

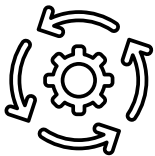
## Monthly Updates- March 2026

# 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

- PGSRD and SDP plans for VPRP preparation were completed, and GP-level summary datasheets compiled.
- Regular field visits were undertaken to facilitate GPDP-VPRP integration in pilot GP Anandpur.
- A status report is being developed to document key observations, gaps, challenges, and recommendations.
- Department-level meetings were held to update officials and discuss the way forward.

### Odisha

- VPRP preparation progressed in Papermetla GP (Malkangiri), building on earlier orientation and social mapping; demands were collected across all components.
- Consultations were held with the Sarpanch and Panchayat members on VPRP-GPDP integration; compiled demand lists will be shared with the Panchayat and PEO.
- Process documentation initiated in Malkangiri; documentation for Keonjhar has been finalised and is under review.

### Karnataka

- Focus shifted to integration of VPRP demands post submission across pilot GPs, including mapping demands to relevant line departments.
- A Gram Sabha was facilitated in Alawandi (Koppal), enabling discussions between GP and GPLF on demand integration.
- Ongoing work on process documentation and draft VPRP guidelines for the state.

### Tamil Nadu

- Field visits conducted in Thirupathur district for the VPRP study; report preparation is underway.
- Engagements with SIRD focused on Tamil translation of PRI-SHG partnership modules and planning of pilot trainings.

## Localising SDGs

### Tamil Nadu

- District-level consultation in Thirupathur reviewed draft VPDPs with participation from BRCPs across five blocks.
- A scoping visit to Eraiyur Panchayat (Kancheepuram) was conducted to assess VPDP progress and the functioning of the GP Planning and Facilitation Team.

## FRA (Forest Rights Act)

### Jharkhand

- Based on FGDs and in-depth interviews in Manoharpur, a questionnaire was developed for a study on post-FRA livelihood support.

### Odisha

- Micro-study report drafted and under final review; additional household surveys planned to address data gaps and strengthen analysis on livelihoods and vulnerability indicators.
- Baseline completed for the NTFP value-chain study; next phase will focus on detailed mapping of selected high-value forest products, including actors, processes, and market margins.

## Commons

### Jharkhand

- A comprehensive document on commons regeneration in Anandpur was developed, highlighting MGNREGA-linked interventions.
- Field engagements with PRI members supported integration of commons into labour budgets.
- The document was shared with the MGNREGA Commissioner during a departmental review.

## PESA

### Jharkhand

- Proposal for the PESA PMU submitted to the State Coordinator.
- Meeting held with the Minister's office to discuss PESA and potential new initiatives.
- Participation in a PESA consultation workshop organised by Common Ground.
- Draft Implementation Roadmap prepared for operationalisation of PESA in the state.

### Odisha

- Ongoing engagement in state-level consultations on revised PESA Rules, with coordination support to SIRD on interdepartmental mechanisms.

## Photo Gallery



## Key Learnings



Programme implementation highlighted that while **participatory planning processes are improving across states, their effectiveness depends on contextual adaptation, simplified approaches for SHGs, sustained handholding support, stronger institutional coordination, and improved grassroots awareness** along with integrated convergence across livelihoods, FRA, Commons, and PESA for more inclusive and effective outcomes.

## Way Forward

- **Strengthen GP-SHG convergence** through GPDP-VPRP integration, consolidation of learnings, and development of state-specific guidelines.
- Complete **VPRP study, training materials, and LSDG guidelines** in Tamil Nadu, along with GPDP analysis.
- Advance **FRA work through new studies** in Jharkhand and completion of surveys, analysis, and NTFP value-chain mapping in Odisha.
- **Prioritise integration of commons** into labour budgets in Jharkhand and develop supporting guidelines.
- **Progress PESA implementation** via PMU establishment in Jharkhand and improved interdepartmental coordination in Odisha.