

# **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR INDIA 2010**

## **Social Entrepreneurship for Inclusive Growth**



Profile Booklet



# Introduction

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Professor Klaus Schwab founder of World Economic Forum along with his wife Hilde founded the **Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship** in 1998, with the purpose to promote entrepreneurial solutions and social commitment with a clear impact at the grassroots level.

The World Economic Forum and the Schwab Foundation work in close partnership to provide social entrepreneurs with unique platforms at the regional and global levels to showcase their important role and work in today's society.



*Prof. Klaus Schwab  
and Hilde Schwab*

**Jubilant Bhartia Foundation**, the social wing of the **Jubilant Bhartia Group**, was established in 2007. As a part of the Jubilant Bhartia Group, we focus on conceptualizing and implementing the Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives for the group. The foundation's objectives include various community development work, health care, cultural & sports, environment preservation initiative, vocational training, women empowerment and educational activities.



*S S Bhartia and H S Bhartia*

# The Importance of Social Entrepreneurship

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Social entrepreneurship is about applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to benefit society, with an emphasis on the marginalized and the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Social entrepreneurs drive social innovation and transformation across all different fields and sectors, including but not limited to health, education, environment and enterprise development. They pursue their social missions with entrepreneurial zeal, business methods and the courage to overcome traditional practices. It is this approach that sets the social entrepreneur apart from the rest of the crowd of well-meaning people and organizations who dedicate their lives to social improvement.



## Foreword

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The Jubilant Bhartia Foundation and the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship are dedicated to promoting social innovation in India to the highest national, regional, and global levels.

While outstanding social entrepreneurs have been selected by the Schwab Foundation in the country since 2001, the annual Social Entrepreneur of the Year award in India was instituted in 2005. Under a partnership agreement between the Jubilant Bhartia Foundation and the Schwab Foundation, we are pleased to present to you an amazing group of innovators.

Social entrepreneurs are ordinary individuals who are extraordinary in solving societal problems, creating wealth, and moving under-served communities up the development ladder. This Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award is a testimony to the innovation and impact that is possible when sustainable inclusive growth is pursued.

The competition this year was formidable. From a pool of over 100 applications, four finalists – Mr Santosh Kumar Choubey, Mr Rajiv Khandelwal & Mr Krishnavatar Sharma, Mr Anant Kumar and Mr Ashwin Naik – emerged after 3 stages of rigorous assessment. They have met the national jury – an independent panel of leaders from business, government, media, academia and civil society. We are grateful for the jury's insights and contributions to the selection process.

We would also like to acknowledge with deep appreciation the contributions of our media partners – The Hindustan Times, Mint and CNBC-TV18 – all involved in bringing due recognition to social entrepreneurs and their work.

Finally, we thank you for joining us in congratulating all finalists of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award. The finalists exude business acumen, operational excellence, and most importantly an unwavering social mission to the people of India.



**Hilde Schwab**  
Co-founder & Chairperson  
Schwab Foundation for  
Social Entrepreneurship



**Shyam S Bhartia**  
Director  
Jubilant Bhartia Foundation



# Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2010

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## Criteria for Selection

We select late-stage social enterprises that have demonstrated large-scale systemic change and impact. In particular, we assess based on the following criteria:

- **Innovation:** The candidate has transformed traditional practice through an innovative product, service, approach, or a more rigorous application of known technologies and ideas.
- **Sustainability:** The organisation is achieving some degree of financial self-sustainability through revenues or is engaged in creating mutually beneficial partnerships with business and/or the public sector.
- **Direct social impact:** The organisation implements the initiative directly with poor or marginalised communities. The impact and results are rigorously measured and documented as well as improved upon over time.
- **Reach and Scope:** The candidate's initiative has spread beyond its initial context and has been adapted successfully to other settings in the country or internationally, either by the entrepreneur him/herself, or through others who have replicated or adapted elements of it.
- **Replicability:** The initiative can be adapted to other regions of the world to solve similar problems.

## List of Jury Members

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**Mr Brij Kothari**  
President  
Planet Read



**Ms Hilde Schwab**  
Co-founder & Chairperson  
Schwab Foundation for  
Social Entrepreneurship



**Ms Rohini Nilekani**  
Chairperson  
Arghyam Foundation  
India



**Ms Shobhna Bhartia**  
Chairperson & Editorial  
Director  
The Hindustan Times



**Ms Sudha Pillai**  
Member Secretary  
Planning Commission



**Mr Vikram Akula**  
Founder & CEO  
SKS Microfinance



**Mr Y C Deveshwar**  
Chairman  
ITC Ltd



## About our Media Partners

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The Hindustan Times Ltd is a leading mainline daily with a significant presence in the print medium for over eight decades now. Hindustan Times is the flagship publication of HT Media Ltd. It has a nationwide reach in India with simultaneous editions from New Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, Patna, Ranchi and Kolkata. It is also printed from Bhopal and Chandigarh.



In addition to Hindustan Times, HT Media also publishes a national business newspaper, Mint. Mint is a one-of-its-kind newspaper in the sense that the company has an exclusive agreement with the Wall Street Journal to publish Journal-branded news and information in India. Mint is today the second-largest business newspaper in India with presence in the key markets of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Pune and now Kolkata too.



CNBC-TV18 is India's No.1 business medium and the undisputed leader in business news. CNBC-TV18 has been an integral part of the Indian economic story, spearheading and mirroring these enterprising times. The channel's benchmark coverage extends from corporate news, financial markets coverage, expert perspective on investing and management to industry verticals and beyond. CNBC-TV18 has been constantly innovating with new genres of programming that helps make business more relevant to different constituencies across India. India's most able business audience consumes CNBC-TV18 for their information & investing needs. CNBC-TV18 is currently available in over 30 million households in India.



# Indian Social Enterprises

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## Profiles

# Profiles

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## Finalists 2010

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# Finalist 2010

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## Anant Kumar

LifeSpring Hospitals

[www.lifespring.in](http://www.lifespring.in)

**Finalist - Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010**

LifeSpring Hospitals is a chain of small, low-cost maternity hospitals that provides quality, affordable healthcare services to women from low-income groups in Indian urban centers.

## Focus

Maternal Health

### Background

Approximately 100,000 women die each year in India due to pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. The country's maternal mortality is unacceptably high, almost 4 times that of Brazil<sup>1</sup>. India contributes to almost one-fourth of global maternal deaths and almost two-thirds of all births are unattended by a skilled health worker. What makes these statistics especially distressing is the fact that the vast majority of these deaths can be averted with proper maternal care and institutional delivery. Most low-income women in India have to choose between delivering in a resource-constrained government hospital and borrowing money to deliver in a private hospital/clinic.

### Innovation and Activities

Set up in 2005 by Anant Kumar and incubated by Hindustan Lifecare Limited (HLL), LifeSpring is today a group of nine hospitals in Andhra Pradesh, six of which are in Hyderabad and three in smaller cities along the coastal belt of the state. Each hospital has 20-30 beds and is located within easy reach of its customers, i.e. women from low-income families that earn between Rs 3000 - Rs 7000 per month.

With safe deliveries of more than 7000 healthy babies and quality care and treatment of 100,000 outpatient cases, LifeSpring has kept its morbidity rate to less than 1% and its caesarian cases to less than 35%.

The tariff for LifeSpring's services are stringently maintained at a half or third of the prevailing rates in private hospitals. The fee of a doctor's consultation is Rs. 75 (US \$1.60) and the cost of a normal delivery in its general ward is between Rs. 2000 to 4000 (US\$ 40 - \$80). LifeSpring has achieved profitability, despite its low tariff structure by focusing sharply on efficient resource utilization, and a high throughput, both of which keep unit costs low.

LifeSpring's conscious choice of specialization in maternal healthcare is reflected in the service range it offers to its customers. In addition to normal and caesarian deliveries, it offers pre-natal and post-natal care, family planning services, assistance in registering for birth certificates, and vaccination services under the Government of India programs. The hospitals are also equipped with pharmacies and laboratories managed by third parties. Each hospital hosts a monthly health camp, during which pregnant women are given free medical consultations and advice from doctors. The outreach workers educate women in communities around the hospital on ante-natal care and institutional delivery.

With the aim of ensuring a quality experience to each customer, LifeSpring has over 100 standard procedures, including clinical protocols and identical surgery kits, which have been a key outcome from its partnership with the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (based in Cambridge, USA).

### The Entrepreneur

With 13 years of experience in public health, sales and program management, Anant has extensive management and business experience. He led LifeSpring's first pilot hospital and its subsequent growth from 1 to 9 hospitals in less than 2 years.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/85773/section/7>



**Ashwin Naik**  
Vaatsalya Healthcare  
www.vaatsalya.com

**Finalist - Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010**

Vaatsalya Healthcare Solutions Private Limited provides primary and secondary healthcare services which are accessible, appropriate and affordable to middle- and low-income families in Tier III and Tier IV towns in India. It focuses on the semi-urban and rural population that has limited access to good quality healthcare services.

## Focus

Health

### Background

In India, primary health care is provided by the government through a network of over 146,036 health subcenters, 23,458 primary healthcare centers (PHCs) and 4,276 community healthcare centers (CHCs), with a 150-bedded civil/district hospital in the main district town and a few smaller hospitals and dispensaries spread over other towns and larger villages, on an average<sup>1</sup>. However, with a few exceptions, such as the All India Institute of Medical Studies (AIIMS), and in spite of the government programs, the overall public health facilities remain inefficient, inadequately managed and staffed with poorly maintained medical equipment<sup>2</sup>.

### Innovation and Activities

Established by Dr Aswin Naik and Dr Veerendra Hiramata, Vaatsalya is a network of 10 hospitals, each with about 60-70 beds, eight of which are in Karnataka and two in Andhra Pradesh. Each hospital is well equipped with operations theatres, maternity services, neonatal and adult ICUs, pharmacy and diagnostics. They cater to four basic specializations: gynecology, pediatrics, general surgery and general medicine. Taken together, these specializations position the hospitals to address 70% of the health needs of the local community.

Vaatsalya serves 300,000 customers every year, most of whom do not have insurance, and who come from families with monthly incomes of Rs 5000 to 15000 (USD 100-300). The services fees are at 15-20% of what an average urban hospital would charge its patients. Patients at Vaatsalya pay INR 100-300 per bed per night, while their consultancy fees range from INR 25-100. The Vaatsalya pharmacies however sell medicines at market rates.

To keep the services affordable in its geographies of operations, where the income levels dip significantly in comparison to the urban population, Vaatsalya offers "no-frills" services by optimising its capital and operational expenditures, without compromising on investments in training its staff for maintaining quality.

Every Vaatsalya hospital is built around the service ethos and entrepreneurship of committed local doctors. The Vaatsalya team invests time in the careful selection of doctors with semi-urban or rural backgrounds and gives the scope, scale and opportunities of professional growth that doctors find rewarding. They are given managerial responsibilities faster than the industry standard and are placed in a position to drive entrepreneurial decisions on the hospitals they manage. Vaatsalya hospitals have been recently empanelled by the government of Karnataka for neonatal critical care services in select districts of the state.

### The Entrepreneur

Ashwin, co-founder of Vaatsalya, has more than 10 years experience in the life sciences and healthcare industry. Prior to founding Vaatsalya, Ashwin was Vice President of Business Development and Informatics, Triesta Sciences, a specialty clinical research organization involved in conducting advanced genomics based research in the field of oncology.

<sup>1</sup> <http://mohfw.nic.in/Annual%20report%20to%20the%20people%20on%20health.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.pwc.com/en\\_GX/gx/healthcare/pdf/emerging-market-report-hc-in-india.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/healthcare/pdf/emerging-market-report-hc-in-india.pdf)



## Rajiv Khandelwal & Krishvatar Sharma

Aajeevika Bureau

[www.aajeevika.org](http://www.aajeevika.org)

**Finalists - Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010**

Established in 2005, Aajeevika Bureau develops financial products, 'photo-identity' services and partnerships with local governments and businesses to help rural seasonal migrants succeed in difficult economies. Aajeevika Bureau's solutions are designed to support seasonal rural migrants both at the source (i.e. resource-poor rural economies) and the destination points (i.e. exclusionary urban markets) of their migration cycles.

### Focus

Migration

#### Background

Rural, seasonal migrant workers are a massive workforce with numbers that touch nearly a 100 million across India. They drift through the economy, often at its very bottom end, remaining largely outside the reach of state services and devoid of opportunities offered by the growing markets. Despite the major contributions migrant workers make to India's prosperity, they suffer neglect from employers, public and government alike. As a large and vulnerable section of India's unorganized labour force, migrant workers have poor social security, meager protection from malpractices and hazards, and dim prospects of growth and advancement

#### Innovation and Activities

Aajeevika Bureau is headquartered in Udaipur, with offices in Ahmadabad, Jaipur and seven blocks of Southern Rajasthan, where, every year, an estimated 800,000 rural workers migrate seasonally to Gujarat and Karnataka.

All of Aajeevika Bureau's clients are unskilled and semi-skilled men and women who are typically unviable for SHG or MFI loans due to their mobility and lack of assets. A typical individual who benefits from their services has an annual income (prior to accessing the Bureau's services) of INR 36,000.

Aajeevika Bureau has developed a series of services that interlock to create a security net for its clients. The services are:

- Photo-identity cards – Aajeevika's flagship innovation, that are, for the migrants, their only identity at the destination points, in the absence of any other document. The card, authorized by

the Government of Rajasthan and verified by local panchayats, opens up migrants' access to banks, basic communication (for example, purchase of a mobile connection), linkages with government schemes and other citizenship entitlements;

- Financial products programmes, which give travel loans and insurance products, designed to ease the migration experience of poor, unskilled workers;
- Accelerated skills training and job placement programs, for rural unemployed youth, who are at the threshold of migration. It equips them to enter the job market at higher skill and more rewarding wage levels;
- Formation of trade-based collectives, which fortify migrant workers with social networks and legitimate platforms for accessing government schemes and;
- Legal services, such as counseling, arbitration and innovative practices in worker recruitment and contractual arrangements, which sure-fire the security of rural seasonal migrants, especially in large cities where they are routinely harassed by contractors and law enforcement agencies.

Over 5 years, more than 50000 ultra- poor seasonal migrants have directly accessed the Bureau's services to experience dignity, voice and citizenship entitlements. Those who have registered for the Bureau's skill training programs have seen a 50-80% increase in family incomes. Additionally, Aajeevika's model has been chosen to be adapted and replicated by more than 30 civil society organizations in Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. It has signed a first-of-its kind MOU with the National Unique Identity Authority of India to ensure inclusion of the 100-million strong, though invisible, base of seasonal migrant labourers in the ambitious AADHAR project.

#### The Entrepreneur

Rajiv Khandelwal, worked in a vast range of rural development, employment and entitlement programmes and projects in tribal Rajasthan. He held coordination and leadership position over 10 years and later began to work as a consultant to NGOs and donors.

Krishnavatar Sharma, is a senior social worker and practitioner in Udaipur. After During his association with nearly 6 organisations Krishnavatar coordinated self help programmes, natural resources work, employment and legal aid programmes.



## Santosh Kumar Choubey

AISECT

[www.aisect.org](http://www.aisect.org)

**Finalist - Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010**

AISECT has pioneered a model of ICT-based education in rural India that has opened up entrepreneurship and new employment opportunities for more than 1 million rural youth in their local eco-systems.

### Focus

Rural Technical Education and Vocational Training, Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Creation.

#### Background

In the context of the Indian sub continent technological progress is extremely disparate. Metros and other major urban centers have charted unprecedented growths owing to their ability to attract investment, technology and manpower to build the modern ICT sector (Information and Communication Technologies). In stark contrast is the situation of rural and backward areas.

#### Innovation and Activities

Founded by Santosh Kumar Choubey, the AISECT model, based in Bhopal, responds to the indefatigable demand from rural youth for technical and vocational education. Over 25 years, AISECT has emerged as a profitable rural education franchise model with 8000 education centers in 27 states and 3 union territories. The network of AISECT franchisees, a chain of rural education entrepreneurs, cumulatively employ 32,000 rural knowledge workers in their centers from their local communities.

100,000 students graduate from AISECT centers every year with training in any of the 100 courses available. 50% of AISECT's students come from the

most backward districts of India, availing scholarships of upto 50% of their course fee. All curriculum and teaching-learning material developed by AISECT are in regional languages. More than 80% of the AISECT graduates are then placed by AISECT centre owners in best-fit local jobs.

To maximize the operations of ICT centers at the district, block and panchayat levels, AISECT franchisees that are not under the CSC scheme of the government have converted their education centers into multi-purpose service stations, thereby linking their local communities to government services and development schemes.

As an extension of its goal of developing knowledge capital among rural youth and creating high quality rural education infrastructure, the AISECT team has set up a private university in Bilaspur (the first in the country to be set up in a backward tribal district of Madhya Pradesh). It will soon launch the country's first rural employment portal service.

#### The Entrepreneur

Santosh Kumar Choubey, Chairman and Founder, AISECT & Chancellor, Dr. C.V Raman University, heads the organisation in its entirety and controls its centralised functioning, policy planning initiatives and strategy for the organisation. He comes from an Engineering background and was also selected into the Civil Services which he gave up to set up AISECT, today an,8000 strong franchisee centre network which has educated over 10 lakh students across 27 states of the country.

# Schwab Social Entrepreneurs

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## Amitabha Sadangi

International Development Enterprises India (IDEI)

[www.ide-india.org](http://www.ide-india.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

IDEI designs and develops micro-irrigation technology that saves up to 50-70% of water use and increases crop yield by 30-40% in 226 districts of India.

### Focus

Agriculture, Rural Development, Water

#### Background

About 60% of India's cultivable land is rain fed and remains critically dependent on dryland farming. Numerous analyses of the growing distress among farmers, especially small farm families, point to a severe water crisis. Small farms in India comprise 70% of the total agricultural land, and more than 60% of the farming community holds less than 0.4 hectares of land. Most farmers lack any insurance against risks caused by monsoons and falling groundwater levels and fluctuations in the international farm commodity markets. Despite 80-90% subsidies offered on irrigation and farm technologies, they remain out of reach for small farmers. The result is large-scale distress migration.

#### Innovations and Activities

Recognizing the high correlation between rural poverty and lack of access to water, International Development Enterprises India (IDEI) has identified micro-irrigation solutions as a strategic entry point to poverty alleviation. The not-for-profit organization designs, develops and delivers small plot irrigation technologies that are commercially viable, environment friendly, one-fifth the cost of its competitors, and scaled down to fit one-tenth of a hectare plots. These are sold through village market supply chains to small-holder farmers at an unsubsidized market price. IDEI also provides technical, financial, consulting and business development services to its customer base, which enables them to move on to high value commercial

agriculture. The small-holder farmers have therefore been able to earn a net additional income of US\$ 400 annually, thus emerging out of the poverty trap.

IDEI builds the supply chains and credit mechanisms necessary for farmers to succeed. Over a million small-holder farmer families have been reached through IDEI-promoted, low-cost irrigation technologies, such as the treadle pump and drip irrigation. A social impact assessment conducted by IDEI in 2006 revealed a notable shift from subsistence to profitable small-scale commercial farming. Farmers now cultivate throughout the year with increased food security, and, as a result, a decline in migration – 20% reported investing their income in education for their children and 15% have increased their spending on family health.

#### The Entrepreneur

Amitabha Sadangi was born in a village in Orissa on the east coast of India. He holds a postgraduate degree in labour and social welfare and a degree in law. Amitabha has spent 20 years in various aspects of rural development work. While working for Oxfam, he sharpened many of his ideas around market-based programmes for poverty alleviation. He first joined IDE International in 1992, served as the country director of IDE Sri Lanka, and then as deputy country director of IDE International's India programme. Amithabha is a founding board member of International Development Enterprises India, and has been selected to serve as its first Executive Director. Amitabha and IDEI have received several awards: the Ashden Outstanding Achievement Award, First Prize Winner (2009); Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy (2006); Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship (2005); The Templeton Freedom Prize for Social Entrepreneurship (2005); and Tech Museum Award for Economic Development (2004).





## Arbind Singh

Nidan

[www.nidan.in](http://www.nidan.in)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Nidan creates institutions and programmes aimed at economic and social development of India's poorest and marginalized workers.

### Focus

Advocacy for the Unorganized Sector, Entrepreneurship Generation, Livelihoods, Waste Management

#### Background

There are over 340 million workers, or roughly 92% of the country's working population, in India's informal sector. They contribute to about 60% of the national economic output. Despite their vast numbers and their substantial contribution to the economy, they make up the poorest segments of the population. On average, these workers do not earn much more than US\$ 1 a day and work is often seasonal. They do not belong to unions and are regularly exploited for their labour.

#### Innovation and Activities

Nidan builds profitable businesses and organizations that are led by workers from the informal sector – waste workers, rag pickers, vegetable vendors, construction labourers, domestic helpers, farmers and street traders. It does this by tapping into the wealth of the poor, primarily their numerical strength, and then aggregates them into economies of scale. This process of “collectivizing” generates social capital, representation and voice for the poor, which they then leverage to launch their own businesses. Businesses launched by Nidan have brought together

360,000 workers from the informal sector and positioned them as legitimate competitors in markets opening up throughout the country.

As an entry point, Arbind Singh and his team move into neighbourhoods to train and align individuals into profession-based groups. These groups quickly

generate connections between individuals, as they learn to link their personal struggles to the challenges of their occupational sectors. Once fragmented, traders and service providers now organize into broad-based occupational pressure groups. For Arbind, each pressure group is a nascent enterprise to be mentored until it emerges as an independent identity and registers profit curves. Every enterprise is decentralized and independent, with growth and operations left entirely to shareholders. Most are large enough to affect significant policy shift, like the National Association of Street Vendors, which successfully lobbied for the passage of the Act for Urban Vendors.

As entrepreneurs, the informal workers are reporting income growths of 100% or more. Waste collectors, for example, have realized 200% increase in their annual incomes. With secure and regular income growth has come access to social security, education, childcare and legal aid. Most significantly, Nidan is returning to underdeveloped states and organizations of informal workers a culture of accountability and honest enterprise. Its contracts are secured without bribes and at competitive market rates. This has soldered the confidence of the poorest in transparency and collective action.

#### The Entrepreneur

Arbind Singh spent his early years in Katihar, a district in India's north-eastern state of Bihar, which is a hub of first generation migrants who travel to the area in search of work. As a child, Arbind was perplexed by the routine eviction of neighbourhood vendors. After studying sociology and law in New Delhi, he returned to Bihar in the early 1990s to work with vendors, and has been active in the development sector for 15 fifteen years. Arbind started Nidan to support poor men and women and their children involved in the informal economy.



**Ashok Khosla**  
Development Alternatives  
[www.devalt.org](http://www.devalt.org)  
**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Development Alternatives' innovative technologies or methodologies always combine two goals: to create income for the poor and to regenerate the environment.

## Focus

Climate Change, Energy, Environment, Literacy, Sustainable and Rural Development, Technology, Water, Youth

### Background

In India, half of the rural population is unemployed, underemployed or informally employed. This population needs income-generating jobs that provide them with economic security and with the products and services required to satisfy their basic needs. At the same time, the industries that create these jobs must reduce their wasteful use of energy, water, forests and other natural resources. Conventional development practices only increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots. New technologies and institutional systems are needed to achieve equitable and environmentally sound development.

### Innovation and Activities

The strategy of Development Alternatives is to develop and deliver alternative technologies that are commercially viable and environmentally friendly. Among its successes are machines that produce standardized and affordable products for rural markets, such as roofing systems, compressed earth blocks, fired bricks, recycled paper, handloom textiles, cooking stoves, briquette presses and biomass-based electricity. Its simple but highly effective TARA micro-concrete roof tile kit, for example, provides employment for five people, while the TARA vertical shaft brick kiln reduces energy use by 55% and emissions by 50%. Development Alternatives' paper production units employ 40 workers to produce textured, high-quality paper out of rags

and recycled paper for use in stationery, cards and commercial products. DESI Power, the electric utility of Development Alternatives, installs mini power stations in villages, fuelled by weeds and agricultural wastes. TARAhaat, the ICT affiliate of Development Alternatives brings information technology to villages through its portal ([www.TARAhaat.com](http://www.TARAhaat.com)) and its rapidly growing network of over 400 franchised local telecentres, which provide a wide range of information services including educational courses, e-governance services and Internet connectivity to local people on a commercial basis. The Lifelines Project it is implementing in rural India uses mobile telephone technology to connect poor farmers across 1,000 villages to critical agricultural information through volunteers. Its functional Hindi literacy programme has made more than 50,000 rural women literate in less than 18 months. Local groups and official agencies use Development Alternatives' portable pollution monitoring kits to test water and air quality in cities and towns across India.

### The Entrepreneur

Ashok Khosla holds a PhD in Experimental Physics from Harvard University. He abandoned a promising scientific career to focus on issues of environment and development. After helping to design and teach Harvard's first course on the environment, he set up and directed the environmental policy unit for the government of India. Subsequently, he worked for the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in Kenya before starting Development Alternatives in 1983. Khosla has been a board member of many global environmental institutions, including the Club of Rome, IUCN, WWF, IISD, SEI and the Alliance for a New Humanity. He is also an advisor to UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank. In 2002, Khosla received the United Nations Sasakawa Environment Prize, and in 2008 received an Order of the British Empire by Her Majesty, the Queen of England. In 2009, he was elected president of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



## Brij Kothari

PlanetRead

[www.planetread.org](http://www.planetread.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Millions of people across India have weak reading skills despite having attended five years of primary school. PlanetRead is improving their literacy levels using Same Language Subtitling (SLS) on popular song-based film and television programmes.

### Focus

Communication/Media, Education

#### Background

India's 2001 Census indicates that India has made significant progress in the field of literacy, with 65.4% of its population (above 7 years old) literate compared to 52.2% in 1991. On the flip side, India is ranked an abysmal 147th out of 177 countries measured for literacy by UNESCO, and an estimated 44% of Class 5 students cannot read a Class 2 text. This discrepancy exists because self-reporting of literacy rates overstates the number of functional literates by capturing "neoliterates": individuals who only have rudimentary literacy skills despite having attended several years of primary school. Neo-literacy exists because many primary school students have neither home nor school environments that help augment their literacy. As such, every year approximately 27 million children leave primary school as non-functional readers.

#### Innovation and Activities

PlanetRead's key innovation, Same Language Subtitling (SLS), is simple and effective. It operates on the basis that literacy skills have to be constantly reinforced if neo-literates are to be prevented from regressing back to illiteracy. PlanetRead subtitles popular programming on India's national broadcasting agency, Doordarshan, exposing viewers to the written word and providing them with reading practice in an unobtrusive manner. Subtitles in the same language appear in perfect synchronization with the audio track so viewers can

read exactly what they are listening to. SLS is grounded in rigorous research, culturally appropriate and cost-effective. The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad and the Nielsen-ORG Center for Social Research have studied the effects of SLS in 3,179 households since 2003, and their results are telling: when exposed to 30 minutes of SLS per week, the literacy rate among students who had at least five years of Hindi schooling grew from 25% to 56%. Leveraging Doordarshan's media presence across India and the large number of film viewers in major Indian languages, PlanetRead estimates that every US\$ 1 spent on SLS is on average able to generate 30 minutes of reading practice to approximately 1,000 people for a year.

Currently, PlanetRead applies SLS to eight programmes, each in a major Indian language. Programmes have a weekly airtime of 30 minutes, reaching 200 million neo-literate viewers. Having made important inroads in convincing top Indian policymakers of SLS' value, PlanetRead aims to consolidate SLS adoption within India, and then scale its efforts internationally. PlanetRead also runs a for-profit venture, BookBox, which produces animated books with SLS in multiple languages.

#### The Entrepreneur

Brij Kothari came upon the idea of SLS in 1996 when he was watching a Spanish film with his friends. As a student of Spanish, he wished that the subtitles could be in Spanish so that he could read along and understand the dialogues. Brij has master degrees from the Indian Institute of Technology (Kanpur) and Cornell University in the United States. After completing his dissertation at Cornell, he returned to India as faculty at IIM Ahmedabad. Combating illiteracy through SLS has since become Brij's personal and professional passion.



## Ela Bhatt and Mirai Chatterjee

Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

[www.sewa.org](http://www.sewa.org)

### Schwab Social Entrepreneurs

SEWA provides support to poor, self-employed women in countries with large informal economies.

### Focus

Enterprise Development, Financial Inclusion, Labour Conditions and Unemployment, Rural Development, Women, Social Security, Communications/Media, Culture and Handicrafts

### Background

About 94% of the women's workforce in India is self-employed. Yet, self-employed women have historically enjoyed few legal protections or workers' rights. Most are illiterate and subject to exploitation and harassment by moneylenders, employers and officials. In 1972, Ela Bhatt, a lawyer who was chief of the women's section of the Textile Labour Association in Ahmedabad, witnessed the terrible conditions faced by women working as head-loaders, weavers, needlecraft workers, cigarette rollers and waste collectors. She began helping women to organize themselves.

### Innovation and Activities

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) provides comprehensive support to poor, self-employed women in countries with large informal economies. Its efforts over three decades to increase the bargaining power, economic opportunities, health security, legal representation and organizational abilities of Indian women have brought dramatic improvements to thousands of lives and influenced similar initiatives around the globe. Based in the Indian state of Gujarat, SEWA's one million members include 500,000 women representing more than 100 informal trades within the state and an additional 500,000 members in eight other states. SEWA is the largest women's union in India, offering its members a broad array of livelihood, financial, health, childcare,

insurance, legal, vocational and education services. Its members have created 100 cooperatives and over 3,000 producers' groups, thereby forging market linkages and enhancing their bargaining position. The efforts have had so much success that, from 1994-98, members increased employment income by 600%. SEWA Bank, with 300,000 savers, has issued loans to thousands of members. To provide for its members' healthcare, SEWA has also helped them start health cooperatives and developed an insurance programme that provides members' coverage for healthcare, emergencies and loss of life. A SEWA-affiliated team of 500 midwives and health workers serves the healthcare needs of 250,000 individuals. The insurance programme has now developed into the VimoSEWA cooperative, India's first such national-level organization.

### The Entrepreneurs

After graduating with a law degree in 1954, Ela Bhatt joined the Textile Labour Association, a union founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1917. While working there, she observed the conditions of the nonorganized sector – primarily comprised of women – and decided to help “unionize” them. Bhatt is the recipient of the Magsaysay Award, the Right Livelihood Award and other national and international honours. She is currently a member of the Council of Elders, led by Nelson Mandela. Mirai Chatterjee has a BA in History and Science from Harvard University and a Masters in Hygiene and Public Health from Johns Hopkins University. She is SEWA's director for social security director, responsible for healthcare, childcare and insurance programmes. Chatterjee is on the boards of several organizations in India, including the Friends of Women's World Banking and the Public Health Foundation of India. She is adviser to the National Rural Health Mission and was a commissioner for the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2005-2008).



**Harish Hande**  
Selco Solar Light  
[www.selco-india.com](http://www.selco-india.com)  
**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

SELCO Solar Light provides sustainable energy solutions and services to under-served households and businesses in India.

## Focus

Energy, Environment, Rural Development

### Background

About 57% of India's population does not have electricity and for many more, the supply is unreliable. SELCO's approach to the lack of working electricity through much of rural India relies on three tenets: the poor can afford sustainable technologies; the poor can maintain sustainable technologies; and one can run a commercially viable venture serving the needs of the poor.

### Innovation and Activities

SELCO Solar Light has pioneered access to rural solar electrification for families living below the poverty line through a combination of customized lighting systems, innovative financing, and an understanding of market needs of different user groups. Rather than focus on a saturated solar technology production field, SELCO brings the sustainable technology to the base of the pyramid using financing mechanisms to make it affordable and productive for the end user. To do so, SELCO pioneers linkages between technology, financing, energy services, income generation and quality of life. The organization runs its grassroots operations through 25 Energy Service Centres (ESCs). The centres market, sell, install and service SELCO's products. The company's core business is the sale of PhotoVoltaic (PV) solar-home systems that provide electricity for lighting as well as water pumping, communications, computing, entertainment, and

small business appliances. The company works with banks to structure innovative financing for customers.

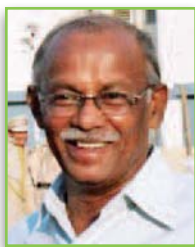
A standard four-light system, for example, costs users approximately US\$ 380. A user will usually pay a small down payment and then pay monthly installments of US\$ 6-8 over five years. The user can also pay from extra income brought in from additional work made possible with the light and savings from eliminating costly fossil fuels with customized payment schedules.

SELCO further spreads the sustainable technology and creates livelihoods by creating "business associates". These entrepreneurs lease solar-powered lights to street vendors in the evening. SELCO has reached 80,000 clients across Karnataka and Kerala, and has recently moved into Gujarat. Solar electrification has led to improvements in the quality of life for thousands of people,

including better education outcomes for children who can now study at night.

### The Entrepreneur

Dr Harish Hande is an engineering graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. He earned his doctorate in energy engineering, specializing in solar energy, at the University of Massachusetts. Harish originally started his PhD thesis in heat transfer. But, when visiting the Dominican Republic, he saw areas with worse poverty than India that were using solar energy and decided to shift his academic focus. Upon returning to Massachusetts, he flung his heat transfer thesis into the river. He then started anew on solar electrification in rural areas, conducting much of his research in India, Sri Lanka and the Dominican Republic. He is widely recognized as an international expert in the field of renewable energy.



## Jockin Arputham and Sheela Patel

Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC)

[www.sparcindia.org](http://www.sparcindia.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneurs**

As part of a three-way alliance, SPARC works to ensure secure housing and infrastructure for India's urban poor.

### Focus

Land Security, Housing, Infrastructure

#### Background

India has one of the world's largest urban populations, with about 350 million people living in cities. The percentage of people living under the poverty line in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, and these numbers are rising. Because cities are poorly planned, most poor people live as squatters on private or public lands and have inadequate access to basic services. This has a significant impact on their health, education and income. Slum dwellers are constantly threatened by eviction and treated as non-citizens who have encroached on cities that need their labour but unwilling to accommodate their housing needs.

#### Innovation and Activities

The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC) has forged a three-way alliance with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan (MM) to tackle housing and infrastructure issues for the urban poor. NSDF organizes and mobilizes the urban poor and negotiates with resource providing institutions, while MM supports and trains women's collectives to administer and manage their community's resources and participate in NSDF activities. SPARC provides the administrative, financial, policy, documentation and other support necessary for these processes to be successful on the ground. Over the past 20 years, the alliance has developed a strategy to achieve its goal of ensuring secure housing and infrastructure for the urban poor. This involves: setting up community area resource centres which

we call; encouraging communities to join a savings and credit programme that simultaneously builds trust within a settlement and strengthens the financial assets of participating families; and demonstrating through pilot projects the kinds of housing and infrastructure models that work for the poor, as well as the city, and can be scaled up substantially. Today, the alliance works in about 70 cities in India and has networks in about 20 countries.

#### The Entrepreneurs

Born in Mumbai, Sheela Patel has worked since 1974 with urban poor communities, with a particular focus on women and children. From her experience, she came to realize that the most efficiently delivered welfare does not produce real change in the lives of the poor, and unless organizations working on poverty issues find new ways to address these problems there can be no change. She founded SPARC with other like-minded peers to bring about that change. Patel has been recognized for her work and is the recipient of 2009 David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award and the 2000 UNHABITAT Habitat Award. She also chairs the board of Shack Dwellers' International.

Jockin Arputham is from the southern India state of Karnataka. He ran away from home as an adolescent and came to Mumbai where he lived on the streets and in the slums. Arputham has worked for more than 40 years in India's slums and shanty towns, building representative organizations to partner with governments and international agencies for the betterment of urban living. He is the president of the National Slum Dwellers Federation, which he founded in the 1970s, and of Slum Dwellers International, which networks slum dwellers from over 20 countries across the world. Arputham was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding in 2000.



**Joseph Madiath**  
Gram Vikas  
[www.gramvikas.org](http://www.gramvikas.org)  
**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Helping villagers pool resources to set up water and sanitation infrastructure, Gram Vikas improves the quality of life of poor rural communities in India.

## Focus

Education, Health, Rural Development, Water and Sanitation

### Background

Joe Madiath became acquainted with Orissa's rural poor when he led a group of student volunteers from Madras University who were providing relief after a cyclone devastated the area in 1971. Struck by the terrible poverty, particularly among *Adivasis* (indigenous people) and *Dalits* (Untouchables), Madiath remained to provide further assistance. At that time, Orissa's villages lacked even the most basic infrastructure. He quickly realized that the limited economic options were driving villagers to urban slums in a futile search for prosperity. Hoping to reverse this trend, he and a few friends started Gram Vikas with the goal of improving living conditions in villages, increasing local economic options and restoring dignity to marginalized populations.

### Innovation and Activities

Working in extremely impoverished areas of Orissa, Gram Vikas helps tens of thousands of villagers organize themselves to solve a wide range of social and health problems. Gram Vikas demands the participation of each and every adult in its programmes and provides incentives to encourage villagers to pool their resources to improve village infrastructure and sanitation. This process has led to increased awareness of rights and civic duties and more effective political mobilization.

The core methodology of Gram Vikas is to harness, through full community mobilization, all physical and

human capital in a village. The organization works with the villagers to create and manage a "village corpus," a fund that draws cash and in-kind contributions from all families based on their ability to pay. Once the fund is established, the organization contributes supplementary resources or makes soft loans for specific projects. Under a state project, Gram Vikas set up 55,000 biogas systems in Orissa to provide inexpensive fuel for villagers. Through its Rural Health and Environment Program, Gram Vikas has helped more than 35,362 families in 522 villages build low-cost facilities for safe drinking water and proper sanitation. As a result, every family in the village has a toilet, bathing room and protected piped water supply; water-related diseases have been reduced drastically. All constructions make use of the villagers' own resources, materials and labour, demystifying construction techniques and enhancing their skills. The same approach has been used to build roads, drainage systems, community halls and schools.

The Gram Vikas Rural Health and Environment Program has won numerous international awards, including the UN Habitat Award (2003), World Bank Development Market Place Award (2003), Kyoto World Water Grand Prize (2006) and Skoll Award (2006).

### The Entrepreneur

Recognizing the poor conditions workers faced on his family farms, Joe Madiath at the age of 12 led a movement to organize them to lobby for better treatment. His confrontational role was met with hostility as his family banished him to a boarding school 2,500 km away from home. When he returned at age 16, Joe embarked on a bicycle tour across his country and worked with tribal people along the way to improve their conditions. After the successful launch of Gram Vikas, Joe's family finally accepted his views, and his father became fully supportive of his son's activities as a social entrepreneur.



## Padmanabha Rao and Rama Rao

RIVER - Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources

[www.river-rv.org](http://www.river-rv.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneurs**

RIVER - Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources (Krishnamurthi Foundation India) has developed and scaled a multi-grade, multi-level model of primary education so that rural and marginalized children can access quality education.

### Focus

Education

#### Background

Primary education in India is assailed by many problems – the lack of teachers, disengaged students, irrelevant textbook content and chaotic classrooms with multiple grade students under one instructor. While the government has invested heavily in universal primary education, in less developed areas school dropout rates remain as high as 40%; 70% of students in Class 1 fail to reach Class 5. Overburdened teachers have little creative control of classroom content and teaching methodologies.

Left with little external support, teacher absentee rates can be as high as 50%. Collectively, this is leading to dire educational outcomes for students in rural India.

#### Innovation and Activities

RIVER's innovation is the “multi-grade, multi-level ladder of learning” (MGML) approach. MGML effectively addresses the multi-grade, single teacher reality of India's mainstream primary education system. It breaks down the curriculum into multiple learning units and then aligns learning with students' ability instead of age – students progress along the ladder at their own pace and re-engage at the same level after absences. Children from different levels learn together in a self-directed fashion, freeing up teachers' attention to work with weaker students. Local teachers gain ownership over their learning materials by developing “School-in-a-Box” sets, consisting of cards, charts and songs customized for their students. RIVER gives teachers extensive support through training, information exchanges and distance learning tools in their network. RIVER also engages parents and local

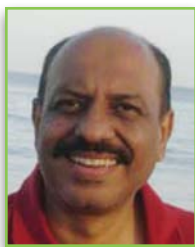
communities in the education accountability chain, creating feedback loops for quality control wherever its model is replicated.

RIVER is financed largely by state and national governments to train educators in the MGML approach. Key players in public education – education secretaries, district administrators, principals, and teachers – train in the MGML process for two weeks at the Rishi Valley Institute in Andhra Pradesh. RIVER then closely mentors the teams over a period of two years to ensure proper implementation of the model. Results so far are telling. The approach has scaled up to 75,000 schools in 16 states as part of India's universal education initiative. Attendance in RIVER schools is above 80%; dropout rates are 30% lower. Student learning levels are also 40% higher than those of public schools. UNESCO reports confirm improved math and verbal scores of RIVER students and the enthusiastic learning environment generated by the program. RIVER's “School-in-a-Box” learning materials are cheaper and more durable than textbooks, and its work has created a critical mass of teachers who are replicating the model within their states. Internationally, RIVER is already replicating its work in Ethiopia and partnerships are being formalized in nine other countries. RIVER has also launched research partnerships with Harvard University, the University of Metz (France) and the University of Regensburg (Germany).

#### The Entrepreneurs

The husband and wife team of Padmanabha and Rama Rao joined the Rishi Valley education outreach programme in 1987 with post-graduate degrees in education. From 1987-1993, they developed the MGML ladder and tested it in 16 satellite schools with marginalized rural areas. Today, Padmanabha and Rama serve as co-directors of RIVER, travelling widely across India to promote their methodology. They are actively involved with India's key curriculum platform, the National Centre for Education Resource and Training, and have been involved with numerous education appraisal and evaluation missions.





## Rajendra Joshi

Saath

[www.saath.org](http://www.saath.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Saath's public-private partnership model is integrating Ahmedabad's slum residents into the formal economy while improving their living conditions.

### Focus

Education, Health, Financial Inclusion, Labour and Unemployment

### Background

In 2007, UN-HABITAT estimated that 1 billion people worldwide live in slums, and that this figure is likely to double by 2030. Rapid urban migration will exacerbate this problem in India, where more than 60 million people live in slums. Slum residents often have substandard housing, insecure land tenure, poor access to basic services and a systemic lack of opportunities. Simultaneously, slums are vital pockets of economic activity; there is considerable potential for wealth creation if their residents can be plugged into the formal economy. While government infrastructure investments and programmes are essential for uplifting slum populations, there is a dire need for social enterprises to help them utilize resources offered by the public and private sectors.

### Innovation and Activities

Saath's work in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, has demonstrated that a market-based approach can successfully generate socioeconomic wealth for slum populations while creating market opportunities at the base of the pyramid for companies. Its Integrated Slum Development (ISD) approach offers an array of services across healthcare, education, livelihood development, microfinance, infrastructure and information.

Saath's work began in health and education when founder Rajendra Joshi saw the need to provide basic public services in the face of government failures. Today, these programmes impact 14,000 households annually. Since the 1990s, Saath's Slum Networking Program has brought slum residents, utility companies

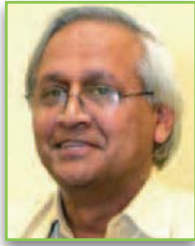
and the Gujarat government together to provide water, electricity and road infrastructure to over 6,000 households on a fee-paying basis. Saath's livelihood programmes with employers have placed 25,000 youths and housewives into formal sector employment, and are complemented by its growing microfinance practice. Saath has expanded these services to rural Gujarat along with its natural resource management programmes, impacting over 7,000 households.

Saath's latest innovation is the Urban Resource Center (URC), which serves as critical linkage points to connect slum residents with information, knowledge and services from governments, NGOs and private companies. To date, four URCs serve 13,000 households across Ahmedabad for an annual subscription fee. Saath is also actively working with academic institutions, NGOs and urban planners to draft policy suggestions addressing land-tenure issues critical to slum development.

### The Entrepreneur

Rajendra Joshi was born and raised in Tanzania before moving back to India for post-secondary education. During this time he was struck by the inequality among different castes and communities. After working as a salesman for two years after graduation, he was introduced to the work of Father Emiro Reviti, a Jesuit priest working in Ahmedabad's slums. As an educator, Rajendra developed a curriculum to attract and retain students in schools. His experience allowed him to listen to the stories of slum residents first-hand as they displayed both anguish and hope amidst difficult living conditions.

Rajendra also realized that contrary to popular belief, slum residents were actually willing to pay for essential goods and services, and not solely interested in free handouts from the government and NGOs. This sparked Rajendra's desire to pioneer a sustainable response that would help lift slum residents out of poverty and place them at the centre of development.



## Sanjit (Bunker) Roy

Barefoot College

[www.barefootcollege.org](http://www.barefootcollege.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Barefoot College turns rural school dropouts into “barefoot” doctors, engineers, architects, teachers and IT specialists, bringing the benefits of improved technologies to hundreds of thousands across India.

### Focus

Education, Solar Electrification, Rural Development, Technology, Rain Water Harvesting, Women's Empowerment

#### Background

Created in 1972 by a group of students from top Indian universities under the leadership of Bunker Roy, Barefoot College in Tilonia, Rajasthan, was inspired by the principles of Gandhi and around the concept of the village as a self-reliant unit. The college benefits the poorest of the poor who have no alternatives, encouraging practical knowledge and skills rather than paper qualifications through a learning-by-doing process of education. In particular, the college addresses problems of drinking water, girls' education, health and sanitation, rural unemployment, income generation, electricity and power, as well as social awareness and the conservation of ecological systems in rural communities.

#### Innovation and Activities

Barefoot College identifies poor, rural, jobless and unemployable youth who have been unable to finish their formal education and have returned to their villages as dropouts. These individuals are trained to be “barefoot” doctors, teachers, engineers, architects, designers, metal workers, IT specialists and communicators.

The innovation lies in the simple and informal method of confidence building. Barefoot College

does not believe that educational degrees are either relevant or important when it comes to developing people; only a hands-on approach achieves results. The Barefoot method challenges the notion that formal education is required, for example, to become a solar engineer.

The Barefoot campus itself is a testament to the quality of its training programmes. Barefoot educated architects and masons constructed most of the campus out of low-cost materials. It is the only fully solar-powered college in India. Barefoot technicians have also installed solar-powered electricity in several thousand houses in eight Indian states and installed hand pumps in the Himalayas, a task which urban engineers had declared technically impossible. Barefoot water engineers have planned and implemented piped drinking water in their communities, while Barefoot educators have been trained as pre-primary and school teachers, instructing some 3,000 boys and girls who attend one of the 150 Barefoot-run night schools. In local communities, Barefoot facilitators use puppets and theatre to change attitudes around issues such as child marriage, women's rights and child literacy.

#### The Entrepreneur

Bunker Roy has been a leading figure in the Indian NGO community for the past 30 years and is a source of inspiration for many younger social entrepreneurs. The code of conduct debate he launched 10 years ago was then a groundbreaking, controversial, but visionary initiative. It sought to promote the standardization of social auditing to render the Indian voluntary social sector more transparent, effective, reliable and accountable.



## Shobha A. Arole and Rajanikant S. Arole

Comprehensive Rural Health Project (CRHP)

[www.jamkhed.org](http://www.jamkhed.org)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneurs**

CRHP has set a new standard in rural community-based healthcare programmes in the last decades.

### Focus

Health, Rural Development, Women

#### Background

In 1970, malnutrition and infant mortality were pervasive problems in India's state of Maharashtra. Less than 1% of the population had systems for the disposal of solid waste; modern health services were non-existent and cholera, typhoid and malaria were highly prevalent. Having grown up in rural India, Raj Arole understood that any healthcare delivery system would have to overcome superstitions about the causes of illness as well as caste, religious, gender and political divisions. After graduating from medical school in the US, Arole and his late wife, Mabelle, returned to India. Using available resources and respecting local customs and traditions, they began engaging villagers in the creation of modern healthcare services for the rural poor.

#### Innovation and Activities

The Comprehensive Rural Health Project (CRHP), a community-based healthcare programme for the rural poor, has brought about extraordinary health and social improvements in 300 villages in India's state of Maharashtra. Despite extreme poverty, severe gender and caste inequality, and minimal public health services, CRHP has attained phenomenal outcomes by training local village healthcare workers and by helping villagers to address economic, social, and agricultural and health needs through self-organization. The Aroles initially gained acceptance from village leaders. To earn the trust of the community, they invited all groups to volleyball games, which became meeting places for discussions

about village development. These discussions led to the formation of farmers' clubs to address such issues as inadequate drinking water and poor sanitation. The clubs eventually conducted their own health survey, a crucial step towards overcoming traditional beliefs about the causes of disease and identified simple ways to improve health, such as draining puddles that attracted mosquitoes.

The clubs also encouraged women to become village health workers. With coaching and guidance from the Aroles, they provided prenatal care, monitored child immunizations and coordinated village waste management. The village health workers in turn organized women's development associations, which initiated credit circles to fund cooperative business enterprises. From 1971- 1993, infant mortality rates in areas where CRHP worked plunged by 84%, while maternal mortality dropped by 75%.

#### The Entrepreneurs

Raj Arole was born in Jamkhed to a Dalit family (Untouchables) that had converted to Christianity. His parents, who were schoolteachers, sent him to a private English school, where he remained consistently at the top of his class. Against the odds because of his caste, Raj went on to one of the most prestigious medical colleges in India, the Christian Medical College at Vellore. There, he met his future wife Mabelle. On their wedding day, they took a vow to work together and devote their lives to the marginalized and disenfranchised people living in Indian villages. Today, their daughter Shobha, a medical doctor and anesthesiologist, follows in their footsteps. Raj Arole continues to work with the communities he and his late wife dedicated their lives to serve.



**Thulasiraj Ravilla**  
Aravind Eye Hospital  
[www.aravind.org](http://www.aravind.org)  
**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

Specializing in state-of-the-art comprehensive eye care, Aravind treats over 2.5 million patients a year, with an emphasis on providing services to the rural poor.

## Focus

Health

### Background

There are an estimated 45 million blind people in the world and an additional 269 million who are visually impaired. About 90% live in developing countries where they must also face the challenges of poverty, illiteracy and diseases of epidemic proportions. In India alone there are 12 million blind people, more than in any other country. Most of the blindness is easily treatable by simple cataract surgery or with a pair of glasses. The challenge is to address affordability and access issues so that those who can have their sight restored can re-enter the workforce and support themselves and their families.

### Innovation and Activities

Since its inception in 1973 in the southern Indian city of Madurai, the Aravind Eye Hospital has grown from a small clinic of 11 beds to one of the largest and most productive eye care facilities in the world. The Aravind eye care system encompasses five hospitals, three managed eye hospitals, a manufacturing centre for ophthalmic products, an international research foundation and a resource and training centre that is revolutionizing hundreds of eye care programmes across the developing world.

Aravind has built a sustainable service delivery model, with 60% of its services being free or significantly subsidized for low income families. Some of the activities and innovations behind the model are:

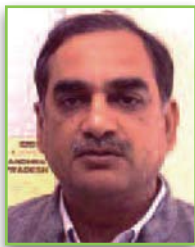
producing and making available high-quality, low-cost intraocular lenses and other ophthalmic supplies; extensive use of telemedicine and other such technologies to improve rural access; and recruiting and training hundreds of young rural women each year as eye care technicians, thereby giving them a career opportunity and significantly reducing the cost of eye care.

Aravind's success in eliminating needless blindness is based on engaging in direct action and creating competition. Real competition is encouraged through a proactive capacity-building process that shares lessons learned detailed procedures, systems, forms and software. The Lions Aravind Institute of Community Ophthalmology (LAICO), for example, was set up in 1993 to help Aravind transfer the best of its expertise and experience to other eye care institutes in India and elsewhere. It has helped replicate best practices in over 270 eye hospitals worldwide.

### The Entrepreneur

Thulasiraj Ravilla was born in a small village in southern India. After receiving his MBA from IIM in Calcutta, he stayed in the city and worked for a multinational company. In 1981, Ravilla joined Aravind and soon after spent a year at the University of Michigan to study hospital and health management. Since then he has been part of the leadership team that has built Aravind into the world's largest eye care provider. Honours include the 2007 Champalimaud Foundation Vision Award and the 2008 Gates Award for Global Health.

The Aravind Eye Hospital was founded by pioneering eye surgeon Dr. G. Venkataswamy under the GOVEL Trust in 1976. He personally performed over 100,000 successful eye surgeries and remained chairman of the Govel Trust until he passed away in July 2006.



## Vijay Mahajan

Bhartiya Samruddhi Investments & Consulting Services (BASIX)

[www.basixindia.com](http://www.basixindia.com)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

BASIX promotes sustainable livelihoods for the rural poor and women through the provision of financial services and technical assistance.

### Focus

Microfinance, Rural Development

#### Background

While the concept of microfinance institutions (MFIs) spread rapidly in neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, India had a slower start. Until the early 1990s, banks were nationalized and mandated to reach the poor with subsidized loans. While the intention was laudable, in practice loans to the rural poor by the banking sector were riddled with corruption and red tape, limiting what could have been a powerful economic intervention for social change. In 1992, India started to reform its banking system to restore financial health. As a result, the number of small loans going to rural areas declined rapidly, since they are less profitable. BASIX was set up in 1996 with an ambitious target: to disburse microcredit to one million of the rural poor in India.

#### Innovation and Activities

BASIX is the first MFI in India and among the first in the world to attract commercial equity investments internationally and within India. By successfully lobbying for changes in the Indian regulatory policy framework, BASIX helped create a viable institutional space for MFIs in India. The mission of BASIX is to promote a critical mass of opportunities for the rural poor and to attract commercial funding by proving that lending to the poor can be a viable business. BASIX tailors its lending techniques and distribution channels to different customer groups and arranges technical assistance and support services for its clients. It also aggressively uses IT applications to process large numbers of transactions and support innovative delivery channels, such as franchise agents using hand-held devices to serve poor borrowers. But

BASIX does not confine its loans to the landless poor and self-employed, as do most other MFIs. Rather, it argues that most of the poorer population groups prefer to be employed. Thus, providing credit to the microenterprises that can employ them is as important as providing credit to the poor themselves.

Studies show that, on average, the income of BASIX borrowers increases 20-30% in 2-3 years, and that they also generate substantial wage employment for others. Based in Hyderabad, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, BASIX has approximately 250 full-time employees, mostly in rural districts, and over 400 village-based customer service agents reaching over 7,500 villages in more than 40 districts in 9 states of India. BASIX works with nearly 95,000 borrowers, including women in self-help groups (SHGs) and federations. BASIX has cumulatively disbursed over 137,000 loans worth over US\$ 33 million, 41% of which are loans to SHGs. BASIX's pioneering work with SHGs and its advocacy for microcredit has been one of the factors that led Indian banks to extend over US\$ 44 million worth of microcredit to more than 12 million rural poor women since 1998.

#### The Entrepreneur

Educated at India's prestigious Institute of Technology in Delhi and at the Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, and a fellow at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Vijay Mahajan could have chosen many different life paths and lucrative careers. Instead, he chose to channel his talents and education to improve rural Indian society. In 1983, he cofounded PRADAN, which is one of India's most respected rural development NGOs, and in 1998, he co-founded Sa-Dhan, the association of Indian MFIs. In 2001, he helped found the Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), a capacity-building institution for the over half a million women's self-help groups in the state. Vijay has published a book on the rural non-farming sector in India and over 50 articles on rural development and microfinance.



## Vikram K. Akula

SKS Microfinance

[www.sksmicrofinance.com](http://www.sksmicrofinance.com)

**Schwab Social Entrepreneur**

SKS Microfinance empowers India's poor, especially in rural areas, to become economically self-reliant through access to financial services.

### Focus

Microfinance, Technology

#### Background

The commercial banking sector in India has traditionally avoided lending to the poor, deeming them risky and unprofitable due to lack of collateral and the high transaction costs of small loans. The Grameen Bank model of group lending has largely overcome the risk problem by demonstrating that group guarantors can ensure high repayment. However, high transaction costs have long remained a challenge to growth. To date, most Indian microfinance institutions have not been able to significantly scale their operations and reach a large population group across different states.

#### Innovation and Activities

SKS Microfinance applies global business best practices to the field of microfinance. It was launched to address a fundamental flaw in microfinance, namely, the inability to scale to large numbers. SKS has overcome this challenge by applying three innovative principles: using a profit-oriented model to overcome capital constraints; leveraging best practices for scaling from the business world to overcome capacity constraint; and using technology to automate processes and lower costs.

SKS' commercial model has led to sustained growth rates of more than 128% and attracted major equity investments from premier venture capitalists, including Vinod Khosla, founder of Sun Microsystems, and Sequoia Capital. As of November 2009, SKS had US\$ 641 million worth of outstanding loans to more than 5.3 million poor women. Since inception, it has disbursed

more than US\$ 2 billion in microloans. In 2008 it launched micro-insurance services with Indian partner Bajaj Allianz. From training field agents to streamlining data entry, SKS has created standardized operations that can be widely scaled. SKS also automates microfinance through technology in the back office and the field. Rather than relying on paper collection sheets and manually entering data in ledgers, SKS created its own automated Management Information System (MIS). Its user-friendly technology allows field staff with just a high school education to manage the system independently. Subsequently, a loan officer can handle as many as 1,000 customers with a portfolio of 3 to 5 million rupees – a standard unheard of in microfinance.

#### The Entrepreneur

Vikram Akula was born in Hyderabad and moved to the US when he was three years old. He witnessed India's poverty on numerous family visits to India and made a promise to himself to do something to eradicate poverty. After college, he returned to India and worked as a community organizer with an Indian non-profit. During this time, he realized the most important initiative for the poor was economic development. Feeling that the microfinance sector was not scaling rapidly enough, he launched SKS.

Vikram is a former management consultant with McKinsey & Company and has over a decade of work and research experience in microfinance. He holds a BA from Tufts and an MA from Yale. His PhD dissertation from the University of Chicago focused on the impact of microfinance. In 2006, Vikram was named by TIME Magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential people. SKS Microfinance is a recipient of the Grameen Foundation USA Excellence Award, CGAP Pro-Poor Innovation Award, and Digital Partners SEL Award.





SCHWAB FOUNDATION FOR **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**  
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