The Beginning: SEWA Rural is a voluntary development organisation involved in health & development activities in rural tribal area of Bharuch and Narmada districts of South Gujarat for past 37 years. The activities were initiated in 1980 by a group of friends having education and experience in India & abroad and based upon the ideals & ideas of Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji. Over a period of time many like minded youngsters joined the organisation.

Mission: SEWA Rural endeavours to reach out & assist the poorest of poor through various health & development programmes based upon the community needs & available manpower. While involved in such activities it also seeks to ensure that the values are preserved and self development, in broader sense, of those involved in the work, is achieved simultaneously.

Approach: The focus of all programmes has been vulnerable members of family i.e. women children and elderly and under served sections of society i.e. rural poor and tribals. In all activities an attempt is made to incorporate as well as balance the following three principles: Social Service, Scientific Approach, Spiritual Outlook.

Scope of Work: Even though overall development was the ultimate objective, SEWA Rural started with a 30 bed hospital in Jabgad having better understanding and expertise. The maternity Home was handed over by local organisation, Kasturba Medical Aid Society. Over the years the medical activity went beyond the four walls of hospital and resulted into community based health care. Apart from successful management of the Govt. entrusted primary health centre, delivery of safe motherhood & new born care at door steps covering entire Jabgadi block were some of the main accomplishments. Considering the needs of local community, particularly elderly, comprehensive eye care programme was started offering good low cost eye care. As a result of such rich experiences in field of health care, a training centre in primary health care was established. Gradually other development programmes were introduced including vocational training centre for providing employment opportunity to rural poor and tribal youth and the women development & empowerment programmes with income generation activities. The latter is now managed by an independent organisation - Sharada Mahila Vikas Society, promoted by SEWA Rural in 2002 and now totally managed by Women.

Recognitions and linkages: SEWA Rural was conferred many awards in recognition and appreciation of its work including SASKAWA award given by WHO in 1983, Mac Arthur award in 2007 and also Public Health Champion Award by WHO (India) in 2015. All these work has provided opportunities to work closely with many sectors like local community, voluntary organisations, Govt., industries and academic institutions etc. While remaining apolitical in approach & work, it has been a learning and enriching experience for us.

Overview of Present Activities

Kasturba Hospital: People of surrounding 2000 villages take advantage of hospital having 25 full time doctors, 200 beds and facilities like Laboratory, X-ray, Sonography, Blood storage centre, Operation Theater, ICU and NICU etc. Every year more than 1 lac OPD & 20000 Indoor patients are treated, about 5500 deliveries & more than 7500 operations, including eye, are performed. The hospital is approved as FRU and for various Govt. schemes like Chiranjivi, Balsakha & RSBY. Inspite of subsidised charges, about 55% of OPD & 85% of Indoor patients are treated free, most of them being poor. The hospital services are financially supported by Govt grant, patient's income, contributions from various health insurance schemes and on going donations from various trusts and well wishers including interest income under reserved bed schemes.

Eye Programmes: They were initiated in 1988 covering range of services from primary to tertiary level care covering 15 lacs population. It includes twice a week diagnostic eye camp in villages, OPD, operations (including phaco surgery for cataract) and various super speciality clinics in hospital. It has facilities like operating microscopes, Diode and YAG lasers, auto refractor and automated perimeter. About 85% patients are treated free for which Govt.grant, District Blindness Society (Bharuch ), other trusts and well wishers beside local community provide necessary support. The hospital and eye programmes are synergistically interwoven with each other.

Community Based Rehabilitation Programme: More than 800 blinds from 7 blocks (Population 9 lacs) were identified over the years by survey whose vision could not be corrected. Most of them were given appropriate rehabilitative training. Youth were given economic rehabilitation avenues like petty shops, irrigation facilities etc. 28 blind children have continued study in their village schools while 66 children study in various special schools. At present necessary support and follow up actions have continued for various components of the programmes.

Community Health Project: Govt. entrusted primary health centre was successfully managed for 15 years since 1984. After returning it to Govt. Family Centred Safe Mother-hood and New Born Care project covering 168 villages of Jabgad block (Population 1,71,000) was undertaken in 2003. As a result, by 2015, there were 75% and 38% reduction in maternal and new born mortality respectively. In addition institutional delivery has increased from 22% to 83%. Now under this project Asha workers are equipped with modern technology and are taught to undertake mother & child health care in 750 villages of Bharuch & Narmada districts. The effectiveness of this innovation is being checked in larger area by systematic research study. As a result similar activity can be extended in interior difficult area. Technical support & other assistance are provided by ICMR / WHO / MacArthur besides Govt. of Gujarat. ImTeCHO Project certified under ISO9001:2015.

Heath Training & Resource Centre: The centre, located at Gumandev, provides training opportunity to different cadres of health workers from voluntary organisations, Govt. Staff and students. The latter come from varied academic institutions of India and abroad and learn from rich grass root level experiences of SEWA Rural. On an average about 800 Trainees and students coming from 40 various organisations take advantage of the centre every year. Various training programmes and workshops are also organised for staff of SEWA Rural to enhance their competence, knowledge, involvement and also to reaffirm the core values of the organisation.
Established in 1987 for development and economic betterment of rural tribal youth of poor families, the kendra is located at Gumandev which is 5 km from Jhagadia. Local youth, who could not pursue higher education for various reasons, are given one year of free residential training in various trades like Fitter, Welder, Turner, Environment Plant Operator, Electrician, Printing & Machinist. Efforts are also made to inculcate moral values including character building & becoming responsible citizens. Every year about 200 youth are trained in kendra & job placement of most of them is assured in nearby industries. So far more than 2500 youth have been trained at Kendra. 45 youth have set up self employment units. Financial assistance comes from multiple sources like industrial houses, philanthropic organisations & well wishers beside state Govt.

Entire activities has been made possible by significant financial help from State Govt's Tribal Development Department under its Vanbandhu Scheme, Industries & other well wishers from India & Abroad.

Financial Outlay : During 37 years, SEWA Rural has obtained as well as spent about Rs. 110 crores for its various programmes. The present yearly recurring expenditure is about Rs. 10 crores for which financial assistance has come from Govt. grant (30%), indigenous resource like patients income, various Govt. schemes for BPL families etc. (45%). For remaining 25% support, we are dependent on trusts, foundations and well wishers from India and abroad.

Conclusion : SEWA Rural completed 37 years of its work for the poor in October 2017. Our efforts have been to ensure that fruits of development & growth ultimately reach the marginalised and underserved sections of society i.e. Women, tribals & the poor. This has been made possible by our dedicated and sincere team members committed to the cause of SEWA Rural. It is encouraging that the younger generation is successfully taking over the reins of SEWA Rural and marching ahead. We wish to thank all of you who have helped us directly or indirectly to realize this dream. We look forward to your continued interest & valuable support in coming years as well.