

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2025

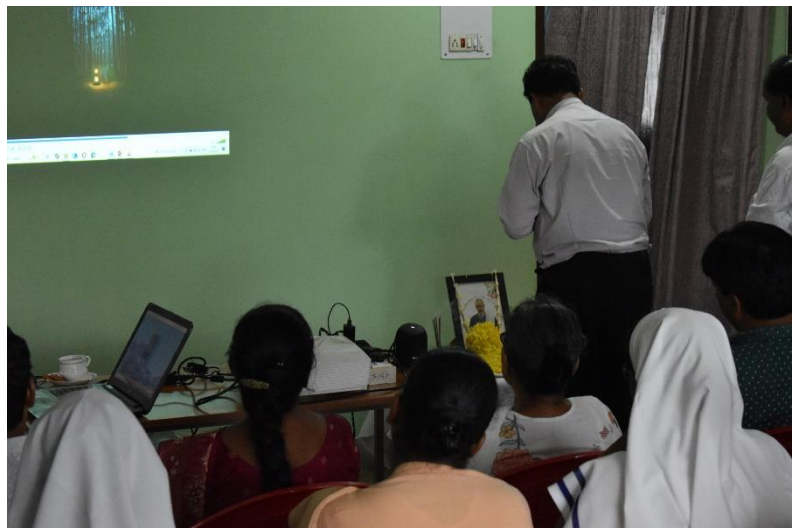
Orientation and Tribute Meeting of Sponsorship Program Center-in-Charges: On 3 August 2025, after the passing away of Mr. Samuel Parandinah, SIGN organized the first



meeting of all Center-in-Charges of the Sponsorship Program at the SIGN office meeting hall. The gathering began with an emotional tribute to Mr. Samuel, who had served the Sponsorship Program with dedication and commitment for many years. He was remembered as a gentle and faithful person who worked tirelessly for the welfare of children. Fr. Bipin Pani, Director of SIGN, shared about his life and contribution, recalling how his

efforts helped build a strong foundation for the program. A prayer was then offered, accompanied by music, and all participants paid homage by offering flowers before his picture. The solemn moment created a deep sense of gratitude and respect in the hearts of all present.

Following the tribute, the meeting continued with the orientation for new Center-in-Charges. Fr. Bipin shared the history of the Fratelli Dimenticati Sponsorship Program, spoke about its present leadership team, and outlined the Mission/Objective and activities expected at each center. He reminded the participants that the Sponsorship Program is child-centered, and all financial support from Fratelli Dimenticati must directly benefit the welfare of children. He stressed the importance of maintaining proper accounts with transparency and accountability.



Fr. Bipin also highlighted the annual opportunity during Christmas to thank benefactors. He said that in the entire year, a child gets an opportunity to thank his/her benefactor for the support they are providing. So he also talked to them how to write a Christmas letter. He said that every child under sponsorship is expected to write a thanksgiving letter updating about their growth during the year and family situation. For younger children who cannot write, a simple drawing or picture is sufficient. Center-in-Charges will help by translating the letters into English and adding a short profile of the child.

Linking the program with the spirit of the Jubilee Year 2025, Fr. Bipin encouraged Center-



in-Charges to embrace their role as “Pilgrims of Hope”, accompanying children and their families with care and commitment. He further added that Center-in-Charges are meant to be the “Hope of the Children and their parents,” and each center should be transformed into a true “Home of Hope.”

The meeting concluded with gratitude expressed to all participants for their dedication

and willingness to walk together in service of children.

Workshop on Tribal Heritage and the PESA Act: On 10th September 2025, SIGN organized a one-day workshop on “Tribal Heritage and the PESA Act” at Sonbarsa hamlet of Barkol Khurd village, under Tenhri Panchayat. Sonbarsa, a small settlement located on the Jharkhand–Chhattisgarh border, became the meeting ground where traditional wisdom met modern

constitutional rights. Around 60–65 members of the Oraon tribal community actively participated in this important event. The workshop was facilitated by Fr. Bipin Pani (Director, SIGN), Coordinator Sunita



Lakra, Silas Soy, and the key resource person Mr. Sunil Minz, a well-known social activist, independent journalist, writer, and expert on Gram Sabha processes. In his input, Mr.



Sunil Minz explained that today the Gram Sabha has the power to make laws, implement plans prepared by the village, and take decisions when rules are violated. The PESA Act gives Gram Sabhas the constitutional right to revive, protect, and

promote jal, jungle, zameen (water, forest, land), language, culture, customs, and traditions. He emphasized that customary practices now have the status of law. Sunil Minz

also shared the inspiring example of Mendha Lekha, the first tribal village in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, famous for its self-governance and community management of forests. Belonging to the Gond tribe, this village has built a unique system of collective



decision-making, whether in managing farmland or forests. Today, Mendha Lekha is recognized for self-reliance, decentralized governance, and safeguarding the community's common good. On 10 September, at the Hesatu village session, Fr. Bipin Pani reminded the participants that

unity is their greatest strength. He said: "It is easy to break a single piece of wood, but very difficult to break a bundle of sticks. You have inherited your own culture, your environment, and the basic means of life. During the Corona pandemic, while the whole world was in distress, your villages remained safe because you lived as one family. You carry ancestral wisdom of medicinal herbs and knowledge of survival. This is your heritage, and it must be preserved for the generations to come." Mr. Silas Soy highlighted the social, cultural, and political systems of the Mundari Khuntkatti region, where governance is rooted in tradition. He explained that no administrative officer can enter a village without the Munda's permission, and no land can be taken or government scheme implemented without Gram Sabha approval.



The session concluded with a call for social inclusion and unity. The SIGN Animator recalled how ancestors maintained bonds of friendship (*Goi Sakhi*) with people beyond their community. She encouraged everyone to continue building relationships of trust, ensuring brotherhood and harmony in village life. The workshop reaffirmed that heritage, unity, and self-governance are the pillars of tribal identity and progress

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 village leaders in Khunti district on 15th September. The workshop sought to strengthen the knowledge of leaders on the cultural roots of Adivasi

communities and their constitutional rights under the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, widely known as PESA.

The workshop was held at Hoffman Social Service Centre, Khunti, where 135 village leaders from across the district participated with enthusiasm and commitment. The



program was inaugurated in the presence of Fr. Bisu Benjamin Aind, who appreciated the initiative and encouraged catechists to become instruments of social awareness in their parishes. He also served as the resource person for the sessions, bringing his

wide experience in education and tribal rights.

The day began with an engaging session on the richness of tribal heritage as “Rediscovering Tribal Heritage and Culture”. Village leaders explored oral traditions, rituals, cultural values, and community lifestyle unique to Adivasi societies. The session highlighted how tribal wisdom—deeply rooted in harmony with nature, collective responsibility, and respect for elders—remains a strong foundation of identity. Catechists were reminded that this cultural wealth is not just a source of pride for the Church, but for the entire nation.

After this the workshop focused on the PESA Act. The resource person said, it is a



vital law that empowers tribal communities to govern themselves through traditional Gram Sabhas. The sessions explained in simple terms how the Act safeguards land, forests, water, and cultural practices. Participants were encouraged to take this message back to



their villages and parishes, particularly in rural and interior areas where awareness of such rights is still limited.

Village leaders expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to learn in a space that combined

cultural pride with spiritual reflection. Many shared that they felt more confident to guide others and to take active part in awareness programs in their communities.

This district-level workshop was more than training sessions—they were a journey into identity, history, and empowerment. With initiatives like these, SIGN remains committed to walking alongside the community leaders, ensuring that voices from the grassroots continue to rise with unity, dignity, and hope.

Orientation on Safeguarding: In September, SIGN took another important step in its mission of building safe spaces for children and vulnerable adults by conducting three orientation workshops on Safeguarding. These were held for the staff of Vikas Kendra



(Simdega), Social Educational Development Center (Dumka), and Hoffman Social Service Society (Khunti) on 11th, 22nd, and 27th September respectively. The sessions were led by Fr. Bipin Pani, Director of SIGN, together with Walter Zaphed Kerketta, who guided participants through an engaging and thought-provoking learning process. In total, 53

participants took part—5 from Simdega, 40 from Dumka, and 8 from Khunti.

At the start, participants were invited to reflect on the true meaning of safeguarding and how it differs from simple “protection.” The sessions explained not only *what* safeguarding is, but also *who* it applies to, *when* it applies, and *why* it is essential for every institution. The facilitators reminded everyone that safeguarding is the concern of the Universal Church itself. Pope Francis has spoken strongly about the importance of implementing safeguarding policies in all institutions, especially because of past abuses that caused deep wounds. Unless we make serious efforts to prevent such incidents, our



schools, centers, and organizations cannot truly be places of trust, safety, and growth.

The workshops were not just about information—they were practical and interactive. Together, participants explored:

- Prohibited Behaviors under safeguarding policy, such as abuse, exploitation, and harassment.

- Different forms of abuse including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect, workplace harassment, and inappropriate conduct towards children. Each participant was asked to share at least two examples to deepen understanding.
- The importance of Safe Recruitment and why every institution must follow strict recruitment guidelines.



recruitment guidelines.

- The role of sub-recipients, service providers, and suppliers in upholding safeguarding principles.
- The principle of mandatory reporting, which ensures that every concern is taken seriously and addressed through proper reporting channels.
- The idea of staff taking an oath/agreement to

commit themselves personally to safeguarding in their workplace.

The resource person also emphasized that safeguarding is built on four guiding principles:

- Zero Tolerance of any form of abuse
- Survivor-Centered response
- Confidentiality in handling cases
- Non-Retaliation against those who report concerns

These principles form the foundation for trust and accountability in any institution.

As the sessions drew to a close, there was a strong sense of responsibility among the participants.

They recognized that safeguarding is not just about policies written on paper—it is about creating living environments of care, accountability, and protection.

Participants expressed their commitment to carry these lessons into their institutions, ensuring that every



child and vulnerable person entrusted to their care feels valued, safe, and respected.

One participant from Dumka shared, **“I realized that safeguarding is not just the work of a director or a policy—it is my personal responsibility too. Every child I meet should feel secure and cared for.”**

Another participant from Khunti added, **“The session opened my eyes to the importance of reporting and accountability. I now know that silence can sometimes harm more than words. I feel more confident to speak up.”**

Through these workshops, SIGN once again affirmed its mission: to build communities where dignity is upheld, voices are heard, and every person can grow in hope and safety.