

50 YEARS



SEVA MANDIR

Looking Ahead

Various individuals, governments, foundations, companies and churches, from India, Western Europe and North America have generously supported Seva Mandir's efforts in the past decades. However, on account of India's recent economic growth, and the misperception that all regions of India are thriving equally, much of the financial support that Seva Mandir received previously is being redirected. Seva Mandir thus faces a funding crisis. Despite its successes, its mission remains incomplete and the needs of those it serves urgent.

The past five decades have helped Seva Mandir acquire the experience and knowledge required to expand the work it has been doing. By steadily being on the ground for fifty years it has won the trust of those with whom it works. This allows it to pursue projects that are crucially reliant on taking the long view and not responding merely to immediate incentives and crises. Trust is an essential thread in the braid of democracy, economic well-being and human dignity.

Ironically, Seva Mandir now faces a dilemma not unlike that faced by many with whom it works. Its enhanced capabilities to work among the poor and to deliver on its ambitious hopes may be limited by its diminished resources.

How to Support Seva Mandir

Friends of Seva Mandir raises funds in the US to support SM's charitable and educational activities. To learn more please visit our website <http://friendsofsevamandir.org/>
For further enquiry please contact Poonam Abbi.
Email: info@friendsofsevamandir.org | Tel: 732.393.0034 x36
200 Metroplex Drive, Suite 300 Edison, NJ 08817



Contributions to FSM, an IRS-certified public charity, are tax deductible within legal limits.

505050 SEVA MANDIR

OUR MISSION

For the past fifty years, **Seva Mandir** has been committed to a simple idea: that democracy, economic well-being, and human dignity are all part of a single braid that loses its strength when its various strands are kept apart. **Seva Mandir** has worked in a severely deprived and arid region, which for numerous reasons has not shared many of the benefits of modern life even after India became independent. The persistence of feudal norms and the concentration of power in traditional elites, deprivations of health and education, and an absence of equal opportunities for women, have had a deeper hold in southern Rajasthan than in many other regions of India. **Seva Mandir** has worked assiduously to improve the lives of individuals and communities in this region, while building on, rather than repudiating, their complex inheritances.

Since its modest beginning as an organization focused upon reducing adult illiteracy in the tribal environs of Udaipur (illiteracy was close to eighty five percent when **Seva Mandir** was founded in 1968) Seva Mandir has now grown into an institution that works in over six hundred and fifty villages, reaching over one hundred thousand households and hundreds of thousands of people. It is one of the largest development-promoting NGOs in India. The reach of its activities now extends well beyond its initial focus and includes initiatives related to local governance and democracy, education, health, employment, and environmental regeneration.



OUR METHOD

From its inception, **Seva Mandir** has been concerned with enriching lives by empowering citizens and enabling them to play a more vital role in local democracy and thus in their own development. To this end, it has assisted in creating local representative institutions, and facilitating norms of accountability, transparency, and personal and collective responsibility. **Seva Mandir** acknowledges the important role of government in the process of development, and is committed to the idea that unless public institutions are allied with the local efforts of citizens and their associations, neither democracy nor development will bring forth viable, sustainable results. Hence, **Seva Mandir** has helped to create village institutions that make individuals aware of their democratic rights, give citizens greater confidence in their interactions with the government, and enable them better to solve their own problems.

Agriculture is the main source of the livelihood of the families that **Seva Mandir** serves. In a region where there has been a sustained degradation of forests and common lands and a resulting heightened frequency of droughts, and in which a majority of the farmers cultivate two or fewer rain dependent acres of land, farming is typically a subsistence and desperate activity. **Seva Mandir** has created over 650 Village Development Funds through the contributions of villagers and other donors. These funds are directed towards local development opportunities in light of local priorities. The total assets being administered by these funds--and invested in activities, which enhance local productivity and lives--are now substantial (over \$960,000, a sizable sum in the local context). The funds are managed by elected "village development committees" which are answerable to village members.

To enhance human capabilities, especially those of women, **Seva Mandir** has expanded its work on education, primary health, and initiatives benefiting women and children. It now runs close to 170 non-formal educational centers, 224 childcare centers, and a referral hospital. It has also established 650 women's groups in various villages that serve as a focal point for linking over 11,000 women to each other. **Seva Mandir** has created a cooperative called Sadhna, which teaches women embroidery, patchwork, and appliqué, and then markets their products, thus giving the women an independent source of income. Some of these products are now being sold in the US and have received high praise for their quality and design.

Finally, to improve livelihoods, **Seva Mandir** has initiated various programs that help regenerate natural resources, encourage the creation of non-farm incomes, and create income for women. In order to regenerate natural resources, **Seva Mandir** together with the communities in which it works undertakes reforestation, improves the quality of village commons and pasturelands, constructs small dams to raise the water table, and manages the watershed. These initiatives, taken together, have markedly transformed the economic and social landscape of the region. Learn more at sevamandir.org