



Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs – India Economic Summit 2009

Vikram Akula – SKS Microfinance – India



Although microfinance is not new in India, Vikram Akula innovated the whole concept. By standardizing, using principles of McDonalds and Starbucks, he managed to overcome the problem of insufficient dissemination of microfinance especially in rural areas. Since its foundation in 1998, SKS Microfinance has lend over 3,2 billion rupees, has provided loans to nearly 350 000 poor woman and has approximately benefited 1,5 million individuals.

Harish Hande – SELCO Solar Light (P) Limited – India



SELCO's approach to the lack of working electricity through much of rural India relies on the beliefs that the poor can afford and maintain sustainable technologies. The main activity of SELCO is the sale of PhotoVoltaic (PV) solar-home-systems that provide lighting and also energy that is suitable for radios and fans. Targeting low income and poor rural families, SELCO works with banks and MFIs to create financing mechanisms that suit the budget of clients. Lastly, SELCO further spreads the sustainable technology and creates livelihoods by creating 'business associates' that lease solar powered lights to street vendors in the evening.

Amitabha Sadangi – International Development Enterprises - India



IDEI has identified micro irrigation solutions as a strategic entry point to poverty alleviation. IDEI's two main products are the treadle pump and the drip irrigation system. A treadle pump is a foot operated pump that can irrigate small plots of land in regions that have a higher water table than 25 feet. The drip irrigation system has been adapted by IDEI for farm families living in arid and/or water scarce regions where groundwater pumping is not environmentally appropriate. The technology saves up to 50-70% water and increases crop yield by 30-40%. In order to make these technologies available to farmers, IDEI builds the supply chains and credit mechanisms that gives farmers the loans to enter into the local markets.

Arbind Singh – Nidan – India



Nidan works in the most politically difficult areas of India to help build livelihoods for marginalized informal workers. The Nidan approach gathers informal workers around a particular industry (e.g. waste collection), helps incubate their business, builds a collective voice, and leverages economies of scale to make them economically competitive for industrial-level contracts. Thus far, Nidan has helped 360,000 unorganized workers and positioned them as legitimate competitors in markets opening up in globalizing cities of India.

Rory Stear – Freeplay Energy Group - UK, South Africa



Freeplay has distributed over 250,000 self-powered radios in sub-Saharan Africa, providing continuous access to information and education to more than 6 million people. Freeplay's patented wind-up technology has been used also for torches, water purifiers, cell phone chargers and fetal heart monitors. The popularity of its products in affluent markets allows the Foundation to buy the products at a subsidized rate for humanitarian and development efforts.