



SEWA: A Movement of Women Empowerment through Mobilization of poor Women

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Abstract: *SEWA is a member-based trade union. It was registered in 1972 at Ahmedabad, Gujarat. It is comprised of poor, self-reliant women workers. Its purpose is to make women self-reliant and employable. Women have 94% stake in its operation. It plays an important part in economic growth. The main goal of SEWA is to mobilize poor women and get them full time employment and self-reliant. SEWA is both an organization and a movement. As a result, the number of its members is constantly increasing.*

This paper entitled 'SEWA: A Movement of Women Empowerment through Mobilization of poor Women' is an effort to analyze how SEWA movement work and membership mobilize in the institution and examine the role played by SEWA for women empowerment.

Keywords: *SEWA, Movement, Mobilization of membership, Self-reliant, Women Empowerment.*

I. INTRODUCTION

SEWA is a member-based trade union. It was registered in 1972 at Ahmedabad, Gujarat. It is comprised of poor, self-reliant women workers. Its purpose is to make women self-reliant and employment.

Women have a 94% stake in its operation does not count as being in the unorganized sector. It contributes in economic growth of the country. The main goal of SEWA is to mobilize poor women and get them full time employment and self-reliant. Full employment was achieved through Economic and Social protection. So, it takes care of health for her-self and family, care for the children, can get small house. It is developed to provide job security, income security, food security and social security. It becomes able to take the decisions of individuals as well as families.

The organization completes its goal by removing limitations, and struggles to fill strategic steps for its development. The activity is conducted in accordance with the needs of the members. It attempts to transform the whole society through the development of poor women. It is the organization running on Gandhi's Views. It follows Gandhi's doctrines- truth, non violence, religion, and Khadi. All other SEWA activities have emerged and evolved in direct response to members needs. There is no a priori view on what these needs are or how they should be served, though experience has shown SEWA that all the needs of poor women are interrelated, and all deserve attention. It is, as Ela Bhatt has often emphasized, a movement rather than a program or an NGO in the usual sense. The movement flows slowly at times and faster at others, it may be deflected around an obstacle, but it always moves in the same direction.

II. SEWA – A MOVEMENT

SEWA is both an organization and a movement. The SEWA movement is enhanced by its being a confluence of three movements:

- The labour movement
- The cooperative movement
- The womens' movement

It is a movement of self employed workers. It has become strong and visible. Their tremendous Economic and Social contributions are recognized with globalization, liberalization and other economic changes, there are both new opportunities as well as threats to some traditional areas of employments.

In 1977 SEWA's Genral Secretary, Ela Bhatt was awarded prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award and this brought international recognition to SEWA. As a result, the number of its members is constantly increasing.

**III. SEWA'S MEMBERSHIP**

The number of SEWA members in 2014 was 1,916,676 and accelerate its movement. In 1972 it was 1070 and increased to 15,144 in 1987. From 88 to 92 there was 25% growth in the period of five years, 35% from 93 to 97, 27% in 97 to 2003 and 37% increase from 2003 to 2008. The number of SEWA's members in 2008 were 9,66,137 in India and 5,19,309 in Gujarat. The SEWA is basically a Gujarat state institution. So, 50% of the members are from Gujarat. SEWA is located in Ahmedabad. So at the beginning of its members were in the city. After 1994 it became intense planning in rural areas. So, the number of members is increasing in rural areas. In 2008 34.42% of the total members of Gujarat were urban and 65.58% in rural members.

SEWA's members are poor, illiterate, and vulnerable. Their employment is not accurate. They have no assets or working capital. But they give an important contribution to society and country by their own labor, and the economic activity. In fact, 64% of GDP is accounted for by the self-employed of our country. There are four types of self employed women workers:

1. Hawkers, vendors and small business women like vegetable, fruit, fish, egg and other vendors of food items, household goods and clothes vendors.
2. Home-based workers like weavers, potters, bidi and agarbatti workers, papad rollers, ready-made garment workers, women who process agricultural products and artisans.
3. Manual labourers & service providers like agricultural labourers, construction workers, contract labourers, hand cart pullers, head – loaders, domestic workers and laundry workers.

In addition to these three categories there is emergence of another category of women workers.

4. Producers & Services who invest their labour and capital to carry out their businesses. This category includes Agriculture, cattle rearers, salt workers, gum collectors, cooking & vending etc.

In 2008 there was the number of membership of the four types in Gujarat as follows.

Sr. no	Main Categories of Workers	No. of Women
1	Hawkers & Vendors	57,010
2	Home based Workers	86,962
3	Manual Laborers & Service Providers	3,29,509
4	Producers & Services	45,830
Total		5,19,309

The following table shows an increase in the membership in 2008 and 2014

States	2008 Membership	2014 Membership
Gujarat	5,19,309	1,000,224
Bihar	12,000	82,460
Delhi	15,771	40,010
West Bengal	1,758	7,057
Rjasthan	9,168	37,000
Kerala	675	10,000
Uttrakhand	954	4,470
Madhya Pradesh	3,82,000	6,00,950
Uttar Pradesh	24,502	1,27,780
Maharashtra	-----	4,500
Assam	-----	1,613
Meghalaya	-----	400
Kashmir	-----	212
Total	9,66,139	1,916,676

Majority of membership of SEWA belongs to Gujarat. SEWA organizations have also been started in 4 other Indian states with membership of 1,916,676 in 2014. There was an increase of 98% in the membership of SEWA with the inclusion of 4 states of India. Compare to 2008, in 2014 there is a tremendous increase in its membership. SEWA is strengthened with the mobilization of needy and poor women of the country. In addition SEWA associates in South Africa, Turkey, UK, USA, Australia and Yemen.

SEWA is a member-based organization. SEWA asks 11 questions to its members to verify their real development. They are:

1. Have more members obtained more employment?
2. Has their income increased?
3. Have they obtained food and nutrition?



4. Has their health been safeguarded?
5. Have they obtained child-care?
6. Have they obtained or improved their housing?
7. Have their assets increased?
8. Have the worker's organizational strength increased?
9. Has worker's leadership increased?
10. Have they become self-reliant both collectively and individually?
11. Have they become literate?

Questions 1 to 7 are linked to the goal of full employment while 8 to 11 are those concerned with SEWA's goal of self reliance. However each of these interconnected to each other.

All of the questions are frequently evaluated and assume a number of development activities for members. It does all of this through the network of his country and abroad. Of its cooperatives, SHGs, Its affiliated organizations, such as: SEWA Academy, SEWA Bank, SEWA Insurance, SEWA Gram Mahila Haat, SEWA Trade, SEWA Kalakruti, Hansiba, SEWA Sanskarkendra, SEWA Manager ni School, SEWA Nirman, SEWA Federation etc...

The country has become more powerful through social services of SEWA. Thus, we can say SEWA is a Movement of Women Empowerment through Mobilization of poor Women.

REFERENCES

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