

DA leads the conversation on Youth Entrepreneurship at Livelihoods India Summit

Development Alternatives hosted a session at the Livelihoods India Summit 2022, New Delhi on 19 January, 2023, wherein it led the conversation on ‘Youth Entrepreneurship: Driving Micromovements of Change’. India with 378 million youth between the ages of 15 and 29 has the largest youth population in the world. Simultaneously, unemployment among 20–24 years old is at a staggering 43.36% — the nation’s highest ever in 45 years. Narratives from the ground present an avenue where potential opportunities can be unleashed with 44% of rural India’s youth aspiring to become future entrepreneurs and run their businesses. This leads to a question, how can these hidden or evolving aspirations be made visible through collaborative energies, including them into the purviews of entrepreneurship? With this background, the session broadly explored the following questions:

Triggering Behavioural Shifts: How do we build an ecosystem that not only responds to the entrepreneurial aspirations of the youth but also enables them to become agents of change in their communities?

Unlocking Innovation for Access to Entrepreneurial Opportunities: How do we unlock access to finance, technology, and knowledge in building pathways for a robust local entrepreneurial ecosystem?

Collaborative Action: How can policies be cognizant, inclusive, and adaptive to unleash young entrepreneurial energies and connect local micro-movements across scales and place them at the heart of local, national, and global discourse?

Leading the conversation, entrepreneur Rajkumar Prajapati, 29, who runs an udyame kiosk, shared his inspiring story of catalysing access to entrepreneurship in Poha Khas, Niwari, Madhya Pradesh by providing entrepreneurial support services through his kiosk. This was followed by a discussion, which was moderated by Mr [Shrashtant Patara](#), CEO, Development Alternatives and included diverse perspectives represented by Ms Lakshmi V Venkatesan, Founding and Managing Trustee, [Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust](#), Ms Shruti Kapoor, Lead, Economic Opportunities at [YuWaah \(Generation Unlimited India\) at UNICEF](#), Mr [Mekin Maheshwari](#), Founder and CEO, [Udhyam Learning Foundation](#), and Ms [Kanika Verma](#), Lead, Green & Inclusive Entrepreneurship and AVP, Development Alternatives.



udyame kiosk entrepreneur Rajkumar Prajapati, spoke about his journey of providing entrepreneurial support services in Poha Khas, Niwari

The discussion stressed that the youth's aspirations towards [entrepreneurship](#) are fervent. The onus is on actors at the meso and macro levels in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to pick up the ropes in building an inclusive and responsive ecosystem.

The following are the takeaways from the session:

- The question is not what the youth needs, because they have a bundle of ideas, but how do we, as actors, in the ecosystem support these aspirations of millions across the country?
- How can [entrepreneurship](#) become the first choice among the youth, and the ecosystem nurture these everyday [entrepreneurs](#)?
- Let us not make [entrepreneurship](#) another competitive exam.
- Entrepreneurial mindsets can be nurtured in young minds through [curriculum](#) and [practice](#).



The panel highlighted the need for collaborative action among key stakeholders to build pathways for emerging aspirations

This year, DA was also awarded the Development Catalyst award for enhancing livelihood opportunities over the last 25 years and more. DA is one among the ten organisations that has been awarded this recognition. Our major livelihood initiatives TARA Akshar+ and Work4Progress found special mention for the systemic impact it has created within communities for digital literacy and entrepreneurship-led job creation respectively. Additionally, IMEDF case study on Mat Craft Cluster, West Bengal was published as one of the top 10 in the Sitaram Rao Livihoods India Case Study Compendium 2022 on the theme 'Climate Resilient Livihood Models'.



(From Left to Right) Mr Shrashtant Patara, CEO, DA, Ms Lakshmi Venkatesan, Founding and Managing Trustee, BYST, Ms Shruti Kapoor, Lead, Economic Opportunities, YuWaah, Ms Kanika Verma, Lead, Green & Inclusive Entrepreneurship and AVP, DA, and Mr Mekin Maheshwari, CEO, Udhyan Learning Foundation

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The yearly Summit, an important gathering of development practitioners, is organised by ACCESS Development Services. Spread over two days, the Summit saw nearly 70 thought leaders speaking on a wide range of themes and more than 800 delegates participating from across the country. **Development Alternatives along with partners, including Transforming Rural India Foundation**, has been associated with the Summit since 2019 as a technical partner and a co-host. More information on the Livelihoods India platform and its various sub- initiatives is available on the website - <https://www.livelihoods-india.org/>.