

Development Alternatives at the Work 4 Progress Annual Conference 2021

In accordance with the 2030 agenda, the Work 4 Progress programme of “la Caixa” Foundation aims to identify challenges and needs in the area of employment and, by supporting innovative solutions, help to create jobs, with particular emphasis on vulnerable women and young people in Peru, Mozambique, and India. The programme hosted its Annual International Conference from 7–10 June 2021. The conference aimed to connect country networks to share their different learning sets from the past year on successful enterprise and financial models, and connect with other network partners to accelerate learnings and impact.

The conference, conducted virtually, saw the participation of Development Alternatives (W4P India), Entreculturas (W4P Peru) and Ayuda en Acción (W4P Mozambique). The representatives came together to converse on issues of entrepreneurship led job creation for young people and women in India, Mozambique and Peru. The 2021 conference included sessions and workshops on the overall situation of the programme, analysis of new models of funding, governance and scaling up, lessons learned in development evaluation as well as proposals to improve communication and the generation of knowledge.

W4P India network led by Development Alternatives aims to create decent employment for women and youth in underserved communities of Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh and at accelerating inclusive businesses that promote local and sustainable economic growth by fostering innovation, especially technological innovation and digitalisation.

In the session on “Lessons Learned in Developmental Evaluation”, Kanika Verma, Programme Director, DA, stated that with more than 1450 enterprises created, the W4P India team has seen acceleration in the rate and a decline in the project cost per enterprise. Shrashtant Patara, Senior Vice President, DA, shared how the entrepreneurs responded to challenges induced by COVID-19 by diversifying and digitising to cater to local needs. In the following sessions, the team also highlighted how inclusive prototypes like regional entrepreneurship coalitions, UdyAME are enabling a lot of entrepreneurs to access government schemes and credit on a single platform, while also acting as a pillar of support to ensure the sustainability of the programme and to create resilient communities.

The conference enabled the team to identify opportunities for DA in the future in terms of building on learning systems and developmental evaluation practices, dissemination of knowledge, possible ways of developing digital solutions, strengthening international collaborations, and developing more mechanisms for cross-learning across geographies.