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Inform, Inspire, Impact Poverty and Climate Change in India

Press release

IDCA Organizes An Inspiring India Healthcare Forum

Darien, IL: August 24, **India Development Coalition of America**, organized, **India Healthcare Forum** at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien. Speakers included: Dr. Khushroo Patel , director, Gram Seva Foundation, Northbrook, IL, Dr. J. G. Patel, sponsor, Sevalia Arogya Mandal, Gujarat, Willowbrook, IL , and Mrs. Chandrakala Bhargaw, founder, Adarsh Mahila Grah Udyog, Latur, Maharashtra.

Mr. Porus Dadabhoy, IDCA program chair, welcomed all and introduced the speakers. Dr. Khushroo Patel, made an inspiring presentation and spoke:

“Gram Seva Foundation USA (www.gramseva.org), was founded by my late wife Dr. Roda K. Patel in 2003. What she achieved in 15 years, would take me a lifetime. She was a Pediatrician by profession and a superb humanitarian at heart. Her passion to serve humanity landed her at the Gram Seva Trust Hospital in Kharel, India in 1995. The abandoned hospital was resurrected by a very dedicated, sincere and honest couple, Drs. Ashwin & Harsha Shah, who left their successful practice in Amalsad and settled in Kharel to serve the poor and the needy. It was at this time that the trio began their journey and the rest is history.

My wife spent 9 months in the villages and discovered to her great dismay that malnutrition was rampant. Unfortunately malnutrition causes not only physical, but mental retardation which is irreversible in those less than 2 years of age. To fight the evils of malnutrition she started Child Health and Education Centers (Anganwadis) for those 0-5 years old in 1995. Initially she served 32 children at the cost of \$2.00 a month per child and by 1997 five centers with 146 children were operational. Today 104 centers exist and are serving 3300 children at a cost of \$3.00 per month per child. As of today, 8000 children have benefited from these centers saving them lifelong physical and mental disabilities. The attendees received preschool education, high energy, high protein powder (Hyderabad mix), regular on-site check-ups which were monitored by meticulous growth charts and the progress was recorded as per WHO guidelines. Since the start of this foundation, the children in the “normal” grade increased from 10 to 54 percent and those mildly malnourished dropped from 80 to 40 percent.

As for the adolescent girls, 58% are childbearing of which 23% are having their second child, 55% are illiterate and 25% are victims of unwanted pregnancy or forced marriages. These girls are given Health and Life Education classes in the villages and schools to curb the teenage pregnancies and vocational guidance to promote independence. So far 386 adolescent girls have completed on campus sewing classes and currently 128 girls are earning \$20.00 to \$40.00 per month.

Roda's dream was to build a home to house 100 orphans and children of migrant workers which is currently under construction. The current cost for the rental facilities for room and board of the 43 children temporarily placed is \$50.00 per month per child.

For the women of the villages who are considered second class citizens of this society, they empowered them through microcredits, restoring their much needed self-confidence and self-respect. To date more than 1000 women have benefited from these self-help groups.

Antenatal programs were also initiated and have served about 2000 pregnant mothers per year, providing biweekly check-ups and education. Thus far, 20,000 women have benefited from these programs and thanks to the Health & Education Staff, 98% of deliveries are in-hospital compared to 60% six years ago.

My wife spent 4-6 months in India every year working, developing and overseeing the various programs and the rest of the year was spent in the USA generating donations to fund this foundation. She single-handedly collected \$1.8 million within a short span of 15 years and 100 percent of all funds generated go to the cause. My family and I feel honored and privileged to continue her noble legacy of serving the poor and the needy."

Next speaker Dr. J. G. Patel spoke about the hospital he helped build near his native village in Gujarat for taking care the healthcare needs of the villagers nearby. The project was started over 10 years ago and they recently transferred responsibility to operate to a Medical college in a nearby town. Earlier they experienced staffing problem but now the medical college regularly sends, students, interns, and faculty members to take care of the patients. He continues to get involved to improve the facilities and operations further.

Mrs. Chandrakala Bhargaw spoke about promoting kitchen gardens in more than 100 villages to provide better nutrition and improve the health of rural folks. This program has been promoted in 150 villages around Latur. She started her NGO more than 35 years ago and has helped in improving the livelihoods of women in the villages through various training program. You can see the photos and videos of the program at: <http://idc-america.org/resources/photos>

At this time, we are also pleased to invite you to participate in our upcoming 11th International Conference on October 12-13, at IIT Rice campus, Wheaton, IL 60189. Conference theme is: ***Finding Innovative Solutions for Poverty Eradication and Climate Change Mitigation in India***. You can find more information and register at: <http://idc-america.org/events>. We also invite to become IDCA member and Save on registration. <http://idc-america.org/membership>.

*IDCA is a not-for-profit organization registered in the state of Illinois since 2004. We obtained our 501 (c)(3) tax exemption status in 2005 from the U. S. Internal service. We have been engaged since 2004 in promoting sustainable development in India to eradicate poverty and minimize damage to our environment. **We promote networking, collaboration, learning, giving, and volunteering both in US and India to support our member and partner***

organizations. To this effect we have been bringing NPOs/NGOs and concerned members of our community in our Annual Regional and International conferences both in India and the US and regular monthly seminars in the Chicago. So far we have organized 9 International conferences in Chicago, one in Indiana, 9 International conferences in India (New Delhi, Gurgaon, Jaipur, and Hyderabad, Kochi), and 9 regional conferences (Washington, Detroit, Houston, and San Jose). Each conference we have 10-15 speakers representing organizations working in the areas mentioned above. For the US International conference we have invited one or more NGOs from India also. For more info call:630-303-9592, write: info@idc-america.org Visit our website for more information and updates: <http://idc-america.org>



