

Indian Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2009 announced

5 November 2009

New Delhi, India, 6 November 2009 – The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has selected three social enterprises with significant impact in India as winners of the India Social Entrepreneurs Award for 2009: Rajendra Joshi, Managing Trustee, Saath; Brij Kothari, Director, PlanetRead; and Padmanabha and Rama Rao, Co-Directors, RIVER. These social entrepreneurs will be honoured at the India Economic Summit on Monday 9 November in the presence of Anand Sharma, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Venu Srinivasan, President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

This is the fifth edition of the award, which has been given annually since 2005 to individuals that have founded organizations or companies that do not maximize profits, but benefit society or the environment. Previous winners, which have been included in the Schwab Foundation's global network of the world's 150 leading social entrepreneurs, include Vikram Akula, SKS Microfinance (2006), Harish Hande, SELCO (2007) and Arbind Singh (2008). For the first time since the beginning of the competition in 2005, the Foundation Board has decided not to pick just one winner in a country, but three. The Board thus acknowledged that India is home to a significant number of the world's leading social entrepreneurs.

The three winners are:

Rajendra Joshi, Saath (<http://www.saath.org>), Ahmedabad

Today, more than 60 million people live in slums across India, lacking access to healthcare, education, employment and housing. In 1989, Rajendra Joshi developed Saath, which uses public-private partnerships to improve the lives of over 40,000 people per year. In 2009, Saath's employment programmes with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation placed 8,000 slum residents in jobs at firms like Tata Indicom and Kotak Mahindra. Its Slum Networking Program has improved the physical infrastructure of 6,000 households while its four Urban Resource Centers in Ahmedabad have given 22,000 slum households access to microfinance accounts, insurance packages, preventive and natal healthcare, and pre-school education.

Brij Kothari, PlanetRead (<http://www.planetread.org>), Mumbai

Two hundred million Indians remain functionally illiterate despite having completed Class V education. Brij Kothari's organization, PlanetRead, uses Same Language Subtitling, or SLS, to improve Indians' reading abilities. Subtitles are inserted for popular Bollywood songs, and broadcasted in eight major languages on Doordarshan's network. Reading practice thus becomes a by-product of entertainment already consumed by audiences. Research by IIM (Ahmedabad) has shown that regular exposure to SLS increases the percentage of children who become good readers after having received five years of primary schooling from 25% to 56%.

Padmanabha and Rama Rao (<http://www.rishivalley.org>), RIVER, Andhra Pradesh

Teachers in India's 1.1 million single-teacher schools lack the appropriate methodologies, curricula and support systems to educate their students. RIVER's education model helps teachers adapt to these challenges. Government curricula are adapted for local context, and divided into smaller modules so learning is aligned with each student's ability. Local accountability chains are established between teachers, parents and government. RIVER's success in improving the quality of primary education has led to its replication in over 75,000 schools as part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, reaching eight million children across India per year.

The Schwab Foundation also announced that Jubilant Organosys will partner with the Schwab Foundation as of 2010 to identify and highlight the "Social Entrepreneur of the Year" India.

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