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Sahakarita

A SEWA Cooperative Federation Newsletter.

THEME: COOPERATIVES & DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

VOLUME #8



Capacity Building • Business Development • Policy Action



Working with informal women workers' collectives to help them achieve full employment and self-reliance, since 1992.

In the eighth edition of Sahakarita, we highlight a key building block of cooperatives: democratic participation. Cooperatives are democratically-run enterprises where the workers are owners (share holders), managers and decision-makers; ensuring collective decision-making over every aspect of the collective's functioning. This model enables women to take ownership of their trade, and participate fully in the mainstream economy.

Ensuring true democracy requires sound governance laws, formalised organisational models, and robust management practices. These processes can offer women recognition, representation, and voice. To achieve this, women workers' capacities need to be built to participate in and leverage these processes. A major challenge in maintaining a democratic structure within cooperatives is the selection of board representatives, across diverse geographies and communities.

In this volume, we delve into the intricacies of cooperative elections and on how **SCF**# supports its members in navigating these democratic processes. We'll also highlight the significant role of cooperative principles in empowering women workers and how these structures make them the true owners of their trade.

SCF: SEWA Cooperative Federation

A GUIDE TO ELECTIONS IN COOPERATIVES

The process of registration and election in cooperatives is fundamental to upholding democracy within these organisations, ensuring accountability and representation of all members.



Our latest blog
explores all these
processes.

[Read Our Blog](#)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

AGM* AT VANALAXMI TREE GROWER'S COOPERATIVE GANESHPURA

In 1986, **SEWA**# started organising landless agricultural workers in Gujarat's Mehsana district into a cooperative called the Vanalaxmi Women Tree Grower's Cooperative, after obtaining a 10-acre plot from the local village council on a 30 year lease. It took **SEWA** village members over 3 years (1986-1989) to clear the land, till it and make it arable.

Today, the Vanalaxmi Cooperative stands as a model for the entire district of how the landless rural poor can successfully practise collective agriculture. The success of this initiative has led **SEWA** to maintain a needs-based and demand-driven approach in rural areas, where livelihood activities are structured according to local needs and regional characteristics.



*AGM: Annual General Meeting | # SEWA: Self Employed Women's Association

SEWA RECOMMENDS

A peek at what we're reading, watching, and listening.



BOOK TO READ

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING BY NAOMI KLEIN

This is a compelling critique of capitalism's role in climate change, urging systemic reforms to address environmental crises. It's a call to action for a global movement to confront and transform our economic systems for a sustainable future.



FILM TO WATCH

MANTHAN, AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE

Screened at Cannes this year, Shyam Benegal's *Manthan* is an inspiring portrayal of the rise the dairy cooperative in Gujarat. The film highlights the power of collective action and cooperative principles in transforming rural livelihoods and communities.



ARTICLE TO READ

MIRAI CHATTERJEE'S INTERVIEW TO CICOPA *

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, CICOPA interviewed Mirai Chatterjee, to talk about how worker cooperatives empower women in society drawing from the 30 plus years journey of **SEWA** Cooperative Federation.

[Read More](#)

*CICOPA: International Organisation of Cooperatives in Industry and Services



FOLLOW THE **IN SOLIDARITY** PODCAST ON SPOTIFY



In conversation with **BHANUPRIYA RAO**

In this episode, set against the backdrop of the country's elections, we explore how platforms like BehanBox act as inclusive media spaces and amplify female participation in national issues by mainstreaming gender journalism.

[Listen on Spotify](#)

In conversation with **DR. ASHWINI DESHPANDE**

Recent data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey, reveals a concerning trend. As India's female labour force participation rate continues to remain alarmingly low why aren't women participating in paid work? Or are we not counting them adequately?

[Listen on Spotify](#)



QUARTERLY UPDATES



News from India's Cooperative Movement

- **Govt launches the National Cooperative Database:** National Cooperative Database, a centralised digital repository aimed at bolstering the cooperative sector in India. This database includes information about approximately 8 lakh registered cooperative societies across the country, impacting over 30 crore individuals.

- **NCUI Launches Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme:** The National Centre for Cooperative Education (NCCE), a division of the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) has launched a training program on the "Formation of Cooperative Societies" to equip youth with the skills needed to establish and manage cooperative societies.
- **SCF Team Recommends Policies to the Ministry of Cooperation:** Despite India having 8,54,300 cooperatives, only 2.5% are owned and managed by women, highlighting the need to promote women's cooperatives to formalise the informal economy. To address this, our team recommended policies to the Ministry of Cooperation aimed at boosting women-owned cooperatives, contributing to local and national economic development.

*ICA: International Cooperative Alliance | # CIFAR: Canadian Institute for Advanced Research

OUR PUBLICATION



The **UNDF**# 2019–2028 Global Action Plan calls for rural communication services (RCS) to be part of family farming policies and programmes and to be delivered in a sustained and inclusive manner. Based on studies of **SCF**'s digital inclusion efforts with Megha Farmers' Co-op and **SEWA** Lilotri, [this report](#) by **FAO*** identifies communication as a key factor and an asset in the rural transformations currently affecting family farming and food systems.

[All SCF Publications](#)



Unions and cooperatives are the only two forms of organisations which are democratic. After India's freedom, we have won democratic governance, but we have remained weak on the economic front. So democracy and the collective force of a cooperative is very critical for us, for our ideology, for SEWA's strategy – which we call joint action of unions and cooperatives.



-ELABEN BHATT, FOUNDER SEWA

*FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization | # UNDF: United Nations Decade of Family Farming



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