

Focus on Sehgal Foundation team member: Zafar Hussain

The first Mewati employee of Sehgal Foundation!

The youngest of the nine siblings born to a family residing in Nagina block of district Nuh, Haryana, Zafar is a farmer and a development worker at Sehgal Foundation who performs his roles with great panache and commitment. Zafar was the very first Mewati employee of Sehgal Foundation. Being the first, his insights into the community needs opened many doors for the organization to work in the district. A graduate by qualification, Zafar was married soon after he completed his bachelor's degree. He worked with the Census Department, Chandigarh, and later for a few years with an NGO, Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses. His stint with the NGO was at a time when Sehgal Foundation was funding local NGOs to implement projects on their behalf, and Zafar had been facilitating the life skills education centers for rural youth in five villages under that funding project.



Zafar says, "I always looked up to visits by Sehgal Foundation staff at the center as there was much learning in those visits, and I was inspired by the values shared by the foundation representatives who spoke highly of the organization's vision and culture. During this time, I was also introduced to Mewat Development Agency and their women's empowerment work, which I was associated with for some time before joining Sehgal Foundation.



Zafar joined the foundation team formally in July 2002 around the same time that Sehgal Foundation underwent change from being a funding body only to start direct implementation of projects on the ground. The approach reshaped over time from a focus on four villages, four programs, and four years under an integrated sustainable village development model to include programs and initiatives on good governance. Zafar felt that the foundation should only work on water and education

in Nuh; however, he remembers candid conversations with the founder, Dr Suri Sehgal, where he described the four programs as like four legs of a cot—if we forgo one, we have a balance issue. Zafar lives up to his belief that change facilitators must lead by example before trying to convince the community to do something. He is elated to see the seeds of his labor bearing fruits as so many villagers are now empowered to lead their own development.

A taskmaster, Zafar recalls how despite his limited knowledge of English, he coordinated work visits in several villages with Jan Dirk Geertsema, a volunteer photographer and trainer at the foundation. He shares, "These visits helped me learn the art of expressing my thoughts in fewer words and still be able to communicate. At times, I felt challenged, but all these visits served as language crash courses. I would wait for the time when Jan visited India, and I would have a chance to accompany him." Zafar shares, "I resolved in my mind that I would give my children opportunities to learn and have command over English, Urdu, and Arabic so they could freely interact with people from diverse backgrounds. As a proud father, Zafar shares that his four children, two girls and two boys, are well-versed in English. His daughter is an inspiration for many in Nuh as one of a very few female MBBS doctors from the region. Zafar's elder son completed BTech Automobiles and recently published a novel. The younger children are pursuing higher studies in a respected private university. Zafar shares that all this would not have been possible without the exposure received from Sehgal Foundation and the support of his wife, who always stood by him in the highs and lows of his professional and personal life.

Zafar is an immensely dedicated worker and a pillar to the organization's work. He has seen the foundation evolve from an organization working in few villages to eight states as of 2019. His sixteen years of continuous service with Sehgal Foundation give him a special place in the organization. Zafar says, "I carry Sehgal Foundation with me wherever I go."

(The article is a translated version of the piece shared by the author in Hindi)