



# SAHAKARITA

## Gujarat State Women's Sewa Cooperative Federation

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*Leadership is based on inspiration, not domination; on cooperation, not intimidation.*

– William Arthur Ward

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*'Sahakarita, our quarterly newsletter completes five years journey.*

*It has been an interesting journey and learning all the way.*

*I thank the Sewa Federation team, our associates, sister organizations, friends, who have constantly given their feedback and encouraged us.*

*We will continue to share our activities and experiences in women's cooperatives with you. Please send your comments and suggestions.*

*Happy Birth Day Elaben!*

– LalitaKrishnaswami



Shri LalitaKrishnaswami at COOP EXPO, Milan

### "We not Me – The Food for All"

Shri LalitaKrishnaswami, Chair Person, Sewa Cooperative Federation participated and presented the activities of the Federation in the conference "WE NOT ME: THE FOOD OF ALL" in international Cooperative Expo, held at Milan, Italy. **The** Conference presented the measures and actions implemented by Italian cooperatives and the stories, masterfully narrated, how 'together is better'.

Excerpts from the interview: "Food security and access to credit are the two closely related concepts. Sewa Cooperative Federation has an integrated approach because, without access to credit, health insurance or education, women are unable to run a farm. **What are your basic principles?** The basic principle is that poor women could give a concrete voice to their problems if they were united. Women have always worked, but had no tools, no access to markets, no training. But where can they get the necessary money? The first problem which had to be tackled was access to credit. How can a woman who borrows 100 rupees, but has to pay 10% to the intermediary, sell her products on the market? She's left with nothing, and she gets sucked into the vicious cycle of debt. So, SEWA initially contacted national banks to persuade them to lend money to women for their businesses. But this did not succeed. We formed our own bank – Sewa Mahila Bank.

**How do your food Sector cooperatives work?** SEWA has initiated many farmers' cooperatives in rural areas. Women cultivate vegetables, sell them in the wholesale shop, set up by the Sewa Cooperative Federation, which is the only one, run by the women.

The women produce, pick, sell, distribute, package and check on quality. The Federation helps to improve the production by distribution of seeds, fertilizers, have a collective store, from where they can buy or rent tools. The whole productive cycle is through the cooperative and run by our cooperatives. The profits are reinvested within the village: in other words, the profits remain within the rural area and women eat the food they have produced.

**What are the next challenges your food cooperatives have to face?** We are working towards increasing the use of organic and natural production methods which do not impoverish the land. This involves a whole series of different methods and products. But as always, we have to keep on winning the same battles, helping small farms, especially those run by women, through the cooperative framework.”

## My Body – My Asset

‘My Body – My Asset’ is the key, said Elaben Bhatt, Founder of SEWA at the celebration of silver jubilee of Lokswasthya Healthcare Cooperative.

ArogyaSewa began with the occupational study of women bidi roller. Initially, healthcare training was provided to them. 25 years journey has resulted in working with international organization like WEIGO and organizations in Africa. Also with the state level health departments and National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH).

Shri Mirai Chatterji, Director, Arogya Sewa Cooperative, sharing her experiences said, “Our organization is an important aspect of this activity. How providing healthcare services to the members of SEWA brought more members to join the organization and resulting in more and more SEWA members, needing healthcare services.



Lokswasthya Cooperative celebrates its silver jubilee

Bhatt on the occasion. She emphasized the importance of healthcare. She said, “We should live healthy without use of medicines. When our country is developing, then why mal nutrition is maximum in Ahmedabad? This is a very serious issue. We should take healthy – traditional-simple food regularly.”

It is important that primary healthcare services are provided at the door step of the poor women members. It is also important that they have access to medicines at reasonable rates. We must also look into the occupational and mental health of these poor women for their overall development.”

The leaders and pioneers of the cooperative and its activities were felicitated by Shri Ela

The celebration ended with the bhavai (traditional drama), performed by the young girls.

ArogyaSewa is a movement to spread the healthcare services to the interior villages, build a healthy society and reach the primary healthcare service to all the women members.

## SewaFederationjoins Fair Trade Forum of India

**Fair Trade Forum-India** (FTF-I) is the National Network in India. It helps the producers to export their goods at a fair price to ensure a dignified income. FTF-I is a not-for-profit organization, registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860.

It is a member of the **World Fair Trade Organization**– WFTO, which is the global face of Fair Trade. FTF-I works to ensure a dignified income and overall development of artisans, farmers and workers in the unorganized sector.

## Updates

Sewa Kalakruti organized an exhibition cum sale of products made by artisans’ cooperatives at its marketing outlet at Goyal Tower. The women gave live demonstration in jewelry making and embroidery.

30 artisan women members of Kadi Cooperative receive loan from SewaMahila Bank for starting their small business.

## Trainings

50 members participated in skill up-gradation training in Bandhani and embroidery in Patan and Surendranagar districts.

Sonalben, leader of Vadhwan District said, “We knew tying the bhindi (knots). The bandhej in Vadhvan is not very fine. It is imperative to take training to enable us to make marketable products. The women did not want and have the confidence that they would be able to do fine work. After the training, we can make fine bhindis now.

She further said, “We have now organized ourselves into a Sakhi Mandal. Till now, we were working for the traders individually, but now we understood that by organizing, we can work collectively.”



Bandhani training at Vadhwan



Training in Heritage Management

### Now Women guide for Heritage Walk in Ahmedabad

For the first time, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), CHC and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) organized a three day training program on Heritage Walk Guide. Four artisan members participated.

Kirti Thakkar, Officer, Tourism Department introduced participants to Ahmedabad’s rich heritage, its pols and community living of the walled city. Heritage Walk expert Girish Gupta gave a detailed presentation on ‘Kranti Yatra’, a special heritage walk that chalked the unique history of Mahatma Gandhi’s association with the Walled City. Which he used to visit for first 15 years of his movement in India.

Apart from KrantiYatra, the participants were introduced to the main ‘Mandir se Masjid tak’ walk of Ahmedabad. The two-hour walk introduces citizens to Ahmedabad’s Architecture, which is truly secular in spirit. “Islamic structures, tall Hindu temples, Jain derasars, hundreds of havelis, unique minarates, pol houses, and stunning step wells co-exist here.” Gupta said. “Scores of structures, which blend Hindu, Jain and Islamic influences, exemplify the liberal outlook of the city.”

## Exposure visit

Eleven artisans from three districts of Gujarat – Patan, Surendranagar and Ahmedabad visited Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh, Located at the heart of India, has been a veritable melting pot of cultures and traditions for innumerable centuries. The team visited several crafts activities, like Block printing, Dhabu print and paper meche in Indore, Batik print in Ujjain, weaving in Maheshwar and Block printing in Bagh.



Visit to the award winners’ family in Bagh



Visit to weaving unit at Maheshwar

Ten years ago weaving at Maheshwar was at dying stage and the weavers were migrating from the village. But the craft was revived with the support of government and then all craftsmen were provided design input, technical support and marketing support. Now, the Maheshwar weaving is very famous and craftsmen from different villages come and settle in Maheshwar for livelihood. When Manjulaben, one of the participants heard the story, she shared that their family is the only weavers’ family in the Sayla village in Surendranagar district. She was very much encouraged by the story of Maheshwar weavers and said, “We in Sayla will organize the weavers and will bring them back to the Ikat craft and generate livelihood through their craft.”

## Visitors

“Exposure trip to Sewa Cooperative Federation is a learning experience for our SHG women to encourage them for some productive activities.”

- SHG Women, from World Vision India, Zarkhand

“I felt very good to see the devotion and satisfaction level of the women members of Sewa Federation. Many women are working with the organization for 10-12 years!”

- Leelaben Vijayvergiya, Founder, Sadhana.



Leelaben, Founder, Sadhana visits Design Sewa

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