

Introduction

2005 SEWA Membership

All India membership	7,96,755
Gujarat membership	4,75,308

All - India Membership Year 2005

State	Membership
Gujarat	4,75,308
Madhya Pradesh	2,72,832
Uttar Pradesh	42,010
Bihar	1,700
	1,676
Delhi	1,260
Kerala	1,119
Rajasthan	850
Total membership of SEWA:	7,96,755

Gujarat membership by Trade

Main Categories of workers	No. of women	Percentage of total membership
Manual Labourers and Service Providers	3,25,902	69 %
Home based workers	77,072	16 %
Hawkers & Vendors	41,188	9 %
Producers	31,146	6 %
Total	4,75,308	100 %

Gujarat membership - Urban and Rural distribution

Main Categories of workers	No. of women	Percentage of total membership
Rural	3,20,331	68 %
Urban	1,54,977	32 %
Total	4,75,308	100 %

Growth of SEWA's Membership: 1972-2005 (India)

Year	Gujarat	India
1972	1,070	1,070
1977	1,948	1,948
1982	10,733	10,733
1987	15,144	15,144
1990	25,911	25,911
1991	46,076	46,076
1992	38,136	45,936
1993	42,280	53,570
1994	75,615	1,43,702
1995	1,58,152	2,18,797
1996	1,62,781	2,12,016
1997	1,59,204	2,11,124
1998	1,42,810	2,09,250
1999	1,47,618	2,15,234
2000	2,05,985	3,18,527
2001	2,84,317	4,20,208
2002	5,35,674	6,94,551
2003	4,69,306	7,04,166
2004	4,68,445	6,88,743
2005	4,75,308	7,96,755

The year 2005 was one of struggle and further organizing of women workers of the informal economy, our members.

The struggle was largely on account of the discontinuation of our partnership with the government in SEWA's biggest livelihood programme. This has been documented elsewhere (see our website: www.sewa.org).

Our combined strength actually increased this year (see membership tables above) and we strengthened our commitment to self-reliance both of our members and of the organizations within the SEWA family. Self-reliance entails planning and implementing each activity and programme of SEWA such that it is economically viable, and such that in the aggregate women's own organizations are sustainable in the long term. Self-reliance also means that women workers run and own these organizations.

2005 was also a year of floods in two districts, causing devastation of homes, crops and livestock and disruption of livelihoods. Yet again we were involved in helping our members recover and re-build their lives. This will be described later in this report.

And finally, 2005 was also a year of several steps forward, both big and small, towards our goals of full employment and self-reliance. These are also described in this report.

Most of all, this year reaffirmed our abiding faith in organizing, building membership-based organizations and of lasting change led by women workers. The increase in our membership, in organizations within the SEWA movement and the growth of our activities and programmes are a testimony to the commitment and strength of our members, their unflagging energy and hope in the future, and their faith in SEWA and in their own sister organizations.

The Self-Employed Women's Association SEWA

SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. Today it is a national union of poor, self-employed women workers, with members from seven states Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Our members are women who earn a living through their own labour or small businesses. They do not obtain regular salaried employment with welfare benefits like workers in the organized sector. They are the unprotected labour force of our country. Constituting 93% of the labour force, these are workers of the informal economy. Of the female labour force in India, more than 94% are in this informal or unorganized sector. However, their work is not counted and hence remains invisible. In fact, women workers themselves remain uncounted, undercounted and invisible.

Self-Employed Women Workers

These are workers who have no fixed employee-employer relationship and depend on their own labour for survival. They are poor, often illiterate and vulnerable. They barely have any assets or working capital. But they are extremely active economically, contributing very significantly to the economy and society with their labour.

There are four types of self-employed workers:

- 1. Hawkers, vendors and small business women like vendors of vegetable, fruit, fish, egg and other food items, household goods and clothes.***
- 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, handcart pullers, head-loaders, domestic workers and laundry workers.***
- 4. Small producers like artisans and salt farmers.***

SEWA's main goals are to organize women workers for full employment and self reliance. Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter). SEWA organizes women to ensure

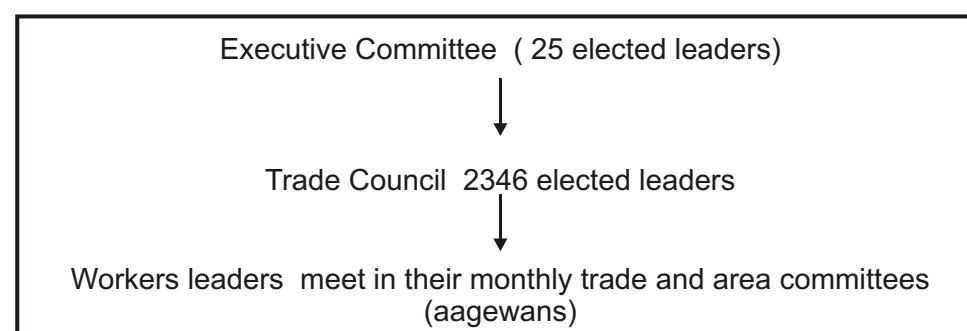
that every family obtains full employment. By self-reliance we mean that women should be autonomous and self-reliant, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability.

At SEWA we organize workers to achieve their goals of full employment and self reliance through the strategy of struggle and development. The struggle is against the many constraints and limitations imposed on them by society and the economy, while development activities strengthen women's bargaining power and offer them new alternatives. Practically, the strategy is carried out through the joint action of union and cooperatives. Gandhian thinking is the guiding force for SEWA's poor, self-employed members in organizing for social change. We follow the principles of satya (truth), ahinsa (non-violence), sarvadharm (integrating all faiths, all people) and Khadi (propagation of local employment and self reliance).

Through their faith in organizing for their rights, to protect their livelihoods and to safeguard their rightful place in the economy, self-employed women have made their mark. They are now visible, more articulate and self-confident. Three decades ago, people didn't even recognize them as a group nor their significant contributions to our country. Today there is a growing recognition of this, of their immense leadership potential and their abilities.

And yet, we have a long way to go. There are still millions of women who remain in poverty and are exploited, despite their long hours of hard labour. They are not yet organized. Also there is much to be done in terms of strengthening women's leadership, their confidence, their bargaining power within and outside their home and their representation in policy-making fora. It is their issues, their priorities and needs which should guide and mould the development process in our country. Towards this end, we have to support women in building their own capacities and in strengthening and develop their own economic organisations.

Any self-employed woman worker in India can become a member of SEWA by paying a membership fee of Rs. 5 per year. Every three years SEWA's members elect their representatives to a Trade Council made up of worker-leaders. This committee then elects the Executive Committee of SEWA.



Building membership-based organizations of women workers

SEWA believes that the basis of development and progress is organization. Self employed women must organize themselves into sustainable organizations so that they can collectively promote their own development.

These are women's own organisations. They have many different purposes. They can be trade organizations which promote employment, increase income or link the women workers/producers with the market. They can be organizations which build assets through savings and credit, such as SEWA Bank. They can be organizations which provide social security, such as health care or child care. They can be organizations which promote the cause of, and advocate for, poor women.

They can be organisations at the village level, at the district level, at the state level, at the national or international level. They can be registered as co-operatives, societies, producers associations or even remain unregistered. Their members may be self-employed women directly, or primary organizations of self-employed women.

SEWA has been helping its members to form their own organisations. All these organisations have the following characteristics:

They exist for the benefit of the self-employed women members of SEWA.

They are owned by the self-employed women workers.

They are managed by them.

They are democratically run.

They aim towards self-reliance, both financially and managerially.

Given SEWA's emphasis on employment and income, most of the organisations are trade or occupation-based. They are poor women's own economic organisations. The members of these organisations own these through shares or control of working capital and other resources. They directly benefit from their own organisations. Some of the organisations are registered under the Co-operatives Act, and some are producers' groups which then form their own district-level association. All these organisations are independent entities. They include:

a) Cooperatives -96

Total: 78,000 members

Milk Producers Co-operatives, with a total of 25,535 members

Artisans Co-operatives, with a total of 10,000 members

Bank Co-operatives, with 34,835 members (share-holders)

Land based Co-operatives, with a total of 4000 members

Service Co-operatives, with 29435 members, including, Cleaners Co-operative, Health Co-operative, Child care Co-operatives, Video Co-operative, Construction workers Co-operative

Vendors Co-operatives, with 10,000 members

b) Producers's groups

Total: 3,200 groups

artisans

land-based

forestry

nursery-raising

others

c) Savings and Credit Groups

Total: 6,000 groups

Women require banking and credit services in both urban and rural areas. In the latter, they have formed their own savings groups and are learning to manage their own collective capital. These groups have then formed by their own district-level associations and include women workers of varied trades in many villages. The current district level savings and credit associations are:

Ahmedabad Savings and Credit Association

Kheda Savings and Credit Association

Gandhinagar Savings and Credit Association

Mehsana Savings and Credit Association

SEWA's urban members have their own, individual savings accounts in SEWA Bank. The Bank promotes and trains these associations in order to decentralize its own operations, and build local self-reliance. It works closely with the associations in reaching savings and credit to rural women.

Presently there are 6000 savings groups in 11 districts of Gujarat. In 2005 a total of 2.5 lakh women were depositing their savings in SEWA Bank.

d) Social Security organizations

These are organisations of social security providers, including health workers, child care workers and insurance promoters. The members are the actual care givers, while the self-employed women workers obtain services. They are

Lok Swasthya SEWA Health Co-operative with 435 members

Shramshakti Co-operative, with 147 members

Shramlakmi Co-operative, with 85 members

Krishna Dayan Co-operative, with 154 members

Sangini Child Care Co-operative with 671 members

Shaishav Child Care Co-operative with 172 members

Vimo SEWA, insurance collective, with 76,754 members

The economic organisations described in sections a - d are all primary organisations, serving the self employed women directly. However, organizing at the primary or grass roots level is necessary, but not enough. Access to markets, to training, to technical inputs and to policy making, requires organisations which can deal at state, national and international levels. The primary purpose of the economic organisations is to link the self employed women, through their primary organisations, to the larger economic structures; and in doing so, to mainstream them into the economy.

These economic associations are of different types, with different purposes, depending on the need of the primary organisations. Some serve one type of need such as housing, while others serve a multiplicity of needs. However, the main aim of all these associations to mainstream the self-employed women.

e) The Gujarat State Women's Cooperative Federation

The need for one such association - a Federation was felt by the co-operatives mainly in the areas of marketing, capacity building for management of primary co-operatives and policy interventions with the government. The SEWA sponsored co-operatives organized and took the initiative to form this Gujarat State Women's Co-operative Federation, the first of its kind. Today it has 96 co-operatives as members with a total of 78,000 self-employed women. It was registered in 1993. In 1996, the Federation became a member of the National Cooperative Union of India.

f) Associations of Producers' groups

**Banaskantha District Mahila SEWA Association
(BDMSA)**

Number of members: 34,831

In Gujarat's north-western desert district, Patan (formerly known as Banaskantha), women have formed their own association of village level producers group. Originally these were part of the Government of India's Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) programme. Based on local resources and women's own traditional skills, women have taken the leadership to develop their own district through economic activities.

80% of the families who once migrated in search of work and income security no longer do so. In 1996, rural women managers took over the running of their own economic activities.

An individual village level producer's group is too isolated and vulnerable to easily reach markets, raw materials and credit on its own. SEWA, the union, had undertaken the task of promoting new groups, helping them to build their capacities and of linking with the government. However, it was felt that there should be a self-managed organization to undertake all these functions to act as a promoter, support and advocate for the producer's groups. Thus the BDMSA was registered as an Association. Its members are representatives of producer's groups in Patan district. It was registered in 1993.

Kutchcraft Association

Number of members: 20,002

This association was formed in 1995 to support local women in their efforts to preserve and promote their traditional craft skills. It also aims to assist them in marketing so that their skill becomes a continuous source of employment. Now women no longer have to depend on state-supported 'relief work' (mainly digging and road construction work) for survival. Instead they embroider and market their own exquisite products, eliminating middlemen and exploitative traders.

Surendranagar Mahila and Balsewa Mandal

Number of members: 20,246

In the dry, desert villages of Halvad, Dhrangadhra and Patdi talukas, women work in salt pans in very hard conditions. In order to plan for a better future for their young children, women have formed their own groups. These then, in turn, formed a district level association ('mandal') of 50 groups and women. At present the mandal is running 18 child care centres and 28 non formal education classes.

Sabarkantha Khedu Mandal**Number of members: 28,163**

In the largely dry, rain-fed lands of Sabarkantha district, agriculture is the major occupation. There is severe soil erosion of land resulting in ravines and land degradation. The Gujarat government's Land Development Corporation (GLDC) approached SEWA for collaboration in its watershed project in this district. The latter aimed to protect and preserve water and land through local women's participation. From 1994 onwards, SEWA has been organizing women farmers and agricultural labourers towards developing their land as a viable source of employment. Even after the completion of a two-year collaboration on the GLDC project, women continued to be active in the district's development. They formed their own Women Farmers' Organisation, Sabarkantha Khedu Mandal, in 1997. Currently the Mandal has 28,163 members.

Sukhi Mahila Mandal**Number of members: 30,080**

A dam built over the Sukhi river displaced thousands of tribal families. SEWA started organizing these families after their rehabilitation by the Government of Gujarat, with the aim of integrating them into the mainstream through economic rehabilitation. A three-year project from the government was undertaken by SEWA. Two village-level trade organisations of co-operatives and 3 producers groups were formed, as part of the project. At the end of three years, SEWA's primary and linking role was taken over by the Sukhi Mandal registered in 1995. The Mandal has 30,080 self-employed women from around 300 villages as its members in SEWA. SEWA is supporting the Mandal with technical services and capacity building.

g) Ansooy Trust

SEWA has been using communication services as a means of bringing the reality, concerns and struggle of poor women into the mainstream of society. In addition, communication services are required by self-employed workers to facilitate sharing of expenses, enhance organizing and strengthen their movement. Through these services, women learn of each other's concerns, struggles and strategies.

One such medium of communication is our fortnightly Newsletter 'Ansooya'. It communicates the experiences of workers and their organisations to the outside world in Gujarati. SEWA members call 'Ansooya our own newspaper'.

In order to consolidate and strengthen 'Ansooya's' efforts to promote women's development, Shri Mahila Ansooya Trust was established in 1996. The Trust produces publications on issues concerned with women workers. It also promotes local and folk media, booklets, posters and video films. Workers also obtain training in these various communication media.

h) Mahila Housing SEWA Trust

SEWA, SEWA Bank, and all the Federations described above deal mainly with women's employment and social security needs. In addition to their main purpose, each of the federations were facing a demand for improved quality of life particularly better housing from their members. Since for the self-employed, a house is also a productive asset, their housing needs are closely linked with their employment needs. It was, therefore, decided to promote an organisation which

would deal only with housing and would help each sister organization to promote the housing requirements of her members, and would link with the larger housing structures nationally and internationally. The Mahila Housing Trust registered in 1995 was promoted by SEWA, SEWA Bank and other sister organisations such as Foundation for Public Interest (technical and training support), and Friends of Women's World Banking (Finance).

i) SEWA Gram Mahila Haat (SGMH)

To help rural producer groups directly earn their livelihoods, SEWA established SEWA Gram Mahila Haat in 1999, with the full support and co-operation of the Government of Gujarat. Today, SGMH has three main goals:

- a. To provide marketing facilities, managerial and technical support and working capital assistance to the district associations.
- b. To enable rural producers to earn a monthly income of at least Rs. 2,000/-
- c. To facilitate the producers to become owner/managers of their collective enterprises.

Gram Haat's vision is to build a marketing organization providing integrated marketing services to the rural producers through exploring, developing and establishing first the internal (local market) and then the national market for rural products.

Gram Haat also strengthen the producer groups through District and financial management services along with marketing services.

Today, SGMH works with 3200 groups, or 52000 women across 11 districts of Gujarat to connect them to mainstream markets and reduce their dependency on businessmen who often exploit them. SGMH focuses on four sectors: agriculture, salt, gum, and handicrafts, as producers of these products constitute 85% of SEWA's membership. Moreover, SGMH identified these trades as ones in which rural producer groups had difficulty connecting with local, national and international market places.

To date, SGMH's interventions have ranged from initial capital assistance to market interventions which have addressed SEWA's main goals. Going forward, SGMH will focus on distributing modern technologies to improve productivity and profitability, building and capacity of its members to run enterprises independently, and training members to produce value added services.

j) SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre (STFC) or Unnat Bazaar

SEWA realised the potential of craft production as a source of ensuring sustained livelihood and a disaster mitigation tool during the worst-ever drought in 2000. This was then immediately up-scaled after the earthquake in 2001. In this context, the need to expand the marketing efforts at the national and global level emerged, and SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre (STFC) was thus created.

STFC serves as a bridge between the rural micro-level enterprises and the global markets. The poor artisans are the owners of their own company. STFC or Unnat Bazaar strategically targets the markets, thereby influencing the local wages and increasing the bargaining power of the poor artisans. With the objectives of capacity building, product development and exploring new markets,

STFC has an integrated marketing approach. This is backed by research, data management, production related services and networking with wider national and international markets.

In this way, rural artisans reach national and global markets and they obtain regular work and income to become self-reliant.

Democratic, self-managed sustainable organizations

All the organisations described above function in a democratic manner. Their members, the self-employed women, hold elections periodically (most organisations have elections once every three years) to determine their executive committee. The executive committee meets at least once a month, sometimes more often, and takes all the decisions regarding both day to day running of the organisation, and most of its policies. The members of this executive committee are from the self-employed members of the organization. This kind of structure makes the organisations fully accountable to its members.

The organisations are self-run. There are two ways in which the organisations run their day-to-day affairs. First, the members of the executive committee may be the managers of the organization; this is especially true at the village level co-operatives or producers' groups, where the secretary or manager of the group is responsible for managing, accounts, marketing etc. Second, the executive committee may hire full time or part-time staff. Generally, the organisations prefer to hire local women, especially from among their own ranks of self-employed. Given the increasing literacy among the younger generation, this is an entirely feasible process. Sometimes, staff is hired from among trained personnel in particular fields, e.g. a trained banker as Managing Director of the Bank or a product designer or an agricultural expert.

Sustainability is a must for these organisations. They are a means by which the self-employed reach the mainstream. This means that the organisations must be able to stand firm in the market. Furthermore, the members expect their organisations to have a long life, so they have to be self-reliant and cannot depend financially or managerially on others. They themselves learn to be managers.

Capacity Building, Resources, Linkages

Demand and awareness about their own organisations is growing among the women workers and their communities. Their major needs now are capacity building, access to more resources and linkages, including to existing formal structures and institutions.

They need the skills required to run their own organisations. These include accounting skills, managerial skills, marketing skills and various types of technical skills such as agricultural techniques or knowledge of medicines.

SEWA's capacity-building institution, SEWA Academy, the various associations and the cooperative federation are providing these skills, but the demand is huge.

The organizations also need resources to become self-sufficient and to grow. They need seed capital in the form of revolving funds, credit, water, electricity and land. SEWA has always struggled to enter the mainstream and make the presence of the self employed and poor women felt there: be it the trade union or co-operative sector, banking or financial structures, mainstream markets, the media, social security structures in fact, everywhere.

Therefore, we strive for linkages to existing structures, as a methods of mainstreaming the organisations of self employed women and making them sustainable. Not only do the organisations get linked but in the process the existing structures also start adapting to these organisations. Linkages are required to technical institutions such as agricultural universities, marketing and export organisations, housing institutions, health facilities, government programmes and schemes.

SEWA's Campaigns

While organising women and supporting them to build their own workers' organisations, the need for mass mobilization through campaigns became evident. This mass mobilization strengthens the SEWA movement and at the same time highlights the workers' own pressing issues.

All mobilization is done as part of a campaign around a clearly identified issue. The issue is identified by the women and local leaders as one which affects large numbers of people, which then effects them deeply or is felt as unjust or intolerable, and is continually called to our attention. Mobilisation involves continuous meetings at the village or mohalla level. The meetings must include as large a representation as possible, for example an all-village meeting 'gram sabha'. It means clear identification of issues and a strategy formulated by as inclusive a group as possible. It means follow-up of the strategy by local people supported by SEWA. It means leadership from the women themselves. It means collection of relevant information through formal and informal surveys, and equally useful dissemination of this information. Several campaigns have taken the SEWA movement forward over the years.

Home-based Workers' Campaign



A campaign started at SEWA more than two decades ago reached its peak at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1996. A historic victory for home-based workers world-wide was won when the ILO voted for a Convention to address the needs and priorities of home-based workers everywhere, according to them full rights as workers. SEWA collaborated with unions in many countries and federations of unions like HOMENET in the campaign process. Extensive dialogue was also held with policy-makers in the labour ministry of the government of India and our own state labour department in Gujarat.

Currently, SEWA is spearheading a national and South Asian movement for the rights of home-based workers.

Vendors' Campaign

Vendors are an important part of the urban economy, yet they are treated as criminals. In 1995 SEWA took the campaign for 'Legal rights for Street Vendors in our cities' to the international arena, with a meeting of vendors of 11 mega cities of the world organized in Bellagio, Italy. The meeting passed an International Declaration demanding policy and space for vendors.

In 1996, we began a survey of vendors in Ahmedabad and other Indian cities. This year we extended the survey. We also contacted various groups working with vendors and disseminated information on the Bellagio Declaration. In addition, we continued our campaign at the local level with the municipal authorities, for an end to forcible eviction of vendors and to obtain alternative vending sites. Negotiations for more sites, and an end to forced eviction till suitable alternative sites are given, are in progress.

In 1997, SEWA formed NASVI the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India which now has organizations in its network. In 2001, through SEWA's and NASVI's efforts, a national policy on street vendors was developed. The struggle to implement this policy continues.

Clean Ahmedabad Campaign

Increasingly people are becoming aware of the lack of clean surroundings in our cities and its health consequences. The poor in slums especially, face piling of garbage, filthy and insufficient number of toilets, overflowing drains, stagnant pools and polluted drinking water, which spread disease and make their lives miserable. However, it is not the poor alone who can handle these problems. Those living in better off areas have come to realize that lack of cleanliness in one part of the city will affect the health of all. For various reasons, the public authorities are unable to handle the huge problems of the cities, and this has given rise to the "Clean Ahmedabad" campaign since 1994.

SEWA is conducting this campaign in working class areas of Ahmedabad. Continuous mohalla level meetings bring out the problems and raise awareness. The women leaders from the areas then take up the issues with help and guidance from SEWA organizers. Generally, the leaders handle simple garbage cleaning within the community, but for infrastructure issues like broken drain pipes, polluted drinking water and toilets they contact and co-ordinate with the municipal authorities. Continuous education in cleanliness and discussion with members, ongoing identification of local needs and daily co-ordination and pressuring of the municipal authorities for garbage clearance are the main elements of this campaign.

In the middle class residential areas, the campaign is conducted in collaboration with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The paper picker members of SEWA are in the forefront of the campaign as they are the real cleaners and recycles of the dry garbage of Ahmedabad. They are allocated certain areas to keep clean and each house is supplied with a SEWA bag for waste collection, to be replaced when filled. There is an ongoing education campaign on cleanliness with the residents. The women then re-sell the dry waste which is their only source of employment.

The women involved in this campaign are now recognised as "Arogya Bhaginis" or literally, "Health Sisters" (Health Workers).

The Water Campaign

The areas of North Gujarat where SEWA works are mainly arid and semi-arid. Safe drinking water is a major problem, as is water for irrigation. Without water, both living conditions and the economy remain depressed in these areas. In 1995, SEWA's local leaders organized gram sabhas in 290 villages. The response was overwhelming with villagers coming together to identify their major problem as an acute shortage of water.

The women leaders then identified the usually defunct or untapped water resources in their villages, and the exact reason for the shortage - some had no well at all, in some there was a bore well but the pump was out of order, in others there was a pipeline, but water was rarely piped through. They identified the agency responsible for their water source, and the means of obtaining assured water, new water sources and repair of existing sources. They, then, began to work with the village Panchayat towards a solution - collection of funds from villagers, contacting responsible authorities, linking with Government schemes, bringing in new technical solutions, and education campaigns within the village. The villagers have been responding to SEWA members with great enthusiasm, and in some areas results are already visible, with water tankers being provided in some villages, repair works beginning in others and new water resources provided in a few. In 2005 too, this campaign was carried forward by women leaders.

Campaign for Forest Workers

Women have been forest and nursery workers and collectors of minor forest produce for years. However, they have not received the technical support and services that they require. On the other hand, it is they who are the worst sufferers in the increasing ecological degeneration and land degradation at the local level. In addition, some policies of the government's Forest Department, including their own nursery-raising, are an impediment to women's employment. These policies are not only a hindrance but also result in declining incomes of the poorest of women who depend on forest and nursery-raising for survival. In this context, SEWA has initiated a national and state level campaign to hand over nursery raising to local women.

Campaign for Agricultural Labourers

Agricultural workers - small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers - form the bulk of SEWA's membership. Increasingly our members engaged in agriculture are finding it hard to make a living off the land.

With globalization and increasing mechanization in farming, as well as other rapid changes in agriculture like export-oriented cash crop cultivation, our members face many challenges.

First, water, seeds, fertilizers and other inputs are either not easily available, or expensive, or both. Second, our members do almost all the work related to agriculture. Yet their contribution is not recognized. They need identity cards, voice and representation. When new policies are made, our members demand that they be consulted and involved in such decision-making.

Third, our sisters want access to technology and processes that enhance their employment and incomes. Hence, we try to link up with technological institutes and agricultural universities.

Finally, women want better prices for their products and access to markets. Our campaign brings these and other issues to the forefront. We have also been a part of the Government of India's Farmers' Commission and have organized consultations between women and the Commission.

Campaign for Recognition of Dais (Traditional Birth Attendants) as Village Health Workers

Dais or Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) have been conducting home deliveries in Gujarat's villages for centuries. They also provide general primary health services to families. Yet they remain unrecognized by the government's Health Department and society in general. They neither get the respect that is their due nor do they play any significant role in the government health system. SEWA has been demanding that the dais be registered, given identity cards and be given responsibility for providing decentralized health care at women's doorsteps in the villages.

In 2004, the government issued a formal resolution (GR) recognising dais and promoting them as village health workers. The Dai Sangathan (Gujarat) was formally registered as an organization of dais from all over the State in 2005. SEWA is a founder member, along with 6 NGOs. SEWA is also the secretariat of this new organization.

Campaign for Child Care as a Basic Service

For poor working women, child care is a priority and basic need. Our experience has been that when appropriate and affordable child care is organized for workers, they can earn and their productivity increases. Enhanced income brings in better food, nutrition and health care to women's families, as they can now spend on these needs. They also report "peace of mind", knowing that their children are being taken care of properly. Finally, workers' older children are released from child care responsibilities and start attending school.

For all these reasons, SEWA has been campaigning for child care as an entitlement for all women workers for some years now. We have been a founder-member of FORCES (Forum for Creches and Child Care Services). In 1996 we began the process of starting a Gujarat chapter of FORCES. A state-level meeting of several organisations involved in child care was held and its recommendation widely circulated, follow-up dialogue with state-level planners and policy-makers is continuing. In addition, we have been pressing our demand for child care as part of the governments' Minimum Needs Programme and for appropriate budgetary allocations at both state and central government levels. In 2005 40 NGOs were part of Gujarat FORCES whose secretariat is at SEWA.

Some of the campaigns described here are undertaken at national level, state or local level. Some are even active at the international level. Still others are operative at a combination of levels. This year, we put considerable emphasis and effort in pushing these campaigns forward. Women themselves actively participated, voicing their concerns and contributing to plans in committees and with the concerned government officials. Most of them are ongoing and have to be pursued actively each year.

Through these campaigns there is increased mobilization. They are a boost to SEWA's organizing efforts. They also strengthen women's leadership and own workers' organizations. It is a slow and long-term process which leads to overall development of women, their families and ultimately social change. It brings poor women and their concerns into the mainstream of society. It makes them more and more visible.