

Making Market Work for Women and Youth

CCFC acknowledges that while investments through traditional development projects are part of a solution to address the issues of poverty, real sustainability and success are derived through a philosophical transformation that turns 'beneficiaries' into 'stakeholders or partners in development.' This has been realized through participation and ownership but also through sound business practices that build ownership through stakeholder investment.

The **Making Market Work for Women and Youth** Project will contribute to poverty reduction in rural India through the creation of viable small businesses operated by women and youth in Tamil Nadu, South India. It will increase incomes and enhance opportunities through self-employment of rural women and youth, leading to sustainable agri-enterprise development and building the capacities of small entrepreneurs. It will also become an incentive to enhance engagement with the private sector in development. Complementing the integrated poverty reduction programs of **Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC)** in rural poor communities, the project is expected to have a profound impact on the empowerment of women and youth, as well as reducing child mortality and strengthening the participation of local NGO and CBO partners.

CCFC and its partner People's Action for Development (PAD) have been engaged in alleviating poverty in India since 1972. In these communities, CCFC implements a wide range of programs in Education, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Health and Nutrition, Institutional Strengthening, and Sustainable Livelihoods.

The rural communities remain dependent on agriculture. Private sector jobs are rare. The livelihood system is inescapably connected to livestock. Surplus produce is rarely traded for cash income, as households are primarily subsistence. Economic growth is hampered by a myriad of barriers: lack of access to capital; lack of opportunities to harness the entrepreneurial skills particularly of women; and missing 'middle economic structures' such as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are able to link micro-producers with markets. Recent environmental threats such as climate change also have put farm productivity and livelihood at risk.

CCFC and partners seek to address these gaps through this Project. It will build capacities of enterprising women and youth to improve livestock breeding and farm production, introduce knowledge, skills and tools to manage small businesses, and link them with markets. It will provide start-up resources such as breeding facilities and breeder (parent) stock. The Project will organize them into aggregated producer units for the purpose of sales and marketing of their produce. As the program expands, these producer groups will be aggregated further into a Cooperative Administration Office (CAO). The CAO will serve both as a central trading hub for breeds produced,

and a marketing arm that will help the coops market their produce. Over time, new products and services will be introduced into the value-chain, diversifying the opportunities that will harness the power of entrepreneurship developed in this project.

At the outset, the small entrepreneurs will breed country (indigenous) poultry because this is the natural available resource in the community and is more readily adapted into the household livelihood production system. Phase I of the pilot will provide them access to capital and start-up resources. In Phase II, they will have access to Business Development Services (BDS). In Phase III, the strengthened coops and enterprises will have market linkages. At this phase, new partners---such as those in the private sector---would have been identified and engaged as buyers of the produce, or investors. To expand and scale-up, it is envisaged that the entrepreneurs would diversify into production and marketing of other products and/or services. The Project will generate sustainable jobs and increase incomes amongst the business participants. As a result of improved economic status, combined with the existing interventions of CCFC in the communities, it is expected that families will invest greater amount of resources into the health, education and well-being of their children.

CCFC has maintained a commitment to addressing the rights and needs of children first and to help improve the overall status of the communities in which those children are living. It does this in close partnership with local organizations and community action groups, through a participatory process that encourages entrepreneurship and ownership and, ultimately, the strengthening of household and community social and economic capital.