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SAHAKARITA VOLUME 7



APRIL 2024

Sahakarita

A SEWA Cooperative Federation Newsletter.



HELLO,

Welcome to Sahakarita – SEWA Cooperative Federation’s digital newsletter. We work as a Women’s Enterprise Support System, promoting and supporting grassroots women’s enterprises. Through this newsletter, we bring to you our work, stories of grassroots women’s collective enterprises, their needs, and their contributions to the economy. The seventh volume focuses on the role of women’s collectives and cooperatives in emphasising and providing social security, as well as work security to women in the informal economy. Through this volume, we highlight work done and progress made by women collectives in improving the standards of living of their members, through social security. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together! If you would like to partner with us or support us, do get in touch. If you find this useful, please share further on social media.



ASHA BEN AJMERI
PRESIDENT AND AAGEWAN
VIMOSEWA, INSURANCE COOPERATIVE

“ I financially support my family. I am able to provide quality education to my children. My voice is heard and my opinion matters in important decisions related to the family. This, to me, is self-reliance at a personal level. Our insurance cooperative, VimoSEWA, works towards self-reliance of our informal women worker members. During difficult times – a death or sickness in the family – the insurance they take supports them financially. They do not have to take loans from money lenders at high rates of interest. What is a better, truer way of self-reliance? ”



In conversation with

ANANNYA BHATTACHARJEE

Anannya Bhattacharjee is a prominent local labour organiser and trade unionist in the northwest region of India. We spoke with her about the major problems informal women workers face across the globe, and the lack of social security measures at their workplaces.

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Enterprise in focus

LOK SWASTHYA HEALTH COOPERATIVE

Healthcare is a critical component of social protection. The activities of Shree Gujarat Mahila Lok Swasthya SEWA Sahakari Mandali Ltd (LSM), a health cooperative, was initiated by SEWA for informal women workers, with the aim of linking work and health security. LSM is a state-level cooperative and provides comprehensive health coverage to almost 2,85,659 women in the state of Gujarat. Over the years, LSM added several activities to its portfolio, including manufacturing Ayurvedic products and running of low-cost medicine shops. In 2005, LSM established the Lok Swasthya SEWA Trust (LSST) to manage non-revenue generating health activities such as health education and promotion. LSM's outlook was informed by the maxim "Our bodies are our only assets".

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On Childcare:

FROM THE ARCHIVES

LOOKING BACK INTO THE HISTORY OF OUR CHILDCARE COOPERATIVES

"We used to work with farmer cooperatives in Kheda where tobacco was widely cultivated. During our visits to these cooperatives, we observed that some women used to bring their young kids along with them to the tobacco farmland. Though it was unsafe, the women workers had no other option. This strong need for social protection, like child care facilities, gave rise to the birth of our Shaishav and Sangini childcare centres.

The formation of the first child care cooperative was in 1986. These centres then became a support system for the women members and their entire family. Women now worked with focus and observed a surge in their income. The older kids, who were responsible for taking care of the younger ones, were now able to focus on their studies. And the children in these centres received not only nutrition-rich food three times a day, but were also given holistic education from the trained members of the cooperatives"

JAYABEN, SENIOR LEADER,
SEWA COOPERATIVE FEDERATION



FROM STICKY FLOORS TO OPEN DOORS: CHILDCARE ACCESS AS A KEY TO DECENT WORK

The "sticky floor," a concept indicative of a higher wage gap between men and women in lower work orders, creates barriers for women, restricting their occupational and social mobility. This blog post looks at the role of childcare in enabling women to access decent work.

[Read Our Blog.](#)

Updates



Miraiben Chatterjee, Chairperson, SEWA Cooperative Federation participated in a panel called The Number Game at the “We Lead” Lounge during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting. The lounge brought forth the message of Global Prosperity powered by women and the role of India therein.

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Our team participated in a 5-day climate change training program for grassroots organisations, developed by Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation and supported by Intellectap on various aspects of the climate and energy transition in India.

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A 24- person delegation of youth from North America and Europe had an exposure visit to SEWA Cooperative Federation in February. They explored three of our member cooperatives – Lok Swasthya Mandali, SEWA Sangini and SEWA Abodana. This was as part of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee’s (JDC) ‘Entwine’ programme.



Our research team contributed to a GADN briefing, which asserts that quality care is a public good, necessitating government responsibility.

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Capacity-building • Business Development • Policy Action



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