

SFC in the Service of Farmers

Shriram Krishi Vikas Programme (SKVP) is a long-term, Integrated and need based rural development model which is multi-disciplinary with multi-agency involvement, to pursue a common minimum programme under the umbrella of SFC, in the service of the farming community. Over a period of ten years, the SKVP model befitted the need and the objectives of need based end location specific transfer of farm technology in optimising crop productivity and quality of produce, and thus the quality of life of farmers of adopted villages. SKVP manned and managed by Shriram Fertilisers and Chemicals, aims not only on agricultural development, but equally well for other aspects of rural life such as health and hygiene, education, need based training (both for men and women), etc., for exploring new vistas of farm diversification and thus to supplement the farm income to the extent possible and to improve rural life. The special innovative activities like focused theme, post-harvest management of produce and yield club taken up under the auspices of SKVP on a regular basis, were found to extend extra support to farming and quality of the living conditions of the community of adopted villages. On agricultural front, improvement in seed replacement rate, introduction of improved varieties/hybrids, preparation and use of compost and crop diversification in the adopted villages are the other key achievements of the project.

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FARM TECHNOLOGY IS ONE OF THE seven prime agri-inputs required for optimising crop productivity and profitability. Many institutional and private agencies are working towards this goal of efficient transfer of farm technology from the lab to the land, to a varying degree of success and reach to the farmers. In Shriram Fertilisers and Chemicals (SFC), we analysed the pros and cons of the prevailing systems being adopted by different agencies to achieve the set goal. We understand that the shortcomings whatsoever that may be there in the system could be ascribed mainly to following reasons :

- (i) Ad hoc and piecemeal approach.
- (ii) Short-term plan and programmes.
- (iii) Inadequate availability of location specific technology and understanding of the localised problems of the farming community on the whole rather than agriculture related problems alone.
- (iv) Greater emphasis on products rather than adopting a package and project approach.
- (v) Inconsistent follow up efforts.
- (vi) Different agencies approaching the

farmers of the same locality with their own interest and beliefs, products/practices and modus operandi, etc. This often confuses the farmers and make them skeptic and stubborn about the varied advises and concerns expressed by different agencies, in their vested interest. Such an approach may induce duplication of efforts and wastage of time and resources.

In SFC, we thus developed and implemented an integrated long-term model of rural development called "Shriram Krishi Vikas Programme (SKVP)", which takes care of most of the above listed problems to a good extent. The programme was implemented with effect from March 1996, and since then has been successfully implemented in nine states, with consistent review, modifications and upgradation, to make the programme more and more farmer friendly and innovative for ushering necessary value addition for helping the farmers to get higher crop and farm productivity and profitability at lesser cost and with better quality of produce. This paper is an attempt to discuss some of the basic aspects of SKVP, its salient achievements and unique

features, as a step towards long-term integrated need based rural development through farm technology transfer, tuned to farmers needs and aspirations, to the extent possible.

THE BASIC CONCEPT OF SKVP

THE BASIC CONCEPT OF SKVP IS TO create awareness among the farmers of the adopted villages regarding the judicious use of various agro-inputs including both the essential monetary and non-monetary inputs to make best use of available resources in an integrated manner and business-like approach, to boost overall productivity and profitability at the farm while maintaining the soil health. Accordingly, a set of need based activities are identified, based on a benchmark survey, for a particular cluster and implemented through the help of a whole-time agriculture graduate called Shriram Kissan Guide (SKG), under the closer supervision and guidance of team of company experts. The programme is multi-disciplinary and thus is being carried out by the company's team of experts and also the involvement of experts from different agencies, to make it need based and location specific, for suitable value addition. In other words, notwithstanding

the fact that as such SKVY is a programme conceived, manned and managed by Shriram Fertilisers and Chemicals (SFC), it in fact is an umbrella programme where within the main programme framework, **farm** and other specialists **from outside** the company are involved from time to time, keeping in view needs of the farming community of adopted villages. This helps to make the programme truly need based and location specific **and** in local language. Therefore, the farmers are able to easily align themselves with the advise and demonstrations provided by the experts, to draw maximum possible benefits to improve their lot.

Company's **wholesaler/retailer** having bent up of mind towards carrying out social and developmental activities in villages, is picked up. Party's shop is thus, transformed into a One-Point-Shop called Shriram Krishi Vikas Kendra (SKVK). **Under each SKVK**, a set of 4-5 contiguously located villages called 'Cluster', is adopted. The cluster of villages indeed forms the main hub of various need based field activities and programmes.

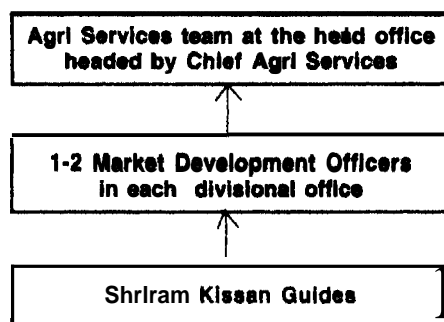
An agricultural graduate called "Shriram Kissan Guide (SKG)" is deployed to execute the planned programme in adopted villages.

The SKVP model is guided by the following principles of agricultural extension:

1. Interest and need of the particular farming community
2. Cultural differences and adaptability
3. Involvement of local leadership and progressive farmers
4. Whole family/community approach
5. Participatory
6. Cooperation of all concerned
7. Satisfaction of the community being served
8. Innovation and flexibility in approach and choice of activities, to suit local needs and aspirations

9. Sustainability of skills and continuity.

The man power for the SKVP project and its structure is as follows:



GROWTH AND SPREAD OF SKVP

STARTING WITH EFFECT FROM MARCH 1996, we started the project on a smaller scale, with the opening of nine centres in Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana. The number and spread of centres was increased slowly and steadily in a phased manner, so that by March 2005, we had 97 Shriram Krishi Vikas Kendras, spread over nine states. In addition, with the objective of greater spread of the scheme and extending service to larger number of farmers, a relatively moderate scheme with lesser number of activities and budget called Shriram Krishi Vikas Programme Franchise, with more or less similar objectives and modus operandi has also been introduced. Under the later scheme, by March 2005 we had a total of five

centres. Thus, the total number of SKVKs under both these schemes up to 2004-05 had been 102. However, for the present purpose we will be presenting details only of the main scheme.

THE MAJOR ACTIVITIES UNDER SKVP

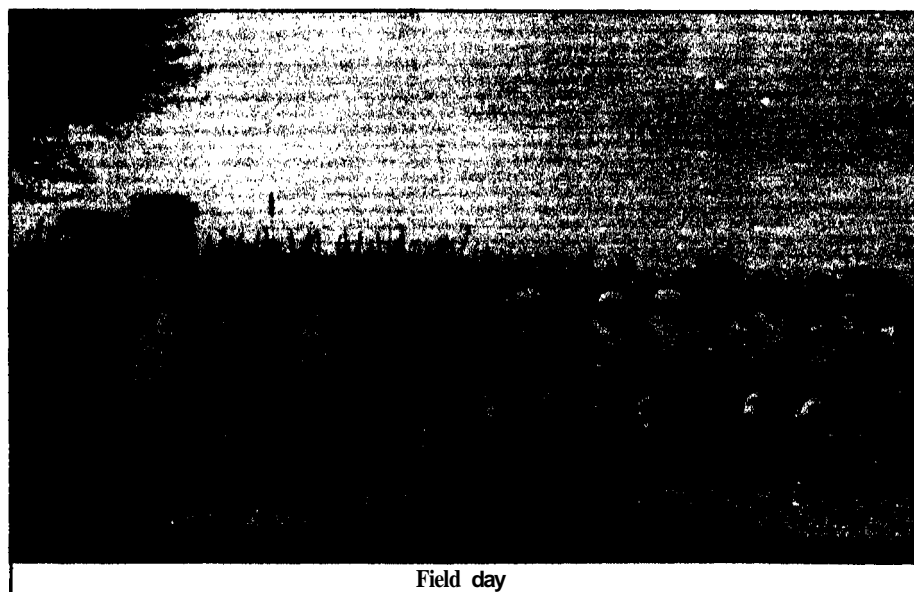
A WHOLE GAMUT OF ACTIVITIES ARE organised in Shriram villages on need basis, touching almost all aspects of rural life and communities, but depending upon the need and interest of the community.

The SKVP activities may be broadly categorised as agricultural activities, health and hygiene activities, educational activities, farmers training, special activities etc.. as under:

Agricultural Activities

Agricultural activities that are commonly organised in Shriram villages include soil testing to promote soil test based balanced fertilisation, laying of 2 to 3-plot field demonstrations, crop seminars, field days, farmers meetings, preparation and promoting the use of super compost or vermi-compost, etc. The progress of agricultural activities undertaken in various SKVK centres for the last five years is presented in Table 1.

In agricultural activities we lay greater emphasis on laying out 2-plot demonstrations with thrust on the use of improved high yielding varieties/



Field day

Table 1 - Progress of agricultural activities taken up under Shriram Krishi Vikas Programme: 2000-01 to 2004-05

S.N.	Activity	Year-wise agricultural activities					Total
		2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	
1	Soil testing	5173	7634	7417	8517	8821	37562
2	Crop seminar	105	218	272	321	336	1252
3	Field demonstration	1077	1549	1920	2203	2290	9039
4	Farmer meeting	2353	2967	3764	4165	4461	17650
5	Field day	143	195	233	295	300	1166
6	Compost making (No. of pits)	521	1669	2298	3231	3620	11330
7	Farmer visit to univ. & Kissan melas	18	31	30	40	83	202

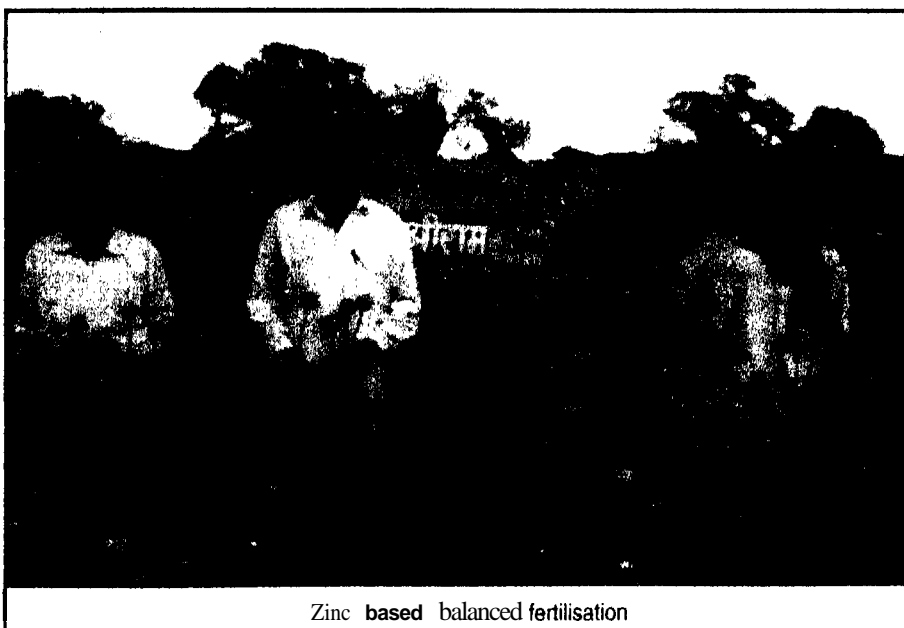
80% area of Jhaji village under SKVK Sonepat and a good part of adjoining villages, for instance, has come under zero tillage for wheat cultivation. In the said cluster, in fact five farmers have purchased the drill and beside meeting their own requirement are lending these to other farmers on rent ranging between Rs. 400-500/ acre.

Field demonstrations is one of the primary activity for efficient transfer of a technology package and we lay lot of emphasis on their conduct, and during the

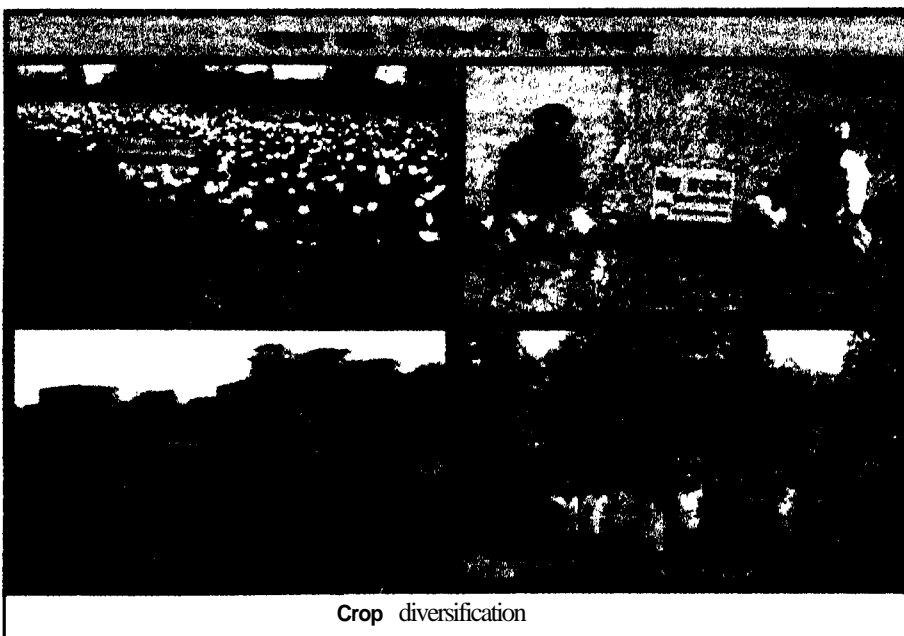
hybrids, non-monetary inputs and crop diversification, and with emphasis on zinc or potash based balanced fertilisation and use of organic sources such as compost and biofertilisers, and promoting new agricultural practices.

In this regard, improvement in seed replacement rate, crop diversification, sowing seed and fertiliser separately in lines, popularisation of the practice of zero tillage in several centres, especially in Haryana, may be regarded as key achievements. Several crop rotations providing an opportunity to farmers to pick up the most suited crops. with the use of certified/quality seed has successfully been tried in most the centres. In most of the Shriram villages the seed replacement rate is more than 60% and in certain cases it is above 80%.

We introduced the practice of zero tillage during Rabi 2001-02 in wheat in village Fatehpur falling under our SKVK Sonepat (Haryana). Immediately seeing the benefit in initial stages of crop growth itself, a farmer was persuaded to purchase the zero tillage drill by availing government subsidy with our assistance. Soon he was in demand by other fellow farmers and he started providing the drill on rent. Thus, in the very first year he could recover most of the cost he spend on purchasing the drill. Ultimately, in 2001-02 itself we could get wheat sowing with zero tillage on about 535 acres of land in SKVK Sonepat, Pehowa, Cheeka and Ismailabad, all in Haryana. Since then the practice had gained more and more favour with the farmers. As a result, currently, almost



Zinc based balanced fertilisation



Crop diversification

last 5- years more than 9000 demos were conducted only under SKVP, whereas equally large number is conducted in the open territory.

Health and Hygiene Activities

Health and hygiene, including the availability of potable drinking water in villages and especially in schools and community places, indeed is a matter of great concern for ushering improvement in the living of the rural community. Therefore, every possible attempt is made to address this dire need of the community of the adopted cluster of villages. Thus depending upon the local need any or all of the following activities are organised. Details pertaining to the progress of various health and hygiene activities undertaken in SKVP during the last five years are presented in **Table 2**

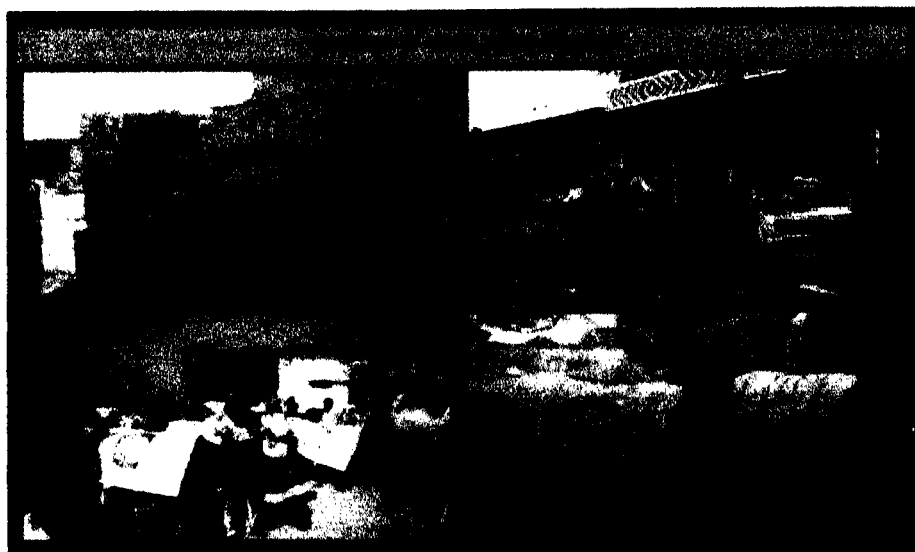
Human health camps : This service includes free health check, providing prescription and medicines to the needy free of cost, vaccination, blood group testing, etc., by involving local medical experts. Also specially designed cow coats are distributed to protect the animals against cold in winter.

Veterinary camps : For extending coveted medical and diagnostic aid including vaccination and free distribution of medicines to the needy farmers. animal health camps are organised from time to time. The timely organization of such camps and especially providing vaccination to the animals, have often proved a great help to minimize the mortality rate of animal wealth of adopted villages and also to help and guide them to optimize milk production through their milch animals.

Bio-gas : In SKVK Bisalpur (UP), farmers were encouraged and helped to install Jannta bio-gas units by availing government subsidy. Ultimately, thirteen bio-gas units were established which are running successfully. It has proved great help for the ladies both from health and convenience point of view.

Educational Activities

Some educational support in the form



Potable drinking water and cow coat distribution



Animal health care camp

Table 2 - Progress of health and hygiene activities undertaken under Shriram Krishi Vikas Programme (SKVP) during 2000-01 to 2004-05

S.N.	Activity	Year-wise health and hygiene activities					Total
		2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	
1	Human health camp	50	37	38	47	58	230
2	Veterinary camp	29	56	78	86	80	329
3	Hand pumps/water tanks	39	36	37	66	49	227
4	Blood group testing camps					81	81
5	Cow coat distribution	1895	2598	1545	1700	Not distributed	7738

of school bag kits to girl students of adopted villages, and small wall paintings carrying educational and social awareness slogans are prepared in most of the villages adapted under the auspices of SKVP. In addition, company's educational audio visual van is put into service whenever and wherever possible. Table 3 embodies information on the number of school bag kits distributed year-wise in Shriram villages.

Farmers Training

Need based training programmes are organised separately both for the farmers and the rural ladies. Thereafter, they are helped and motivated to use the skill as a profession or household support. List of training programmes organised thus far under SKVP is presented in Table 3.

Special Activities

To have even more focused attention on the problems and the needs of the community we have devised and taken up certain new and innovative activities on a normative basis in all the adopted villages, for the benefit of the rural community. These activities are focused theme. Yield club. Post harvest management technology (PHT) of produce, etc., for coveted value addition for the farm and rural living.

Farm Literature

Litature in the form of hand bills, booklets, brochures etc. plays an important role in educating and creating



Distribution of school bag kits to girl students

due awareness among the farmers on various products and farm practices. Consequently, it has always been our endeavour to develop and distribute extensively need based and in regional language handbills etc. for guiding the farmers on product features and various farm practices. As such we have a very wide-range of farm literature for the benefit of farmers not only of the adopted villages but for all the farmers in our entire marketing territory.

Video Films

Video film is another very powerful medium of educating and creating coveted awareness among the farmers. Thus from time to time we had been developing short video films on subjects

of immediate need and interest to the farmers. Fortunately, two of our recent video films one entitled "Kulu Sona" and another captioned as "Saugat" won FAI award in their annual competition. Of the said two films the former was on the theme of significance of using compost in farming whereby effect of using compost on crop productivity and quality was effectively demonstrated. The second film "Saugat" was on the role and significance of seed and non-monetary inputs, with suitable emphasis on post-harvest management of produce.

Preparation and Distribution of Farm Newsletters

We are bringing out two newsletters on a regular basis for the last about ten years.

Table 3 - Training and education activities under Shriram Krishi Vikas Programme (SKVP) during 2000-01 to 2004-05

Activity	Year-wise training and educational activities											
	00-01		01-02		02-03		03-04		04-05		Tdtal	
	No. of prog.	No. of parti.	No. of prog.	No. of parti.	No. of prog.	No. of parti.	No. of prog.	No. of parti.	No. of prog.	No. of parti.	No. of prog.	No. of parti.
Men training programme	26	360	47	589	61	666	73	538	62	724	269	2877
Women training programme	63	906	85	1209	105	1158	131	1658	147	1775	531	6706
Distribution of sewing machines										66		66
Post-harvest technology camps	31	930	68	2380	62	2550	87	3239	77	3253	325	12352
Education kits for needy girl students		2550		2789		3500		6600		7500		22939

Of these one called *Shriram Krishi Patrika* (in Hindi) is quarterly and is meant for free distribution among the dealers and progressive farmers. The second one called *Shriram Kissan Patra* is bimonthly and is brought out both in Hindi and Gurmukhi for free distribution among the farmers of SKVP villages and others. Special attempt is made to see that the newsletters are dispatched at least a month before its due date. This is considered important so that the farmers have ready information for the necessary farming and related activities before actual crop sowing or taking up of a particular farm practice, etc., for efficient use of the information/the farming tips, etc. In all, twenty thousand copies of the *Shriram Kissan Patra* are distributed.

Farmers Visits and Kissan Melas

Visits of farmers of Shriram villages in small batches are organised to **Kissan Melas/Rural** exhibitions organised by Agricultural universities or Institutes or Departments of agriculture or research farms, etc. During the last five years, in all, 202 such farmers' visits were organised.

In addition, during the last five years, we participated in 52 Kissan Melas by putting up exhibition stalls and distributing handbills and fann literature among the visiting farmers, etc. We have developed special exhibition kit and a vast range of farm handbills, booklets and brochures on a variety of subjects including the crop leaflets on package of practices to post-harvest management, soil sampling to biofertilisers, for distribution among the farmers. Out of these exhibitions, 29 of our exhibition stalls got prizes, of which 15 being first prizes, because of their educative content and attractive presentation.

Audio Visual Vans

We have put into service three fully equipped AV vans, for the education and entertainment of farmers.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF SKVP

4 Long-term (six years) integrated rural development programme.

4 Have a resident, whole-time, agriculturally qualified person called

Shriram Kissan Guide (SKG), in place, at each centre, to take care of day-to-day activities and problems of the farmers.

4 **Continuity** : The need based planned activities are organised at a stretch for three years in the same cluster of villages, and during the total tenure of six years for a centre two such clusters are adopted each of three years duration.

◆ **Innovative and flexible** approach for the choice of activities and their execution.

◆ **Multi-disciplinary multi-agency** approach.

4 Thrust on non-monetary inputs and use of organic sources in farming.

4 Post-harvest management of produce for value addition and focused theme for concerted result-oriented efforts form integral part of the project.

◆ Programme is for all sects of the community of adopted villages.

SOME GLARING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROJECT

Mushroom farming : One farmer Mr. Kanwaljeet Singh, village Chhachhupur, SKVK Pehowa (Haryana) after attending SKVP training programme on mushroom cultivation, took up mushroom cultivation as a side business. Over a period of about three years, he is till carrying the business with good growth, and currently is earning about Rupees one lakh from the said business.

The same farmer also participated in another training programme on vermi-compost and is pursuing the production of vermi-compost on a regular basis both for using as manure as well as part of the culture for mushroom cultivation.

Fish farming: A training on fish farming was organised for a group of farmers of SKVP Sonapat about 3 years before. initially a farmer Mr. Ishwar Singh of village Mohamdabad (Haryana), adopted fish culture as profession on a small scale. Based on his experience and the encouragement by our staff and subsequent training provided by SFC, currently ten fish ponds have been developed in the said cluster of villages and the farmers are earning up to **Rs. 1.5**

lakh per year through this business.

Similarly, after a training programme and other support to farmers of **SKVK Sangrur** (Punjab), three farmers started fish farming as a side business and are running the same successfully.

Bio-gas : Under **SKVK Bisalpur** (UP), a farmer was encouraged to go for **Janta bio-gas** based on human excreta and cow dung, by helping him to avail government subsidy available for the purpose. The bio-gas plant proved very successful to meet out the entire gas and some lighting requirement for the household. With the success of the bio-gas plant farmers were enthused to adopt and develop their own bio-gas plants for meeting their household needs. Subsequently, a total of 13 farmers in different villages developed their own bio-gas plants which are running successfully. The net saving to farmers in this activity had been as follows:

No. of Janta bio-gas units installed:	10
Total cost of 10 units @ Rs. 4600 each	Rs. 46000.0
Government subsidy @ Rs.2800/ plant	Rs.28000.0
Total saving to farmers @ Rs. 1800.0 per plant	Rs.18000.0

Spm pumps: In different SKVKs of Uttar Pradesh, farmers were encouraged to avail 50% government subsidy for the purchase of spray pumps, to promote effective use of pesticides. For the purpose, we extended all-out help and support to the interested farmers in getting government subsidy on plant protection equipment. Ultimately, a total of nine hundred and twenty two spray pumps (122 in SKVK Sadabad, 160 in SKVK Hathras, 12 in SKVK Kichha, 10 in SKVK Sambal, 215 in SKVK Kala Kharia, 57 in Etah, 80 in Mainpuri, 165 in Atrolly, 26 in Nawabganj and 75 in SKVK Bisalpur) were received by the same number of farmers. Thus the total saving to farmers thru our help and guidance had been of the order of **Rs. 2.55 Lakh** with the aid of subsidy @ **Rs. 275** per spray pump per farmer.

Diagnostic and treatment support: During the course of one of the early human health camps organised in one of our SKVK at **Kheri** (UP), the team of doctors

identified four patients suffering from **leprosy**. All the patients were thoroughly got examined and put on the course of treatment with **company** assistance. It is gratifying that after about two years of treatment, two patients have fully recovered while the other two have shown almost 90% recovery.

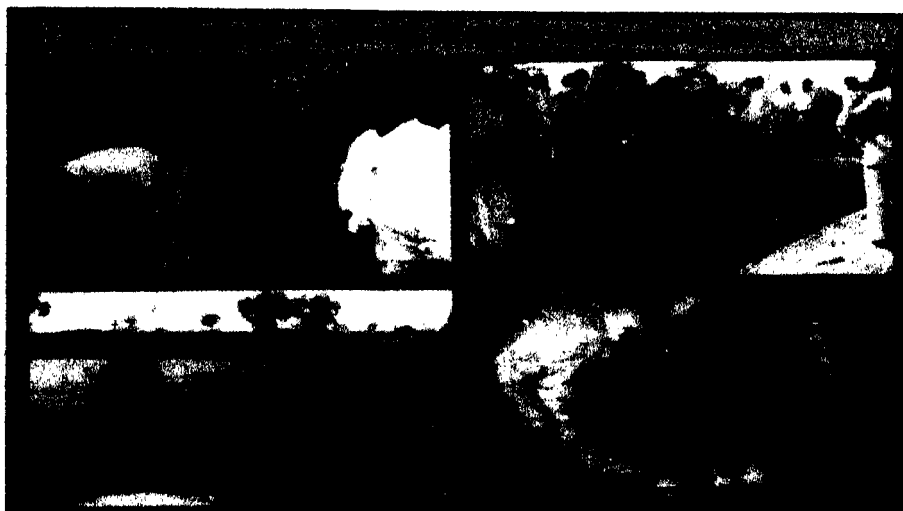
Another innovative social service introduced in Shriram villages is blood group testing of the residents and their family members. It was thought necessary as an emergency requirement in case of any mishap or casualty in the village whereby a person may require blood infusion. In such situation a readily available list of blood group of local farmers may come handy.

Promoting compost: SKVP has achieved commendable success on promoting the preparation and use of super compost and vermi-compost in almost all our centres. Several farmers have gone a step forward, beyond limited use of compost at their farm, and have adopted it especially vermi-compost, as a side business. For example, Mr. Ranjit Singh of village **Bhurthala**, under SKVK Malerkotla, is managing five vermi-compost pits and working to increase their number to ten for commercial purposes. Similar is the case with Mr. Gurnam Singh of the same SKVK.

Bee keeping: After a training programme on bee keeping for the farmers of SKVK Ratia (Haryana), four farmers started bee keeping as a side business.

In SKVK Dholi and **Mahnar** (Bihar), bee keeping training invited a lots of interest. In all, out of 56 trainees, 20 farmers started bee keeping. Four farmers are doing it on commercial scale earning up to Rs. 0.50 to 0.75 lakh per annum.

Sewing training for the ladies: This is another activity that had been very popular among the rural ladies in all our SKVKs. In each SKVK, we organise ladies sewing training programme or on food preservation, etc., depending upon need. It is encouraging to find that in our different clusters, at least eighty ladies have adopted tailoring as profession and are earning between **Rs.500** to 1600 per month. To further facilitate adoption of tailoring as a profession, we have also



Promotion of organ~sources



Sewing training for the ladies

started distributing 1-2 sewing machines to participants from last year, who need financial assistance and seems to have learnt reasonably better. We also entuse and help them in getting work. On successful completion of the training programme, certificates are also provided to all the trainees.

NEEM COATED UREA

WE HAVE ALSO STARTED TRIAL production and marketing of neem coated urea at no extra cost to the farmers, in **Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh** and Madhya Pradesh. which means another service to the farmers.

CONCLUSIONS

SHRIRAM KRISHI VIKAS PROGRAMME IS A model for need based and location specific farm technology for improving farming

and quality of rural living through an integrated and participatory approach. in a long-term manner. It operates through the active involvement of company's wholesalers/retailers and adoption of a cluster of villages under each Shriram Kriahi Vikas Kendra by deploying a team of experts, both internal and external. including a resident, whole-time agriculture graduate called Shriram Kissan guide for the execution and monitoring of day-to-day activities.

On the whole, Shriram always had been and would like to be on the forefront in the service of the farming community to help them improve their farm productivity and quality of life at large. Thus helping the farmers bridging out the last mile on farming.