

SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), India

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Formed in 1972.

Membership: "Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was registered as a trade union in 1972 and since then has been organising women in the informal economy. Belonging to various trades and services, SEWA members are divided into four major categories on the basis of their work. They are home based workers, vendors, hawkers, laborers and service providers and small producers."

The informal economy accounts for 93% of Indian work force. Of the women's work force in India, more than 94% are in the unorganised sector. They work for long hours, on very low wages and are mostly illiterate. There are no protective laws for them who are economically very active, contributing significantly to the Indian economy and the society but are nonetheless exploited, discriminated against and marginalised.

SEWA has worked towards their visibility and for integrating them in the mainstream. Their needs, struggle and development have always been central to our objectives. Today, SEWA has 700,000 members located in 7 states of India. Membership of paid up hawkers and vendors is 50 003.

Activities:

SEWA believes in the Gandhian philosophy of Satya (truth), Ahimsa (non-violence), Sarvadharm (integration of all faiths, all religion) and Khadi (preparation of local employment and self reliance).

SEWA organized women through its joint strategy of struggle and development. It undertakes several activities based on members needs and priorities. Some of these are union struggles, cooperative economic, organizations, supportive services like banking and credit, health care, child care, shelter, legal-aid, insurance, capacity building, training through Sewa Academy, research and communication services.

SEWA members are the Directors of the SEWA Bank, managers of their cooperatives, leaders of their trade groups, camera persons, designers, and barefoot doctors, engineers, researchers, bankers. They change their own situation for the better and in doing so change society and their own men folk. In the SEWA movement, women are the leaders.

Today, we are very pleased to be users of the digital technologies in reaching out to our members and also new and extensive audiences. We do this through satellite communication, Video SEWA, and our websites. " (*We the Self-Employed*, Vol. 1, No. 1)

SEWA is the largest union organising informal economy workers and has made application to register as a national Central Trade Union.

Office bearers: Founder - Elaben Bhatt; President - Bhanuben Danabhai Solanki; Vice President - Manaliben Shah; Vice-president - Maniben Haribhai Patani; Vice-President - Gauriben Ramabhai Brahman; General Secretary - Jyotiben Macwan; Secretary - Mittalben Shah; Treasurer - Namrata Bali - Treasurer.

Website: <http://www.sewa.org/>