



Co-creating an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for Supporting Women

Development Alternatives has partnered with UN Women and Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) under the Second Chance Education (SCE) project to address the challenges of normative gender barriers leading to girl child dropouts, inability to leverage skills to gain employment, and mismatched opportunities. It seeks to address this twin challenge by anchoring action with women collectives, tapping opportunities in India's rural economy, and facilitating linkages for girls and young women in enterprises, job-linked skills training, and the education system.

DA will focus on knowledge transference and technical support to co-create an approach consisting of a systematic process of scanning for potential enterprises, capacity building, and ecosystem creation. This in turn will support women to set up enterprises of their own. DA will be supporting the implementation partners in the non-farm enterprise development in four states - Rajasthan, Odisha, Bihar, and Maharashtra.

In line with this, the team recently visited all the project sites across the four states for conducting listening and dialogue sessions with the communities. Till now over 12 Comic workshops have been conducted across eight districts of the three geographies and reached out to over 100 women. The team was supported by the implementing partners which included PRADAN (in Odisha and Bihar), Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (in Bihar), Aaina and Srishti (in Odisha), and Manjari Foundation (in Rajasthan).

The comic workshop is a social innovation tool based on the principle of community participation and creativity and helps participants to describe their life stories, shifts in lifestyles, and future aspirations through sketching. This interactive session is followed by a SWOT analysis of their aspirations and goals helping them connect their aspirations with actionable steps towards fruition. Furthermore, the team

also conducted community meetings with more than 90 women for listening sessions which enable us to understand local needs and opportunities.

The team observed that this process of expressing their aspirations through sketching helped all categories of women including neo-literates to not only express themselves but also rekindle their past dreams and connect them with their future aspirations. Many women rejoiced at their childhood aspirations and achievements, which were almost forgotten by many. The exercise also enabled the women to link their existing skills to self-employment opportunities that can earn them decent and dignified livelihoods

Based on the learnings from the workshops and aspiration mapping, the three personas developed under the program (Early Adopters, Inspire, and Budding) were built and tested for different women cohorts. A pipeline of entrepreneurs has been developed who will be supported through customised enterprise support services as per their demands and needs. The project will work towards unearthing entrepreneurial energies of women for enabling an inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem.