

**Report on Roundtable of Informal Sector Women Workers
and their Contributions, Innovation towards Strengthen
Indian Agriculture and Climate Action, 11th November 2025, IIC, New Delhi**



The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was founded and registered as a trade union in 1972, and celebrated its 50 year anniversary in April 2022. At the Golden Jubilee celebration SEWA members collectively under leadership of SEWA' founder Shri Elaben Bhatt pledged that our work will ensure that the cleaner sky is right of every living thing on earth and thus embarked upon the cleaner skys campaign with objective to sustain earth for next 50-100 years.

SEWA's journey took on a different kind of momentum, and by July 2023, SEWA members built a plan to tackle climate change in their everyday lives. The initiative compiled the collective thoughts, efforts, and actions undertaken by SEWA members, and they call the initiative SEWA's "Swachh Aakash Building Cleaner Skies" Campaign.

SEWA convenes the National Meeting on Cleaner Skys campaign where the representatives from different states meets on quarterly basis and deliberate on the agendas of action plans, status of implementations, climate actions and its impact, innovative actions, best practices and linkages with government schemes for collective solutions implemented by SEWA in different states on ground.

In November at the beginning of the COP, SEWA convened a Roundtable to bring out the contributions of the informal sector women workers including small and marginal women family farmers in strengthening their trades and India agriculture, taking up climate action, improving biodiversity and that's how improving the food and nutrition security in India. This gives them visibility in climate action and impact to the larger communities.

The sisters from nine states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, UP, Kashmir, Assam, Odissa, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Jharkhand) participated and sharing and deliberations happened in presence of esteemed guests Mr. Praveen Kumar Jhakhad from CIWA -ICAR (Central Institute for Women in Agriculture) and Mr. Jeevan Kumar Jethani from MNRE (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy) who provided their full time whole heartedly and listen to the contribution, challenges

and best practices by participants and addressed with the valuable insights and guidance . The day started with prayer and song celebrating climate action by women.

SEWA's President, Ramilaben Rohit- a small farmer from Anand, welcomed participants from different states and talked about how SEWA's founder Shri Elaben challenged the sisters to think about Climate Change and come up with solution to tackle it.

Jyotiben Macwan – General Secretary of SEWA , who shared the origins of the Swachh Aakash Campaign. She explained that the campaign was launched on SEWA's 50th Anniversary, inspired by Elaben's vision of securing the environment for future generations—not only for humans but for all life forms and how we would like to celebrate SEWA's journey when it turns 100 years. According to her, climate risks is the major risks in the lives and livelihood of sisters. How can sisters take the lead for a clean sky in the next 50 years? According to her, in the next 50 years we have to think differently since a lot of our young members will be joining SEWA, and we need to come up with plans of how we can involve them in this journey. Overall, how do we ensure that food and nutrition is available to our sisters. SEWA launched Swachh Aakash campaign in 2022 with awareness creation as the first step for a cleaner sky.

Reemaben – Director Economic and Rural Development suggested to utilise the presence of esteemed guests from MNRE and ICAR and take guidance on challenges faced by informal sector women workers and what new technologies we have implemented and also what challenges we have faced.

Faridaben founder director Lucknow Mahila SEWA Trust from UP summarised the first day deliberations for information of those who were not present on the first day.

Roundtable Discussions: During the round-table session, informal sector women workers involved in the implementation of the campaign shared their lived experiences, struggles, and achievements from diverse trades and geographies, ranging from urban chawls and rag pickers' centres to bangle-making units, fisher communities, and farmlands. Across states, members described the growing impacts of climate change on their daily lives, particularly the reduction in working hours due to extreme heat, which has significantly reduced the incomes of construction workers, farmers, and street vendors. Alongside economic impacts,



members highlighted increasing physical and mental health concerns, with many children emotionally affected by heightened household stress linked to heat-related discomfort and livelihood insecurities.

Pruthaben, Ahmedabad: Pruthaben shared SEWA work with urban informal sector workers in Ahmedabad city. Through FGDs that SEWA conducted the following challenges faced by members came out- reduction of work hours due to extreme heat, skin diseases, affect on mental health due to decrease in earnings and anxiety and stress, effect on children's health. Based on these findings, SEWA has been implementing solutions like planning of jasud plants whose flowers have medicinal properties, converting urban chawls into green chawls through introduction of biogas, cool roofs, solar fans, etc. Sensor based heat and humidity measurements have been undertaken in the houses of home-based workers, so that impact of heat and humidity can be measured. Efforts are ongoing with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to convert markets into green markets, so that daily wage labourers and migrant workers can take shelter during extreme weather incidences.

Nilzaben, Ladakh: Ladakh as part of clean villages campaign has been creating awareness amongst villagers to reduce plastic bag usage, awareness campaigns in schools, enrolment of sisters in SEWA's climate insurance program and introduction of resilient traditional crops like Buckwheat.

Priyankaben, Maharashtra: In Maharashtra biogas plants for individual members have been very successful. Sisters have been using the slurry of biogas plant for enhancing soil health. Around 8000 sisters have been trained on production of bio fertilizers and 4500 on preparation of IM solutions and vermicompost. Around 48 agri input centres have been set up. 16,000 women have been enrolled till date for SEWA Climate Insurance Program.

Odisha: Odisha shared about the slash and burn cultivation that lot of tribal communities are practicing in Kandahal and Ganjam district. SEWA's efforts has been as to how we can end this practice by providing better alternatives. Similarly, another challenge is depletion of ground water table.

Ferozabad, UP: Shalu ben from UP shared experiences of bangles workers and how the heat from the furnaces have impacted the health of these women. Also, the waste from bangle making industry is polluting the agricultural land and it have an adverse impact on overall soil health and productivity. There is need for solution against these.

Ahmedabad: There has been a significant impact of climate change on agriculture cultivation. SEWA has been introducing bio gas and precision pumps to help members mitigate these challenges.

Rehanaben, SEWA: She raised the issue of 4000 hours training requirement for solar technicians. Its challenging for women members to give so much time because they have to also manage their households. Can this be reduced or a separate module be prepared for women technicians? She also highlighted the challenges for Solar entrepreneurs to find work through vendors since vendors are offering work in very far off places which is impossible for the women to travel everyday to such distances. Also, there is a need to simplify the template for model villages and what new technologies can be incorporated.

Naimishaben, SEWA: In case of green villages, around 10 green technologies has been demonstrated, but in case of bio gas SEWA members are facing a lot of hurdles in purchase of units from vendors. They change their terms and conditions all of a sudden or not able to supply the required units. There is a huge demand for biogas from members with around 2500 units being implemented till date.

There is also demand from new states like Assam.

Meghalaya: In Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya there has been a campaign to reduce plastic usage through awareness generation and providing waste baskets made of bamboo so that villagers can through plastic in these bins.

Alpaben, Ahmedabad: At present the waste pickers in Ahmedabad are sorting three types of plastics in the recycling centres, but there is a need for additional training so that they can sort upto 12 types of plastics.

Sachinbhai, Maharashtra: He shared that there is a huge demand for precision pumps under Kusum Yojana, but farmers must wait almost a year to avail the pumps.

Lalitaben, Anand: She also shared the challenges that women farmers face under Kusum yojana. Due to lack of land titles in their names, small and marginal farmers have been left out of this scheme. They require precision pumps the most since otherwise they are purchasing water from large farmers paying hefty amounts.

Regarding flower pickers, there is a need for hard hat lights so that they find it easier to pick flowers at dawn wearing them.

Kailashben, Rajasthan: Kailashben also highlighted about the challenges faced by Dungarpur team regarding biogas supplies from vendors. She also highlighted that there should be multiple vendors for e-vehicles since single vendors pose difficulties for women in accessing service and spares if they are located very far off. Regarding roof top solar panels, she suggested if there can be provisions for payments in instalments instead of upfront.

Jaisalmer: Due to the terrain and power cuts, there is a huge demand for solar light, fans and pumps.

Parmeshwariben, Ladakh: Access to firewood is a big challenge in Ladakh. As a result, members are using electric heaters which have adverse effect on their health. Is there any alternatives.

Deveshbhai: For just transition, SEWA has been implementing the climate insurance program for its members. Can we think of a Green Transition Loan where in case of crop damage due to climate shocks, farm loans can be either written off for that duration or there is a mechanism for circumvention. This was adoption rate for green technologies can be increased.

Kashmir and Ladakh: These are high radiation zones, so there are a lot of possibilities on introducing solar based technologies.

Heenaben: What we have noticed with SEWA members is that there are huge demand for three production and services- Surya training, Green villages and solar rooftops.

Dr. Pravinbhai, CIWA-ICAR:

Dr. Pravinbhai shared that government has a climate action plan with certain goals for 2050 and 2090. The focus is both on mitigation and adaptation. Women are important in agriculture and the government while planning climate resilience strategies are ensuring that women plays a central role in this. Some of the plans and schemes that both Government and ICAR are focusing on mitigation and adaptation are-

- Promotion of biofortified crops varieties for family nutrition and also promotion of climate resilience varieties like millets

- Provide easy access to tools and machinery for women through setting up Custom Hiring Centre in districts. At present around 10 different types of machines are available for hiring purposes in these centres. Government is also promoting smart agri technologies for climate resilience
- Setting up of seed villages- Promoting seed villages so that women can participate in seed production of local varieties and sell it to the government. Seed production is more lucrative than crop production.
- Promotion of millets through the two-year Millets Mission
- Conservation of water- both groundwater and surface through watershed development and soil conservation practices
- Setting up of climate resilience committees in each district

Jethani, MNRE

Dr Jethani from the Ministry of non-renewable energy gave an update on the challenges that the sisters shared during the roundtable.

Regarding solar roof, besides central subsidies, some state governments provide additional subsidies. Each state who is implementing solar roof tops, should explore such schemes of individual state governments so that installation costs can be reduced. At present there are no instalment schemes and he don't think this will be a feasible alternative.

For those women who can't afford on their own or don't have proper roofs for installation, there are models where 10-12 women can come together and set up a decentralised unit.

He asked SEWA as the national organisation, to create awareness about different schemes to its members so that members can access them. At present there are many schemes of the government whose budget goes unutilised.

In case of Ladakh, where lack of firewood is a challenge during winter months, he asked them to approach National Institute of Solar Energy who have developed a solar dryer. This can be an alternate solution.

Regarding inability of vendors to deliver biogas units in spite of demand, he shared that they will discuss internally with the relevant team and share the members challenges.

There are a number of risk guarantee schemes of the government like mudra loans etc, SEWA can document such schemes and share with its members.

He emphasized the need to increase awareness of emerging renewable energy technologies, address the shortage of local vendors by training SEWA members to become skilled local technicians and micro-entrepreneurs, and motivate women to invest a portion of their income in pension schemes. He also encouraged skill development under national programmes such as Surya Mitra, Jal Mitra, and Vayu Mitra.

Closing Remarks: Jyotiben thanked both the guest speakers and the sisters for sharing their challenges and accomplishments and suggested to both Dr Jethani and Dr Jharkhar about holding a separate meeting with each of them to discuss some of the points that were raised in today's roundtable.

Annexure Policy Recommendations:

1. Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)

A. Solar Skilling Reforms

- Introduce a mid-level Green Energy Training Module (150–200 hrs) that is more practical than RPL but shorter than the 400-hour programme.
- Mandate dual-mode (online + offline) delivery so rural women, migrants, and informal workers can access training.
- Allocate a dedicated budget line for women-led SEWA training centres to run solar skilling and maintenance support.

B. Strengthening Har Ghar Surya Yojana

- Introduce low-capacity solar systems (0.5–1 kW) for rural households, rented homes, and small users with limited space or lower load needs.
- Allow group-based or cooperative-based solar installations for women farmers and artisans.

C. Technology Access for Livelihoods

- Provide subsidies for solar-powered productive assets: handlooms, water pumps, dehydrators, cold storage, and small processing units.
- Ensure long-term contracts with certified local vendors, especially for biogas and solar maintenance, to prevent service gaps.

2. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

A. Model Green Village Framework

- Create a simplified “Green Village” template

B. Biogas Infrastructure Support

- Establish a national vendor partnership framework so women’s groups can easily collaborate with reliable biogas companies.
- Provide repair and maintenance funds to avoid abandoned biogas units in villages.

C. Livelihood recovery fund

- Women Farmers should have access to immediate funds during Climate event like floods, cyclone or heatwave to support food security and continuation of their livelihood.

3. Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW)

A. Support for Women Family Farmers

- Expand access to solar-powered agri-assets such as solar pumps, micro-irrigation systems, and dryers through dedicated women's quotas.
- Recognize informal women farmers as primary agricultural workers for direct scheme entitlements.

B. Sustainable Agriculture

- Integrate solar-energy use and biogas systems into NMSA, RKVY, and PKVY guidelines.
- Provide demonstration grants for low-cost climate-resilient technologies in Green Villages.