

**Internship
at
Seva Mandir, Udaipur**

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Seva Mandir

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Seva Mandir is one of India's leading development nonprofit organizations. It currently works with 360,000 people across 700 villages of southern Rajasthan, where over 90% of the population relies on subsistence agriculture and most people live on less than Rs. 20 (\$0.35) a day.

For over 45 years, Seva Mandir has worked in partnership with these people, not only to improve their material well-being, but to build stronger and more ethical communities. Through its programs on governance, health, education, sustainable use of natural resources, women's empowerment, youth development, child care and social enterprise, Seva Mandir makes a tangible and transformative impact.

Every year, 12,000 disadvantaged children receive a quality education in its schools; 8,000 women and children out of reach of hospitals are offered critical health services; thousands more families achieve food security and sustainable livelihoods through the rehabilitation of

hundreds of acres of land; and 9,000 women move closer to gender equality and financial independence through women's groups and lending cooperatives.

At Seva Mandir, very modest amounts of money go a very long way toward improving people's lives, and our success has been recognized through a long list of awards and partnerships with distinguished funders and the Indian government.

What is distinctive about Seva Mandir is that it does not just deliver aid, but instead uses every development project as a way to build stronger communities. This is accomplished through 532 Village Forums and associated Village Funds, which co-manage all Seva Mandir projects and ensure that citizens themselves take responsibility for their village. Over time, these Forums have grown into institutions of just governance, turning Seva Mandir projects into sustained investments in more self-sufficient and equitable communities.

MISSION STATEMENT

Seva Mandir's mission is to make real the idea of a society consisting of free and equal citizens who are able to come together to solve the problems that affect them in their particular contexts. The commitment is to work for a paradigm of development and governance that is democratic and polyarchic. We seek to institutionalize the idea that development and governance should not just be

left to the state and its formal bodies, such as the legislature and the bureaucracy, but that citizens and their associations should engage separately and jointly with the state.

The mission, briefly, is to construct the conditions in which citizens of plural backgrounds and perspectives can come together and deliberate on how they can work to benefit and empower the least advantaged in society.

WHAT THEY DO

OUR IMPACT	
Village Development Forums	532
People Represented by Forums	>300,000
Village Development Funds	618
Amount Held in Funds	\$720,000
Development Projects Done with Village Funds in 2012-13	141

Self Governance

Strong village institutions are the nucleus for all of Seva Mandir's work. For over 40 years, Seva Mandir has slowly built its alternative village governments into spaces where people are able to participate actively and ethically in the decisions which affect their lives. Our 532 Village Development Forums and 618 Village Development Funds manage local development projects, co-fund projects and act as pressure groups on the state. At a deeper level, they build community ownership of the development process, unite communities and ensure the long-term sustainability of Seva Mandir's work.

Rural Governance

Need: The impoverished rural communities where Seva Mandir works lack the social cohesion and civic consciousness to work together on community issues. The institutions of the state, including the village-level panchayats, are weakened by corruption and dysfunction. When no one assumes responsibility, private interests are often left unchallenged to the detriment of the public good.

Seva Mandir's Response: The first action Seva Mandir takes in a community is to form an elected Village Forum in which all citizens can regularly meet and act to address local challenges. Currently, 45% of elected members are women. Seva Mandir then helps create a Village Fund, managed by the Forum and audited by Seva Mandir, which collects financial contributions from the community. In 2012-13, our 532 Forums and 618 Village Funds underwrote 121 development projects (including the partial salaries of 21 Seva Mandir employees working at the village level). The Forums filed 1,323 applications to different government schemes with an economic benefit to community members of Rs. 22 million (\$375,000), and advanced 95 proposals to local panchayats for work on common resources, such as deepening water sources and protecting community pastureland. 13 new villages associated with Seva Mandir.

Peri-Urban Governance

Need: Nearly 90% of India's settlements are small towns. Delwara, a town of 5,000 people just 28 km from Udaipur, is Seva Mandir's experiment in peri-urban development. The town faces a mix of rural challenges, like access to clean drinking water, and peculiarly urban challenges, such as waste management and communal divides between 27 different caste and religious groups.

Seva Mandir's Response: In 2004, Seva Mandir and the people of Delwara founded the Citizens' Development Forum, a system of 18 neighborhood-based committees and a central Executive Committee charged with directing development across the town. Across ten years and three democratic elections, the Forum has transformed the town's infrastructure and brought revolutionary social change. Its main accomplishments include: a system of town-wide waste management; clean drinking water for hundreds of the town's poorest households; toilets for half the town's residents; and a slow but revolutionary breakdown in caste and gender discrimination. Even as Seva Mandir begins to replicate the Delwara Project in another peri-urban settlement, major challenges remain such as inconsistent civic participation and underlying ties of dependency on politicians.

Education: Half the children in the rural areas where we work do not attend school, and over a third have never been to school. Through our 173 alternative schools, 3 annual Learning Camps and scholarship program, we offer out-of-school children access to quality primary education. At a deeper level, by educating thousands of first-generation learners, striving for equal enrollment of girls, and partnering with government schools, we are slowly transforming the demand for quality education among families from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

Health : Seva Mandir addresses some of the most critical unmet healthcare needs in the rural villages around Udaipur. Our 422-strong cadre of community health workers has made major strides in improving maternal and child health across 152 villages, and we have helped nearly 20,000 people gain access to clean drinking water and sanitation. The Health Program also facilitates access to government services and undertakes rigorous research projects leading to solutions on the ground.

Sustainable Natural Resources: Over 90% of the people Seva Mandir works with rely on subsistence agriculture, but the region's natural resource base is severely degraded. For over 35 years, across more than 400 villages, Seva Mandir has protected and developed 16,000 hectares of common land, made sustainable watersheds for 6,000 families, and helped another 10,000 farmers improve their agricultural yields. These efforts have strengthened farming livelihoods, ensuring that the poorest people have food and financial security, and nurtured a demand for better, more ethical management of the environmental commons.