, Kadamguda Panchayat, Lanjigarh.

Commons

- **In Jharkhand**, three priority commons were identified in the pilot GP one talav and two parcels of common land. A comprehensive list of works was prepared for their protection, restoration, and regeneration.

PESA

- **In Jharkhand**, a regional workshop on understanding implementation challenges of PESA is scheduled to be held in East Singhbhum. The workshop, to be hosted by Kalamandir, TSRD, and the Panchayati Raj Department, aims to identify critical implementation gaps requiring urgent action.
- **In Odisha**, the PESA Rules are being redrafted at SIRD based on observations from government departments on the existing draft rules. The team is currently providing technical support to the process. The State Lead also participated in the National Workshop on the PESA Act at NIRDPR, Hyderabad, from 16–18 February as the nominated official representing the Government of Odisha.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



Across themes, **participatory processes and sustained handholding** significantly improve planning quality, ownership, and implementation outcomes. Tools such as transect walks, social mapping, resilience assessments, and consultative workshops strengthen community awareness and generate more realistic demands. However, **gaps in awareness, data systems, and interdepartmental convergence** highlight the need for context-specific guidelines and stronger institutional coordination.

Way Forward

GP-SHG Convergence: Efforts will focus on institutionalising participatory VPRP processes through continued orientation and handholding support to SHGs.

Localising SDGs: The team will strengthen Gram Sabha-led prioritisation to ensure need-based and effective VPDP planning and implementation.

FRA: Work will continue towards developing verified databases, improving convergence across departments, and evolving district-specific post-recognition support strategies.

Commons: Identified commons-related works will be integrated into GPDP and Labour Budgets with necessary technical facilitation and convergence support.

PESA: The team will prioritise key implementation bottlenecks identified through consultations and support the state in strengthening PESA implementation.