

## IDCA Conference on Sustainable Development in India, a Resounding Success

New Delhi: On January 10, several dedicated social scientists and technologists, in the fields of sustainable livelihoods, healthcare, water and education came together to share and explore ways of helping lift India's over 650,000 villages from their poverty. The conference entitled "**Empowering Grassroots for Sustainable Development in India**", was held at Punjab Haryana Delhi (PHD) Chamber of Commerce House in New Delhi. It was organized by India Development Coalition of America (IDCA) and co-sponsored by Education Promotion Society of India (EPSI). More than 125 people representing various organizations from many parts of India and several NRIs participated in the 12- hour long program.

Both IDCA and EPSI are setting historic precedents in bringing together the finest minds and the highest ideals from the Diaspora as well as from within India herself. Welcoming the conference participants from throughout India, the U.S., England and other countries was IDCA's President, Dr. Mohan Jain. EPSI's Secretary General, Shri Manohar Chellani, introduced the co-sponsoring organization which in only eighteen months of existence has made great strides in living up to its name. EPSI has implemented programs, cut through government red tape and connected resources to projects throughout the country. Ms. Anjali Makhija, Group leader at the Sehgal Foundation, Gurgaon, served as master of ceremony for this session.

The morning plenary session included four distinguished keynote speakers. Professor P. V. Indiresan, former director of IIT Madras was honored as chief guest of the session. He spoke about PURA projects and proposed for developing transformative approaches for rural development.

One of the many highlights of the session was Dr. Devinder Sharma from the Forum for Biotechnology and Food Security [www.dsharma.net](http://www.dsharma.net). He is acutely aware of and gives sound reasons for nations to avoid Genetically Modified (GM) foods. He traced a chain reaction which encompassed the impact on human health as well as on the environment from GM foods.

Another notable speaker Dr. Nandita Pathak from the Deendayal Research Institute spoke about the Chitrakoot Project in Madhya Pradesh where one of the most successful scientifically based sustainable communities has been operating since the early 1990s. Dr. Pathak demonstrated with an extensive Power Point presentation containing both data and photographs, the levels of sophistication and success that can be attained without harming people or the environment. These quality of life principles, in four main areas, Water, Health, Education and Livelihoods are IDCA's rural development objectives. IDCA connects people and organizations to resources as well as providing educational forums for achieving these objectives.

Mr. Bhaskar Save, an eighty-five year old farmer from Gujarat spoke about successful organic farming work he has been doing for over 60 years. He emphasized that to stop the farmer suicides in many parts of India, we have to promote organic farming which is sustainable, as it does not require any external inputs. He mentioned about writing open letters to Dr. M. S, Swaminathan, to seriously consider organic farming, while formulating new farmer policy.

The afternoon was filled with technical sessions covering the following topics:

- 1) Healthcare Management session chaired by Dr. R.S. Rajan, Karuna Trust, Bangalore. The speakers included: Dr. B. K. Sharma from UK-- founder of of Gawalior Childrens Hospital and Snehalaya. Dr. Siddarth Agarwal of Urban Health, New Delhi; Dr. Ananth Pandhare, founder director of Headgewar Hospital, Aurangabad, Maharashtra; Dr. Archana Chowdhary, the Sehgal Foundation, Gurgaon; and Dr. Akhil Sangal, CEO of Indian confederation for Healthcare Accreditation, New Delhi.
- 2) Sustainable Livelihoods session was chaired by Mr. Umesh Rohatgi of Flint, Michigan, a Rural Development Expert. Speakers included: Dr. C. Prasad, Director, Vardaan, New

Delhi; Dilip Gandhi and Anjali Godyal, Sehgal Foundation; Professor R. R. Gaur of IIT Delhi, Mr. Rajesh Sinha, PRIA, New Delhi.

- 3) Education Session was co-chaired by Mr. Krishna Khanna, President of iWatch, Mumbai, and Mr. Manohar Chelani of EPSI, New Delhi. Speakers included: Mr. Pramod K. Deshmukh director of Sanskriti Samvardhan Mandal (SSM), ([www.ssmandal.net](http://www.ssmandal.net)) Sangroli, Maharashtra; Professor Jagdish Shukla of Maryland founder of Gandhi College([www.gandhicollege.org](http://www.gandhicollege.org)), Mirdha, Ballia, UP, Mr. Virendra Sam Singh, founder president of Pardada Pardadi Educational Trust ([www.education4change.org](http://www.education4change.org)), Anupsahar, UP; Mr. T. K. Mathew, secretary and chief executive, Deepalaya ([www.deepalaya.org](http://www.deepalaya.org)), New Delhi; and Mr. P. K. Siddarth, secretary general of Bharat Sodh Sansthan ([www.bharatshodh.org](http://www.bharatshodh.org)), New Delhi.
- 4) Water Management session was chaired by Dr. Prakasam Tata, IDCA, Naperville, Illinois. Speakers included: Mr. Sudesh Menon, WaterHealth India Private Ltd.([www.waterhealth.com](http://www.waterhealth.com)), Bangalore; Mr. Sunil Jaiswal, Deendayal Research Institute ([www.chitrakoot.org](http://www.chitrakoot.org)), Chitrakoot, MP; Dr. D. K. Paul of WATER, New Delhi; and Dr. Kshama Metre, National Director, Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development, Sidhbari, HP.
- 5) The concluding plenary session was chaired by Prof. Rajender Prasad, Center of Rural Development and Technology at IIT, New Delhi and Mr. Jay Sehgal, IDCA and Sehgal Foundation, Gurgaon, India. The four session chairpersons presented a summary of the sessions. It was followed by questions and answers and some discussions on these issues.

The long and informative day concluded with a dinner, and a film by Sulabh International, the largest nationally and internationally recognized pan-India social service organization with 35,000 volunteers who work to promote human rights. A major supporter of the event was the S.M. Sehgal Foundation of Gurgaon. Dinner was sponsored by Sangrila Infrastructure, Pvt. Ltd.

The next Chicago area meeting of IDCA ([www.idc-america.org](http://www.idc-america.org)) will be held at the Oak Brook Library on February 24<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 4:30 pm. The topic of that meeting will be related to healthcare and sanitation. For more information, please call: Raj Rajaram at 630-915-6176 or Tim Somers at 630-235-7617. For more information about IDCA visit: [www.idc-america.org](http://www.idc-america.org) or email at: [info@idc-america.org](mailto:info@idc-america.org) or call at: 630-303-9592.