

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Bindeshwar Pathak Honoured

The annual World Water Week in Stockholm took place from 16 to 22 August under this year's motto "Accessing Water for the Common Good". Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of *Sulabh Shauchalaya* was named 2009 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate.



The World Water Week, hosted and organised by the Stockholm International Water Institute, is the leading annual global meeting place for capacity-building, partnership-building and follow-up on the implementation of international processes and programmes in water and development.

Karin Kortmann, the parliamentary state secretary at the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) explained the German position on this issue; "We cannot live with the fact that almost 900 million people have no access to clean drinking water and 42 percent of people worldwide do not have access to toilets. This violates human dignity but is also harmful for human health and the environment."

A main focus of German development policy is implementation of basic access to water and sanitation. In Stockholm, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development will be making a presentation along with the UN water and sanitation expert Catarina de Albuquerque on the practical implementation of the right to water and sanitation worldwide.

Germany is actively engaged in this area with over 30 partner countries and is one of the three largest donors with an investment of 350 million Euros per annum.

The 2009 WWW will be the first under a new three-year niche entitled "Water: Responding to Global Change". It will feature more than 90 sessions, including plenaries, workshops, seminars, and side-events covering a wide breadth of topics and multiple cross-cutting issues in water and development policy, planning and management.

As an open platform for over 2,000 participants including key decision-makers and more than 200 collaborating organisations, the conference promotes the exchange of views and experiences between the scientific, business, policy and civil society communities, thereby advancing the water, environment, health, livelihood and poverty reduction agendas.

Other highlights include the felicitation of Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak of India, on Thursday 20 August with the 2009 Stockholm Water Laureate Prize. Dr. Pathak is the founder of the "Sulabh Sanitation Movement". Dr. Pathak is known world-wide for his accomplishments spanning the fields of sanitation technology, social enterprise and healthcare education.

Frequently citing the common toilet as one of civilization's most significant advances, he led the development of cost-effective and culturally appropriate toilets and related treatment systems to replace the traditional unsanitary bucket latrines in poor communities throughout India. At the same time, he waged a decades-long campaign to abolish the dehumanizing practice of manual scavenging of human waste and established hygiene education programmes in rural villages and urban slums.

Considering such social issues has become increasingly important in international discussions on basic development issues. Complexities of culture and human nature must be factored in to find solutions for the world's water and sanitation problems.

The German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul and German Minister for Environment Sigmar Gabriel welcomed the decision to award Dr. Pathak this year's water prize as the right signal to underline the importance of this issue.

Sulabh Sanitation is an important partner in the "Sustainable Sanitation Alliance" initiated by Germany, with more than 100 international partners. This alliance is involved in implementing sustainable waste and sanitation systems worldwide that are also suitable to the local needs — (*from notes furnished by G. Parthasarathy, NGRI, Hyderabad*).