

Inception workshop on developing a comprehensive understanding on Convergence of Agricultural Interventions in Maharashtra (CAIM) programme

**September 22 to 26, 2009
Amravati**

Background and Purpose of Workshop:

The agrarian distress in Vidharbha region of Maharashtra for the last 4-5 years has been the key reason for farmer suicides and various other issues. There are various reasons for the agrarian distress linked to both, physical and social changes in the region. The suicides have been highlighted at various forums and the state and central governments have taken steps to promote special packages for overcoming the situation. However, these packages also have not been able to make any significant changes in the situation on the ground. The government of Maharashtra looking at this status felt that a strong convergence approach on livelihood promotion would be the only relevant answer to overcome the agrarian distress. With this focus, they approached the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for supporting this initiative. IFAD undertook a detailed analysis of the situation and came up with a comprehensive approach for working in the region. The programme titled Convergence of Agriculture in Maharashtra (CAIM) was developed with the following core components for livelihood promotion:

- (i) Institution building and capacity building of community
- (ii) Promotion and strengthening of SHGs and CMRCs to take up micro-enterprises
- (iii) Sustainable agriculture
- (iv) Micro-enterprise promotion and market linkages
- (v) Programme management. This programme is unique in the sense that it looks for convergence of various government programmes going on in the region.

This basically means that the partner organisation implementing the projects would dovetail funds from ongoing government programmes such as NREGA, NHM, etc along with the support from CAIM and the Trust. The Trust has been promoting Sukhi Baliraja Initiative in Vidharbha, nearly with the same objectives as CAIM and thus it was felt that it would be better converging the efforts with CAIM. The CAIM programme is a joint partnership between the government of Maharashtra, IFAD and the Trust towards overcoming the agrarian distress in Vidharbha. The initial process of shortlisting the probable NGOs for partnering in the programme has already been done and some 35 organisations have been shortlisted. It is strongly felt that these shortlisted organisations need to understand each and every aspect of CAIM in the initial period itself, so that when they actually compete for the sub-projects on different livelihood interventions, the quality is ensured. The sub-projects, which would be looking at end-to-end solutions for the livelihood activity, would be developed by the partner organisations and submitted to the PMU for formal approvals. With the objective that each organisation needs to understand each and every aspect of CAIM, an inception workshop is being planned from August 17 - 21, 2009. Collectives for Integrated Livelihood Initiatives (CINI), which has been involved in framing the SBI, would be the facilitating organisation for the workshop. The key objectives of the 5 days workshop are:

- (i) To develop a comprehensive understanding about CAIM programme among the proposed implementing organisations
- (ii) Ensuring implementing organisations thoroughly understand each sub-component of CAIM and enable them to develop the end-to-end sub-projects to be implemented with the rural communities for livelihood promotion.

To achieve the above objectives, the inception workshop has been framed with the following key activities:

- (i) Developing detailed sessions/modules for each sub-component of CAIM
- (ii) Finalising the resource persons involved in facilitating the workshop
- (iii) Invitation to shortlisted organisations to attend the workshop
- (iv) Developing the resource material on CAIM to be shared with the organisations
- (v) Developing a format/structure on sub-projects, which could be used by partner organisations in submitting the specific sub-projects. The workshop would be focusing more on the market angle, as CAIM itself looks at market being the main player in promoting livelihoods in the region. There would be experts from each sector to provide strong guidance on the programme and developing sub-projects. The outcome of the inception

workshop would be that CAIM would get 15-20 good quality sub-projects for the different sub-components. These would be evaluated and formally approved to be initiated in year one. Each partner organisation would understand the nitty-gritty of CAIM and work jointly towards strengthening the same.

CAIM overall is a very well thought out programme, which looks at market being the major resource for development. Such an innovative programme would need intense involvement of various stakeholders to make it a success. It is thus, important to make everybody involved understand all the aspects of the programme. The inception workshop for 5 days is one such step towards a comprehensive understanding development of all players. This is an important component as the intensive participatory discussions would actually demystify the different facets about CAIM and its sub-projects. Thus, it is felt that as the Trust is closely involved in the programme, supporting the inception workshop is very important to develop the ground for quality field projects.