

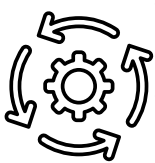
Monthly Updates- September 2026

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:** Finalised the **SHG–PRI Convergence Guidelines** and **drafted the state-level Action Plan covering training of resource persons on Mahila Sabhas**, VPRP, beneficiary identification, and SHG representation in Standing Committees. A consolidated proposal, including the status report, writeshop report, guidelines, and Action Plan, was prepared for submission to the state.
- **Odisha:** Advanced preparations for the **VPRP–GPDP Convergence Writeshop** through coordination with SIRD, session planning, and participant finalisation. Submitted the Field Report, Guidelines, Training Module, and Action Plan to the concerned departments and participated in SIRD's TNA sessions for PRI representatives.
- **Karnataka:** Revised the VPRP pilot report based on recent field findings and submitted it to the National Livelihood Mission, Karnataka.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Conducted induction training for SRPs and DRPs and BRP orientations across four regional batches. Released the **PRI-SHG Partnership Training Module** and prepared the October work plan and LRP training schedule for 15 districts. Oriented BRPs on PGSRD and SDP planning, provided inputs on the Gender Resource Centre SOP, and finalised reporting formats and training materials with inputs from Resource Persons.

Localizing SDGs (LSDG)

- **Tamil Nadu:** Revised the LSDG module covering all nine themes, including the VPDP chapters, based on stakeholder feedback. The **LSDG Guidelines were also redrafted in alignment with the RD&PR Policy Note 2026–27**, incorporating the five selected themes and criteria for identifying high-performing Village Panchayats for district- and state-level awards. The revised Guidelines have been submitted to the department and are currently under review by the Additional Director of Rural Development (ADRD).

FRA

- **Odisha – NTFP Study:** Drafted and submitted the concept for a State-level NTFP Workshop to the State Lead for feedback. A concept note, including an executive summary, is also being developed for a Jackfruit Pilot in collaboration with the State Mission for operationalisation and knowledge support.
- **FRA Microstudy:** Finalised and submitted the microstudy report to SCSTRTI, Odisha.

PESA

- **Jharkhand:** Completed the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) across selected districts and finalised the TNA report, which identified key capacity-building gaps for effective implementation of PESA.

Commons

- Mapped **commons-related works to VB-G RAM G** and **conducted field visits** to the pilot area in West Singhbhum to facilitate the passage of three Gram Sabha resolutions.

Key Learnings



- **GP-SHG Convergence:** The planning process highlighted the need to align training priorities and strategies with evolving field realities, while leveraging existing government training mechanisms and stakeholder inputs to make interventions practical and context-specific.
- **Localising SDGs:** Linking LSDG implementation with awards and financial incentives can motivate Village Panchayats to improve performance across identified priority themes.
- **Forest Rights Act (FRA):** Strong convergence and institutional coordination across departments, community institutions, and existing schemes are critical for strengthening NTFP-based livelihoods.
- **PESA:** Differences in awareness across geographies and the TNA findings highlighted the need for sustained, localised training support beyond one-day sessions to strengthen understanding and operationalisation of PESA.
- **Commons:** The exercise strengthened understanding of the prioritised commons-related works applicable in Jharkhand and the process for incorporating them under VB-G-RAM-G.

Way Forward

- **GP-SHG Convergence:** Provide handholding support across four blocks in West Singhbhum to strengthen VPRP-GPDP planning for 2026–27, engage the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department on issuing the SHG-PRI Convergence Guidelines, and develop a capacity-building module.
- **Localising SDGs:** Update and finalise the LSDG module with new government schemes and processes, and revise the Guidelines based on feedback from ADRD and DRD before submitting them to the Secretary.
- **FRA:** Finalise the concept note and organise the State-Level NTFP Workshop to consolidate stakeholder recommendations and develop an actionable roadmap, while identifying pilot sites for market-linked NTFP enterprises.
- **PESA:** Organise the October CSO workshop to bring together PESA-focused organisations, strengthen coordination with the department, and identify their focus areas and geographical coverage for operationalising PESA.
- **Commons:** Facilitate the passage of resolutions for commons regeneration in the remaining six pilot Gram Panchayats.

Photos

