



### **TARAgam Mela and Coalition, Orchha, Madhya Pradesh**

**O**n 4th December 2018, the Annual TARAgam Mela was hosted to celebrate the success of entrepreneurs in Bundelkhand. The theme of the mela was 'Entrepreneurship for Job Creation and Empowerment' with the aim to explore approaches towards a green, sustainable and inclusive economy.

The Mela had a total of 25 stalls and a marketplace with 15 entrepreneur stalls supported by Development Alternatives (DA). The event was inaugurated by Dr A. R. Sharma (Director of Research, Rani Laxmi Bai University) and saw participation from neighbouring communities and key government stakeholders with a footfall of over 300 people. The Kaun Banega Business Leader 2.0 – rural reality programme for business pitch was launched at the Mela.

The Mela was followed by a coalition meeting of local government stakeholders and communities and develop an acceleration strategy for promoting entrepreneurship in Bundelkhand. This event concluded with the launch of an e-rickshaw enterprise for transport of girls to school by Meera Kushwaha from Kaina village supported by DA.

Here is a brief overview of both the events:

#### **TARAgam Mela**

Showcasing sustainable livelihood initiatives with local communities and stakeholders, this year's annual TARAgam Mela on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018 focused on entrepreneurship for promoting development. The Mela saw a large gathering of women SHG members and entrepreneurs, community participation, the showcasing of organisational development to concretise ideas into on-ground action, support to families of entrepreneurs in terms of children's education and the development of self-sustaining enterprises as its major achievements.

Bringing together entrepreneurs, practitioners, policy makers, local bank officials and academics and inaugurated by the Director of Research of Rani Laxmi Bai University, the Mela identified synergies for promoting enterprises in Bundelkhand. The Mela had a total of 25 stalls with 15 entrepreneur stalls and remaining 10 showcasing DA's innovations and services. Stalls by agri-based and food processing enterprises like pulse processing (Kependra Singh,) Farmer Producer Organisations (Sakshi Dairy FPO,

Newari), vermi-compost (Vir Singh), spice grinding (Rakesh Khushwaha) and tailoring services (Narendra Kumar). The Mela provided a platform to showcase the efforts and initiatives of entrepreneurs, who displayed their products and services at stalls.

In addition to showcasing entrepreneurs, the Mela showcased models, networks and programmes developed by DA that are key for enterprise development. These models included Hamara Gaon: Integrated Village Socio-Economic Development, the TARA Akshar Literacy Programme and Radio Bundelkhand as a community radio initiative.

### **Coalition**

A regional coalition was also launched at TARAGram Orchha as a multistakeholder platform to co-create solutions and undertake joint action for micro entrepreneurship. With representatives of key organisations like Bundelkhand University, NABARD and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, the coalition focussed on discussing Vision 2020 for Bundelkhand and its micro-entrepreneurs and developing a joint action plan to drive this vision.

The coalition deliberated on how local enterprises can be promoted by capturing traditional knowledge. It noted that focusing on the village economy by showcasing a product's medicinal properties, women's knowledge of cooking, traditional practices of seed production, herbal plants, traditional based foods good for energy and nutrition are examples of how local customs can be taken out of rural areas for dissemination to urban spaces. Technical tie-ups with agricultural departments of universities and DA were suggested to showcase FPO work on ground, ideate on improving the procurement system for farmers and for building agri-tourism. A need for aggregating platforms and quality control for effective marketing was articulated.

The coalition also discussed brand creation through convergence with trusted institutions involving knowledge transfer by "Lab to Farm" and "Lab to Market" models; branding local products as the Rani Laxmibai Brand to ensure quality and model village development through coalition partners. Stakeholders identified potential areas of work to be obtaining technical support from universities for agriculture and agri-based enterprises, accelerating hybrid seed production/research, capitalising on traditional crops like millets, leveraging Jhansi Mahotsav for market linkage and Saras Mela. It was concluded that regular coalition meetings at stakeholders' venue and mapping services of each coalition partner would be the way forward.