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# **WORKING TOGETHER TO EMPOWER RURAL INDIA: INSTITUTE OF RURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Pooja O. Murada\***

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Institute of Rural Research and Development (IRRAD) is an initiative of the S. M. Sehgal Foundation. The Sehgal Foundation commenced operations with a vision to make a positive change in the lives of rural communities under the leadership of a forward looking visionary and an action-oriented implementer, Suri Sehgal. He always had a dream to change the tattered sketch of rural India, an India which has around 600,000 villages with many unmet needs of human life such as social equality, justice and the path to vertical mobility. To realise this objective, the S.M. Sehgal Foundation was registered as a non profit trust in 1999 bringing hope to villagers in Mewat, one of the most backward districts of Haryana in India. Mewat is inhabited by Meo Muslims, who have remained backward despite being in the proximity to the millennium city of Gurgaon.

With the strong belief in integrated models of rural development, the foundation nurtured a model, called "Integrated Sustainable Village Development" (ISVD) in 17 villages through programmes of water management, income enhancement, education, health and alternative energy. As a result of these interventions, 32000 people in the villages across Mewat have been brought on the path of progress. Water harvesting structures have quenched the thirst of many villagers; several farmers gained better access to inputs, support and markets; girls who had never been to school

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