

# All Things Shared

JULY - DECEMBER  
2025

Common  
Ground

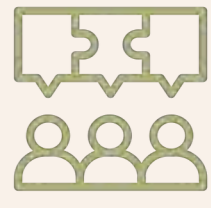


Over the period July–December 2025, Common Ground continued to consolidate its role as a collaborative platform for aligning practice, policy, finance, and market pathways around the governance of Commons. The work during this phase deepened engagement across existing geographies in Jharkhand and Odisha, while extending into Meghalaya, Karnataka, Kerala, and Maharashtra, bringing together a wider set of civil society organisations, government actors, technical institutions, and community networks. The Collaborative expanded from 68 to 88 partner organisations, with over 80 initiatives underway, reflecting both continuity of effort and growing alignment across actors working on land, forests, livelihoods, and local governance.

Across geographies, the emphasis remained on strengthening local agency and institutional capacity. This included supporting the early operationalisation of PESA rules, advancing village-level planning under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan, and grounding area-based approaches through Multi-Actor Platforms shaped by local context. Efforts during this period helped clarify how community institutions, Panchayats, decision-makers, and field catalysts can coordinate more effectively around shared priorities such as forest governance, NTFP-based livelihoods, water security, and landscape restoration, while remaining anchored in existing legal and policy frameworks.



**80 INITIATIVES** →



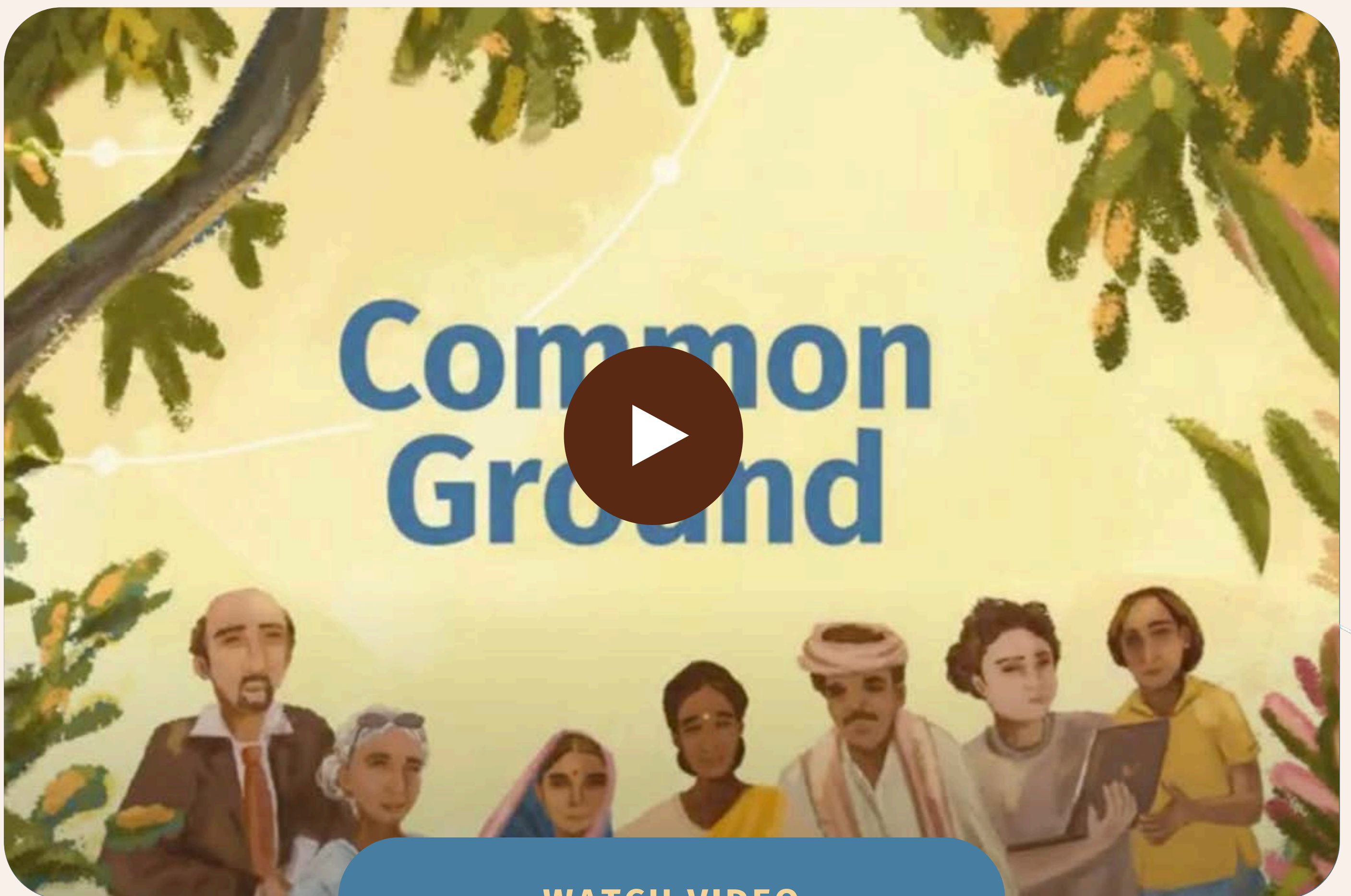
**88 PARTNERS** →



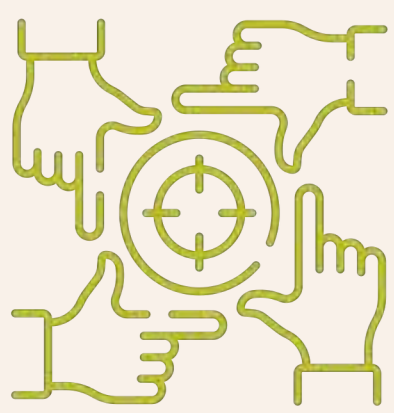
**1 COALITION OF NETWORKS**

The period also marked a shift from conceptual framing to operational design. This was visible in the co-development of the Bamboo Village model in Meghalaya and Odisha, where ecological restoration, cooperative governance, and enterprise pathways are being integrated with state programmes and financial models. Parallel efforts focused on strengthening the transfer of digital tools and knowledge infrastructure to the hands of the local communities, NGOs, and government functionaries. Peer learning spaces and convenings helped support coordination, cross-learning, and collective sense-making across the Collaborative.

Taken together, the focus over the past six months has been on strengthening the social and institutional infrastructure for systems-level change. The work has prioritised continuity over isolated outcomes, with attention to alignment across actors, clearer pathways linking local practice with policy and finance, and the development of a wider community of practice able to sustain action across landscapes. This is consistent with Common Ground's intent to set the field for collaborative action on Commons governance—grounded in place, responsive to context, and accountable to people and ecosystems.



**WATCH VIDEO**



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## TURNING PLANS INTO OUTCOMES

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## In the Spotlight

### Strengthening tribal area governance with promulgation and approval of PESA rules



The Panchayat Extension to Schedule Areas (PESA) Rules for Jharkhand have been approved by the State Government, which shifts agency of local communities over their land, natural resources, and institutional management issues, including control over the collection and marketing of forest produce. This policy provides for a breaking of prolonged system inertia for Scheduled Area governance with stronger concentrations of their social, cultural, and ecological relationships of tribal communities imbibed through generations.

Common Ground contributed to the pre-policy processes by supporting the relevant department and actors with nuanced legal provisions and helped strengthen the draft policy that reflects the imagination of self-governance by tribal communities. Partners, including CRISP and PHIA, along with the Living Landscapes team, contributed to the government's efforts in bringing this policy to light. In parallel, CRISP and PHIA are both engaging with the Government of Jharkhand to co-create a capacity-building apparatus for the effective rollout of PESA across the state, particularly in three bio-regions: Kollan, East Singhum, and Santhal Pargana.

Similar engagements are underway with the Government of Odisha to shape the draft policy for PESA, which is in the final stage of inter-departmental review. Currently, efforts are also being made to support the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) to present a strong case with a comparative analysis of PESA rules and their provisions in states such as Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh. CRISP is deeply engaged in the process of PESA rule formation in Odisha.

## Improving systems-level recognition of local actors, local actions through village-level planning, and Adi Sahayata Kendras (village resource centre) under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan



The Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan (AKA) aims to improve responsive governance in tribal areas by enabling people-centred village planning and strengthening coordination across government and community institutions.

Between July and September, Common Ground began collaborating with Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF), state departments, and Landscape Partners to co-create early implementation pathways for AKA across Jharkhand and Odisha. This work builds on existing processes, such as Gram Panchayat–CBO convergence, FRA and PESA implementation, and village action planning, already underway in these geographies.

To support the rollout, Common Ground set up a simple mechanism for training, materials, translation, and field travel that helped partners and community networks organise village-level planning and operationalise Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs).

Through this collaboration, partners jointly developed action plans with district and block actors, strengthening local planning routines, and establishing ways for communities, Panchayats, and departments to work together. The emphasis across states is on co-creating context-specific approaches that make village planning more inclusive, better coordinated, and grounded in local priorities.

To support the AKA rollout, Gramify, a lightweight digital tool (app) was developed by Platform Commons, and has supported village teams in documenting local priorities, transect walks, preparing digitised action plans, and sharing community stories.



The database of Adi Karmasathi has been prepared, which can aid in developing stronger interconnected local changemaker networks. While designed to aid immediate AKA processes, it is also being shaped to strengthen future GPDP planning, enabling more responsive governance and supporting learning across community networks.

## Co-developing the Bamboo Village model and regenerative Bamboo economies

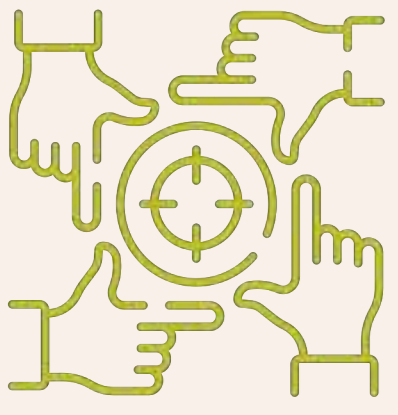


Over six months, partners across Meghalaya and Odisha have been shaping a practical, place-based Bamboo Village approach that links forest restoration, local governance and enterprise. In Meghalaya, the Regenerative Economies through Accelerated & Inclusive Enterprises in Meghalaya (Meg-REAP) Cell, notified under the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, has become the institutional anchor for coordinating bamboo-linked restoration, cooperative structures and enterprise development.

GIS mapping and Rapid Rural Appraisals in Umling and Umsning have been conducted creating a base for taking bamboo-led regenerative economies forward to use bamboo in public buildings and work with village-level cooperative structures. In Odisha, detailed feasibility work in Boipariguda, Koraput, and follow-up engagement with the Odisha Bamboo Development Authority in Kalahandi mapped the ecological, governance, and market conditions required to anchor bamboo villages through state programmes such as the National Bamboo Mission and the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP).

Alongside this, the focus has steadily shifted from conceptualisation to operational design. In Meghalaya, Bamboo Village Trust and CMS-Vrutti, working through MEG-REAP with MBDA, have begun laying out two bamboo villages across 4,000 hectares, integrating bamboo, agro-forestry and forest management with equitable benefit-sharing and income pathways. In Koraput, the Bamboo Village initiative, led by SPREAD and Vrutti, is now being operationalised through the development of a financial model anchored on *Dendrocalamus strictus* value chains (agarbatti and pellets), alongside scheme mapping and a risk register, to ensure commercial viability and risk-informed execution.

These field-level efforts have been reinforced through wider ecosystem alignment. At the SUTRA 2025 convening in October in New Delhi, partners including MBDA, CMS-Vrutti, and Bamboo Village Trust discussed how Commons-rooted enterprise models can contribute to regenerative economic pathways. The discussions brought together a shared narrative on [how Commons-based bamboo economies can contribute to Meghalaya's wider green growth agenda at the national level](#). Later in November, the model was presented in the National Bamboo Conference in Bhubaneshwar and subsequent discussions undertaken with the State Bamboo Mission, Government of Odisha, for scoping such initiatives in Kalahandi region as per the state mandate. Discussion has also been initiated for a comprehensive Bamboo Policy for Odisha with International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR - technical agency for drafting the policy).



# TURNING PLANS INTO OUTCOMES

## PATHWAY 1

### Strengthening Effectiveness of Grassroots Actors



#### Strategies to scale across Landscapes

Common Ground continued to shape a diversified set of strategies for scale as the landscape approach deepened across Jharkhand and Odisha, where partners are active across 53 blocks, while also extending into new geographies. The period saw a steady move from consolidating block-level coalitions to exploring how the ‘landscape partnership model’ could spread across regions through peer networks, partners, enabled by district administrations and state programmes, and guided by place-based evidence. As a result, engagement has expanded into South Karnataka and exploratory conversations have been initiated with community-led landscape networks in Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, signalling a widening scale landscape partnerships.

By December, this expansion was accompanied by a clearer orientation for the next phase, with partners identifying how existing blocks would be supported to move towards more established and systems-integrated hubs, while new blocks would be brought in through tailored entry points such as women’s forums, SHG catalysts and community changemakers.

At the state level, Jharkhand and Odisha partners aligned around strengthening peer learning through Samaaja, standardising MAP design tools such as ePRA, advancing income and NTFP pathways, and anchoring FRA work and PRI–CBO convergence within broader policy frameworks, helping connect the growing geography of partners with more coherent, state-aligned pathways for the landscape approach.

## **From Village Platforms to Landscape Systems**

As part of several partner meetings over six months, work in Jharkhand and Odisha helped clarify how Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) are taking root across various landscapes. Two distinct patterns are now visible: in Jharkhand, block-level government functionaries are increasingly facilitating MAP processes alongside Gram Sansads, Panchayat Help Desks, Paharia leadership councils and FPO-led platforms, while in Odisha, SHG federations, CSOs and community institutions are anchoring the spaces, with line departments participating around shared issues such as dams, forest fires and Commons.

Within this, MAPs are being shaped by local practice rather than being a single template. For example, Seba Jagat linking forest rights with fire prevention, Kalamandir working through cultural and customary institutions, and Badlao Foundation enabling collective action on forest rights, water scarcity and access to schemes. Partners reflected on the conditions shaping progress, including leadership and facilitation capacity, continuity within local administrations, coordination across institutions, the pace of regulatory processes, the scale and spread of the landscapes involved, and the need for more locally grounded NTFP pathways; the next phase is being oriented around strengthening local leadership, advancing place-based NTFP and blended-finance pathways, using digital tools (Samaaja, Gramify, Know Your Landscape, i-ECHO and Commons Connect) for coordination, and aligning more closely with state-level priorities.

## **Catalysts and Field Networks**

Around 50 catalysts across Jharkhand and Odisha reached the close of their first year (in December) as facilitators of MAP processes. They are now transitioning into a new phase of engagement with additional support on facilitation skills, needs based mentorship and stronger network among the catalysts leading to expansion of the work to newer geographies. Building on the Catalytic Hubs Framework (from nascent to systems-integrated stages), a structured catalyst engagement and support plan designed with Reap Benefit is now underway, emphasising collaborative leadership, peer learning and adaptive community governance.

As a part of this effort catalysts are participating in narrative building and visioning sessions aimed to strengthen their ability to frame local change processes and understand and communicate linkages between forest and farm ecosystems and ground their work with communities in that context.



This shift to direct engagement with community networks was also tested through a three-day engagement in December with the Antaranga youth network in Kandhamal, Odisha, where coordinators mapped their networks, identified local strengths and gaps, and explored how 383 youth clubs could be re-activated around village-level planning in a district characterised by high forest cover, need for FRA implementation, migration and livelihood stress. Village youth groups experimented with tools such as Gramify, transect walks and PRA methods, and Voice Report to gather their views on landscapes, skills, culture, governance and gender. The engagement underlined the potential of such networks to anchor local MAPs, while also pointing to the need for stronger facilitation skills, clearer links to policy processes and more intuitive and accessible digital tools to support the work of such networks.

## Strengthening participatory governance and amplifying local voices



Common Ground partners formed new collaborations around initiatives on Just Transitions in Jharkhand, as part of the Saarthi network. The network initiated participatory dialogue involving local communities through facilitated workshops with CSO partners and state-level dialogues.

Such processes resulted in surfacing how Commons and natural resource management can be strengthened as part of local area planning processes, including GPDP discussions, multi-stakeholder coordination, and pathways that speak to a green circular economy alongside livelihood security.

The Just Transition Yatra in November created a week-long engagement across nine districts of Jharkhand, bringing together civil society organisations, women's federations, community leaders, PRI members, relevant departments and media to deepen shared understanding on community-centred planning.

In parallel, efforts to amplify local voices have begun testing lightweight tools such as Voice Report with youth networks (Antaranga), capturing aspirations around diversified livelihoods, skills, education support, sustainable agriculture, stronger NTFP pathways, and cleaner villages, while also noting design improvements needed for accessibility, longer recordings and more reliable dialect-sensitive translations.

## **Area-based approaches and landscape-level planning**

During the India Land and Development Conference (ILDC) in November, Common Ground convened a session on how area-based and landscape-level approaches can shape more coherent pathways for place-based governance and ecological resilience, drawing on field experience from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

Through three case studies presented by WASSAN, WOSCA, and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha/Government of Andhra Pradesh, partners explored how land, water, forests, and agriculture can be planned as part of an interconnected ecological and social system, rather than as separate sectors.

The cases highlighted the importance of place-specific design principles, community institutions, and the use of data and technology in enabling area-based approaches to move beyond pilots and into more durable forms of practice.



The discussion also brought together perspectives from WELL Labs, the Agroecology Fund, IUCN, and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha to reflect on how community institutions can become the authors of their own landscape plans, how practitioners can begin with iterative, place-led action.

At the same time, policy alignment evolves, and how fragmented programmes, agencies and funding streams might be brought into closer alignment.

These exchanges helped surface how participatory governance, integrated finance, and locally grounded data can support area-based planning that is both scalable and accountable to people and place. Going forward, the focus will be on actionable next steps, including digital tools, mainstreaming area-based approaches within government systems, and alignment with larger initiatives such as GIVA.

## **PATHWAY 2**

### **Assisting Policy-Practice-Finance Flows**

#### **Deepening Government collaboration for improving local governance for ecological and social outcomes**

Common Ground partner, the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP), made progress with the Grassroots Level Institutions Strengthening and Transformation (GIST) initiative with government departments, civil society, and collaborative partners.

The Government of Jharkhand signed an MoU for supporting in localisation of SDGs, improving PRI-CBO convergence, embedding restoration and management of Commons in local governance planning, formulation and operationalisation of PESA rules, and providing need-based guiding support on FRA and post-FRA convergence programming.



Early actions under CRISP's initiative across different states include: piloting the first version of an SDG localisation mobile application in Tiruporur block, Tamil Nadu; approvals from Karnataka's NRLM for GP-SHG convergence pilots and field testing of the 'Know Your Resilience' tool.

Common Ground also contributed to the recommendations on the National Adaptation Plan exercise, anchored by Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF) on behalf of Niti Aayog and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

To demonstrate best practices and effective roll out strategies of Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan (AKA), Common Ground partners joined hands with local government department and district level officials to carry out capacity building and planning exercises in 16 districts of Odisha and Jharkhand. Such engagements have provided deeper insights and access to advance the earlier efforts that have gone into shaping and operationalising Dharti Aba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) programme for tribal area development.

## **Improving agency of panchayats in local area planning with direct disbursement of Finance Commission grants for panchayats**

Shifts in fiscal devolution are strengthening the ability of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to plan and act on local priorities in Jharkhand. While Gram Panchayats have long been constitutionally mandated to govern 29 aspects of village life, their ability to do so has often been constrained by reliance on discretionary, top-down grants that left little room for participatory planning or locally driven decision-making. The 14th and 15th Finance Commissions began to change this by institutionalising direct grants to Panchayats, and this has now been reinforced in Jharkhand through a move from discretionary allocations to a formula-based devolution model. This transition was supported by CRISP, which worked with the Fifth State Finance Commission to design the new framework.

Following its recommendations, the State Cabinet approved the devolution of four percent of the state's net revenue directly to PRIs as untied funds, enabling Panchayats to determine how resources are used against their development plans. As a result, INR 790 crore is now being channelled each year to local bodies, providing each Gram Panchayat with around INR 1.8 to 2 million as predictable, flexible finance to support the 29 devolved functions and strengthen local governance.

## **Scaling practice-led innovations with policy provisions**

In rural Jharkhand, gaps in information and coordination make it difficult for citizens, especially women, tribal households and other marginalised groups to access public programmes and entitlements. Tagore Society for Rural Development (TSRD) and PRADAN, with Common Ground, piloted Gram Panchayat Help Desks (GPHD) in 35 Panchayats in East Singhbhum. Run by two local self-help group women from within each Panchayat, the Help Desks operate from Panchayat offices and support people to access scheme information, file applications and track entitlements related to livelihoods, forest rights and local infrastructure, while also improving coordination between communities and frontline government staff. As the model demonstrated its value on the ground, partners worked with state departments and communicators to make the case for its wider adoption. The visibility of regional and national stories led to a public endorsement from the Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, who recognised the GPHDs as a bridge between the administration and communities. Alongside, alignment with the government's Adi Karmayogi Abhiyaan helped position the Help Desks as a practical way to strengthen Panchayat functioning.

This led to a formal state-level commitment, with the Government of Jharkhand approving dedicated funding for the rollout of GPHDs and Panchayat Sahayaks across all Panchayats in the state.

In Tamil Nadu, CRISP supported the process that led to the issuance of a Government Order formalising PRI–SHG collaboration and the finalisation of a PRI–SHG module with an ISBN, helping anchor inclusive, participatory governance within state policy and practice. CRISP’s engagement with the state government involved reviewing existing institutional arrangements, facilitating co-design dialogues with PRIs and SHG networks, and drafting actionable guidance and frameworks that informed both the policy order and the accompanying module, strengthening how Panchayat–SHG partnerships are applied.

### **Improving the capacity building apparatus of state government (State Institute of Rural Development)**

In Odisha, Common Ground and the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) collaborated to strengthen how natural resource management is built into frontline training systems. This included co-developing Natural Resource Management (NRM) training materials, conducting a Training Needs Assessment across cadres, and delivering both a Training of Trainers and a day-long NRM module for government functionaries, helping align field practice with ecological and governance priorities. Alongside this, a set of DAJGUA playbooks jointly curated and published by the SIRD and Tribal Research Training Institute of Odisha (TRTI) has been placed with both institutions, creating a shared set of practical resources that can continue to inform training and capacity building within the state system.

### **Integrating area based planning approach into government programmes: Springshed planning in Jharkhand**

Common Ground’s engagement with the Jharkhand Forest Department is gradually building into a collaborative springshed planning process across 26 forest divisions, linking ecological restoration with public finance through the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). This work has opened a pathway for sustained investment in catchment treatment and springshed management across river basins, while strengthening the department’s scientific and participatory planning capacity. The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) has joined to support this process through the Comprehensive Landscape Assessment and Restoration Tool (CLART) and a wider social–ecological planning framework.

As training and joint planning exercises progress across selected sites, community institutions and Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) are being brought into forest and water management processes, helping ensure that springshed restoration is locally grounded, transparent and aligned with both ecological and livelihood priorities.

## Co-creating and curating multi-actor voice around climate action: Odisha Vikas Conclave

Common Ground participated in the Odisha Vikas Conclave (OVC) 2025 to help strengthen a shared understanding that Commons and natural resource management lie at the heart of the state's development pathway. Working with CYSD, Socratus, iForest, Dakshin and other partners, conversations across 18 sessions brought forest governance, wetlands, mangroves, Gram Sabha roles and women's leadership into a coherent frame, contributing to the shaping of the Conclave's final outcomes. With nearly 600 participants from government, civil society, academia, industry and grassroots institutions, the gathering advanced discussions on how Odisha Vision 2036 can be anchored in community-centred, climate-resilient approaches to land and natural resources.



In parallel, discussions with the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning and Convergence Department, Government of Odisha led to the submission of a one-page note for a proposed collaboration to support the development of interoperable and participatory environmental statistics aligned with the Odisha Integrated Statistical System for Resilient Growth

A co-created draft of the Outcome Document (for OVC) embedded community-led governance of forests, water bodies, coastal systems and NTFP value chains within pillar-wise recommendations, reinforcing the role of local institutions and evidence in state planning. These themes were carried forward through narrative building across vernacular and digital channels. The outcomes were jointly presented with civil society leaders from the state to the Government of Odisha.

### **PATHWAY 3**

## **Tilting Market Opportunities**

### **Market Pathways for Climate-Resilient Livelihoods**

Common Ground continued to work on market-facing approaches that support climate-resilient livelihoods and eco-restoration efforts. Common Ground Partner EcoAgriculture (EcoAg) worked with Landscape Partners on a costing framework for multi-stakeholder landscape governance, contributing to a shared understanding of the institutional and coordination costs involved. In Koraput, Vrutti and WASSAN are expanding financing options for multi-layer natural farming beyond the existing ₹50-lakh public commitment by exploring blended credit arrangements that reduce risks for farmers. Engagements with Samunnati, Rabo Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Dalberg Catalyst and Rainmatter are examining ways to blend commercial and concessional capital to support restoration through risk-sharing mechanisms.

Alongside this, the Outcomes Accelerator has initiated Social Success Notes for Boipariguda block, helping partners align on the operating system of the Multi-Actor Platform model, including roles, coordination processes and planning structures needed for more integrated delivery of multi-layer natural farming. Shared processes and standard operating procedures for anchor civil society organisations and FPOs have created clearer pathways for coordinated implementation, while work continues to structure a First Loss Default Guarantee mechanism that can de-risk lending and enable outcome-based finance to reach farmers at scale.



## **NTFP Market Price Information System**

Common Ground has begun exploring a price information system for non-timber forest produce to strengthen how forest-dependent communities engage with markets. Working with Ecociate, the effort will start in Rayagada, where an inquiry across key NTFP commodities will map how prices are formed, how information travels, and where collectors and local enterprises face disadvantages.

These insights will inform the design of a practical pricing information system aimed at improving negotiating power, supporting local entrepreneurship and rebalancing relationships between collectors, traders and wider value-chain actors.

## **Channelling CSR and ESG into place-based restoration**

Markets Working Group partner Sattva helped co-create a shared set of principles for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) financing that frames landscape restoration beyond carbon and provides a clearer, common language for action. Moving forward, Sattva will work with landscape partners to situate emerging financing pathways within specific agro-ecological and agro-economic contexts, helping ensure that they are shaped by the realities of different places. In parallel, Sattva is beginning to explore how credit and blended finance can link restoration more directly with sustainable livelihood pathways.

To support this shift from framing to action, Sattva began by building an evidence base on where restoration finance is currently flowing. Living Landscapes and Vrutti have shared CSR and ESG funding datasets, which, together with Sattva's internal analysis, are being used to map patterns of restoration activity across forest-tribal and arid and semi-arid landscapes, as well as related themes such as livelihoods, women's empowerment and water. This diagnostic work will inform more targeted capacity building for partners, reflecting the diversity of landscape contexts and the practical constraints they face in accessing CSR and ESG funding.

## Strengthening the sal seed economy in Odisha

Towards efforts to unlock the sal seed value chain in Odisha through an ecosystem-based approach, Sattva has been engaging with the Government of Odisha and NITI Aayog to link community institutions, markets and public systems. Despite the abundance of sal seed and strong downstream demand, gaps in local processing, market mechanisms and institutional arrangements have limited how much value stays with forest-dependent communities.

Building on field assessments across two districts, Sattva has proposed the creation of a Project Management Unit with the state to support quality-based aggregation, competitive markets, mechanisation to reduce drudgery, improved access to sustainable finance and more informed selling decisions. Recent discussions with the Chief Secretary, Odisha and the Chief Executive Officer, NITI Aayog have indicated interest in exploring this, creating a pathway for responsible private investment and more durable, system-level outcomes for the sal seed ecosystem.

### PATHWAY 4

## Catalysing Collaborative Action

### Digital Public Goods and Data Systems

Common Ground continued to develop the digital and data infrastructure needed to support participatory planning, shared learning, and networked governance across landscapes. Platform Commons, Reap Benefit, CoRE Stack and Tarkam worked with partners to refine tools such as the Samaaja chatbot, Gramify, Commons Connect 3.0 and the emerging Common Digital Backbone. Feedback from catalysts and Landscape Partners informed improvements in usability, offline access, and integration of block-level datasets.

Tarkam led data-interoperability workshops with multiple partners and began designing training modules for data storytelling, while also working with CoRE Stack to translate social-ecological patterns from datasets into narrative formats. Together, these efforts are shaping a shared ecosystem of digital public goods that communities, NGOs and state actors can use for planning, documentation and cross-learning.

## A shared Digital Backbone for the Collaborative

Partners are beginning to use a set of open digital tools, that can be connected to each other via a “common digital backbone”, to support re-use and extension of tools and functionality that support place-based planning, coordinated action, and cross-learning.

[Commons Connect](#) and [Know Your Landscape](#) are gradually enabling communities and field teams to map resources and understand ecological patterns in ways that can feed into public programmes, while also building a vibrant community of practice around these tools and encouraging ecosystem-led innovation on the underlying CoRE Stack itself.

[Samaaja](#) and [Gramify](#) are starting to support lateral exchange, local storytelling, and participatory planning through simple, mobile-first interfaces. Gramify demonstrated the utility of the shared digital backbone by allowing users to find place-based solutions from the *Green Rural Economy* without having to navigate to a different platform.

The [Common Ground Forum](#) and the [Website](#) have been launched as spaces where partners share updates, resources and questions across geographies, and build a stronger external-facing narrative for Common Ground.



## Building a shared knowledge infrastructure

The initiative around Knowledge Commons has been taking shape across three connected strands. i) The first has focused on establishing a Common Ground hub on the Project iECHO platform, where several partners began running training programmes on themes such as the Forest Rights Act and community mobilisation. This has created a shared space for peer learning and practitioner-led capacity building across geographies. ii) In parallel, the Green Rural Economy platform by Rainmatter foundation is being introduced to partners as an open marketplace to share and access knowledge and expertise across the ecosystem iii) Common Ground Identifies gaps in the existing knowledge and supports development of targeted, high-quality materials/playbooks designed with the end-user in mind to ensure information is accessible and relevant.

Currently, several Common Ground playbooks are being shared with UNDP and they in turn shared it with state governments of Orissa, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Additionally, a resource manual on Natural Resource Management is being used by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) in Odisha.

## Strengthening reflection and learning across the Collaborative

The work of Learning, Measurement and Evidence (LME) Hub is helping the Collaborative to generate evidence, reflect, learn and undertake course-correction, as needed. Through joint reflection sessions with Landscape Partners in Jharkhand and Odisha, and with support from the Landscape Partnership Facilitation Working Group, partners have shared insights on what enables and constrains multi-actor processes at the block level, translation of strategies to on the ground implementation, ability of partners to create systems shifts individually and collectively.

These learnings helped strengthen the engagements and expectations. The foundations of a shared learning and measurement infrastructure are being put in place and a twelve-month action plan has been developed for the collaborative and various initiatives. Work is underway to link learning loops across Working Groups, Community Champions and field platforms, supported by dashboards on financial and non-financial leverage, catalytic hubs and convergence, and by the adoption of the DOTs platform as a common impact tracking system.



## Community-rooted storytelling, shared across landscapes

Storytelling efforts have focused on deepening how community narratives, mindset shifts and lateral exchange come together across geographies, using stories rooted in place to connect everyday practice with wider ways of seeing the Commons. In Odisha, the Communicating the Commons workshop, organised with Views India, brought together community storytellers, radio practitioners, folk artists, women communicators and CSOs to explore solutions-focused, community-rooted ways of documenting livelihoods, governance and cultural relationships with land and water. Building on earlier learning from Jharkhand, this helped move narratives beyond conflict towards everyday leadership, problem-solving, and peer learning across landscapes.

The Working Group's approach, led by Asar, is increasingly carried by a distributed network of over 300 communicators and community communicators across multiple states. Catalyst-led storytelling practices are being supported in Jharkhand and Odisha to connect everyday field moments to wider people–nature–institution relationships, strengthening how stories are observed, structured and shared. These processes have begun to generate a steady flow of story leads and shared templates that could travel through tools such as Gramify, Samaaja and the iECHO learning space. Over the same period, stories on rural and urban commons have found space on platforms through efforts by IDR and Land Conflict Watch, helping widen public imagination around how Commons continue to shape ecology, economy, and livelihoods.



## **KaBhuMm!!! — Art for the Coastal Commons**

KaBhuMm!!! — Art for the Coastal Commons Common Ground supported and partnered with Equinoct, Asar and other organisations in Kerala for KaBhuMm!!! – Art for the Coastal Commons, a month-long, place-based initiative along the Ernakulam (Kochi) coastline that used art, science and community storytelling to surface how tidal flooding and coastal change are reshaping everyday life in estuarine landscapes. Through installations, films, performances and conversations with residents, fishers and local leaders, KaBhuMm made slow-onset climate impacts visible in ways that connected ecological change with memory, culture and local governance, rather than treating it as a distant or technical issue. The unique outreach also prompted multiple government departments to come together, with steps now underway to constitute a committee to examine the issue and potential responses.

As part of this process, a two-day immersion in November brought partners from Jharkhand, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya into direct engagement with coastal commons, enabling lateral exchange across geographies. Building on these learnings, a four-state Art for Commons framework has been co-developed with Kalamandir, SEWAK, and the Living Root Bridges Federation with the MBDA, outlining how the KaBhuMm model can travel across landscapes by mapping creative practice with natural resource management and ecological restoration through place-rooted stories and community institutions.

## A widening community of practice

Over the past six months, the Common Ground Collaborative has continued to grow in both depth and reach, with the network expanding from around 68 to 88 partners across civil society, community networks, policy institutions and market actors. New geographies have come into the fold, including Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and the Northeastern states of Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, reflecting a widening landscape of place-based engagement. During this period, partnerships were formalised with organisations such as the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, Project ECHO and Dalberg Catalyst, alongside community networks, while exploratory conversations have opened pathways with groups including SETU Alliance, OASiS Alliance, Anode Governance Lab, TerraStack, Atma Shakti and the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies.

## Engagement through convenings and field exchanges

Participation in national and regional convenings has provided opportunities to connect with actors and bring landscape-based and commons-centred perspectives into wider conversations. Engagements such as the Alliance for Conserving Freshwater Ecosystems and Restoring Natural Ecologies in Guwahati created spaces for cross-learning among community networks working on freshwater and coastal systems, while events like the India Land and Development Conference and the Odisha Vikas Conclave enabled dialogue between policy, civil society and market actors around area-based governance. The Agami JusticeMakers Mela supported new connections with young legal practitioners around forest rights, Panchayat roles and legal literacy, and a series of Champions Meets and landscape workshops at the regional level helped strengthen local leadership, refine tools and sustain peer learning across geographies.



## Collective reflection on the Collaborative

In late October, a set of partners came together for a Collaborative workshop designed to take stock of how the Common Ground Collaborative is functioning. The deliberations focused on reviewing governance arrangements, collaboration practices and execution capacities, drawing on the experiences of partners and Working Groups. The workshop helped surface what is working and where there are frictions. Participants also developed recommendations on how to overcome existing challenges and develop stronger collaborative arrangements. The insights from this process are now being consolidated to inform ongoing evolution of arrangements and ways of working within the Collaborative.



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ALL THINGS SHARED

