

CONTENTS

- [SEWA's Membership at all time high](#)
- [Queen of Bhutan visits SEWA artisans in Delhi](#)
- [SEWA and Green Livelihoods](#)
- [A visit to Iran](#)

NO. 25 | JANUARY, 2010

SEWA MEMBERSHIP OVER 1.2 MILLION, ALL-TIME HIGH!

Our membership has increased this year and we are now 12, 56,994 women workers in nine states of India. The majority of SEWA's members live in the state of Gujarat (6, 31,345) in northwestern India and two third of SEWA's members come from the rural areas. The SEWA's success is evident in the manner its membership has risen over the years.

The complexion of SEWA's membership has changed significantly. The statistics of the growth of SEWA's membership has been shown with the help of a graph:

IN OTHER NEWS

A visit to Iran

Mirai Chatterjee, Director, SEWA Social Security addressed the Asian parliamentarians Assembly, including Ministers of Health from the Asian region from June 28th to 30th 2009 in Iran (Tehran) on the topic: Women's Empowerment & the Social Determinants of Health- SEWA's experience.

About 17 countries were represented by their parliamentarians and some senior officials. Some of the countries were: Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Oman and representatives from India and Bangladesh.

The meeting was mainly held with the focus to discuss the steps to be taken for further improving women's health. Senior Iranian political leaders were present at the meeting - the Vice-President of the Iranian Parliament, the Health Minister and others. The senior advisor to the president on women Dr. Z. Tabib said women literacy rate in Iran is 85 percent. She discussed the need for exploratory visits for collaboration between Iranian and Indian women at SEWA.

[back to top ^](#)

(x axis- number of years, y axis- SEWA's all India membership for each year)

The membership of SEWA has been on an upward spiral in the first decade of 21st century. With the efforts of SEWA, slowly sisters from all over the country are coming together and voicing their demands and joining the struggle for their just rights.

The SEWA membership is now evenly spread between Gujarat (6,313,45) and the rest of India (6,256,49) and is indicative of the fact that SEWA is now an All India movement. The below table shows how the numbers pan out in India:

SEWA- All-India Membership year- 2009

State	Membership
Gujarat	6,31,345
Madhya Pradesh	5,02,040
Uttar Pradesh	56,130
Delhi	28,024
Bihar	19,000
Rajasthan	15,258
West Bengal (Murshidabad only)	2,359
Kerala	2,000
Uttrakhand	788
Total	12,56,944

SEWA organizing, especially in Gujarat is getting even in terms of Rural and Urban memberships. Though, rural sisters will always have larger numbers due to the demographics and the nature of India. SEWA is reaching out to both these areas with equal vigor and vision as seen from the following statistics on the rural and urban memberships of SEWA in 2009:

Gujarat Membership - Rural - Urban 2009

Main categories of workers	No. of women	Percentage of total membership
Urban	2,30,184	36.46
Rural	4,01,161	63.54
Total	6,31,345	100

Overall membership trend witnessed significant change in the recent past, as a result of;

- Campaigns leading to mass movements
- Concrete gains from organizing and support during crises
- Intensification of organizing at rural level for membership increase
- Victories of SEWA in getting our sisters the rights and respect they are entitled to

[back to top ^](#)

HER MAJESTY, ASHI DORJI WANGMO WANGCHUCK, THE ELDEST QUEEN OF BHUTAN VISITS SEWA, NEW DELHI.

The SAARC Development Fund has awarded an initiative on Women's Empowerment to Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and Home Net South Asia (HNSA), for strengthening the livelihoods of poor, home based workers in the SAARC Region. As this initiative enters the second phase of work, the activities towards setting up a Trade Facilitation Centre in Bhutan are about to start soon.

On 19th January, 2010, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the eldest Queen of Bhutan visited SEWA artisans in New Delhi. The team from SEWA was led by Ms. Reema Nanavaty, Chairperson of SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre along with the members of SEWA representing a cross-section of trades and activities like crafts, agriculture, information technology, micro finance, and food processing.

The Queen inaugurated the 'Ananta' collection and was taken on a guided tour of the flagship store of SEWA, 'Hansiba'. She expressed a deep admiration of the products made by SEWA artisans, and appreciated the labour and toil which had gone into creating these beautiful pieces of art in the form of embroidery. The Queen then interacted with the SEWA members, who shared their experiences of their fight against poverty and alleviate their status in society both economically and financially.

Jamuben spearheads the center in the village and became the member of SEWA. Here she learnt how organizing can help them change their lives. They used to collect gum from the nearby area. After connecting with SEWA they have found security and stability in their lives by improving on their traditional crafts. Today though they do have craft skill but it is important to understand the market and needs of the customers. The real challenge is how to uplift the poorest of the poor and pave their way into main stream of life.
[back to top ^](#)

SEWA AND GREEN LIVELIHOODS

With reference to the recent Copenhagen Summit, 300 SEWA members from 9 districts across Gujarat collectively gathered to discuss about the effects of climate change. The world is looking for a solution on climate change. SEWA members exchanged their experiences on the impact of climate change on their lives.

A waste picker member of SEWA made a point that waste pickers are improving the environment as they recycle everything. They are the best managers of solid waste. But cities do not appreciate them and instead of encouraging livelihoods through recycling they bring in private companies and encourage land-fills and incinerators. This is damaging for the environment and also increases poverty as livelihoods are lost. Cities should encourage solid waste management through recycling and waste pickers co-operatives.

Women from Ganeshpura, made a remark that in today's world the concept of development is judged on the basis of big dams, hyper markers, highways etc without considering the costs it has in terms of the damage they cause to the natural ecosystems.

The women from Bodeli and Kutch said that the use of modern agricultural technologies and interference in natural processes seem to be failing in maintaining the harmony with nature behind the sustainability of agriculture as a whole. They said that use of chemicals and pesticides have spoiled the quality of the produce and the fodder fed to animals is equally harmful.

SEWA has taken up several initiatives under 'Green Movement' and 'Green Livelihoods'. The green livelihoods at SEWA comprise of forestry, vermiculture, water harvesting, operations and maintenance of water resources and rural infrastructure. This green energy and green livelihood campaign led to an annual income of Rs. 1175 million for 1,39,685 members. In the coming 5 years SEWA wishes to have 25,000 young green entrepreneurs which would help create 2 lakh green livelihoods.

Total number of farmers associated with SEWA in Gujarat is 2, 65,000 and most of them being small and marginal. SEWA through its vast network of Gujarat spreading across 14 districts, covering million of hectares, is promoting the use of vermicompost and organic cultivation.

SEWA has started the drive for green energy, to address the issue of increasing incidences of lung diseases caused by smoke from burning cow dung cakes and foul smell from open compost pit. To address this issue SEWA has constructed 145 Bio gas plants in Kutch district of Gujarat. The total amount of carbon emission reduction caused by these bio gas plants is 2994.1 tons CO₂e per year.

[back to top ^](#)

SEWA Academy

Krishna Bhuvan, Near Hariharanand Ashram, Opp Sakar Two, Town Hall Road, Ellisbridge,
Ahmedabad: 380 006. Gujarat , INDIA .

Phone: +91-79-26577115, 26580474 Fax: +91-79-26587086
Web: www.sewaacademy.org Email: mail@sewaacademy.org