



SEHGAL  
FOUNDATION

TOGETHER  
WE EMPOWER  
RURAL INDIA

# GOOD RURAL GOVERNANCE IN INDIA



# GOOD GOVERNANCE EMPOWERS THE POOR

The Government of India, with support from state governments, allocates large financial resources on public service programs to develop rural India. Government programs for individuals and families support the distribution of subsidized rations, school lunch programs, old age and disability pensions, guaranteed rural employment, access to basic facilities such as cooking gas and electricity, the provision of household toilets, and more. Some support is free, some is subsidized, and some require payments, but many rural citizens are entirely unaware of the content or features of government programs and services or how to access those they may be entitled to. Creating awareness is critical to help intended beneficiaries know about government programs and services so they are able to demand and receive their rightful entitlements.

Individual citizens in rural areas, many of whom are illiterate and isolated, particularly women, remain unaware of their rights. They don't know



what departments to approach to apply for their entitlements, whom to appeal to about any delays or denials, or how to monitor the implementation of public services and programs in their villages. In addition, many elected or selected representatives and members of gram panchayats, school management committees, village health sanitation and nutrition committees, and other village-level institutions are unaware of their roles and responsibilities or the procedures and management of government institutions.<sup>123</sup> They do not know how to plan activities, access funds, or lead development in their villages in critical areas. They lack the skills and information to address the lack of basic amenities such as drinking water, wastewater disposal systems, good public infrastructure, functioning schools, public healthcare facilities, etc.

Sehgal Foundation's Good Rural Governance (GRG) program strengthens village governance in grassroots democracy and citizen participation to bring about mass awareness, empowerment, and capacity enhancement of villagers and village-level institutions. In developing effective leadership at local levels, particular emphasis is placed on the empowerment of women and girls, who have long been disadvantaged.

The GRG team carries out participatory training sessions at the village level on government programs, entitlements, and citizens' rights. Villagers learn about priority issues in their communities, such as food security programs and social security services. They learn how to apply for and claim their entitlements and how

<sup>1</sup> School management committees are constituted in each government school to ensure implementation and monitoring of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education [RTE] Act.

<sup>2</sup> Panchayats are councils constituted at the village level to administer local governance and development.

<sup>3</sup> Village health sanitation and nutrition committees are formed under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to take collective action on issues related to health and its social determinants at the village level.

to appeal against any delays and denials to the appropriate government officials.



Structured training sessions for representatives of village-level institutions help establish synergies with government departments and assist elected and selected representatives in creating village development plans. Representatives are trained to identify and address community problems, access government funds to address local problems, and implement their development plans in a transparent manner. With these tools, Good Rural Governance training promotes participatory and sustainable village development.

## AWARENESS IS CRITICAL

- √ By building the capacities of citizens to know and understand their rights and be aware of government programs, entitlements, and grievance redressal mechanisms, their individual participation in the development of their villages is enhanced.
- √ By improving the competencies of village-level institutions (panchayats, school management committees, project user committees, and village health sanitation and nutrition committees, etc.), members better execute their roles in the development activities of their communities, maintain community structures and improvements, and use their skills to procure government funds and benefits.
- √ Empowered women positively influence their families and become community leaders who actively participate in the village development process.

- √ Work with communities to spread good governance awareness is a component of programming on the foundation's community radio station, *Alfaz-e-Mewat* (Rural Voices of Mewat). Programming reaches hundreds of marginalized communities in Nuh district of Haryana, providing vital information and resources to villagers.
- √ Synergies are created between institutions, citizens, and government administration, and grassroots policy advocacy articulates the concerns of citizens.
- √ Overall sustainability of projects is maintained by community empowerment efforts that result in increased responsiveness, accountability, and transparency.

## CAPACITY BUILDING EMPOWERS CITIZENS

The Good Rural Governance program embraces the essence of capacity building of rural communities at its core. Through trainings and interventions, a pool of aware, confident, and empowered rural individuals is created, many of whom take on effective roles as members of village-level institutions (VLIs) in panchayats, school management committees, village development committees, village health sanitation and nutrition committees, etc., and are responsible for leveraging government funds for village development, appropriately executing the schemes, sustaining the results of projects implemented by Sehgal Foundation, and ensuring that the impact remains beyond the project period.





## TRAINING BEGINS WITH VILLAGE LEADERSHIP

Good governance training and awareness building are key components of every Sehgal Foundation program and initiative. Village development committees are created in each new village identified for intervention by the foundation team. This vital engagement with the community is essential for the sustainability of any initiative after the initial impact is made.

### ***Creating a village leadership school (VLS)***

is the first step in Sehgal Foundation work in a village for any project or initiative. VLS training is an essential component of all community-led development. Active men and women members of panchayats and village-level institutions and other selected community leaders are trained how to access citizen benefits, increase their awareness of their rights, and empower them to take action with, and responsibility for, any development programs put in place. Monthly training and planning workshops conducted with these members provide an opportunity for them to articulate

their visions for village development and work to realize those visions.

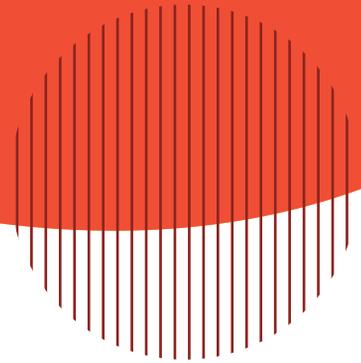
### ***The Citizen Information and Support Center (CISC)***

is a toll-free helpline set up by Sehgal Foundation that is accessible to people in district Nuh, Haryana, and Samastipur, Bihar. CISC is an effective resource for community members to learn about governance initiatives and program benefits. On a cloud-based integrated voice-response-system technology, the helpline provides information to callers. The information is also available offline in village meetings. Apps are used to disseminate information and share villagers' experiences.

### ***Information, education, and communication (IEC)***

materials, such as locally relevant booklets, pamphlets, posters, wall paintings, and audio/video messages, are used for all community-based interventions. IEC materials cover information on roles and responsibilities of village-level institutions, and different government programs and schemes.

# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IS INTEGRAL TO ALL INITIATIVES



## ***Mahila sangathans (women's collectives)***

empower and strengthen women's participation in village governance. Women members of village-level institutions are mobilized to form a sangathan in every village to give them a platform to come together, gather information, and work collectively to address local issues. The Sehgal Foundation team organizes monthly meeting and training workshops that focus on leadership skills, government programs, sanitation, and gender equity. Women leaders have opportunities to voice their concerns about community and development issues, support each other, receive training on their legal and

constitutional rights and entitlements, and work collectively to address issues that affect their families and their community.

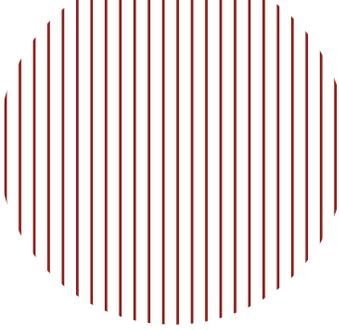


# YOUTH ARE EMPOWERED, LIVES ARE TRANSFORMED

***Empowering schoolchildren*** to have a more promising future is the heart of an initiative, Transform Lives *one school at a time*, that was first launched in late 2016 wherein run-down rural government schools are restored and revitalized to be stimulating school environments that include critical trainings to empower India's future leaders.

***Youth learning centers*** are created as part of the initiative, which provide a mixed interactive curriculum that includes Life Skills Education and Digital Literacy Training, along with Good Rural Governance awareness. Girls can also learn tailoring skills. Activities help adolescents gain confidence, information, and new perspectives





on gender stereotypes to help them become positive change agents in their families and their communities.

**The Rural Research team** conducts baseline studies and needs assessments of the community to evaluate the potential for repairing and revitalizing the school buildings and grounds. When community members and village-level institutions are willing to be active partners and participants in the projects, work begins with capacity building of the School Management Committee and individual community members. These schools without secure and functioning infrastructure (without clean drinking water, without toilets for boys and girls, without a space for sanitary midday meal

prep, and without recreation areas) are turned into safe, stimulating learning environments with repaired buildings, rainwater-harvesting systems, clean drinking water facilities, separate toilets for boys and girls, a sanitary kitchen area, and leveled school grounds with plants and play equipment.

**Ongoing governance training to build capacities of the School Management Committee (SMC)** and other VLIs and individual villagers assures that any needed infrastructure repairs and improvements will be sustained after project completion and the SMC will be able to apply for and appropriately use their allotted government funds.



# DEVELOPMENT PLANS ARE CREATED BY THE PEOPLE

**Micro-planning**, a comprehensive approach wherein gram panchayat development plans are made by the community for the community, is provided in the form of support and training. Based on these plans, requests for funding are submitted to appropriate block and district departments. The GRG team follows up with district administration to facilitate the flow of funds and implementation of proposed plans. Technologies including geographical information systems (GIS) are integrated for effective village-level planning and management.

**Interface workshops** are organized with block and district administration to create synergies with the government for enabling panchayats and other institutions to access funds for

implementing activities in their villages. These provide a platform to community members to directly interact with government officials and identify and resolve bottlenecks.

**Grassroots policy advocacy** creates solutions. Community leaders and women collectives at local levels articulate and share their grievances with the relevant administrative bodies, legal offices, and social and political institutions in order to facilitate solutions to any implementation bottlenecks in government programs. Such grassroots advocacy efforts are documented and sent to state-level administrative units, so that concerns of citizens are integrated in programs and policies of government.



# E-GOVERNANCE MONITORS VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Sehgal Foundation developed a public-private partnership (PPP) initiative on e-governance to digitize governance processes at the panchayat level, including digital issuance, maintenance of records, and online monitoring of government programs using household-level data. The Digital Corridor Village project is located at Nuthankal Village, Medchal mandal, Ranga Reddy district, Telangana. Collaborating partners include two government ministries as technical experts (National Informatics Center, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Hyderabad, and National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad, Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj), a corporate CSR partner, and Sehgal Foundation as the facilitation and implementing partner. The rural community digitally obtains services from panchayat functionaries, and

the data is used by government, corporates, village-level institutions, and other agencies to effectively plan, execute, and monitor village development activities. This long-term initiative creates greater transparency and accountability in the government system.



## IMPACT IS THE PRIORITY

The Rural Research team quantifies the impact created by all Sehgal Foundation activities and established findings help to improve strategies and are provided to the community, donors, and policymakers. Findings continue to affirm that good rural governance is critical for citizen

empowerment and for sustainability of all initiatives. For an entire community to be aware, confident, and knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities as citizens is a priority for their own ongoing development.



# RESULTS DEMONSTRATE IMPACT AS BENEFICIARIES SPEAK

Anju worked in the *anganwadi* (childcare) center of Bhadas, Nuh district, Haryana, before she was elected to the post of sarpanch. Through the GRG training programs, she became aware of possibilities for utilizing her position. Anju uses the unspent VHSNC budget to clean the village streets and promote government schemes including the widow's pension, *Nirashrit* (destitute) pension, *Budhapa* (old age) pension, *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* (girl child in poverty), etc. She is an inspiration to other women, and her village is proud of their sarpanch.

“After learning about the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan in the training session conducted by Sehgal Foundation, I joined hands with the panchayat and other sanitation ambassadors to organize rallies and door-to-door campaigns. As a result of our efforts, almost 90 percent of households now have toilets.”

**Jakir**, Sanitation Ambassador  
Village Ghida, Nuh, Haryana

“The CISC helped me get money from the Labor Department to purchase a cycle and tools for my trade. In the Mewat region, people do not know about the National Welfare Scheme for the workers. Many workers like me received their dues from the unspent fund of Rs. 2,200 crore intended by the National Welfare Scheme.”

**Mohammad Sharif**  
Noshera Village, Nuh, Haryana

“In Devla Nangla village, Nuh, Haryana, the Public Distribution System (PDS) depot holder denied rations to most families, saying that their information was not available online, so many of the people did not receive adequate food. With support from the CISC, Aas Mohammad filed a Right to Information (RTI) application with the Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, and learned that his name was on the online list. He filed a complaint at the Chief Minister's office, and the government initiated a vigilance enquiry and conducted a raid at the depot holder's house. It was found that the depot holder was siphoning off the food grains, so his license was terminated. Timely action by Aas Mohammad solved the woes of many of us facing this problem.”

**Ali Sher**  
Devla Nangla Village, Nuh, Haryana

“ Through the CISC, I registered with the *Karmakar Kalyan Board* (labour welfare board) and received Rs 3,000 for purchasing a sewing machine and Rs 5,100 as Mahila Samman Bhatta (women dignity allowance). Through tailoring, I am adding to the family income. ”

**Asubi**

Bibipur Village, Nuh, Haryana

“ I was inspired by a training session on health and nutrition as part of the Women’s Leadership School, and created a small kitchen in my backyard. Within a few months, my garden had multiple varieties of vegetables.

The regular intake of these nutrient-rich vegetables has provided my family with food and nutrition security, besides helping me save money. After ensuring adequate vegetables for my family intake, I sell the surplus in the nearby market, which provides me with an additional income. ”

**Neelam Devi**

Gopalpur Village, Samastipur, Bihar

“ My parents had chosen a boy for my marriage at age seventeen. When I learned at the center that the legal age for marriage is eighteen, I convinced my parents to wait until I am older. My friends from the center coached and helped me greatly. I feel really happy. ”

**Tarmeen**

Life Skills Education Center, Nawli Village, Nuh, Haryana

- Many mothers in rural India believe myths about vaccinations, including that they lead to severe body pain and fever in the infants. For this reason, many mothers are afraid to have their infants immunized. Girls from Nawli Life Skills Education Center at Nuh, Haryana, were inspired to conduct a door-to-door campaign along with the local health department that educated mothers about immunization, which led to the immunization of many infants.
- Fajiri, the leader of the mahila sangathan of Nagli, Nuh district, Haryana, led the sangathan to reopen the primary school in her village, which had been closed due to a shortage of teaching staff. She also conducted a door-to-door campaign on the use of toilets for hygiene. Due to her efforts, an increased number of men and women are participating in panchayat meetings, and Fajiri personally facilitated six citizens’ pensions, construction of fifty toilets, and vaccinations of seventy children in her village.
- Roshni, a visually impaired woman from Firozpur, Nuh, Haryana, did not have financial support from her children in her old age. For eight years she tried to get a government pension but was always turned away from the office, as she did not have a disability certificate. The mahila sangathan took up her case and guided her in obtaining all the necessary documents, due to which Roshni now receives her vmonthly pension.
- When youth from the Life Skills Education Center in village Jatka, Nuh, Haryana, became aware of diarrhea, malaria, and dengue, and about the roles and responsibilities of Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Center (VHSNC), which was basically nonfunctioning, they trained twenty VHSNC members who were then inspired to provide door-to-door awareness campaigns in their village.

# GOVERNANCE AWARDS RECOGNIZE IMPACT



**2018**

**Bhamashah Award** for school renovation in government schools in Alwar, Rajasthan.

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**2017**

**Bhamashah Award** for improving school infrastructure in government schools in Alwar, Rajasthan.

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**2016**

**Bhamashah Award** by Government of Rajasthan for work in government schools in Alwar, Rajasthan.

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**2015**

**Best Learners Award**, Namati Global Justice Prize, Special Category Winner for a project that focuses on demand and supply for local governance and justice.

**2013**

**Rockefeller Foundation Top 100 Next Century Innovators Awards Shortlist**, for Strengthening the Demand and Supply for Better Village Governance.

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**2013**

**Certificate of Appreciation** presented by Haryana School Education Department under *Mukhya Mantri Shiksha-Deeksha Yojna*.

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**2010**

**Japanese Award** for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP), Global Development Network, Bogota, Columbia, Third Place for Good Governance Now model.



# SCALE, IMPACT, AND REACH ARE ESCALATING



**Holding Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC** (United Nations Economic and Social Council), Sehgal Foundation is able to share its work related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a global audience.

**Corporate Social Responsibility** activities and goals approved by Schedule VII Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 are strongly endorsed and supported by Sehgal Foundation.

As of 2019 Sehgal Foundation projects and initiatives have spread to **890 villages, 27 districts**, and **8 states**: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

## PLEASE JOIN

Sehgal Foundation invites partnerships with other individuals, corporates, government bodies, multilateral organizations, and educational institutions to further the sustainable development work to achieve positive social, economic, and environmental change across rural India.

Please contact [smsf@smsfoundation.org](mailto:smsf@smsfoundation.org).



**SEHGAL**  
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S M Sehgal Foundation is a public, charitable trust registered in India since 1999.  
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