



Unearthing Rural Entrepreneurship: SVEP Festival Mela Initiative

Venue: Jogniya Mata Temple Complex, Begun
Dates: 10th to 18th October, 2018
Organised by: Block Resource Centre, Begun



INTRODUCTION

One of the primary objectives of Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme is to foster robust village economies by empowering the rural poor to start their own micro enterprises. One of the core target groups of the programme is the first generation entrepreneurs in rural India. The Block Resource Centre for Enterprise Promotion (BRC-EP), established at the block level under SVEP, facilitates entrepreneurship among the most economically backward communities through the active Community Based Organisations in Begun.

Aspiring to become a centre for all rural entrepreneurship needs, BRC-EP provides various vital services for an entrepreneur's growth by entering into a contract with trained local Micro Enterprise Consultants (MECs). MECs engage in a variety of entrepreneurship facilitation activities in Begun. Leveraging local economic opportunities to the advantage of the SVEP beneficiaries is one such service provided by the MECs.

Ekta MEC Group in Begun working for the BRC-EP has set out to take advantage of the numerous religious festivals and *melas* which take place in Begun block throughout the year. Temples are centres of culture where people come together in Rajasthan and the major temples situated in Begun attract huge crowds during their festive seasons and is an economic opportunity for the local entrepreneurs. The recently concluded SVEP Festival Mela conducted in Jogniya Mata Temple complex during the Navratri festival was one of the first attempts by the MEC Group to organise a local festival market for SVEP entrepreneurs.

MELA PREPARATIONS AND BRC SUPPORT

Planning and management of the festival market were under the supervision of the BRC and was executed by Ekta MEC Group. The MEC group formed a Festival Market Organising Team of four MECs who took the collective responsibility of ensuring good locations within the temple complex for an SVEP market during the busy festival period. Marketing plan, stock and store management by the entrepreneurs, accounting support, café management support, and market space decoration were led by this team and they were stationed in the market throughout the nine-day festival.

In the past two years since the MECs completed their training, such a marketing initiative was the first of its kind. Naturally, the challenges they faced were many. The apprehension of their clients regarding the scope of revenue generation from the activity was the first major challenge as the MECs had little evidence from their past engagements to promise specific sales volumes. Poor entrepreneur turn-out presented a tough challenge in the planning phase. 13 entrepreneurs were finally engaged in the market even though the MEC group had initially anticipated at least 25 participants.



Stalls provided by BRC to the participants

Behind the Scene...

The Micro Enterprise Consultants had a difficult time convincing the entrepreneurs to participate in the mela.

The BRC even agreed to bear the cost of stall arrangements to encourage the entrepreneurs.

The Ekta MEC Group finally commenced the nine-day festival market on 10th October, 2018. After the initial days of moderate sales, the market revenue slowly picked up towards the middle before stabilising towards the end of the *mela*. The market generated more than expected sales turnover, becoming a huge financial success for the participating entrepreneurs.



Manni Bai's Fruits and Vegetables Stall

“When the MEC first spoke to me over phone regarding the opportunity to set up a Fruit and Vegetable stall in Jogniya Mata temple for the mela, I declined the offer as I never realised the scope for it there. This mela has been an eye-opener for me. I will never miss a chance to participate in such melas from now on. The experience of seeing MECs manage the whole market gives me great confidence.”

- Manni Bai
Participating entrepreneur

The *mela* provided the MEC Group with much-needed confidence and tangible benefits to participating entrepreneurs which will ensure that this will only be the first of many such interventions.



Night crowd at the 24x7 SVEP Cafe

24x7 SVEP Cafes!

The nine-day festival saw sustained crowd round the clock and hence SVEP Cafes became a 24x7 hangout space for the devotees!

PARTICIPATING ENTERPRISES

Table 3.1: Type of Participating Enterprises in SVEP festival market, Jogniya Mata

Type of Enterprises Participating	No. of Stalls
SVEP Cafés	2
Tea and Snacks	3
Optical Stores	2
Fruits and Vegetable Stalls	2
SVEP Stall by MECs	1
Tent House Services	1
Total	11

Table 3.2: Existing SVEP Enterprises in Jogniya Mata

Existing SVEP Enterprises in Jogniya Mata	No. of Enterprises
Ritual/Pooja Supplies	5
Shringar/Fancy Store	4
Portraits and Wallpaper Stalls	2
Groundnut Peddling	1
Total	12

13 enterprises participated in the market, in which three enterprises provided their stocks for the SVEP Stall managed by the MECs for marketing SVEP products. However, the larger impact of SVEP in Jogniya Mata is reflected in the SVEP supported enterprises which operate within the temple complex during other periods of the year as well from their permanent spaces. These existing stalls registered three times the sales turnover attained by the SVEP festival market stalls as they are established in the most crowded locations inside the complex.

"I am from Palanpura village. MEC had advised me to start a year-round store in Jogniya Mata temple to sell items of ritual offering when she came to my SHG. She also helped us in getting a CEF loan.

The festival seasons offer a great boost to all enterprises operating here. And it is a matter of great joy to see our MECs taking this opportunity to a larger community of rural poor who would otherwise never take advantage of such temple festivals."

- Sugana Bai
SVEP Entrepreneur with a regular stall in Jogniya Mata



Seating facility outside a SVEP Cafe with a total seating capacity of 50.

Interesting Fact...

Permanent eateries in the immediate vicinity of the SVEP market posed huge competition to the SVEP Cafes.

However, MECs edged out the competition using a simple technique: By providing superior seating facilities at their Cafes.

FINANCIAL SUCCESS OF THE MARKET

The sales turnover during the festival market exceeded the expectations of the MECs. The SVEP enterprises operating regularly from the temple complex during non-mela periods made an average profit of Rs. 13,777 during the 10-day period. The other SVEP enterprises which participated in the mela recorded an average profit for Rs. 9,626. The table below summarises the revenue generated by the festival market.

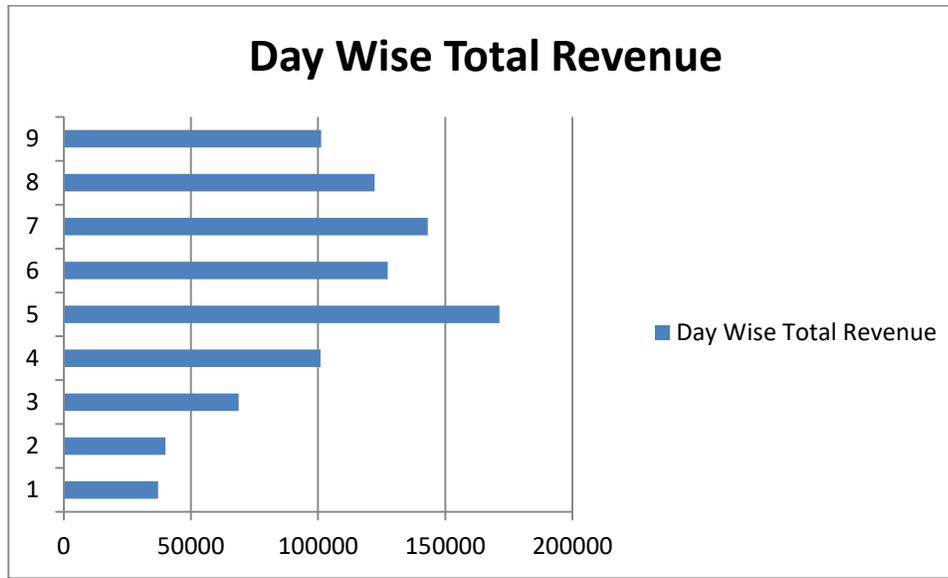
Table 4.1: Total sales during the festival by SVEP support

Sales Figures	
No. of participating Enterprises	13
Total turnover in the stalls	Rs. 2,73,595
No. of Existing SVEP Enterprises	12
Total turnover in existing stores	Rs. 6,38,400
Total Sales	Rs. 9,11,995

“When the MEC Group first suggested the idea of conducting a festival mela, we encouraged them as we saw this is as an opportunity for them to gain some new experience. But the financial success of the initiative exceeded all our expectations! From this light, henceforth, BRC shall not bear any costs of organising festival markets. The revenues are considerable enough for the entrepreneurs to bear all costs. I wish Ekta MEC Group well for all their future initiatives.”

- Rani Jain
President, BRC Management Committee, Begun

Figure 4.1: Day wise total and average sales



Day	Total Revenue (in Rs.)
1	37,110
2	39,920
3	68,745
4	1,00,955
5	1,71,335
6	1,27,350
7	1,43,090
8	1,22,260
9	1,01,230

The market plan played a vital role in ensuring large sales turnover. SVEP cafes were strategically positioned in the market and offered good ambience and convenient seating facilities. The other stalls greatly benefited from the large crowds attracted by the cafes.



Manju, SVEP Mentor (Extreme left), with the Market Organising Team members: Krishna (Extreme Right), Asha Sharma (Second from right) and Rethna (Third from left) in front of the MEC managed SVEP stall.

Festival Market Organising Team

The Festival Market Organising Team ensured the success of the mela. The team of four was given the responsibility of organising the mela by Ekta MEC Group.

Managing the 24x7 mela posed a huge challenge to the team, but they managed well despite their inexperience. Support provided by the SVEP mentor of Begun block, Manju Sreekandan to the team was also crucial.

Table 4.2: Day wise sales figures in individual enterprises

Business	Total Sales									
	10-10-2018	11-10-2018	12-10-2018	13-10-2018	14-10-2018	15-10-2018	16-10-2018	17-10-2018	18-10-2018	Total
SVEP Enterprises which participated during the mela period										
Tent House Service	5635	860	3170	3445	10300	4500	2720	10850	15920	57,400
SVEP Café	150	300	320	2230	5620	13500	11400	10200	8670	52,390
SVEP Café	1000	1700	2000	4200	7200	4500	6300	7800	15920	50,620
Optical Store and Gents Accessories	400	1000	2200	3000	8000	6000	5000	5000	1000	31,600
Optical Store	500	760	1680	3700	7800	4170	6300	5200	1200	31,310
Tea and Snacks Centre	0	0	50	180	3700	5600	2300	2100	0	13,930
Tea and Snacks Centre	150	500	450	900	3500	3000	1100	4000	150	13,750
Fruits and Vegetables Store	550	405	1295	170	1300	1500	1780	1500	1180	9,680
Handicrafts, Fancy Items, Garments	0	215	2320	350	1515	130	2120	600	820	8,070
Fruits and Vegetables Store	185	165	70	290	500	700	170	280	420	2,780
Shringar Store	40	15	90	90	900	350	200	330	50	2,065
SVEP Enterprises which regularly sell in the temple complex										
Shringar Store cum Milk Booth	10000	15000	10000	20000	25000	10000	30000	25000	30000	1,75,000
Shringar Store	3500	4000	9000	12500	19000	21000	17500	20000	6000	1,12,500
Pooja Items	1500	3200	8000	15000	22000	10000	20000	10000	5300	95,000
Pooja Items and Toys	4000	500	12000	10000	15000	12000	12000	6000	4000	75,500
Portraits/Wallpaper Stall	1500	2000	2500	5000	12000	6000	4000	2000	2000	37,000
Shringar Store	2000	1500	3000	4000	6000	7000	4200	2000	2500	32,200
Pooja Items	2000	3000	5000	2000	5000	5000	6000	2000	2000	32,000
Portraits/Wallpaper Stall	1000	1000	2000	2500	6000	6000	3000	2000	1500	25,000
Shringar Store	1000	1500	1000	2500	3500	600	2000	3000	1000	16,100
Pooja Items and Toys	1000	700	800	1200	3000	2500	3500	1500	800	15,000
Ground Nut Selling	500	1000	800	5700	2000	300	500	500	300	11,600
Pooja Items	500	600	1000	2000	2500	3000	1000	400	500	11,500
Total Sales	37,110	39,920	68,745	1,00,955	1,71,335	1,27,350	1,43,090	1,22,260	1,01,230	9,11,995

LEARNINGS AND FUTURE PLAN

The success of the festival market was a moment of realisation for Ekta MEC Group. The economic opportunity of festivals in Begun was established and the MECs now see a source of additional income outside of SVEP funds by charging a fee from the entrepreneurs for festival market facilitation and management.

Further, MECs have decided to use festival markets to provide seasonal monetary benefits to their clients who do not perform well as per the monthly performance tracking undertaken by them. Yet another major outcome was the generation of tangible financial benefits for the entrepreneurs who participate in the SVEP festival markets. MECs are now in a position to promise minimum earnings estimates for participating entrepreneurs.

The success of the market has evoked great enthusiasm in the BRC-EP. Possible future plan for widening Festival Market facilitation services by the BRC-EP includes procurement of foldable stalls which can be rented out to SVEP entrepreneurs during such markets as well as to third parties. The BRC Management Committee, comprising SHG representatives, has also decided to not bear any costs for future festival market initiatives as the well-planned market facilitation was found to be a sustainable revenue-generating model.

Differential pricing for services

Staying true to their vision of ensuring equal opportunities to their clients, Ekta MEC Group decided to levy higher operational charges from high turnover enterprises. The surplus was used to waive off the operative expenses like space rent and electricity charges incurred by low turnover stalls. Their conviction for redistribution ensured that all participating enterprises earned considerable profits.



MEC Asha Sharma, in front of Bharat Singh's Opticals and Gents Accessories stall

"I was really hesitant to take up the responsibility when the MEC Group asked me to be a part of the market organising team. I doubted the chances for the mela's success as I had never before organised something like this. But with the support from BRC and the SVEP mentor, I was proven wrong. This has been a great learning experience. Now, I can organise a mela like this easily!"

- Asha Sharma
MEC, Member of Market Organising Team