

Newsletter may 2025

School-Level Speech Competitions: In the month of May 2025, SIGN (Social Initiatives for Growth and Networking) organized a series of school-level speech competitions across



twelve schools in different districts of Jharkhand. The theme of the competition focused on historic tribal revolts that shaped the region's identity—specifically the Kol Revolt, the Santal Revolt, and the Ulgulan (led by Birsa Munda). These events were aimed at educating and inspiring young minds by connecting them with their rich Adivasi heritage.

The competitions were conducted at the high school level, targeting students from

Classes 8 to 10. Each participant spoke passionately about the significance of these revolts and the contributions of tribal heroes to India's freedom and justice movements. The events were designed not only to build public speaking skills among students but also to create awareness about the sacrifices made by tribal communities.



The highlight of the competition was that the first prize winners from each school would go on to represent their schools at a State-Level Speech Competition in Ranchi, offering them a larger platform to showcase their understanding and talent.

Children of following schools participated in the competition: 1) St. Charles Convent High



School, Kuru, Lohardaga - 3rd May 2025, 2) St. Mikhael High School, Sale Mahuadanr, Latehar - 8th May 2025, 3) St. Teresa Girl's High School,

Mahuadanr, Latehar - 9th May 2025, 4) Prabhu Prakash Middle School, Jamuniyatanr, Garhwa - 9th May 2025, 5) Prabhu Prakash High School, Jamuniyatanr, Garhwa - 10th May 2025, 6) St. Anne's Girls High School, Dighiya, Ranchi - 10th May 2025, 7) St. Mary's Middle School, Chetma, Latehar - 16th May 2025, 8) St. Xavier's High School, Mander, Ranchi - 17th May 2025, 9) Nav Jyoti Middle School, Jolonga, Garhwa - 17th May 2025,

10) St. Anne's Girl's High School, Mander, Ranchi – 19th May 2025, 11) St. Joseph High School, Bishrampur, Latehar – 20th May 2025 and 12) Satya Jyoti Niketan, Armu Garu, Latehar – 20th May 2025



Students delivered speeches in Hindi, demonstrating their knowledge of historical facts and their ability to relate those to present-day issues of tribal identity, rights, and justice. Teachers, principals, and community leaders appreciated the depth of research and emotional connection students brought to their presentations.

SIGN's initiative through these competitions has not only sparked academic engagement but also

rekindled pride in tribal history among the youth. It is a step towards nurturing future leaders who understand the roots of their culture and the value of standing up for justice. The winners now eagerly await the upcoming State-Level Competition in Ranchi, where they will have a chance to voice their views on a bigger stage and honor the legacy of Jharkhand's Adivasi heroes

WORKSHOP ON TRIBAL HERITAGE and PESA to EMPOWER EDUCATORS: In a significant step towards deepening the understanding of tribal identity and rights, SIGN organized a series of one-day district-level workshops for school teachers on the theme "Tribal Heritage and PESA (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act)". The workshops took place during the month of May 2025 across four key districts—Lohardaga, Ranchi, Garhwa, and Gumla—and witnessed enthusiastic participation from educators committed to nurturing young minds with knowledge rooted in their culture and rights.



The sessions were held on the following dates: 8th May in Lohardaga, 10th May in Ranchi, 14th May in Garhwa and 19th May in Gumla. Teachers from selected schools in each district attended the workshops, making the sessions diverse and enriching with shared experiences and dialogues. These workshops were part of SIGN's broader mission to integrate tribal knowledge systems and legal rights awareness into the educational framework of Jharkhand.

Two key resource persons led the sessions: Mr. Walter Kandulna, a well-known educationist and expert on tribal culture and governance, facilitated the workshops in Lohardaga, Garhwa, and Gumla and Mr. Gladson Dungdung, a renowned tribal rights activist and author, conducted the session in Ranchi. The workshops focused on two main themes: A. Understanding Tribal Heritage and Philosophy: The sessions began with a rich presentation on tribal heritage—covering the customs, values, traditions, and the deep

relationship of Adivasi communities with nature and collective living. Teachers were encouraged to see tribal culture not just as history, but as a living philosophy that continues to offer wisdom for modern challenges. The facilitators emphasized how tribal knowledge systems promote sustainability, harmony, and community-based governance.



B) Awareness on PESA Act and Its Relevance: A major part of the workshop was dedicated to understanding the **PESA Act**, a landmark legislation that empowers Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) in Scheduled Areas with authority over natural resources, community practices, and local governance. The resource persons explained how teachers can play a critical role in creating awareness among students and communities about these legal rights. The interactive

discussions highlighted how the Act recognizes tribal customs, traditions, and systems of justice. Teachers expressed that the workshops gave them a new perspective on education—that it should not only transmit knowledge but also build pride in one's identity and equip students with awareness about their rights and duties. The workshops were also a platform for teachers to network, share experiences, and commit to making tribal heritage and legal awareness part of classroom discussions. Many teachers proposed forming school-based heritage clubs and organizing similar awareness activities for students. By investing in educators, SIGN aims to plant seeds of empowerment that will grow through the younger generation. These workshops were not just informative—they were transformative. Teachers left with the vision to be not only educators but also cultural ambassadors and advocates for justice in their schools and communities.

WORKSHOP on TRIBAL HERITAGE and PESA for CATECHIST: A Step Toward

Awareness and Empowerment: As part of its ongoing efforts to build awareness on tribal identity, heritage, and legal rights, SIGN organized a one-day workshop on “Tribal Heritage and PESA” for catechists in two dioceses—Daltonganj and Ranchi. Held in the month of May 2025, these workshops aimed to equip catechists with deeper knowledge about the cultural roots of Adivasi communities and their constitutional rights under the (Panchayatiraj Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, commonly known as PESA.



The first workshop was held on 13th May 2025 at Sadhna Sadan, Chiyanki, Daltonganj for the catechists of the Daltonganj Diocese. A total of 114 catechists from Latehar, Garhwa, and Palamu districts participated with enthusiasm and commitment. The session was

inaugurated in the presence of Bishop Theodore, SFX, who appreciated the initiative and encouraged catechists to become instruments of social awareness in their parishes.

The second workshop took place on 15th May 2025 at the Social Development Centre (SDC), Ranchi, for catechists belonging to the Ranchi Archdiocese. Around 100 catechists **from** Ranchi and Lohardaga districts attended the day-long session. The workshop was graced by the presence of Archbishop Vincent Aind, who addressed the gathering with words of encouragement and emphasized the Church's role in preserving tribal identity and promoting justice.

The resource persons for the workshops were: Mr. Walter Kandulna, a respected figure in the field of education and tribal rights, who led the session in Daltonganj Diocese. And Mr. Gladson Dungdung, a well-known tribal rights activist, researcher, and author, who conducted the workshop in Ranchi Archdiocese.



Key Highlights of the Workshops:

1. **Understanding Tribal Heritage and Culture**
Both workshops began with an engaging session on tribal heritage. The catechists explored the rich cultural values, oral traditions, rituals, and community lifestyle of Adivasi societies. The speakers helped participants rediscover the depth of tribal wisdom, which is rooted in harmony with nature, collective responsibility, and respect for elders and traditions. Catechists were encouraged to recognize tribal culture as a source of strength and identity, not just for the Church, but for the nation.

2. **Awareness on PESA Act**
The second half of the sessions focused on **PESA**, a vital law that empowers tribal communities to govern themselves through traditional Gram Sabhas. The resource persons explained in simple terms how this Act protects tribal land, forests, water, and culture. They encouraged catechists to become messengers of this awareness in their parishes, especially in rural and interior villages, where understanding of legal rights remains low.

Participants expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to learn about their history and rights in a spiritual and community-based setting. Many shared that they felt more confident to educate others and take part in awareness programs.

These diocesan-level workshops were more than training sessions—they were a journey into identity, history, and empowerment. SIGN remains committed to walking with the Church and community leaders like catechists, so that voices from the grassroots continue to rise in unity, dignity, and hope.