The Maharashtra Rural Livelihoods Innovation Forum 2013

Creating an institutional architecture that is both enabling and empowering for the poor to access better livelihoods and improve their standards of living would be one of the key objectives of the mission in Maharashtra. Such an architecture would allow a coalescence of multiple stakeholders including community led initiatives, civil society organizations, private/corporate bodies, state agencies as well as individuals involved in pioneering/innovative work. It is in this context that a forum for identifying, supporting and promoting innovative and scalable interventions is located and proposed. This forum would be critical for the mission as a whole to bring in its fold good practice and livelihoods innovations that are replicable as well as forge strategic partnerships with agencies and individuals in the state within the larger objective of – Promotion and Support for Innovations and Partnership Development – which aims to create institutional mechanism to identify, nurture and support innovative ideas to address the livelihoods needs of the rural poor.

OBJECTIVES

The MRLIF is a quest to find the most promising livelihoods initiatives in Maharashtra that are scalable and make a significant impact on livelihoods enhancement of the poor. The aim of the initiative is to create an ecosystem for social entrepreneurship and encourage sustainable, scalable and measurable livelihoods innovation.

- Supporting high impact innovations from Maharashtra for replication: Identify, recognize and support high impact, sustainable and scalable rural livelihood solutions from across Maharashtra with high potential for replication
- Focused promotion of social enterprises/entrepreneurs or inclusive businesses: Special support for social entrepreneurship models which expand access to goods, services, and livelihood opportunities for those at the base of the economic pyramid.
- Support to early grassroots innovations: Identify and recognize early stage grassroots innovations and provide mentoring and incubation support

Salient Features of the MRLIF

- Plays a critical role in rural livelihoods improvement on a large scale
- Facilitates continuous integration of livelihoods innovations across sub-sectors
- Focus on partnering with multiple stakeholders and agencies including social entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, the corporate, the government, development agencies and academia - by leveraging their respective strengths in developing viable business models at scaled up levels as well as providing incentives and encouraging investments in rural livelihoods.
- A unique initiative of the Government of Maharashtra towards strengthening rural livelihoods
Facilitate partnerships among different players: Develop partnerships with various stakeholders - innovators, social entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, business sector, government, development agencies and academia – to provide customized support to innovations to maximize their impact in challenging socio economic contexts.

ROLE OF THE MRLIF

(i) Organization of competitive, development market place type of innovations forums;

(ii) Technical and financial assistance for innovative livelihood activities identified at these forums through a transparent award system;

(iii) Special and dedicated support for social entrepreneurship development through setting up of systematic identification mechanisms, provision of start-up funds and overall technical capacity building through mentoring and hand-holding;

(iv) Support public-private-community partnerships (PPCPs) for product development, value chain and technology extension etc. in sectors that can benefit the poor the most, such as, agribusiness, financial services, dairy, goat development and other non-farm sector.

(v) Pulling together various strategic stakeholders from different categories such as civil society organizations, the business sector, the government and development agencies for supporting and improving livelihood opportunities to the poor;

THEMATIC FOCUS

The MRLIF will invite entries/proposals in the following broad themes related to livelihoods. The indicative descriptions of the themes are as under:

i) Social Inclusion - Innovations engaging marginalised communities and groups like the disabled, aged, tribals, dalits, destitute women, etc.

ii) Financial Inclusion – Innovations in financial services may include better savings, credit, insurance and remittance products that mitigate risks and vulnerabilities of the poor as well as financial solutions that increase efficiency and reduce the transactions costs for the poor

iii) Livelihoods sub-sectors – Innovations in agricultural, fishery, forestry and livestock management and may include improved productivity/production, post-harvest management, local level value addition and processing, access to markets among others, will also cover opportunities for employment and enterprise promotion and skill development in the service sectors.
iv) **Technological Innovations** – This category will include innovations in technology such as ICT, fuel efficient, low-cost, easy-to-use and durable implements and machinery and will cut across categories. This would also cover opportunities in rural energy and climate change initiatives.

v) **Media and Communication** – Innovative media and communication strategies and products will be considered in this category. Behavioral change communication, impactful and creative information exchange and communication, social networking and other electronic media, community radio, etc. will also be considered in this category.

vi) **Public Sector Innovations** – This category will cover innovations in food security enhancement, health, education, water and sanitation, etc. as well as convergence mechanisms that enhance access to and benefits from various government schemes and programs such as the Public Distribution System, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and others.

vii) **Social Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Business Models** – Special emphasis will be made to encourage private sector partnerships with community institutions by supporting social enterprises, fair trade initiatives and value chain partnerships with small and marginal producers. Initiatives working with poor and marginalized groups and addressing vulnerabilities will be considered in this category.