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Dr. Naresh Chandra Saxena was the topper of his batch in the Indian Administrative Service, which he joined in 1964. He retired as Secretary, Planning Commission, Govt of India (GOI). He also worked as Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, and Secretary Minorities Commission (GOI). He was Member of the National Advisory Council from 2004 to 2008 and 2010 to 2014. During 1993-96 he was Director, LalBahadurShastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, which trains senior civil servants. On behalf of the Supreme Court of India, Dr Saxena monitors hunger based programmes in India. He has chaired several government committees, such as on 'Women's Land Rights', 'Identification of poor families', 'Implementation of Forest Rights Act', 'Joint Review Mission on Elementary Education' and 'Bauxite Mining in Orissa'.

Author of several books and articles, Dr Saxena did his Doctorate in Forestry from the Oxford University in 1992. He was awarded honorary Ph.D from the University of East Anglia (UK) in 2006. He is a member on the Editorial Board, Development Policy Review, London, International Forestry Review, Oxford, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, Stockholm. He was a Director on the ADB Institute, Tokyo from 2002-2004. Currently he advises United Nations on development issues.