

## Session on Social Innovation for Systems Change with Ashoka Fellows

A session was organised by Rang De as a part of their collaboration with Ashoka Social Innovation for Livelihoods around the theme “Social Innovation for Systems Change”. Kanika Verma, Associate Vice President of Development Alternatives (DA), was invited to share insights on social innovation tools and processes and DA’s interventions in the entrepreneurial space.

The session brought in subject matter experts in the area of social entrepreneurship and was attended by 35+ participants from organisations such as Manjari Foundation, Jaljeevika, Spandan Seva Samaj, PRAN, Udyodgini and Drishtee and Ashoka Fellows.

In the session, Kanika Verma spoke about Work4Progress’ social innovation approach towards entrepreneurship-led job creation, with its uniqueness in the methodology of listening, co-creation, prototype and acceleration. It has led to systemic shifts in the community, resulting in the building of a robust local entrepreneurship ecosystem with the community and stakeholders at a district level.

Kanika highlighted the District Entrepreneurship Coalition in Mirzapur, which has enabled resource convergence among government departments, training and financial institutions, and other organisations working in the entrepreneurial space. This has also led to a mainstream bank to revise the loan structure in the form of reducing interest rates for micro-enterprises.

Kanika also introduced the participants to some of the DIY (Do It Yourself) tools of social innovation such as Kaun Banega Business Leader and Brave Spaces. She also spoke about the evaluation framework that has guided the learning and programme design of the Work4Progress programme.

The participants were intrigued by the listening component of the social innovation processes and asked questions about the relevance of community listening and how it may be implemented. Kanika shared about the instrumental role listening plays in unleashing entrepreneurial energies to recognise needs, opportunities, challenges, and interdependencies within the local entrepreneurial systems. She also explained some of the listening tools such as the ‘Day-in-the-Life-of’ which allows to delve deeper into the daily life of an entrepreneur where the researcher plays the role of an observer or “a fly on the wall” as the entrepreneur goes about his/her day. Another listening tool that was introduced was ‘community canvas’ which helps to understand the shared narratives and experiences of the communities through visuals drawn on a chart paper.

The session was received well by the participants, with many of them also showing interest in DA’s entrepreneurship development initiatives. As the session provided a platform to position DA’s work in the development space, it also presented an opportunity for collaborations with like-minded organisations.



Kanika Verma explaining the importance of social innovation processes in entrepreneurship development initiatives