



Building long-term, sustainable relationships changes lives forever

Mr. Kevin Kimm, managing director, Mosaic India Pvt. Ltd. shares his experience of working with farmers at the grassroots as part of Mosaic's partnership with Sehgal Foundation.

1. Mosaic's story says "We help the world grow the food it needs"; what is your approach toward working with farmers?

I feel the story of Mosaic holds true in every sense of the word. Farmers or growers are, usually, handed over farming techniques and methods by their forefathers, i.e. over generations. These methods, though tried and tested, are subject to dynamics. You see, everything sees change, and this also applies to farming. The soil quality changes, environmental factors play a vital role, and so do economic scenarios, amongst many other factors. Our role is to encourage farmers to try out fresh options alongside traditional ones in order to compare outcomes and understand the gaps, if any, themselves. In addition, information on innovative developments and their proven results is provided as a supplement, for example, creating awareness about balanced crop nutrition and new agro technologies. In fact, we have noticed that crop productivity has increased by 20–30 percent. It is vital that agriculture remains profitable and continues to contribute to the growth of the economy.

2. How do you see the agriculture sector in India and worldwide and what do you see as the opportunities and challenges faced?

We all understand that the growing population is in direct proportion to the demand for food. This is actually what makes the agriculture sector so important. A number of challenges stand before this sector. Land consolidation, proper infrastructure for cold storage, effective and quality farming, maintenance of the water table, education of growers on balanced soil quality, and crop nutrition are just some of the issues faced not only by India but in different parts of the world. Having said this, the opportunities are also many: enhancing agricultural productivity and thereby competitiveness, rural growth, sustaining the environment, and future agricultural productivity, etc.

3. The association between Mosaic and Sehgal Foundation in the core areas of agriculture, water management, and education have seen many success stories. But the challenges may have been many. What, according to you, were or are the challenges being encountered?

I feel that there is a lot of demand for good work at the grassroots level. The challenge is to replicate the success stories and models everywhere, which is not always possible due to the logistics involved. Another challenge is the transfer of know-how, ownership, and knowledge to others, even after initiative project has been accomplished. That is vital to sustain the bonds formed and the hard work

and effort completed. Efficient man-power utilization is another domain that needs balance. For us, at Mosaic, CSR is not just a corporate social responsibility, it is building long-term, sustainable relationships that change lives forever. I still recall how farmers were skeptical when we started *Krishi Jyoti*. They were reluctant to participate in project interventions, but with more and more success stories, farmers joined hands.

4. Every project or assignment is a journey for all those involved, at various levels. How do you feel this journey impacted you on a professional and personal level?

The development of an impactful and meaningful long-term association with all stakeholders involved—farmers, communities, Sehgal Foundation, and our teams—has been an excellent return on investment of time and effort, besides finances. This is very heartening, indeed. What is more encouraging is that the know-how is sustained and maintenance of all that has been built, whether tangible or intangible, is respected.

On a personal level, India never ceases to amaze me. I remember, in fact, before I came to India, I had to undergo a training on intercultural intelligence and, to my surprise, I saw an American standing in front of me as a coach. I learned that he had been twenty years in India and had an Indian wife. On a professional level, the feeling of having made an impact is what is so important at the end of each and every day.

5. What has been your experience working with farmers in Mewat (now Nuh), Haryana, and Alwar, Rajasthan, for over nine years now on soil health and crop micronutrients?

Krishi Jyoti's agricultural development goal is for most farmers in the village to start using micronutrients to increase yields, productivity, and profits. This endeavor has seen a growth of 20 to 30 percent in productivity. The goal of building check dams is to help increase the groundwater level or arrest its depletion, and to mitigate its salinity. Together, the check dams have directly and indirectly benefited more than 40,000 people and have a total reservoir capacity of more than 16.99 million gallons. As far as education goes, to date more than 4,000 children have benefited from this project in twenty schools.

6. Embarking on a new journey usually involves a certain amount of excitement and anxiety. Since you are taking up a bigger challenge overseas, what are your expectations from the new assignment and how do you foresee synergies between the work done here in India and in your next position?

Though I will be taking up the responsibility as the head of International Distribution, specifically for the Asian markets, my connection with India can never be lost. On the contrary, it will be reemphasized by the new position. Having said that, what I want to say as a message is to dream. It does not matter whether a dream is big or small, but every journey begins with a dream. Mine did, too. I came from a background of farmers; I studied and traveled the world. This taught me a number of things: humility and respect for other



cultures and human beings. I think that is a very important lesson, which I also have imparted to my children.

(Interview by Sarah Berry, communications and media consultant, S M Sehgal Foundation)