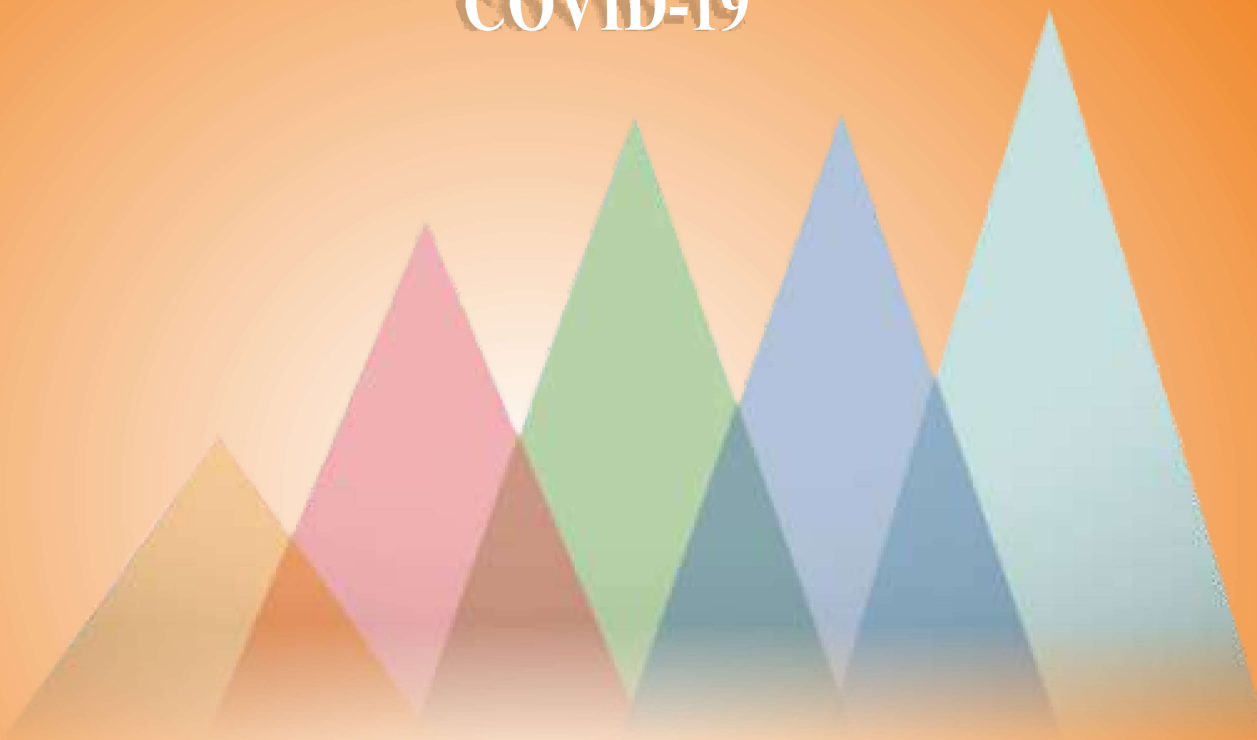


Global Standard, Accountability Practices and Indian CSOs in times of COVID-19

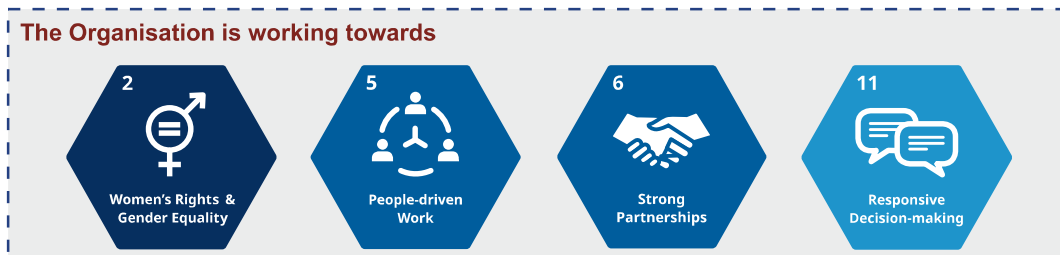


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S M Sehgal Foundation: Transforming Lives with People-Driven Work



S M Sehgal Foundation (“Sehgal Foundation”) is a public charitable trust founded in India in 1999 and serves as a rural, grassroots implementing NGO. Operating in about 1,000 villages across ten states, Sehgal Foundation reaches more than 2.5 million people—and counting—with a mission to achieve positive social, economic, and environmental change across rural India. Foundation initiatives address critical issues of food security, water security, and social justice with a focus on the empowerment of women and children.

Dedicated foundation experts and teams create sustainable programs by working directly alongside rural communities to better manage their water resources; increase their agricultural productivity; strengthen, articulate, and activate their vision for village development, and positively transform the lives of youth and schoolchildren to ensure they have a better future. The core pillar of participatory governance empowers citizens, especially women, to become effective leaders and enables citizens to become engaged in and direct their own development.

Sehgal Foundation seeks collaborative opportunities for continuous quality improvement and replication of its agriculture and water management innovations. As an emerging knowledge leader on rural development issues in India, the foundation teams engage in participatory research, impact assessment, interactive dialogue, and community media formats to take informed actions and achieve sustainable results.

Sehgal Foundation has been well-recognized over more than two decades for the quality, innovation, and integrity of its work, and has received numerous awards, including NGO of the Year at the CSR Summit and Awards by UBS Forums; Water Digest Water Award for Best NGO – Rural Drinking Water Solutions Provider; and winner of the National Community Radio Awards by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Sehgal Foundation holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is accredited with the Conference of the Parties to UNCCD.

The Foundation has four primary program areas: Water Management, Agricultural Development, Good Rural Governance, and Transform Lives one school at a time. Recognizing the importance of women's roles within rural families and communities, foundation teams strive to involve, value, and empower women and girls in all initiatives and activities. Gender equality is a critical embedded element



across all the programs. There is zero tolerance on any gender-based discrimination or violence.

As part of its Good Rural Governance program, Sehgal Foundation mobilizes women to form Women's Collectives and/or Women Leadership Schools to strengthen their participation in village governance. The organisation builds capacities of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayats. These platforms help women to come together, voice their concerns on agendas of village development, learn about their legal and constitutional rights, and work collectively to address local issues. Internally, Sehgal Foundation is an equal opportunities employer with women leaders who are part of the senior management team and decision making. The organization also ensures equity of pay and timely disbursement of salaries.

Sehgal Foundation is a “people-first” organization. Upon the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent



lockdown, the safety and well-being of the community and financial security of its team were the top priorities. Timely payments were made to staff and vendors. Announcements about safety protocols and other relevant information during the pandemic were immediately communicated by radio and through phone calls. Once masks and sanitizers were made available to staff, they went on the ground to aid in village sanitization, information sensitization, mask making, and

distribution of safety and relief materials. Work from home and use of information technology were promoted among all teams. Post lockdown, dry rations were distributed to migrants who returned to the villages. Thermal scanners, sanitizers, and COVID kits were distributed to prevent the spread of the pandemic in the villages. Our female on-ground trainers, community mobilisers and volunteers are leading the process of making and distributing face masks amongst the communities. Through Transform Lives one school at a time, the foundation team has extended its work in rural schools to also provide COVID-19 safety kits, including no-touch handwashing stations, and other relief materials.

For Sehgal Foundation, the key to strong partnerships is collaboration, transparency, and ongoing communication. Partnership projects of the organization are designed to address critical community needs. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization maintained communication with its partners, sharing real-time updates and project impacts. Partners were informed about any project delays as a result of the lockdown. Information about the organization's work, including work during COVID-19, is shared with stakeholders in monthly newsletters, on social media platforms, and on community radio.

Sehgal Foundation partnerships in the corporate, government, academic, social sectors, and on the ground in rural communities are key to the success of every rural development initiative. The foundation cultivates strategic partnerships with organizations and individuals who share the vision of more secure, prosperous, and empowered rural communities. In concert with these partners, the most critical challenges facing rural communities are addressed and resolved, and

the most effective solutions are scaled up to expand to more rural communities across India.

Sehgal Foundation follows the management principle of a “flat” organization, wherein staff and volunteers are all considered equal partners. Regular team calls (through audio and video platforms) are used to exchange updates and seek suggestions from members and to share any revised road maps. These platforms are also used for skill upgrades of staff, whose inputs are sought and implemented for project improvement. The organization strictly follows its Employee Handbook and Accounting Manual, which address accounting systems, purchase procedures, recording of transactions, handling receipts and payments, payroll, Employee Code of Conduct and organization policies.

Sehgal Foundation has a structure in place for effective communication of feedback, suggestions, and subsequent decisions. Every department conducts regular team meetings to share updates, and receive and give feedback/suggestions. Subjects raised in these meetings are shared in management team meetings where collective decisions are made on any matters highlighted. Management Team comprises the all departmental directors along with the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Development Officer.

All matters and decisions are then discussed with the team at large during monthly team meetings, and further feedback/ inputs are taken from all staff. Minutes of all these meetings are recorded and documented.

Overall, Sehgal Foundation's people-driven approach rests on the

belief that peoples are organization's greatest assets and all our interventions focus on building resilience of rural communities, with a lasting impact.

Together We Empower Rural India!