

GEM 'Critical Issues'

International Seminar Series

2007-08 Theme:

**United Nations Millennium Development Goals:
Update on Building a Sustainable Future**

The Millennium
Development
Goals

Eradicate extreme
poverty and hunger

Achieve universal
primary education

Promote gender
equality and
empower women

Reduce child
mortality

Improve maternal
health

Combat HIV/AIDS,
malaria and other
diseases

Ensure
environmental
sustainability

Develop a global
partnership for
development

Sushma Iyengar

Managing Trustee, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan
(KMVS) Bhuj, Gujarat, India



Sushma Iyengar

Strengthening women's roles in building a sustainable future

Sushma Iyengar began work in 1988 in the rural regions of dryland Kutch with rural women on issues concerning their empowerment. In 1989, she founded the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, a membership-based organization of rural women's groups in the district of Kutch, Gujarat. Today members of KMVS provide leadership to over 14,000 women and communities in 175 villages. KMVS collectives focus on issues of ecological restoration, adaptation to drought and dryland livelihoods, strengthening women's role and resource access in their traditional economies of animal husbandry and embroidered craft, domestic violence, reproductive health, land tenancy rights, and political participation. The collective has pioneered the use of community radio in the country.

Iyengar is also one of the core founding members of Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan – commonly known as Abhiyan - a district network of developmental, civil society organizations in Kutch District. As the Coordinating Head of the network, Iyengar -

- Led the relief and rehabilitation coordination following the 2001 earthquake in the region.
- In 2001 Founded 'SETU' – a network of 18 grassroots, resource facilitation centres in clusters of 15-20 villages across the district of Kutch.
- In 2004 Founded KHAMIR – Craft Resource Centre, an institution which supports and services artisans dependent on the textile and 3-D crafts in Kutch.

Seeks to revitalize, and redefine the many different craft sectors in the region – known for its craft tradition and skills.

Iyengar has won numerous awards and wide recognition for her work. She was nominated in 2005 by *India Today* National Magazine as one of the 30 young powerful women influencers in the country, and in 2007 was featured on CNN-IBN in its series on individuals who have contributed to India's development.

Sushma Iyengar will discuss her experiences in the context of a growing impact of globalization on the rural economies, society and polity in the region in which she works. She will discuss the movement to assert grassroots citizenship and local self-governance, reviving local traditional knowledge systems for sustaining scarce natural resources, and the impact of economic growth on rural women and gender relations.

Tuesday, March 4, 7 p.m.

Dreyfus University Center Theater

Free & Open to the Public

Hosted by:



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