



Building Synergies at Regional Enterprise Coalitions

The Work 4 Progress (W4P) India program of “la Caixa” Foundation and Development Alternatives (DA) aims to accelerate the creation of meaningful and dignified employment through the creation of platforms for innovation, action and continuous learning in two regions of India - Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. It provides enterprise development opportunities for youth and women and uses social innovation methods that encourage dialogue-based participation by the community to co-create model solutions and share learning with others to generate impact at scale.

W4P India has co-created several social innovation tools and platforms with the communities based on the values of mutual participation, creativity and collective decision making. Regional Entrepreneurship Coalition is one such multi-stakeholder learning and action platform for co-creating solutions and facilitating convergent action for entrepreneurship led job creation. In the past few years and especially since COVID19, it has emerged as a platform to co-create relevant and viable solutions for entrepreneurship. As part of its growth, the platform is also being transferred to other partners of DA and is being replicated in different geographies with diverse entrepreneurship ecosystems. Two such coalitions were conducted during February’ 2021 - one under W4P India program (in Bhadohi, Mirzapur) and one which was transferred to PRADAN under the UN-WOMEN Second Education project (in Bihar).

In Bhadohi, 16+ stakeholders participated in the virtual discussion which aimed at exploring convergence between inter-district organisations, government institutions and other stakeholders to increase support for entrepreneurship and create sustainable and equitable livelihood opportunities through entrepreneurship. The stakeholders included District Industry Commissioner, representatives from HDFC Microfinance, LDM, NRLM, Hindustan Unilever Microfinances, FPO organisations etc. The key highlights from the discussion were how microfinance loans have seen good returns post pandemic and how coalition as a platform has helped mitigating the impact of the pandemic by joining various organizations – government and finance institutions together with the entrepreneurs. The FPOs also suggested that agri-value chain production and better market linkages would improve agricultural practices on organic farming. The need was raised to invite more and more financial institutions to the coalition to meet the growing financial needs of the micro entrepreneurs of India.

In Bihar, this was the first pre-coalition meeting that took place under DA's partnership with PRADAN for UN Women's '*Second Chance Education*' project. 10+ stakeholders participated in the pre-coalition, which aimed at providing a platform where an effective network could be created to provide synergies, uplift the entrepreneurs and disseminate business-related information to marginalised communities, especially women. The stakeholders included representatives from RSETI, RUDSETI, PUSA Agriculture Institute, Jeevika, Farmers producer cooperative, AKRSPI and PRAN. The participants acknowledged the idea of bringing all the stakeholders under one roof to support the marginalized communities. The key highlights and suggestions from the pre-coalition were the inclusion of microfinance institutions and banks in the next coalition, need for co-developing financial linkages, and forming partnerships with technology providers.

The Regional Entrepreneurship Coalition initiated with a vision of channeling and optimizing the efforts and resources of multiple stakeholders is now turning into a replicable model of meso-level collaboration enabling interlinkages of resources for creating a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem.