

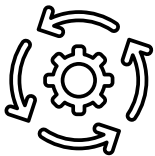
Monthly Updates- November 2025

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

- In Jharkhand, the team conducted monthly review meetings with pilot partners (WASSAN, KALAMANDIR, BADLAO) and field facilitators, created a WhatsApp group for improved monitoring and weekly coordination, and shared an Observation Tool along with a GPDP/VPRP process map to support facilitators in understanding and documenting the planning process, challenges, and learnings.
- In Odisha, generic VPRP learning material is being developed as suggested by Vijayanand Sir, and a draft has been shared with mentors for feedback and refinement to accommodate variations across field contexts.
- In Karnataka, the team released the report “A Field Study on VPRP in Karnataka” based on work in 30 GPs across 10 districts, presenting findings, challenges, recommendations, and a detailed action plan to strengthen VPRP preparation, its integration with GPDP, and demand tracking.
- In Tamil Nadu, the team prepared additional chapters for the PRI–SHG Partnership module as requested by TNSRLM, finalised the schedule for the VP–SHG Partnership conference after multiple consultations, and submitted job descriptions for SRPs, DRPs, and BRPs for the pilot project.

Localising SDGs

- In Jharkhand, the team held monthly review meetings with pilot partners and facilitators, created a WhatsApp group for efficient communication and monitoring, and shared an Observation Tool with a GPDP/VPRP process map to help facilitators observe and capture process learnings.
- In Tamil Nadu, the team supported BRCPs through field visits to 7 GPs for forming GPPFTs, participated with them in the Gram Sabha on 1st November, facilitated the creation of 25 GPPFTs in pilot panchayats, and conducted a stakeholder meeting in Kanchipuram to discuss the CRISP action plan and provide LSDG training.

Forest Rights Act (FRA)

- In Jharkhand, the team met with the RD Secretary to plan work on identifying challenges related to post-claim benefits for IFR holders and to explore best practices from other states, and met with the MGNREGA Commissioner to discuss convergence opportunities including 150 days of NREGA work for IFR households.
- In Odisha, continuous monitoring of field pilots is underway with baseline mapping progressing, field staff receiving regular scaffolding support through WhatsApp and calls, and NGO partners actively conducting community meetings as the pilot enters Week 3.

Commons

- In Jharkhand, the team organised monthly review meetings with pilot partners and facilitators, created a WhatsApp group for smoother monitoring, and shared an Observation Tool and GPDP/VPRP process map to guide facilitators in observing and reporting learnings from the planning process.
- In Odisha, field visits for Gram Sabha orientation with partner NGOs (FES in Dhenkanal, NIRMAN in Nayagarh, SPREAD in Koraput) are being scheduled, and despite slight delays, all partners have confirmed dates and readiness to begin the pilots.
- In Karnataka, the team participated in a consultation workshop on draft Commons guidelines prepared by the Foundation for Ecological Security, contributing to expert and stakeholder feedback for refinement of the guidelines.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



A key learning across states is that one-size-fits-all approaches do not work, as field realities differ greatly by geography, community readiness, and the socio-political context—requiring adaptable, region-specific planning materials. Implementation timelines are heavily shaped by seasonal rhythms, community availability, and NGO coordination, underscoring the need for flexible planning and built-in buffers. Strengthening the use of participatory tools, leveraging existing local institutions, and deploying dedicated facilitators like BRCPs can significantly improve planning quality and GP–SHG coordination. Overall, effective pilots require grounded facilitation, context-sensitive design, and stronger early alignment with partners to ensure smoother execution.

Way Forward

- **GP–SHG Convergence:** Strengthen GPPFT/GPCC, draft and integrate VPRP with GPDP, test resilience and PRA tools in Karnataka, finalize VPRP materials in Odisha, and prepare for the VP–SHG Partnership Conference in Tamil Nadu.
- **Localising SDGs:** Support GPPFT/GPCC in Jharkhand, and in Tamil Nadu, train BRCPs and Panchayat Presidents, conduct need assessments, and prepare SDG status reports to inform Panchayat Development Plans.
- **FRA:** Identify post-claim support challenges, explore new schemes, and engage IFR holders through workshops, KIIs, and FGDs in Jharkhand, while continuing and accelerating field pilots in Odisha.
- **Commons:** Map and plan rejuvenation of CPRs in Jharkhand integrated into GPDP, and initiate pilot activities with FES, NIRMAN, and SPREAD in Odisha to strengthen commons governance.