

**INTER-CITY MARKETING NETWORK FOR WOMEN MICRO-ENTREPRENEURS
THROUGH CELL PHONE**
(infoDev Activity ID number: 466-000317)
Implementing organization: Foundation Of Occupational Development (FOOD)
Email: food@XLweb.com

Summary of current project status:

Activity	Status
Preparation of operation manual	Completed
Visit to 100 semi-urban areas	Completed
Sensitizing the CBOs	Completed
Conducting orientation program for CBOs	Completed
Survey	Completed
Short-listing products made locally	Completed
Training program for the CBOs in management of the network and marketing	Completed
Coordinating the marketing activity	On going
Organizing regional workshops to create awareness	On going
Quality assurance	On going
Evaluation	On going

The "Intercity Marketing Network for Women Micro-Entrepreneurs" project was initiated in July 2001.

Out of the project target of 100 CBOs as on date all 100 CBOs have been identified and the orientation and training programs conducted for them and they have become a part of either the marketing or production groups.

The focus of activities during this reporting period was on organizing regional workshops to create awareness and share experiences.

FOOD has organized 20 regional workshops as on date, on our own as well as jointly with other agencies, to motivate the existing community groups and identify new groups that are interested in becoming a part of the intercity network.

The workshops were organized at the following locations:

- Alandur
- Cuddalore
- Vellore
- Salem
- Coimbatore
- Mettupalayam
- Tuticorin
- Thirunelveli
- Nagercoil
- Sivakasi
- Madurai
- Dindigul
- Trichy
- Thanjavur
- Pollachi
- Karur
- Periyakulam
- Kanchipuram

- Chegalpattu
- Mathuranthagam

The overall agenda for the workshops was as follows:

- Introduction to the project (video presentation)
- Key aspects: Self-motivation, Group dynamics, Entrepreneurship, Group perspective, Group formation, Leadership qualities, Group networking
- Practical implementation
- Self-evaluation by existing women groups
- Marketing by building social capital
- Brainstorming sessions with the groups and encouraging them to suggest changes, identify problem areas and come up with new ideas for the intercity network

To aid in the effective promotion of the intercity marketing network project FOOD along with infoDev had produced a short video program explaining the basics of the project and the benefits it had for the community. This video program featured interviews with the marketing and production women groups who recounted their personal experiences. This video footage was shown in all the regional workshops conducted by us and was well received by the workshop participants.

Another objective of these workshops were to sensitize the government officials on the project, gauge the local feedback and tailor the project to suit local conditions. Hence each of the workshops had invitees from the government departments as well as the elected local bodies members and NGOs. In some instances the participants were also taken on field visits to show examples of the intercity marketing network in action.

In addition to the regional workshops the existing women groups from the intercity network were also enthusiastic in organizing shanty's (meeting between buyers and sellers) wherein each meeting had about 200 to 300 women participants from the intercity network. The shanty's are conducted in an informal atmosphere where the women groups take the lead and discuss about the project and practical issues faced and suggest solutions as well as display their products for the other groups to buy.

Ms Deepa Narayan, the infoDev task manager for this project, was present with us during one such shanty and she was very much impressed by the enthusiasm shown by the women groups. One observation made by Ms Narayan was that the progress of the project was rapid and we needed to go slow with the addition of new groups to the intercity network. We have kept this suggestion in mind while up-scaling the program. However since the project has become demand driven and the women groups are highly enthused we feel that the addition of new groups at rapid pace though inevitable will definitely be sustainable.

Lessons learnt:

The project has proceeded as per schedule and the results obtained have been satisfactory.

One of the lessons learnt during this reporting period is that due to non-availability of micro-credits some of the women groups that wanted to be a part of the intercity network were not able to do so because they did not have sufficient start up funds. We are discussing this issue with the Government and hope we could find some source for micro-credits to the women groups.

The women groups' initiative of organizing shanties has brought forth one more lesson in that face-to-face meetings are encouraging better networking among the groups through cell phone. During the shanties the women get introduced to each other and later maintain these contacts over cell phone. Further during the shanties many women brought items made by their groups and were able to sell these products in the shanty itself. Suggestions for new marketable products as well as quality assurance tips also came about as a result of these shanties.

There was one more instance of a cell phone bill going too high due to more calls made to land lines. We have asked the women groups to restrict their calls only to FOOD's conferencing line to avoid huge cell phone bills.

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