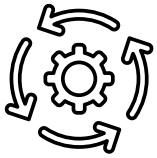
Monthly Updates - October 2026

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.

Progress this Month

GP-SHG Convergence

- **Jharkhand:** The team participated in the 5-day training of SRPs and DRPs on VPRP for 2026-27 and facilitated resource mapping simulations. Four blocks in West Singhbhum were selected as intervention sites for handholding SHG networks through the VPRP process in order to improve GPDP outcomes for 2026-27.
- **Odisha:** Organized a 2-day writeshop with SIRD, OLM, and NGO partners to validate, refine, and finalize draft guidelines, action plans, and training modules for VPRP–GPDP integration.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Rolled out 2-day LRP block-level training across 15 districts and conducted district-level stakeholder coordination meetings. Organized a 1-day workshop on VB-G RAM G for APOs, SRPs, DRPs, and BRPs at SIRD&PR. Translated and compiled Volume 1 (Chapters 1–6) of the PRI-SHG module into Tamil for TNSRLM. Produced and published 2 training video modules on YouTube, prepared SRP/DRP recruitment assessment papers, and established weekly progress reviews.

Localizing SDGs (LSDG)

- **Tamil Nadu:** The LSDG Guidelines were redrafted based on the five selected themes, with specific priorities and criteria prepared for identifying and selecting the Village Panchayats. The revised LSDG Guidelines have been submitted to the department and are currently under review by the Additional Director of Rural Development (ADRD). Conducted a meeting with ADRD, State Coordinator RRGSA and AD (Panchayat) to release the guideline. The file has been put up to the government.

FRA

- **Odisha (NTFP Study)**: On Jackfruit State Mission - Develop a collaboration framework to operationalize a sustained pilot through implementation support, interdepartmental coordination, and knowledge sharing. The concept note for the state-level NTFP workshop is being revised to explore the need for reforming Odisha's existing MFP Rules in alignment with the FRA and BDA, and to promote an enabling NTFP policy framework that strengthens community rights and sustainable resource governance.

PESA

- **Jharkhand:** Completed Training Needs Assessment (TNA) across 5 blocks, engaging 200 key stakeholders. The team also initiated preparations for a state-level CSO workshop in November to build a unified platform for PESA implementation and convergence.

Key Learnings

- **GP–SHG Convergence:** Comprehensive training faced time constraints covering multiple complex modules, and stakeholder coordination highlighted a gap between central guidelines and ground-level implementation.

- **Localising SDGs:** Recognition and financial incentives effectively motivate Village Panchayats to improve their performance across identified priority themes.

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA):** Strong convergence and institutional coordination across departments and community institutions are essential for strengthening NTFP-based livelihoods.

- **PESA:** Through the TNA, the need for refresher training at the field level was highlighted. One-day training on PESA could not bridge the gap in information and awareness regarding PESA provisions.

Way Forward

- **GP–SHG Convergence:** Facilitate the VPRP process in selected blocks, finalize and operationalize integrated guidelines through departmental coordination, develop AI-enhanced training videos, and conduct structured block-level LRP and CBO trainings, assessments, and orientations.
- **Localising SDGs:** Finalize and release the revised LSDG guidelines and module, prepare selection parameters and action plans for TN VETRI Ooratchi awards, and coordinate with leadership for official rollout.
- **FRA:** Finalize concept notes for departmental collaboration, advance the Jackfruit State Mission pilot framework, and promote enabling NTFP policy reforms aligned with FRA and BDA.
- **PESA:** Organize a state-level CSO workshop in Jharkhand to drive convergence, and develop targeted refresher training to address awareness gaps identified through TNA.

Photos





