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MULTIFUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPES

WORKSHOP REPORT

From Vision to Action (V2A)

Co-development of transition pathways towards enhanced multifunctionality in Mandla landscapes, Madhya Pradesh (India)

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About Multifunctional Landscapes: Multifunctional Landscapes is a CGIAR Science Program that aims to enhance the resilience, productivity, and sustainability of agricultural landscapes by integrating diverse land uses, ecosystem services, and livelihood strategies. The initiative supports evidence-based policies and innovations that balance food production with climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and social inclusion. By working with local communities, governments, and partners, it promotes landscape level approaches to managing natural resources for long-term ecological and economic benefits. Learn more here: https://www.cgiar.org/initiative/multifunctional-landscapes

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Contents

Overview of Mandla

Mandla district is situated in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh (seen in figure 1), covers an area of 7226 km^2 and is defined by its diverse topography and agricultural significance. The district is situated within the Satpura hill range and the Narmada catchment area. The district comprises 1223 villages with a population of 1.28 million, and is home to several scheduled tribes, particularly the Gond, Baiga, and Oraon communities https://hdl.handle.net/10568/173476. These indigenous groups rely heavily on the commons, forests for Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), and open pastures. The district's agricultural landscape is marked by the cultivation of key crops such as rice, wheat, pulses, and oilseeds.

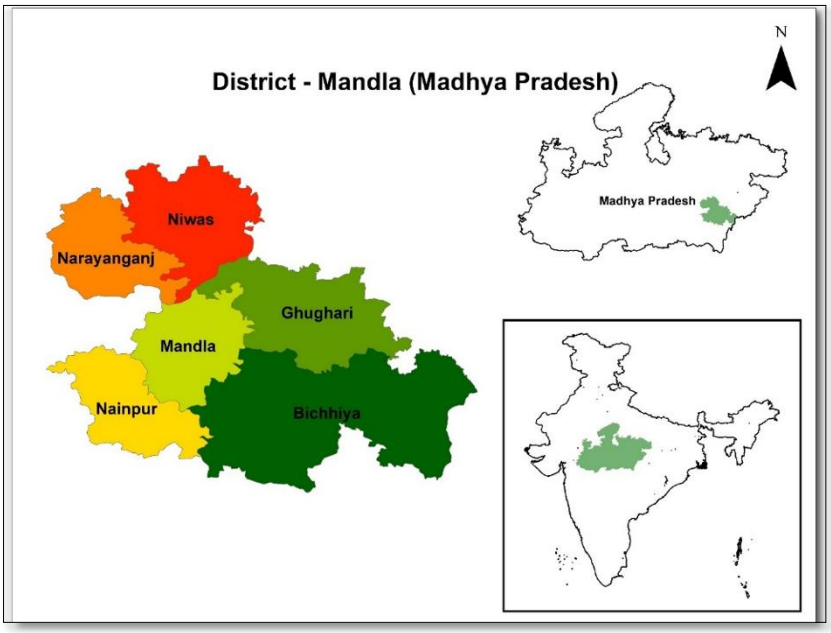

Figure 1: Map showing block-level division of Mandla district

Mandla faces challenges like soil erosion, particularly in ridge areas, prompting the construction of continuous contour bunds and trenches to mitigate its impact. With a total cropped area of 376,780 hectares, the district predominantly cultivates paddy, wheat, and pulses. However, water scarcity looms large despite an annual average rainfall of more than 1300 mm, as the districts undulating topography limits prolonged water retention and its soil characteristics further constrain groundwater recharge. Limited irrigation infrastructure, concentrated mainly near dams and canals, compels local residents to depend on rivers, streams, and traditional wells for domestic water needs.The district, largely falling under the Narmada river catchment, exhibits a unique environmental duality, with over 60% covered by forests providing vital habitat for wildlife and serving as a crucial resource for the local population.

Vision to Action in the context of Multifunctional landscapes

The Vision-to-Action (V2A) approach was developed to support inclusive stakeholder conversations to create a shared vision for a desirable future, develop holistic and medium-term transition pathways towards sustainable living landscapes, and define realistic, collectively agreed-upon concrete action plans that outline the behavior changes required to transition from their current situation to the envisioned future. It is designed to foster action that is multi-actor (e.g., producers, traders, enterprises, consumers, policymakers), multi-dimensional (e.g., agricultural, environmental, economic, social), and multi-scalar (e.g., farm, landscape, system) to realize sustainable food system transformation.

This method structures conversations to allow stakeholders to discuss and agree about who, what, when and where to engage in the sought transformation processes. The V2A process and results also point to opportunities and entry points for responsive external support

including by research-in-development partners such as the CGIAR Science Program on Multifunctional Landscapes.

Reflections from previous engagement

Our journey toward formulating a shared vision for Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, began with the first visioning workshop held over three days in October 2023. This initial engagement successfully brought together diverse participants, including women collectives, female and male farmers, government officers, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

During this first workshop, participants collectively envisioned a future where all farmers practice environment-friendly and diversified farming that ensures household nutrition, thriving markets, and equitable participation of men and women. The vision emphasized access to bio-fertilizers and advanced farm machinery, improved water management, strengthened local institutions, and greater livelihood diversification through activities such as poultry, fisheries, and goat rearing. Underpinning this vision were aspirations for better-quality education, healthcare, renewable energy, digital access, and infrastructure that would improve quality of life for all residents.

Figure 2: First visioning workshop held in October 2023

The process also identified a set of desired behavior changes required to move toward this shared vision, spanning knowledge and awareness of agroecological (AE) methods, adoption of AE practices, transforming gender dynamics, income diversification, and improved governance and institutional convergence as well as access to technology and infrastructure. Corresponding strategies and action plan included establishing bio-resource centers, enhancing access to bio-inputs, promoting multi-stakeholder platforms, ensuring fair prices and certification for natural produce, and developing scientific evidence to guide AE transitions.

Follow-up interviews conducted in 2024 with 23 system actors revealed encouraging signs of alignment and ownership. While this alignment indicates strong convergence around shared goals, it may also reflect a degree of homogeneity in perspectives shaped by similar institutional engagements and local experiences. There is a possibility that certain alternative or market-oriented viewpoints remain underrepresented, highlighting the importance of bringing in more diverse actors and external experiences in future processes. Nearly 40 percent of the interviewees were new participants, including private market actors and input dealers, indicating expanding interest in the V2A process. Importantly, even those who had not attended the initial workshop independently identified and supported many of the same priority actions, suggesting broad-based convergence around the identified pathways.

At the same time, persistent challenges were noted, particularly related to access to financial resources, tools, and networks; entrenched gender norms limiting women's leadership; and the need for practical support and coordination mechanisms to translate shared goals into

sustained local action. Actors also underscored the importance of timely fund flows from government departments and development agencies to maintain implementation momentum.

Thereafter, a second V2A workshop was held in August 2025 to expand the vision, embracing diverse land use types and considering broader benefits provided by the Mandla landscape. Participants also identified actors who can play an important role in shaping the future of the landscape aligned with the joint vision, followed by a deeper reflection on actor relations including dynamics of power, relationships, and collaboration in the system.

Action plan for Mandla's transformation by 2040: Overview of the workshop

Building on the shared vision developed for Mandla by 2040, the workshop held in Mandla (landscape) on 12th December 2025 was designed to develop a deeper understanding of the actionable next steps required to fulfil this vision for the landscape. The opening plenary revisited the collective journey of the past two years in Mandla, reinforcing the purpose of the V2A process in advancing sustainable development.

Figure 3: Participants are seen arranging behavior changes identified in the first V2A workshop under suitable themes

To initiate the discussion, participants were presented with the desired behavior changes identified during the first workshop along with the stakeholders responsible for each of these actions. They deliberated on these, reassessing and expanding them to account for the multifunctionality of the Mandla landscape, while organizing the actions across relevant thematic areas. Subsequently, participants identified additional actors needed to implement these actions, reflecting the diversity of stakeholders within the landscape. Finally, they outlined potential action pathways for a subset of these actions.

The workshop brought together a diverse mix of participants representing multiple sectors and stakeholder groups such as community representatives, CSOs, research institutions, and representatives from government departments. While follow-up interactions included participation from private actors such as input dealers, their role in the workshop discussions and resulting action pathways appears limited. This may have influenced the depth of engagement on market development, enterprise models, and value chain strengthening. Strengthening the active participation of private actors in future engagements could help broaden perspectives and improve the feasibility of market-led solutions.

Reflections from the group work

To realize the co-developed vision for the Mandla landscape, participants identified nine key development domains. These domains reflect both sectoral priorities and cross-cutting institutional and social dimensions. Broadly, the domains include- Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs), Livelihoods, Water Management and Soil Health, Natural Resource Management, Financial Services, Youth, Gender, Nutrition, and Infrastructure. These themes provide a holistic structure for the behavioral changes required by government bodies, CSOs, research institutions, and local community organizations.

Together, these domains capture the need for coordinated institutional mechanisms, sustainable and diversified livelihoods, improved natural resource governance, strengthened service delivery systems, and greater inclusion of women and youth. While these domains reflect a comprehensive and holistic understanding of landscape transformation, a few cross-cutting patterns emerge. There is a strong emphasis on the role of government actors across most domains, indicating a continued reliance on public systems for enabling change. At the same time, the role of private sector actors appears limited, both in participation and in the actions identified. The prominence of training-related actions, despite no explicit identification of knowledge gaps, may reflect limited exposure to alternative models rather than absence of knowledge. These patterns suggest the need to further strengthen market linkages, diversify actor engagement, and expand exposure to external experiences to support more balanced and sustainable transformation pathways While each domain focuses on a specific thematic area, they are highly interconnected and collectively contribute to building a resilient and inclusive landscape.

1. Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs)

Key behavioral changes identified within this domain include the following actions (listed in no strict sequence) along with the identified actors(s) for implementing these actions:

- Establish community-driven multi-stakeholder platforms for information exchange (Actors: CSOs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), community, CGIAR)
- Provide technical and knowledge support for MSP creation (Actors: CGIAR)
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of MSPs in solving local challenges (Actors: CSOs, SHGs, community)
- Formalize MSPs through institutional mechanisms within government systems (Actors: Government)
- Link Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) with agricultural activities for mutual benefits (Actors: Government)
- Generate policy-oriented research to integrate natural/social farming into large schemes (Actors: CGIAR)

2. Natural farming and livelihoods

This domain outlined a sequenced pathway of behavioral change, with clear first-level, second-level, and advanced actions (third-level behaviors), as well as parallel pathways.

First-level behaviors:

- Provide training on agroecological (AE)-based farming methods (Actors: Government, SHGs, research institutions, and Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs))
- Publicize input shops (Actors: Government, SHGs, research institutions, FPCs and other community-based organizations (CBOs))
- Share information on existing bio-input initiatives (Actors: Government, CSOs, Enterprises, FPCs and other CBOs)
- Establish MSPs for natural farming outputs/cash transfers (Actors: Government, FPCs)
- Promote diverse and nutritious crops (Actors: Government, FPCs and seed bank cooperatives, community)
- Disseminate information on schemes supporting small businesses (Actors: Government, CSOs, banks, local governance bodies)
- Conduct research on fair pricing of bio-inputs/products (Actors: Government, CGIAR, and other research institutions, FPCs, Enterprises and local markets)

Second-level behaviors:

- Follow up on training uptake (Actors: Government, SHGs, research institutions, FPCs and CBOs)
- Increase indigenous livestock/fish populations (Actors: Government, CSOs, SHGs, Enterprises)
- Collectivize regenerative farming produce (Actors: Government, CSOs, FPCs, community)
- Develop herbal medicine production facilities (Actors: Government, CSOs, banks)
- Generate local employment opportunities (Actors: Government, CSOs, private sector)

Third-level behaviors:

- Identify certification and GI mechanisms (Actors: Government, CSOs, research institutions, private sector, CBOs)
- Demonstrate viable fishery models (Actors: Government, research institutions, FPCs, Enterprises)
- Assess quality of locally produced inputs (Actors: Government, research institutions, private labs)

Final outcome:

- Strengthened markets to boost the local economy (Actors: Government, Enterprises, and private sector)

Parallel pathways include:

- To boost adoption of natural farming: Training → Follow-up → Certification for products → Markets
- To promote use of bio-inputs: Input promotion → Information sharing on existing schemes/programs → Livestock increase → Quality assessment of locally produced natural inputs
- To promote fish farming: Fish model identification → Demonstration

3. Water Management and Soil Health

This domain outlined a sequenced pathway of behavioral change, and a few independent actions.

- Raise awareness on water conservation (Actors: Government, CSOs, SHGs, community institutions, local governance bodies)
- Sensitize stakeholders on water harvesting models and green credits (Actors: Government, research institutions, private sector)
- Disseminate information on schemes for water conservation investments (Actors: Government, SHGs, local governance bodies, MSP)
- Identify suitable locations for water storage (Actors: Government, research institutions, local governance bodies)
- Establish water user associations and undertake water budgeting (Actors: Government, CSOs, research institutions, local governance bodies, CBOs)
- Promote rainwater harvesting and household water collection (Actors: Government, community)
- Improve water infrastructure (Actors: Government, local governance bodies, user groups and other CBOs)

Independent actions:

- Train local actors in soil and water testing (Actors: Government, research institutions, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), private sector)
- Develop farm policies based on soil types (Actors: Government, CSOs)

4. Natural Resource Management

Key behavioral changes identified within this domain include the following actions (listed in no strict sequence) along with the identified actors(s) for implementing these actions:

- Convert common lands into grazing areas (Actors: Government, CSOs, local governance bodies)
- Promote tree plantation for water conservation and biodiversity (Actors: Government, CBOs, community)
- Remove invasive species and conserve forests (Actors: Government, CSOs, CBOs)
- Support communities in claiming forest rights (Actors: Government, local governance bodies, CBOs)
- Promote forest-based livelihoods and minor forest produce (Actors: Government, research institutions, Enterprises and private sector, local governance bodies, CBOs)

5. Financial Services

Key behavioral changes identified within this domain include the following actions (listed in no strict sequence) along with the identified actors(s) for implementing these actions:

- Disseminate information on financial schemes for small businesses (Actors: Government, SHGs, banks, MSPs)
- Strengthen governance and supportive policies (e.g., Minimum Support Price, incentives such as compensation for yield loss, regulation of use of chemical inputs) (Actors: Government, financial institutions, private sector)
- Improve access to financial services (Actors: cross-sector stakeholders)

6. Youth

This domain outlined a sequenced pathway of behavioral change as follows:

- Conduct needs and aspirations assessments for youth (Actors: Research institutions and Universities, CSOs, counselling centers for youth)
- Provide skill development training (Actors: Government, CSOs, private agencies)
- Create employment opportunities for youth (Actors: Government, CSOs)

7. Gender

This domain outlined a sequenced pathway of behavioral change as follows:

- Increase women's awareness of markets (Actors: Government, CSOs, local governance bodies)
- Ensure reserved spaces and priority access for women in markets (Actors: Government, local governance bodies)
- Strengthen women's decision-making in agriculture and households (Actors: Government, CSOs, CBOs, community, Enterprises)
- Increase women's participation in SHGs (Actors: Government, CSOs, SHGs and other CBOs)
- Promote equal rights, including property rights (Actors: Government, CSOs, community leaders, CBOs)
- Create employment opportunities for women and girls (Actors: Government, CSOs)
- Promote gender-equitable norms (shared household responsibilities) (Actors: Government, CSOs, community leaders, CBOs)
- Encourage girls' education and delay marriage (Actors: Government, CSOs, local governance bodies, CBOs)

- Increase representation of women and youth in governance (Actors: Government, CSOs, local governance bodies, CBOs, community)

8. Nutrition

This domain outlined a sequenced pathway of behavioral change as follows:

- Promote cultivation of indigenous and nutritious crops (Actors: Government, CSOs, research institutions, FPCs, private sector)
- Allocate funds for diversified diets in schools (Actors: Government, local governance bodies)
- Provide diversified meals in school feeding programs (Actors: Government, CBOs including parent-teacher associations)
- Promote nutrition awareness and behavior change, especially for women (Actors: Government, CSOs, CBOs, community)

9. Infrastructure

Key behavioral changes identified within this domain include the following actions (listed in no strict sequence) along with the identified actors(s) for implementing these actions:

- Establish local input shops for natural/organic inputs (Actors: Government, CSOs, SHGs, private sector)
- Provide institutional support for setting up local input shops for natural/organic inputs (Actors: Government, research institutions)
- Expand soil and water testing infrastructure (Actors: Government, local governance bodies)
- Improve processing, storage, transport, and market infrastructure
- Strengthen basic services: roads, electricity, internet, health, education, and housing
- Ensure adequate staffing in government systems

Way forward and closure of workshop

Going forward, there is a need to complement the existing participatory approach with greater inclusion of underrepresented actors, particularly from the private sector, and to facilitate exposure to successful models from other regions. Creating space for diverse and even contrasting perspectives during the process can help deepen discussions and improve the robustness of proposed action pathways. This will be important for translating the shared vision into scalable and sustainable outcomes.

The closing remarks from the facilitator emphasized the need for coordinated action, inclusive participation, institutional convergence, and sustained local leadership across the landscape. It reinforced that the responsibility for realizing the vision lies primarily with local actors and institutions in Mandla, while development partners and supporting organizations must continue to collaborate and stand alongside them. Together, these reflections marked a fitting close to the workshop, reaffirming that the vision for 2040 is not only aspirational but also actionable.

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