



India Development Coalition of America

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IDCA Organizes an Informative India Water, and Livelihoods Forum



Darien, IL: In continuation of its efforts to raise awareness of development work in India, the IDCA recently hosted a Water, and Livelihoods forum on August 22 at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, IL. Three Speakers were (left to right see picture) Dr. Prakasam Tata, Mrs. Chandrakala Bhargaw, and Ms. Leah Barnes. Attendees learned of Dr. Tata's work with Water and sanitation, Mrs. Bhargaw's award-winning approach to women's empowerment, and about Mrs. Barnes' study abroad trip to a watershed development village.

Dr. Prakasam Tata, President, Bharathi Theertha, Naperville, IL - Dr. Tata began by asking the question, "will we see Swaccha Bharath (clean India) in our time?" With multiple degrees in environmental science disciplines, Dr. Tata shared his experiences, career of research and teaching in this area. He also named specific water and sanitation projects overseen by Bharathi Theertha and Rotary International. Dr. Tata's first example of water and sanitation work was on a polluted lake in Vizianagaram, A.P. India that was required for rainwater harvesting, irrigation, and drinking water supply. A waste stabilization pond system was installed to remediate the pollution of the pedda tank. It worked very efficiently for 4-5 years. Where there were no fish, tons of fish grew and survived. It became defunct for years because repairs were not made to a broken sewer, but with new government in place, there is some movement to rehabilitate it.

The second water/sanitation project was in Duppada, also near Vizianagaram. The goal was a joint venture with Bharathi Theertha and a local Rotary International club, to supply safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation to a community of 400 people. It worked very well with people buying water and using the facilities, for about three years until the pump broke and was not fixed. Currently, it is back on track with new Rotary involvement and a caring NGO. To close he said, "the short answer to the question will we see 'Swaccha Bharath' during our life time, is yes, but only if government staff, citizens, and volunteer organizations work selflessly with passion, persistence, and perfection. You must be like a leach - and not let go."

Mrs. Chandrakala Bhargaw, Founder and President, Adarsh Mahila Griha Udyog (AMGU), Latur, Maharashtra was honored in 2013 by Maharashtra Foundation USA, for the presentation of AMGUs work. She summarized reasons for her work by citing a 2001 World Bank study, 2006 report of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and 2007 UNICEF findings. All three studies concluded women's empowerment raises economic productivity and reduces infant mortality, contributes to improved health and nutrition, and increases the chances of education for the next generation. Gender equality yields a double dividend. If women are empowered, they will elevate their children and community as well.

She explained AMGUs approach of Holistic Women's Empowerment and evidence of progress in each area. It involves economic self-reliance, literacy, vocational training, legal and social awareness, governance awareness, and health and sex education to form a sustainable approach. Economic self-reliance is taught with self-help groups (SHGs) and adolescent girls groups (AGGs). All groups have had 100% repayment! Through these groups 20-30% of women have achieved improving their house from a thatched hut, to fully cemented house, all with SHG loans. Vocational training in areas such as tailoring and farming provides income, while literacy is encouraged with school attendance, banking and women's literacy. Legal and social awareness occurs with street play performances, and community discussions. Workshops also educate women about laws pertaining to them such as the Domestic Violence Act, Child Marriage Act, and Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act. All combined efforts, and counseling centers supporting women have lead to a 90%+ drop in child marriage, with many not marrying till age 18. Women play a larger role in village governance with increased sarpanch and committee roles. Health results include increase of in-house toilets, purified water, reduced anemia and vaccinations. 12,900 boys and girls also received sex education, including HIV/AIDS awareness. She emphasized with these examples from Latur that holistic women's development is a community's best hope for a better future.

Ms. Leah Barnes, a graduate student in International Public Service at DePaul University, Chicago, connected global water challenges to those of India, and the potential leadership role India can play in finding solutions. Furthermore, she shared observations on watershed development from a recent study abroad trip to Bhojdari Village, Maharashtra. Ms. Barnes explained challenges with water stem from its finite supply, contained in only 9 countries. Mention of India's specific challenges include decreased ground water supply due to agriculture, population growth, and poor quality due to lack of infrastructure investment. Ms.

Barnes cited research asserting the fact with its large population, and grassroots initiatives such as watershed development, that India could become a leader by example in dealing with cross-border challenges, and village solutions. The work of Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR), specifically in Climate Change Adaptations (CCA) in Bhojdari village, offered hope for regeneration of ground water and adaptive farming methods. IDCA's role in continuing to bring organizations together and promote the work being done in India, so as to aid progress globally, was also outlined.

Our upcoming events include: Our **13th International Conference (*Exploring Innovative Strategies for Poverty Eradication, and Climate Change Mitigation in India*)** will be held on October 17-18 at the Rice campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, Wheaton, Illinois. Registration is open now. Please register early and save. <http://idc-america.org/events/upcoming-events>.

For additional ideas/resources on this subject, you are encouraged to visit IDCA website and Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IDCA.Water/> . Photos and videos will be posted on our website and Facebook IDCA-Water group pages soon.

IDCA Promotes Social entrepreneurship, networking, collaborating, learning, giving and volunteering to alleviate poverty and mitigate climate change in India.

IDCA is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization registered in the state of Illinois since 2004. We have been engaged since 2003 in promoting sustainable development in India to eradicate poverty and mitigate Climate Change. 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 and now bi-monthly seminars in the Chicago. So far we have organized 11 International conferences in Chicago, one in Indiana, 11 International conferences in India (New Delhi, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Kochi, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad), and 10 regional conferences (Washington, New York, Detroit, Houston, and San Jose, California). 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 information about future events and sustainable development initiatives to help India's villages, please go to IDCA's web site at <http://idc-america.org/> or call Dr. Mohan Jain at 630-303-9592 or Mr. Porus Dadabhoy at :630-960-2425.



L-R: Avi Dear, Anupam Mehta, Prakasam Tata, Mohan Jain, Raj Rajaram, Mrs. Bhargaw, Ms. Leah Barnes, Porus Dadabhoy, and Manoj Bhargaw