

## The power of philanthropy and CSR

Sehgal Foundation held a roundtable discussion, "Philanthropy and CSR for Rural Development in India," in Gurugram on April 21, 2017, to examine current trends and practices in philanthropy and CSR that affect rural development in India. The diverse panel was welcomed by Sehgal Foundation CEO Ajay Pandey, and Associate Professor Yugank Goyal of O. P. Jindal Law University, moderated the discussion.



The esteemed panel (from left-right): Prof. Yugank Goel, Ms. Pushpa Sundar, Dr. Bhaskar Chatterjee, Mr. B K Sinha, Dr. Suri Sehgal, Mr. Ramesh Menon

Dr. Suri Sehgal, cofounder and chairman of Sehgal Foundation, presented a philanthropist's view. He described being taught the value of giving and how, after earning a fortune, he and his family decided to use the bulk of their wealth to help those in need. He quoted Gandhiji's directive, "Your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs." He added, "Giving always brings satisfaction. It is good for your heart and health." He stressed that the aim of philanthropy is development, not charity. He pointed out that the Sehgal Foundation team used the initial years to demonstrate its credibility and trustworthiness and that each intervention must reflect that commitment as well as have a positive and sustainable impact on the lives of people and communities.

Development specialist and author of a new book, *Giving with a Thousand Hands: The Changing Face of Indian Philanthropy*, Ms. Pushpa Sundar talked about types of philanthropy and the emergence of philanthropy into public

discourse. She described individual giving, community giving, and institutional giving—a concept more prevalent in the West. She noted that 1,200 community foundations function in forty-six countries around the world. She stressed that money given to communities is only effective if community members are the primary decision makers—a view promoted by Sehgal Foundation from the beginning.

Writer and filmmaker, Mr. Ramesh Menon, spoke about India as an epicenter of philanthropy. He noted the important role of the media in highlighting good work done by NGOs, and that NGOs must sharpen their skills and strategies. Good examples of philanthropic work with follow-up stories will help create trustworthy and positive images of NGOs. He stressed that relationship building is critical; NGOs should seek feedback from donors to improve their systems and sharpen communication strategies. He shared an example: Hiwre Bazar, a village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, which has created sixty millionaires. Mr. Menon shared his worry about “hydrological poverty,” which has already begun to have adverse effects around the globe. He noted that, “In our lifetime we will see how water is going to be the crucial commodity.”

Mr. B. K. Sinha, former director general, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, quoted Swami Vivekananda’s view that those who have come out of poverty would be like criminals if they don’t help others come out as well. Mr. Sinha said that every development program “must walk on four legs” to be successful, namely, women’s power, youth’s power, technology, and skill development. He shared examples of self-help groups that have made significant strides in their own development issues. He described several government programs that are changing lives, such as the Aajeevika program, Bharat Nirman program, etc.

Dr. Bhaskar Chatterjee, former director general and CEO, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (considered the father of CSR in India), shared how the Indian CSR law helps direct corporate profits to assist the nation’s development: The law helps corporates understand grassroots work being done by NGOs in communities and simultaneously facilitates the corporatisation of NGOs whereby they learn from companies how to showcase the impact of their work. He discussed provisions made under the law to bring transparency and ensure that corporates can trust NGOs for developmental activities. He emphasized that corporates should use existing successful models rather than devising new strategies.

Sehgal Foundation Trustee, Mr. Jay Sehgal, thanked the panel for their insights, acknowledging that more discourses like this are needed to develop a wider understanding of how philanthropy and CSR will further rural development.

*(Compiled by Arti Manchanda Grover)*