

June 2024



# Sewa Sandesh

*June: The Month of Journey  
—Connecting Outliers and  
Frontiers*

# Editors Note

*Namaskar,*

## ***Inclusivity and Community Development: An Interdependent Relationship***

Welcome to this edition of Sewa Sandesh, dedicated to "*Inclusivity and Community Development: An Interdependent Relationship*." Inspired by Robert Chambers' "**Putting the Last First**," we reaffirm our commitment to prioritising the needs and voices of the most marginalised, especially in India's border regions.

Chambers, a renowned development scholar, advocates for engaging directly with communities to understand their needs and aspirations. This participatory approach fosters empowerment, ensuring vulnerable communities have a voice in their development. In India, similar philosophies include "Antyodaya" and "Sarvodaya." Antyodaya, championed by Mahatma Gandhi and leaders like Deendayal Upadhyaya, focuses on uplifting the most disadvantaged. Sarvodaya promotes the welfare of all, envisioning a just society where everyone thrives. Both advocate for community-based development, prioritising collective well-being over individual gain.

Guided by these ideals, Sewa International passionately pursues inclusive community development, particularly in marginalised and border communities which are often overlooked. Our initiatives address their unique challenges while harnessing their resilience. This month, we have focused on integrating the most vulnerable, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. From vibrant Yoga Day celebrations involving diverse community groups to empowering local artisans and farmers, our efforts highlight the intersectionality of our work.

In Tripura, we empowered 72 pineapple farmers with technical training, enhancing agricultural practices through collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Dhalai. Our SHE CAF programme has uplifted 220 women, including transgender individuals, through skills in block printing, tailoring, and bamboo art, fostering economic growth and sustainability.

Stories like Sarojini Devi's from Rudraprayag district highlight the transformative impact of our initiatives, increasing income and improving livelihoods through SEWA Narishakti and ALIGN projects. By increasing the participation of women and marginalised groups in community-driven programmes under the guiding principles of "Antyodaya" and "Sarvodaya," we prioritise inclusivity.

In Uttarakhand, we celebrated Yoga Day and organised a multi-speciality medical camp in Malari Village under MoHAs' Vibrant Village Programme, providing vital services and enhancing community well-being to those at the margins of our nation, Bharat. Our work underscores the interdependent relationship between inclusivity and community development, aiming to empower every member, especially the marginalised.

As we reflect on our efforts and achievements, we are reminded that our journey is far from over. True development is only achieved when every community member, especially the most marginalised, is included and empowered. Join us in celebrating June as a month of journey and transformation, where every step brings us closer to a more equitable and united future. Together, we can make a difference.

*Dhanyawaad!*





# Embracing Mental and Physical Wellness

## *Yoga Day Celebration in Uttarakhand*

Every year, June 21st, marks the celebration of Yoga Day, chosen for its significance as the longest day of the year. The primary aim of this observance is to raise awareness about the numerous benefits of practicing yoga, emphasising its positive impact on both physical and mental well-being.

This year, Sewa International organised a vibrant Yoga Day celebration, bringing together members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), youth groups, and adolescent girl groups. Yoga is derived from word “*yuj*,” which means to “unite.” These diverse stakeholders, often on the margins of mainstream health and wellness narratives, gathered in one place, united by a common goal: to engage in yoga practices that promote holistic health and wellness.

Our event was more than a series of yoga sessions; it was a community-driven initiative to spread knowledge and awareness, particularly among those who often lack access to such opportunities. Participants experienced firsthand transformative benefits of yoga, enhancing their own well-being while simultaneously inspiring others in the community to embrace this ancient practice.

Through this celebration, Sewa International underscored the importance of intersectionality in health initiatives, recognising the unique challenges faced by different segments of the community. By focusing on holistic health, we aimed to bridge gaps and ensure that the benefits of yoga reach everyone, especially the outliers.

In fostering a sense of unity and shared commitment to healthier lifestyles, our Yoga Day celebration highlighted yoga's role not just as a physical exercise but as a tool for community empowerment and holistic well-being.





# Connecting Healthcare to Border Regions

## Multi-Speciality Camp in Malari Village

In recognition of the critical importance of health, Sewa International's Uttarakhand chapter recently conducted a multi-speciality medical camp in Malari Village. This initiative is part of a broader effort to bring essential medical services directly to the doors of this remote community, often overlooked and underserved due to its geographic isolation.

This effort aligns with the Ministry of Home Affairs' *Vibrant Village Programme*, aimed at fostering comprehensive development in villages along Bharat's northern border. The primary goal of this initiative is to improve the quality of life for residents in these regions, thereby reducing outmigration. Malari village, identified as one of the 663 villages under this initiative, is a focal point of Sewa International's work.

Recognising the pressing need for medical facilities in Malari village, Sewa International organised a multi-speciality camp, providing treatments to 1,910 patients across various specialties, including gynaecology, ophthalmology, dentistry, and AYUSH. This multi-speciality camp not only addressed immediate healthcare needs but also reinforced the community's access to essential medical services.

Sewa International's initiative highlights the intersectionality of health and geography, bridging gaps that often leave border communities isolated. By crossing the threshold of gated borders, both literal and metaphorical, we connect outliers to critical healthcare resources, fostering holistic health and resilience.

This camp exemplifies how dedicated efforts can bring meaningful change to underserved regions, emphasising the importance of a holistic approach to health that considers physical, mental, and social well-being. As Malari Village continues to develop under the Vibrant Village Programme, initiatives like these pave the way for a brighter, healthier future, ensuring that even the most remote communities are included in the nation's progress.





# Pineapple Farming:

## *Empowering Marginal Farmers in Tripura*

In an impactful endeavour aimed at uplifting marginal pineapple farmers in Tripura Basti, Dhalai district, Sewa International partnered with Krishi Vigyan Kendra Dhalai to organise a specialised technical training programme. This initiative underscores the transformative potential of community-centric efforts to foster sustainable livelihoods and economic growth. Working towards achieving holistic health requires agri-livelihood rooted in our earth.

The training program, under the direction of Dr. Abhijit Debnath, Senior Scientist and In-Charge of KVK Dhalai, focused on providing farmers with scientific methodologies and strategic approaches to improve pineapple cultivation. The goal was to increase yields and promote more efficient farming practices essential for long-term sustainability.

Seventy-two farmers from four producer groups participated in the educational workshop, where Dr. Debnath shared intricate insights and practical knowledge on pineapple farming. Beyond mere agricultural techniques, the workshop aimed at empowering local farmers and encouraging them to adopt sustainable agricultural practices that ensure environmental stewardship and economic resilience.

This collaborative effort between Sewa International and KVK Dhalai exemplifies the vital role of bridging expertise with grassroots implementation. By fostering knowledge

exchange and practical application, such initiatives not only improve farming outcomes but also empower communities to become self-reliant and resilient in the face of challenges.

This initiative resonates deeply with Sewa International's commitment to sustainable development and inclusivity, ensuring that marginalised communities are integrated into broader economic and social frameworks. By supporting pineapple farmers in Tripura Basti, Sewa International contributes towards creating a future where agricultural communities thrive, promoting equitable development and environmental sustainability in the region.





# Skill Development for Women

## *Supporting Rural, Urban Tribal, Transgender and Marginalised Communities*

Rural communities serve as the backbone of a nation's economy and culture. Empowering these communities is crucial for national growth and development, with women playing a pivotal role in driving societal progress. It is widely recognised that empowered women lead to the empowerment of the entire nation.

Sewa International's SHE- CAF (Sanitation Hygiene and Empowerment—Covid Affected Families) initiative exemplifies this commitment through diverse skill development programmes like block printing, tailoring, nakshi kantha embroidery, bangle making, bamboo art, and more. These initiatives have benefited approximately 220 women so far from states such as Assam, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar, predominantly from rural and tribal areas where such opportunities are scarce.

Inclusivity is at the heart of SHE- CAF, which has also supported five transgender individuals through micro-enterprises in Cooch Behar, West Bengal. By focusing on marginalised communities, Sewa International not only empowers individuals but also fosters sustainable development and economic growth in underserved regions.

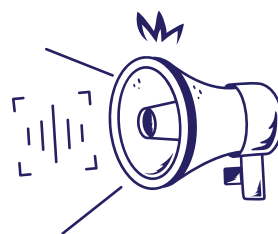
Investing in human capital through skill development enhances economic productivity and empowers marginalised women to thrive in diverse economic landscapes. The Capability Approach by Amartya Sen focuses on expanding individuals' freedoms and opportunities to live the kind of life they value. The SHE- CAF initiative emphasises autonomy and agency for women, fostering confidence and self-reliance, translating to leadership within their communities and pursuits of sustainable livelihoods.

Skill development cultivates social networks and amplifies collective strengths among women from diverse backgrounds, promoting community-led development and enhancing cultural adaptability. Structural functionalism views society as a complex system with interdependent parts working together to promote stability and solidarity. Skill development for women helps to integrate marginalised groups into the economic system, thus enhancing social cohesion and contributing to societal stability.

Sewa International's initiatives transcend barriers, providing pathways to sustainable livelihoods and fostering inclusive development for marginalised groups. Through holistic approaches like skill development, Sewa International empowers women as catalysts for national progress, fostering economic resilience and societal cohesion. This streamlined narrative highlights Sewa International's impactful efforts in empowering marginalised women through skill development, underscoring their role in fostering inclusive development and societal resilience.



# Voices from the Field



## Sewa's Narishakti:

### Sarojini Devi's Story of Skill Development

Sarojini Devi, a 42-year-old resident of Dobliya village in Rudraprayag district, found a turning point in her life when she joined the SEWA Narishakti Self-Help Group (SHG) in July 2023. With a modest family income of Rs. 8,000 per month and unemployed higher secondary graduate, Sarojini saw in SEWA's ALIGN project an opportunity to improve her family's financial stability through knitting. She explains, "Ham jo kaam karte hain, uska shardiyon ke time par maang jyada hoti hain."



SEWA International's ALIGN project has profoundly impacted Sarojini's life, instilling financial discipline, promoting regular savings, and facilitating access to credit. Reflecting on the changes brought about through SEWA International's initiatives, Sarojini asserts, "*Sewa ke prayas se hamra ek permanent samooch banaya gya jisme baith kar ham apne bachat/saving ki baat kar paa rhe hain. Saath hi saath sewa ke dwara diye gye training se hamare bunai ke tarike mein bhi antar aaya. ham tarah tarah ke naye design aur product banaa seekh gye.*" (Thanks to these initiatives, we have established a stable platform for saving a portion of our earnings and have also enhanced our knitting skills, thus diversifying product offerings.)

As a result of improved design and production skills, market access, and increased demand, Sarojini's income has significantly increased from Rs. 6,000–7,000 per month to Rs. 10,000 during peak seasons. Looking forward, Sarojini aims to expand her market reach and product range further. She aspires to establish herself as a successful knitting artisan, creating sustainable income opportunities for herself and empowering other women in her community.

Sarojini Devi's journey with SEWA's ALIGN project exemplifies the transformative impact of skill-building programs and organizational support. Through SEWA's guidance and training, Sarojini has not only improved her livelihood but has also become an inspiration for other women facing similar challenges. Her story highlights the potential for economic empowerment through non-farm income generation and underscores the positive effects of community-based initiatives on rural artisans.

Sarojini's journey is a testament to the power of empowering women economically and building resilient communities through skill development and collective action.





# Fabricating Future Leaders:

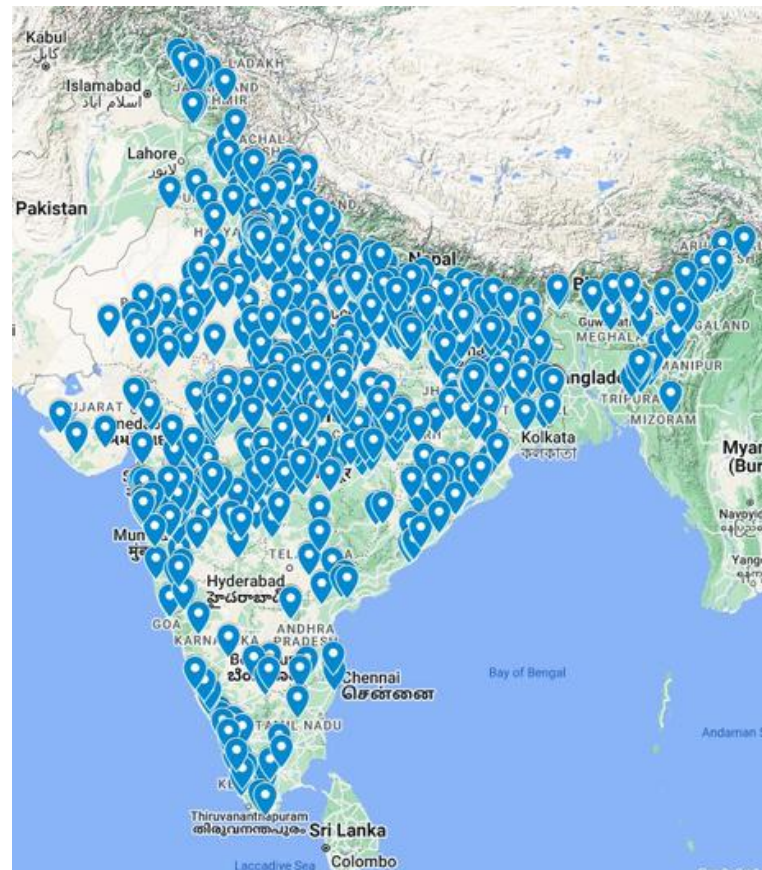
## *Sewa Fellowship's Grassroot Leadership Camp 2024*

Sewa International is gearing up to welcome the new cohort of Sewa Fellowship 2024–26, poised to infuse fresh perspectives and dynamic energy into the organisations, sparking vibrant progress in community development. The Grassroots Leadership Camps (GLC), held in Delhi and Bangalore in June 2024, served as the final selection rounds. These intensive and rigorous 3-day camps evaluated candidates' problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities, and capacity for learning, essential qualities for future leaders in social impact. This cohort not only progresses through the selection process but also gains valuable insights into the fellowship's expectations and responsibilities.

Emphasising inclusivity and diversity, Sewa International ensured robust representation from rural and marginalised communities in this cohort. It attracted over 14,000 online registrations. From this pool, 160 candidates were shortlisted to participate in the GLC. This commitment aligns with Sewa International's vision of nationwide engagement and inclusive development, ensuring that no community is left behind. Efforts were strategically directed to increase participation from underserved regions, transcending beyond urban centres, as shown in the map.

In building this cadre of leaders, the GLC integrated activities to understand their innate disposition and sense of personal duty. The leadership development approach for fellowship enriches by fostering authentic community engagement and mutual benefit, empowering leaders to serve with empathy and effectiveness.

Through these initiatives, Sewa International continues to forge a future where empowered individuals from diverse backgrounds drive impactful community development and social change. This holistic approach not only strengthens societal bonds but also cultivates resilient leadership rooted in service and inclusivity, paving the way for a more equitable society.







*Together, we've sketched stories of change,  
etching hope into hearts. We want to express  
our sincere gratitude for your continued support  
and readership.*



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