



(Supported by Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India)



सूक्ष्म, लघु और मध्यम उद्यम मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



India Back to

*Gandhi*

**RURAL BUSINESS SUMMIT  
& TRADE FAIR 2019**

**Crafting Livelihood for Rural India**



**2nd - 6th October 2019  
Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts  
Janpath, New Delhi**

**MSME EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL**

(Supported by Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India)



(Supported by Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India)

## 4. India Back to Gandhi : Strengthening rural livelihoods

By S. M. Sehgal Foundation

### The Paradigm Shift

According to the study conducted by World Bank in year 2017, more than 60% of India's population is in rural areas. This rural majority is dependent on agriculture, however the farmers still operate with many limitations such as reliance on rainfall, poor infrastructure/facilities, lack of access to advanced agricultural practices, fear of taking risks, lack of finances, illiteracy, and competition from urban entrepreneurs.

For a paradigm shift to happen, the agriculture sector must be able to flourish and feed the growing population and continue to contribute to the country's

GDP. In order to propel transformative social change and inclusive growth, farmers have to move away from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture. The S M Sehgal Foundation (Sehgal Foundation) team works with farmers to help them identify and utilize sustainable agriculture practices to meet the increasing demand for food.



### Ushering in winds of change

Since 1999, Sehgal Foundation teams have created and implemented integrated grassroots programs that emphasize innovation, impact, and sustainability, with an overarching focus on the empowerment of women and gender equality. Four key programs—Agricultural Development, Water Management, Good Rural Governance, and Transform Lives one school at a time—are supported by rural research and community radio as cross-cutting tools that address the most critical needs of rural villages and create a community of engaged and proactive citizens who are capable of furthering their own development. The Agricultural Development Program is designed to decrease rural poverty in India by improving the livelihoods of small and marginal landholders by increasing their crop productivity in a sustainable way, enhancing their knowledge and awareness of scientific farming practices and water-use efficiency, and strengthening their linkages with government departments and academic institutions.

Farmers' incomes improve by introducing them to easy-to-learn and easy-to-adopt best practices that boost agricultural productivity and optimize the cost of inputs such as fertilizers, plant protection chemicals, water, and labor.

Developing allied agricultural activities such as horticulture and livestock management interventions contribute significantly to household incomes in rural India. Sehgal Foundation crop scientists stationed at the International Crop Research for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) continue to develop high-yielding hybrids and varieties that are disease- and insect-tolerant and are adapted to the tough growing conditions of arid and semi-arid areas.

## Increasing Agricultural Productivity

Most of India's farmers use old seed varieties, apply fertilizers arbitrarily without soil testing, and do not follow appropriate agronomic practices. In the absence of reliable sources of information, farmers rely on input suppliers and retailers even for pest and disease management. A "package of practice" (POP) for farmers has been created to include inputs such as quality seeds and need-based fertilizers. To motivate farmers to adopt the modern technology shown in the demonstration fields, day-long khet diwas (field days) take place at various stages of crop growth germination, fruiting (pods, spikes), and prior to harvesting. Farmers are invited to see for themselves the results from adopting the recommended practices. Sehgal Foundation's agriculture interventions have reached 269 villages.



A general perception prevails that farmers with small and fragmented landholdings will not benefit from mechanization. But the Sehgal Foundation team has demonstrated that successful mechanization of small landholdings is possible with adequate training and the creation of shareable infrastructure tools at subsidized rates. Such interventions at the level of the smallholder farmers encourage them to continue with agriculture and refrain from population migration to cities.

The team introduced farm mechanization equipment like zero tillage machines, maize shellers, potato planters, and solar sprayers; and new practices such as hi-tech vegetable nurseries, crop diversification, and kitchen gardens; and livestock management such as goat promotion, and preventive animal healthcare through health camps and animal nutrient management. Farmers earn additional income by renting out their machines to other farmers. With



(Supported by Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India)

the adoption of farm mechanisation, crop productivity has increased by 25 to 60 percent. Farm water conservation is promoted in the form of sprinklers, drip irrigation, laser land leveling, zebra-water absorbent soil input, farm bunds, and irrigation ponds. The foundation in partnership with corporates introduced a Mobile Agri Clinic, which brings holistic agricultural programs for small farmers to their doorstep. More than 3,000 farmers benefited from the Mobile Agri Clinic in its first two years.

### Goat-rearing creates women entrepreneurs

Goat-rearing is a source of additional income and an insurance against calamity in agricultural subsistence societies. Enterprising women from poor households are given information and training on how to establish goat-rearing units. Each unit has five goats—four females and one male.

The Sehgal Foundation team provides training, including best practices in feed and nutrition and treating seasonal diseases and the use of medicines, so these women entrepreneurs can run the units as an enterprise.



### Water filters provide access to drinking water and generate employment



Sehgal Foundation has developed a biosand filter called JalKalp and a low-cost gravity-based ceramic filter called MatiKalp for providing access to safe drinking water through effective, sustainable, and low-cost technologies, at the same time generating livelihoods for local artisans. JalKalp is effective against pathogens such as E. coli, total coliforms, parasites, microbes, and worms, and eliminates turbidity, iron, manganese, and arsenic contamination. To promote the delivery of filters and containers to remote villages in a timely fashion, the team nurtures relationships with local social entrepreneurs who can ensure supply and service locally. Building the capacities of other stakeholders and NGOs on this technology increases

the outreach of the product. So far, 1,605 JalKalp biosand filters have been installed in rural households.

## Empowering youth through digital literacy

India has the world's largest youth population with a very low literacy level in rural areas. To bridge the digital divide and also orient the young rural population to information technology, i.e. basic computer and internet literacy, Sehgal Foundation conducts a digital literacy program in rural villages for girls and boys, with additional training on tailoring; stitching, embroidery, and knitting, provided as a community-based program that is also open to all women.

More than 3,770 students were trained in life skills education, digital literacy, and good rural governance awareness. Many of the trained students have got employment opportunities, some have opened a Citizen Services Center providing digital India services under one roof, and women have earned additional income from stitching.

## Making rural voices heard: Community Radio: Alfaz-e-Mewat

Since the most essential participants in grassroots development work are local voices, Sehgal Foundation established community radio Alfaz-e-Mewat ("Rural Voices of Mewat") FM 107.8 to provide a media platform to local community voices in Mewat district, Haryana. The station broadcasts in the local language in an accessible format, so that listeners can learn about, discuss, and debate important local issues.

Alfaz-e-Mewat FM 107.8 broadcasts thirteen hours a day, seven days a week bringing important messages to over 225 villages in Nuh, within 25-km radius. More than 7,000 unique callers who tune into radio, share feedback, and participate in programming. Programs focus on sharing agriculture information that helps in capacity building for better produce and profits.



Sehgal Foundation remains on the forefront of rural development with its programs and initiatives that are carried out in partnership with rural citizens who are taking more and more of a lead in their own development. The process is slow but continuing. The team and an ever-expanding group of partners are committed to empowering all of rural India.

\*\*\*\*\*