

## **“Develop your own Village”**

### **Hamaare Haathon Badalte Gaon (Our Hands for changing our Villages)**

— Project Concept by INDIA Redefined

This is a call to be a part of Collective Responsibility of four pillars of a nation, namely Citizens, Corporate, NGOs & Government, on a Common United Platform (CUP) of INDIA Redefined which is aiming to make more Doers than Beneficiaries. Best Humanitarian Initiative 2009 award winner INDIA Redefined (IR) which started as a social experiment and is now emerging as a People's Movement in last two years to create the "Unified Diversity" of the subcontinent known as INDIA into "Diversified Unity" of a HAPPY INDIA. INDIA Redefined, with supporters across Globe, is actually creating responsible, empowered citizens by bringing about “Behavioral Change”.

“Develop your own Village” was initially thought for Global Indians Group (GIG) & NRIs, but many Indians living in urban areas have shown interest in this so they can also take this up. Majority of India lives in villages. Lack of opportunities is forcing people to migrate to urban areas. Unless we create opportunities for people in the villages, give them a reason to remain in villages and promote entrepreneurship and agricultural at village level, redefining of India will remain an urban phenomenon. We have to look at our own villages – develop these, educate the people there, create awareness and opportunities for the people of our own villages. If we make our roots strong – we shall make the country strong. We are working on creating a set of activities and small projects which anyone can take back to his village and with active involvement of the villagers there, can bring about positive changes, helping Redefine India.

#### **Do You Want To Do Something for the Development of Your Village**

You can help your village to develop through INDIA Redefined platform. Your initiative can benefit any or many of the following

- To your childhood classmates, relatives and community
- To your birth/childhood place
- To the fond memories of your parents
- To the fond memories of your grand parents
- To your children
- To your great grand children
- To your native place
- To provide sustainable livelihood to the fellow villagers
- To safe guard flora and fauna
- Help People switch to organic farming for sustainable livelihood.
- For young generations to see the greenery.
- To your country
- To Mother Earth

**Broad Guidelines for “Develop a Village” Campaign of INDIA Redefined**

- Create a group of people who will be interested to work on the campaign.
- Identify a village in India, preferably a village where people from your group are familiar with the village (or the general locality) and some of you know the people of that village well.
- Identify few key people in the village including some local youth who will be the part of your team
- Identify the main problems or issues facing the village. Make a list.
- Now, prioritize the issues with regards to which needs to be tackled on the most urgent basis.
- First pick up one of the top issues from the priority list. Choose a problem/ issue which can have large impact on limited resources. Important to remember is to find solutions or projects which can be sustained in the long run – for example, if in a village there is water problem the ask questions like
  - ✓ Is putting a number of hand-pumps sufficient?
  - ✓ What is the condition of groundwater table? How long can it last?
  - ✓ What will happen if a hand pump starts malfunctioning after a couple of years?
  - ✓ Should we train locals with the pump repair? How will the spares be procured then?
  - ✓ Is it better to take up rain water harvesting than providing hand pumps?
  - ✓ How do we take up rain water harvesting and can we find someone locally who can guide the villagers on rain water harvesting?
- Keep expectations realistic instead of working on over ambitious projects. Time will come to take up bigger projects when smaller ones are done successfully.
- Do not start on multiple issues initially. We should aim at taking up one issue initially and try addressing that issue successfully. Success in addressing one issue builds confidence and trust not only among the team but also in the villagers also and they start participating in the development more actively. A village, or any place, cannot be developed and sustained, unless people who are living there are not actively involved. Do not treat them as beneficiaries but as stakeholders. Win their confidence and trust by establishing your sincerity and maintain that.
- Try to involve experts (search within your contacts and network) in the field for advice and guidance
- Plan the project first with various milestones. Contributing only with money will not develop a village. Think of innovative ways, leveraging technology to get personally involved to work out ways to push forward your project even when remotely located. Create a framework of responsibility and accountability among the team members.
- Leverage INDIA Redefined’s network of people who may be able to help on the project, so share your project details at different stages of planning and execution.
- See the Annexure I for an indicative list of issues and problems faced in many villages. Please do a ground level reality check in your identified village in deciding what that village’s priority is, which may not be in this list.

- Read about examples of village development done without government or NGO help and take a leaf out to use that in a customized way for developing the village you have chosen. See Annexure II to read the excerpts on how Ralegan Siddhi was developed by Anna Hazare. There are other people associated with INDIA Redefined like Mr. Gyan Ghosh who managed to change the face of his village in West Bengal by planting fruit trees, promoting fish farming and many other things.

Here is a real life story of a well intentioned and well settled Indian origin American citizen which happened in 2009-10, sent to us by email -

*From: Raman*

*Sent: Sunday, August 19, 2012 9:59 PM*

*Subject: Re: Sharing your Indian experience of educating North Indian village kids*

*I came to India assuming I could do better with the 100 USD I was sending to village schools.*

*Luckily I was offered a job with a brand new MBA School and I came with that pretext. I hired a car driver, helper and we visited 12 or more schools and chose one where there 1500 students and just one scored above 75%.*

*We met with BDO, HM and teachers at all levels.*

*Villages lack clean water and electricity. Any progress in bringing village owned water supply and electricity would be highly effective.*

*FYI For the school we tried the following:*

*Evening school -- we hired 2 more teachers math/english and they would tutor any student who walked in with a problem. This program started with 200 students and when the harvest arrived went down to 4.*

*We bot supplies -- unlimited -- supplied everything they asked for -- pens, pencils, notebooks.*

*We bot solar lanterns -- 2 for HM and several others with the teachers.*

*I would admit failure but I learned something out of this experience.*

*If I can afford to do it again I will invest 10X more money and stay in the village and personally get involved with parents, school and children. Any agency or intermediary kills it in India.*

*Everything has to be done by yourself. I will go even northern than where I was. It has to be remote and far flung from ones home/mother tongue state.*

*While I am not happy with the result, I have no bad taste for what I did. i will do it again without hesitation provided I have 10X more funding. I am saving. I am planning to be back.*

*regards*

*Raman*

INDIA Redefined can now help coordinate by raising local volunteers, so that when it is time to leave for persons like Raman, the work continues through these volunteers and unlike other agencies or intermediary, all resources provided by you are used only for the developmental work.

## ANNEXURE I

**Broad issues & problems facing villages in India (each can be expanded into multiple specific issues):**

1. Infrastructure
  - a. Water – drinking water, irrigation water
  - b. Electricity
  - c. Roads
  - d. Sanitation
2. Education, Literacy & Awareness
3. Health & Hygiene including access to reliable healthcare
4. Environmental degradation
5. Sustainable agricultural methods
6. Local employment & Entrepreneurship opportunities – Vocational Training
7. Digital divide
8. Local empowerment
9. And many more issues



## ANNEXURE II

### **Excerpts from Anna Hazare talk on development of his Village Ralegan Siddhi**

There is a village called Ralegan Siddhi with a population of 2000 people. Earlier, in this village, there used to be no drinking water in summers. 80 per cent people did not have food to eat. People were forced to travel 5-6 kms outside village due to lack of work in the village. There was neither adequate work nor adequate food for all. This forced many villagers to make liquor. There were as many as 30-35 liquor manufacturing units. Liquor was made and sold from village to village for livelihood. Due to alcohol, there were regular fights in the village. There were no proper educational facilities in the village. 4 classes were held in 2 rooms. There were no medical facilities, neither for villagers nor for animals. People used to practice untouchability.

Girls were married off at the age of 12-13 years. The circumstances forced them to do this. Efforts for developing this village started in 1975. Swami Vivekanand used to say that people with empty stomachs can't absorb knowledge. First we should think how to procure food for empty stomachs and work for everyone. And we did that. We tried to conserve every drop of rain water in the village. We increased the green cover by growing grass and planted more than 3 lakh trees. Nala bund, Check Dam, cement dam, CCT, Percolation Tank and other corrective measures were taken and rain water was conserved in the village. This being a drought affected area, the annual rainfall is just between 400-500 mm. Earlier, the village had less than 300 acres of cultivable land, which yielded one crop annually. Due to water conservation, cultivable land has increased to 1500 acres, which now yields 2 crops annually. After 35 years, it is the same village, same people and same land- but without taking any money from any industrialist, this village has become self sufficient. The village in which 80 per cent people once slept hungry, this village now exports vegetables. People once used to go out for work. Now its hard to get even 10 people for labour as people tend their own farms. Since they have got work and food in their village, the number of people migrating to cities has reduced. No family in the village procures grains from outside. Earlier the village did not produce even 300 litres of surplus milk, which could be sold outside. Today, 4000-5000 litres of surplus milk is sold outside the village on a daily basis. Every day the village earns around 80 to 90 thousand rupees by selling milk. The village which once used to sleep hungry, is now selling vegetables to cities. Every year 150-200 trucks of onions are sent to Chennai and Bangalore. The village, where the school was only till class 4 is now imparting education upto class XII in both Art and Science. Earlier the girls did not have access to education. Today, they are completing graduation.

Earlier, dalits were not allowed to enter temples. They were forced to draw water from a separate well. They were made to sit separately during wedding feasts. Today, when the dalits were unable to pay back their loans amounting to Rs. 60,000, the gram sabha decided that other non-dalits would pay off their loan. All villagers did two years of 'shramdaan' on the land belonging to dalits. Crops were grown and the loan was paid off by the villagers. Now-a-days, in any community feast in the village, dalits are also involved with people of other castes and religions in cooking and distributing food. Untouchability is no longer practiced. Buildings like school, temples, community temples worth crores were built by people through their hardwork and 'shramdaan'. In the last 7 years, the village has been visited by nearly 5.5 lakh people from India and abroad. 5 villages neighboring Ralegan Siddhi are also developing on same lines. Similar development work is now taking place in many villages of Maharashtra. 50 new villages are being chosen for similar work.