

Guidelines for Organizing SARAS *Melas* by SRLMs Under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – (DAY-NRLM)

Introduction

SARAS Mela is a scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India (GoI) that aims at providing SHG artisans/producers an avenue for marketing their products, understand the changing tastes and preferences of the urban consumers and improve their skills. The *SARAS Melas* provide an opportunity to the urban consumers to buy directly from the rural artisans at competitive prices. The MoRD provides funds to all SRLMs to organize two *SARAS Melas* per year. While organizing the *Melas*, the SRLMs are required to adhere to the following guidelines.

Guiding Principles for Organizing *Melas*

1. Nomination of a Mela Coordinator / State Coordinator

- (a) Each SRLM is required to designate an official as “Mela Coordinator” for each Mela being organized by the SRLM, who shall have to remain present in person at the fair venue throughout
- (b) For participation in the National level Saras, every participating SRLM is to designate an official as “State Coordinator”, who shall have to remain present in person at the fair venue throughout.
- (c) The Nominated Mela Coordinator /State Coordinator should ensure that allotted stalls are properly utilized by genuine SHGs and that the stalls should not remain empty before the end of the fair.

2. Constitution of Planning and Organizing Committee:

- (a) **Planning and Organizing Committee:** Each SRLM is required to constitute a planning and organizing committee comprising 3 to 5 members. The members of the committee may be drawn from SMMU, DRDA and other organizations supporting rural artisans. The Mela coordinator shall be the convener of planning and organizing committee.
- (b) **Responsibilities of the Committee:** The committee functioning under the overall control of SMMU will be responsible for:

- (i) preparing a calendar of Melas to be organized in each state in the cities/district headquarter including specific locations, approximate number of stalls to be set up and the dates/duration of the Melas;
- (ii) preparation of database on SHG producers/rural artisans in the state, their product details, skills and dexterity employed, volumes produced, quality, prices, experience in participating in earlier Melas *etc*;
- (iii) issuing an advisory-cum-invitation to the identified SHG producers/artisans across the state through the DMMUs/DRDAs and block panchayats;
- (iv) the advisory may clearly indicate the location and duration of the fair, the total number of stalls and the size of each stall/s, the range of expected products, suggested quantities of each of them, precautions to be taken for their packaging and preservation (in respect of perishables), weighing, grading, pricing *etc*. It may be noted that a Mela in a big city may be organized for 7 to 15 days, while in a district headquarters for 5 to 7 days; and
- (v) the committee may also involve other departments and agencies in the actual planning and organization of the Melas. These may include KVIC, NABARD, MSME, Departments of SC & ST Welfare and TRIFED. Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) has been organizing such Melas in convergence with other departments and other states may examine this approach for possible adoption (*Annexure-I*).

3. Identification of SHG Producers/Artisans for Melas

- (a) As far as possible, all SHG producers/artisans must be selected from NRLM database ensuring that SHGs/members selected are actually engaged in producing the products;
- (b) SHG selected must have demonstrated the quality of the products, their ability to produce and hold required quantity of stocks and have participated in the previous Melas;
- (c) The services of the district and block level staff of the Mission may be used to identify the appropriate SHG products, giving due priority to those that have proven track record of participating in the Melas organized earlier;
- (d) In addition, online applications may also be received wherever possible from the SHGs, screened and finalized (*Annexure-II*);

- (e) In order to provide a fair chance to all potential SHG producers / artisans including relatively new producers/artisans, a cap may be imposed on the quantity of products that can be sold by a single SHG/producer;
- (f) The SRLMs may also provide a small window of opportunity to a limited number of rural artisans outside the SHG fold to attract customers to the Mela, but the proportion of stalls allocated to such artisans may not exceed 10% of the total;
- (g) To promote cross-learning and inspiration for the local SHGs, artisanal groups from other states may also be invited to participate in the Mela. For example, Maharashtra invites artisans from Kerala and Odisha;
- (h) Further, suitable Producer Groups and companies may also be given an opportunity to participate in the Melas;
- (i) The final selection of products should be done in a transparent manner, taking into account the potential demand in the proposed location, season of the year, geography and cultural patterns and past experience;
- (j) Further, district-wise targeting and selection of artisans should be avoided;
- (k) The important criteria for the selection should be the mix and quality of products and the potential demand for them. The committee should select a balanced mix of products that would be in great demand such as fabrics and apparel, food items, wooden handicrafts, pottery, metal works, etc. Appropriate number of stalls should be allocated to each product category. As far as possible, the stalls selling a category of products should be located in one area; and
- (l) A dedicated team may be placed at State level to organize these Melas. The community cadres developed and nurtured by SRLMs such as micro-enterprise consultants (MECs), community resource persons – enterprise promotion (CRP-EP) should be involved in the organization of the Melas.

4. Location and Timing

- (a) The *Melas* can be organized in any major city/town of the state or any well connected peri-urban location;
- (b) The duration of the Mela may be synchronized with local festivals or cultural events;
- (c) The event should be organized around a time when the customers would be more inclined to buying such as post-harvest or lean season or school/college holiday season;

- (d) Since most of the shopping is done in the evening hours (between 5 pm to 9 pm) based on the region and the season, the Melas may be open till 8.30 pm and the SHG/ producer group members manning the stalls should keep the stalls open till late in the evening;
- (e) The Mela must provide for food court and small eateries, preferably run by the SHGs. The organizers must ensure that quality food stuffs are made available in the food courts;
- (f) Organising the mela regularly at the same location and in the same months every year also helps build the brand of the mela and leads to higher footfalls in the subsequent Melas; and
- (g) The organizers should ensure that the stalls in the Melas are zoned as per product categories – food items, fabrics and apparels, handmade articles/handicrafts, wooden articles, metallic articles, paintings etc. Such an arrangement will facilitate cross-learning among the artisans. Logo, branding and publicity.

5. Logo, Branding and Publicity

- (a) All SRLMs may use the existing logo of SARAS in all the state level fairs.
- (b) The duration, the timing and the products on sale must receive adequate coverage in print and electronic media. Advertisements, posters, banners, roadside standees, brochures, hoardings, pamphlets, radio advertisements and social media should be used by the SRLMs to publicize the Mela;
- (c) Entry into the Mela should be free and must be widely published;
- (d) All efforts made to publicize the Mela, including copies of advertisement issued must be documented and sent to the NRLM division of MoRD;
- (e) That SARAS fairs are being sponsored and funded by NRLM, MoRD should be prominently displayed in all publicity materials;
- (f) Other schemes of the MoRD may also be prominently displayed at vantage points in the Mela; and
- (g) The SRLM could also organise some game or lucky draw prize for the visitors who share their email ids and mobile phone numbers with explicit permission to receive information about the Mela and subsequent *Melas*. This shall help in contacting the visitors in the next Mela and shall get repeat customers to the Mela.

6. Arrangement for Participating SHGs

The SRLMs are required to make the following arrangements for the SHG artisans and the visitors:

- (a) Proper security arrangements in the Mela premises;
- (b) Proper toilet and sanitation facilities including adequate number of dustbins;
- (c) Safe drinking water;
- (d) First aid facilities in case of minor accidents/mishaps/ailments etc;
- (e) Local Transportation facilities;
- (f) A food court with a few food stalls managed by the nominated SHG groups exclusively for local cuisine/ethnic food items and for providing tea/coffee and snacks;
- (g) Banking facilities for deposits of sale proceeds;
- (h) Credit and debit card acceptance machines to facilitate digital transactions; and
- (i) Permission to hold the Mela from the district administration, police and fire departments.

Apart from this, the SRLM should provide support for transportation of goods brought for sale in the Mela, (both to and fro transportation), travel, stay and food for the participating SHG/producer group members as per norms. The contract for the food to be provided to all the participants may be awarded to an SHG or group of SHGs or a village organization.

7. Buyer-Seller Meets (BSMs)

The organizer States must take steps to organize Buyer-Seller Meets (BSMs) with local/ district/ state level producers involved in displaying/selling such products and district/state level line department government officials during the event. The Buyer-Seller Meets (BSMs) must be organized at least for one day at the SARAS Mela site only. Adequate importance must be given to the BSMs for making it a success, thus helping the cause of the rural producers/artisans. Prior coordination with concerned officials of the government and local/state level manufacturers and buyers must be made to ensure that such meet(s) yield results in orders/commitments, in writing

Product and Skill Development Workshop

- (a) Each SRLM should organize at least one workshop during the Mela at the Mela site itself to discuss the scope for introducing new products and to make improvements to the existing ones. Experts in design development and emporia representatives may be invited to the workshop. The workshop should enable the SHG artisans to understand the latest designs, tastes and preferences as well as the availability of machinery and equipment for improving quality. The idea behind the workshop is to encourage and promote the participant groups to come up with more market ready and quality products in future;
- (b) Workshops may be held on various topics like costing and pricing, packaging, legal requirements, market linkages, purchase of raw material, selling techniques, visual merchandising, stock planning, access to online market places, knowledge of financial products of banks through which the SHG/ producer groups can access finance; and
- (c) RSETIs, NIRD-PR and NRPs empanelled may also be involved in the workshops as resource persons and experts besides involving experts from institutions like Indian Institute of Packaging, National Institute of Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology etc.

8. General Areas

- (a) Competitions like best stall in terms of decoration, sales, salesmanship, orders booked etc., should be organized to create interest and healthy competition amongst participants;
- (b) All members of SHG/State Coordinators must follow due decorum at the event. State may ensure that names of blacklisted SHG Groups, if any, are not allotted any stalls nor are forwarded for the events organised by MoRD and other states;
- (c) Mela Evaluation Report should be prepared by hiring of any Research Org./ Institution/ students of the Management School / Business School/ NGOs during the event;
- (d) All SRLMs must send their final Mela reports and audited statements of accounts at the earliest but in no case later than four months from the date of conclusion of the Mela;
- (e) Visitors book should be kept during the Mela for identification of potential buyers and visitors to the Mela; and

- (f) The SRLM could also organise some game or lucky draw prize for the visitors who share their email ids and mobile phone numbers with the permission to receive information about the mela and subsequent *Melas*. This shall help in contacting the visitors in the next mela and shall get repeat customers to the mela.

9. Monitoring

To ensure that the Melas are organized as per guidelines, officials of SRLM, CAPART and NRLM may visit the venue the Melas without prior notice. Each SRLM may also formulate its own norms for monitoring and assessment of each SARAS Mela.

10. Report

Each SRLM is required to send a comprehensive report on each Mela covering the location and duration, the number of stalls, the products brought and sold, the day-wise footfall, the day-wise sales achieved and the item-wise expenditure incurred on the Mela. Data regarding the bulk sales, bulk orders by the SHGs etc. should also be maintained.

11. Norms for Sending SHG Artisans to *Melas* Organized in Other States

SRLMs are expected to adhere to the following guidelines while sending SHG artisans to other states:

- (a) Only SHGs/Artisans who are beneficiaries of DAY-NRLM schemes, and are listed on the NRLM database should be selected and recommended for participation in the *Melas*;
- (b) Producer groups/Artisans shall be permitted to participate in Mela only on the recommendation of their respective State Rural Development Department/ Nodal Authority at the district level and approved by the SRLM;
- (c) Not more than two persons from each participant group will be permitted (one SHG member and an associate). Preference should be given to women participation in the *Melas*;

- (d) Each participant should bring his/her photo ID/Aadhar Cards etc., and the selection letter issued by the competent authority. The participants selected should be physically fit to participate enthusiastically in the fair;
- (e) For participation in national level Melas organised by the MoRD or participating in the state level Melas organised by other states, the details of the participating SHGs, should be forwarded only by the State Government, by an officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary, to ensure the authenticity of the participating group. Proforma furnished directly by any other authority/official will not be considered;
- (f) The articles to be displayed and sold at the stalls must be the ones actually produced by the selected SHGs and the artisans present in the stall should be able to explain about the nature of the products, the process of its making and other related information to the curious visitors and buyers;
- (g) There should be no cases of any stalls being managed by others. Selling of traded goods, which are not produced by the SHG groups/ producer groups should be discouraged in the Melas;
- (h) In case any allottee is found guilty of the misdemeanour and mentioned in point g above, the SHG should be blacklisted from participating in any Melas for the next 5 years;
- (i) The participating members should bring the stock statement along with the receipt of the mode of transportation availed. The stock statement along with the price range has to be submitted prior to the beginning of the fair. The names of the Artisans and their product database should be forwarded to organizer/organizer States well in advance so as to enable them to make a plan for display and allotment of stall accordingly;
- (j) Use of plastic bags below 90 micron is prohibited. SHGs may use paper, gunny, cloth bag etc., instead; and
- (k) All participants should be strictly instructed to avoid bringing any prohibited item for display and sale e.g.; animal skins, hairs, conch shell etc., which may attract penal action under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Annexure-I

Conduct of Melas by Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS)

Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society(ORMAS) under the Dept of Panchayati Department has achieved great success in using the *Melas* or *Melas* as an important tool for helping SHG producers to connect to the market. Starting with 1,060 SHG participants participating in 6 *Melas* to account for sales of Rs 150.39 lakhs in 2003-04, the *Melas* have seen almost 5-fold increase in participation and sales of Rs 5453.20 lakhs during 2017-18, an increase in sales of 36 times compared to 2003-04. During 2017-18, 34 exhibitions were held across the state.

ORMAS has identified the need to create synergies in the efforts of various departments and institutions working for rural artisans. Therefore, the Mass Marketing Mission has been created under the chairmanship of Commissioner cum Secretary, PR Department with participation of the line departments like Director of Handicraft & Cottage Industries (H &CI), Mission Shakti, Director of Textile, DC- Handicraft, NABARD, KVIC, OKVIB, TDCC, TRIFED, ORTSS, Odisha Cooperative Coir Corporation, Odisha Bamboo Development Agency, ATMA- Agriculture Deptt., RBI etc. The members meet at the beginning of the financial year to plan the mela calendar where the number, type and location of various *Melas* planned for the year are finalised.

ORMAS categories the *Melas* into three types - Mega Exhibitions or Saras held in big cities usually capital of Bhubaneshwar and Cuttack, Big Exhibitions held in different parts of state during major festivals and District level exhibitions held at district headquarters. The number of exhibitions and other details in the table below will provide a better picture:

During the meeting, the participating departments pool in their financial resources, commit other resources including time and artisans supported under the scheme, finalisation of dates, duration, budget, stall allocation to the various departments etc. The policy guidelines are also finalised and shared with all the participating departments.

Each participating department pools their financial resources based on the number of stalls that department wants in the *Melas*. Currently ORMAS's formula is Rs.7500 per stall.

Also ORMAS's budget process ensures that the district level exhibitions with 120 stalls are organised in a budget of Rs.7 lakhs each. The amount spent on putting up the stalls is kept low to manage the organisation in the small budget. In smaller places, the stalls can be basic stalls and hence more of the budgetary allocation can be spent on marketing and promotion to attract customers to visit the mela.

Annexure-II

Maharashtra Online Registration Process

Maharashtra SRLM created a separate web site for the online registration/enrolment of SHG for the State level Saras *Melas*. A 15-day time period was provided for registration of SHGs.

This was preceded by educating all the districts about the steps to be followed in the online registration process as well the role of the District and Block level units. The district levels were also provided Unique IDs and passwords. The manual prepared for the registration process was shared with key stakeholders like the District/block/village level staff and CRPs.

The SHG members after the registration process receives an SMS on her registered mobile. The have to provide information on mandatory fields like SHG NIC code, Aadhaar No. and upload supporting documents like the copies of certificates, participant photograph and signature scanned copy. In case of food processing units, the FSSAI registration number and certificate copy also needs to be uploaded.

The product categorization was also provided for SHGs to select from like Food Court with subcategories like veg, non-veg etc. Food Products, Jewellery, Handicrafts, Textiles and Utilities etc.

The districts units conducted an online screening of registered SHGs. The clear objective criteria developed for assessment of applications ensured transparency in the entire process. The entire online information provided would appear to the district as a one-page form for verifying details provided and to check the attached scanned copies. The SHG applicants are informed about their status of application through an SMS. The next stage of selection process was at the divisional level. A similar process like the district level was done and the participants are informed about the status of application by SMS. The reasons for rejection of the application is also provided in the sms.

The State unit allocates the stall numbers and exhibition entry passes are also provided. The Districts and Divisions were provided facility to print the Gate Pass. The printed Gate pass comprising of major parameters like scanned signature of participant, stall no, unique user id and password (each finalized SHG is given credentials for website

and app login) was handed to individual SHG. SHGs which bring the Gate Pass duly signed by district or division authority, for entry at the exhibition.