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Development Initiatives

Project Location: Village Kohra, District Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

Projects of:

Dr. Surjan Singh Memorial Foundation, New Delhi

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I. Introduction to the Foundation

Dr Surjan Singh Memorial Foundation has being set-up in memory of Dr. Surjan Singh, who was born in 'Kohra' village and through sheer hard work and perseverance excelled in his educational and professional career.

He struggled in his early years to complete his basic education from the village schools and went on to complete his Bachelors & Masters from the Agra University and then doctorate from the University of Illinois, USA, as a food technologist.

During his illustrious career he worked with the GB Pant University, the USAID, the UNDP & the FAO. At the time of his retirement he was the Regional Director of the Winrock International at New Delhi.

As an individual he was always close to his roots and to the people of 'Kohra'. About 60 kms from the industrial city of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, there is a small village called "Kohra". The village is similar to thousands of other under-developed villages across India, or probably a little worse. There are no roads, no sanitation, no safe drinking water and no proper educational facilities. The area has not seen the positive development experienced by other areas in the country.

The majority of the village population is engaged in farming, but has seen their land holdings become smaller over generation leading to poverty and helplessness. Their attempts to trying to get jobs fail as the quality of education provided in the village and the adjoining areas does not groom the kids well enough to get quality jobs. The current limited numbers of education centers are badly built, badly staffed and lack the enthusiasm of providing quality education.

Dr. Surjan Singh wanted to do much more for the improvement of the quality of life of his birthplace, than what he was able to do. The foundation would try and accomplish that dream. In lieu of the present situation in Kohra, Dr. Surjan Singh Memorial Foundation (SSMF) is being established to endeavor a high quality educational institution, which will bring about a positive change in the lives of the coming generation in the villages in the area.

The focus of the Foundation is on the betterment on the quality of lives of the people of 'Kohra'. The foundation will undertake grass-root level activities, which would have a positive impact on the population of the village, and it's surrounding areas in the long term. One of the key areas on work for the foundation would be education.

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II. Present situation in village 'Kohra'

We have observed that the people in Kohra are isolated from the mainstream society. Although only an hours' drive from one of the largest industrial cities in Uttar Pradesh - Kanpur, the village is almost frozen in time. The various benefits of development and modernization seem to have overlooked this particular village. With a population of over 10000 people, Kohra is fairly large village, however, it lacks even the most basic facilities which most villages now have, like safe drinking water, electricity, basic roads, medical facilities, proper educational facilities etc. Almost about 70% of the villagers live in mud houses, with an absolute lack of sanitation.

The basic occupation of most villagers continue to be farming and with individual landholdings coming down over the generations the quality of life has only deteriorated over time. Lack of proper education has resulted in unemployment or lack of quality employment options, resulting in more pressure on the families. There are hardly any job opportunities in the close vicinity of the village by way of industries etc.



An old lady at a typically hut in Kohra.

Economic poverty does not enable children to attend school. Children are involved in child labor at very young age to meet the end of families.

Those parents interested in sending their children to school do have access to schools; however, the quality of education in those schools is extremely low.



State of one of the schools being run the village with about 200 students.

Besides this, the education system is not appealing to children because of low standards of teaching. Teachers have to manage more than they can handle at a given time. Children from different grades are seated in the same room, which does not allow them to concentrate in studies. Teachers are not regular to school as they are also not motivated to teach. There is

a total absence of education aids and the schools are totally worn down.

Situation of girl children is more degrading, as they are not the priority for most families. Socially girls are at lower status as compared to boys in community. They are not provided opportunity to study and are involved in household chores and given responsibility of siblings at very young age. They lose on chance to live a normal childhood. The girls are also married off at a very early age.

The environmental conditions at school and home of children are not hygienic. Awareness on these issues needs to be addressed through children for improving conditions of villages.

The school pass outs of the current educational system are unable to secure quality jobs, thereby increasing the general apathy towards education. There is a serious dropout percentage of students, which is more so for the girl child.

III. Planned SSMF Activities

The foundation would undertake projects that would involve the community and ensure that there is a long-term improvement in the quality of life of the villagers.

According to Van der Merwe (2000), one dimension that are essential for rapid productivity growth, is skills development. The largest share of rural jobs and employment growth comes from the service sector which employs over half of all rural workers. Services related to recreation, retirement and natural amenities have merged as important new sources of rural employment and growth. It is thus the aim of SSMF to discuss the value of education in communities, with special reference in establishing school and introducing Dairy farming and Vermiculture projects.



A. *Adharshila*

A non-profit school 'Adharshila' (Hindi for "foundation stone") is founded by SSMF on the principle that the best education will result from an active partnership between society, parents, teachers and children. We will strive to promote a meaningful, integrated curriculum, challenging students to respond at many levels of thinking and learning.

The mission of 'Adharshila' is to meet the need of the local community for a comprehensive, high quality English/Hindi medium education, preparing our

students for life-long learning so that they may become effective and successful members of the local, national and international community.

SSMF belief is that if a young mind were given quality education at the early stages of life, the person would normally grow up to be a responsible citizen who would be able to take charge of most situations that are presented to him.

During our interaction with community, they too have expressed their need to educate their children. We plan to work in 'Kohra' village with active participation of communities to help them access education.

The Gram Panchayat of Kohra has donated some land for the school premises. Adharshila, as the name suggests, would provide a strong foundation to the new generation making them better citizens who can rely on themselves to open new door of opportunity for themselves.

Trained, quality and enthusiastic teachers will staff Adharshila. The school will provide quality infrastructure for overall development of young minds and bodies. In order to prepare the students for their future lives the village school will also provide them with computer education, in order to remove the fear or IT. Adharshila will touch the lives of about 150 students and their families in the 1st year and this number will grow over the years. Special emphasis will be laid on education of female students and students from the financially weak families.

Establishment of Adharshila will be done in phases. The 1st phase would see the start of nursery, first and the second standards along with a computer room and a library. SSMF will establish the 1st phase in the next 4 months. The 2nd phase with 2 more classes will happen in the next year.

For more details please visit our website www.adharshila.net

B. Milk for Education

SSMF plans to undertake projects in village 'Kohra' that emphasize innovative approaches to non-formal education for sustainable development for various SSMF projects. In order to achieve it's goals SSMF is planning to introduce an initiative of Milk for Education, where-in SSMF would work jointly with families to ensure extra income for families and the foundation and all around education.

SSMF would like to provide the "educated but unemployed youth" and the "poor families" of Kohra with a potential source of revenue and at the same time ensure that these families send their kids to Adharshila for quality education so that over time SSMF is able to break the cycle of poverty.

The initiative would also act as a training center in dairy at the most grass-root level. It is important to work on this initiative as about 70% of India's population is living in villages and majority of them are engaged in agriculture

and allied activities. With the green revolution in early 70s, the country became surplus in foodgrain production. Northern belt of India comprising of Punjab, Haryana, U.P. and Rajasthan has immensely benefited by the green revolution. However, due to excessive use of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and over exploitation of ground water resources, per acre productivity is coming down every year. As a result, crop farming is no more economical. Therefore, in the present circumstances, it has become imperative to find out alternative avenues to boost the net income of farmers/villagers.

Dairying plays a dynamic role in India's agro based economy. Our country's Dairy Industry is one of the fastest expanding in the world. Ten years ago only 5% of the milk produced came into the dairies. Today, it is 10%, and this figure will keep increasing. Today India ranks second only to the US in terms of milk production and it is expected that at the present rate of growth, it will soon overtake the US.

According to a recent report prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, the dairy industry has the potential to offer about 4.2 crore jobs a year. Today there are barely 50,000 - 60,000 trained professionals in this field. Given the proper thrust, dairying could in the years ahead, become one of the largest business sectors of the economy, even overtaking the industrial sector.

SSMF plans to start a dairy farm in Kohra by donating cows/buffaloes to prospective villagers to whom the technical advice and guidance for the development of cattle will be given. We will choose hardworking, reliable persons preferably with some experience.

SSMF will provide them training to be small entrepreneurs and would take 50% of the profit for sustaining various projects of SSMF initially for Adharshila.

Middle class health-conscious Indian families prefer low fat milk for consumption as liquid milk. Therefore, a commercial farm of mixed type (Cross breed cows and buffaloes kept in separate rows under one shed) should be preferred. Thorough study of the immediate market for marketing of milk should be made. You can mix milk from both type of animals and sell as per the need of the market. Hotels and some general customers (can be around 30%) prefer pure buffalo milk. Hospitals, sanitariums etc. prefer cow's milk.

SSMF will initially start with 5 animals (3 cow, 2 buffaloes) and this strength can easily go up to 10 animals in proportion of 50:50 or 40:60. After this, however, SSMF will review the strength and market potential before we chose to go for expansion.

Dairy farming is a safe business for the following reasons:

- It is eco-friendly and does not cause environmental pollution as compared to other industries
- Requirement of skilled labour is relatively .
- Dairy product market is active round the year.

- Minimum investment on inventory. (No need to stock raw materials in huge quantities.)
- Entire establishment can be shifted to a new location (if need arises c e fire, floods etc.)
- One can insure animals.
- Less energy requirement. Biogas plant fed with cow dung can supply maximum energy to meet day to day requirement of farms. Decomposed slurry of such plant can also be effectively used as organic manure.

Limitations and constraints in dairy farming

- Breeding of animals and getting expected milk yield is a biological phenomenon, which depends upon various factors.
- Dairy farming, besides good planning, requires hardworking, reliable and alert manager. In India, usually persons from the family take the responsibility.

Inadequate management of feeding, herd health and lack of quality control in various stage of production can cause major loss, affecting the profitability of the entire venture.

The dairy sector offers a good opportunity to entrepreneurs in India. India is a land of opportunity for those who are looking for new and expanding markets. Growth prospects in the dairy sector are bright. Key elements of free market system, raw material (milk) availability, an established infrastructure of technology and supporting manpower are in place.

India is emerging as a mega dairy market of the 21st century. The recent liberalization has thrown a bagful of opportunities for dairy entrepreneurs. Rewards await those who will transfer technology, sign joint ventures or use India as an export sourcing center.

For more details please visit our website www.adharshila.net

C. Vermiculture for economic upliftment of women

Upliftment and economic independence of women folk at Kohra is a key objective of SSMF and is a must to ensure the overall development of the village.

SSMF has identified Vermiculture as a means to this end. After studying Vermiculture success stories across various areas of India and after consulting experts in the field SSMF believes that Vermiculture as a concept would be a hugely productive initiative in Kohra for all round development.

This initiative of SSMF would be focused on the women of Kohra and would give them a means of :

- Generating additional income for the family.
- Saving on scarce resources of the family.
- Improving the quality of farm produce.
- Assisting in cleaning up the overall environment of the village.

Vermiculture is a simple scientific technique of producing high quality manure and pesticides using the bio-degradable waste material which is found in abundance in Kohra. The technique uses special breed of worms to decompose waste in a controlled environment so as to produce high quality manure and pesticides

SSMF is working closely with the extension department of Kanpur University and independent experts to bring about this revolution in Kohra and the surrounding villages.

SSMF will set-up a pilot project with the technical assistance of the above in Kohra. This project would act as a training center and technology transfer center for the easy adaptation of the vermin farms.

The switch-over of the local community from toxic fertilizers and pesticides to vermin compost and pesticides has the following long and short term benefits / merits:

- It is a zero pollution, environment friendly technology
- It ensures that the family need not buy expensive fertilizer for their fields
- It ensures that the crop quality is better
- It provides the family with a sellable commodity thus generating extra funds for the family
- It is a simple low-cost, low-involvement, low-training technique.
- It uses the bio-degradable waste, which ensures better overall environment.
- Organic fertilizers fed produce is being increasing preferred by end - user.

Dr. PK Pathak, who was instrumental in propagating the Vermiculture concept in Uttaranchal with huge success has agreed to the project leader for this initiative. Dr. Pathak is a authority on Integrated Pest Management and has experience of research, implementation and review of Vermiculture projects under similar circumstances.

Dr. Pathak has volunteered to be a part of this SSMF initiative.

IV. Beneficiaries and the Target Group

A. Adharshila:

Number of people who will benefit directly:

	Year 1&2	Year 3&4	Year 5
1. Girl students	50	100	150
2. Total students	100	200	300
3. Teachers	04	07	11
4. Principal	01	01	01

The number of students mentioned would be for one session. It will be a continuous process and we are hopeful of a larger impact.

We expect about 20% of the village population to benefit directly from the school in the 1st and the 2nd years. We also believe that the school will also help gradually change the mindset of the villagers and will help them move further in their lives.

B. Milk for Education

Number of people who will benefit directly :

Educated, but unemployed youths and very poor families with focus on women:

The objective would be to provide technical training in dairy along with educational and related personality inputs, which help the person in securing better quality jobs for themselves. Besides securing jobs these courses would also provide vocational inputs.

In the initial discussions and observations it has been felt that in terms of training individuals for jobs support and knowledge building in terms of basic computer education, interview skills and spoken English are the three most critical requirements.

For vocational inputs, the foundation is currently in discussion with various NGO for conducting training forums in areas like, new agriculture techniques, and dairy farming techniques, poultry farming and various other income generation methods. The foundation is encouraged by the positive response at both sides. The amphitheater being constructed would be used for this purpose.

We expect 5 families per year to get direct financial benefit from the "milk for education" project alone. As the families who get involved in this project will be provided the education free of cost in Adharshila. We expect that this project would assist in education of about 50 students per year. Besides this the project will provide funding to the Adharshila per year as the 50 % profit with the project will go to the Adharshila accounts.

This project would increase the monthly income of the families involved and hence ensure better placements and overall technique improvement across scorers of people.

C. *Vermiculture*

The number of people who will benefit directly:

The women folk:

It is well understood that a women can change the way her family progresses in life. Our objective would be to provide quality adult education along with activity which makes them financially independent and supportive towards the family, ensuring that they are able to make the right decisions about their families.

We expect a total of 1000 families would switch partially or completely to Vermicompost, in about 2 years. These families would either producing the Vermicompost on their own or in a cooperative manner.

V. Promotion and growth of the Initiatives

The work undertaken by SSMF needs to be promoted and grown in size to ensure larger impact. The problems faced by Kohra are similar to problems faced by magnitude of remote villages across India and the region.

Also in order to ensure that SSMF gets adequate funds and donations, the work undertaken and the impact created would need to be informed to more and more individuals across the world. With this updated information, interested individuals and organizations would want to be associated with the projects and initiatives.

In order to increase the scope of coverage, SSMF would want to share its project specification with more organizations and bodies across the country and would like to get progressively involved, for e.g., SSMF would like to set-up thru' other interested individuals or organizations more Adharshilas, where-in SSMF would provide all technical assistance for them to set-up the schools, and the success of Vermiculture would like to be shared and spread beyond Kohra.

The lowest cost and the most effective method of getting across to people in large numbers is the world-wide web, which is proposed to be used by SSMF for information dissemination. SSMF would create website for its' initiative where detailed information would be shared with the already involved individuals and organizations and with potential people.

SSMF expects an expenditure of Rs150,000/- on these promotional and growth related activities in the 1st two years. This cost includes development and maintenance of the website, regular updating, cost programs and activity extensions.

The initiative had already been commenced with the registration of www.adharshila.net. This needs to be promoted further.

VI. Overall Project Schedule

A. *Adharshila*

The land acquisition and development has already started in November 2004.

The basic construction work is scheduled to start in the month of December, 2004 and the same would be completed in 6 months.

The principal, teachers and staff would be hired in April, 2005.

The sessions would commence for the 3 scheduled classes in the academic year 2005-06

B. *Dairy Farming*

The milk for education program would start in April 2005 with construction of a shed, purchase of animals and identification of potential beneficial families. This program would be operational as per plan from May 2005.

C. *Vermiculture*

The pilot project for the Vermiculture would commence in Feb 2005 and demonstration of success would happen in 3 months which is the minimal time cycle for production of Vermicompost.

The project would be extended to women folk across the villages from the month of May 2005.

VII. Monitoring & Reporting

The activities of SSMF require regular supervision. The Foundation will effectively develop to carry out supervision activities. SSMF has identified an Administrator from the village who will regularly supervise on the activities. Once in two months a member of the Foundation would conduct an overall assessment of the school. Resource person would also undertake the overall assessment.

The appointed Administrator would monitor the projects regularly. He would send monthly reports to the Trustees of the Foundation.

The Foundation believes in transparency of the plan. All efforts would be made to ensure that expenditure on activities is a public domain subject. The Display Board will show all investments being made by the SSMF. The seeds of a monitoring system can only be sown by acceptance of a Right to Information at the initial level. Copies of all sanction orders for pre-project/project activities would be pasted on the web-site of the Foundation.

After completion of its first year, the Foundation will evaluate the performance of the teachers, students as well as the project. A help of the donor agency's coordinator would also be obtained.

VIII. Funding Requirement

It is our belief that no project like ours should be fully dependent on external funding for its long term survival. However, the project would require funds at the initial stage for its establishment.

A. *Adharshila*

We foresee the funds requirement in three distinct stages:

Phase 1 : FY04-05: INR 9,00,000/-

This would entail the basic school set-up and classes functioning from 1st to the 3rd standard.

Phase 2 : FY06-07: INR 4,00,000/-

Phase 2 will entail a full-fledged primary school till class 5

Phase 3 : FY07-08: INR 2,00,000/-

At this stage the school would see the classes expanded till class 7. We believe that beyond this stage the school would have the momentum to expand and excel on its own without external funding.

Please refer to the 5 year plan enclosed here-with.

B. *Dairy Farming*

The foundation expects the 1st phase of the project to have a investment of Rs.200,000/- for the setting up the farm and the training center.

This project would be self sustaining beyond this point for this particular village.

Further enhancements / expansions of capacities would require additional funds.

C. *Vermiculture*

The foundation expects a cost of Rs. 150,000/- towards this initiative. This overall funding would ensure development of the pilot project, purchase of initial inputs, creating awareness of the abilities/benefits of the project to a larger audience. It would also include exclusive training programs for women, and overall training programs for the families.

IX. Annexures

- A. Philosophy and objectives of the SSMF
- B. Adharshila
- C. Milk for education

Annexure

A. Philosophy and objectives of the SSMF

Dr. Surjan Singh Memorial Foundation is purely non-profitable, non-governmental, social, educational, and cultural organization, established for welfare of the humanity based on mutual help, free from all sorts of political motives.

The Foundation believes in social and cultural inherent strengths and potential of people to bring about social change for development and betterment of live and society at large.

The concept of citizenship in India has been understood mainly in political terms - 'the right to vote'. But as poor people, particularly, have discovered the ability to vote is not enough on its own. Citizenship must also include the right to actively contribute and to participate in making decisions that affect investment and work. Rural villages throughout India have the potential to play a key role in boosting rural economies through their participation in developmental programmes. As illiteracy is a huge problem in the country, it needs serious attention, and can be addressed through training, education and skills development.

SSMF believes in teamwork, good governance and responding to local needs. It has encouraged micro-planning, thus passing responsibility for the project operation to people at the grassroots level. It acts as a catalyst and attempts to support community ownership of the project. Collaboration and participation of the villagers are prerequisites for all activities.

The focus of the Foundation is on the betterment on the quality of lives of not only the people of 'Kohra' but also villages nearby. The foundation will start their activities from village 'Kohra' as it is also an ancestral home of one of our trust member and we have lot of support from the local villagers. The foundation will undertake grass-root level activities, which would have a positive impact on the population of the village, and it's surrounding areas in the long term.

The work of the foundation will be funded by donations and grants by private citizens, companies, non-governmental agencies and other development projects funding organizations.

It is also our belief that any project needs to be self sustaining in the foreseeable future and should not be purely dependent on grants and external funding.

SSMF plans to undertake projects in village 'Kohra' that emphasize innovative approaches to non-formal education for sustainable development. These projects will focus on disadvantaged member of rural society (women, oppressed people, unemployed youth) and (in addition to local empowerment) address literacy and primary education, vocational education, health education, improvement of the environment, and the decentralization of financial and administrative powers to local levels.

SSMF is engaged in experimenting innovative ideas for the spread of literacy and primary education through formal and non-formal modes and for the empowerment of unemployed youth, rural women and other oppressed people.

Objectives of SSMF

- To focus on all types of educational issues
- To initially establish a non-profit School 'Adharshila' in village Kohra
- To facilitate growth of education through awareness, networking and contacting other like-minded individuals
- To educate the citizens on basic human rights issues
- To establish Information Technology centers like computer training centers etc.
- To organize projects for poverty alleviation
- To organize the skill/technical training centers
- To organize the projects concerning small-scale enterprises
- To establish and maintain well equipped libraries
- To provide all sorts of facilities to deserving persons free of charges for the benefit of the poor and needy people
- To provide support to the other organizations working for similar objectives

To undertake any scheme with a view to collect funds for the achievement of the above objectives