

Nurturing Entrepreneurship through Developmental Evaluation: An Innovative Approach



Discussion with field team from Development Alternatives- Bundelkhand, Manviya Drishtikon Sewa Samiti (MDSS) and Swami Vivekanand Shiksha Samiti (SVSS)

Work4Progress is the flagship initiative of Development Alternatives in collaboration with the 'Ia Caixa' Foundation. Operating in economically disadvantaged regions like Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh (EUP) in Central India, it leverages social innovation to stimulate micro-entrepreneurship and job creation. To accommodate the dynamic requirements of innovative and non-linear nature of the programme, apart from the existing assessment mechanisms, it was advised for Work4Progress to adopt a non-traditional evaluation methodology as well, namely developmental evaluation.

Developmental Evaluation (DE) is an approach to assessing and understanding social programmes or initiatives that are innovative and evolving. A concept first promoted by Michael Quinn Patton, a renowned organisational development and program evaluation consultant, in his book "[Developmental Evaluation- Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use](#)". DE is ideal for projects in dynamic environments, focused on innovation and requiring collaboration among diverse stakeholders from various sectors. Unlike traditional forms of evaluation that focus on measuring predefined outcomes, DE is more flexible and adaptive. Due to the continuous nature of ongoing evaluation, feedback can be continually provided, allowing for ongoing adjustments to projects and programmes.

During the recent visit to Mirzapur, as a follow-up to the previous exercise held in [March 2023](#), a two-day developmental evaluation was conducted with the Work4Progress entrepreneurs, the larger community of Meuli village, field team from Development Alternatives- Bundelkhand (DA-BKD), Manviya Drishtikon Sewa Samiti (MDSS) and Swami Vivekanand Shiksha Samiti (SVSS). The exercise was carried out by the DA team with the objective to understand and evaluate the needs, opportunities, barriers and enablers in the entrepreneurial ecosystem for adjusting social innovation tools, processes and activities.

The first round of DE exercise was undertaken by the DA team on September 13, 2023, involving approximately 30 team members from DA-BKD, MDSS, and SVSS at the SVSS office in Mirzapur. While the MDSS and SVSS teams were physically present, DA-BKD joined remotely and provided valuable

input. The conversation centered on DE objectives, covering various topics such as technology, finance, marketing, and capacity building.



Interaction with Work4Progress entrepreneurs and the community in Meuli village, Mirzapur

Building upon insights from the field teams, on September 14, the DA team conducted the DE process with 10 Work4Progress entrepreneurs, including 5 women and the Meuli village community in Mirzapur. The gathering took place in a relaxed informal environment at the Meuli gram panchayat office premises. The team utilised diverse tools, including listening exercises and interactive games, to engage with the participants. As the session unfolded, both entrepreneurs and community members began to express their perspectives on the changes within the village-level ecosystem, consisting of socio-political, economic, cultural, and entrepreneurial aspects.

Subsequently, the team plans to broaden the scope of DE in the coming rounds by involving additional participants such as District Entrepreneurship Coalition (DEC) members, programme partners, and other stakeholders. As the Work4Progress programme advances into Phase IV, the knowledge and perspectives gained from DE exercise would contribute significantly to shaping programmatic decisions and thereby empowering the community to unleash their entrepreneurial potential and drive positive change.