



# India Development Coalition of America

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Press Release

## IDCA Organizes First South Regional Conference in Houston on *Working Together to Eradicate Poverty and Mitigate Climate Change in India*

**Houston:** India Development Coalition of America (IDCA) organized the First South Regional Conference on June 4, 2011 at the India House, Houston. The theme of the conference was "*Working Together to Eradicate Poverty and Mitigate Climate Change in India*". It was held from 9 AM to 5 PM.

The conference was attended by more than 30 people from Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago and Des Moines, Iowa. Mr. Porus Dadabhoy, president of IDCA welcomed all the delegates and speakers and gave a brief introduction to IDCA including some recent initiatives under way. This includes our interactions with University of Iowa faculty and students, De Paul University of Chicago, University of Illinois, St. Catherine University, who send students to volunteer for many NGOs in India and learn from them during winter semester break. He mentioned about supporting a promising student of University of Chicago, who is going to volunteer for an NGO in Jodhpur, Rajasthan this summer, to help improve their healthcare program. He then invited Dr. Mohan Jain, the Trustee and Founder/President of IDCA to make a detailed presentation about IDCA.

Dr. Jain welcomed all and said that IDCA's Vision is a developed India, free of poverty, ignorance, diseases, socioeconomic disparities, ecological disasters, and social disharmony. He then told that IDCA's Mission is to empower Not for profit Organizations in the US and India by promoting networking, collaboration, learning, and sharing of knowledge and resources. It achieves its Mission by organizing Annual conferences in US and India, organizing seminars and forums on various related topics, provides a forum to the visiting NGO leaders in the US, To date, IDCA has organized 11 conferences in the US and 8 in India. It has organized over 50 forums in the Chicago area. It has helped members to raise fund for a project and help implement it to provide solar lanterns in 44 villages of Madhya Pradesh. He said that IDCA also organized learning journeys to visit NGOs in India to learn more about them and find ways to work with them. IDCA members have been interacting with many NGOs in India on regular basis and providing whatever support they can. He invited all to join IDCA in this wonderful journey to serve our fellow human beings who have been left out by the systems we have evolved in India.

Following this 4 sessions were organized. The First Session – **Poverty Eradication-Rural Developments** – was chaired by Mr. Sam Kannappan. There were 3 speakers in this session. It included Dr. Vijaya Cherukuri and Mrs. Anjani Kothatri from Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development ([www.cordusa.org](http://www.cordusa.org)). Dr. Cherukuri flew from Los Angeles to speak. They spoke about the integrated sustainable rural development work that the organization is doing in about 700 villages around the country. It started in few villages near Sidbari, Himachal Pradesh by its founder and current National director Dr. Kshma Maitre in 1985 with the inspiration of her spiritual Guru Swami Chinmayananda. She is pediatrician by training and as such her focus was to improve children's health. However, they soon found

that they cannot deal with the health issues in isolation of other issues faced by the rural folks. They have to slowly introduce education, income generation, nutrition, and other related issues.

Following this Mr. Jay Sehgal, Managing Trustee of the *Institute of Rural Research and Development in India* ([www.irrad.org](http://www.irrad.org)), Iowa/Gurgaon spoke about the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development work being done by IRRAD since 1999 to address, education, healthcare, income generation and water. They have built 40 check dams to address the water problem in the 20 villages they have been working. They also introduced sanitation, rain water harvesting, improved agriculture technology. Currently they are using rights based approach by using Right to Information Act, Right to Education Act, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to empower people to take advantage of many government schemes to address their poverty issues. He said that IRRAD will be happy to work with other organization to introduce this approach in their area. They are also working on improving governance and develop policy documents. They are headquartered in the Institutional area of Gurgaon in a Platinum Lead certified facility.

The Second Session – **Poverty Eradication-Education** was chaired by Porus Dadabhoy and had four speakers. This included Mr. Anil Shah past president of Pratham USA ( [www.prathamusa.org](http://www.prathamusa.org) ), and Mr. Swatantra Jain, president, Houston Chapter, Pratham USA, Mr. Ramesh Shah, chairman, Ekal Foundation ([www.ekal.org](http://www.ekal.org)) , USA, and Dr. Kirtikumar T. Shah, Chairman, Houston Chapter, Akshaya Patra Foundation ([www.akshayapatra.org](http://www.akshayapatra.org)) . Dr. Shah said with a humble beginning in mid 90's to feed few hundred children in Karantak has developed in to a nationwide organization to feed almost 1.2 million children in urban and rural areas hot nutritious lunch. Mr. Ramesh Shah said Ekal Foundation had a small beginning in the 1990's in Jharkhand area and now has 34,343 one teacher schools. They teach in each school 35 students costing at a total of \$365. per year. One third of the schools are supported by the NRIs/PIOs. These schools only go up to third grade level to teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Their focus is on small villages in the tribal areas of the country. Their goal is to cover all of the 100000 villages in next 10 years. They have also started providing healthcare services and livelihood training and are promoting rural development. Ekal has enrolled 962,485 students at this time. Mr. Swatantra Jain said that the Pratham was started in India in 1994 by Dr. Madhav Chavan in slums of Mumbai and now spread its work in almost 300 districts of the country. It has several programs to promote and improve education in rural and urban India. These include: Balwadis, support classes, libraries, scholarship program, Read India, ASER, Vocational skills program, computer aided literacy, Pratham books, PCVC(Pratham Council for Vulnerable Children), ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education Center), and English program. Mr. Anil Shah talked about his recent visits to different parts of India to see Pratham schools.

The Third Session—**Poverty Eradication—Water and Rural Development**. It was chaired by Dr. K. T. Shah and had three speakers: Mr. Sam Kannappan ([www.samkannappan.com](http://www.samkannappan.com)), Mr. Shekhar Agarwal, Vice president, Bharat Swabhiman Overseas, Inc. ([www.bharatswabhimanusa.org](http://www.bharatswabhimanusa.org)) , and Mr. Anil Matta, Deputy Counsel General of India in Houston. Mr. Matta spoke about various government of India schemes being run through the Panchayat Raj Institution to promote Rural development to eradicate poverty. He mentioned about a new initiative “Hariyali” launched by the PM. It involves, watershed development program, Integrated wasteland development program, Draught prone Area Program, and Desert development program. When asked by Dr. Shah, he said more information about various programs is available at: <http://rural.nic.in> . Mr. Kannppan spoke about Water Management Strategies. He said, “confrontations are common in division of water among those upstream and downstream of rivers. There is also competition between agricultural and domestic use. Water scarcity will increase to the level of countries going to war for water rights. Fresh water supply is very limited in locations with

large and increasing population. Due to watershed pollution, water quality is reduced even at the source. Multiple strategies are required to manage water in the near future such as better use of information, water conservation, watershed protection, dual use of water systems, reuse of water and use of new technologies to purify the water. Wastewater treatment and reuse of treated water requires more attention. Water management must include reuse of treated water since fresh water source is limited. He identified that dams are being built by the Republic of China on the Bramaputra river in Tibet. Government of the Republic of China filed an objection that Sam Kannappan is lobbying in Washington DC without being a registered lobbyist though not paid for the effort. Mr. Shekhar Agrawal spoke that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century India had 29% share of the world economy and even in 1765 it was 25%, and now only 3%. How it happen? He said it was due to loot and neglect by the foreign rulers and our existing rulers. He said about 50% live on less than Rs. 20. a day, about 20,000 people die of hunger and mal nutrition every day. Farmers are neglected and thousands are committing suicide every year. Our politicians are using caste system to further divide the society. Often criminals are not getting punished. His organization in India has 4 programs to build a healthy society free of poverty. It includes teaching Yoga and Ayurveda for good health to all, Income generation for the poor, Largest Food and herbal processing plan, Model village program in each of the 690 districts. Its leader Baba Ramdev have interacted with over 100 million people last year through Bharat Swabhiman campaign in the country to stop corruption and bring the black money in foreign countries back. He has trained 400,000 yoga teachers around the world who are providing free training to all including moral education, tree plantation, blood donation and against dowry.

**The Fourth Session**—Way Forward -was led by Dr. Kirtikumar Shah, Mr. Sam Kannappan, and Mr. Porus Dadabhoy. Dr. Shah suggested that to move forward we should become members of IDCA and start a Chapter. Several delegates agreed to be part of IDCA and become member of the Houston Chapter. This included Mr. Raghav Solipuram, coordinator of 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar and Lok Satta Party in Houston, Mr. Raghavender Nednur of North American Telugu Association, Mr. Jim K. Shroff from Zorastrian Association of Houston. Dr. Mohan Jain, Founder president and Trustee suggested that to form a Chapter regular activities like a monthly forum covering education, water, healthcare, livelihoods, alternate energy should be organized to introduce new people to IDCA on regular basis.

Dr. Jain finally thanked all the delegates, speakers and organizers, caterer—Madras Pavillion for their services. He also thanked Ms. Shree Pandya, resident of Houston and a sophomore College student in California for volunteering for the conference registration. For more information Video clips, photos, and presentation will be soon made available on our website: [www.idc-america.org](http://www.idc-america.org) .

Upcoming IDCA Events:

On August 13, 2011, we are organizing our Third East Regional Conference will take place at the Johns Hopkins University Campus, at Rockville, MD. Conference theme will be: *Exploring Innovative Approaches to Eradicate Poverty and Mitigate Climate Change*. More information will be at: [www.idc-america.org/upcoming.htm](http://www.idc-america.org/upcoming.htm)

*India Development Coalition of America (IDCA) 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. 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](http://www.idc-america.org/membership.htm). Media Contact :[info@idc-america.org](mailto:info@idc-america.org) or call: 630-303-9592.*



Seated L-R: Mr. Porus Dadabhoy, president IDCA, Chicago, Dr. Kirtikumhar Shah, Chairman, Akshaya Patra, Houston, Dr. Mohan Jain, Trustee and Founder president, IDCA, Chicago, Mrs. Meenakshi Kannappan, Mr. Sam Kannappan, former president, GOPIO, Houston. Standing L-R: Mr. Raghava Solipuram, 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar, Houston, Mr. Nikhil Mehta, Ekal Foundation, Houston, Prof. S. Radhakrishnan, Mr. Prakash Shah, president, Houston Chapter, Ekal Foundation, Mr. Shekhar Agarwal, Bharat Swabhiman Overseas Inc., Houston Mr. Raghavender Nednur, North American Telugu Association, Houston, Mr. Sandip Mody, Austin, 8. Mr. Chandrakant Patel, Houston, Mr. Subbaraman Viswanathan, Houston



Row 1: Dr. K .T. Shah, Mrs. and Mr. Sam Kannappan, Row 2: Mr. Kul Bhushan Uppal, VP India House, Mr. Ramesh Shah, Chairman, Ekal Foundation, USA



Dr. Vijaya Cherukuri of CORD USA, (Second in the front row) and others intently listening to a speaker



Mr. Anil Shah and Mr. Swatantra Jain of Pratham USA making their presentation