

All Things Shared

THE YEAR THAT WENT BY

Common Ground



We have, for a long time now, witnessed clear signals of a failing relationship between humans and nature. We have also realised that the time for debating or denying these changes has passed. *Now is the time to act.*

Between April 2024 and March 2025, we have taken the initial step towards action. We had the immense opportunity to kickstart work under **Common Ground**—a coalition of over 58 organisations, dedicated to addressing the right questions to tackle challenges related to community-managed resources, equitable access, and the collective stewardship of Commons in the face of climate change.

In this update of **All Things Shared**, we look back at some key milestones achieved during this period. We have deliberated upon how addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and depleting water resources demands interdisciplinary collaboration, which is more often than not neglected.

Common Ground has adopted a two-pronged approach to realise the change we seek: addressing the deeper structural shifts, while nurturing a system-wide collaborative infrastructure. Above all, to find a ‘common ground’ in addressing these issues in the absence of full agreement.



75 INITIATIVES



58 PARTNERS



1 NETWORK

During this time, the network expanded to 58 partners and 75 initiatives, with new Working Groups emerging to enhance collaboration and impact. These include the Landscape Partners Group, comprising Catalytic Hub organisations from Odisha and Jharkhand, and the Landscape Partnerships Facilitation Group, which supports grassroots actors in institutionalising multi-actor processes. Other key groups include the Policy and Practice Working Group, Engagement with Markets Working Group, Public Goods Working Group, Strategic Communications Working Group, and the LME Working Group (LME Hub), all working together to drive systemic change.

We are also proud to present a video on the Common Ground Initiative voiced by actor Raghubir Yadav, known for his role in hit television series '*Panchayat*'. This video highlights the importance of our country's natural resources and commons and brings to the fore the stories of communities that depend on these resources and have strived for generations for their sustainable use and conservation.



WATCH VIDEO

The coming months are crucial—to implement our pathways, and intervention strategies to strengthen local capacities and align goals, and to ensure that the custodians of Commons emerge as champions for addressing climate action.



In the Spotlight

Collaborating for Impact: Setting the Tone with Commons Convening 2024



The Commons Convening 2024, held in Delhi this past August, proved a resounding success, bringing together over 500 participants from across India’s diverse landscape. This three-day event served as a crucial platform to explore the vital role of Commons, commoning practices, self-governance, and collective action in ensuring the sustainable management of our shared resources.

The Convening and its central theme **“Collaborating for Impact”** united diverse stakeholders, including community leaders, policymakers, academia, civil society organisations, businesses, technologists, and media professionals to chart new pathways for safeguarding shared resources across India.

Across 37 carefully curated sessions, it became clear that complex, interconnected challenges, such as land degradation and livelihood crises, cannot be solved in isolation. Instead, we must embrace collaborative approaches to co-create and promote innovative, inclusive, and sustainable local solutions.



37 CURATED SESSIONS ON COMMONS
500+ PARTICIPANTS FROM 20+ STATES

COMMONS CONVENING



Collaborating for Impact

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

Landing Common Ground: Reflecting, Connecting, Planning

From January 24 to 26, 58 partner organisations and individuals of the Common Ground Collaborative came together in Ranchi, Jharkhand for “Landing Common Ground.” The gathering marked the completion of one year of the Collaborative’s journey. It offered an opportunity to review progress, strengthen relationships, and plan for the future.

Common Ground operates through working groups formed by its partner organisations. The effectiveness of these groups, both within themselves and in collaboration with each other, is a key measure of the Collaborative’s success.

Over three days, each working group presented its progress to the larger group, planned next steps, received feedback from peers, and explored ideas for cross-functional collaboration. Sessions were designed to create a reflective and open environment that encouraged meaningful conversations and strengthened collective purpose.

Landing the Common Ground Initiative



Ranchi | 24–26 January, 2025

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

The momentum generated at the Convening translated into tangible action through the formation of thematic Working Groups. These groups began taking shape soon after the Convening and now anchor collective efforts across the four strategic pathways—focusing on grassroots networks, policy-practice-finance flows, equitable markets, and collaborative action. They bring together partners working in different geographies to co-create, consolidate learnings, and build shared frameworks, tools, and approaches to strengthen the role of the Commons in enhancing livelihoods, ecological resilience, and local governance.



Action Towards Impact

PATHWAY 1

Strengthening Grassroots Networks

Building MAPs for Grassroots Action

Common Ground has developed a draft framework for Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) as a key component of landscape partnerships, fostering grassroots action and collaboration. Co-led by CoRe and WASSAN, the MAP design enables multi-stakeholder dialogue and planning to strengthen landscape-level resilience and local livelihoods. A prototype model was successfully tested in Koraput, Odisha, engaging seven local NGOs and two government representatives.

Scaling Partnerships for Landscape Resilience



Formalised partnerships with 17 NGOs, acting as “Catalytic Hubs”, have initiated MAP facilitation and landscape partnerships across 52 blocks in Odisha and Jharkhand. PRADAN has been driving district-level platform-building in 12 districts of Jharkhand, aligning with this Catalytic Hub model. Additionally, the Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (RRAN) has explored multi-actor processes in five distinct agro-ecological landscapes, expanding efforts to enhance resilience and sustainability.

Building Leadership for Landscape Partnerships

A three-month programme was launched to strengthen the capabilities of Catalysts in facilitating multi-actor processes and supporting community-led, integrated landscape management. The initiative also aims to equip Catalysts to leverage policy, programme, and market opportunities while clarifying their role within Common Ground, and in advancing Landscape Partnerships. The first workshop, held for Catalysts from Jharkhand and Odisha, was co-designed with Oolai Labs, CoRe, and senior landscape experts. It focused on systems thinking, stakeholder mapping, and strategies for multi-actor engagement. Each Catalyst developed an action plan to guide their work over the coming months.

Enhancing Grassroots Capacity with Contextual Resources

We developed a practitioner's guide to MAPs in Hindi with Asar Social Impact Advisors. This knowledge product was introduced to the catalysts in both Odisha and Jharkhand, along with supportive processes for engagement, handholding, learning, and improvement of training modules.

PATHWAY 2

Assisting Policy–Practice–Finance Flows

Strengthening Convergence for Forest Fringe Landscapes

A national consultation workshop on Forest Fringe landscapes in rainfed regions was jointly conducted by NRAA, RRAN, and Common Ground to promote convergence through an integrated framework linking forest, farm, and livestock production systems. Mr Faiz Ahmed Kidwai, Additional Secretary of MoA&FW and CEO of NRAA, highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder processes in strengthening this framework and stressed the need for area-based planning across diverse agro-ecological contexts.



Advancing Natural Resource Governance Through Collaboration



A partnership between the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) and Common Ground has been formalised to address village-level natural resource management, governance, and the integration of Panchayati Raj Institutions with SHGs and other CBOs. The collaboration focuses on aligning PESA and FRA, localising SDGs, and strengthening area-based planning through programmes such as GPDP, MGNREGS, State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs), and SIRDs. CRISP, founded by retired senior IAS officers, brings deep expertise in tribal and rural development. An MoU was signed between the Government of Odisha and CRISP, following a co-developed plan of action shared with the Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj and SRLMs of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha.

Leveraging an Inter-Thematic Framework for Livelihoods

UNDP and Common Ground have agreed to implement an inter-thematic framework to identify opportunities for enhancing livelihoods and income generation within government policies, UNDP partner programmes, and Common Ground interventions. The framework assesses:

- Community-based forest management and conservation
- Market access and institutional support opportunities
- Citizen engagement and data-driven monitoring

Shaping Chhattisgarh's Eco-Restoration Policy

Key recommendations from Common Ground have been incorporated into the revised draft of Chhattisgarh's Eco-Restoration Policy, which has been submitted to the government for approval. Key suggestions included planning and implementation of eco-restoration efforts at the block and sub-block level, active involvement of communities, strengthening a 'whole of society' approach, and adopting a cross-sectoral lens to address the interlinkages between forests, agriculture, and livestock. The policy also integrates multi-actor processes for planning and execution and embeds the concept of 'village commons' as a central element.

Policy Note on Post-Forest Rights Act

A joint policy note has been prepared with Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) and Forest Rights Forum on the Post-FRA and PESA issue, which is to be submitted to the Minister of Tribal Affairs, Government of India by the Forest Rights Forum. This note highlighted the need for devolution of power, mapping potential Community Forest Rights Resource (CFRR) areas, identifying Community Resource Persons (CRPs) and market linkages for NTFPs & Tribal Products.

Youth Engagement for DAJUGA Implementation in Odisha

Discussions on enhancing community-level feedback mechanisms and developing decision support tools for state, district, and block-level implementing actors under the DAJUGA initiative have progressed significantly. A wireframe and operating model have been co-developed by Common Ground partners Reap Benefit and Platform Commons, in collaboration with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute, Government of Odisha. These decision support tools are designed to capture real-time community feedback and bridge the gap between departmental service delivery and community planning.

PATHWAY 3

Creating Equitable Market Opportunities

Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Commons-Dependent Communities

The Markets Working Group, led by Vrutti, has spearheaded efforts to enhance economic opportunities for communities reliant on the Commons by exploring landscape financing and strengthening market linkages. Five priority pathways have been identified to support community-based enterprises: public financing, ESG-aligned investments, Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) market integration, innovative finance mechanisms, and value chain strengthening.

Several targeted actions are being implemented under these pathways. Vrutti is engaging with the Capacity Building Commission to integrate Commons-related themes into the Government of India's Viksit Bharat initiative. In the ESG space, research has identified investment opportunities in Odisha and Jharkhand, with ongoing discussions with the 360 ONE Foundation to support future projects. Market innovation is also progressing through collaboration with Gram Mooligai Co. Ltd., which is focused on strengthening the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAP) value chain.

Developing a Bamboo Value Chain Model in India

Drawing on insights from the end-to-end bamboo value chain under the Bamboo Village Model in Indonesia, Vrutti has assessed the model's strengths and areas of concern to contextualise it for India.

The next steps include formalising a partnership with the Bamboo Village Trust (BVT) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and applying for the BVT fund cohort. In parallel, Common Ground will map relevant Indian stakeholders, design an integrated Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) plan aligned with the bamboo model, develop targeted pitches, and assess potential sites for the first Bamboo Village. The initiative envisions the establishment of 20 Bamboo Villages across India to foster forest-based rural livelihoods and community stewardship.

Bringing Community Stewardship into Carbon Market



Picture from panel discussion on 'Private Financing towards decarbonisation focussed towards ecosystem services for Commons.' Conducted in August 2024 at Catalysing Social Impact event in Delhi. Participants: Terviva, WWF, Intellectap, ITC, Tata Trusts, ASQI.

Common Ground has initiated discussions on Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) models and carbon market integration as potential financing pathways for landscape restoration. A stewardship framework has been developed to explore community participation in PES markets, ensuring that local governance structures play a central role in decision-making.

Steering Private Sector Investments to Rural Markets

Work is underway to assess how sustainable practices can be aligned with ESG-driven investments, particularly in sectors such as NTFPs, agroforestry, and decentralised renewable energy. The objective is to ensure that private sector investments in these areas support environmental and social sustainability while directly benefiting local communities. A concept note has been developed, outlining essential considerations for strengthening value chain governance through better access to price information and institutional support for producer collectives.

Support for Coastal Commons



A collaboration plan with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership and the Aquaculture Stewardship Council is underway to assess the coastal Commons—specifically shrimp cultivation—and their environmental and social impacts. This is part of a Walmart-supported project aimed at influencing the company towards responsible sourcing and highlight the unequal market dynamics affecting shrimp farmers and other coastal livelihoods.

Orchestrating Value Chain Innovations

Progress has been made in the area of orchestrating value chain innovations as the assessment exercise for the procurement potential of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in 24 blocks of Jharkhand and Odisha, conducted by the Centre of Collective Development (CCD) nears completion. The initial results show an additional annual income of Rs 10,000 to 18,000 per gatherer from the sale of NTFPs in both Odisha and Jharkhand. A workshop was organised with potential buyers and market actors to share potential sourcing opportunities for organic ginger and turmeric (from Odisha) and mahua and oilseed cakes (from Jharkhand).

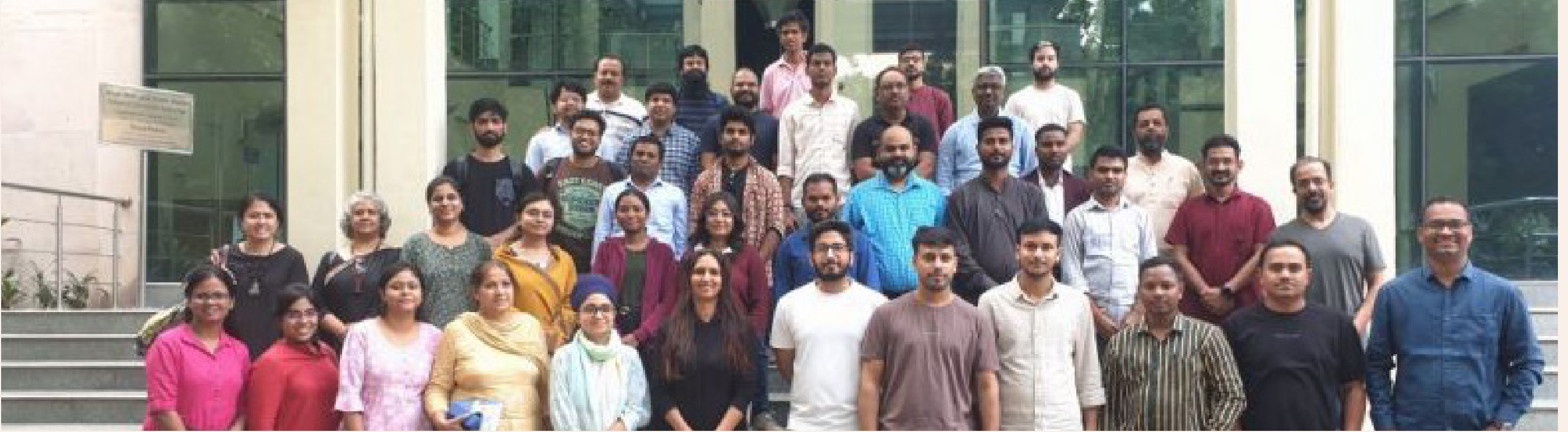
Exploring Carbon Offset Opportunities

As part of the Markets Working Group's efforts to influence ESG investments, partner organisation Vrutti has introduced an opportunity to access ESG commitments through a carbon offset initiative. A proposal has been submitted for a tree plantation-based carbon offset project involving 25 lakh saplings across 5,000 hectares, incorporating a diverse range of tree species across multiple districts in Odisha and Jharkhand. The proposal is currently under review.

PATHWAY 4

Catalysing Collaborative Action

Building Public Digital Infrastructure for Collective Action



The CommonsTech Foundation for Participatory Technologies advanced the CoRE Stack, a platform integrating social-ecological datasets to support landscape action. The Public Goods Working Group also expanded with Platform Commons, Tarkam, Reap Benefit and Aapti Institute joining in. Tarkam is focusing on data interoperability, integrating traditional knowledge systems, enabling data-driven storytelling, and building capacities of grassroots actors to engage with data. Reap Benefit is using its Samaaja platform for lateral exchange and capacity building among catalysts. Platform Commons is developing a Common Digital Backbone, ensuring interoperability and reuse of digital tools within the NGO ecosystem. Aapti Institute is working on institutional and ethical frameworks to enhance inclusion and participation and safeguard community rights over public infrastructures.

Driving Innovation for Climate Resilience



CoRE Stack, Platform Commons, and Living Landscapes, under the Common Ground banner, served as knowledge partners for the Code4Change Hackathon, organised by the ISDM Centre for Data Science and Social Impact. With a focus on climate resilience, the initiative ensured that problem statements addressed real-world challenges and supported selected participants with mentorship to enable real-world adoption of their solutions. The hackathon, launched at Dialogues on Development Management, Delhi, engaged nearly 100 participants across 30 teams, working on locally-led climate action challenges.

Strengthening Learning and Measurement for Impact

The Living Landscapes team was familiarised with the LME (Learning, Monitoring, and Evaluation) approach under Common Ground, helping them integrate a learning lens into their work. An orientation on the Annual Common Ground Partner Survey was also conducted, leading to team-wide reflections on key findings. The mechanics and administration date for the 2025 survey were finalised.

Community Engagement and Decision Support Tool

To support the implementation of the DAJUGA scheme in Odisha, the development of a community engagement and decision support tool is being explored with the Ministry of Tribal Welfare, Odisha. The tool integrates and visualises Panchayat resolutions, programme implementation data, and community feedback, enabling informed decision-making. It also includes chatbots for grassroots functionaries and community volunteers to facilitate access to relevant information and improve engagement at the local level.

As we move forward, Common Ground remains committed to nurturing the connections, processes, and shared purpose that make collaborative action possible. It is only through continued co-creation with communities and partners that we can deepen alignment, widen our reach, and build the social infrastructure necessary to regenerate ecosystems, strengthen livelihoods, and support the leadership of women and marginalised groups. Your ongoing engagement will be essential as we turn collective intent into collective action.



**Common
Ground**

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