

Report on visioning workshop of the Banspal Bikas Mancha (Living Lab) supporting locally led climate action, Odisha, India

Vaishnavi Paliya¹, Saswatik Tripathy¹, Kartik Chandra Prusty¹, Thomas Falk², Ilan Chabay³

¹ Foundation for Ecological Security, ² International Food Policy Research Institute, ³ Knowledge, Learning, Societal Change Research Alliance



The authors: **Vaishnavi Paliya** is a project manager at Foundation for Ecological Security. **Saswatik Tripathy** is Senior Project manager and head of the Banspal office of Foundation for Ecological Security. **Kartik Chandra Prusty** is a Senior Program manager and head of the direct engagement of Foundation for Ecological Security in Odisha. **Thomas Falk** is a Research Fellow at International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Germany; **Ilan Chabay** is the co-director of KLASICA, the Knowledge, Learning, Societal Change Research Alliance.

Acknowledgement: This work was conducted under the CGIAR Climate Action Science Program. We would like to thank all funders who support this research through their contributions to the CGIAR Trust Fund (www.cgiar.org/funders).

About Climate Action: The CGIAR Climate Action Program drives science, innovation, and collaboration to transform food, land, and water systems toward a climate-resilient, net-zero, and equitable future. By fostering more resilient and low-emission farms, landscapes, and aquatic systems, the program advances research across agri-food systems, benefiting up to 38 million vulnerable small-scale producers and value chain actors in 30 countries.

Copyright © 2025 International Food Policy Research Institute. This publication is licensed for use under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.

Disclaimer: Responsibility for editing, proofreading, layout, opinions expressed, and any errors lie with the authors and not the institutions involved. The boundaries shown on the maps, names and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IFPRI, CGIAR, our partner institutions, or donors.

Photo credits: Front cover: Bhabani Shankar Parida; Back cover: Saswatik Tripathy

Introduction

This report documents a one-day Vision to Action workshop organized by Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) with support of International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), held on **August 18, 2025**, in Banspal village, Keonjhar, Odisha. The workshop is convened as a foundation step towards establishing a Living Lab in Banspal and situated within the broader framework of the CGIAR Climate Action Science Program.

Climate change poses serious risks to Odisha, where average temperatures are projected to rise by 3–4 °C by 2080. Rainfall patterns are expected to become increasingly erratic, with a 10–40% rise in monsoon precipitation leading to more intense rainfall events and higher risks of flash floods, while certain months such as June may see declining rainfall. These shifts, coupled with more frequent droughts and storms, threaten the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and forest-dependent communities. Therefore, innovative approaches in agriculture, water management, and climate-resilient livelihoods are critical to help local populations adapt to these deepening climate uncertainties.

The primary objective of the workshop was to introduce the concept of living labs to stakeholders in Keonjhar and propose the establishment of a living lab supporting locally led climate action. Building on the participants' commitment to this process, the workshop aimed to facilitate the formulation of a shared vision for a desirable future of Keonjhar's agri-food systems in the face of climate change. It also sought to identify which actors have an interest in locally led climate initiatives and which could play key roles in realizing the shared vision. Additionally, participants were invited to reflect on the roles and interrelations of these key actors. Finally, the workshop aimed to outline concrete next steps for establishing the living lab.

The workshop was attended by diverse stakeholders, including traditional authorities, local government (Panchayati Raj Institutions), officials from the Forest Department and Disaster Management authorities, representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as PRADAN and MobileCraze, academicians from Dharani Dhar University, and women's leaders.

Session 1 – Introduction and clarification of objectives

The first session of the workshop began with facilitators and participants introducing themselves and sharing their affiliations and areas of interest. This was followed by a brief overview of the CGIAR Climate Action Program, providing context for the initiative in Keonjhar. Facilitators then presented climate change projections for the district, highlighting the urgency of locally led responses. The concept of living labs was introduced as inclusive social spaces where diverse stakeholders collaboratively develop, test, and implement innovative solutions that integrate technical approaches with new ways of working together. Emphasis was placed on valuing all forms of knowledge, including indigenous and traditional systems, and on the importance of effective governance and actor networks to support co-creation processes. Concluding the session, participants expressed their willingness to explore the establishment of the *Banspal Bikas Mancha* (Living Lab) as a platform for locally led climate action.

Session 2 - Formulating a joint vision for Banspal, Keonjhar

Objective of the session: This session was focused on formulating a joint vision for a desirable future of Banspal, Keonjhar in the time of climate change. A **visioning exercise** was

undertaken, designed by IFPRI, and facilitated with the support of FES, in English and Odia language.

Method: Participants were invited to collectively imagine and formulate a multi-dimensional vision of a desirable future for Keonjhar in the face of projected challenges associated with climate change. They were encouraged to reflect on the diverse benefits experienced by different groups, as well as the burdens that some may bear because of others' actions. Participants were asked: What would the Keonjhar look like if it were shaped by your highest aspirations? By engaging participants in the collective development of this vision, the process nurtures a shared sense of purpose and motivation, paving the way for transformative change. It also fosters essential group qualities such as cohesion and a unified sense of direction.

The facilitators invited participants to imagine traveling 15 years into the future. A documentary team has arrived in Keonjhar to interview various stakeholders because the place has gained recognition for its remarkable progress - particularly for how its actors have successfully adapted to climate change. Participants were encouraged to reflect on what messages they would want to share with the documentary team about these achievements. Participants were divided into four mixed groups. The groups brainstormed for 20 minutes and then wrote short statements on moderation cards which are potential elements of the shared vision. Each group briefly presented their ideas while the facilitators arranged all the cards thematically.

After briefly presenting the key aspects of their envisioned future, the groups continued their group work. Each group then chose one member to act as a 'journalist' and another as a 'Keonjhar actor'. Together, the group prioritized the most important aspects of the desired future depicted on the cards and agreed on the questions the 'journalist' would ask and the answers the 'landscape actor' would provide.

Thereafter, all participants were called back to the plenary. The 'journalists' and 'Keonjhar actors' of all groups were invited to enact a press conference and assume roles of a panel of 'actors' from the different groups and of 'journalists'. The 'actors' and 'journalists' sat across a table facing each other. The facilitator moderated the session encouraging the 'journalists' to ask their questions which were answered by the 'system actor' panel. The facilitator ensured that all 'journalists' and 'system actors' have equal opportunity to ask questions and answer questions, respectively. Through this activity the panel members identified the priorities of the community and locally rooted strategies for achieving sustainability, prosperity, and wellbeing.

Outcome: Participants developed visions that were framed in relation to conditions they have lived in, which made visioning initially as a reflective exercise, anchored in participants' immediate contexts and constraints, rather than standalone aspirations for future. A list of aspects of the vision was clustered around the following topics:

- Climate change and impact on farming productivity and food availability,
- Addressing forest fires,
- Addressing human wildlife conflicts,
- Improving infrastructural – roads, hospital, and transport,
- Securing livelihoods,
- Inclusive decision making,
- Resource mobilization.

Based on the shared aspects of a desirable future, participants prepared and enacted a press conference. In this role-play, actors described a future where forests and wildlife are protected through community stewardship, water harvesting, and tree planting, ensuring coexistence

between people and animals. They envisioned strong women’s collectives and self-help groups driving economic inclusion, with diversified livelihoods such as mushroom cultivation, honey production, and vegetable farming, alongside substantial savings and access to government schemes. Education formed another cluster, with actors imagining every child—girls and boys—attending school and completing secondary education, supported by local committees and NGO partnerships. A further cluster focused on improved infrastructure and services, including all-weather roads linking villages, reliable health facilities, and expanded irrigation that enables productive, climate-resilient agriculture. Finally, the scene highlighted aspirations for social justice and reduced harms from alcohol, with active women’s groups confronting addiction, strengthening local governance, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the journey towards a thriving Banspal in 2040.



The press conference exercise enabled participants to conceptualize the roles, responsibilities, and interdependencies of diverse system actors in a simulated real-world interface of power, accountability, and community experience. Climate resilience emerged as a community-framed vision, embodied in practices such as state-supported forest protection, women’s economic empowerment to counter livelihood precarity, and adaptive agriculture fueled by knowledge sharing and infrastructure. As the discussion progressed, participants shifted from describing current challenges to imagining an aspiration future. The exercise also revealed that multiple vision co-existed and that there are synergies and trade-offs ecological, social, and economic outcomes.

Session 3 - Stakeholder mapping

Objective of the segment: This part of the workshop dedicated to identifying and map relevant actors who would have interest in locally led climate action in Keonjhar and which actors could play an important role in achieving the vision communities have for Banspal.

Method: In this part of the exercise, same groups as in Session 2 identified relevant existing actors. Subsequently, they analyzed these stakeholders according to their level of interest and power/influence to determine their potential roles in supporting the Living Lab’s realization of its vision.



Outcome: Stakeholder Mapped

<p>Government Stakeholders</p>	<p>Panchayati Raj Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarpanch and Ward Members • Gram Panchayat Members • Panchayat Executive Officer • Block Development Officer <p>Line Departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture Department • Horticulture Department • Soil Conservation Department • Rural Development Department • Animal Husbandry Department • Veterinary Department • Forest Department • Revenue Department <p>Government Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed committees
<p>Community Systems Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Help Groups • Mission Shakti Collectors • Women Leaders • Pastoralists groups • Youth Groups
<p>Market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Chain Actors • Local Trading Units • Private Mining Entities
<p>Entrepreneurs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil Expellers Units • Sal Plate Makers (Shorea Robusta leaves plates) • Plant Nurseries owners and staff

Outcome: Stakeholder Mapped

Knowledge and Practice Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NGOs and CSOs• Academic institutions
Financial institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Banks• Microfinance institutions
Media and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local reporters• Digital Media Platforms

Session 4 - Contextualizing system actors through the actor constellation exercise

Objective and method of the segment: The next activity in the workshop aimed to dive deeper into the relationship between actors. This was facilitated through an embodiment practice, more specifically an organizational constellation, allowing participants to intuitively experience the current state of the social system. This practice aims to help participants reflect on potential and blind spots and sense a desired future. It encourages innovative thinking regarding actor relations and power dynamics.

Method: For the activity, participants were asked to sit in a large circle with a big open space in the middle. Based on the earlier stakeholder mapping activity, the participants prioritized the 10 most important actors. The key actors identified by the participants, in no particular order, were:

- Political Leader
- Traditional authorities (Pidhaa)
- Agriculture Department
- Gram Panchayat Committee Member
- Police Department
- Education & Health Department
- Forest Department
- NGO Representative
- Panchayat Representative
- Block Department Officer
- Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA)

The facilitators then explained that the participants shall adopt the roles of these 11 shortlisted system actors. As one facilitator called out one of these 11 actors, starting with the more powerful ones, one person from the group was invited to volunteer to play this actor. It was emphasized that the person playing the role of an actor should not be closely affiliated with this actor in real life (e.g. a representative of a ministry should not play the role of a minister). Once a volunteer was found, the facilitator gave the nametag with the actor's name to the person. The person was asked to sense into this role and embody it by moving around and finding a place in the room and creating a shape or gesture that intuitively embodies the actor's experience within the system. Once they found a place in the room and established their gesture, they were asked to remain in the assumed gesture and position. Thereafter the second actor was invited and the same procedure repeated. As the second actor entered the open space, they could (but did not have to) relate to the first actor. Once the second actor found their position, the process repeated until all ten actors were in the open space in the middle. Once all participants had entered the space, the facilitator invited them to say a few words that came intuitively to their mind at this point in time. After a short pause, the 'actors'

were asked to move and search for a place in the room in relation to the other actors where they would feel more comfortable and say again a short phrase of what came to their minds.

Outcomes:

During this process, a few participants used gestures to embody their roles more vividly, offering subtle insights into their interpretation of their roles. They mostly expressed their roles by using pantomime eventually forming a sitting circle (some sitting on the floor, some on chairs). The participants expressed the following insights regarding the role they were playing:

- **Political Leader:** Felt responsible for delivering results within five years but acknowledged limited grasp of departmental work; advocated entrusting committed grassroots leaders, emphasizing interdependence with panchayat and line departments for community progress.
- **Traditional authorities (Pidhaa):** Felt guilty for unfinished work and inability to advise alone; stressed that development requires collective support from villagers, departments, and elected leaders, rejecting sole reliance on any single actor.
- **Agriculture Department:** Represented farmers; expressed pride in supporting agricultural livelihoods.
- **Gram Panchayat Committee Member:** Actively participated in local governance; felt happy with presence of political leader, highlighting reliance on multi-stakeholder coordination for village-level action.
- **Police Department:** Felt proud as a woman protecting girls; noted confusion in alliances but aligned with Education/Health to combat social issues, revealing need for cross-sector proximity over isolation.
- **Education & Health Department:** Proud of providing education and health services; saw greatest achievement in direct community service, underscoring essential ties to other actors for holistic wellbeing.
- **Forest Department:** Committed to protecting forests and wildlife, handling human-wildlife conflicts and fires; positioned role as vital for ecological balance, dependent on community and government support.
- **NGO Representative:** Felt happy addressing household problems and uniting village committees; observed role superiority tensions, advocating acceptance and coordination among actors.
- **Panchayat Representative:** Happy supporting panchayat members but noted distance from people; called for elected officials and police to foster cooperation, unity, and respect via village meetings.
- **Block Department Officer:** Proud of resolving village issues quickly, escalating unsolved ones via letters; urged staff efficiency, reflecting hierarchical coordination with departments for block development.
- **Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA):** Felt proud joining the team under political leadership; prioritized greeting political leader and ensuring departmental duties aid people, emphasizing government-led collective progress.



1. Testimony – Identity given Panchayat Representative

“I felt a communication gap.”

“Earlier, I enjoyed working closely with the people. But after being attached to the block office, a kind of distance has been created between us.”

2. Testimony – Identity give Community Leader – Pidho

“I felt guilty.”

“Because I am the Pidho leader, people tell me that I’m responsible for why the work has not been completed. I am unable to give people any suggestions about why the work stopped or what happened. I am feeling guilty.”

3. Testimony – Identity given Police Department

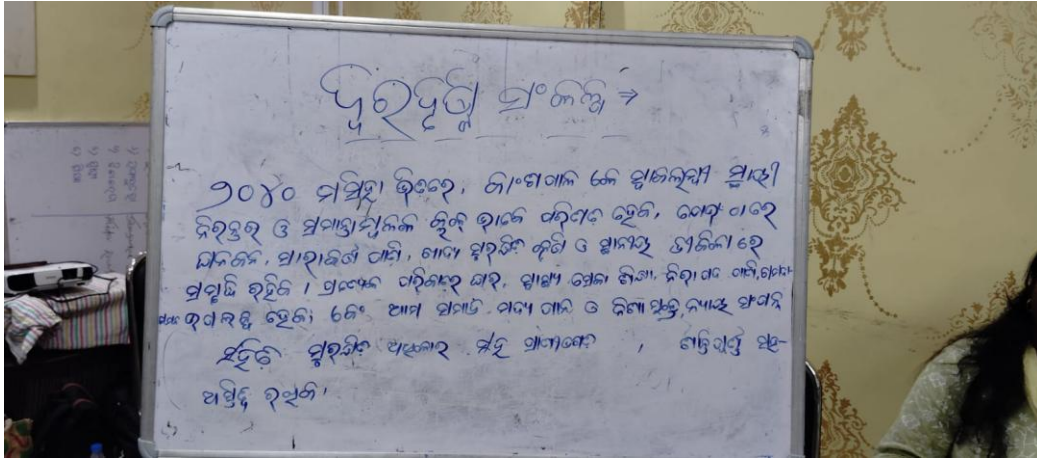
“I felt proud and powerful, and then suddenly ordinary.”

“When I wore the police uniform, I felt very proud and powerful, as if all the power of our region was in my hands. But when I removed the nameplate, I immediately felt like an ordinary person again.”

This exercise reinforced and established the need for a social space where socio-technical solutions can be co-created, grounded in collaboration and shared ownership for climate action pathways and to fulfill the vision for 2040. Towards the end, the discussions and reflections facilitated formulation of shared vision 2024.

Session 5 – Proposing a shared vision

The facilitation team used the input provided during the workshop to draft a preliminary vision for Keonjhar. It was written on a board. This statement was meant to be reviewed and refined in future steps of establishing the Banspal Bikas Mancha (Living Lab).



Banspal Vision for 2024

Vision for 2040

Banspal village emerges as a developed and self-reliant community, where interdependent actors collaborate seamlessly to ensure access to education, healthcare, and employment, eliminating hunger and scarcity for dignified lives. Agriculture thrives through scientific methods and improved water supply. Community stewardship protects wildlife and natural resources, fostering harmony between humans and nature. Empowered women achieve economic independence and active roles in decision-making. All children attend school, with child labor and child marriage eradicated. The community advances together through unity, cooperation, and sustainable development.

Session 5 – The way forward

The workshop concluded announcing that participants and other actors will receive a workshop report in Odia. As a next step, the facilitators will engage with different actors bilaterally to outline a governance structure emphasizing community ownership, inclusive decision-making and actor coordination. In addition, the team will collect and anonymously share Keonjhar actors’ narratives on climate change impacts. Finally, concrete plans were set for the next workshop in January 2026 to advance the Living Lab’s establishment. The workshop will have the objectives to revise the vision statement, agree on a living lab governance, and identify innovation cases.

