

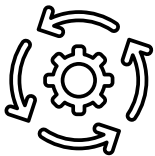
Monthly Updates- October 2025

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

VP-SHG Convergence

- **Jharkhand:** The pilot was initiated in 7 GPs of West Singhbhum with WASSAN and Kalamandir. Field visits and meetings with Panchayat officials, JSLPS staff, and SHG members helped assess GPDP-VPRP implementation and local processes. Ten field facilitators were oriented to adapt pilot execution to ground realities. Key insights highlight the need to build awareness of GPDP as a development tool and establish mechanisms for monitoring and alignment with village needs.
- **Odisha:** Draft orientation material on VPRP was prepared, integrating relevant schemes and convergence frameworks. Fieldwork in Budhikapudi (Keonjhar) and Baunsanali (Mayurbhanj) with PRADAN revealed that SHG participation in Gram Sabhas is strong, but VPRPs mostly cover entitlement and livelihood demands, with limited thematic focus. The absence of CRPs in some GPs affects plan preparation; however, GPLFs and community participation remain active, and VDPs are integrated into GPDPs.
- **Karnataka:** Field visits across 12 GPs in Haveri, Davanagere, and Udupi assessed VPRP quality and process. Discussions with GPLF members and CRPs informed the finalized field study report, "A Field Study on Village Prosperity Resilience Plan in Karnataka."
- **Tamil Nadu:** GO on VP-SHG Partnership released (15 Oct 2025). Completed PRI-SHG module with ISBN, case studies, and proposal for 370-village pilot finalized.

Localising SDGs

- **Jharkhand:** The pilot started in 7 GPs of West Singhbhum, with facilitators oriented by Kalamandir. Inputs highlighted the need for Gram Sabha awareness on LSDGs and integrating resource mapping with baseline data for efficiency.
- **Odisha:** Field visits to Kandibandha (Kandhamal) and Budhikapudi (Keonjhar) with PRADAN focused on participatory planning and theme selection under LSDGs. Findings revealed low awareness of theme-based GPDPs and that fund availability often dictates priority themes like "Clean and Green Village."
- **Tamil Nadu:** Meetings with district and block resource persons were held in 5 districts to operationalize field interventions. Scoping visits and Gram Sabha participation in Chengalpattu and Tiruppathur initiated GPPFT formation and a Bala Sabha on Child-Friendly Villages with 40 children.

FRA

- **Jharkhand:** Pilot in 6 GPs (West Singhbhum & Godda). Visited Gram Sabhas; aligned FRA sessions with Tassar farming cycles. Mahua & Tassar identified as key NTFPs.
- **Odisha:** Developed Gantt & orientation handouts; onboarded PRADAN, Seabajat & SEWAK. Field visits (13-17 Oct) across Kalahandi & Sundargarh; pilots launched 27 Oct 2024.

PESA

- **Odisha:** The team participated in the National Workshop on Customary Dispute Resolution in PESA Areas, gaining insights into traditional tribal governance and local justice mechanisms. These learnings are being used to explore how customary institutions can complement statutory systems, strengthen Gram Sabha decision-making, and reinforce FRA and commons governance in PESA regions.

Commons

- **Jharkhand:** Pilot in 9 GPs; field visits in Godda identified water scarcity & forest fires as major threats. Planned Gram Sabhas for Commons Committee formation.
- **Odisha:** Developed Gantt & orientation handouts outlining pilot timeline, milestones, and partner roles for smooth implementation.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



Key learnings highlight limited convergence between departments and low community awareness on participatory, theme-based planning, requiring stronger coordination and capacity building. The FRA and Commons pilots showed the need to align activities with local contexts, cultivation cycles, and geography while improving documentation and collaboration. Overall, context-specific planning and community ownership are essential for effective and sustainable local governance.

Way Forward

- **VP-SHG Convergence:** Pilots will be initiated across states, focusing on stakeholder orientation, GPPFT formation, and PRI capacity building. Modules and plans will be finalized with state partners to strengthen convergence and streamline GPDP-VPRP integration.
- **Localising SDGs:** LSDG pilots will begin in selected GPs with awareness sessions, baseline data collection, and theme-based planning. Focus will be on integrating PRI-SHG efforts and strengthening participatory GPDP preparation.
- **Protection of Commons:** Commons Governance Committees will be formed, and household dependency registers prepared. Orientation visits with partners in Jharkhand and Odisha will guide pilot rollout and community engagement.
- **FRA:** FRCs will be activated for NTFP mapping and continuous partner engagement ensured for smooth implementation. A policy note on CFR claims in Odisha will be developed for advocacy and scale-up.
- **PESA:** Engagement with SIRD will continue to finalize and consolidate feedback on the Odisha PESA Draft. Insights will inform improved community-led governance frameworks.