

## Celebrating 40 Years' of Development Alternatives



On June 9, 2023, Development Alternatives (DA) celebrated a significant milestone—40 years of serving society and providing sustainable solutions. As one of the pioneering organisations in sustainable development in India, this day marked a momentous occasion for the organisation. The event, themed “Celebrating the Past and Powering the Future” focused on environment and sustainability and coincided with World Environment Day. It aimed to highlight the impact of sustainable development through technological interventions that the organisation has made in the past 40 years.

The DA team and its leadership comprising of Dr Ashok Khosla - Chairman, Shrashtant Patara - Chief Executive Officer, Zeenat Niazi - Chief Knowledge Officer, Gitika Goswami - Associate Vice President, Maj Gen Rahul Bhardwaj - Associate Vice President, Kanika Verma - Associate Vice President, Shaila Sam - Head of Impact and Communication and Dr Soumen Maity – Chief Technical Officer hosted the event with pride and enthusiasm. It was attended by alumni, friends, partners and the DA family. All in all about 150 plus people attended the event.

The event was inaugurated with a special gesture of watering a plant sapling, showcasing the idea of resilient and sustainable future. The keynote speaker for the event was Mr Shombi Sharp, the UN Resident Coordinator for India. In his speech, he emphasised that India is viewed as a beacon of hope in the fields of environment, sustainability, and innovation for the future. He also acknowledged the work DA has done in the field of environment and sustainability as an organisation.



Keeping in mind that WED 2023 theme was **#BeatPlasticPollution** the event set the tone with a presentation by Gitika Goswami titled **"Effective Management of Plastic Waste"** focusing on strategic intervention to tackle Plastic Pollution in cities in India. This was followed by a panel discussion on "Beating Plastic Pollution". This session was moderated by Zeenat Niazi and co-moderated by Dr Debishree Khan, Scientist from CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI). The panelists included Mr Ratnesh, Executive Director of UN Global Compact Network India, Dr Leena Srivastava, Head and Director of Ashoka Centre for a People Centric Energy Transition at Ashoka University, and Mr Sanjiva De Silva, Counsellor at the Australian High Commission. The discussion revolved around the collective efforts required from academia, government, policy, and people in combating plastic pollution. The panelists explored open-ended and innovative approaches to tackle plastic pollution on a large scale.

The 40 years celebrations commenced with Dr Ashok Khosla giving his vision statement for the organisation, that back in time the focus was on **"No More Tears"**. To identify the problem and to solve more than one problem at a time, to create leaders of tomorrow. Now for next 40 years this should transition to **"Everyone should be Happy, Fulfilled and Empowered"**. To work specifically on issues that include women, marginalised communities and to give them access to all they need to make them feel fulfilled. This was followed by a walk down memory lane "Celebrating Development Alternatives" by DA stalwarts Zeenat Niazi and Shrashtant Patara. Together they shared a nostalgic pictorial presentation that took the audience back to the foundation days of Development Alternatives and showcased the organisation's growth over the years. Alumni and friends of DA also shared their experiences and associations with the organisation, highlighting how its core values have remained intact despite its substantial growth.

With DA's core ethos being innovations, a special fireside chat **"Innovations and Sustainable Future"** was organised between India's well-known innovator and DA's founder Chairman - Dr Ashok Khosla and young innovators, Mr Monish Siripurapu, Founder/Principal Architect of Ant Studio, and Mr Ashudeep Garg, Senior Vice President and Head of Corporate Development at Absolute. The conversation centered around the future of sustainable development through technological intervention. Dr Ashok Khosla shared his valuable insights on environment, innovation, and sustainability, reflecting on his vision 40 years ago whilst establishing this social enterprise. Mr Monish and Mr Ashudeep showcased their successful sustainable technological solutions, including an eco-friendly cooling mechanism and large-scale decarbonisation of agriculture in the current scenario. The three discussed on the future of Startups and Innovations.

The evening continued with dinner which had a farm to table concept with Millets being the hero dish, and live music by Manzil Mystics, a group of artists and musicians whose music spoke of environment and just cause. With this event DA set the tone of "Powering the Future" with fresh fervor and a vision where people, planet and prosperity co-exist.



