



India Development Coalition of America

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Press Release

Working Together to Accelerate Sustainable Development in India

Chicago: **India Development Coalition of America (IDCA)** organized its first one-day National Conference, ***Working Together to Accelerate Sustainable Development in India*** on **October 16-17, 2004**, at the Illinois Institute of Technology-Rice Campus in Wheaton, Illinois. Almost 80 people participated in a 12-hour long meeting. They came from all parts of the US, and from India. The Mission of IDCA is to foster collaboration, cooperation, and networking between non-profit organizations (NPOs) in the US engaged in development activities in India; and to promote giving and volunteering in the community-at-large for sustainable development in India. Based upon the favorable comments by the participants, IDCA plans to expand its National Conference to two days in 2005.

The conference began with a welcome address by IDCA president Dr. Mohan Jain. He thanked Dr. Suri Sehgal and the Sehgal Foundation for offering a two-year grant to IDCA to give it a head start. He then introduced the IDCA organizing team, consisting of: Dr. V. Rajaram, Vice president, Mr. Vivek Singhal, Treasurer, and Mr. Anil Bhatt, Secretary. Dr. Rajaram, Mr. Vivek Singhal, and Mr. Ram Krishnan, founder of the NRI-Home-Coming yahoo group, helped in putting together the program. Dr. Rajaram, Ram Krishnan, Anil Bhatt, and Prashant Gupta of GOPIO assisted in organizing posters and exhibits. Other volunteers who helped us with other aspects of the conference include: Dr. Mahendra Bapna, Ms. Gauri N. Pal, Mr. Jawahar Seker, Mr. Arjun Nagar all from the Chicago area, and Mr. G. Prasad from India. Dr. Jain thanked all of them for their support. He said that the vision of a developed India is indeed a difficult one to achieve, but by effective networking in such conferences between member organizations, and promoting giving and volunteering in the community-at-large, both here and in India, we can accelerate its pace. IDCA intends to play the role of a Catalyst both here and in India for accelerating sustainable development.

In Session 1, *Empowering NPO's*, Dr. Suri Sehgal, Chairman, The Sehgal Family Foundation, Florida, talked about, *IDCA, What It Is?* He described how it came into being over the last one year and what is its Mission, Vision and objectives are, kinds of memberships options for the individuals, corporations and NPOs. Following this, Mrs. Lata Krishnan, President, American India Foundation, New York, talked about, *Mobilizing US Resources for India's Development*. She told that AIF has raised 19 million dollars since its inception in the aftermath of the Gujarat earthquake in 2001. AIF supports many NGOs in India. It also offers annual fellowships to 20 people from the US to work with Indian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). AIF also provides computers and other equipment to reduce the digital divide. Mr. Balbir Mathur, Trees for Life, Wichita, Kansas spoke about, *Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers*.

In Session 2, *Promoting Rural Development*, Professor Bala Balachandran, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, IL, spoke about *Power to the Powerless through rural marketing cooperatives*; Mr. Jay Sehgal from S. M. Sehgal Foundation, India, spoke about *Working together to Empower Rural India*; Rajesh Sinha from S. M. Sehgal Foundation, spoke about *Approaches and Successes in Livelihood Creation in Rural India*; and Dr. Venugopal Kesavulu of San Antonio Texas, spoke about, *Renewable Energy for Rural India*.

Following this a delicious Indian lunch was served in the atrium to the participants. This gave an opportunity for networking and also visiting the exhibits and posters from ATREE, Nav Bharat Trust, NRI-Home-Coming, The U. N. Foundation, The Swaraj Foundation, and The North South Foundation.



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In Session 3, “*Accelerating Rural Development*”. The session began with a presentation by Ms. Seema Paul, Program Director, UN Foundation, Washington, D.C., who spoke about, *How the UN Foundation is Helping to Accelerate Development in India*, through its programs/projects. Dr. Suresh Babu, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C., spoke about, *Experiences in Rural Development, and how NPOs can do better*. Dr. Bhamy Shenoy of Mysore Grahakar Parishad, Houston, Texas, spoke about, *Recent Experiences of Organizing for Better Governance in Mysore*.

In Session 4, *Knowledge Sharing*, Dr. Sehgal spoke on behalf of Dr. Kamal Bawa, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment, Boston, MA, about *Promoting Conservation and Sustainable Development in India*. Mr. Vikram Akula, SKS Foundation, IL, spoke about, *Micro-Credit Movement and SKSF Experience in Livelihood Creation*. SKS Microfinance began its work in 1998 and over the last 6 years has given small loans valued at US\$14 million dollars to help 65,000 people, with 100% loan recovery rate. Mr. Mahendra Vasandani, India Development Service, IL, spoke about *IDS’s 30-year Experience in Supporting Sustainable Development in India*.

Organizations who spoke in the open forum for 5 minutes each included: Ram Krishnan, Akash Ganga Trust, MN; G. Prasad, Sarvodaya Mandali, AP, India; Vibhakar Mohile, ATMI, Mumbai, India; Sudhanshu Misra, MN, Nav Prabhat Trust, Orissa; D. Prakash, ASHA for education; Nipun Mehta, Charity Focus, CA; S. Subramaniam, KY; Prem Advani, Educate the Children, IL; Sudhakar Murthy, Infrasy, CA; Dr. Srinivas Rao, New York, NY; and Subijoy Dutta, Yamuna Foundation for Blue Water, Crofton, MD. At the end of all this Dr. Rajaram summarized the proceedings of the day, thanked again all the speakers and participants. He finally urged the participants to work together to accelerate sustainable development in India. He said that IDCA aims to promote this networking and collaboration between its members. IDCA also aims to inform, inspire, and involve the community to support its members, through increased giving and volunteering by them. He finally appealed all participants to support IDCA in its Mission, by joining it as a member.

Following this, a sumptuous dinner was served and participants networked with each other until 9 P.M. Most of the feedback received indicates that the conference met or exceeded their expectations. Many personally came to us and shown their appreciation for what we have been able to do for them and India. Some of the people decided to become members on the spot and many informed that they would like to become member, and will like to participate in future activities and support IDCA actively in their respective regions. A detailed program is being developed to channelize the newly found centers of enthusiasm and energy.

You can view the full presentations at IDCA website: www.idc-america.org . For more information contact: Dr. Vasudevan Rajaram, (630) 915-6176, Mr. Anil Bhatt, (847) 240-5955; Vivek Singhal, 630-323-2200; Dr. Mohan Jain, (630) 325-7571 or info@idc-america.org