IMPACT SUMMARY REPORT

ROOTS LEARNING
PLATFORM

APRIL 2024 - JUNE 2025

ROOTS
Capacity Building for Impact

REPORT PREPARED BY

PHICUS
Catalyzing Resilience and Impact

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Roots Learning Platform exceeded expectations in its inaugural year, successfully transitioning from the Packard Foundation-managed Samedh initiative to a robust, partner-driven learning ecosystem.

Key accomplishments include:

- **Scale and Reach:** Over 15 months, Roots delivered 42 learning events engaging over 675 participants, including 341 from Packard grantees, 43 from Hewlett & AVPN partners, and 291 from other organizations (including the SATHI Network). The platform achieved 1,065 cumulative registrations by June 2025, demonstrating strong and growing interest across the sector.
- **Responsive Learning Design:** Through comprehensive needs assessments with all 26 Packard grantee organizations and subsequent expansion to Hewlett/AVPN partners, Roots created a learning calendar directly responsive to partner priorities. The platform achieved consistently high satisfaction ratings (ranging from 70-100%, with most sessions at 92-100%) and strong relevance scores (83-100% for work applicability across all session types).
- **Multi-Tiered Capacity Building:** The "something for everyone" approach successfully addressed capacity gaps across organizational levels:
  - Senior leadership through expert sessions and CXO-focused sessions
  - Mid-level leaders via the intensive Excelerate program (11 of 16 participants from 6 partner organizations completed the 6-month journey)
  - Field staff through the pioneering Sahuri initiative, reaching 200+ frontline workers through Development Consortium and SATHI Network with story-based learning in Hindi and English (14 letters to Development Consortium, 6 to SATHI Network)
- **Peer Learning Ecosystem:** Six grantee organizations led peer learning sessions, transforming from passive recipients to active knowledge contributors: PCI India (gender programming), WorldBeing (youth wellbeing), Population Council (process evaluation), Engender Health (adolescent SRHR), DevCons (digital communication), and Agents of Ishq (culturally rooted sex education). This shift demonstrates the platform's success in building internal capacity and fostering cross-organizational collaboration.

Outstanding Engagement: Ipas Development Foundation demonstrated exceptional commitment, participating in 28 out of 42 events with 75 staff members attending Roots sessions. Many Packard grantees showed sustained engagement, with 60% returning for multiple programs.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS
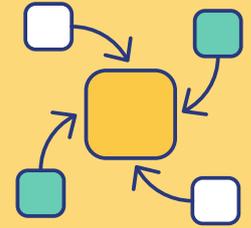
Co-creation with Partners: The platform's foundation on listening and responsiveness, beginning with February 2024 launch conversations and March needs assessments, ensured relevance and ownership. Regular SPOC engagement and quarterly feedback loops maintained this alignment.

Flexible Multi-Format Approach: The combination of workshops, expert sessions, peer learning, and panel discussions accommodated diverse learning preferences and organizational contexts. This flexibility proved crucial for sustaining engagement across varied partner organizations.

Strong Facilitation: 18+ subject experts led the various Roots learning events, ensuring rigor, engagement, and sector alignment.

Language Accessibility: Hindi and English session delivery broke down barriers for grassroots organizations, with the bilingual approach particularly evident in the Sahuri initiative's success with field staff.

Phicus' Sectoral Expertise: Drawing from 15+ years strengthening 200+ CSOs, Phicus brought deep understanding of sector needs and practical solutions that resonated with participants.

Donor Support: We received unequivocal support from both Donors to experiment! Excelerate and Sahuri were notable experiments which have become an integral part of Roots! Our Donors also stayed in regular touch to listen, generously shared of their networks and celebrated all wins!

CHALLENGES & THEIR ADDRESSAL
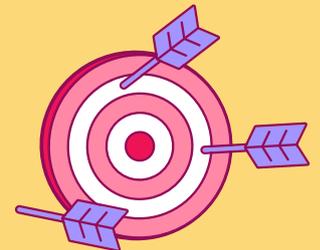
Challenge 1: Technology Adoption Barriers Some organizations struggled with digital platform access, particularly smaller grassroots partners. We addressed this through simplified registration processes, WhatsApp-based communications, and the development of the audio-enabled Sahuri tool for field staff.

Challenge 2: Varying Organizational Readiness Partner organizations showed different levels of engagement and internal capacity. We responded by creating multiple participation pathways—from drop-in workshops to intensive programs like Excelerate—allowing organizations to engage at their comfort level.

Challenge 3: Sustaining Engagement Over Time Initial enthusiasm sometimes waned. We countered this through personalized SPOC relationships, diverse content formats, extensive digital engagement and peer-led sessions that created investment in the platform's success.

Challenge 4: Measuring Impact Beyond Satisfaction While satisfaction scores were consistently high, demonstrating behavioral change and organizational impact proved more complex. We're developing more robust impact measurement tools and longer-term tracking mechanisms.

ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH ROOTS

Roots significantly advanced equity in multiple dimensions:

Geographic Equity: The platform reached organizations across India, including remote and underserved areas previously excluded from capacity-building opportunities.

Organizational Size Equity: Unlike traditional programs that favor large organizations, Roots provided equal access to small grassroots organizations, with several organizations under 20 employees actively participating.

Hierarchical Equity: The "something for everyone" approach ensured that field staff, mid-level managers, and senior leaders all had relevant learning opportunities—a stark contrast to typical programs that focus only on senior leadership.

Language Equity: Hindi and English sessions removed language barriers that typically exclude non-English speaking staff from professional development opportunities.

The **Sahuri** initiative particularly exemplifies our equity commitment, reaching frontline workers who are typically excluded from capacity-building investments despite being closest to communities.

GOING FORWARD SYNERGIES

- **Strengthen Long-term Partnership Design:** As we put together a Donor Consortium, we are aiming for multi-year funding commitments that allow for deeper organizational transformation rather than annual cycles that limit sustained impact.
- **Enhance Cross-Grantee Collaboration:** Create more opportunities for grantees to learn from each other's work, perhaps through regional gatherings or collaborative projects emerging from Roots connections.
- **Support Organizational Learning Systems:** We are excited to rollout the small grants program for the Packard Foundation in 2025 – 26 which go beyond individual capacity building to more systemic support.
- **Expand Sectoral Partnerships:** Explore connections with other Foundations and sectoral platforms to create learning opportunities that extend beyond the Packard and Hewlett ecosystems while avoiding duplication.

The Roots Learning Platform has successfully evolved from a Foundation-managed initiative to a thriving, partner-driven ecosystem that addresses capacity gaps across all organizational levels. Its emphasis on equity, responsiveness, and peer learning positions it as a model for sectoral capacity building that can continue growing in impact and reach.

The entire Phicus team is deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve this rich learning ecosystem. Thanks to the unwavering support of the Packard and Hewlett Foundations, we've built something that is not only growing—but taking root across diverse organizations, levels, and geographies.

We look forward to deepening and expanding this collective journey in the coming year.