



Virtual Coalition Meeting for Creating Sustainable Livelihoods

The coalition meeting for the Work 4 Progress Programme of Development Alternatives and la Caixa Foundation was conducted virtually at Eastern UP and Jhansi on 25 and 26 April 2020. Some of the partners included Rural Self Employed Training Institutes (R-Seti), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), UNIBASE, Manviya Drishtikon Sew Samiti, Swami Vivekanand Shiksha Sanshthan, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Bank Literacy, Fusion Bank, Sarv Gramin UP Bank, and Punjab National Bank.

In Eastern UP the Coalition focused on ecosystem building. The objective of the meeting included discussions on how entrepreneurs can recover themselves and help the community to recover back to normal in times of the pandemic, and what are the factors which they need to consider to re-imagine and re-design the ecosystem for enterprise development.

In Jhansi, the meeting started with a small presentation on how 'COVID 19 is impacting entrepreneurs of Jhansi'. Based on a preliminary survey conducted, results were presented which showed how enterprises are being affected by the lockdown. The objective of the meeting included discussion on how the network can come together to work on emerging demand and opportunities (Information kiosks, Digital payments, Home delivery), and once this epidemic ends, then what steps can we take in the future. The discussion also focused on how we can change the way we currently work as members of the coalition, keeping in view the social distancing norm.

Representatives from National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) suggested that there is a need to focus on group-based or big enterprises which can create jobs as many migrant workers have come back to rural areas are now unemployed. Suggestions were also made to encourage SHG and women entrepreneurs to run food processing based enterprises as those come under essential products. Representatives from the Rural Self Employed Training Institutes (R-Seti) pointed out that there exists an opportunity to sell products in set geographical areas to get rid of overlapping markets in this situation.

The Representatives from the Banks also suggested some product ideas of donapattal, handmade paper bags, bamboo products, two-seater/E-rickshaw, training to SHGs/post office staff on financial, papad-achar making/packaging. The Stakeholder from Krishi Vigyan Kendra highlighted the need for a new communication strategy due to COVID-19. They also discussed on the government's potential support for rural economies through farm-based interventions (agriculture and horticulture) and micro enterprises because of factors like reverse migration, the revival of the national economy.

In the end, the concept of the Enterprise Development Facility was introduced to the participants. All stakeholders agreed that it can be a one-stop solution as this can support the entrepreneurs and create more jobs in rural areas.