

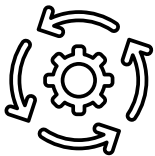
Monthly Updates- September 2025

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

- In **Jharkhand**, the team completed the **6-month pilot plan** for SHG-GP Convergence, including a detailed **Gantt chart** of micro-activities. They also onboarded Landscape Partners to clearly define their roles and responsibilities (R&R) for the pilot.
- In **Odisha**, the team developed the **methodology and week-wise action plan**. They engaged and onboarded NGO partners, with support from Living Landscapes, to align approaches and build readiness. **Pilots were initiated in 2 villages** of Paparmetla GP, Malkangiri, with WASSAN from September 22nd to 25th. This involved preparatory activities like discussions with SHGs on VPRP, **joint PRI-SHG meetings**, and social mapping, bringing **over 40 participants** together to begin VPRP preparation.
- In **Karnataka**, the team conducted **field visits to 10 Gram Panchayats** in Koppal, Bagalkote, and Bijapur districts to document the process and quality of **VPRP preparation** by SHGs. They held discussions with GPLF members and interviewed CRPs. Based on field insights, **Alawani GP from Koppal was chosen for the VPRP pilot**, ensuring the program covers all three administrative divisions.
- In **Tamil Nadu**, the team completed the **revision of the PRI-SHG Partnership module** and conducted a field visit in Chengalpattu to gather case study insights for the module. A **GANTT Chart with weekly activities** for the 1.5-year VP-SHG Convergence pilot was also prepared.

Localising SDGs

- In **Jharkhand**, the team completed the **6-month pilot plan** for LSDG, including a detailed **Gantt chart**. They onboarded Landscape Partners to clarify roles and responsibilities (R&R) for the pilot and its activities.
- In **Odisha**, the team developed the **methodology and week-wise action plan**. They engaged and onboarded NGO partners, with support from Living Landscapes, which helped in **confirming pilot locations**. Partner NGOs, including PRADAN and SEWAK, were involved in discussions on village selection and pilot rollout.
- In **Tamil Nadu**, the team conducted meetings with panchayat leaders and community members in Thiruvadanthai village (Chengalpattu) for the preparation of the **Village SDG Status Report** and also held School Management Committee meetings. A scoping visit for LSDG was conducted to Hanumanthapuram panchayat in Thiruporur block.

FRA

- In **Jharkhand**, the team completed the **6-month pilot plan** for enhancing FRA, including a **Gantt chart**. They onboarded Landscape Partners to clarify roles and responsibilities (R&R) for the pilot and its activities.
- In **Odisha**, the team engaged and onboarded NGO partners, with support from Living Landscapes. They met with the Director of **SCSTRTI** to explore a **collaborative NTFP study**, and are currently preparing a concept note for this.

PESA

- In **Odisha**, the team visited Koraput in late August to understand the scope for a **PESA-compliant GPDP micro-pilot**. Following this, they deliberated with **SIRD** in September to support the state in **reviewing and consolidating inputs on the Odisha PESA Draft**, incorporating comments from CRISP and various government departments.

Commons

- In **Jharkhand**, the team completed the **6-month pilot plan** for Governance of Commons, including a **Gantt chart**. They onboarded Landscape Partners to clarify roles and responsibilities (R&R) for the pilot and its activities.
- In **Odisha**, the team held detailed deliberations with NGO partners to finalize the **methodology and week-wise structure** for the pilot. They engaged partners like **FES, SPREAD, and NIRMAN** in discussions on village selection and pilot rollout. A field visit was conducted to FES in Dhenkanal to orient the partner team, with pilots **scheduled to commence in October**.

Photo Gallery



Key Learnings



Active community engagement, using tools like social mapping, is crucial to overcome initial low awareness and persisting inequalities, particularly for women in participatory planning. Strengthening VPRP requires targeted training to cover monitoring and convergence, coupled with multi-departmental alignment for processes like PESA and LSDG.

Way Forward

- **In Jharkhand,** the team is focused on preparing orientation material and conducting orientation for field facilitators for all four themes: VP-SHG Convergence, Localising SDGs, Protection of Commons, and FRA. All pilots are scheduled to kickstart from the second week of October.
- **In Odisha,** VP-SHG Convergence and LSDG pilots will begin in October in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar (dual pilot) with PRADAN. For Protection of Commons, pilots start October 6th in Dhenkanal (FES) and Nayagarh (NIRMAN), with integration in Kalahandi (PRADAN). FRA rollout is from October 13th in Kalahandi (Sebajagat) and Sundargarh (SEWAK). PESA involves continued engagement with SIRD on the PESA Draft consolidation.
- **In Karnataka,** the VPRP pilot will be initiated in October upon official approval. The launch will begin with the orientation of key stakeholders including GPLF members and GP officials.
- **In Tamil Nadu,** VP-SHG Convergence activities include field visits for case studies and preparing for the VP-SHG Partnership conference. For LSDG, the team will activate GPPFT to start GPDP preparation and complete the selection of pilot villages in Kancheepuram, Thenkasi, and Thirupathur districts.