

# MINI TOOLKIT ON PLATFORMS FOR LEARNING

## ABOUT WORK 4 PROGRESS (W4P), INDIA

The Work 4 Progress (W4P) program of “la Caixa” Foundation aims to accelerate the creation of meaningful and dignified employment through the creation of platforms for innovation, action and continuous learning. In India, W4P provides enterprise development opportunities for youth and women in two regions - Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. W4P 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.



### DIALOGUE

Listen to Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives



### CO-CREATE

Develop Relevant Solutions Collaboratively



### PROTOTYPE

Demonstrate Sustainability of Solutions



### ACCELERATE

Mainstream Learning for Impact at Scale

## W4P OBJECTIVES

W4P innovates and demonstrates systemic solutions to create a culture of entrepreneurship through the following interconnected objectives:

- **Nurture constructive communities** through community led influence platforms, safe spaces for women, social enterprises, and awareness building through local self-governments and change leaders
- **Unleash entrepreneurial energies** through finance, technology and marketing solutions for entrepreneurs, network of information centres, and peer-to-peer influence
- **Build robust ecosystems** for enterprise development by creating regional and national platforms for convergent action
- **Mainstream enabling mechanisms** by sharing lessons and evidence on job creation through regional and global platforms

**W4P aims to enable decent work opportunities for a million people over the next ten years.**

## SYSTEMS CHANGE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To achieve the 2030 Agenda for transforming our world towards sustainable development, a departure from traditional project-based efforts to practical solutions is required for addressing growing and complex needs. There have been recent developments in adopting a systems change approach for complex development problems like unemployment and job creation. Evidence from these developments shows that stakeholders in the development process have been provided with the tools and frameworks to navigate complexity and strengthen their capacity for initiating transformative change.

**“The systems-thinking lens allows us to reclaim our intuition about whole systems and hone our abilities to understand parts, see interconnections, ask ‘what-if’ questions about possible future behaviours, and be creative and courageous about system redesign.”<sup>1</sup>**

A systems approach need, therefore, defies using pre-defined solutions. It is the core of social innovation methodologies which in implementation work to influence linkages and interconnections of the system to reach their intended communities.<sup>2</sup> It does this through activation of networks, collaboration, human centred design, embedding learning, and shared narratives. It taps into leverage points in the system, and creates viable and sustainable alternatives to established mindsets and paradigms, providing an inclusive and open approach for sustainable development.

**Flip through the pages to see a movement!**



<sup>1</sup> Donella Meadows (2008) Thinking in Systems: A Primer

<sup>2</sup> Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The approach thus has the potential for achieving development solutions with greater efficiency and scale, than traditional approaches. Evidence from successful initiatives shows that there can be new ways of organizing and operating to achieve our development goals. These new ways of operating, based on deep understanding, reflection, co-creation and collaboration, build constructive communities geared towards transformative change.<sup>3</sup>

**Work 4 Progress (W4P) aims to practice innovation that is social in purpose, systemic in nature and inclusive by design.**

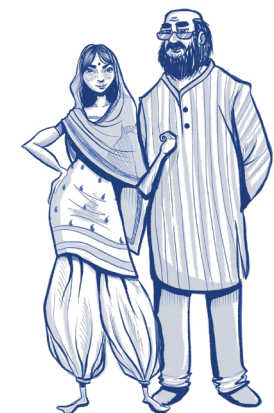
Development Alternatives (DA), through Phase 1 of the W4P program of the “la Caixa” Banking Foundation, working on innovating resources, processes and models, has had early success in the space of micro-entrepreneurship to provide meaningful and decent work for all. Stories are emerging of women transcending gender barriers to drive progress literally through e-rickshaws, the youth taking advantage of technological and market dynamism through information kiosks, and communities in general transitioning from being recipients of change to co-creators of change. Building on current evidence base and initial successes, W4P continues to strengthen its systemic approach to further develop interconnected solutions with diverse actors to drive transformational change at not only the micro, but also the meso and macro levels.

<sup>3</sup> Gorka Espiau (2017) Social Innovation Platforms for International Development

## CATALYZING SOCIAL INNOVATION AND CHANGE THROUGH DEEP LEARNING AND EVALUATION

Social Innovation tackles ‘wicked’ problems of development. The Harvard Business Review (HBR) defines wicked problems as social or cultural problems that are difficult to solve due to incomplete and contradictory knowledge systems and their interconnected nature with other problems of development. A social innovation approach establishes novel ways to use current resources, creates new networks, relationships and systems that untangle the web of wicked problems, bringing coherence to a complex world.

Catalyzing social innovation requires initiating systemic approaches. One approach is to instate a complexity aware approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning throughout a program life cycle.<sup>4</sup> Traditional approaches to evaluation involve assessing specific effects of a program according to a set of pre-determined outcomes. For social innovation based programs, evaluation needs to accommodate the evolving and unpredictable nature of complex systems. There is a need, therefore, to design evaluations and learning systems that are mindful of contextual factors being flexible, iterative and responsive to changing dynamics within interventions.



<sup>4</sup> Considerations for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in Social Innovation Platforms, JOSHUA FISHER, Columbia University

## WORK 4 PROGRESS (W4P) MULTI-SCALE, ADAPTIVE LEARNING SYSTEM

W4P is based on the methodology of social innovation, and aims to create meaningful and dignified employment. For encouraging innovative solutions and implementation, the program engages in dialogue with communities and entrepreneurs through deep listening, to co-create prototype solutions for acceleration. Throughout the process, the program builds ground-up systems of learning and evaluation.

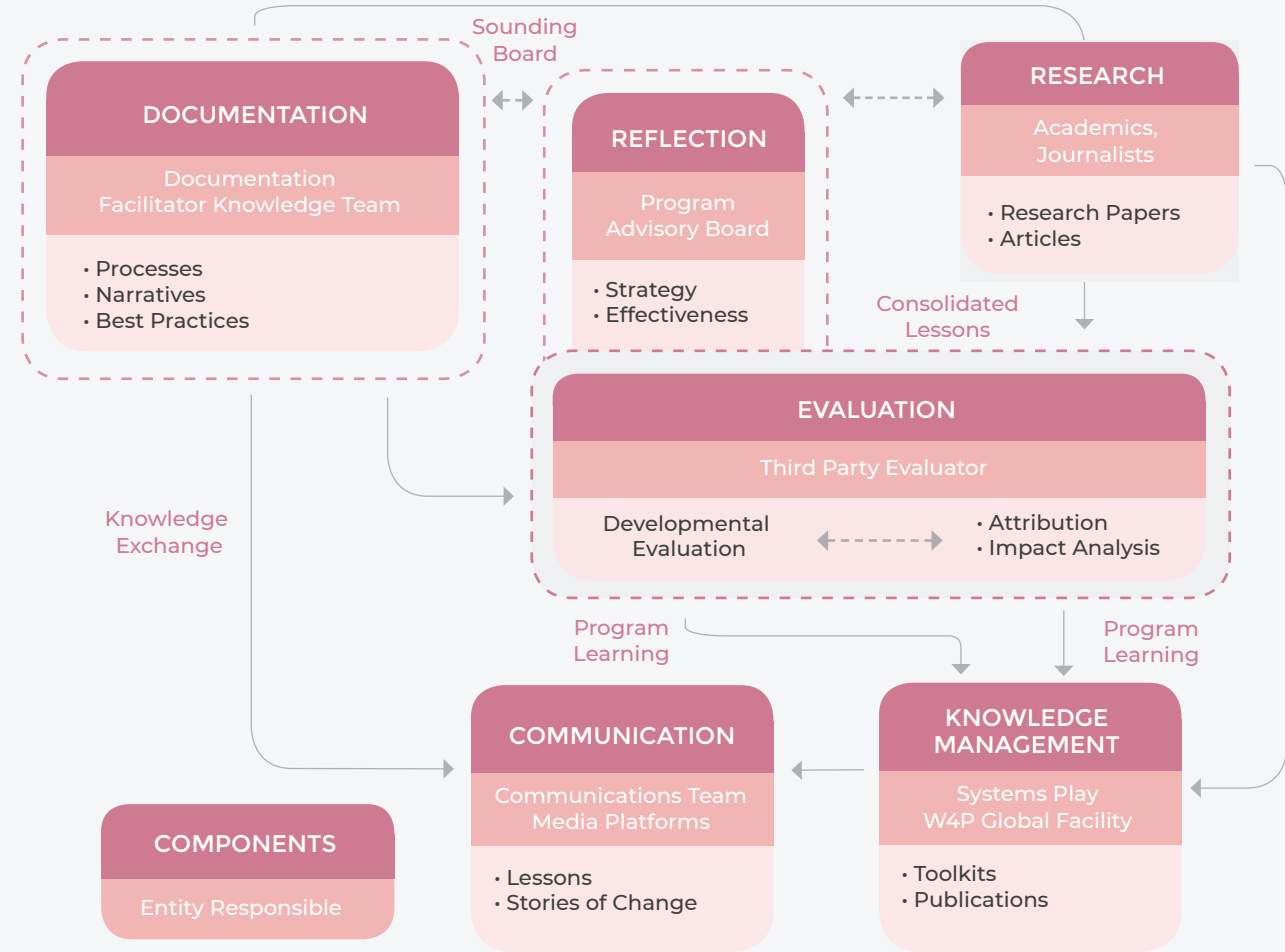
The learning and evaluation work of W4P is based on Development Evaluation (DE) principles and techniques of analysis, dialogue and reflection. DE has been defined as an evaluation tool that can help social innovators develop social change initiatives in complex or uncertain environments.<sup>5</sup> It aims to understand what is enabling or impeding desired change at different scales of the ecosystem, that is, the participant, platform, community and macro level. The DE tool comprehensively deals with many types and sources of information to allow enlightened programmatic decision-making and wider learnings for replication. For instance, teams can use the DE process to learn which of their current strategies work well, and to develop new approaches to adapt to changing conditions in the field.

**The goal for DE is to generate the most useful insights through a realistic and reasonable investment of time, money, and people.<sup>6</sup>**

Based on the DE process, W4P has co-created a learning plan that will systematically collect and analyze data across the various stages of its methodology of dialogue, co-create, prototype and accelerate. The analyzed data is organized into key learnings to aid in programmatic decision-making and knowledge creation for acceleration. The knowledge thus created, however, is not considered rigid or final, but being mindful of changing local dynamics is shared with communities, partners and other stakeholders, thus being integrated back into the system to initiate further dialogue and co-creation.

<sup>5</sup> Betterevaluation.org  
<sup>6</sup> Joshua Fischer, Columbia University

## W4P LEARNING FRAMEWORK



### The multi-scale, adaptive learning system of W4P has initiated data collection to:

- Identify key needs and opportunities raised during the listening and co-creation phases of the W4P program, and the current corresponding prototypes addressing these.
- Understand significant changes occurring for the program participants in terms of their socio-economic conditions and their meaningfulness for them.
- Understand what significant changes are occurring in the platform and identify effective strategies to adapt to emerging conditions.
- Identify the barriers to and enablers of desired change to enable platforms to design strategies for adaptation and response.
- Identify changes at the system level that can signal future change.

## W4P TOOLS AND INITIATIVES FOR CAPTURING LEARNINGS

### DASHBOARD

A monitoring tool implemented for tracking and assessing program process efficiency and performance.



### THEORY OF CHANGE

The W4P theory of change has been constructed and reiterated with partners over the course of periodic workshops.

### MACRO-EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

W4P works in India, Peru and Mozambique. In order to understand trends and exchange learnings, all countries are implementing a common framework to understand aspects such as barriers, enablers, needs and opportunities.







**systems play**

## SYSTEMS PLAY

Systems play' is a collaborative focused in the Global South, which is dedicated to building a community of praxis that innovates responses to intractable social-ecological challenges.

W4P forms an important part of systems play, and works on fostering collaboration, experimentation and learning for addressing the challenge of job creation.

## DAY IN THE LIFE

'Day in the life of' is an observation tool through which W4P has been able to build a deeper understanding of local values and beliefs.

## BUILDING MOVEMENTS USING ETHNOGRAPHY

Social innovation platforms involve building movements of transformative change. They enable this through:

- 1 Scaling up of knowledge and innovation across macro, meso and micro levels, where innovation at one level can be adapted and applied to other levels.
- 2 Scaling out of enterprises, innovations and approaches by reaching a wider number of entrepreneurs, stakeholders and geographies.
- 3 Deepening impact by addressing the paradigms, mindsets and behaviours across scales.

These movements of transformation aim to bring about broad systems change. To build these movements, firstly it is important to better understand socio-economic and cultural dimensions such as values, beliefs and practices within communities of action and the ecosystem at large. Secondly, the understanding of these core aspects needs to be connected to actions and interventions.

**Successful experiences in social innovation have been those that have effectively connected wider goals of transformation with local values and the community's deeper aspirational goals.**



## COMMUNITY-DRIVEN COALITION

W4P initiated the set up of regional coalitions in June 2017, with the objective of co-creating solutions for accelerating enterprise development in four districts of India. The coalitions include stakeholders such as aspiring entrepreneurs, skill development institutions, universities, government agencies, financial institutions and market aggregators. Over the past two years, W4P has taken on the role of an observer and shifted the role of moderating and organizing the coalition meetings to its members. This has led to greater ownership of the coalition's mandate amongst its members. By shifting control of the coalition to the members, the outcomes of the co-creation process are becoming increasingly relevant to the local context.

These local values and beliefs are shared by a particular community, city or territory, and are often expressed through collective narratives. If these leverage points within the local community are identified along with changemakers (individuals and organizations), they can be significant enablers for building a movement, that is, creating alternative narratives about their community and the possibility for change.

Ethnography, being the work of describing a culture by becoming part of that culture, would be highly effective in understanding collective narratives, as well as the possibilities of alternative narratives and change. For building movements within the platform and beyond, and for establishing systems of learning throughout the program life-cycle, W4P employs ethnography as the base methodology for data collection and analysis, supplementing its quantitative processes.

Using ethnographic principles and tools, the program team engages with communities at a deeper level, becoming more aware of local conditions, leading to richer feedback into learning systems. Such feedback combined with data and analysis at multiple levels of the community, field teams, management, partners and stakeholders, which is part of DE, has the potential to provide a systems view of interventions.

**In short, ethnography enables program teams to build movements by understanding collective narratives that act as mechanisms of self-definition, informing attitudes, behaviours, enhancing flows and, ultimately, aiding decision-making for transformational change.**

The deeper understanding of the field and interventions allows for re-framing of successful transformations to be understood as movements rather than outcomes. That is, it leads to embedding of new and reflective systems, building constructive communities geared towards transformative change where individuals feel empowered to act differently.

The basic principles that guide the process are around empathy, acknowledgement of biases and values of the program team, and learning about people by learning from people. In a nutshell, putting the tool into practice requires:

- A shift in understanding of communities from beneficiaries to co-creators in their own vision for their enterprises and local ecosystems.
- Building a deeper sense of what, how and why individuals and communities of action are feeling and doing at any given moment of time.
- Being open to disruptive change, leading to new iterations of interventions based on pilot testing and feedback.
- A balance between close interaction and understanding of communities and taking a step back to analyze changes and processes.





Given the highly complex nature of a social innovation program like W4P, the program is initiating processes to ensure real-time feedback and responses from the field, inclusion of voices from the community, entrepreneurs, partners, field coordinators and the like. The learning team, additionally, shadows operations and tracking meetings, conducts conventional data collection through interactions on the field, and holds learning discussions around the DE framework. Some of these processes have allowed the team to understand shifts within the system, thereby enabling capturing of micro movements.

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR UNFILTERED FEEDBACK

The W4P India program is testing social media as a mode through which communities can share perspectives and insights in a candid/unfiltered manner. This is bringing us closer to the field and enabling us to understand emerging narratives.

## CAPTURING MICRO MOVEMENTS OF CHANGE

Ethnographic tools, such as involvement in field activities, conversing with entrepreneurs and community members, videography etc, are leading to a more nuanced understanding of change. That is, the triggers ('**why change is happening?**') create shifts ('**how change is happening?**') and lead to change in narratives ('**what is changing?**'). We envision growth to happen when not one, but a coalition of micro movements, creates 'communities of change' - for entrepreneurship led job creation.

A series of 'micro movements' have emerged in W4P geographies. Micro movements are self-sustaining in nature. They empower communities to engage with dynamic socio-economic ecosystems. They challenge the status quo, and take forms that accelerate systemic shifts in existing relationships, attitudes and behaviour, resource flows, and local processes. They have the potential to build networks (between and within communities) and momentum, to create conditions for impact at scale. In the past six months, such system shifts have been evolved at three levels in the W4P program – between entrepreneurs, within and between communities, and in the enterprise development ecosystem of the W4P geographies.

Watch mini-documentaries on 'micro movements of change' on the Development Alternatives YouTube channel.





## UNLEASHING INDIVIDUAL ENERGIES THROUGH SHIFTS IN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

Meera Kushwaha provided part-time tailoring services till 2017. Over the course of 2 years and several business development sessions with enterprise development service providers, Meera is now managing three enterprises – a tailoring service, women care products retail, and an e-rickshaw service. Together, her enterprises are providing the latest clothing trend, quality health care products and safe transport services for the residents of her village.

Meera continuously keeps thinking of new ideas to diversify her enterprises. Her role as a changemaker is not limited to her household as she strives to create a better lifestyle for the residents of her village every day. She stands as a true example of how an entrepreneur can energize her surroundings.

## NURTURING CONSTRUCTIVE COMMUNITIES THROUGH SHIFTS IN FLOWS AND RELATIONSHIPS

This has been captured in the patriarchal community of village Bhojla where Prabha Devi, one of the first women entrepreneurs, has inspired women to come together and challenge orthodox norms that restrict them from becoming self-dependent. These women have created a support system for each other, and over the past year, five more women entrepreneurs have emerged in Bhojla.

Inspired by the strength of such a solidarity platform, 'safe spaces for women' are being created across 40 villages in India. These spaces are envisioned to bring women together – to raise their voices and advance their learning about themselves. Ultimately, safe spaces aim to equip more women to take collective decisions in starting their journey towards entrepreneurship.

## BUILDING A ROBUST ECOSYSTEM THROUGH SHIFTS IN LOCAL PROCESSES

Several support services for enterprise development have been available since 2015 in Eastern Uttar Pradesh (UP) but only a few have been working together.

With the objective of leveraging resources for enterprise development, a W4P regional enterprise development coalition was set up in June 2017 in two districts of Eastern UP. Over the course of a year and a half, the coalition in Eastern UP has connected over 200 aspiring entrepreneurs with support service providers, and over 40 support service providers with each other. Such coalitions are setting up enterprises at an increasing rate across four districts in India. Members of the coalition are growing every month and so are partnerships and action for creating decent jobs.



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THE EMERGING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF VILLAGE BHOJLA -  
A PATRIARCHAL COMMUNITY IN BUNDELKHAND

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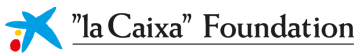


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Development Alternatives (DA) is a social enterprise with global presence in the fields of green economic development, social empowerment and environmental management. It is credited with numerous innovations in clean technology and delivery systems that help create sustainable livelihoods in the developing world. DA focuses on empowering communities through strengthening people's institutions and facilitating their access to basic needs; enabling economic opportunities through skill development for green jobs and enterprise creation; and promoting low carbon pathways for development through natural resource management models and clean technology solutions.



The "la Caixa" Foundation from Spain, the third largest foundation in the world, promotes diverse social, economic, cultural and ecological initiatives to foster sustainable development across the world. "la Caixa" has worked for more than 110 years in contributing to the advancement of society and the progress of individuals, with a special emphasis on those who need it most. Its main strategic objective is to provide opportunities and fight inequalities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America through programs that contribute to the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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