



India Development Coalition of America

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Press Release

IDCA Organizes an Inspiring First West Regional Conference in the Bay area on: ***Working Together to Eradicate Poverty and Mitigate Climate Change in India***

November 29, 2010, San Francisco Bay Area: India Development Coalition of America (IDCA) organized the First West Regional Conference on November 20, 2010 at the India Community Center in Milpitas, California. The theme of the conference was “*Working Together to Eradicate Poverty and Mitigate Climate Change in India*”. It was held from 9 AM to 6 PM and was followed by a dinner with speakers and volunteers.

The conference was attended by more than 50 people from the Bay Area, LA, IA, IL, and India. Dr. Chaya Prasad, co-chair of the conference began with her opening remarks at 9:30 AM, then introduced Dr. Mohan Jain, the Trustee and Founder/President of IDCA, who welcomed the visitors and shared the accomplishments that IDCA has accomplished since 2004.

Welcoming the delegates, Dr. Jain remembered and paid tribute to the leaders of the freedom movement, and also to the social workers who are committed to making a substantial difference in the lives of the poor in India. Focusing primarily on the rural areas, Dr. Jain commented on the continued need for people with a heart and the time to concentrate on making a difference. Shared were the goals of IDCA to an audience of professional people some of whom had not heard of the organization before.

It was powerful to the audience to learn how many events IDCA has coordinated in just seven years. Annual conferences in Chicago, Washington, D.C., Terre Haute, Indiana, New Delhi (4), Hyderabad, Jaipur and Gurgaon in India, and organized seminars in the New York, Detroit and Chicago areas, was very rewarding information for both the speakers and the delegates, and very inspiring.

It was clearly stated that this was just the beginning for IDCA being active in the San Francisco Bay Area, and all delegates were invited to become an IDCA member and support its efforts to help eradicate poverty in India. IDCA is organizing its Seventh International conference in Gurgaon on January 12, 2011.

This First Conference brought together leaders and social entrepreneurs who work tirelessly for India's sustainable development that requires individual thought and dedication. In the keynote address of the First Session – **Poverty Eradication in Rural Developments** – chaired by Dr. Sailesh Rao. Discussed at the Session was the need for upgrading teaching skills, and programs that, whenever possible, required a small financial support from the children's family. By encouraging the parents to participate in the purchase of uniforms, supplies, textbooks, meals and a focus on learning English, the chance for success among the children increases ten fold. Speaking on this topic were Mr. Erik Kaeding, president and Director of the *India Rural Development Fund* in Fremont – (www.indiarural.org); Mr. Jay Sehgal, Managing Trustee of the *Institute of Rural Research and Development in India* (www.irrad.org), Iowa/Gurgaon ; Mr. Bhupen Mehta, President of *Indians for Collective Action* in Palo Alto –

www.icaonline.org; and Dr. Prabhu Goel, Founder of *the Foundation for Excellence*, in Santa Clara – www.ffe.org.

The Second Session – **Mitigating Climate Change** – began with the opening remarks by Dr. Bhamy Shenoy former chief Editor of *Catalyst Magazine* and energy consultant with UN agencies. The first speaker was Dr. Sailesh Rao, Executive Director of the *Climate Healers* in Danville (www.climatehealers.org), and he shared the success of installing of a new way to cook in villages that have no electricity, using solar-charged ovens, and how critical it is to follow-up with return visits to make sure that all needs of the new audience are being met. Ms. Anna Sidana, Founder and CEO of *One Millions Lights* in Palo Alto – (www.onemillionlights.org), discussed the global need for solar power. This is not only economical, but the removal of kerosene oil lights has cut back on illnesses that accompany this old approach to light – 2 hours of a kerosene lamp produces the same contamination as 2.5 cigarette packs being smoked. Dr. Mohan Jain, presented the work done by the IDCA – www.idc-america.org - a renewable energy team in partnership with Rotary clubs in Naperville, IL and Satna Madhya Pradesh, with *The Rotary International Foundation*, *The Energy and Resources Institute* and the *Deendayal Research Institute*, both in New Delhi. As an NGO working on the ground in the Chitrakoot area of Madhya Pradesh, IDCA is helping distribute solar lanterns in 40 villages, replacing kerosene lamps, providing livelihoods to 80 women in these villages, improving, health, education and livelihood training. Also invited to join the conversation was Dr. Robert Gould, the Founder of *Physicians for Social Responsibility*, based in Berkeley – (www.sfbaypsr.org), who addressed about the work his organization is doing to promote more energy efficiency in the hospitals and healthcare area.

Mr. Ethan Veneklasen, ED, from the West Coast Division of the *America Indian Foundation* – www.aifoundation.org – addressed the audience during lunch, with a great style that kept everyone's attention. The company he works with is the largest U.S. based company that focuses on India, working with \$8 to \$10 million annually provides help to organizations through Grants, and has spent a lot of time in many areas in India.

Mr. Jay Sehgal chaired the Third Session – **Poverty Eradication – Education**. The focus was on how individual, non-profit organizations have contributed positively in improving the opportunities for children in very poor areas throughout India. The first speaker was Dr. Nilima Sabharwal the Founder of *Home of Hope*, based in Hillsborough – www.hohinc.org – who discussed what has been accomplished in positively impacting the lives of over 50,000 children in India. Next were Ms. Nikki Somani, the Founder and President of *Home of Hope - Youth Chapter*, and Mr. Roshani Roy, the Vice President of HOH YC, attend High School in San Ramon – www.hohyouthchapter.org. Together, they have caught the interest in over 90 fellow students, all of whom are determined to make a difference with a primary focus on raising the money needed to help young children learn to communicate and read in English, and will initially be working with children in Oakland. Ms. Manju Seal, the Communications Director of *Narika* – www.narika.org – talked about the crisis that impacts women who are living with abuse. Narika offers support to these women on the Peninsula since 1992, and works with 14 organizations around the world, focusing on Asian communities.

The final Session dealt with **Poverty Eradication – Healthcare and Livelihoods** – was chaired by Dr. Nilima Sabharwal. Discussed here was how a small idea can become an immediate way to change the lives of the children and families who are being helped with the introduction of a new idea. This included a program to provide a valid option to early marriage for young girls, correctly identifying eye disease and preventing blindness, small financial aid programs and zeroing in on the skills needed to communicate in English. Discussing this in detail were Ms. Rupali Saiya, Founder of *Crafts of Hope* (A youth initiative of

HOH), from Pleasanton – www.craftsofhope.com – who talked about teaching young girls in the village of Mijwan how to crochet along with a sense of independence, provided them with the option of financial independence, and undercut a tradition in their village that had directed the lives of women for generations. Mr. Murali Krishnamurthy, Founder, Executive Chairman of the *Sankara Eye Foundation* in Milpitas – www.giftofvision.org – opened the imagination of everyone in the room when he talked about going into the villages to test the eyes of the people, and determining who needed surgery to improve their vision. These people were taken to the hospital for surgery and a three-day stay to make sure all was successful, and a return visit to the village was arranged to teach the residents techniques for sanitation. Dr. Jerina Kapoor, President of the *Pallium India* in San Jose – www.palliumindia.org – shared the success of ‘investing in rural india for a change’. Required is a guideline that deals with small enterprises that can demonstrate a need with the local audience. Mr. Murthy Sudhakar, Founder of *Infrasys* in South Pasadena and Bengaluru, India – www.infrasys.biz – addressed getting his business set up in India with a team of law firms equally interested in helping those in need, and creating a customized banking approach that requires low investments and a payback schedule. Mr. Bhalchander Vishwanath, Founder and CEO of *United Prosperity*, in Fremont – www.unitedprosperity.org; Mr. Sunil Savara, Founder and President of *Foundation for Life* in Bengaluru, India – www.f4life.org – talked about their technique to open the minds of very shy and undereducated children, and teach them to communicate clearly in English and how to inspire others. Their program lasts 3 months, and focuses exclusively on details that will make the child employable, and open their hearts to a desire to learn more. Meenakshi Nayar, Founder of *Etasha Society*, New Delhi – www.etashasociety.org shared information about successfully teaching children with very little, or no education at all, to learn Interactive Skills, and become employed in retail environments. The program is 230 hours, and once graduated, the students earn more of an income than the combined salaries of their parents.

Both Dr. Sailesh Rao and Dr. Nilima Sabharwal led the final 45 minutes as a brainstorming session, to bring together organizations and individuals interested in contributing to India’s sustainable development.

Upcoming IDCA Events:

On January 12, 2011, the 7th International Conference in India will take place at Institute of Rural Research and Development (IRRAD) in Gurgaon, Haryana – www.irrad.org. Conference theme is *Working Together to Eradicate Poverty and Mitigate Climate Change*. More information is available at: www.idc-america.org/upcoming.htm

India Development Coalition of America (IDCA, www.idc-america.org) was organized in Chicago in mid 2004 after a conference held in October 2003 to understand and promote Rural Development in India. It is a 501 (c) (3) Illinois Not for Profit Corporation. All contributions are exempt from Federal Income taxes. It was formed to bring together Indian American NPO’s, members of India Diaspora and institutions working towards India’s sustainable development under one umbrella. IDCA’s vision is: a developed India, free of poverty, ignorance, diseases, socioeconomic disparities, ecological disasters, and social disharmony.

Recently IDCA supported a Water and Sanitation project in a village near Vizianagram, Andhra Pradesh, and a Solar Lantern Project in Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh. We are also building links with many good NGO’s and groups in India to advance our Mission and Vision for India. We are a membership organization and invite all members of our community to support and join us.

More information is available at: www.idc-america.org/membership.htm. Media Contact :info@idc-america.org or call 630.303.9592.