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Making Development a Good Business

To achieve a sustainable future, India clearly has two priorities that must come before all others. The first is to ensure that all its citizens have access to the means of satisfying their basic needs. The second is to evolve practices that bring the environmental resource base back to its full health and former productivity. To achieve these two primary goals requires, as has often been reiterated in these pages, action on two fronts. We must:

- create sustainable **livelihoods** on a very large scale, particularly for the poor and marginalized; and
- encourage sustainable **lifestyles** among all our people, particularly the rich and privileged.

Creation of livelihoods and jobs should, generally, be the job of the private sector. This has not been the case in post colonial India – there are today more than 20 million people working for government and public agencies, while less than 10 million workers are employed in "organized" or "formal" industries. These 30 million are the jobs to which the largest part of governmental decision making and attention are devoted. Yet, both these numbers are dwarfed by numbers of workers employed in the SME and "informal" sector in urban areas – some 110 million and in agriculture – some 240

million. And these, in turn, are dwarfed by the numbers of those basically out of work, which is the rest of the labour force – some 250 to 300 million.

Private sector, in its restricted meaning of large corporate houses, or

imperatives of the bigger businesses operating in a globalizing economy make it unlikely that they will ever be in a position to do so. In the meantime, governments at all levels have, despite the temptations to the contrary, begun to show tendencies

to cut back gradually on their payrolls. Somebody else, then, will have to take responsibility for creating sustainable livelihoods. This is the private sector in its larger meaning: entities that can be big but are mostly small, which work as businesses with profit as the main driving motivation.

Encouraging widespread adoption of sustainable lifestyles needs the concerted efforts of all our leaders – the decision or opinion makers in government, business, media, schools and universities, voluntary organizations and, not least, the institutions of religion

and faith. Since neither those who run government (of whatever political party or administrative cadre), nor those in business have shown much inclination to provide such leadership, it must come from the others – the "Civil Society". Although civil society hasn't, so far, fared much better in delivering the results needed than either government or business, it still offers some hope and could serve as an effective entry point onto

(Contd. on page 3....)



TARA Paper Unit, A Typical Sustainable Enterprise:
Creating wealth from waste

even the organized sector, is not currently geared to creating the jobs or livelihoods in the numbers needed in our economy. Besides, as has been repeatedly demonstrated by the work of Development Alternatives, the technology, financial and marketing

**Happy New Year
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