

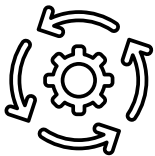
Monthly Updates- January 2026

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

- **Jharkhand:** Conducted entitlement planning under VPRP in pilot GP Anandpur (West Singhbhum); engaged Panchayat and Block stakeholders; completed groundwork for livelihood planning; partnered with WASSAN for livelihood plan preparation; initiated SHG database creation.
- **Odisha:** Finalised SHG orientation materials and field-level presentations.
- **Karnataka:** Completed PRA activities (transect walk, resource, and social mapping) in all pilot GPs; initiated SHG-level plan preparation including resilience tool administration and demand prioritisation.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Completed Tamil translation and revision of training modules; prepared 8-day lesson plans; supported TNSRLM in PRI-CBO convergence action planning; prepared action plan for VPRP study in 5 VPs.

Localising SDGs (LSDGs)

- **Odisha:** Completed and shared LSDG status report for Sirtiguda GP, Kandhamal district.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Conducted social mapping in 10 pilot Panchayats with BRCPs to identify community needs for VPDP; facilitated PRA with Mahila Sabha and Balar Sabha; participated in Gram Sabha (26 January) and DPPC meeting in Thiruppathur district.

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- **Jharkhand:** Prepared FGD and KII tools with IFR titleholders; developed IFR concept note post Living Landscapes workshop; held coordination meetings with Abhivyakti and Badlao Foundations to finalise study approach and priority blocks.
- **Odisha:** Conducted field visits in Kalahandi (6–8 January); initiated FRA micro-studies—NTFP market mapping with Sebjagat in Khaliyamunda and a PRADAN-led livelihood study in Podapadar; initiated household survey tools and next steps.

Commons

- **Jharkhand:** Conducted transect walks with Mundas and community members to map commons; applied commons evaluation matrix; identified GPDP and MGNREGA works for protection, restoration, and regeneration of commons.

PESA

- **Jharkhand:** Participated in State-level PESA training manual customisation workshop; supported contextualisation of training modules; contributed to proposed revisions of PESA rules.
- **Odisha:** Held discussions with SIRD on formation of a State-level interdepartmental committee for draft PESA.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



Effective community planning requires context-specific, participatory approaches that combine structured tools with local knowledge to capture real needs and challenges. When stakeholders are engaged meaningfully—from SHGs to titleholders—plans become more inclusive, actionable, and aligned with ground realities.

Way Forward

- **GP-SHG Convergence:** In Jharkhand, Odisha, Karnataka & Tamil Nadu complete remaining entitlement and SHG-level planning processes, finalise livelihood, social development and public goods plans, consolidate and rank demands at federation levels, integrate VPRPs into GPDP/annual plans, and initiate follow-up and studies.
- **Localising SDGs (LSDGs):** In Odisha & Tamil Nadu build on LSDG status findings to strengthen community-led planning by exploring community-driven LSDG action plans, training BRCPs, preparing and finalising draft VPDPs through social mapping and Gram Sabha processes.
- **Forest Rights Act (FRA):** In Jharkhand & Odisha undertake focused field-based studies through FGDs, KIIs, household surveys, and NTFP market and livelihood assessments to document post-FRA experiences, consolidate findings, and develop evidence-based insights to inform policy recommendations and future field engagement.
- **Commons:** In Jharkhand continue systematic mapping and documentation of village commons, prioritise areas for regeneration, and prepare MGNREGA labour budgets to support planning and implementation of commons restoration works.
- **PESA:** Continue engagement with relevant departments in Jharkhand to support implementation and follow-up on PESA-related processes and institutional mechanisms.