

SEWA Delhi Report of 10 Years

I extend a very warm welcome to all of you on this occasion marking the completion of ten years of SEWA Delhi's journey of struggle for the economic and social empowerment of women workers in the unorganised sector. Ever since the foundation of SEWA was laid by Elaben Bhatt in 1972, SEWA has followed on her footsteps and has worked towards securing self-reliance and full-employment for poor women workers in the unorganized sector. Beginning with its work in both urban and rural areas in Gujarat, SEWA has expanded its outreach to ten states of India with a total membership of 12 lakh women members. SEWA began its journey in Delhi with organizing women vegetable vendors in a slum community of North Delhi in the year 1999. One of the first steps which SEWA took here was helping women workers form Self Help Groups so that they could become economically strong and self-reliant. Soon street vendors from Raghbir Nagar also joined the membership of SEWA Delhi to find a solution to their problem of a lack of a permanent and legal space to sell their products. Eventually, the membership of SEWA Delhi grew to include construction workers, home-based workers and domestic workers. The geographic reach of SEWA Delhi also expanded tremendously from its first slum cluster in North Delhi, Jahangirpuri, to Raghbir Nagar, Sundernagri, Rajiv Nagar, Anand Vihar, Sonia Vihar, Gokulpuri and New Ashok Nagar. At present, SEWA Delhi's membership comprises of **25,000** poor women from these sites.

In its journey of organizing and working for the empowerment of its women members, SEWA Delhi has achieved the following milestones:

Street Vendors Programme

Street Vendors who number more than 3 lakh, and cater to the need of a large majority of the city's population are often vulnerable to harassment and oppression at the hands of authorities. Their situation becomes all the more poignant in the wake of beautification drive as part of the Common wealth Games to be held in the year 2010. SEWA's aim since the beginning has been securing a space for women street vendors where they can vend their goods with dignity.

1. After a struggle of four years starting in the year 2005, SEWA Delhi established India's first ever exclusive Ladies Market at Tagore Road, where over 200 women vendors from different parts of Delhi vend with dignity, without facing any harassment. The women vend their goods at the market every Sunday and earn upto Rs. 1500 in a day.
2. When historical Red Fort market was evicted in the year 2001, SEWA Delhi waged a consistent struggle and succeeded in reestablishing it at Vellodrome Road. The Vellodrome Road market was made into a model market by SEWA Delhi. However, even this market was evicted in the beginning of this year. The struggle is on for the relocation of this market.
3. As part of its struggle for protecting the rights of street vendors, SEWA fought cases for the continuation of important markets such as Qutub Road Market and Daryaganj Book Bazaar.
4. SEWA's interventions have also played a significant role in influencing policy level decisions. The National Policy for urban street vendors was the outcome

of initiative taken by SEWA's founder Smt. Elaben Bhatt. SEWA Delhi has tremendously contributed to the formulation of Urban Street Vendors Scheme in Delhi.

Construction Workers' Programme

In recent years, Delhi has seen a massive influx of construction workers from all parts of the country due to large scale construction projects including the DMRC project and construction for Commonwealth Games.

Construction Workers' programme began in Delhi in 2005 with the aim of unionizing workers particularly women workers who are the most vulnerable and enabling them to obtain skill training and social security benefits. Since then, SEWA Delhi has been successful in linking **1100** construction workers with the Welfare Board of the Delhi Government which has enabled them to gain a legal identity and entitled them to social security benefit such as medical benefit, compensation in case of accident, insurance, old-age pension, and scholarship for their children etc.

Employment Generation for Home-Based Workers

The programme began in 2002 with endeavours like catering and screen printing. Home-based workers have been an exploited lot, vulnerable in the hands of the contractors and middlemen who give them extremely low returns for their skilled work. Thus, a more sustainable programme was launched by SEWA Delhi in 2005 wherein embroidery workers were directly linked to retailers and export houses. With SEWA's intervention, the income of over 500 embroidery workers has doubled, amounting to a total of **Rs. 1, 5, 16,000**. The women members now even manage to save a proportion of their income after meeting their household expenses. SEWA is also a member of ETI, a London-based coalition, established to monitor and ensure proper wages, work rules, and no child labour for home-based workers in the developing world.

Capacity Building

Vocational Training and Personality Development

SEWA Delhi tied up with Delhi government in 2008 to manage the GRC in Sundernagri that is the state government's initiative to empower women through income generation, legal counseling, medical aid and facilitating linkage to other available government schemes. Based on this model, SEWA Delhi has set-up information centres and vocational training centres for girls in all the areas where it is working. Through these centres, 784 girls have received training which has enabled them to become economically self-reliant.

Supplementary Education Programme

SEWA Delhi is also running a programme of Supplementary Education for adolescent girls and children of its members. Six such centres have been set-up in different areas across Delhi where over **5000 children and adolescents** have been provided supplementary education.

Microfinance

Since the poor are not good customers for banks, SEWA Delhi had to wage a long struggle to ensure access to formal institutions for its members. With its first step being promotion of Self-Help groups in one slum cluster of North Delhi; it has now succeeded in registering its own cooperative bank which is called SEWA Mahila Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society in the year 2007. The total membership of the cooperative is **1800**. The total savings of members has amounted to **Rs. 6,10,5614** and the total amount of loans taken by members has amounted to **Rs. 1, 01, 99000**.

Health Programme

The basic goal of the Health Programme in SEWA Delhi is to decrease expenditure on health care by strengthening public service linkages, promote health and well-being by providing access to information and health education and in the process, improve accountability of health care services. In its efforts to fulfill this goal, SEWA Delhi conducts regular awareness sessions which have received the participation of more than 1500 members. SEWA Delhi's intervention has enabled more than 1000 members to get their medical treatment done in government as well as private hospitals and helped them save expenditure on the treatment amounting to approximately four lakh rupees.

Highlights of the Year 2009:

Street Vendors' Programme

1. SEWA Mahila Bazaar received numerous customers this year, including both Indian and foreign tourists. Exhibitions and fairs were organized in the market from time to time on various festivals and occasions.
2. Through consistent efforts of SEWA, it has been decided by MCD to relocate Vellodrome Road Market at Crematorium, Bela Road.

Construction Workers' Programme

1. SEWA Delhi has facilitated the registration of 600 construction workers with the welfare board this year
2. As part of its advocacy campaign, SEWA Delhi helped in securing registration passbooks of 200 workers after a day long hunger strike.
3. With the help of SEWA Delhi's intervention, **40** children of construction workers were able to receive scholarship benefit which amounted to a total of **Rs. 48,000** and **451 workers** obtained LIC policies.

Embroidery Programme

1. A total of 500 members have earned **Rs. 16, 00,000**. The total production done in this year amounted to **Rs. 18, 00,000**.
2. Apart from women home-based workers producing for GAP, Monsoon and NEXT, linkage have been made with 5 new export houses namely H&M retailer, Shivank Udyog, DEBENHAMMS (retailer), Modesty Garments and Paramount.
3. 90 home-based embroidery workers now receive payment directly from SEWA's cooperative.

4. 116 workers have been successfully linked to Artisans' Insurance which provides them with a legal identity under the Ministry of Textiles, along with medical benefits, compensation in case of any injury and scholarship for their children.

Capacity Building Programme

Vocational Training and Personality Development Programme

1. A soft skill training of 6 months has been conducted this year in collaboration with State Bank Academy, where 34 girls were given the skills of basic accountancy, computer and spoken English.
2. Around 400 girls received vocational training in embroidery, cutting and tailoring and mehendi application.
3. Apart from vocational training, the women beneficiaries of Gender Resource Centre at Sunder Nagri are also being linked to various schemes of the Delhi Government and receiving benefits through monthly health camps, nutrition camps and legal counselling.
4. New trainings have been introduced in Madhubani printing and Accessories making.

Supplementary Education

1. 248 children were provided non-formal education this year.
2. Through these centres, 72 children of our women members were linked to government schools.
3. 30 girls were assisted in taking admission into open schools.

Microfinance

1. The total savings done by all the members this year amounted to **Rs. 53, 64,855** and 877 members joined the cooperative bank. The amount of loan taken by the members this year is **Rs. 99, 12,000**.
2. To suit the convenience of the members, new schemes were introduced such as the gold loan scheme whereby women can take loans on mortgage of gold jewellery.
3. Facility of micro-pension is also being provided to the members in collaboration with UTI. Beginning last year, a total of **390 members** have benefited from the scheme. The total amount of savings of members as part of the micro- pension scheme is **Rs. 1, 71,400**.

Health Programme

A total of 1300 members participated in the health awareness training organised this year and 400 members were referred to government as well as private hospitals and could save approximately 2.5 lakhs on medical treatment due to SEWA's intervention.

Vision for the Future

After successfully completing 10 years of struggle and achieving several milestones, SEWA Delhi is now determined to expand its outreach in all parts of Delhi and strengthen its programs and membership, as well as its links with the global markets and government schemes. Looking ahead into the future, SEWA Delhi will continue to struggle for the rights of informal women workers including their right for vending spaces, fair wages, and full-employment. SEWA Delhi will take fresh initiatives to involve women in the growth of the city; create self-sustaining embroidery centers; reach out to more members; and change the lives of young girls by educating and imparting vocational skills that will link them directly to jobs and security. It is the very faith of SEWA in the strength of unionising and collective strength that will keep us moving ahead and accomplish greater victories in the coming years.

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