

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2025

WORKSHOP ON TRIBAL HERITAGE: On 17 October, SIGN organised a workshop on Adivasi Heritage at the Kochli Tola Gram Sabha, with around 50-55 community members participating.

The resource person for the workshop was **Mr. Sunil Minz**, who gave an insightful presentation on the importance of the **PESA Act**. He explained that PESA applies to the Scheduled Areas of ten states – Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Telangana. He emphasized



that before the Government of Jharkhand finalizes and implements the draft PESA Rules, it is essential for communities to strengthen village self-governance. Mr. Minz highlighted that the **PESA Act**,

1996, gives the Gram Sabha legal authority, combining both legislative and executive powers. This means that villagers can make their own rules for self-governance and implement them effectively. The Act also gives the Gram Sabha the right to prepare, approve, and implement development plans for the village, along with the power to audit and review them.

Under PESA, the Gram Sabha holds the right to use, protect, and conserve natural resources within village boundaries. These include minor forest produce, fruit-bearing trees, dry wood, and trees

traditionally used for religious, agricultural, or house-building purposes.

Further, under the **Forest Rights Act, 2006**, a strong and active Gram Sabha



can claim the right to manage forests within its territory.

During the discussion, villagers shared their concerns that people from neighbouring villages have long been using their forest resources, leaving them feeling neglected. Because their hamlet is located near the forest and far from the main settlement, they protect the forest but are unable to enjoy its benefits. Participants expressed that the workshop helped them understand the strength of the Gram Sabha and the powers provided under PESA. They also felt that the Government of Jharkhand should implement PESA at the earliest.

The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Mr. Sukan Korwa.

FIELD VISIT TO SERENGTOLI: On 30 October, Fr. Bipin Pani, Director of SIGN, together with Mr. Walter Zaphed Kerketta, Senior Project Coordinator, visited Serengtoli village as part of the Climate Resilient Agriculture project supported by Manos Unidas, Spain. The project is being implemented in 15 villages of Lali and Rajaulatu Panchayats.

Under the leadership of Mr. Sanjay, the project animator, around 35 community members—mostly women—gathered for the meeting in Serengtoli. During the interaction, Fr. Bipin



shared that there is a strong possibility of officials from Manos Unidas visiting the project area to observe the progress made so far. He informed the group that, if the villagers agree, SIGN plans to bring the visiting officials to Serengtoli—provided they receive their visas—so that they can see first-hand the work being done by the SHG members and the Kisan Club.

The villagers warmly welcomed the idea and

agreed to host the visitors. This led to a thoughtful discussion on how to prepare for the visit—how to welcome the guests, what information to share, and what activities, practices, and displays could be showcased.

Some villagers also asked whether the officials would be willing to share a meal with them, to which Fr. Bipin confirmed that it would indeed be possible. It was also clarified that no photographs would be allowed of the visiting officials during their stay. After the meeting, Fr. Bipin and Mr. Walter



visited the paddy fields, where the results of the farmers' hard work were clearly visible. They observed a striking difference between fields cultivated using the SRI (System of Root Intensification) method and those using the traditional method. In the SRI method, a single paddy stem carried about 370 grains, while in the traditional method, a stem bore only around 140 grains—showing the remarkable impact of improved agricultural practices.

Before concluding, Fr. Bipin and Mr. Walter encouraged the villagers to prepare well and keep everything ready as discussed in the preparatory meeting

