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Small NGO firms represented in fair

By Ramya Kannan

CHENNAI, JUNE 17. Many institutions at the NGO sector fair, 'Sindhanai 2001' were making their first public presentation in the city. In the second year, since its inception, the fair brought together small, but extremely important grassroots level organisations making significant contributions in rural and semiurban societies.

At 'Sindhanai 2000' in June, there were more stalls with "big names" in the area of welfare than forty stalls this year. They also hailed mostly from what is perceived as the "traditional" sectors of education, AIDS, women, children and disability. The attempt then, was to build a common platform for these organisations to meet an agenda in the social development sector.

'Sindhanai 2001' took a significant detour from the patterns its predecessor sought to establish. This year, it has included a large number of organisations involved in sectors like animal welfare, environment, haemophilia and rural development hitherto unrepresented.

NGOs working in the rural areas of the State such as the Thirumalai Charity Trust, were for the first time being exposed to a large audience. Representatives of the organisation are happy to have an opportunity to provide information on their activities and network with city-based setups.

Involvement of the corporate sector is yet another feature this year. The ICICI's special social initiatives group had represented its development portal www.communities.org, devoted to sourcing worldwide funding for projects in India. Building a bridge between donors and recipients and establishing a transparent channel for exchange of funds, the portal is willing to provide space to organisations with clean background.

IndianNGOs.org, a Bombay-based portal, was also represented, to provide opportunities for small-time NGOs through the net to link each other and funding agencies.

Even the products of different organisations or their beneficiaries show a remarkable improvement in terms of saleability. 'Marketable' and

innovative food preservatives with export potential were also on display.

According to Ms. Vidya Shankar of Relief Foundation, the post- Sindhanai follow up will include an attempt to build a common brand for the products being made by these organisations.

The aim, however, would not be to build an elitist NGO that will bear the flag of a few organisations, but to connect together and form larger networks. The unit will also evolve a policy for monitoring and accountability of member units, for fostering sustainable social change in the State, Ms.Vidya Shankar adds.

The two-day fair concluded at the Kamaraj Memorial grounds today. A seminar on building effective intersectoral partnerships was held on Saturday. More than 40 organisations participated.

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