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## International Development Enterprise India's (IDEI) Affordable Irrigation Technology: Making a Big Social Impact?

*During my growing up years I realized the importance of water in a farmer's life. Inability to access water can change the course of a farmer's life, even prove fatal.<sup>1</sup>*

Amitabha Sadangi, CEO, IDEI

### Introduction

In 2009, 1,500 farmers committed suicide in India<sup>2</sup> after being driven to debt by crop failure. Most of them were small and marginal acreage farmers. This has become a trend during the past few years as failure of monsoons, lack of irrigation facilities, and depleted surface and ground water resources have forced small farmers toward acute poverty. Although the government has been charting various policies for the development of agriculture and irrigation, the small farmer has hardly enjoyed the benefits.

In 1991, realizing the severity of this problem, Amitabha Sadangi (Sadangi) started a not-for-profit organization, International Development Enterprise India, as a representative office of International Development Enterprise (IDE),<sup>i</sup> to empower rural farmers. Over a period of time, the organization developed simple and affordable farming equipment like the treadle pump and drip irrigation kits. Additionally, the organization initiated other programs like "Integrating Poor into Market Systems" and "Crop Post Harvest Program", which helped small farmers get better prices for their yield and in turn improve their standard of living. However, given the sociopolitical scenario in India, can IDEI scale up its business and cater to the market gaps in the bottom of the pyramid?

### Farming in India: Need for Irrigation Facilities

Agriculture has been considered the backbone of the Indian economy, with more than 75% of its population subsisting on it, but the contribution of agriculture to the economy is declining. According to

<sup>i</sup> IDE was founded by Paul Polak, a psychiatrist, in 1982. He started the organization with a mission to create opportunities for poor rural households. Since then, the organization has been striving to enable farm families to access the tools and knowledge they need to increase their income. It uses a market-oriented development model to increase the income of the rural poor by improving market access, increasing agricultural production, and creating sustainable local businesses. IDE's projects are country-specific, aimed at increasing income for those living on less than a dollar a day in the most efficient and viable manner possible according to each region's unique opportunities.



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