

## The Sehgal Foundation Organized Water Awareness Campaign (Jal Chetna Yatra) in Mewat

Gurgaon, India - The Sehgal Foundation organized a campaign on "Water Awareness" (Jal Chetna Yatra) on 16<sup>th</sup> June in the Nagina block of Mewat District. A walking rally began from Karheda, proceeded to Notki, then Shahpura. The communities from these three villages reached Ghaghas to study how this village is successfully managing its water resources. In each village, discussions were held at street junctions, particularly to address women. The yatra culminated in Ghaghas's old Panchayat building, where discussions were held on the pervasive water stress, especially the over exploitation of ground water and the potential of water related infrastructure.

India, though rich in water resources, faces severe scarcity due to demographic explosion, unplanned urbanization and poor community driven water management. In Mewat, the ground water is depleting at the rate of about 25 cms a year and salinity is increasing in many parts. The rising water salinity is affecting crop yield and limiting the choice of crops that can be grown. Public water supply is illegally opened at various points and when the water supply is on, it flows uncontrolled into the streets leading to water wastage, messy and unhygienic environment.

It is imperative that efficient use and equitable distribution of water through sound technological input receive everyone's undivided and sustained attention. Therefore, the Sehgal Foundation took an initiative to alert the communities to envisage their future with a worsening water scenario and start taking part in conservation and rain water harvesting in every possible way.

Practical methods used in rural water management, such as contour trenches, gully plugs, check dams, recharge wells, reviving traditional ponds, soak pits and deep plowing with chisel were explained during the campaign. Banners with diverse water messages were carried in the rally as visual aids.

The executive Director of the Foundation, Mr Jay Sehgal said "Water is the engine that drives all development activities, thus, this program is fundamental to the work of the Foundation. The program focuses on water harvesting structures to recharging the ground water. By organizing events like Jal Chetna Yatra, we are trying to foster the need to conserve water and make every villager take part in its collection and conservation.