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"All the human and animal manure which the world wastes, if returned to the land, instead of being thrown into the sea, would suffice to nourish the world."

- Victor Hugo

"This March 8th, International Women's Day, we march forward to work towards Gender Equality for women in agriculture."

Out of the total rural population, 85% of the women are engaged in agriculture. While 65% of agricultural workers are women, they own less than 10% of agriculture land. For inclusive growth and development, it is imperative that these women workers are not isolated from the mainstream economy, provided with a positive environment for growth and are able to secure a sustainable livelihood.

Technological changes taking place in agriculture, since more than two decades (like the introduction of pesticides, fertilizers and GMO products) has brought a new challenge to the agriculture sector, especially for women.

Women are ill-equipped to understand these challenges and have affected their traditional methods of farming. These changes have been detrimental not only to their income and employment, but also health of the families.

Meanwhile, the trend of organic farming has become popular and elitist. It is time that women take the lead in going back to the traditional method – which is actually organic farming and newer techniques. It is imperative to re-introduce, re-inforce, facilitate their status and share in agriculture as they are the ones, who are largely engaged in seeding, ploughing, harvesting and packing of the produce."

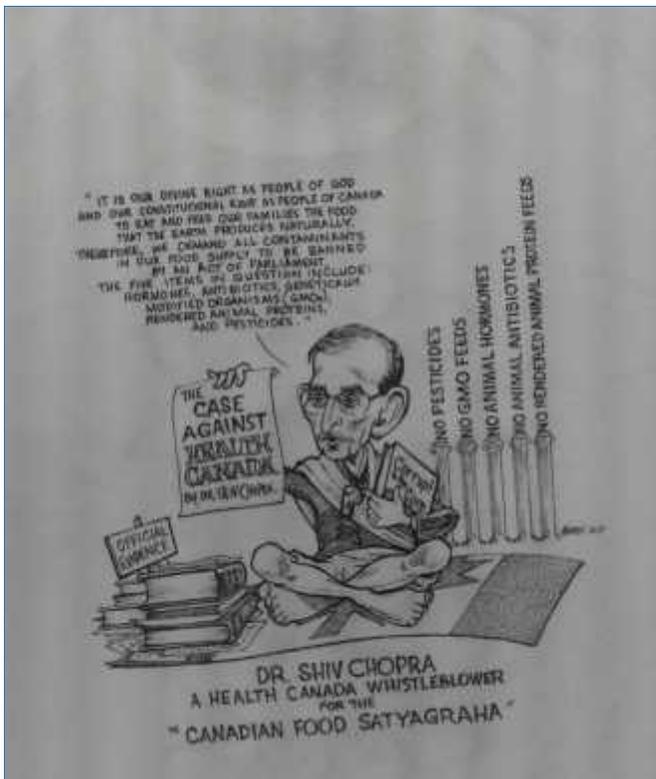
- Lalita Krishnaswami.

Dr. Shiv Chopra, Scientist visits Kheda Agriculture Cooperative

Dr. Shiv Chopra, Scientist, Canadian Council on Food Sovereignty and Health visited Kheda Taluka Vegetable and Food Producers' Cooperative and discussed the issues of the farmers - prominent amongst these issues is erosion of soil due to higher use of urea and other chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Dr. Shiv explained that the 'rotation of crops' is very important for soil fertility. He emphasized the benefits of organic farming and usage of vermin compost. He added, "It may take some time for the soil to set with organic farming, but gradually, the quality of soil will improve and the yield will be higher, leading to enhanced income. Secondly, the medicines like hormones and antibiotic, given to the cattle for higher productivity has led to the diseases like obesity."

He continued, "It is our right to eat and feed our families with what the earth produces naturally. All the contaminants in our food should be banned. The five items in question include: Hormones, Antibiotics, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), Rendered Animal Proteins and pesticides."





Labour minister of Canada visited SEWA's Cooperatives

Labour Minister of Canada visits SEWA Cooperatives

Dr. Kellie Leitch, Labour Minister of Canada and her team of Directors of various departments visited SEWA Cooperatives to learn about current civil conditions, and civil society's view on good policy interventions.

Seventeen representatives from Sewa Cooperative Federation, Mahila Sewa Cooperative Bank, Lokswasthya Healthcare, National Insurance, Artisan cooperatives, Sewa Mahila Housing Trust and Sewa Academy presented their activities and issues pertaining to development of grassroot women's Cooperatives.

Four cooperatives participated in 'Satvik Fair'

MEGHA Agriculture, LOKSWASTHYA Healthcare, VANLAXMI Agriculture and VIDEO Sewa Cooperatives participated in the Satvik Mela (organic fair), organized by Sristi. **SRISTI** is a non-governmental organization, set up to strengthen the creativity of grassroots inventors, innovators and ecopreneurs, engaged in conserving biodiversity and developing eco-friendly solutions to local problems.

Megha Cooperative served fresh cooked food and rotlas (chapattis/bread), made from different types of flour (maize, bajra, juar, ragi and rice), along with cooked vegetables like brinjal and potato. Vandanaben from Mohini village, a member of the cooperative said, "I was wondering, whether our tribal-rural food will be accepted and appreciated by the urban citizens. Looking at the long queue at the fair to buy our food astonished me to no end. Everything was sold within a short time. We are now going to come every year to participate in the Satvik Fair." The cooperative inaugurated its vegetable outlet at Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC), Vyara, initiated by the Federation.



Members of Megha Cooperative offering their food to the customers

Vanlaxmi Agriculture Cooperative, Ganeshpura village produces organic lemon and amla. It sold the squashes, made out of these products. These products were very much appreciated by the public at the fair. Many of them showed interest in visiting Ganeshpura Cooperative.

Lokswasthya Cooperative produces ayurvedik and herbal medicines, soaps, biscuits etc. From the sale of each biscuit packet, one rupee will be donated to the childcare centers. The response for the products was very good.

The Video Cooperative documented the activities of the cooperatives at the Satvik Fair.

Award conferred on Vimo Sewa Cooperative

National Insurance SEWA Cooperative received an award from NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) and Xaviars' School of Management for Innovation for Impact in Financial Services. Vimo Sewa Cooperative is the first microfinance company for the women workers in informal sector.



Inauguration of the seminar

Cooperative Education for girls

A seminar on cooperative education for teenage daughters was organized by Sewa Cooperative Federation. 102 girls participated. The objective of the seminar is to generate awareness about cooperative movement and its philosophy. The seminar had four sessions, "History of cooperative movement in India specifically in SEWA Movement"; "Importance of vocational education"; "Health as a productive asset", and "Livelihood through cooperatives". Two documentaries: "Cooperatives - Our Strength" and "Artisans become Designers" were viewed by the participants, which gave them insight into the activities of the Federation.

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A young girl sharing her views during the seminar

Inaugurating the seminar, Shri Lalita Krishnaswami explained to the participants the history of SEWA Movement and its joint strategy of organizing women in Union and Cooperatives. She said, "Education is an opportunity for you. Your mothers did not get the opportunity you have to acquire newer skills and generate your livelihood collectively through the cooperatives." She explained the integrated approach of SEWA's four pillars. Organizing, Social Securities, Asset-building & Capital Formation and Capacity building.

Shri Namrata Bali, Director, Sewa Academy said, "In this era, education is mandatory. Especially, knowledge of five subjects, including primary mathematics, science, English, regional language and computer. In addition, specific skills are required, to enhance livelihood. Now, there are opportunities for girls even in areas, which are male dominated."

"You have access to technology. You should use it and acquire new skills and generate collective livelihood, which will improve your socio-economic status." Said Labhuben Thakkar, Managing Director, Sewa Cooperative Federation.

Rinaben Yadav, one of the young participants was very excited seeing the documentary and said, "I have understood the process of development through cooperatives. But, I am very much interested in learning computers since it is an essential skill in all fields of life."



Kishori Seminar



Musical event at Dhal Ni Pol

Musical Evening for 'Hamari Virasat'

From extending help through micro financing for repairs of dilapidated havelis to helping people manage their heritage and even earn a livelihood out of it, schemes were shared with the community members at the inaugural ceremony of 'Hamari Virasat' on Sunday .

At the event Gujarat State Women's SEWA Cooperative Federation, Mahila Housing Trust and City Heritage Centre had come together to form an enterprise, 'Hamari Virasat' for the revival of the Walled City. The team has taken up Dhal ni Pol as a test case for the project.

Lalita Krishnaswami, president of Gujarat State Women's SEWA Cooperative Federation, said, "We have been at Dhal ni Pol for 25 years. We want to be with community in its development to make it a model pol in the city." She further explained that our own heritage can turn to be a socio-economic advantage and not consumed, but should be passed on to the next generation."

The SEWA Artisan Cooperatives demonstrated their crafts at the event.



Ethiopian Ambassador to India checking the products in the stall

Ethiopia in India

An exhibition of products, made by Ethiopian artisans was held at the Ethiopian Arts Center, New Delhi, followed by a Design workshop.

This is the outcome of the SETU-Africa program, supported by the Government of India, where Sewa Cooperative Federation is a partner.



Inauguration of Pratibimb Exhibition

Sewa Kalakruti at 'Pratibimb' in Mumbai

Pratibimb, an exhibition, organized by Rangoonwala Foundation (India) Trust, Mumbai hosted Sewa Kalakruti and other crafts groups from all over India to participate in the exhibition. The Sewa Kalakruti artisans gave a live demonstration in block printing during the exhibition. It also participated in Fair Trade Haat, an exhibition at Baroda Bus-stop.

Trainings in this quarter

- Upscaling of skills trainings in patchwork, aari work, jewelry making, tie & dye, old age care, child care, massuse, using modern equipments and TOT was imparted to 95 women.
- Seven member cooperatives participated in a 3-day training programme on Leadership, organized by National Cooperative Union of India in New Delhi. The subjects covered were Stress Management, Education, Legal Status of Cooperatives and Finance Management.
- Trushnaben Parmar, who was the leader of the team expressed her views on the training, "I liked the stress management session, as I am always stressed out in my work in the office."



Shri Nirmala Chopra, Designer, Canada at jewelry making



Shri Rakesh Arora visited SEWA NI HAVELI



Shri Elaben Bhatt visited SEWA NI HAVELI with her guests from U.S.

Visitors

Ms. Rama Bhatt, Himalayan Gram Vikas Samiti, Uttarakhand said, "Homecare Cooperative, initiated by Sewa Cooperative Federation has benefited the poor women and has given them economic security with self-confidence and dignity. We congratulate you. The information provided to our team of 19 regarding the Homecare Cooperative has been very useful and inspiring."

Shri Rakesh Kumar Arora, Executive Director, Rural Electrification Corporation of India, while visiting SEWA NI HAVELI, Dhal Ni Pol said, "Excellent work done for the unorganized sector. Extremely impressed. Wish you all the best."

Ms. Alexa Ahooja, Que'bec, Canada said: "What an inspiring place. I hope you all do the best in the future. Much love from Que'bec. We were shown several activities of Design Sewa. I have no words to describe how best the women must feel here in India to have access to such help and guidance."

"Client's Feedback for the Homecare Cooperative via e-mail:
"We are happy with the service Sewa Homecare has provided through Sarojben. Sarojben takes care of my twins really well. She does all the work related to the kids n also does some of the household work. We are satisfied with your service. Thank you!" –
Namrataben Kanjani

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