CONTENTS

W4P India Platform 2
Editorial 3
Listen 4
Co-create 6
Prototype 8
Accelerate 10
Highlights 11
W4P Annual Global Conference 12
THE W4P PLATFORM IN INDIA

The Work4Progress (W4P) program, launched in India in 2016 and subsequently in Peru and Mozambique, by the “la Caixa” Foundation, seeks to create new employment opportunities. The program operates as an open platform for social innovation, formed by civil society organizations, financing institutions, research and technology agencies, and public stakeholder institutions. This program is operational in 345 villages across Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand, and works with socially and economically disadvantaged communities, women, and young adults. Social innovation is at the core of the W4P approach and brings with it advanced tools and methodologies for key processes of listening, co-creating, prototyping, and accelerating. The starting point and an ongoing principle is deep listening, which lays a solid foundation for community-centeredness, innovation, and social change. A strong emphasis on developmental evaluation, learning, and knowledge building helps to gather insights, refine program strategies and processes, and pave the way for acceleration.

In India, the W4P program has two networks anchored by Development Alternatives (DA), which joined the W4P platform in November 2016, and ActionAid Association and its partner in Spain, Alianza por la Solidaridad, which joined in March 2020. The social innovation processes are at an advanced stage for the network led by DA. In August 2021, the network entered the acceleration phase with implementing partners, including Manviya Dristikon Sewa Sansthan and Swami Vivekanand Shiksha Samiti, and new national-level partners, including Transforming Rural India Foundation, Janastu, and Rang De. The influence of the DA-led network has begun to extend beyond these program geographies as partnerships are getting forged with other stakeholders, including community networks, state governments, NGOs and donors.

Central to the wider application of social innovation are the 96 prototypes developed till date under the W4P program in India, representing solutions that are tested in the program geography and are available for replication. There are enterprise prototypes, which are opportunity-driven businesses that cater to existing, emerging, and potential needs and demands of rural economies, and systemic prototypes, which are co-designed with communities and create shifts in the local entrepreneurial ecosystems.
“la Caixa” Foundation celebrates 25 years of international cooperation in 2022. Over the years, the foundation has forged strategic alliances to impact and transform the lives of thousands of people through decent employment, education, health, and humanitarian aid. The Work4Progress (W4P) program is part of its employment portfolio and brings a new approach of social innovation to unleash entrepreneurship and create jobs for women and young people.

The W4P program calls for a new way of working, which involves a network of organizations operating together in Peru, Mozambique, and India, to co-create, test, and develop prototypes that lead to job creation among women and young people. In India, the network led by Alianza por la Solidaridad and ActionAid Association has tested seven livelihood models, and the experience is already showing the importance of connections with the local stakeholders and the local economy. The network led by Development Alternatives (DA) has entered the acceleration phase, wherein prototypes are being replicated in the program geography and beginning to witness rapid transference to other regions through strategic alliances with the government, NGOs, corporate sector and financing platforms.

The following diagram presents the transference mechanisms devised by the DA-led network:

Accelerating a program that hinges on social innovation calls for exploring new ways of transference that embed prototypes in local ecosystems, create local employment, and further transform the entrepreneurial energies in the area. The Fifth Annual Global Conference of W4P, held in June, 2022, deliberated on the pathways for its acceleration and the emergent challenges. Through this issue of the newsletter and subsequent ones, we will share the program’s experience of transferring the social innovation approach for entrepreneurship-led job creation through partnerships and collaborative actions that are already underway in the program geography and beyond.

Prema Gera, External Coordinator, W4P India Platform
Community Listening In Post-Pandemic Period
ActionAid Association
By Prashansha Gupta with inputs from Devendra Kumar Chaursiya

The third wave induced by the COVID-19 at the start of the year was fortunately short-lived and the community dialogue and community listening processes resumed in the program villages of Bundelkhand program participants learned about new farming ideas from each other and through community-level meetings. The stories of Ram Kumari, Jai Kunwar and Raju Sahariya, show us how they engaged with the W4P program.

Ram Kumari – Mahoba
“I am a graduate and was working at Faridabad, but after COVID-19, I along with my husband came back to my village where we both wanted to engage in new farming practices, which are viable in the region and bring in more income. We sowed three varieties of vegetables in a single water cycle. Fortunately, we attended the W4P community meeting in our village, wherein a similar model, called as machan prototype, was discussed and we soon became part of the program”.

Jai Kuwar- Lalitpur
“I have been involved in agricultural farming for a long time. It was difficult to get a good profit margin by selling tomatoes as the prices would fall when sold in bulk in the market. I joined the meetings, where I learned about the right time of sowing, use of organic inputs, and also received seasonal vegetable seeds.”

Raju Sahariya Lalitpur District
“I belong to the Sahariya community and have a big family. I do not have agricultural land or any other reliable source of income. Migrating for work to other cities was the only option left. During the COVID-19 pandemic when we came back to our village, we attended a community meeting. It helped me decide to set up my poultry farming enterprise.”
Unearthing Entrepreneurial Aspirations
Janastu
By Micah Alex

For over a decade, Janastu has been at the forefront of open source technology for communities. Through the W4P Technology Challenge in 2019, which was launched by “la Caixa” Foundation and Janastu being one of the partners, ‘unPC’ called AsPi (aspiration pi) was introduced and built as a shared portable device for young girls and women to interact in a group and share their ideas.

Listening, a central feature of the social innovation approach, became the foundational process. Listening sessions were conducted in different program geographies of the DA network to understand the role of a technology partner in accelerating the program’s objectives. Janastu developed a media-making curriculum and engaged with a group of girls known as ‘Garima Girls’ from Mirzapur – the name is derived from UNICEF’s Garima program on adolescent and reproductive rights. AsPi served as an inexpensive workstation for women entrepreneurs to consider the gig economy as a viable means to earn income through creative services such as content writing, photography, etc.

In the ongoing acceleration phase, Janastu has collaborated with network partner, Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF), to employ technology-enabled listening tools. During a series of interactions with TRIF team and block-level executives, it was emerged that sensemaking is a key process to validate an idea. Then, Janastu started expanding on the idea of ASpi Cloud along with the ASpi Computer. The ASpi Cloud is meant to serve as a software service bucket for collective sensemaking exercises.

PAPAD, an app, which was developed in this direction, has been at the forefront of this movement. PAPAD is a low-literacy tool for archival, annotation, and fragment-sharing of audio files. With PAPAD, teams of listeners from the same communities will be able to parse through and share various conversations that happen in different sectors at different levels and in different places. Beyond listening and capturing the emerging and recurring narratives from the community, the objective is to employ sensemaking through PAPAD to unearth entrepreneurial aspirations and supplement it as a tool in DA and TRIF geographies to accelerate the program.
CO-CREATE
Developing relevant solutions collaboratively

Job-Creating Large Enterprises
Development Alternatives
By Shivankar Mohan and Mayank Nautiyal

In the current phase of the W4P program, which is focussed on acceleration, enterprises are pivoting towards opportunities in the entrepreneurial ecosystem by leveraging the drivers of technology, finance, and markets that allow them to seize emerging opportunities to operate at a larger scale.

Larger enterprises in rural India are mainly manufacturing enterprises that have been able to capitalise on lower operating costs in villages. Most of them are operated either by people who have returned to their villages, having gained experience working at factories far away, or entrepreneurs who bring value addition to local produce to match local demand. These enterprises are able to create jobs at scale often employing more than 10 non-family workers. With larger prototypes, we envision the enterprise-to-jobs ratio to go beyond the current two jobs per enterprise to nearly three to five jobs per enterprise.

However, such enterprises face two major challenges, namely access to timely credit (especially working capital) to produce at scale and poor rural infrastructure, such as a lack of pre-requisite skills of workers. Many entrepreneurs, thus, have to invest in the capacity building of their employees. When local entrepreneurial energies collaborate with skilling the human labour force, jobs can be created in the local economy to make it resilient against the irregularities of the labour market while also providing dignified livelihoods.

Support to such enterprises in the W4P program begins with deep listening with the community to uncover the needs of the entrepreneurs. Going forth, the program partner Janastu is customising its technology, AsPi, to deeply listen to and document ground voices. This will help DA and Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF) to strengthen the existing prototypes and build future-forward larger enterprises.

With over 25 years of work experience in the garment manufacturing sector across Delhi and Chandigarh, Jauhar Ansari decided to return to his village in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh in 2016. Within a year, he invested his savings to establish his garment manufacturing business. He has 65 automatic tailoring machines, which are operated by 24 full-time employees comprising local women and youth. Additionally, he also employs seasonal workers, who help him achieve the targets of orders received from various vendors. Jauhar’s business specializes in manufacturing daily wear, sportswear, and sleepwear for all age groups. The unit has 24 full-time employees from nearby communities.

This is followed by using co-creation tools and prototypes such as AsPi, udyaME Kiosks, Peer-to-Peer, etc., which enhance the engagement of entrepreneurs with each other and the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem. New opportunities in terms of access to larger loans and e-commerce have been explored. Cross-linking of the tools and prototypes forge interconnections between the existing prototypes and the public infrastructure in availing credit, accessing markets, procuring technologies, and other support services.
The W4P program participants in Bundelkhand, who are mainly women, face a number of challenges with respect to engaging with the market, including lack of information regarding markets, prices, small volumes for sale, and dispersed service points for accessing services related to input supplies. Many of these challenges are further aggravated due to them being women, who face additional issues with respect to mobility and lack of networks with key market players.

To create a bridge between women and the market, a Farmer’s Producer Organization (FPO) was conceptualized and brought into a legal form as a registered company. Through a series of consultations with and among women, it was agreed to set up an FPO that is completely owned and managed by women participating in the W4P program. The women stakeholders also established its main objective, that is, to provide a facilitative support system in which entrepreneurs from marginalized communities can flourish and can directly negotiate with various stakeholders and also initiate advocacy efforts for policy initiatives. The FPO has 10 all-women Board of Directors and 445 women members as shareholders.

Laxmi Devi, a member of a Board of Directors from Jhansi District, shared the collective thinking that led to the name of the FPO – BASANT. “The name of the FPO should be something related to happiness and prosperity. During the spring season – Basant – in Bundelkhand, we sing folk songs, celebrate budding leaves in trees and get ready to harvest our fields. This is something all women and girls of Bundelkhand connect with deeply and so we decided to keep the name as BASANT.”

As its first initiative, ‘BASANT will be procuring quality seeds produced by women farmers and they will be graded, certified, stored in warehouses, and sold to farmers during the next sowing season, thereby reducing their dependence on markets where quality seeds are in short supply and available at a high price. The FPO is also considering to provide seeds on credit to very poor farmers. It aims to provide end-to-end services covering technical areas and the marketing and processing needs for the different products of its members and serve as a platform to build the capacity of its women members for decision-making and to emerge in leadership positions.

Currently, the BASANT FPO is in its nascent stage and requires quite a bit of strengthening and forward linkages to become a profitable venture.
Community Goat Model
ActionAid Association
By Prashansha Gupta with inputs from Vinay Srivastava

During the COVID-19-led lockdown, a group of seven women from Sahriya community – the most marginalized social group in Bundelkhand – travelled on foot with their families from a big city, where they worked in factories, to return to their village Bamuhrī Kala in the Lalitpur district. They returned to poor conditions, where they had no food, no land, and no jobs available for them. At the same time, they did not wish to return to the city but had no idea how to survive as they were all landless. They belonged to varied age groups ranging from 26 years to 50 years, and all were illiterate except two who had attended school to get basic education.

During the interactions between community members and the ActionAid team in the village, Sahariya women expressed their interest in the goat-rearing model. However, the model, which is designed as a single family-based unit was adapted as a community goat model – the idea was shared by Sahariya women. The community model would enable every member to take full responsibility for all tasks in a day while others could continue to go out for their daily wage work. As they had stopped migrating, they also decided to admit their children in a local school.

The group of seven women received 21 goats and 1 buck as part of the W4P program, and after about 11–12 months, these gave birth to 11 goats and 9 bucks, who are currently very young and not ready for sale. A single adult goat gives a direct benefit of INR 7,000 annually, a buck gives a direct benefit of INR 10,000 annually, and each of them generates almost two quintals of manure per year.

Janki Devi shares – “They discussed that they all will have ownership in this community goat-rearing model, and the profit or loss will be distributed among all the seven members, so that they grow together.” The process has also helped the women to emerge as a small network supporting each other and empowering themselves to take economic decisions.
Revisiting Inclusive Finance for Rural Entrepreneurs
Development Alternatives and Rang De
By Ankit Mudgal and Debasis Ray (DA) and Sanjana Vengalil (Rang De)

Financial inclusion has been receiving a tremendous push for decades now and there are a plethora of government schemes. However, financial inclusion is still a distant reality; according to the sixth Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) census, barely 2.3 per cent of MSME units in India have access to finance from financial institutions, including non-banking finance companies and microfinance institutions. The majority of the MSMEs fall in the micro enterprise category and 78.2 per cent of them have to fund their enterprises.

Rang De has been designed to offer choice and freedom to individuals who need access to credit. Each borrower on Rang De has the ability to choose how much they want to borrow, for how long and at what terms.

While rural entrepreneurs may have access to both formal (banks, Mudra loans, etc.) and informal loans (moneylenders, friends, family, etc.), these come with their limitations. With entrepreneurs running small businesses often needing credit on an urgent basis, the red tape, bureaucracy, and other such issues faced while availing a formal loan, entrepreneurs have to resort to informal loans at exorbitant interest rates, which often leads them into a debt trap. Further, the loan products are very rarely customized to the needs of the entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Rang De, a peer-to-peer social investing platform to address financial inclusion, has come on board as a partner of the W4P network. Rang De has been designed to offer choice and freedom to individuals who need access to credit. Each borrower on Rang De has the ability to choose how much they want to borrow, for how long and at what terms. The entrepreneurs associated with the W4P program undergo a due diligence process of their business plan and financial history, after which their applications are screened and selected by the team. Once approved, the entrepreneur profiles are uploaded on the Rang De website for social investors. The investees undergo a financial literacy program and continue to get mentored by the team through the loan tenure and beyond it.

The current phase of the W4P is focussed on catalyzing systemic changes and enabling access to low-cost and timely credit to entrepreneurs. This aims to accelerate the overall goal of achieving #InclusiveEntrepreneurship through the inclusion of entrepreneurs who have been denied credit or excluded from the formal financial system.
Transference to Build an Inclusive Ecosystem for Entrepreneurship Development Alternatives
*By Debasis Ray, Roopali Gupta, and Suneptula S Jamir*

W4P operates as an open innovation platform to create a diverse portfolio of “entrepreneurship enablers”. DA has collaborated with three national-level partners, Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF), Rang De and Janastu, in the program phase to accelerate the process of setting up entrepreneurship-led job creation at scale through transferring systemic and enterprise prototypes using innovative tools and processes.

**Transference of KBBL in UN Women’s Second Chance Education program – Mayurbhanj, Odisha**

*Kaun Banega Business Leader (KBBL)*, a tool designed as a community business competition was replicated in four gram panchayats of the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, including Thakurmunda, Champajhar, Khandabandha, and Talapada in February 2022. The competition was customized to cater to an all-women KBBL, wherein the top five winners were selected based on the innovation of their business plan.

The competition received 156 registrations, proposing a variety of business ideas.

**Transference of Regional Entrepreneurship Coalition in Basti, Uttar Pradesh**

Regional Entrepreneurship Coalition, a systemic prototype, is currently active in 6 districts: Uttar Pradesh - Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Bundelkhand, and partner’s districts Lakhimpur Kheri, Bankati, and Bahraich. The coalition’s major goal is to create a multi-stakeholder platform that allows entrepreneurs and stakeholders from government organisations, financial and training institutions to take ownership and come together to collaborate on solutions for supporting enterprise growth.

7 Regional Entrepreneurship Coalitions are operational with 500+ stakeholders.

**Transference of Integrated Fishery and Poultry Model**

Building on the knowledge of the integrated fishery and poultry enterprise set up under W4P by Vinod Kumar Bind, in Lacchhapati village, Mirzapur; DA successfully proposed Godrej Agrovet Ltd. (GAVL) in December 2020 to set up and support 160 of these models across 4 geographies including Mirzapur, Chandauli, Bhadohi, and Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh.

Integrated fishery and poultry enterprise in Uttar Pradesh.
HIGHLIGHTS

The fifth Annual Global Conference of the W4P Platform was held on 29 and 30 June, 2022 in Barcelona, Spain with participation from all W4P networks in Peru, Mozambique, and India.

The W4P enterprise packages, systemic prototypes, and social innovation tools co-created by the DA-led network with communities have been officially recognized by the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission. The network partner Transforming Rural India Foundation will be engaged in adapting these in its W4P program geography in Uttar Pradesh.

Network led by Development Alternatives

+ The International Women’s Day was celebrated and launched a social media campaign – 7 days 7 stories – which featured two stories from the W4P program.
+ A compendium of 65 enterprise packages is now available including information about the enterprise, the business model, its market potential, funding sources and business financials.
+ In Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) felicitated W4P women entrepreneurs, Mrs Saida, an e-rickshaw driver, and Mrs Kanklata, a pickle manufacturer and aggregator along with Garima girls group with Letters of Appreciation for their role in women empowerment. NABARD also supported the launch of two rural marts with each mart aggregating FMCG and handicraft products from 30 W4P enterprises.
+ The integrated fishery and poultry enterprise prototype piloted in 2018 has been replicated across four districts of Uttar Pradesh with 160 entrepreneurs, in collaboration with Godrej Agrovet Limited. A second phase agreement was signed in June 2022 for replicating another 250 enterprises.
+ ILO Decent Jobs 4 Youth platform has recognised the W4P India Guided Tour of Resources as one of the three practical tools in YouthForesight, a knowledge insights newsletter of ILO.
+ With co-funding from ISS Foundation (Spain), a two-year project is underway to scale the existing e-rickshaw prototype and its adoption by young women in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. The project aims to enable 100 women-run e-rickshaws in the program geography.

Network led by ActionAid Association

+ A formal collaboration has been established with the premier Indian Grassland Research Institute, which is providing technical support and offering solutions to problems arising in the field. The special component plan of the government being implemented by the Institute has also been extended to W4P areas.
+ Towards capacity building of the BASANT FPO, a training program was organized for the Board of Directors in the Mahoba district.
+ A stall linked with the BASANT FPO was set up in three districts - Jhansi, Mahoba, and Lalitpur - as part of a program organized by the government’s Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Agriculture Research Center) in collaboration with the Indian Council for Agriculture Research and Banda Agricultural University.
+ Nearly 117 households who have animals such as cows, buffalo and goats were supported by services from the veterinary Hospital Khailar, Babina, following an advocacy program organized by the team in June.
The Fifth Annual Global Conference of W4P was held on 29 and 30 June, 2022 in Barcelona, Spain, where the headquarters of “la Caixa” Foundation are located. It was inaugurated by HRH the Infanta Cristina of Spain Director of the International Area of the “la Caixa” Foundation, with introductory remarks given by Gorka Espiau, Global Adviser for the W4P program.

After two years of being held virtually, the conference was a much-awaited opportunity for W4P platform colleagues in Peru, Mozambique, and India to meet with each other and with Foundation colleagues from the Department of International programs, Ariadna Barolet (Director) and Marta Solsona Masana (program Manager). The W4P India team comprised Shrashtant Patara, Kanika Verma, and Ankit Mudgal from Development Alternatives-led network; Blanca Mingo, Prem Rajan, and Shalini Garg from Alianza ActionAid Association-led network and; Prema Gera, External Coordinator, W4P India Platform.

The W4P program that adopts a social innovation approach for entrepreneurship and job creation is a novel one and the conference is an important platform for the country-level W4P networks to exchange experiences, results, tools, and lessons learned. The W4P India platform presented key milestones for the two networks led by Development Alternatives and Alianza-ActionAid Association and discussed the achievements and emergent challenges and opportunities.

The technical sessions were designed around key challenges that can propel the programs in each country towards acceleration. The network colleagues engaged in intense discussions around the following critical areas - innovative financing mechanisms and instruments, commercialisation of local products, accessing e-commerce platforms, and strategies for acceleration.

The Global Evaluation Adviser, Joshua Fisher, led the session on governance, and external coordinators from the three country platforms shared their review of the working of country-level platforms and the experience of applying the innovative developmental evaluation approach to improve ground implementation and make adjustments to program strategies and processes.
An important aspect discussed in detail was an inter-network engagement at the country level and making the W4P platform a robust one for collaborative action, exchange of learnings, generation of knowledge, and policy influence. In two working sessions, one involving networks of a country platform, and the other with members drawn from all three country platforms (facilitated by FABLAB, Barcelona), the participants deliberated on the ways of collaborating and further enhancing the impact of the program.

The closing session organized as a “fishbowl” discussion helped gather the main conclusions of the annual conference and establish challenges for the future. These focussed mainly on enhancing inter-network collaboration and forging strategic partnerships to accelerate entrepreneurship and job creation.

A snapshot of the W4P global program can be viewed here.

Conference Highlights summarized by: Prema Gera

Technical session to explore potential collaborations across W4P networks and country platforms.
INDIA

In India, W4P enables enterprise development opportunities for youth and women in two regions – Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Prototypes Tested: 96

PERÚ

In Peru, W4P co-develops initiatives that create quality jobs for youth and women in indigenous communities of Quispicanchi and Condorcanqui.

Prototypes Tested: 35

MOZAMBIQUE

In Mozambique, W4P enables decent employment opportunities for vulnerable groups of youth and women in Cabo Delgado, Maputo and Matutine provinces.

Prototypes Tested: 20
The "la Caixa" Foundation of 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).

Development Alternatives (DA) is a social enterprise with global presence in the fields of green economic development, social empowerment and environmental management. 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. For the W4P program, the network led by DA includes premier organizations - Transforming Rural India Foundation, Janastu and Rang De and implementing partners Manviya Drishtikon Seva Samiti and Swami Vivekanand Siksha Samiti.

ActionAid Association is an organization working for social and ecological justice. ActionAid has been engaged with the most marginalized communities in India since 1972. In 2006, ActionAid Association was registered as an Indian organization, governed by an independent General Assembly and a Governing Board. Together with supporters, communities, institutions and governments, we strive for equality, fraternity and liberty for all. ActionAid Association works in 24 states and two union territories, with several partners and allied organizations. ActionAid Association is part of a global federation and a full affiliate of ActionAid International, that has presence in over 40 countries worldwide.

Alianza por la Solidaridad is a nongovernmental Spanish organization that currently channels the effort and support of more than 50,000 people, amongst them members, volunteers, supporters and workers in order to fight against inequalities and contribute to protecting Human Rights in more than 19 countries in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. It’s member of ActionAid Federation.

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JOINT THE W4P GLOBAL PLATFORM AT www.work4progress.org