

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2025

Sogra Hosts Teachers' workshop on Tribal Rights and Gram Sabha: The campus of St. Cotdon High School, Sogra, came alive on August 8 as 30 teachers from five schools of Simdega



district gathered for a day-long workshop on the PESA Act 2006, Tribal Rights, the 5th Schedule of the Constitution, and strengthening the Gram Sabha organized by Social Initiatives for Growth and Networking (SIGN), Ranchi. The purpose of the meeting was to

understand the role of teachers in spreading awareness about tribal rights and to assess how familiar people are with the PESA Act and the 5th Schedule. Addressing the gathering, District Council Member Mr. Ajay Ekka shared valuable insights on the PESA Act, making the complex subject easy to understand for teachers. He explained that the Act is not just a law written on paper, but a living tool that protects the rights, resources, and identity of tribal communities.

He reminded everyone that for tribal people, natural resources like soil, water, sand, and forests are not commodities but part of their life and culture. "The PESA Act ensures that



decisions about these resources remain in the hands of the community itself," he said. Mr. Ekka stressed that the Gram Sabha is much more than a routine meeting. It is the place where the voice of the entire village is heard and respected. It is where justice is done,

disputes are resolved, culture is safeguarded, and collective decisions are made for the common good. "The Gram Sabha is the soul of tribal self-governance—without it, the community loses its strength," he

emphasized.

Participants discussed how regular Gram Sabha meetings benefit



villages. These include control over sand mining, ownership of village resources such as soil, hills, and rivers, permission for village meetings, settlement of disputes, maintenance

of community spaces like Masna, Jatra, Taand, and Akhara, as well as the preservation of tribal language, dress, and culture. The meeting ended with a heartfelt vote of thanks, leaving participants motivated to take the message forward. Teachers agreed that their role is vital in ensuring that more people understand their rights and actively participate in Gram Sabha activities.

Bartoli Village Workshop Celebrates Tribal Heritage and PESA: In a significant step toward strengthening awareness of tribal identity and rights, SIGN organized a one-day



village-level workshop on the theme “Tribal Heritage and PESA (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act)”. The program was held on 20 August 2025 at Bartoli, Tongo, Chainpur under the leadership of Palacidius Toppo. The workshop brought together villagers from the area and featured Fr. Bipin Pani, Director of SIGN, along with coordinators Sunita Lakra and Prabha Lakra as guest speakers. The workshop focused on two key areas: in the first part speakers spoke about

“Understanding Tribal Heritage and Philosophy”: The day began with a lively presentation on tribal heritage—highlighting customs, values, traditions, and the deep connection of Adivasi communities with nature and collective living. Participants were encouraged to see tribal culture not merely as history, but as a living philosophy offering guidance for today’s challenges. Speakers emphasized how tribal knowledge promotes sustainability, harmony, and community-based governance. In the second part, speakers

tried to bring “Awareness on the PESA Act and Its Relevance” the speakers said that the PESA Act is a landmark law that empowers Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) in Scheduled Areas to manage natural resources, uphold community practices, and exercise local governance. Through interactive discussions, villagers learned how the Act recognizes and protects tribal customs, traditions, and systems of justice. Participants shared that the workshop gave them a **new perspective on**



education—one that builds pride in tribal identity while equipping people with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. *“Workshops like this remind us that our culture and our rights go hand in hand. We feel more confident now to strengthen our Gram Sabha,”* said one of the villagers after the session. By investing in such grassroots programs, **SIGN aims to plant seeds of empowerment** that will grow through the youth and strengthen village self-governance. More than an information session, this workshop proved to be a **transformative experience**, inspiring villagers to form and strengthen their Gram Sabha for the well-being of the entire community.