Sehgal Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT 2003-04

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INDIA'S TRYST WITH DESTINY, HERALDED MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO, IS YET TO BE FULFILLED

INDIA'S TRYST WITH destiny, heralded more than fifty years ago, is yet to be fulfilled. In the meantime, the changes that have occurred across the sub-continent could hardly have been imagined by the generation that witnessed partition and the end of an empire. But midnight's children are now in their senior years, and a younger generation is ascendant. Trained in skills that did not even exist a few years ago, destiny is too long off to satisfy the youngsters of this digital age. In fact, they are right to be impatient. For all the progress that has undeniably been made, it is as if time has stood still in many of our rural and urban areas.

We all know that development is a complex process, and one that in a sense never ends. History is not over. At the same time, we must not sanction inaction and bureaucracy under the rubric of cultural complexity or social immobility. Equitable access to water, public hygiene, vocational skills, to name just a few, can be quickly and significantly improved with relatively simple assistance. The basic development issues of India are well known. We have a wealth of talent, scholarly expertise, and committed organisations pursuing an impressive range of grassroots goals. We are not however making the impact we would like. In his 'Vision 2020', India's President Kalam has called upon his country to transform itself into a developed nation. The clock is ticking down on this goal. Health and education are just two areas where we are still failing a large portion of the population. Just 42% of children between the age of 12 and 24 months have completed their immunisation schedule, while 14.4% have had no vaccination at all. While there has been massive growth in the private health sector, it is hardly accessible to the three quarters of Indians who live at or below the subsistence level. The result is that one third of Indian women do not receive a prenatal check-up during pregnancy, and 54% of babies are delivered without support from trained personnel. Even in the most modest private hospitals, the cost of an average stay can exceed twice a family's monthly income.

Regarding education, the state has committed itself to providing free and formal education to all children up to 14 years of age. However, school drop-out rates are high – only 1% of rural girls that enroll in class I will make it to class XII. In part this is because schools cannot adequately cater to the needs of very young people. A survey of India's schools revealed that nearly 52% lacked playgrounds, 89% do not have toilets, and 59% have no drinking water.

For our part, we are seeking to make our own small contribution to the sustainable development that is so eagerly sought by India's village communities. In 2003 progress has been made in the villages of rural Gurgaon, where we are active. I have seen myself in the eyes of young children, mothers, fathers, and old men, just what can be accomplished by rolling up our sleeves and getting to work. We are starting to make a difference in areas of water management, family life, health, and income enhancement.

This year an earthen check dam was completed in Rangala Rajpur, while in Ghaghas a comprehensive programme has revitalised the local water table and water supply. A campaign to build latrines and soak pits has also had a significant impact on public hygiene. Local women report that latrines are the single most important development for them. Almost unbelievably, in Ghaghas for example, only two of the more than 300 families have a latrine. For everyone else, the nearby fields must function as an open-air toilet. The lack of privacy and loss of dignity is deeply felt by women and elderly people. It is these small interventions that can have such a large impact. What's more, they are very low cost.

In this our second year of field operations, we have also learnt a few hard lessons that made us stop, think, and start again. Our efforts to introduce drip irrigation, for example, failed – the investment is too great for the average

IN INDIA WE WANT TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF PEOPLE ...

Suri Sehgal with village leaders in Ghaghas

farmer, instead we have now identified an inexpensive indigenous equivalent system, and will start to promote it in rural Gurgaon.
We began a campaign to enroll boys in a vocational training programme, only to find that the few who qualified and were selected, lacked the emotional security and motivation to actually attend. We will focus on providing just such counseling this coming year.
While young women and mothers are eager to attend our Family Life Education programme, the same cannot be said of their male counterparts. We will re-double our efforts therefore in the coming year.

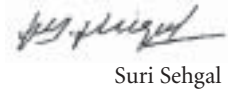
At the same time, it is extremely heartening to witness the efforts of others in the goal of village development. This year I had the honor to participate in this initiative through a US-based NRI (non-Resident Indian) Home Coming. India's expatriate community is a tremendous resource. Together, we have skills and resources that our country of origin needs. At a follow-up meeting in Delhi supported by the Foundation, several inspiring NRI initiatives were also showcased. The talent is there, we must put it to use to benefit our rural communities.

The Sehgal Family Foundation has also continued to support initiatives in the area of genetic improvement of crops, ecology, and the conservation of genetic resources. Programmes in these areas are on-going at several institutes both in the US and elsewhere. Amongst noteworthy grants, this year the Foundation provided a further US $1 million to the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). ICRISAT is using the endowment to improve resistance to downy mildew disease in *bajra* (millet), and to grain mold and shoot fly in *jowar* (sorghum). Part of the new endowment will also be used to conduct research on sustainable management of natural resources in rural Gurgaon. Research by ICRISAT has had a tremendous impact on the welfare of farmers throughout the developing world. Additionally, we provided on-going support to the Missouri Botanical Gardens, the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment, and to Trees for Life.

In India we want to make a positive difference to the lives of people in four villages in rural Gurgaon. At the end of 2002 we gave ourselves four more years to meet this goal, and so have three to go. Of course, four villages in rural India is only the proverbial drop in the ocean. If it takes a village to raise a child, it will take thousands of revitalised villages to raise a new generation of children to whom hope comes as naturally as does food, water, education, prosperity, and health.

We are therefore already looking beyond the short term. By 2007 we expect to begin expansion to eventually cover 40 villages. The scale of our activities will require us to train local 'village champions in sustainable development issues and activities. Our vision is that these village champions will become programme leaders. In the longer term, our vision for 2011 onwards is to reach several thousand villages. Small is beautiful, but to make a significant impact in India, we must become bigger.

This year the Foundation team, especially those working directly in the villages, showed a tremendous commitment to empowering rural India. I am also grateful to all the local volunteers who have worked with us.
For a village youth, woman, or man to take time and effort to assist the Foundation, is no small mark of what we have achieved. I look forward to working with the Foundation and our friends in the villages and elsewhere in the year ahead.



Suri Sehgal
Chairman

SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

THE SEHGAL FOUNDATION is addressing sustainable development in India's village communities. Outside of India, we support research on biodiversity and ecology, as well as various community initiatives seeking to improve the local social and biological ecology.

In India we focus on four programmes:
- Water Management
- Income Enhancement
- Rural Health
- Family Life Education

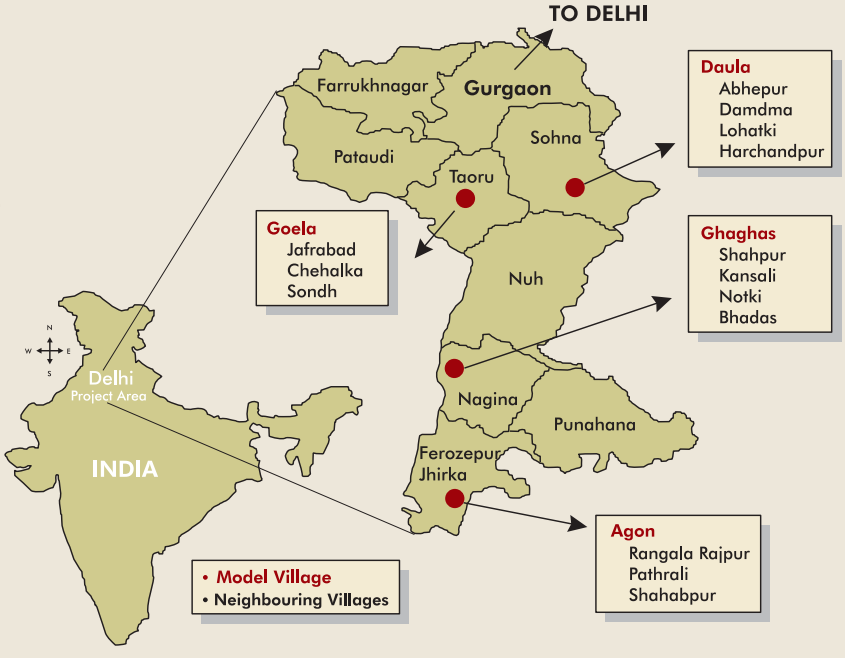
Our goal is to improve the overall well-being of villagers through grassroots activities and empowerment of local institutions. To that end, we work through a Project Implementation Team (PIT) based in the rural community, and actively collaborate on all projects with the village council (the *Panchayat*). Programmes are supported by our IT and Communications services group. We currently work in villages in rural Gurgaon, near Delhi.

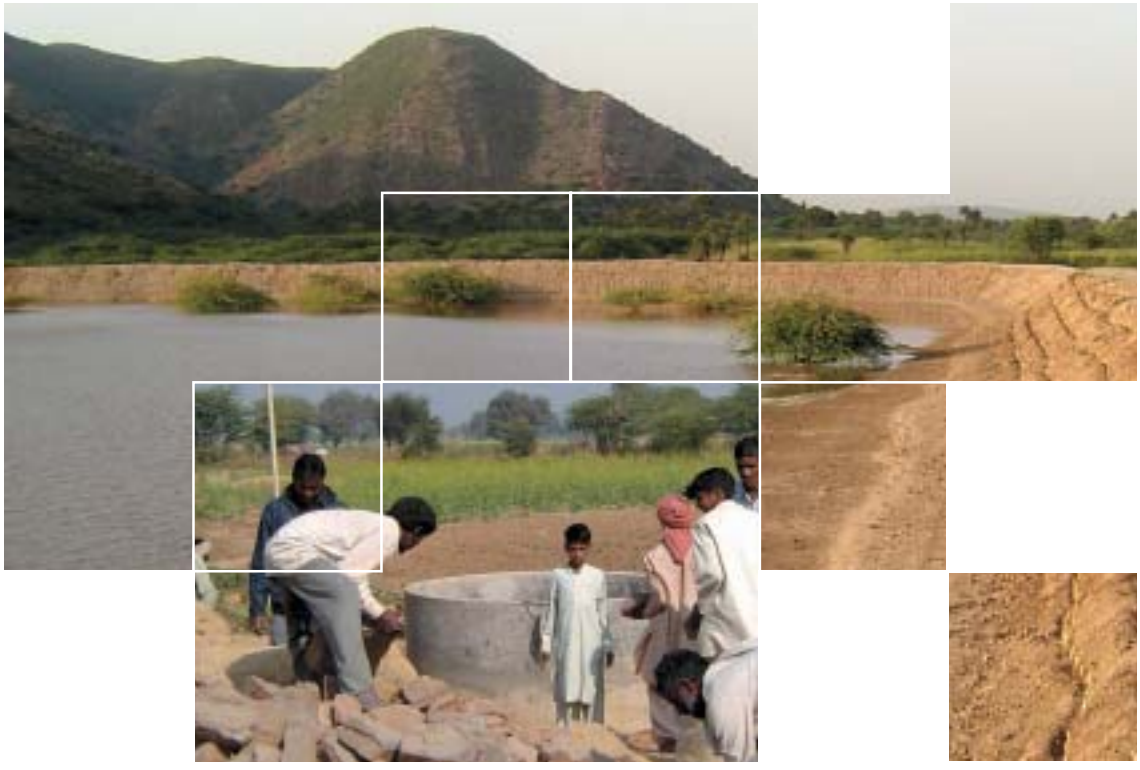
THE FOUNDATION HAS also provided support this year to the following organisations:
- International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
- Trees For Life
- Ekal Vidalaya
- Association for India's Development
- Asian Agri-History Foundation
- Gandhi College
- Swaraj Foundation
- NRI Homecoming
- Plant Database Consortium (On-going)
- Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology & Environment (ATREE)
- United Nations Pride of India Campaign
- Acumen Fund
- Iowa State University
- Various Community Grants, USA

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

THIS YEAR WE have benefited from a close partnership with **CEDPA** (Centre for Development and Population Activities) and **ARAVIS** (Aravali Vikas Sangathan). We are using **CEDPA**'s manual 'Choose a Future', in our **FLE** (Family Life Education) programme. This year, we have also collaborated with **CEDPA** in their nation-wide pre-testing of a new manual targeting adolescent girls.
The manual was used by the Foundation in five villages with over 130 pupils. We have also been invited to join **BLOOM** (Better Life Options and Opportunities Model); their programme to build capacity and provide technical assistance.

We are funding **ARAVIS** to work on sustainable development in the Sohna Block of rural Gurgaon. **ARAVIS** has been involved in development work since 1986, and is currently active in 45 villages in rural Haryana.





WATER MANAGEMENT

ACCORDING TO THE 2002 Government of India Census Household Survey, only 29% of rural homes have direct access to water. Most other households draw water from community taps, hand pumps, and wells. In villages in Gurgaon District, water supply and wastewater disposal is limited and erratic. Homes are generally not directly connected to the public water supply pipe. Instead, the pipe is usually opened at various points along its length, and water is illegally diverted. When the water supply is on, water flows uncontrolled into the street. This leads to water wastage, low water pressure, and a messy and unhygienic environment. Domestic wastewater is similarly disposed of in the open.

ROOFTOP WATER HARVESTING

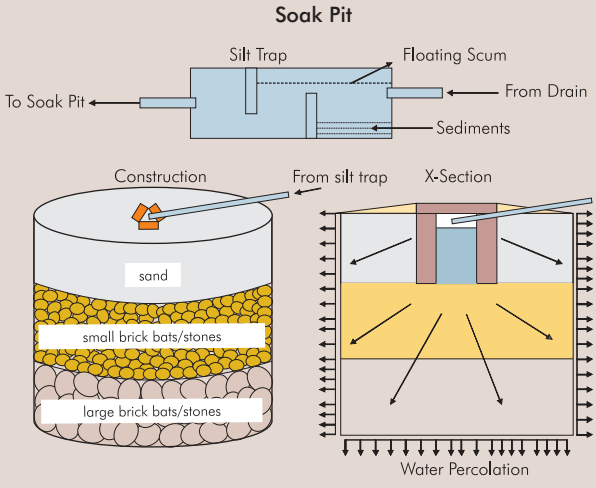
THIS YEAR, A ROOFTOP rainwater harvest structure was installed on the village mosque in Agon. Collection from rooftops is a tried and successful rainwater harvesting technique in India, though dissemination of this simple technology is not widespread. The mosque rooftop, depending on the rainfall, can potentially harvest 205,000 liters of water. This water is channeled to a defunct well, through which it reaches the ground water table. The well is now used for watering animals.

A WATER LITERACY CAMPAIGN

THE FOUNDATION ALSO conducted a door-to-door campaign covering the village of Agon. Agon has about 618 households and a population of approximately 4,700. The PIT (Project Implementation Team), comprising two men and one woman, surveyed the number of homes with a water connection, those having home taps, and those with connections but no effective water supply.

The PIT then focused on 25 households to explain the issues of water management, and introduce the use of taps and soak pits. Soak pits are simple drainage structures that facilitate the disposal, filtration and percolation of wastewater into the ground. A typical soak pit is one meter in diameter, and one meter deep. A desilting trap is placed just before the point where the water enters the soak pit. The desilted waste water discharges into soak pit – a below ground brick structure filled with layers of sand and broken brick. The sand acts as a fine filter, allowing clear water to percolate into the ground.

The structure costs around Rs. 300, which is affordable by most people in the villages. In all, 10 soak pits were constructed in the focus neighbourhood, and 22 taps were installed. Taps are priced at Rs. 30 (Rs 45 = US $ 1). The use of taps and soak pits in Agon has turned otherwise muddy streets into a dry and clean environment. To date a total of 59 soak pits have been constructed, 21 of which in Agon.



RANGALA CHECK DAM

IN SEPTEMBER A check dam to provide water to the village of Rangala Rajpur was completed. In recent years, the local water harvesting and supply infrastructure had fallen into disrepair, aggravating the community's water problems. The Rangala Rajpur check dam project was first proposed to the community's Water Committee in 2002. The community agreed to pay 25% of the total cost, and the Foundation the rest. In 2003 the community requested and was granted funds from the local government covering a part of their share. Each household contributed 10 kilograms of wheat to make up the village contribution. The village also contributed cash and labour. The check dam was completed before the onset of this year's monsoons in July. Water has already percolated from the dam into the ground, and previously dry wells are beginning to fill again. The well water level in the nearby village of Paul has also risen by about 6 feet.

This year, water from the check dam was used to bring 10 acres of previously fallow common land under vegetable cultivation.

Vetiver grass is being planted on the dam to enhance its stability, and a series of storage ponds are also under construction.

The first phase of a comprehensive ridge to valley water management programme was also completed in Ghaghas – see the GHAGHAS FEATURE.

INCOME
ENHANCEMENT

IT IS ESTIMATED that 75% of people designated as poor in India, live in rural areas. Poverty is an extremely complex issue – even agreeing on the criterion of the designation is a matter that occupies serious scholars.

BEST AGRICULTURAL
PRACTICES

THIS YEAR WE provided further training to farmers on the use of raised bed vegetable cultivation to reduce use of water, and produce healthier and more robust plants. Several 'see and believe' trips with local farmers were organised to a village where raised bed cultivation of tomato was on-going. The Foundation then provided an interest-free loan to the Ghaghas Fruit and Vegetable Grower Association to purchase a bed maker and chisel, each costing Rs 7,000. Proper soil preparation, row spacing, plant-to-plant spacing, and the use of low-cost polythene plant nurseries, can also significantly improve yields. Training on these practices was provided to the growers.

To address problems of soil degradation, a vermicomposting initiative was launched this year. Use of compost is common in India, however the traditional composting methods take 12 months, and yield only moderately improved fertiliser. Good quality vermicompost can be ready in 45 -50 days under normal conditions, and has a higher content of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and micronutrients than traditional compost. Six women and three men each received one kilogram of earthworms and technical support on vermicomposting. Significantly, the women were encouraged to travel outside their village to receive the training, as well as to a nearby village to claim free mustard seed from a local government official as part of an incentive programme on offer to users of vermi-compost. There are now 41 vermicompost units in 6 villages, most run by women.

THE DRIP DOWN EFFECT

BY CONTRAST WITH the success of raised beds, the Foundation failed to make an impact with the introduction of drip irrigation. Drip irrigation conserves water and helps enhance plant health and yield. A demonstration system installed by the Foundation was successful, but the Rs 40,000 investment required is, we learnt later, one that farmers are reluctant to make.

The Foundation is now working with International Development Enterprises, India, to introduce a low-cost drip irrigation system. At Rs. 10,000, this system uses an electric or diesel pump to fill an overhead tank, so that gravity generates water pressure through the irrigation piping. With reduced pressure in the system, it is possible to use lower grade piping than the expensive PVC material used in commercial systems.

COMMON LAND REFORMS

THIS YEAR THE Sehgal Foundation began an initiative to develop common lands in Ghaghas, Goela, and Agon. Village common lands are administered by the local *Panchayats*, but are often under-utilised or neglected. Community mobilisation began in February with a series of village meetings, focus group discussions, and home visits. The *Panchayats* in each village were also involved, but have limited power to decide land-use rights. By year-end, and despite considerable efforts, we were not able to make significant progress.

Already we are in discussion with the *Panchayat* for a five-year lease of approximately 10 acres in each village. This small start will hopefully get quick approval and lead to greater results in the mid-term.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

SINCE MOST VILLAGE youth in Gurgaon do not have higher education or vocational qualifications, the Foundation initiated a campaign targeting employment. Working with the Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSET), the goal was to provide vocational training and follow-up. Trades in high demand include general business development, computer hardware management, beauty care, and air conditioner and refrigerator repair.

Those whose profile matched the RUDSET requirements were encouraged to apply for training. Finally, just four candidates were accepted for training on hardware management, of which none eventually agreed to attend the training course. Foundation staff believes that lack of confidence was the prime reason. While disappointing, we learnt it is necessary to provide greater counseling to youth prepared to apply for such trainings.

ISRAIL IS 45 years old and the father of two sons (5 years and 2 months) and two daughters (7 and 11 years). His eldest son attends school but his two school age daughters do not. Israil attended school to the 4th grade, and has basic literacy skills. His wife is illiterate. Israil has a small business in wheat milling. Using a small electric mill, he converts wheat into flour, on which he earns a small premium.

Israil and the PIT have reviewed together the operations of his business, as well as issues such as costs, pricing, and general controlling. An action plan to improve these procedures is being developed, including training to be provided by the Foundation. It has already been agreed that the PIT will help Israil to develop a simple record-keeping system, to create a cash-flow statement, and to open a bank account. Until now, Israil has had no formal savings plan and no access to micro-credits.

RURAL HEALTH

YOU WOULD NOT want to fall ill in rural Gurgaon. Despite considerable improvements to the national healthcare system and infrastructure, general access to timely and quality care is not yet assured. Officially, curative care is available through village health sub-centers and Primary Health Centers. Community Health Centers and District Hospitals are also located in the larger population centers. At the village level, interaction is mostly with the public Auxiliary Nurse Midwife and the *Aanganwadi* (child care) worker. In reality, the sub-centers and Primary Health Centers of rural Gurgaon are mostly poorly maintained, with rudimentary structures, and only the sporadic presence of trained medical staff.

A REFERRAL SYSTEM

GIVEN THE STATE OF the healthcare system, it is hardly surprising that villagers are reluctant to use it. Instead, they often resort to local untrained and unregistered practitioners, or *Jhola* doctors as they are referred to in Hindi. When the *Jhola* doctor is unable to offer any curative solution, villagers often turn to sub-standard private nursing homes or hospitals, which they can hardly afford.

On a positive note, government-run health camps and mobile medical services do play an important role in rural Gurgaon. These services can very often eliminate the cost of a simple diagnosis. Most illnesses turn out to be minor, and are easily treatable in such camps. A simple but useful role of the Foundation has been to keep track of these camps and ensure that villagers know of them.

To that end, the PIT carried out a door-to-door campaign to identify people requiring medical care in the four villages where we are active. Assistance was then provided to ensure that they were able to access appropriate public facilities. By the end of 2003, these efforts were working well in Agon, where a good working relationship has been established with the local Auxillary Nurse Midwife. She now regularly visits the FLE center to administer Tetanus Toxoid to adolescent girls who have not been immunised, to follow-up on nutrition issues, and to refer girls and other villagers to the Primary Health Centers or other healthcare providers for common ailments. Outside of Agon we have not yet had the same success, and so will refocus our efforts there in 2004.

ENHANCING AWARENESS

THIS YEAR THE PIT received further training on water potability, the safe use of pesticides, immunisation schedules, prenatal care, reproductive health, and on the symptoms, prevention and treatment of fever, malaria, dengue, and tuberculosis. Regular information sessions on these and other subjects have also been held for villagers and *Jhola* doctors.

SAFE TRADITIONAL DELIVERY

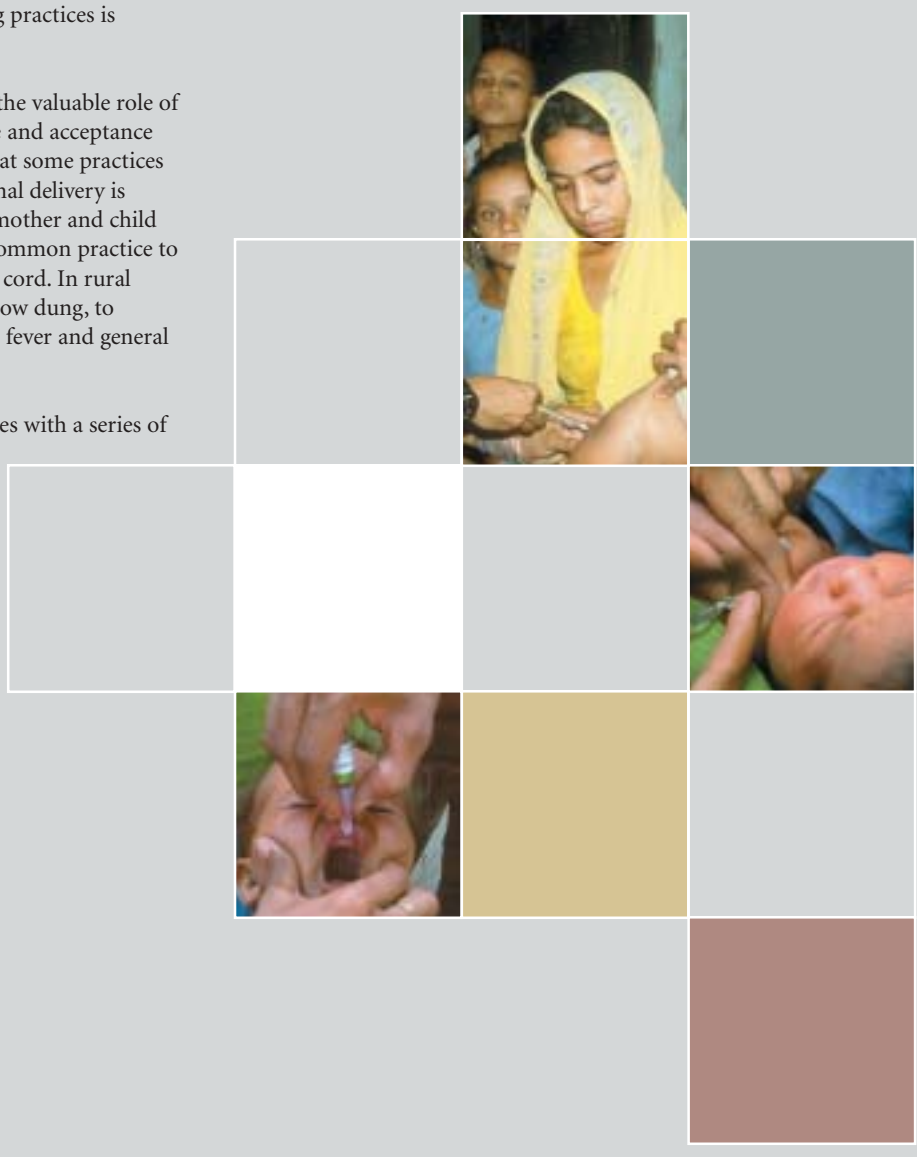
WHEN AQIL WAS born on October 31st this year in Ghaghas, Saliman, the *dai* attending, had made sure to trim her nails and wash her hands. This simple act of cleanliness is helping ensure that traditional deliveries are safe.

Nearly 70% of births in India take place at home with the assistance of a *dai* – a traditional midwife. In villages like Ghaghas, *dais* attend nearly 90% of births. The role of the *dai* is to counsel women during pregnancy and to help during the delivery. Though typically poor, usually illiterate, and formally unskilled, *dais* are a fount of much traditional knowledge. Because they attend many births, they are familiar with most complications. Women who become *dais* are usually also the daughters of other *dais*, so that knowledge of traditional birthing practices is passed on through generations.

While the medical community has come to recognise the valuable role of the *dai*, both with respect to their practical knowledge and acceptance within the rural community, there is also a concern that some practices are ill-advised. The number one issue for safe traditional delivery is ensuring hygiene. Very often home births expose the mother and child to a septic and risky environment. For example, it is common practice to use any sharp instrument at hand to cut the umbilical cord. In rural Gurgaon, the child's navel is sometimes rubbed with cow dung, to protect it from evil. As a result, incidence of puerperal fever and general neonatal morbidity is high.

The Sehgal Foundation has been addressing these issues with a series of *dai* training sessions, and with the promotion of a *dai* kit. This year the Foundation conducted three training sessions for roughly 30 *dais*. The *dai* kit comprises a sterile safety razor, polythene sheet, thread, soap, and a disinfectant, and costs Rs 30.

DURING ONE DOOR-TO-DOOR health survey at Agon, Mir Nath was discovered ill in his house. Mir had been off work for several months due to weakness, fever and a chronic cough. While he had sought treatment in a nursing home some distance from his village, it was too expensive for him to maintain. At first appearance Mir seemed to be suffering from tuberculosis, which a subsequent diagnosis confirmed. The Foundation advised Mir to request the nursing home doctor to supply a diagnosis report and reference letter. This would allow him to be treated free of cost at a government facility. Previously, Mir was unaware that this free service was available to him. He is now recovering and is back at work.



FAMILY LIFE
EDUCATION

THE TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE of village life can be a source of great community and personal strength. In rural Gurgaon, it is often also a mask for restrictive gender and authority roles. The irony of Family Life Education is that the traditional family head is so far largely unresponsive to it.

Parents and village leaders have considerable decision power over the choice of life options of their children. By contrast, young men and women have essentially no influence on their parents and key decisions such as their age at marriage, level of education, and other gender related issues. Fathers are in fact the ultimate decision-makers, even if mothers are consulted. At the same time, women are the primary care givers, and it is young women and mothers who are the 'First Movers' in matters of education and healthcare.

ENROLLING THE
GATEKEEPERS

IN 2003 WE began development of a special Parents' Curriculum which focuses on sensitising parents to their own needs and those of their children. This Curriculum was used in six Focus Group Discussion sessions in four villages. The sessions covered issues in their personal lives, such as 'getting to know your children', family gender roles, the value of literacy, care of the newborn, and the role of the spouse. Most women have reported that the course is helping to bring them closer to their children and to understand their hopes. Additionally, the course is providing mothers with a formal structure to gather together, where they can relax and share their concerns. None of the mothers dropped out of the course or failed to attend a session.

Success with men has been more limited. Interest has been low, and attendance has been erratic. The often-stated reason for this is that work is their priority. A few also admit to awkwardness in discussing issues such as family life and child care, which is the traditional role of women. Overcoming these inhibitions is one target of the new course.

CRICKET ON THE
CURRICULUM

UNLIKE VILLAGE GIRLS, boys are readily given the opportunity for recreation activities. Beginning in 2002 we sought to organise gender sensitisation and other FLE related training around those activities. However, the number of boys enrolled remained low, attendance was irregular, and volunteering was infrequent. In 2003 we therefore began an initiative to support the formation of Youth Clubs.

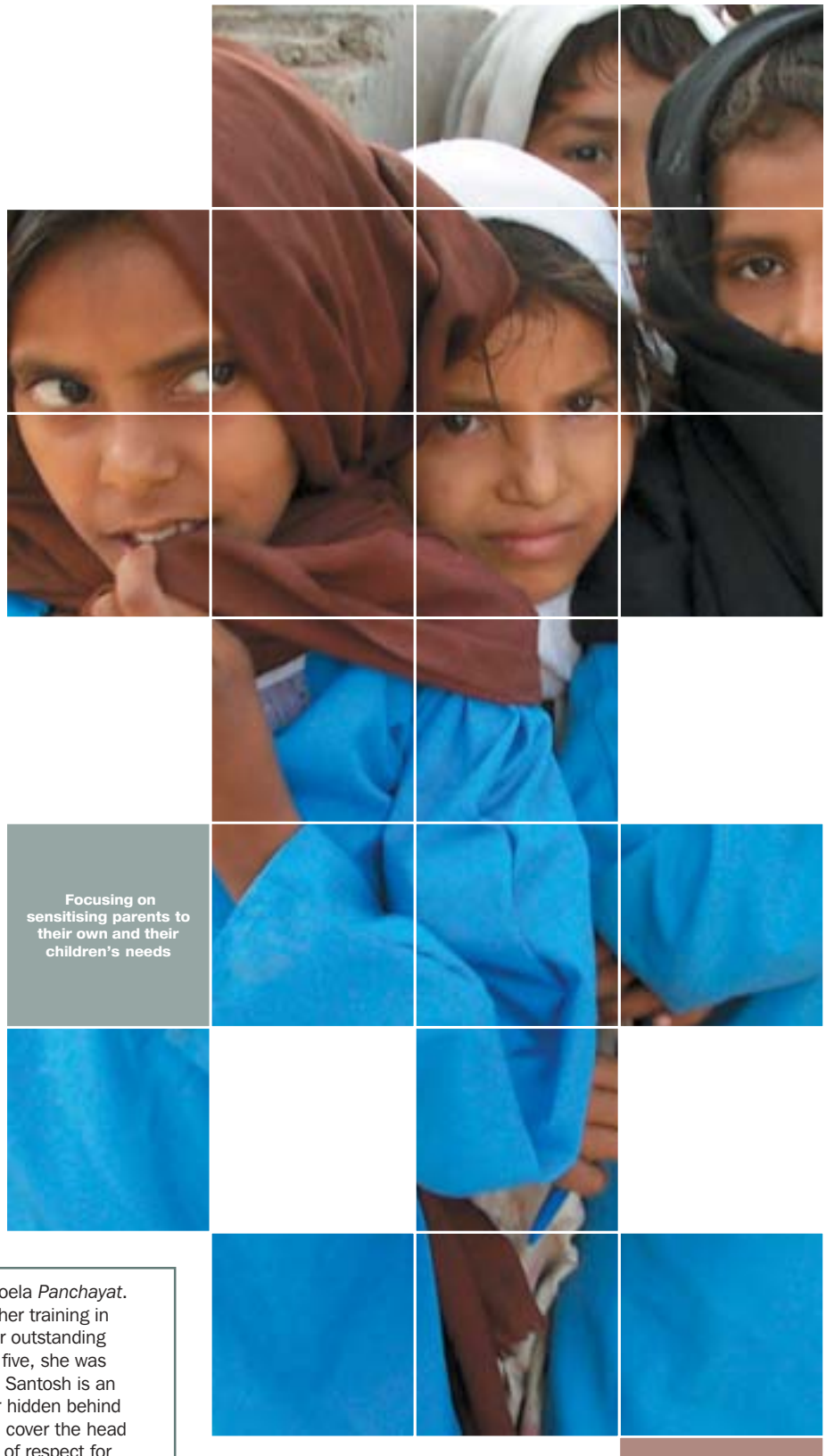
The idea of a Youth Club emerged from the boys of Ghaghas during the Patrika (village newsletter) exercise. Not surprisingly, they were most keen on a cricket club. By coincidence, at a community meeting in Goela, the boys also asked for help in starting a cricket club. The Goela Club is up and running and will start shortly in Ghaghas. The founding members have had to decide their club's name, fees, age eligibility, and the club rules and regulations. The boys also nominated a President and Treasurer. The Foundation has provided a cricket kit and will bear 50% of its maintenance cost for three years. FLE classes in the club have also started and the boys have begun volunteering in village development.

BACK TO SCHOOL

IN 2003, THE Foundation's Family Life Education (FLE) course was offered in 16 villages in rural Gurgaon. The target audience has largely been adolescent girls, but the needs of young men, and parents are also being catered to. Family life in rural Gurgaon for young people is constrained by limited education and access to information, and fairly rigid gender roles. Poverty compounds nearly all problems.

The FLE curriculum is designed to impart life skills, enhance literacy, and provide recreation opportunities and skill training. The curriculum is actually based on an interactive course developed by the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), USA. The course has been very successful in getting girls talking about their concerns and the issues they face, while boys are being confronted with the facts of gender inequity for the first time.

To extend the reach of FLE, this year the Foundation approached several village schools. Family life and health awareness do not form a significant part of any syllabus. Principals at both public and private schools reviewed the course content, and in turn obtained approval from parents to offer the course. In three public schools in Agon, Ghaghas and Goela, the course is offered during a free activity period. At the private school in Agon, classes are conducted after school hours. A total of 51 girls and 44 boys followed the course this year.



Focusing on sensitising parents to their own and their children's needs

The course has been very successful in getting girls talking about their concerns

SANTOSH IS 35 years old, and a member of the Goela *Panchayat*. She joined the FLE center in March and completed her training in September 2003, when she was awarded a prize for outstanding performance. Even though she had studied to class five, she was illiterate. She can now read and write. At first silent, Santosh is an outspoken member of her community and no longer hidden behind her *Ghunghat*. The traditional *ghunghat*, or veil, can cover the head as well as the face. Covering the face can be a sign of respect for elder men, but is not traditionally required at all times.

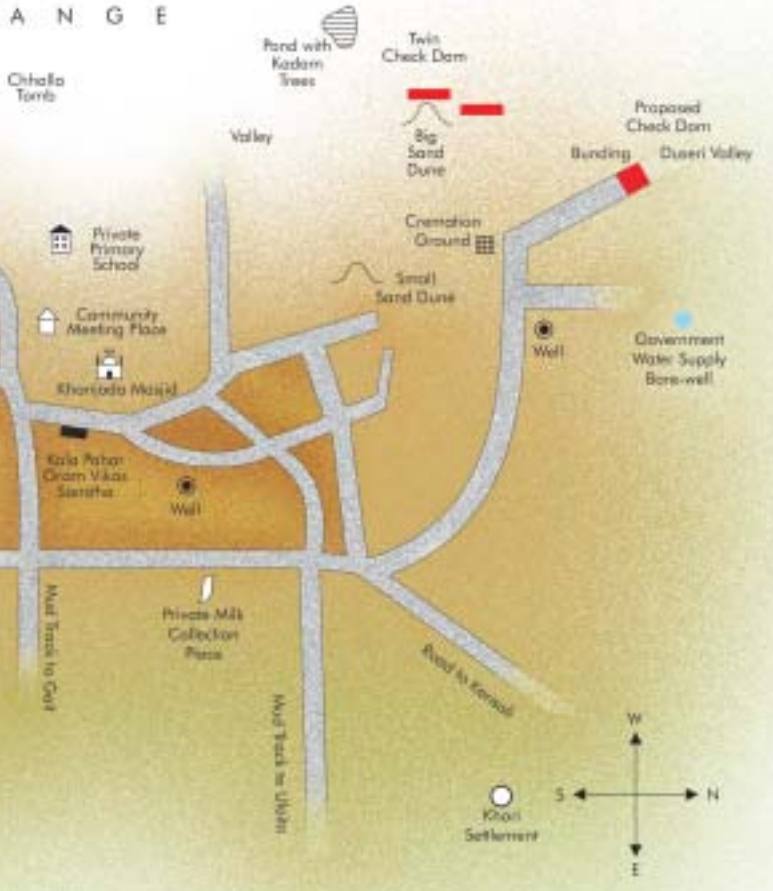
Given the confidence to assert herself through the FLE curriculum, she actively voices her opinion and promotes development initiatives targeting women. Santosh learnt stitching and now earns money making clothes. She also joined the women's 'Self Help Group' and is now a role model in Goela.

LIFE IN GHAGHAS

IN JULY THE rains came in Ghaghas, as they have always done – or nearly always. Villagers remember times when the monsoons were very light. Crops failed, wells went dry and animals grew weak and unproductive. A government pipe supplied their drinking water, but the supply was erratic at best, and in any case, only sufficient for their barest needs. Private water merchants did well, but virtually no one else did.

In the drama that is drought, monsoon failure is only one of the actors however. This year in Ghaghas, anxiety for the monsoons was not in their arrival, but rather their stay. The rains were coming, but the village was not prepared. In the Aravali hills surrounding Ghaghas, rainwater can be quickly lost. The infrastructure to capture the rains had been neglected for years. This year the villagers were determined to ensure that a check dam was able to harvest the plentiful rainfall. So began fifteen frantic days of work in early July. This mobilisation of the community to ensure the 'monsoon harvest' marked a turning point in the Foundation's relationship with the village.

Ghaghas is a typical village in the predominantly Muslim Mewat area of rural Gurgaon. Ghaghas village comprises approximately 300 families, a population of about 2,100 people, of which over 700 are members of the *Gram Sabha*. The *Gram Sabha* comprises all villagers 18 and over, and whose names are included in the village voters' list. The local economy is entirely agrarian, literacy levels are relatively low, gender bias is pervasive, and poverty endemic. At the same time, the village is gradually opening to development. The Foundation's work in Ghaghas began in 2002, but this year took a leap forward with the creation of a 'Village Level Institution' or VLI. It was the VLI that ensured the completion of the check dam.



IT TAKES A 'VILLAGE LEVEL INSTITUTION'

A VILLAGE LEVEL Institution (VLI – called a *Gram Vikas Sanstha* in Hindi) is a formal body intended to ensure sustainable development in rural India. VLIs can be registered under the India Society Act, or remain unregistered.

Since its inception in 1999, the Foundation has recognised the importance of forming VLIs to ensure the sustainability of its activities after it withdraws from a village. The Foundation decided to expedite the VLI process and address sustainability issues with the villagers virtually at the beginning of its activities. As a result, intensive discussions were held in the village. The PIT also met different groups from wards[1], castes and *Kutumbs*[2] and asked each of them to choose their representatives to be VLI founder members. This outreach to the whole community was later identified as a key success factor in the formation of the VLI.

Additionally, it was decided that registering the VLI would lend it credibility, ease access to Government and non-Government funds and facilities, and promote rigorous self-management.

The 16 member Executive Committee of the VLI includes the *Sarpanch*, *Panchayat* and ex-*Panchayat* members, several women, a youth member, as well as 2 members from the Foundation. Presently there are 84 fee-paying village members – the goal is to enroll most of the villagers.

GHAGHAS AT A GLANCE

- Literacy: 40%
- Male literacy: 53% Female literacy: 29%
- Student Teacher Ratio: 350/3
- Latrines: 2
- Radios: 50
- TVs: 10
- Telephones:
  Landlines : Mobile
  2 13
- Farm Animals: 910
- Tractors: 19
- Health:
  Doctor: 1 Nurse: 1
  Child-Care Worker: 1
- Families: 303
- Population: 2,104
- Average family size: 8.4
- Sex Ratio: 949 Females/1000 Males
- Age at marriage:
  Boys: 17.7 years
  Girls: 14.9 years

Footnotes

[1] Wards are the geographical divisions of the village as per Government records. Cultural affinity usually determines ward demographics.
[2] *Kutumbs* are ancestrally linked families.

THIRSTY LAND

ALL FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES in Ghaghas are now carried out under the auspices of the VLI. One of its first tasks was to create a 5 member 'Check dam task force', including one woman member. The task force is responsible for hiring labour, conflict resolution, procurement of construction materials (cement, bricks, steel, stones, grit), managing the availability of tools and equipment, and ensuring women's participation.

The check dam is located in the foothills of the Aravali Range, just outside Ghaghas. Ghaghas depends on water from the hills to recharge local wells and for irrigation. The average annual rainfall in the Ghaghas area is 500 mm, most of this coming during the monsoon season. Failure to harvest the monsoon rains had led to falling groundwater levels, increasing concentration of salts, and disappearance of local flora.

In the implementation of the check dam project, a 'ridge to valley' approach was taken, covering all stages in water flow from hilly regions down to the valley. The plan called for the construction of a series of contour bunds, gabions and gulley plugs, as well as a masonry check dam. Work on the masonry dam began at the end of 2003. Contour bunds are small loose stone structures, typically high up in the water catchment area. Gabions are loose stones covered with wire mesh placed at various intervals along the gulleys through which water flows to the valley floor. Gully plugs are similar, but not meshed. These three structures slow the water speed, leading to greater percolation into the ground, and decreased silt load and soil erosion.

Check dams typically comprise a large natural or excavated water storage area, and a masonry containment structure. Depending on whether or not the dam is also intended for groundwater recharge, the storage area can be lined. At Ghaghas the catchment area is 1.75 sq. km, so that the check dam storage area can contain up to 108,000 kilolitres of water.

This year construction of the contour bunds, gabions, gulley plugs, and a loose dry stone containment structure was completed. Stones for the latter were collected from the local area and layered with soil and grass, before being covered by a polythene sheet. The sheet was then covered with more soil and stones. The resulting watertight dam was in place by the time the monsoons began in July. Ghaghas is now enjoying the benefits of this water-harvesting project.

Analysis of the groundwater in the vicinity of the check dam and at a distance of approximately 1.5 km revealed that it exceeded permissible standards for fluoride, nitrates and chlorides. Testing of the groundwater after the dam had been completed and the monsoons had come revealed that all required quality parameters were met from samples taken in the vicinity of the dam, but not from the second site. This is evidence that the dam is allowing the contained water to percolate into the ground, while elsewhere the monsoon rains simply run-off without recharging the groundwater.

Work is now ongoing to complete the stone-masonry and concrete dam wall, as well as of water guiding walls and a 'cushion chamber'. The latter is designed to protect the dam from damage by heavy water flow. The dam's sand dune slopes are also being stabilised by cutting them into a self-sustaining angle of repose, providing a covering of clayey soil, and by planting vetiver grass. Siphon and side spillways will also be built to direct excess water flow away from the village and into adjacent ponds. Sluice gates are being provided to ensure de-silting. Total cost of the dam is estimated at Rs 900,000.

A BIT OF PRIVACY

THE CHECK DAM is a large programme for Ghaghas, and has already had a significant impact on the village. But if one canvases the women and elders, by far the most cited accomplishment of the VLI this year has been the introduction of sanitary latrines.

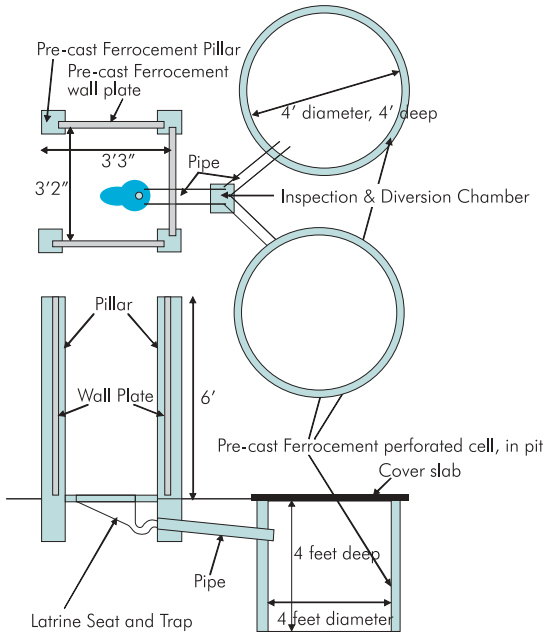
Ghaghas is virtually entirely without any sanitation infrastructure – no sewage of course, but also no latrines. Of the more than 300 village families, only 2 have private latrines. The entire population uses the surrounding area as a large open-air toilet – with all the implications for lack of hygiene, privacy and dignity. This is especially difficult for women and elderly people. Women resort to going to the fields either in the very early morning, or after sunset.

Low cost latrine technology is available. A two-pit latrine system designed by Sulabh International is highly suited to the region, requiring only one mug of water per flush. One pit can be used by a family of 10 for 5 years, after which the flush connection is easily switched to the second pit. Waste in the original pit dries up and decomposes.

The latrine costs about Rs. 2,700 and consists of a simple structure with medium height walls, but no permanent door or roof. To promote the latrines, the Foundation constructed a demonstration model at the Family Life Education center. The Foundation provides families Rs 200 towards the cost, and procures materials and has the latrine constructed.

Domestic wastewater is also disposed of in the open. The result is an unclean and often muddy environment. To improve village hygiene, the Foundation with the VLI facilitated the construction of 28 soak pits this year in Ghaghas. The Foundation has also provided rubbish bins and cleaning implements. Each family also contributes Rs 10 per month towards the employment of street sweepers.

Low Cost Rural Sanitary Latrine



THE WOMEN OF GHAGHAS

SIMPLE IMPROVEMENTS TO the physical infrastructure of Ghaghas are making a difference. At the same time, the highly gender-polarised social infrastructure has a largely negative impact on the well-being of girls and women.

The literacy rate amongst women is about 29%, while average family size is 8.4. Women's daily routine largely comprises doing household chores, collecting water and firewood, tending to animals, and agricultural labour. Despite this massive contribution to the family's welfare, they are essentially powerless at home and in the community. A heavy routine, poverty, and a general lack of hygiene, means that they are also often in poor health.

This vicious circle of constant work and poor health is kept in motion by social isolation. Subjugated at home, they also have no role in matters pertaining to the village at large. Generally they have no access to radio, television or print media. Even visits to neighbours are restricted. At our first community meeting, not a single woman participated. Similarly, there was no women's group of any kind. There are now two women's self-help groups in Ghaghas.

PATRIKA
A VOICE FOR YOUTH

IN OCTOBER THE first village newsletter , or 'Patrika, was launched in Ghaghas. The Patrika provides village youth with a communications outlet, a forum to acknowledge community role models, and a means to celebrate local culture and disseminate information.

Photograph by Jan Dirk Geertsema

ISLAMI

• By the time Islami's day has finished at 11:00 p.m. she has been on the go for nearly 19 hours. During that time she has tended to her family's needs, cleaned her house, worked in the fields, and tended to their farm animals. Islami has no recreation, and little time for herself. In 19th century England, William Blake railed against the 'dark satanic mills' where women and children laboured for twelve hours a day. In Ghaghas in the 21st century, women and children are just beginning to emerge from hardships that are remembered in the West only by its historians. Life in Ghaghas is hard on women.

• Her day begins at 4:00 when she rises to sweep out the house, wash herself and say her first prayers. Like all Muslims, Islami will pray five times each day. Before the sun is up she will also feed the farm animals, and then steal away to a nearby field to relieve herself. Islami is adamant that the life of village women can be greatly improved with the installation of latrines. She feels strongly the indignity that results from lack of hygiene and privacy. Islami is lobbying the Foundation to help her family to install such a latrine, and to provide greater help to those families that cannot afford one.

• By 6:00 she says her second prayers and then prepares tea for her husband, two sons and two daughters. The boys are aged 10 and 11, the girls 7 and 14. Islami and her husband also have two older married daughters aged 18 and 22. Fazr Mohammad, her husband, works nights at the state government's Power & Water Department in nearby Nagina village, and returns home just as the tea is ready. He is a 'key man' and responsible for switching the water supply from one outlet pipe to another. Fazr's income must be supplemented with what Islami can earn and what crops she can raise. By 7:00 she is at work in the kitchen cleaning and cooking.

• Despite her best intentions, like so many other women, Islami is caught up in a system that perpetuates negative gender roles. In her case, she and her husband have chosen to send their sons to the better private school in Nagina, while the girls attend the village government school. They cannot afford to send all their children to the better school. Tuition at the private school is Rs 150 to Rs 170 per month, and essentially free at the government school. With about 1 teacher for every 115 students, the public school barely copes. Still, Islami's children are all literate, and she is determined that even her daughters will complete the full school curriculum to class XII. Her married daughters completed class V.

• After the children leave for school at 8:30, Islami spends her time washing clothes, cleaning dishes, and tidying the house. Most women dispose of domestic wastewater into the street, where it results in an unsightly mess and is lost for recharging the groundwater. With the introduction of soak pits in Ghaghas, she is now eager to have one installed in her area.

• Depending on the seasonal requirement, Islami will head to the field by around 10:30. When required, her children and husband will accompany her. Islami oversees the entire field management, from purchase of seed, sowing, pest control, irrigation, and harvesting. She has followed training on best agricultural practices, including the use of raised beds for vegetable cultivation. When vermicomposting was introduced by the Foundation, Islami was quick to get involved. Today she operates a vermicompost unit on her land and encourages its use by other women. She was also active in the check dam project, and makes sure her family contributes.

• Islami is also a member of the Ghaghas VLI. Becoming a member for any woman is difficult in a highly gender biased society such as Ghaghas. Islami faced resistance from her husband, as well as the community. At one point, her husband forbade her from leaving the house, and on another occasion from leaving the village. When she persisted, he then objected when he learnt that she was actively participating and voicing her opinion in front of men.

• The PIT is very sensitive to the issues raised by shifting the traditional roles of women and men in Ghaghas, and so was careful to also provide support and counsel to Fazr. While he too had to face pressure from other men unhappy with the this new assertiveness amongst the women of the village, he was able to see the value in this change. Fazr now supports his wife and is himself playing a greater role at home and in the field. For Islami and other women, perhaps the greatest change is in their own sense of themselves and their self-confidence. It is a matter of pride for Islami that during VLI meetings she is offered a chair and that she shares the forum with men.

• When she is not in the field, Islami collects what meager fodder she can from the local forest area and common lands. The area around Ghaghas has become significantly deforested, and the Foundation is now actively working to rehabilitate the common lands. Islami also collects animal manure, which is patted into cakes, dried, and used as cooking fuel. With this done, she is ready for her mid-day prayers by 1:30.

• Sorting and cleaning the fodder, feeding and milking the animals, and other bits of housework occupy most of her afternoon. The children arrive home by 4:00 and by 6:00 prayers are said again, and dinner is prepared. Islami's sons then go to private coaching at a tutor's home in the village. With dinner finished, the dishes cleaned, and the children attended to, Islami says the day's final prayers around 8:00. By 11:00 everyone is asleep, and Islami can retire herself.

OUR TEAM

Arvind Bahl
A Trustee of the Foundation, was a senior Executive and a member of the Board of Directors of the Proagro Group of Companies from 1990-1999. He holds a degree in electrical engineering from the Regional Engineering College, Allahabad.
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Anjali Makhija
Program leader Family Life Education, holds a Master's degree in Social Work, Delhi School of Social Work, Delhi University. She has 11 years of experience in the area of health and integrated community development with several Indian and international NGO's.
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R. Jay Sehgal
Executive Director and programme leader Information Technology, holds a degree in Management Information Systems from the University of Iowa, USA. He worked as a Senior Programmer Analyst in the USA in a leading private sector company prior to joining Proagro Seed Company Ltd., India, as the Director of Information Technology.
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M.D. Gupta
Technology Application Consultant, holds a PhD in Genetics and Plant Breeding from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Delhi. Dr. Gupta has 28 years of experience in plant breeding and seed enterprise management with national and international organisations.
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Archana Mandal
Programme leader Rural Health. Graduated from Maulana Azad Medical College, Delhi and specialised in Community Medicine from Lady Hardinge Medical College, Delhi. She has experience in the areas of epidemiology, health education, reproductive and child health, management of rural health centers, and training of health functionaries.
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Ellora Mubashir
Programme leader Communications, holds a PhD in Plant Biochemistry from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. She was the Manager of Biotechnology Regulatory Affairs at Proagro Seed Company, India prior to joining the Foundation.
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B.R. Poonia
Responsible for community mobilisation, holds a Master's degree in Rural Sociology from the University of Udaipur, and has over 25 years of experience in community development. Prior to joining the Foundation, he was employed at CARE-India for 14 years.
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Rajesh K. Sinha
Programme leader Income Enhancement, holds a Management degree from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Gujarat. Mr. Sinha has held various private sector positions in sales, procurement, rural advertising and credit promotion.
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Lalit Mohan Sharma
Programme leader Water Management and Infrastructure Building. He is a graduate civil engineer and holds a Masters of Technology (management & systems) degree from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. He holds a postgraduate diploma is in Construction Management and is a Fellow of the Institution of Valuers.
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Shanthu Shantharam
Special Advisor, holds a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the Memorial University of Newfoundland.
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Kevin O'Brien
Consultant, holds a PhD in philosophy from the University of Leuven, as well as degrees in biology and accounting. Dr. O'Brien is Finance & Administration Advisor to Ablynx NV, a Belgian biopharmaceutical company. He assists the Foundation with external communications.
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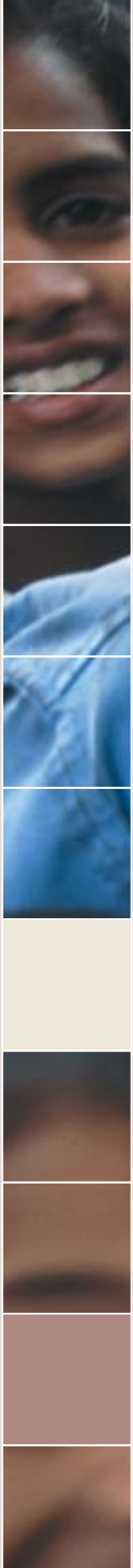
FOUNDERS

Suri Sehgal is the founder of the Sehgal Foundation, USA and S.M. Sehgal Foundation, India. He holds a PhD in Plant Genetics from Harvard University. He is founder and chairman of Maize Technologies International, Austria and Misr Hytech Seed International, Egypt.
Dr. Sehgal is the former Director General and member of the Board of Directors of Plant Genetic Systems, Belgium. He is founder and former chairman of the Proagro Group of Companies, India.

Edda G. Sehgal is a co-founder and trustee of the Sehgal Foundation, USA and S.M. Sehgal Foundation, India. Mrs. Sehgal was born in Breslau, Germany and received early education in Goppingen, near Stuttgart. Mrs. Sehgal served on the Board of the Proagro Group and of Global Technologies Incorporated, USA from 1990 to 1998.



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TEAM (PIT) is the Foundation's immediate interface with the village. The PIT comprises a 'field facilitator' and staff from the local area of operations. The field facilitator leads the PIT team, and oversees all Foundation activities at the village level. Most PIT members have multiple roles, including community mobilisation, identifying and training volunteers, and executing and monitoring projects.

PIT Staff	Responsibility
Zafar Hussain	Field Facilitator
Jaan Mohammed	Community Mobiliser
Sushil Bala	FLE centers in two villages of Nagina block and two villages of Ferozepur Jhirka, and for women's mobilisation, Ghaghas and Agon
Razia	Rural Health, FLE in schools, women's mobilisation, Ghaghas.
Kamlesh	FLE centers, community mobilisation, and Rural Health, Taoru Block
Urmila Gupta	Rural Health, FLE in schools, women's mobilisation, Agon.
Tahir Hussain	Programmes for men and male youth, Agon.
Mohammed Arshed	Programmes for men and male youth, Ghaghas
Sarveshwari Mishra	Better agricultural practices, water management and FLE boys Youth Club, Goela
Mahipal Singh	Promotion of better agricultural practices.
Goverdhan Sharma	Water Management.

USE OF FUNDS

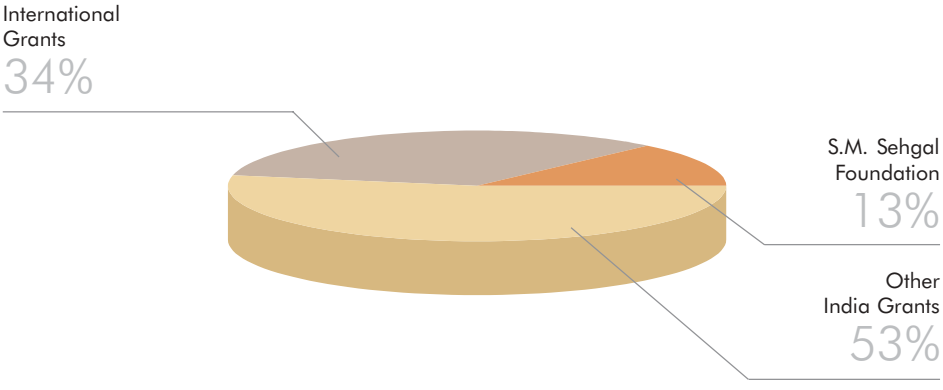
SINCE 1999 THE total grants of the Sehgal Family Foundation amount to approximately US $12.5 million. Of the total grants, US $1.67 million was used by the Foundation for its development activities in India. Other direct grants to organisations working in India account for US $6.53 million. Grants to US and other International organisations account for the remaining $ 4.3 million.

In 2003 total Foundation grants amounted to US $2.63 million, of which US $331,000 went to the Foundation in India. Other grants to organisations for work in India totaled US $1.33 million. Grants to organisations in the US totaled US $962,000

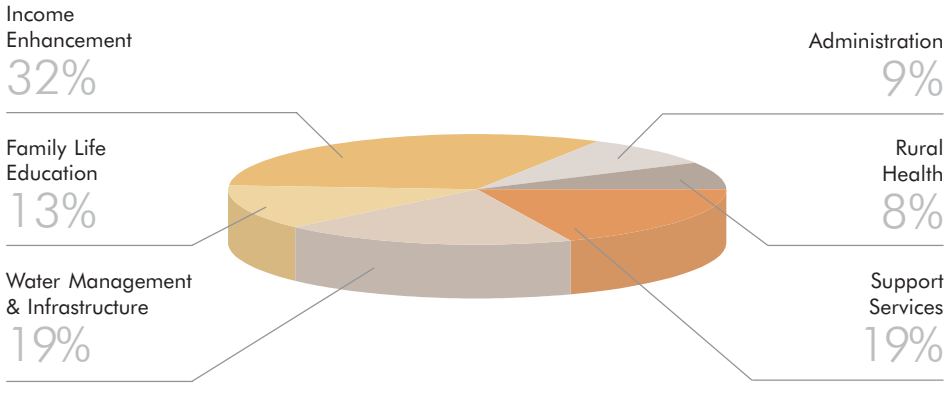
In 2003 grants to the Foundation covered $274,000 of expenses for programmes in Water Management & Infrastructure Development (19%), Income Enhancement (32%), Rural Health (8%), and Family Life Education (13%). The Income Enhancement programme includes support for best agricultural practices. Support Services accounted for 19% of total expenses, and Administration for 9%.

Additionally, in 2003 the Foundation invested approximately $45,300 for land in Ghaghas. The land will be used for the construction of a new community center for the village.

Sehgal Family Foundation Grants, 1999-2003, $12.5 million



S.M. Sehgal Foundation Expenses, 2003, $ 274,000 (Rs. 12.3 million)



EVENTS 2003

JANUARY
- Leadership training of PIT at Gurgaon
- Annual meeting on best agricultural practices
- Exposure visit to Morarka Foundation, Jaipur on vermicomposting

FEBRUARY
- Development of Common Lands, strategic planning in consultation with ATREE, Foundation For Ecological Security (FES) & local Government
- Exposure visit to Ajit Foundation, Jaipur on 'water budgeting'
- Inter-village (Damdma & Daula) girls' kho-kho match, at Damdma

MARCH
- PIT training on drip irrigation
- Exposure visit to Development Alternatives, Jhansi on Water Management and Income Enhancement programmes
- Formation of women Self Help Group (SHG), Ghaghas
- PIT member participated in 'National Women's Water Meet', Tarun Bharat Sangh, Alwar
- PIT training on puberty and sexuality
- Exposure visit to FES, Rajasthan for institution building and developing village perspective plan
- Youth mobilised to desilt Rangala Rajpur natural spring
- Family Life Education centers started in Goela & Chehalka
- Door-to-door data collection for identification & follow up: prenatal cases, immunisation, contraception for eligible couples

APRIL
- Patrika project started, Ghaghas
- Partnership project with CEDPA on pre-testing FLE manual
- Formation of women SHG, Goela
- Participatory Rural Appraisal for development of common lands, Ghaghas & Agon
- PIT training on 'Communication for Behavioural Change in Reproductive & Child Health', organised by Centre for Media Studies, Delhi

MAY
- FLE centers started, Sondh and Jafrabad
- PIT training on handling emotions
- PIT training on safe use of pesticides
- Women awareness sessions on immunisation
- Village Level Institution (VLI) formed, Ghaghas
- First soak pit constructed, Agon

JUNE
- Construction of wells, Agon & Rangala Rajpur
- FLE center started, Kansali
- Farm ponds introduced, Agon, Goela & Ghaghas
- Developed & pre-tested module on 'Prenatal Care'
- Inter-village (Goela and Chehalka) indoor games competition, Goela
- PIT training on vermicomposting
- Developed & pre-tested, 'Parents Training' manual : module 1 – 'Knowing my Family'

JULY
- Developed & pre-tested, 'Parents Training' manual : module 2 – 'Gender Roles'
- PIT training, on 'legal literacy'
- Loose stone check dam built, Ghaghas
- Ghaghas women's SHG trained on vermicomposting, at Sohna
- Demonstration unit on vermicompost, Agon
- Farmer training on safe use of pesticides, Ghaghas
- Demonstration farm ponds, Agon, Goela, Ghaghas
- Check dam completed, Rangala Rajpur

AUGUST
- Demonstration unit on vermicompost, Daula
- Staff 'Team Building workshop', Sohna
- Rooftop water harvesting structure constructed, Agon
- Staff exposure visit to ICRISAT, Hyderabad, on crop diversification practices & crop calendars
- PIT Training on immunisation
- Ghaghas VLI registered with Haryana Government
- Educational visit of Goela FLE girls to crafts fair, Delhi
- Educational visit of Ghaghas FLE boys to Delhi historic monuments
- FLE center renovated, Agon
- Demonstrations of early variety of hot pepper, Goela
- Introduction of raised bed cultivation for cauliflower, tomatoes & chilies, Goela
- Developed and pre-tested 'Parents Training' manual, module 3: 'Role of Literacy in Life'

SEPTEMBER
- Demonstration latrines constructed, Agon & Ghaghas
- PIT training on immunisation & Prenatal Care
- PIT members training on SHGs, organised by Udyogini, near Delhi
- PIT training on information technology
- Cleanliness drive, Agon
- Women awareness sessions on prenatal care
- Training of FLE volunteers on teaching methodology
- Youth club for boys started, Goela
- Awareness drive on self-employment of women & youth, with RUDSET, Gurgaon
- Developed and pre-tested the 'Parents Training' manual : module 4 – 'Care of the Newborn'
- Purchase of chisel and bed-maker by Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association (FVGA), Ghaghas, in coordination with Sehgal Foundation
- Campaign for installing taps, Agon
- Land donation from Goela Panchayat to develop a Community Center

OCTOBER
- FLE sessions started in Goela Government school
- Introduction of rubbish bins, Agon
- Three vermicompost units, Ghaghas
- Women awareness sessions on infant nutrition & sexually transmitted diseases
- Integrated Pest Management training of farmers, Goela & Agon
- PIT training on 'How to Choose an Income Generating Activity', at Alipur
- Land for community center purchased, Ghaghas
- Capacity building on acquisition of good quality agro-inputs for FVGA

NOVEMBER
- Developed and pre-tested the 'Parents Training' manual, module 5 :'Marriage & Partnership'
- PIT training & women awareness sessions on symptoms, prevention & treatment of fever, malaria, dengue, tuberculosis
- 'Panchayat Bhavan' renovation for Community Center begun, Goela
- Inter-cropping introduced, Goela

DECEMBER
- Staff exposure visit for Integrated Development, to BAIF, Udaipur
- Ghaghas VLI opens bank account
- Women awareness sessions on safe delivery and *dai* kit
- Awareness session on fever, with *Jhola* doctors, Nagina
- Construction of wells, Agon & Karheda
- Two new women SHGs started, Ghaghas & Goela
- Use of vermicompost in vegetables started, Ghaghas & Agon
- Construction of Ghaghas check dam masonry structure started

SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

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