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VOLUME #10



**As we step into the next year, we find ourselves reflecting on the journeys of women-led cooperatives.**

For 30 plus years we have seen women corporators from the informal economy breaking traditional boundaries, taking ownership of finances and their decisions, investing time in their cooperatives and collective enterprises to sustain not just themselves but their entire community. ***What happens when these women working in the informal economy come together?***

Through cooperatives, women have demonstrated the power of solidarity and resilience. They create shared platforms to pool resources, access financial linkages, and build sustainable livelihoods.

Presence of strong, supportive ecosystems can nurture them. As a Women Enterprise Support System - we aim to provide these through our six services.

Here is a glimpse of our learnings and resources as we step into the year of cooperatives!

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## HOW DO COOPERATIVES HELP WOMEN WORKERS TRANSITION OUT OF INFORMAL ECONOMY?

At the International Cooperative Alliance's Global Conference, marking the launch of the International Year of Cooperatives 2025, leaders from worker cooperatives shared their journeys.

This session focused on their struggles, successes, and the need for greater visibility to drive their cooperatives forward. It also highlighted the role of the SSE economy in enabling growth. Hear from Dr. Federico Parra, Ms. Poonsap Tulaphan, Ms. Sangita Gamit, Ms. Maria Marta, and Ms. Natalia Zarza, moderated by Simel Esim from the ILO.

[Read insights here](#)



## HOW CAN AGRICULTURE EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF WOMEN FARMERS COLLECTIVES & COOPERATIVES?

Ratilaben, a farmer and board member of the Megha Mandali, along with the Federation team, shared their ideas about what agriculture extension systems can do to be more gender-responsive at a workshop organised by IRRI and CGIAR at the National Institute of Agriculture Extension Management (MANAGE), in Hyderabad.

[Read them here](#)





# SEWA ni Aawaz

**We are happy to introduce a new segment to our podcast series of In Solidarity - called SEWA ni Aawaaz or Voices from SEWA.**

We will be joined by women grassroot leaders heading the various cooperatives and collectives within the SEWA ecosystem - leading thousands of other grassroot women out of informal employment.

In this first episode, we hear from Yasminben, State Health Coordinator of Lok Swasthya SEWA Trust in Gujarat.

She shares her journey of being nurtured into leadership, the importance of an enabling environment for young grassroots women leaders, and her vision for the future of women in the informal economy. Stay tuned as we dive into Yasminben's leadership trajectory.

[Listen here!](#)

**Episode 1**



## SEWA ni AWAAZ

A SEWA COOPERATIVE FEDERATION PODCAST





INFORMAL ECONOMY | WOMEN WORKERS | GRASSROOT LEADERS

STORIES FROM THE INFORMAL ECONOMY WITH

### YASMINBEN

STATE HEALTH COORDINATOR  
LOK SWASTHYA SEWA TRUST, GUJARAT

# Updates

- We along with our sisters from various trade cooperatives (Farming, Childcare, Healthcare) participated in the International Cooperative Alliance's conference held in New Delhi, India for the first time in 130 years. The conference also launched 2025 as the '*Year of Cooperatives*'. Sangitaben Gamit, board member of Megha Indigenous Women Farmers Cooperative in Gujarat, Miraiben Chatterjee - our chairperson and Soniabehn George, National Vice President of SEWA were panelists on various sessions at the conference. 
- To ensure active participation of our cooperatives in the mainstream cooperative narrative, our women run, owned, and managed handicrafts and stationary cooperatives - Abodana and Gitanjali respectively - **designed and produced 3300+ kits** including a shoulder bag, notebook, pen and a calendar for the visitors and guests of the ICA Conference. 
- We had a lovely time hosting Dr. Sarah Alldred from the UK Cooperative College, Anca Voinea from COOP News, Dr. Federico Parra from WIEGO, Natalia Zarra from UTEP, Ms Maria Martha Iglesias from Cooperativa Planeta Verde, Colombia and Dr. Chiyoge B. Sifa- Regional Director from ICA Africa and showcasing the complete SEWA ecosystem to them. You can check their visit through Anca's beautiful video [here](#). 
- As part of extending our Women Enterprise Support System services - we are taking **training of cooperative members across the country**. We held sessions on marketing, sales and others with women groups of Anokha Dhaga in Jharkhand to build their capacities as entrepreneurs. 



# Methods for Action Research with Collectives

Research on informal employment, and worker collective enterprises remains limited. One reason is lack of methods that are contextual to women workers' realities and entrepreneurial journeys.

Our research team at the Federation has been trying to innovate with methods for action research that can unpack some of these realities, while being inclusive and actionable.

## 1 Activity Mapping: Understanding the Work Environment

"I became more aware of the space we inhabit —how even small infrastructural changes can impact our working conditions," shares Subhamaiben, a participant in Urban Design Square's Activity Mapping workshop.

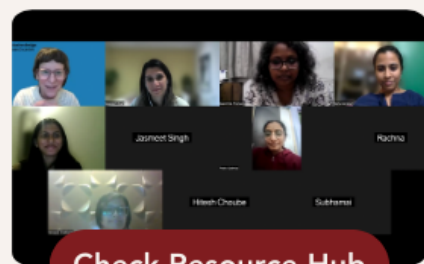
Our team recognized the need to adapt and deepen our understanding of the direct connection between the built environment and its impact on the operations of handicraft cooperatives, particularly those with a majority of home-based workers. We adopted this as a key method in our approach.



## 2 Incorporating Co-Design Principles in Action Research

**How can we ensure grassroots workers are not just participants in research but co-creators of solutions?**

Co-design answers this by actively involving workers in identifying challenges and shaping outcomes. CIFAR's first Solution Network is working with grassroots organizations to identify and address technological barriers faced by women workers through digital literacy training and increased access to technology.



[Check Resource Hub](#)



## News from The Global Cooperative Movement

- International Cooperative Alliance celebrates the launch of the Year of Cooperatives - 2025 - António Guterres, Secretary General, United Nations - also addressed the crucial role of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in light of the upcoming Second World Summit on Social Development.
- CO-OP Dialogue: A bi-annual publication to start conversations around issues that are relevant to cooperatives in the region. You can read the recent Co-op Dialogue [here](#).

## Our Recommendations Corner



Here's a peek at what we're reading, listening, and watching.

We've curated a list of recommendations on Women led change stories to wrap your year on an inspiring note.

[Read Here](#)



## Our Publication

### **Strengthening Collectives of Women's Farmer Interest Groups in Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra: A Summary Report**

Our team conducted an in-depth analysis for the Institute of Regional Analysis (IRA), to understand the needs and aspirations of tribal women farmers in Betul (Madhya Pradesh) and Amravati (Maharashtra). The IRA has an outreach of 14000 women farmers.

The report assesses the maturity of these collectives that have been formed while promoting organic farming techniques in Madhya Pradesh



[Read Policy Brief](#)

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**As the only women's cooperative in agriculture in our community, we want to be seen and heard. We need access to finance and the market.**

Ms. Sangitaben Gamit  
Megha Women Farmers Cooperative



As we mark 32 years as a **Women Enterprise Support System**, our mission remains steadfast: to sustain and strengthen the enabling environment for informal women workers cooperatives and collectives.

Looking ahead to the **International Year of Cooperatives** in 2025, we strengthen our resolve to support women worker-owned and managed collectives towards achieving full employment and self-reliance.

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