

PRESS RELEASE

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International Conference to address skills needed to combat ₹336,000crores (US\$ 53 Billion) loss annually to Indian GDP from lack of sanitary facilities for 600 million Indians.

Hyderabad, November, 19, 2014 -- The Organizing Committee of Life Skills and Livelihood Skills International Conference series announced today that SKILLS2015 International Conference will be held in Hyderabad on 19 and 20 November, 2015 with the theme 'Life Skills and Livelihood Skills – for achieving and sustaining a Clean India'. The conference is being organized to provide impetus to the ongoing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India) Campaign in realizing its objectives. The conference coincides with World Toilet Day on 19 November.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) campaign was launched by Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, on 25 September, 2014. SBA's goal is to transform the country into Clean India by making it Open Defecation Free (ODF) with access to sanitation facilities for all India by the year 2019. The completion date was selected as a tribute to coincide the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, for whom cleanliness was very important. The SBA is aimed at ensuring India has the additional 88.4 million toilets and related sanitation facilities to become ODF India by 2019.

According to Ravi Reddy, co-chairman of the conference, *“Visualizing a nation in which the traditional habit of open defecation is entirely eliminated and quality of life is improved, the challenge is enormous. Despite persistent efforts by the government and other agencies, still about 600 Million persons in rural areas defecate in the open; and as many as 70 per cent rural households are without access to toilets implies a clear lack of a holistic approach in implementation of sanitation policies and programs. This is costing the country very dearly, with an estimated 6 percent of India's GDP, or some ₹336,000crores (US\$ 53.4 billion) wasted annually due to lost productivity and health care costs due to poor sanitation, according to the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Program.”*

The objective of SKILLS2015 conference is to ensure that the skills, technologies, approaches and best practices necessary to achieve and sustain the Clean India campaign are understood and widely adopted throughout India.

SKILLS2015 is the third in a series of Life Skills and Livelihood Skills International conferences aimed at developing the skill levels, and therefore sustainable economies and general quality of life, of rural India. Earlier conferences SKILLS2010 and SKILLS2013 held in December 2010 and December 2013 were focused on The Challenges for Institutional Development and The Challenges for International Cooperation respectively. Both the earlier conferences have been a success for having able to spur the ideas to build and

sustain initiatives in skill development in scale among relevant stakeholders. These conferences received participation from a galaxy of distinguished personalities, key national and international organizations from over 13 countries. SKILLS2010 was privileged to have an inspirational inaugural address by the former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, while SKILLS2013 was addressed by His Excellency Governor of Tamilnadu, Dr. K. Rosaiah.

As with earlier conferences, Skills 2015 is expected to attract a large audience of policy makers, government officials, educators, business executives and training professionals from around the world. The two-day event seeks to address several dimensions of skill development related to sustained sanitation and hygiene practices and the challenges thereof. The event serves as a platform for international dialogue, to exchange ideas and promote initiatives on the sanitation skills development.

SKILLS2015 International Conference is being organized by Life Skills and Livelihood Skills International (LSLSI), a Hyderabad based not-for-profit organization with a focus on the “skilling” of the rural population of India. LSLSI was established in the year 2012 to further the work of Rural Economic and Education Development Society (REEDS), a not-for-profit NGO that has been active in fostering development in rural India since 1989.

To strengthen the government efforts to provide sanitation facilities, the Skills 2015 will focus on the training and behavioral changes necessary among various levels of stakeholder to ensure effective and sustained use of such facilities. In announcing the theme of the Skills 2015 Conference, Ravi Reddy, co-founder of LSLSI as well as co-chairman of the conference, said, *“We believe a critical need in the success of the Clean India campaign is to address the awareness, knowledge and behavior of rural Indians when they are provided new sanitation facilities and practices. Importantly, we think that skilling communities, village officials and children is the key to the sustainability of sanitary practices. Further, we are committed to both developing best practices through operating pilot programs and advocating for the adoption of those practices at Skills 2015 and beyond.”*

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See also: www.skills2015.org

