



Webinar: Promoting Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem at India International Science Festival 2020

Development Alternatives Group participated in the **India International Science Festival (IISF) 2020**, organised by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences & Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA), and hosted by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (NISTADS) through the virtual mode from 22-25 December 2020. Every year, the event provides a platform for young scientists, students, and technocrats to exchange knowledge and ideas.

The theme of IISF 2020 was 'Science for self-reliant India and global welfare to support the Government's initiative of making Atma Nirbhar Bharat'. The event is an integral part of India's long term vision in developing the spectrum of scientific temper in India and abroad. The four-day webinar had a total of 41 events spread across nine different verticals, from sustainable development, science, and humanities to industries and MSMEs.

Representatives from the Development Alternatives (DA) Group participated as well as moderated two panel discussions at the IISF virtual webinar on 25th December 2020. The objectives of the panel discussions were to identify critical collaboration drivers for large scale adoption of socially inclusive and environmentally sound enterprise models in post COVID India and to define strategic imperatives for key stakeholders involved in the promotion of indigenous and advanced technology based rural enterprises.

Zeenat Niazi, Vice President, DA, moderated the panel discussion on "Effective Pathways for Applications and Delivery of Sustainable Technologies (Indigenous and Advanced) for Livelihoods Gain and Economic Re-Growth". It was agreed upon that despite severe multidimensional poverty, India has

the resources to foster new-age businesses on the back of technology. This will not only serve society by solving some of the most critical issues of unsafe water, waste management, agricultural efficiencies, and renewable rural energy but can also create value from new markets of urban services such as food, waste to wealth opportunities, circular economy models, eco-system regeneration by nurturing existing skillsets to improve social and human capital. The panel also came to a consensus that there is an urgent need for breaking the silos and bringing together different streams of education to achieve our aspirations for an “Atma Nirbhar Bharat”.

Dr Arun Kumar, President, DA, featured as a panellist in the panel discussion on 25 December 2020 on the topic “fostering public private linkages for promoting social entrepreneurship ecosystem in rural India landscape directed towards indigenous and sustainable technologies”. The panel was co-moderated by Kanika Verma, Programme Director, Development Alternatives Group, and included a panel of scientists, faculties, and academic researchers from institutions including NITI Aayog, IIT Delhi, University of Delhi, CSIR-NISCAIR, KIIT, and Department of Science and Technology (DST).

While speaking at the event, Dr Arun Kumar pressed for a need to institutionalise and capitalise upon the indigenous technologies, and more importantly knowledge and practices, in our mission for Nav Bharat Nirman. He also asserted that if one wishes to see a change on the ground, then they need to be the driver of that change. Other panellists also highlighted the need for integrating advanced foreign technologies with proven indigenous technologies to achieve sustainable growth targets. Such integration of technology will help in the development of self-reliant communities, which is in tune with the Sustainable Development Goals-2030 and the emerging new normal.

On the topic of post-COVID economic growth, one of the panelists said that in the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, it has become even more urgent to create jobs in rural India that are both aspirational and sustainable. This can be done by combining emerging demands in the rural market, with new products and technologies, incorporating many of the skills that migrant workers are bringing back with them to villages. With rapidly growing complex social and environmental challenges, the large-scale indigenous and advanced technology-based social enterprises will become imperative to address the emerging needs and aspirations of rural India, while catering to the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

Despite the pandemic, the IISF-2020 was organised, which signifies the indomitable spirit to celebrate scientific temper and motivation to involve the common masses to improve their scientific understanding, temperament, and appreciation towards various Indian achievements in the field of Science and Technology.