Interventions by the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad, India

By Janhavi Dave and Kabir Arora

Introduction

Between 2009 and 2014, as part of the Inclusive Cities project, the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) initiated several interventions in Ahmedabad, India, to help its members fulfill some of their basic needs. Specifically, SEWA’s interventions included working with its street vendor members to achieve job security and with its home-based worker members to achieve income security and social protection members. For the benefit of all its members, SEWA also addressed childcare and literacy. This case study describes these four interventions, emphasizing the strategies used, achievements and outcomes, critical success factors, and lessons learned with the intention of helping other organizations replicate the successes of the interventions in their own initiatives.

There are up to 170,000 street vendors in Ahmedabad, many of whom vend in the 164 natural markets spread across the city. 1.9 million women working in both urban and rural regions of 13 Indian states.

SEWA members include:

- **hawkers and vendors**, who sell a range of products including vegetables, fruit, and used clothing from baskets, push carts, or small shops;
- **home-based producers**, who stitch garments, make patch-work quilts, roll hand-made cigarettes (bidi) or incense sticks (agarbatti), prepare snack foods, recycle scrap metal, process agricultural products, produce pottery, or make craft items in or around their homes;
- **labourers and service providers**, who sell their labour (as cart-pullers, head-loaders, or construction workers), or who sell services such as waste picking, laundry services, or domestic services; and
- **rural producers** such as small farmers, milk producers, shepherds and cattle rearers, salt farmers, or gum collectors (Chen et al. 2006).

Membership-Based Organization

SEWA is a trade union of poor women working in the informal economy in India. It was registered in 1972 under the Trade Union Act of India (1926) and began its work at that time in Ahmedabad, a city in the state of Gujarat in western India. SEWA has since expanded its membership to over 1.9 million women working in both urban and rural regions of 13 Indian states.

1 The Inclusive Cities project (2008-2013) addressed urban poverty by supporting and building the capacity of MBOs of the working poor. Visit www.inclusivecities.org for more information.
In the early years of its operations, SEWA realized that its members’ poverty was due to a complex set of issues that included lack of access to finance, shelter, healthcare, and education for themselves and their children. To help address these issues, over the years SEWA initiated numerous membership-based organizations (MBOs), all catering to the needs of its membership: the SEWA Bank creates access to finance; SEWA Social Security provides healthcare, childcare, and insurance services; the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust provides access to housing, water, and sanitation facilities; and the SEWA Federation of Cooperatives organizes and supports the cooperatives of its members. SEWA Bharat is the federation of SEWAs across India. In this way, SEWA acts as an umbrella for multiple organizations—all with a common goal and membership.

City Context

Ahmedabad is the second largest industrial centre in Western India with a population of 5.6 million people. It is also an industrial base for chemicals, textiles, pharmaceuticals, drugs, and automobiles. In 2010, the GDP of Ahmedabad was estimated to be US $160 billion. Despite the city’s robust economy, a large portion of the population lives in poverty. Over 78 per cent of workers make their living in the informal economy as self-employed or casual labourers. While the city has won recognition for various urban infrastructure projects, such as the Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) and the Riverfront Project, informal economy workers widely feel the adverse effects of these projects.

Street Vendors and Home-Based Workers in Ahmedabad

The 2009 Street Vendor Policy estimated that approximately two per cent of an Indian city’s population is street vendors. According to this estimate, there are approximately 127,045 street vendors in Ahmedabad, but other estimates put the number at around 170,000. There are 164 natural markets across Ahmedabad, with a high concentration of markets in the old part of the city.²

Home-based workers, although largely invisible in India, represent a significant share of urban employment. In 2011-2012, they accounted for 14 per cent of total urban employment and 32 per cent of women’s urban employment (Chen and Raveendran 2014). India’s 1999-2000 National Survey estimated that of the 25 million home-based workers in India, 70 per cent are women. In Ahmedabad, SEWA has a membership of approximately 108,000 home-based workers.

Children in Ahmedabad

The 2011 Census reported that the almost 600,000 children lived in Ahmedabad, of which almost 300,000 were boys and just over 270,000 were girls. In order to assist working parents, the Integrated Child Development Services Municipal Corporation, in collaboration with different non-government organizations, runs around 1,845 Aanganwadis (childcare centres), which are spread all over the city. Each Aanganwadi serves around 30 children, which means that roughly 55,350 children are being served through these centres. Although the Municipal Corporation is responsible for the delivery of services through these centres, it has brought in non-government organizations to take over these same centres in order to decentralize the management.

Literacy in Ahmedabad

According to 2011’s provisional Census reports, the population of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (the city proper) is close to 5.6 million people. Of these, just over 4.4 million people are literate (almost 2.5 million men and just over 2 million women), leaving 1.2 million people classified as illiterate. The same Census asserts that female literacy is likely lower because many parents do not allow their female children to go to school. Instead, they are married off young (Govt. of India 2011). And, even if girls remain at home, they often have to take care of their younger siblings while the boys go to school. They also stay home to perform domestic chores and to help in income generating activities. In terms of women, many were enrolled in state schools 20-30 years ago, but these had very low accountability and supervision.

Literacy in Ahmedabad

- Total Population: 5,570,585
- Male Population: 2,935,869
- Female Population: 2,634,716
- Total Literates: 4,464,303
- Average Literacy Rate: 89.62%
- Male Literacy Rate: 93.96%
- Female Literacy Rate: 84.81%
Worker Overview

According to the 2014 Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, a “street vendor” is defined as “a person engaged in the vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in a street, lane, side walk, footpath, pavement, public park or any other public place or private area, from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place and includes hawker, peddler, squatter and all other synonymous terms which may be local or region specific”. Street vending not only provides self-employment option to the poor in urban areas, but also provides convenient and affordable service to the urban population. Due to the nature of street vending—easy entry to and exit from the activity, flexible working hours and low initial capital—there are more women than men in this profession.

In 2013, SEWA organized 85,320 women street vendors across 107 markets in Ahmedabad. The street vendor members of SEWA work between 4 and 10 hours a day and earn anywhere between INR 70 and 500 per day (US $1 and $8). Most of these women are primary contributors to the household income, with street vending being their primary source of income. They are between 18 and 60 years of age, though over 68 per cent of them are between 30 and 50 years old. Over 86 per cent are stationary vendors while the rest are mobile vendors. But even the stationary vendors have to shift their vending space from time to time.

Legal and Policy Framework

The tables below outline keys aspects of laws and policies that restrict and support street vendors and/or street vending in India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laws and Policies Restricting Street Vendors and/or Street Vending</th>
<th>Nature of restriction against street vendors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Indian Penal Code, 1860: Section 283: Danger or obstruction in public way or line of navigation</td>
<td>Allows for a fine issued to anyone who causes danger, obstruction, or injury in a public way.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2. The Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporation Act, 1949 | • Empowers municipal authorities to acquire premises for the purpose of street improvement, such as widening or expanding, or building a new street.  
• Prohibits the erection of any structure or stall on the streets that obstructs the passage of the public or impedes the working of a drain or open channel. Empowers the Municipal Commissioner to remove the structure and fine the offender.  
• Allows the removal of permanent or temporary structures in streets and goods being hawked or sold in public places.  
• Places responsibility on the Commissioner for the provision and maintenance of new municipal markets. It is lawful for the commissioner to prohibit within a distance of 50 yards the sale of commodities sold within the market.  
• Empowers the Commissioner to approve and license private markets and restrict sales from unlicensed markets. The Commissioner has to ensure that all traders in municipal markets are licensed.  
• Establishes the need to procure licences from the Municipal Commissioner for carrying out hawking of wares in any public place and allows confiscation of goods without prior notice in case of failure to comply.  
• Any person living in the city can register complaints about a nuisance in the city, and the Commissioner has the powers to prevent such nuisance. |
| 3. Bombay Police Act, 1951 | • Describes the duty of a Police Officer to regulate and control traffic on the streets, prevent obstruction, keep order in the street and other public places, and regulate access to such places to prevent overcrowding.  
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Conversion Rate: INR 60 = US $1

Stationary vendors refers to street vendors who carry out vending activities on a regular basis at a specific location.

Mobile vendors refers to street vendors who carry out vending activities in designated areas by moving from one place to another.
Laws and Policies Supporting Street Vendors and/or Street Vending

<table>
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<th>Laws</th>
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</table>
| 1. Fundamental Rights | • The Fundamental Rights are the non-negotiable, basic principles of the functioning of the Indian State. All other laws have to abide by the articles of the Fundamental Rights.  
  • Article 14: Equality before Law  
  • Article 19 (1) (g): Protection of certain rights regarding freedom to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business  
  • Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty  
  • Articles 32 & 226: These Articles have been the basis for filing Public Interest Litigations (PIL) and Writ Petition in the Supreme Court and High Court in matters of public interest and non-implementation of laws. |
| 2. Directive Principles and State Policy | • Article 38: The State must secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of the people.  
  • Article 39: The State is expected to direct its policies so that all its citizens may have adequate means of livelihood, ownership, and control over material resources and also to ensure those resources are distributed for common good so that economic systems will not lead to concentration of wealth.  
  • Article 41: The right to work, to education, and to public assistance in certain cases. |
| 3. Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act, 1976 | • Chapter V Section 40: Deals with the reservation of land within a town planning scheme (TPS) for the purposes of roads, open spaces, gardens, recreational activities, etc.  
  • Chapter V Section 47: States that any person affected by the planning scheme can submit his/her objections regarding the scheme to the appropriate authority. It also casts duty on the appropriate authority to consider the objections before submitting the scheme to the government. |
### Laws and Policies Supporting Street Vendors and/or Street Vending (cont’d)

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| **4. National Policy for Urban Street Vendors, 2004** | For the first time, a policy was formulated for street vendors. Some of its salient features include that:  
- Street vending is to be an integral and legitimate part of urban retail trade;  
- Vending zones be demarcated in spatial planning norms;  
- A Town Vending Committee (TVC)/Ward Vending Committee be created to make decisions on vending zones with representation from street vendor leaders;  
- Space to vend be designated for 2 to 2.5% of the city's population;  
- Basic services be provided to street markets;  
- Registration be conducted and identity cards be provided to street vendors;  
- No street vendors be evicted and that relocation be accompanied with a minimum of 30 days notice, with affected vendors involved in the rehabilitation plan;  
- Indian Penal Code 1860 and Bombay Police Act 1951 be amended by the Central and State Government to exempt street vendors from restricting laws;  
- Training for technical and business skills upgrading be provided;  
- Promotion of street vendor organizations be provided; and,  
- Access to credit, insurance for health facilities, maternity benefits, old age pension, and childcare facilities be provided. |
| **5. National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009** | The 2004 National Policy for Urban Street Vendors was refined in 2009. Vending zones were demarcated into restricted free vending zones, restricted vending zones, and no vending zones. This policy was widely circulated and continuous dialogues were held with the State Government to implement the policy. |
| **6. Street Vendor Scheme, Ahmedabad, 2010** | In 2006, SEWA filed a PIL on behalf of the street vendors of Ahmedabad requesting the implementation of the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors, 2004. Under a Special Civil Application, the High Court of Gujarat ordered the AMC to develop a draft scheme in March 2009. The Street Vendor Scheme, 2010, included the salient features of the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009, like the formation of a TVC with representation from street vendors, demarcation of vending zones, bio metric survey identifying street vendors, etc. |
| **7. The Street Vendor (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014** | Through this Act, the law will protect the livelihoods of street vendors. Some of the salient features of the Act are:  
- Every five years, the local authority, in consultation with the TVC, will prepare a plan to promote street vending;  
- A TVC will be formed with 40% representation from street vendor associations. It will conduct surveys to identify street vendors, provide certificates for vending, understand the holding capacity of the street markets, allot shifts for vending (wherever necessary), and plan for new markets along with the affected street vendors;  
- Identity cards and certificates to vend will be provided to all street vendors covered under the survey, with a cap of 2.5% of the city's population. New, post-survey entrants could be provided vending certificates subject to the holding capacity of the vending zone;  
- The Act prevents harassment by the Police and the local authority if street vendors are vending in accordance with the terms and conditions and certificate prescribed under the Act;  
- If the street vendors fail to vacate the space specified in the certificate, their goods could be seized, but a list of seized goods will be prepared and provided to the street vendors. While perishable goods will have to returned on the same day, non-perishable goods will have to released within two working days; |
The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act

Prior to 2014, Indian laws did not directly restrict street vending as a trade, but they prohibited the use of land for street vending. After a long struggle by SEWA, the National Alliance of Street Vendors in India (NASVI), and other street vendor organizations, The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act was passed in March 2014. For the first time, street vendors attained an Act to protect their right to work in urban India. Though the long-term implications of the Act have yet to be seen, street vendors and their organizations across the nation have received the Act well. Shantaben Parmar, a street vendor and SEWA leader, made the following statement regarding Act:

“I have been with SEWA for over 20 years. Since then we had been demanding for a policy for street vendors. The policy came and the government in Ahmedabad was not interested in implementing it. And then we decided we wanted a law, which will protect us. Now, after a long struggle, we have a law. The law will validate our existence—we will now be ‘legal’. We will be represented on the Town Vending Committee and make major decisions regarding all matters affecting street vendors. The Act has been a great victory for us. The law will make us organized as many street vendors as possible and make aware of their rights and the law and protect our livelihood.”

Situation Prior to Intervention

Some of the common issues faced by street vendors in Ahmedabad are:

1. **Displacement and rehabilitation:** To address the challenges brought on by rapid urbanization, in 2005 the Government of India initiated the country-wide Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM). The mission’s main foci were infrastructure development and the provision of basic services for the urban poor. As a part of infrastructure development, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) undertook initiatives such as the Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS), the River-Front Project, road widening, and the construction of flyovers. The AMC was efficient in implementing these projects and even won multiple awards for these initiatives. However, these initiatives displaced several street vendors from their places of work and, in some cases, even from their homes. According to a survey conducted by SEWA, the BRTS project displaced around 5,000 street vendors from their workplaces without any rehabilitation plan. Most of these street vendors had been vending in the same space for over 15 years. In a few cases, street vendors were provided alternate sites to vend, but these were on the outskirts of the city with no customer footfall. The displacement and largely inadequate rehabilitation led to a decrease in income for all affected street vendors and further over-crowded the existing street markets, creating friction between street vendors.

2. **Unfavourable attitude of AMC and city police:** The AMC and Ahmedabad city police generally view street vendors as symbols of poverty and nuisances creating traffic jams and, thereby, pollution in the busiest part of the city. This attitude prevails despite the fact that all street markets in Ahmedabad are natural markets that have developed over the years on the principle of demand and supply. The areas with the highest customer footfall are busy places—outside transportation terminals, places of worship, tourist spots, parks, etc.—that are naturally prone to traffic jams. In any case, the AMC, along with the city police, have historically penalized street vendors by either evicting them, confiscating their goods, beating them up, or locking them in jail. Until recently, there were no laws protecting street vendors, who were left at the mercy of the AMC and police.

3. **Licences:** According to the 1949 Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporation Act, Sections 337 and 376, the AMC is expected to provide licences to street vendors. Along with their application to the Estate Department within the AMC, street vendors must provide identity proofs, including ration cards, voter identity cards, and proof of address. Food vendors must also have approval...
from the Health Department within the AMC. The application procedure is complex and a number of street vendors don’t have all the identity proofs required. The AMC is also reluctant to provide licences—only a handful of SEWA members have received licences. Yet without a licence, street vendors could be charged with engaging in illegal activity. Further, the lack of a legal identity as workers has made street vendors vulnerable to harassment and illegal payments in the form of bribes.

4. **Irregular income:** Due to Ahmedabad’s multiple urban development projects, street vendors are constantly moved from their vending places or are restricted to vending in certain areas. While some vendors can work at alternate sites, many vendors do not have access to alternate sites and are left without work. In 2010, 2,500 SEWA street vendor members reported a work reduction of at least 10 days a month and an income reduction of 40 per cent. This kind of irregular income further adds to the insecurity and vulnerability of the street vendors.

5. **Illegal payments, harassment, and confiscation of goods:** Street vendors work very hard, provide a valuable service to the city, and make an honest living, yet they don’t have entitlement to the land from which they vend. Under various Indian laws, then, their vending activity is considered “illegal”. Consequently, they are at the mercy of the AMC and city police, and harassment from these authorities is common. In many cases, city police have confiscated goods worth INR 500 to INR 2,500 (US $8 to US $42). Often, the goods are never returned and, even if they are, perishable goods, like vegetables and fruits, are worthless. Street vendors are also often obliged to make illegal payments to the authorities in the range of INR 20 to INR 100 (US $0.33 to US $1.6) per day, but many street vendors will not openly report having to pay these bribes.

6. **Lack of inclusion in city development plans:** As a part of JnNURM, all of the cities included in the mission were expected to develop City Development Plans (CDP) that described the current state of the city and included plans for the next 10 years on roads and transportation, environmental services, urban governance, municipal finance, and overall vision, etc. A number of these plans depended upon the allocation/earmarking of the land. While there were some plans for housing for the poor, there was no mention of earmarking land for street vendors. In fact, some plans were overlaid on the existing street vending sites. So, not only were the existing street vending sites contested, but the future ensured that these vending sites would be converted for an alternate purpose.

7. **Lack of representation on decision-making body:** Until 2012, street vendors could only take their concerns to the city police or the AMC, with the AMC being the final decision maker. However, the AMC lacked an understanding of street vendor issues and was not interested in learning about them, let alone solving them. Street vendors had no representation in any forum, formal or informal. They were not consulted even in cases of displacement or rehabilitation. As a result, street vendors continued to face harassment, loss of income, and space to vend, which increased the friction between the AMC and/or the city police and street vendors. In many cases, the friction led to violence.

8. **Lack of social security:** Due to SEWA’s advocacy work, the Gujarat Unorganized Workers’ Welfare Board (GUWWB) was set up in Ahmedabad in 2007. The GUWWB covers nine occupations, including street vending. It provides identity cards, medical aid of INR 1,200 (US $20) per hospitalization, health check-up, toolkits, and skills training to the workers who register with them. However, the GUWWB is a non-statutory board and is dependent on the will of the Government for its funding, making the functioning of the board irregular and ad hoc. The workers find the registration process complex and time consuming. Therefore, SEWA helps the workers to fill out forms and ensures that the workers receive the benefits. From 2007 to 2011, a total of INR 25.6 million (US $441,667) was spent on the registered workers, amounting to INR 476.50 (US $8) per worker. Despite the good intent, the social security services provided by
the Government in Ahmedabad are insufficient, irregular, and have poor outreach.

9. **Lack of basic services**: Street markets lack basic services like drinking water, toilets, drainage, lights, and solid waste collection despite the fact that many people use the markets to obtain goods and services. The lack of basic services in street markets has led to health issues and subsequent reduced working hours, especially for women street vendors. Street vendors must also pay additional costs for procuring drinking water, petromax lights, and solid waste collection. They also face fines or eviction if the market is left dirty.

10. **Occupational health hazards**: Street vendors in Ahmedabad work in extreme weather conditions for long hours without access to toilets, drinking water, or adequate sanitation. Because of this, street vendors, especially women street vendors, face multiple health issues. Members of SEWA have reported frequent back pain, headaches, neck pain, knee problems, dehydration, diarrhoea, vomiting, and urinary tract infections.

11. **Street vending unfavourable for new (women) entrants**: Street vending was once a lucrative work option for poor women due to the low investment needed upfront, the flexible working hours, and the moderate profits earned on a daily basis. But, due to fights over vending spaces, confiscation of goods by the city police, occupational health hazards, and excessive competition, younger women are being pushed out of the street vending profession. The daughters and granddaughters of SEWA’s street vendor members are inclined towards alternate work options that will provide them with a clean and secure workspace. A number of new entrants have procured skills training provided by SEWA and are working as home-based workers or as contractual office support staff. They still work in the informal economy, but the nature of their work has changed.

**Model of Intervention or Theory of Change**

A number of countervailing forces tend to impact street vendors simultaneously, like laws restricting street vending, the apathetic attitude of the urban local government and the city police, and large scale government urban programmes and missions displacing street vendors. To deal with these issues concurrently, SEWA adopted an integrated approach where advocacy work was accompanied by development activities like capacity building, government linkages, and access to finance. The starting point of all the activities was organizing street vendor members who further worked towards increasing representation on formal decision making bodies, accessing basic services and social security, and finding local solutions to issues.

**Intervention: Details of Strategies**

Between 2009 and 2013, SEWA worked with Ahmedabad’s street vendors to achieve these interventions:

1. **Organizing**: Organizing is key to all SEWA’s activities. In 2013, SEWA organized 80,320 street vendors in Ahmedabad, which represents a 41 per cent increase in street vendor membership from the start of the Inclusive Cities project in 2008. SEWA generally takes the approach of organizing vendors at their workspaces. One leader represents every 200 SEWA members. These leaders form the Trade Committee. In 2013, there were 402 elected leaders in Ahmedabad’s Trade Committee. These leaders met once a month to discuss the issues faced by street vendors in the city’s markets. Over the length of the Inclusive Cities project (2008-2013), some of the major issues discussed in Trade Committee meet-

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**Structure of SEWA**

- Executive Committee
- Trade Committee
- Members
ings included vendor displacement due to road widening, the BRTS project, the declaration of Bhadra Fort as a heritage site, irregular work, harassment and confiscation of goods by city police, lack of basic services, occupational health issues, and lack of interest from the younger generation to join the vocation. Because most of these issues were local in nature, the Trade Committee was able to create an action plan to deal with them. If the Trade Committee was unable to find a solution, then the issue was taken up to SEWA's Executive Committee. There were 25 elected members on the Executive Committee who met once a month. Two of the 25 executive committee members were street vendors. Over the course of the Inclusive Cities project, the Executive Committee discussed issues that needed to be addressed by the Town Vending Committee, the non-implementation of the National Policy for Street Vendors, and the need for a law to protect the rights of street vendors. In 2013 specifically, SEWA, which organizes around campaigns decided upon by the trade committee members, campaigned to increase membership, implement the 2009 National Policy for Street Vendors, demand a National Law for Street Vendors, ensure livelihoods through schematic plans, develop linkages with the GUWWB, build the capacity of the market committees, and reduce fines and confiscations of goods.

2. Development of Market Committees: SEWA organized Market Committees for 68 street markets in Ahmedabad. A Market Committee is an elected body for the respective market and consists of 7, 9, or 11 members. During the project period, the Market Committees comprised both SEWA members and other market leaders. Each Market Committee was responsible for the overall management of that market (e.g., easy flow of traffic from in and around the market, fair and systematic allocation of space for all vendors, cleanliness of the market, dispute resolution among street vendors, and negotiations with the city police and local authorities). These Market Committees were successful in solving internal issues and in maintaining the market’s upkeep.

3. Relocation of street markets: When the AMC declared eight main roads as an ideal transportation route through the city, the route underwent road widening and all street vendors were evicted from these roads. SEWA conducted a survey analyzing the number of natural markets on this route and the number of street vendors affected. Sixteen natural markets were on this route, and 5,143 street vendors were affected by the eviction. It also identified an alternate space for street vending in close proximity to the existing natural markets. Due to SEWA's consistent advocacy efforts, the AMC declared that the street vendors selling essential items like vegetables, fruits, etc., would be allowed on ancillary roads. Street vendors in the Hatkeswar and Mansi Tower natural markets, for example, who had been vending on the same site for over 25 years, were shifted to the ancillary roads. However, Resident Welfare Associations in the areas complained that the street vendors blocked traffic and walking space, and the street vendors were evicted for a second time. SEWA, along with the affected street vendors, then identified alternate vending sites in close proximity and provided the AMC with a rehabilitation plan. After continued negotiations with the AMC, the Hatkeswar and Mansi Tower markets were rehabilitated. SEWA organized market committees for these two markets and vending space was designed. Cumulatively, a total of 500 street vendors were rehabilitated in the two markets. Efforts to rehabilitate other evicted street vendors are ongoing.

4. Schematic plan for Jamalpur market: The 35-year-old Jamalpur natural market is located in Ahmedabad's central hub on the periphery of the APMC wholesale vegetable market. At Jamalpur’s inception in 1975, there were seven street vendors outside the APMC market; now there are 726 street vendors who work in three shifts between 4 a.m. and 10 p.m. The street vendors sell vegetables, fruits, food grains, old clothes, plastic and paper bags, sacks, tea, and drinking water. They buy their goods from the APMC market and sell them to other street vendors, restaurants and hotel owners, farmers, and household customers. But the market has faced many challenges. It tends to be surrounded by traffic jams created by several factors: vehicular traffic (trucks, temps, auto rickshaws, and pedal rickshaws); the loading and unloading of goods; the lack of parking space; street vendors encroaching; and the close proximity of the state transport bus stand. This congestion has been a continual source of friction over the years, and because of it, and of what the AMC assessed as unhygienic market conditions, street vendors had been constantly harassed and were evicted in 2004 when an overpass was built. The AMC wanted to establish a market in a river basin, but the site was not appropriate for street vending so vendors returned to the Jamalpur market. The street vendor population continued to grow until, once again, congestion became an issue. This led to constant friction between street vendors and the local authorities. So, in 2009, SEWA organized a seven-member Market Committee for Jamalpur and supported it in building a schematic plan. To form the plan, the Market Committee first conducted a survey identifying the

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street vendors who worked shifts, when and why traffic bottlenecked, and an assessment on the support services needed to keep the market clean. The schematic plan was created on the basis of this survey, with participation from market vendors, and was presented to the Municipal Commissioner and the Deputy Municipal Commissioner of the AMC. AMC’s suggestions were then incorporated into the plan. Important features of the plan include the allotment of vending space and the creation of parking space. Significantly, the plan also created a platform for street vendors to work in participation with the AMC, end harassment, and ensure they could continue to earn their livelihoods.

5. **Advocacy:** In 1982, SEWA filed its first case at the Supreme Court of India, which sought to protect the right to vend for 327 street vendors who had been removed from the almost the 40-year-old Manek Chowk market. After two years of litigation, SEWA won the case, and the market was reinstated. This success encouraged SEWA, and in 1988, Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, presented a resolution to the upper house of Parliament that demanded a national policy for street vendors. The upper house supported the resolution, but the resolution lacked further political support and didn’t move further. But SEWA did not give up, and in 1998, it helped form the National Street Vendors Association of India (NASVI) as a way of organizing street vendors across the nation in demand for a street vendor policy. In 2001, the national Ministry of Urban Development invited SEWA to form a task force to formulate a street vendor policy. After consultation from multiple stakeholders, the first National Policy on Urban Street Vendors was created in 2004 (and was further refined in 2009). Yet the 2004 policy was never implemented at the city level, so, in 2006, SEWA filed a PIL at the High Court of Gujarat with the main objective of implementation. After a long struggle, in August 2010, the High Court ordered the AMC to finalize a draft scheme for street vendors and to implement it within a period of six months. In 2010, the Street Vendors’ Scheme, Ahmedabad, ensured a Town Vending Committee (TVC) was formed and that it had representatives from street vendor unions.

At the same time, the Scheme demarcated vending zones into green, amber, and red, thereby restricting street vending in many of Ahmedabad’s natural markets. Because, as SEWA observed, implementation of the Scheme would adversely affect 129 out of Ahmedabad’s 164 natural markets, it lobbied for a national law protecting street vendors’ rights alongside NASVI and other street vendor organizations. This coordinated and long-term effort resulted in the passage of the historic Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act in 2014.

6. **Government linkages:** The Gujarat Unorganized Worker’s Welfare Board (GUWWB) was set-up in Ahmedabad 2007. SEWA assisted in the GUWWB’s creation by ensuring that at least nine informal economy trades were included and by offering figures for the minimum welfare needs of informal economy workers. Over time, it was clear that due to the complex and time-consuming processes of filling out forms and accessing benefits, many workers were not registering with the GUWWB. In response, SEWA took up an aggregator’s role by linking informal economy workers with the GUWWB. SEWA helped its members and other informal economy workers in Ahmedabad to fill out forms, submit them to the GUWWB, and thereafter follow up on workers’ receipt of the benefits. Since the formation of GUWWB, a total of 51,032 SEWA members have been registered, of which 12,372 are street vendors. The chart below lists some of the benefits received by street vendors from the GUWWB between 2009 and 2013:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Number of Street Vendors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration with GUWWB</td>
<td>9,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Cards</td>
<td>9,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool Kits</td>
<td>1,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Benefits (worth INR103,726 or US $1,729)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Upgrading Training</td>
<td>2,268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Access to finance:** Access to savings and loans has been one of the primary needs of SEWA’s members since its inception. Street vendors, in particular, earn on a daily basis and need a place to save their earnings. At the same time, they need loans for establishing and expanding their business, but they are unable to leave their work to go to the bank. To fill this need, SEWA Bank was formed in Ahmedabad in 1974. It employs Saathis (grassroots bank agents) who collect savings and loan installments from street vendors in markets on a daily basis. Over the course of the Inclusive Cities project period, street vendors saved INR 50 to INR 100 (US $0.83 to US $1.6) on a daily basis. A total of 10,500 street vendors accessed the savings facility provided by SEWA Bank, and 3,552 street vendors accessed loans with an average loan size of INR 84,660 (US $1,411).

8. **Capacity building:** To ensure that street vendors are empowered to build their own membership-based organizations (like market committees), make participatory decisions, negotiate with the local authorities, and operate efficiently while working, SEWA, SEWA Academy, and SEWA Bank conduct training sessions on an ongoing basis. From 2009 to 2013, 1,250 street vendors were trained in leadership, member education, subscription, business counseling, and financial management.

**Achievements and Outcomes**

Over the course of the Inclusive Cities project, the street vendors of SEWA have achieved the following:

1. **Legislation for street vendors:** SEWA has been advocating for over 35 years to bring a national street vending law to India. This effort, strengthened by other street vendor organizations across the nation, resulted in the 2014 Street Vendors’ Act, which protects street vendor livelihoods and regulates their work.

2. **Increased and sustained membership:** Despite the displacement and evictions of street vendors due to urban development plans, the street vendor membership of SEWA has not only been sustained, but has also increased by 41 per cent over the five years of the Inclusive Cities project to 80,320 members.
3. **An empowered cadre of leadership:** SEWA has 402 elected street vendor leaders who together form the Trade Committee. SEWA's capacity building efforts have ensured that these leaders are empowered to find solutions to the issues at the market-level and are able to negotiate with the city police and the AMC.

4. **Creation of independent management bodies:** Within the Union, SEWA has built multiple membership-based organizations (not necessarily legal structures) to deal with the local issues members face on a daily basis. For instance, market committees are elected bodies at the market-level that are independent management units for the markets. SEWA has developed 68 market committees.

5. **Workers at the decision-making table:** After SEWA's long advocacy effort, a TVC has been established in Ahmedabad. The TVC consists of the Municipal Corporation and street vendor unions/associations, which occupy 40 per cent of committee seats. This is the first time that street vendors have been on a formal decision-making body with city officials. One of SEWA's leaders, Shantaben Parmar, is on the TVC.

6. **Creation of replicable market models:** By designing a schematic plan of the Jamalpur market, SEWA has found solutions to the common problems associated with the market that it could address in partnership with the AMC. Though each market is unique and will require a schematic plan of its own, the foundation of the Jamalpur schematic plan model can be replicated across the city.

7. **Secure spaces to vend:** Through SEWA's direct efforts in the Jamalpur, Hatkeshwar, and Mansi Tower markets, the livelihoods of 1,326 street vendors have been reinstated, which means they have received a secure space to vend. It also means they can continue to earn an annual income ranging from INR 62,400 to INR 144,000 (US $1,040 to US $3,000), which between the three markets adds up to a cumulative total of between INR 8,27,42,400 and INR 23,86,80,000 (US $1,379,040 and US $3,978,000).

### Benefits to the City

Customers attest that street vendors provide a valuable service to Ahmedabad. As Ashaben, a customer of the street market close to Mansi Tower, wrote, “These street vendors provide fresh vegetables at walking distance from my house. [The] satellite area is surrounded by many malls, but the malls don’t provide good quality vegetables like these street vendors do. Malls sell vegetables from cold storage and charge more than the street markets.”

### Critical Success Factors

Street vendor members of SEWA have been successful in their intervention during the project period because of the following critical factors:

1. **Organizing street vendors across Ahmedabad:** The entry point for all SEWA activities is organizing workers. SEWA has organized Ahmedabad's women street vendors into unions at the city-level and thereafter into market committees at the market-level. It has also organized through consistent meetings and training sessions where members are able to advocate for their issues in various forums and find local solutions to their issues. Through these strategies, SEWA has managed to organize almost all of Ahmedabad's women street vendors of Ahmedabad.

2. **Relationships with stakeholders:** Through 40 years of work in Ahmedabad, SEWA has built strategic relationships with important stakeholders: street vendors, other street vendor unions, the AMC, the city police, lawyers, judges, Resident Welfare Associations, and Government Ministries. While they have not always been positive, these long-standing relationships have at least provided the street vendors of SEWA with opportunities for dialogue.

3. **SEWA's 40-year presence in Ahmedabad:** Because SEWA had worked with informal economy women workers for over four decades, they were invited to advise on issues concerning informal economy workers in various local and national forums. This longevity and expertise has...
helped street vendors with their advocacy work, especially in initiating the Town Vending Committee as well as advocating for The Street Vendor (Protection of Livelihod and Regulation of Street Vending) Act.

4. **SEWA’s integrated approach:** SEWA has an integrated approach where it works on multiple issues faced by its members simultaneously. In the case of Ahmedabad’s street vendors, SEWA’s advocacy efforts have been accompanied by linking members to government services and access to finance, and by offering capacity building trainings. This web of activities not only meets the multiple needs of street vendors, but also provides them with short-term gains during their long advocacy struggles.

5. **Human resource and financial resource:** SEWA has critically selected its team of mainly grassroots workers accompanied by professionals, such as lawyers. It also recruits other professionals like architects, planners, and managers on an assignment basis. This team has been imperative in implementing SEWA’s work. The five years of financial resources provided by the Inclusive Cities project were key to continuing and scaling up the advocacy efforts for and with street vendors in Ahmedabad.

**Challenges and Their Root Causes**

Despite the intervention and achievements, there are still a few persistent challenges:

1. **Time-consuming policy framework and implementation Process:** SEWA first introduced the idea of a policy for street vendors in 1988, but the first National Policy on Urban Street Vendors was not formulated until 2004. In other words, it took 16 years to formulate the first policy, which has yet to be implemented. The policy formulation and implementation is, in general, a time-consuming process that requires continuous negotiations between street vendor unions and local and national governments. The success of these negotiations is dependent on the strength of the street vendor unions, supportive and like-minded politicians and civil servants at both national and city levels, and the tenure of the supportive politicians and civil servants in their office. And while the street vendors now have an “We are not asking for charity from the government. All that we need is a space for our two vending baskets, and the rest we will manage.” Act protecting their livelihood, the long-term use and impact of this Act is yet to be seen.

2. **Street vendors blamed for traffic congestion and unsanitary conditions:** Street vendors invariably get blamed and sometimes evicted for traffic congestion and unsanitary conditions in and around the market. In some cases, street vendors do encroach upon the roads, but in many cases it has been found that the traffic congestion has been the result of the lack of parking space and the use of non-motorized vehicles. Further, while the local authorities find it easier to blame street vendors for unsanitary conditions in markets because of vendors “illegal” status and low income, the fact is that the markets lack basic services. Street vendors deal with this issue by taking ownership of market upkeep and, in many cases, even of the traffic flow in and around the market. While this does solve the issue of traffic congestion and unsanitary conditions in the market, it doesn’t reduce the vulnerability of the street vendors from evictions or harassment.

3. **Occupational health issues take a backseat during crisis:** Many street vendors complain of back pain, headaches, dehydration, and diarrhoea, but SEWA’s street vendor members place little importance on occupational health issues. This is not because the issues don’t exist, but because their individual health takes a backseat in times of crisis when their source of livelihood is threatened.

**Lessons Learned**

SEWA has learned three main lessons from its work with street vendors:

1. **Local issues need to be solved locally:** SEWA has learnt that not all issues need to be solved at a city level. Each market has its unique problems, which can often be solved at a market level. In fact, it is more effective and efficient to find solutions locally.

2. **Go to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) with solutions and not problems:** Over the years, SEWA has observed that the ULBs don’t understand the nature and depth of the issues faced by street vendors. Therefore, leaders have found it easier to approach the ULBs with multiple possible solutions for the issues.

3. **Build a huge cadre of leadership:** During the five years of the Inclusive Cities project, street vendors in all of Ahmedabad’s markets faced at least a few issues. SEWA’s campaign team (a core team of street vendor experts) found it difficult to reach out to all members. By creating market committees with local leaders from the market, SEWA empowered these leaders to solve the local issues locally.

**Conclusion**

People migrate and continue living in cities not necessarily for better living conditions, but for livelihood opportunities. Street vending in Ahmedabad itself provides livelihood opportunities to an estimated 170,000 people. Despite this, urban infrastructure projects have displaced the livelihoods of many street vendors in Ahmedabad, but these same vendors have collectively and strategically fought back. As Shantaben, a street vendor leader, said, “We are not asking for charity from the government. There are so many unemployed people in the city. The government should focus on them. All that we need is a space for our two vending baskets, and the rest we will manage.” The year 2014 was a milestone for SEWA and its street vendor members due to the enactment of The Street Vendor (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act. SEWA’s street vendors have accomplished a lot between 2009 and 2014, but there is a long way to go before they accomplish their goal of work, income, and social security for all street vendor members.
Worker Overview

Home-based work encompasses a wide variety of work, ranging from traditional embroidery and weaving to preparing snack foods or making craft items or performing telework. Though the work is carried out in the home, it does not refer to either unpaid housework or paid domestic work. Like other occupations in the informal economy in India, home-based work is characterized by irregular hours, low and irregular income, poor and dangerous working conditions, and a lack of social protection such as healthcare, insurance, childcare, and shelter.

In Ahmedabad, SEWA has a membership of 107,530 home-based workers, of whom 21,114 are bidi (cigarette) rollers, 5,831 are kite makers, 38,356 are incense sticks rollers, and 42,229 are cut-piece tailors (garment workers). The daily income of home-based workers is estimated to range from INR 38 to 100, although there are many who exceed the given limit. Most home-based workers are between the ages of 16-60 years. Very few elderly women over 60 prefer to continue working except in circumstances where the family is resource crunched financially. As the work is conducted from home, other family members tend to help. In most cases, female members of the family (i.e., unmarried daughters or daughters-in-law) support the matriarch of the house by rolling bidis and incense sticks and making kites.

Though bidi and incense rolling require fairly uniform activity, kite-making is more diverse. Different workers do different jobs. Some women attach the sticks to paper to make the kite while others decorate the kites. Garment work is also quite diverse. Some workers stitch basic clothing while others stitch quilts or intricate formal garments and costumes.

All four of these trade categories require skilled labourers. The skill requirement is higher for kite and garment work, but bidi and incense stick rollers also need to be well-trained as the scale of production is very high.

Legal and Policy Framework

Currently, there is no inclusive national policy or law regarding home-based work, although certain occupations have been included under the following Central and State Welfare frameworks.

**Bidi Workers Welfare Act, 1976**

Bidi workers are recognized through the Bidi Workers Welfare Act, 1976, which provides social protection measures such as housing facilities, health facilities, maternity benefits, education for bidi workers’ children, and insurance. The Act also ensures there is a dispensary that provides free medicine to the Ahmedabad/Dariyapur area. Such provisions were put into place because of bidi workers’ longstanding struggle to be recognized. Currently, they are registered under the Labor Welfare Department of the Government of India, which provides them with identity cards declaring their occupation. This helps them access social protection measures. The housing and health benefits are also being implemented, but not all bidi workers are able to access them because of a limited number of houses and the geographical distances to the dispensary. Receiving the scholarship for the benefit of their wards is also problematic for workers. Previously, funds were distributed through

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEWA Membership via Trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Home-Based Workers: 107,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bidi Workers: 21,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Kite Makers: 5831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Garment Workers: 42,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incense Stick Rollers: 42,229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the wards’ accounts in government owned banks. According to 8 out of 50 respondent bidi workers in Ahmedabad’s Jhulta Minara district, many workers’ children have not received a scholarship for the past two years in this new system.

Gujarat Unorganized Workers Welfare Board

Due to SEWA’s consistent efforts, the Gujarat Government agreed to create a state level Gujarat Unorganized Workers Welfare Board under its Labour Welfare Department in 2007. The Welfare Board is constituted under the Labour & Employment Department. The board meets almost every month to discuss the challenges of various welfare schemes and ways to mitigate them.

SEWA, a member of the board, also actively contributes to petitioning the government for change and was instrumental in ensuring that home-based workers were included, along with other informal workers. Home-based workers are recognized through the board’s provision of identity cards, and SEWA also makes sure workers are aware they are both entitled to benefits under the board and how to access these benefits. The board also provides services like certified skill enhancement training; a toolkit, which includes scissors, measuring tape and other tools; and a medical claim between INR 1,200 and 2,500 (US $20 and 42). There are 50,000 registered members on the Board, of which SEWA helped register 19,000 (Mahadevia et al. 2014).

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 177 on Home-Based Workers

ILO Convention 177 recognizes the contribution of home-based workers to the economy through what it calls “home-work”. The convention calls for the formulation of a National Policy for home-based workers and an extension of social protection measures like occupational health and safety, protection against gender-based discrimination, access to training, and maternity protection. India has not ratified the convention.

Minimum Wage Act

As described by Sinha, “The [Minimum Wages] Act prescribes different minimum wages for different types of employment in various industries scheduled in the Act. These schedules are decided by state” (2013).

Although the Act is not ideal from the home-based workers’ perspective, SEWA has been able to utilize a two-fold strategy work with it. Firstly, SEWA has advocated for the inclusion of home-based workers in the state schedules, and secondly, SEWA has worked to ensure strong enforcement of the Act.

Situation Prior to Intervention

The demand for manufactured items varies throughout the year, and therefore workers’ income levels fluctuate. For garment workers, work is highest in the festival season, which includes Diwali, Eid, and Navratri. For kite makers, the busy season is closer to Uttarayan (mid-January), while for incense rollers, it is mostly around Diwali, Navratri, and other Hindu festivals. For bidi workers, the demand is consistent all through the year. While the demand for manufactured items may go higher during peak times, the prices mostly remain the same throughout the year. A few home-based workers, however, have said that they do receive either a bonus or a gift from their employers in the festival season—an output of their collective bargaining strength post-organizing.

There are no formal schools that teach bidi and incense stick rolling or kite-making, so the skills are passed on from mother to daughter. Garment workers, on the other hand, can be trained by mothers or by institutions like those SEWA runs. Workers, usually garment workers and kite makers, registered with the Unorganized Workers Welfare Board (founded by the Gujarat Government in 2007) can also take skill enhancement and upgrade training.

Bidi and incense stick rollers face the worst conditions in terms of occupational health and safety risks. India’s government has identified bidi rolling work as a “hazardous vocation” because working conditions render workers susceptible to asthma, bronchitis, and tuberculosis (Lok Sabha 2013). Incense stick rollers face similar working conditions, but these have yet to be recognized at a central level. Garment workers and kite makers have their own challenges (such as associated weakening eyesight), but theirs are comparably safer occupations.

Furthermore, home-based work, as a category of workers, remain invisible. When the work place is at home, most labour laws cannot offer protection—they are designed for a labour market where the employer-employee relationship is clear and for a workplace that is not a private home. Moreover, workers typically do not get worker benefits such as paid leave, severance notice, or bonuses. Only a small percentage receive employer contributions to a pension or provident fund; almost none are covered by accident insurance. Home-based workers tend to remain isolated from other workers and, therefore, to be less well organized and have less voice vis-à-vis employers or public authorities than other workers.

Model of Intervention or Theory of Change

Organizing is central to SEWA’s work as a national trade union. Perceiving that its members, home-based workers in Ahmedabad, were not receiving fair pay for their work, could not access low-cost supplies, and had difficulty accessing social protection measures, SEWA initiated an intervention to organize the workers for collective bargaining and access to social protection measures. SEWA also sought to form tripartite boards that involved its members.

Intervention: Details of Strategies

Organizing Home-Based Workers for Collective Bargaining and Access to Social Protection Measures

Trade Committees

In order to organize its members, SEWA has formed trade committees that reflect major occupational categories. Active members from different regions of the respective trade committees meet once a month to discuss issues of accessing social protection measures or to devise strategies to enhance wages. Additionally, trade committee leaders come together once a month to devise a monthly strategy and plan of action.

Campaign Team

To spread its message across the city, SEWA also has a full-time campaign team. With the help of the trade committee leaders and members, the campaign team visits various localities (almost one locality a day by two campaign team members) and meets with SEWA members to create awareness about existing social protection measures, prevailing wages, and other useful crisis mitigation strategies like the benefits of having insurance and savings accounts, etc. These meetings last for two hours and are organized in the afternoon after lunch (2 p.m.) when the women are relatively free to talk. They discuss the issues they face (which include the regular or irregular reimbursement of their work), get clarity about the ways to access social protection measures (women who have not received identity cards pass on the process details to trade committee members), and receive information about various SEWA ventures (such as the SEWA Bank, insurance company, and vocational training centre) so that they know how to access these services.

Training Sessions

Campaign workers identify relatively active members across the city to participate in training sessions (loosely termed as “worker’s education”) focused on the SEWA Movement—how it was started, its vision, values, and purpose of existence, the importance of membership, ways to organize, etc.—so that they get a sense of the movement’s scale and find avenues to display collective leadership. The sessions are helpful in bringing a rainbow coalition of women workers engaged in diverse professions to one place. Union members or the SEWA Academy facilitators lead these sessions.

Forming Tripartite Boards

Apart from organizing, intervention includes the formation of informal tripartite boards where workers, contractors/owners, and government representatives (like the labour commissioner) meet to decide the appropriate compensation for bidis and incense sticks. The consistent efforts of SEWA leaders brought these boards into existence. SEWA members are now part of the board and meet every two years to decide appropriate compensation depending on the inflation index and expenditure.

For the kite makers and garment workers, the constitution of similar boards is in the works, but currently leaders and representatives meet the traders’ associations almost three times every month to negotiate the wages per piece rate, but the wages aren’t increased just after one meeting. There are longer conversations, and it can take months to negotiate the piece rate. In those meetings, workers make their demands and also share the ongoing market prices of raw materials that they have to buy on their own to manufacture items. The process as written here may come across very simple, but the negotiations are long, tedious, and frequent exercises.

In the same forums, home-based workers also demand bonuses around festivals—many, like the garment workers, have been successful in negotiating for this from time to time.

Achievements and Outcomes

In order to research the scale of the intervention’s impact, six focus group discussions were organized, five with SEWA members who worked in different trades (garment workers in Shahpura, bidi workers in Jhulta Minara and Bapu Nagar, incense stick rollers in Bapunagar, and kite makers in Dhani Limda), and a sixth group with campaign team members.7

7 Due to the limits of this study, we could not address all the achievements this intervention made. Through organizing, many SEWA members have also accessed services provided by the Mahila SEWA Bank, Mahila Housing Trust, VIMO SEWA, and the SEWA Academy. For more information on these and other SEWA interventions, see the following:

There were 102 total members and 20 total campaigners who participated in the discussions.

Results from these focus groups showed that income increased uniformly for incense stick rollers and bidi workers and comparably uniformly for kite makers and garment workers. The focus groups also found that organizing helped women access existing SEWA financial services through Mahila SEWA Bank and insurance through VIMO SEWA (SEWA Insurance Company). Additionally, organizing helped home-based workers gain access to low cost supplies.

**Outcome 1: Increase in Income**

**Bidi Workers**

Almost all respondents (100 out of 102) stated their income has increased in varying amounts. Garment workers are the most diverse group in terms of their finished products, so the variation in wage increase is high. For bidi workers, incense rollers, and kite makers, on the other hand, income increases were fairly uniform. For the benefit of this analysis, we have used the average from all trade categories.

Bidi workers perform an end-to-end job. On an average day, bidi workers roll around 500 to 1,000 bidis and receive the piece rate for every 1,000 bidis made. The roller’s productivity is largely dependent on her age, health, and the pressure of her daily chores. The increase in price per thousand bidis in rupees is reflected in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate (INR)</th>
<th>Rate (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To calculate the increase in bidi workers’ income, we have taken 500 to 1,000 as the average number of bids manufactured by a worker in a day, priced it as shown in Table 1, and used the formula (number of bidis produced by 21,114 workers multiplied by appropriate price for the year divided by 1,000). For the annual income increase, we multiplied the daily income by 317, the average number of working days in a year. This helped us to calculate the income increase on a daily and yearly basis. For US dollar figures, we used an exchange rate of INR 60 to US $1.

As shown in Table 2, bidi workers’ income increase is largely uniform across 21,114 bidi workers because of the regulatory frameworks in place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yearly income of 21114 bidi workers range (Rs.)</th>
<th>Yearly income of 21114 bidi workers range (US$)</th>
<th>Increase in income (%) with 2009 as base year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>217,526,985</td>
<td>3,625,450</td>
<td>7,250,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>227,566,692</td>
<td>3,792,778</td>
<td>7,585,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>234,259,830</td>
<td>3,904,331</td>
<td>7,808,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>267,725,520</td>
<td>4,462,092</td>
<td>8,924,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>307,884,348</td>
<td>5,131,406</td>
<td>10,262,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>334,656,900</td>
<td>5,577,615</td>
<td>11,155,230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 1 shows the income increase percentage for bidi workers, calculated using 2009 as the base year, with the following formula: present year income subtracting base year income multiplied by 100 then divided by base year income.

Incense Stick Rollers

Incense stick rollers receive their materials from a contractor, who also collects the finished product almost every day. Incense stick rollers make between 4,000 and 7,000 incense sticks a day. An incense stick roller’s productivity is largely dependent on their health, on their family’s ability to help, and the time she can take away from her daily chores. Women who have daughters or daughters-in-law supporting them have reported being able to roll 8,000 to 11,000 sticks a day.

Like bidi workers, incense stick rollers have informal tripartite boards that include representatives from incense stick rollers, contractors, and government who all take part in negotiating payments for the workers. Payments are increased every two years after negotiations with the board. The proportion of the increase is dependent on the market conditions.

To calculate the income increase for kite makers, we have taken 1,000 as the average number of kite-related products manufactured per worker per day. Table 4 shows their yearly income in this rate of production in rupees and US dollars.

Kite Makers

Kite makers are paid per thousand kites they manufacture. On average, kite makers make around 1,000 kite-related products per day. Table 4 shows their yearly income in this rate of production in rupees and US dollars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate (INR)</th>
<th>Rate (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This income increase is largely uniform across 5,831 kite makers. Because of worker organization, minor changes in
the maximum price are reflected. Their increased income is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 - Kite Makers’ Yearly Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yearly income of 5831 kite makers range (Rs.)</th>
<th>Yearly income of 5831 kite makers range (US$)</th>
<th>Increase in income (%) with 2009 as base year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>83,179,215</td>
<td>1,386,320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>83,179,215</td>
<td>1,386,320</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>92,421,350</td>
<td>1,540,356</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>101,663,485</td>
<td>1,694,391</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>101,663,485</td>
<td>1,694,391</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>157,116,295</td>
<td>2,618,605</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increased income by percentage for kite makers is shown in Graph 3, calculated by taking 2009 as the base year in the following formula: present year income subtracting base year income multiplied by 100 and divided by base year income.

**Graph 3- Increase in Kite Makers’ Income**

The increased income by percentage for kite makers is shown in Graph 3, calculated by taking 2009 as the base year in the following formula: present year income subtracting base year income multiplied by 100 divided by base year income.

Garment Workers

Garment workers receive payment for every 12 pieces that they manufacture. Table 6 averages their income on a per dozen basis.

Like bidi workers and incense stick rollers, garment workers also have informal tripartite boards that include garment worker representatives, contractors, and the government in order to negotiate payments for the workers. Every two years, the payments are increased after discussion; the proportion of increase is dependent on market conditions.

Table 6 - Garment Workers’ Rates Per 12 Pieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate (INR)</th>
<th>Rate (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like bidi workers and incense stick rollers, garment workers also have informal tripartite boards that include garment worker representatives, contractors, and the government in order to negotiate payments for the workers. Every two years, the payments are increased after discussion; the proportion of increase is dependent on market conditions.

Table 7 reflects the increase in price per dozen for garment workers in rupees. To calculate the increase in income for garment workers, we have taken 12 to 24 as the average number of garment pieces manufactured by a worker in a day, priced it per the prices depicted in Table 6 and used the following formula: number of garments produced by 42,229 workers multiplied by appropriate price for the year divided by 12. For the annual income increase, we multiplied the daily income by 317, the average number of working days in a year. This helped us to calculate the income increase on a daily and yearly basis. For US dollar figures, we used an exchange rate of INR 60 to US $1.

This increase in income is largely uniform across 42,229 garment workers because of the tripartite board frameworks in place. There are minor changes in the maximum price given.

The percentage of the income increase for kite makers is shown in Graph 4, calculated by using 2009 as the base year in the following formula: present year income subtracting base year income multiplied by 100 and divided by base year income.

Like bidi workers and incense stick rollers, garment workers also have informal tripartite boards that include garment worker representatives, contractors, and the government in order to negotiate payments for the workers. Every two years, the payments are increased after discussion; the proportion of increase is dependent on market conditions.

**Graph 4- Increase in Garment Workers’ Income**

The increased income by percentage for kite makers is shown in Graph 3, calculated by taking 2009 as the base year in the following formula: present year income subtracting base year income multiplied by 100 and divided by base year income.

**Table 7 - Increase in Garment Workers’ Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yearly income of 42,229 garment workers range (Rs.)</th>
<th>Yearly income of 42,229 garment workers range (US$)</th>
<th>Increase in income (%) with 2009 as base year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>602,396,685</td>
<td>1,204,793,370</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>602,396,685</td>
<td>1,204,793,370</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>669,329,650</td>
<td>1,338,659,300</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>736,262,615</td>
<td>1,472,525,230</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>870,128,545</td>
<td>1,740,257,090</td>
<td>44.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,137,860,405</td>
<td>2,275,720,810</td>
<td>88.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcome 2: Increased Access to Social Protection Measures
In general, organizing supports members’ increased access to social protection measures. SEWA communicates with members about the various service and social protective measures in place, especially details related to legal frameworks, and encourages them to get identity cards in order to access these benefits. In our focus group discussions, all the respondents across all four work categories have applied for them, but only 72 have received them and can access services.

In 2009, due to its constant policy and advocacy work, SEWA played a significant role in the process that led to the formulation of the Bidi Workers Welfare Act and the Gujarat Unorganized Workers Welfare Board. The services provisioned are open to all, and despite the institutional delays in providing identity cards, SEWA members otherwise face no obstacles in accessing the benefits. Wherever there are obstructions, the trade leaders and other representatives have negotiated with the relevant authorities to ensure smooth responses.

Outcome 3: Access to Low Cost Supplies
Because of the economic crisis, in 2008 and 2009, payment for finished products came down heavily. While raw materials were readily available, many members found the prices for thread and oil were unduly high. So, in order to support its members, SEWA opened a cooperative shop for its members in Juhapura. The shop purchased from relevant wholesale markets and sold its equipment at no-profit, no-loss prices to SEWA members at a lower than market rate. For instance, the cost of thread in the market was between INR 12-15 (US $0.2- 0.25), but the cooperative shop only charged INR 10 (US $0.16). This small difference meant quite a bit as members purchase materials in bulk. All of the 21 members we met in Juhapura were buying their thread and oil from the cooperative shop. Shahebera Ben, who managed the shop in 2011, says that the shop is able to do business worth INR 1,400-1,500 (US $23-25) a day, and with that, it is able to pay the rent, electricity bill, her salary, and also buy more stock.

Critical Success Factors
Several critical factors must be in place if this intervention is to be replicated.

Organizing leaders and campaigners must be local and possibly reside in the localities where the organizing work will be done. The leaders and campaigners must be able to connect well with and know the workers, and they also must know the community’s issues in depth. This allows leaders to offer relevant services, much like SEWA’s cooperative shop, to members.

The creation of informal tripartite labour boards was also necessary for SEWA’s success, and it was critical here to get traders/employers, contractors and the labour commissioner to participate. As a forum, this board was helpful in negotiating with the employers/traders and contractors for fair prices. If replicated, such a board can promise immense success.

Lessons Learned
The process of organizing women is based on mutual trust between the members and the institution at large. It is a challenge to help workers become members of a union. SEWA has learned to overcome that challenge through major grassroots-level mobilization and through empowering grassroots level leaders who can be trusted.

Post-organization, SEWA has regularly pursued both local and national governments so that these recognize the contribution of women workers (in this case home-based workers) in the informal economy. Many progressive policies related to the informal economy came into existence because of SEWA’s consistent struggle.

Organizing enhanced the collective bargaining skills of women workers, which then led to the formation of forums like the tripartite. In theory, the process may sound very linear, but usually development happens simultaneously.

Conclusion
Currently there is no comprehensive national policy for home-based workers except the recognition and social protection measures extended to bidi workers. At the state level, home-based workers are registered under the Gujarat Unorganized Workers Welfare board, which also includes street vendors and waste pickers. However, although the concerns of street vendors, waste pickers, and home-based workers may look similar at one level, SEWA’s experience has shown that they are in fact very different. The challenges and problems faced by street vendors, for example, are very different from those faced by incense stick rollers or garment workers. Clumping more than one group together doesn’t make sense.

In the coming years, SEWA’s goal is to achieve a much-needed larger policy framework for home-based workers that will bring them recognition at a national level. This will also help India as a country in signing the International Labour Organization’s Convention-177.

SEWA is also pursuing statewide uniformity for the minimum piece-rate, which will help in ensuring that all workers in Gujarat are given a fair and equal price for their work.
Overview

In Ahmedabad, SEWA’s Social Security Team manages 27 childcare centres under the ambit of “Sangini Childcare Worker’s Cooperative,” which also handles VIMO SEWA (an insurance company of SEWA). The centres were started in 1986 and have been functioning for the last 28 years. The childcare centres serve the women workers of the informal economy, the majority of whom are residents of Ahmedabad’s informal settlements.

These SEWA childcare centres exist in addition to the 1,845 Aanganwadis (childcare centres) run by the city’s Integrated Child Development Services Municipal Corporation in collaboration with various other non-government organizations. Although the Municipal Corporation is responsible for the delivery of services through these centres, it has brought in non-government organizations to take over these same centres in order to decentralize the management.

In the past, these municipal childcare centres served children mainly between the ages of 2 and 6. Initially, they were open between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., though hours have recently been extended to between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. (it must be noted, however, that many of the centres we came across during research closed before 4 p.m.). Each centre should have one worker and a helper, but as centres have recently been asked to provide fresh lunches for the children, many have added another helper who focuses solely on nutrition. All services provided by these centres are free of charge.

Legal and Policy Framework

India’s national policy framework stipulates that there should be at least one Aanganwadi in each area with a population of 1,000 persons.

Although Aanganwadi management is a state responsibility, in many states, like Gujarat, where powers have devolved into urban local bodies, Aanganwadi management now comes under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation.

Most Aanganwadis are housed either in rooms within schools owned by the Municipal Corporation or in rented space in the locality. In some cases, a childcare worker’s house is used as an Aanganwadi.

Situation Prior to Intervention

Work in the informal economy is characterized by irregular hours, low and irregular income, poor and dangerous working conditions, and a lack of social protection (like healthcare, insurance, childcare, and shelter). This means women workers are very vulnerable. If they have young children, they often have to stop working in order to care for them. This means a loss of income and further aggregation into a vicious cycle of poverty where the number of mouths to feed is more than the money in pocket. In order to mitigate these circumstances, it is at times necessary for elder school-going children, particularly girls, to be removed from school so that they can care for younger siblings when parents are at work. This results in the under-education of children, especially girls.

It was also clear to SEWA that many of the existing childcare centres under the purview of the Municipal Corporation in Ahmedabad don’t function well, and they haven’t yet followed the new requirements for more than one worker or extended
hours. In fact, out of the seven of these centres SEWA visited, only three had the prescribed two workers managing the children. Two of the centres had only one worker, and another two were closed before 4 p.m., which meant they could not be properly assessed. Furthermore, four respondents in our research complained that the workers in the Aanganwadi don’t take adequate care of the children.

### SEWA’s Childcare Centres

- Number of children in each centre: 27-30
- Number of centres in Ahmedabad: 27
- Number of facilitators in each centre: 2
- Total number of supervisors: 3
- Total number of children in the care of the cooperative: 729-810

### Model of Intervention or Theory of Change

**SEWA** believes that childcare is an integral component of social security for women workers. Childcare provisions relieve women of one of their multiple burdens, create time and space and work opportunities for women, and support their empowerment. In 1982, keeping this belief in mind, and with the demand of many members of SEWA who desired to earn an income while not compromising on the upbringing of their offspring, SEWA initiated work on childcare centres, also known as **Balwadi**, for children of informal economy women workers aging zero to six years.

### Intervention: Details of Strategies

**The SEWA Childcare Centres**

In 1986, the SEWA childcare centres opened, and currently 27 centres function in various low-income localities of Ahmedabad. The annual year for the centres begins in July when new wards are admitted, but there is no rule that states children cannot be admitted later.

Every centre has a maximum of 30 children. Women workers in the informal economy can enroll their children for Rs. 100 per month. Each centre has two facilitators who meet the minimum qualification for becoming a facilitator by completing the 10th Standard. SEWA provides training and refresher workshops every three months for all facilitators. Three supervisors visit different centres each day to ensure smooth functioning.

### Nutrition

Freshly prepared, nutritious food is served in the afternoon, and some snacks are provided in the evening. The menu is different each day. Meals range from porridge, pulses and rice to *Idli Sambar* (rice balls with vegetable curry). In winter, food items rich in iron are also served. The centres also regularly document children’s growth in terms of weight and height.

### Curriculum

SEWA develops and regularly uses a curriculum for learning the alphabet and small word formation in both Gujarati and English, and a curriculum for enhancing numeracy in children above three years of age. Each centre also has toys and other learning materials. The centres like to celebrate life through marking all the festivals—and so accept donations from local individuals and small businesses in order to provide children with special sweets and toys. On National Children’s Day (14th November), SEWA organizes a large-scale event in which alumni, current students, and parents participate.

### Communication with Parents

The staff meets with the mothers every month with an average attendance of 80 per cent. In these meetings, mothers are informed about their child’s growth, general health tips, particularly for those who are expecting, and the importance of maintaining hygiene. To make sure that fathers also play an important role in their children’s upbringing, meetings specifically for fathers are conducted every three months. Because the mothers are often working, care of their children can fall on other family members. Photo: J. Luckham
months with an average attendance rate of 50 per cent. At the fathers meeting that occurred just before this report was written, male guardians were informed of their children’s growth, the importance of insurance, and the harmful effects of drug addiction.

Health Care

The centres also play an important health care role: facilitators make sure that all children in the centre are vaccinated on time. In fact, in many localities, childcare centres have become a nodal point where children are vaccinated and given necessary medical doses from time to time by the state authorities.

Follow-Up With Students

The centres also track the activities of alumni so facilitators can ensure that the children who came to the centre are enrolled in school on time. On several occasions, a number of different private schools have approached these centres to enroll potential students.

Operating Costs and Student Fees

On average, running one of these centres costs Rs. 20,000-25,000 (US $333-416), which includes the salary of the two facilitators (Rs. 8,000-10,000 ADD IN US $), rent (Rs. 1,000-1,500 or US $17-25), the cost of food and nutrition (Rs. 4000-5000 or US $67-83), and a supervision cost (Rs. 2,000-3,000 or US $33-50). Fees charged to parents amount to Rs. 3,000, which covers merely 10-15 per cent of the overhead. As a result, the project is largely dependent on the support provided by the various SEWA ventures and external support.

Daily Routine

A typical day in a childcare centre starts at 9 a.m., when parents begin dropping their children off. In many places, one of the two facilitators fetches the children from their homes while the other cleans the space for the day. At 10 a.m., the communal prayers of both the prominent faiths (Hinduism and Islam) are read. Minor physical exercise is practiced, after which a light breakfast is served. After 1 p.m., the children take a nap, and between 3 and 4 p.m. they are up again playing with their toys. Throughout the day, facilitators also toilet train the children. Parents start dropping by to pick up their children at 4 p.m., and in many cases facilitators will take the children back to their homes.

Achievements and Outcomes

The reports used to ground SEWA’s assessment of the impact of its childcare centres include 2007’s “Taking Care of Our Children: Ensuring Long Term Impact (Balwadi Study),” by SEWA’s Academic Research Unit; 2011’s “SEWA Childcare: Impact Assessment Report for Year,” by the Association for Stimulating Know How (ASK); and 2013’s “SEWA’s interventions in Gujarat to enhance social security of members and their families: Some lessons,” by the Gujarat Institute of Development & Research.

This assessment was also supported by interviews conducted with centre facilitators, supervisors, coordinators, alumni, and mothers whose children attend or have attended the centres.

Impact on Children: Education

In all the centres, children aged three to six years are taught the alphabet for Gujarati and for English, numeracy, drawing, rhyme recitation, and storytelling. The centres function as pre-school units with a smaller workload compared to kindergarten, and they serve at a lower cost. Moreover, the 2007 research study shows that 80 per cent of the childcare centre’s Ahmedabad alumni enjoyed going to school. According to the same study, children who went to a SEWA Balwadi have comparably higher school attendance (78 per cent) than those who did not (68 per cent). During our field visits, we also discovered that almost all the children who had attended one of SEWA’s six Ahmedabad centres for five to six years are admitted into school. Some children are in private schools while others are in the state-managed municipal schools, depending on the income of the parents.

Ms. Mirza Muhammad Begum, a teacher in Asmi High School Vatva, stated that the children who come from the SEWA centre are pro-active, and it is easy to keep them engaged as they are accustomed to the centre’s school-like settings.

Impact on Children: Immunization and Health

Between the aforementioned studies, our field visits, and the children’s health profiles (updated on a monthly basis), we found that all children (100 per cent) in the six centres were given immunization doses on time and the documentation in the form of profiles stand as proof of it. In addition, the ASK report states that malnourishment is lowest in the children of SEWA childcare centres due to their emphasis on nutritious, freshly prepared food, and their health- and nutrition-related communications with the parents. As we are not well equipped to study malnourishment levels in the context of this report, the above conclusion is largely based on the review of data provided by ASK as well as the testimonies of 15 mothers interviewed across six localities. During our conversation with the parents, all of the moth-
ers stated that their children now eat well, which was not the case before their visits to childcare centres. According to these mothers, their children had been attracted to processed food, but now they like eating fresh food cooked at home. Many children requested that their parents provide at home the same kind of food they get in the centres.

**Impact on Children: Hygiene**

All the mothers said that their children were accustomed to washing their hands before eating food or had been toilet trained, which was not the case before they attended the centres. During our visits, we saw the facilitators taking the children to the toilet and getting them accustomed to its usage.

**Impact on Parents, Particularly on Mothers**

Women who previously would have had to stop working to care for their children were now independent enough to perform work without worrying about their wards at home. According to Sita Ben, a resident of Tarwadi whose children attend a *Balwadi*, “it was tough to do the work with children to take care of at home”. She had to leave them with a neighbour while going out to work. *Balwadi* relieved her and her neighbours from the responsibility of children. Urmila Ben from Ayojan Nagar, who works as domestic help reiterated the same views.

As per the existing literature, 53 per cent of mothers in Ahmedabad have stated that they can concentrate on increasing their incomes by putting in more time for productive work. The increase in income ranges from Rs.500-1,000 (US $8-16) per month, and for many this income reached up to Rs.2,000 (US $32) per month. An additional benefit of the childcare centres is that 63 per cent of respondents stated that unnecessary household expenditures on processed food like chocolate and chips were also curbed.

**Impact on Siblings**

Siblings are often involved in the upbringing of their younger brothers and sisters. But, according to the responses we received during sibling interviews, this trend is lowest in households that send their younger children to the SEWA centres; only 71 per cent of those who have siblings attending a *Balwadi* take care of younger siblings compared to 100 per cent of respondents whose siblings attend ICDS centres. Fifty per cent of respondents whose siblings don’t attend the centre are also involved in taking care of children.

The children whose siblings don’t go to any centre end up spending more than eight hours a day managing their siblings. For those whose siblings attending ICDS centres, this is reduced to three to five hours, and, significantly, those whose siblings go to SEWA childcare centres spend less than two hours a day performing childcare. Most of those who spent eight hours taking care of their younger siblings had dropped out of school at an early stage.

**Benefits to the City**

By providing quality, affordable childcare for the children of women working in the informal economy in Ahmedabad, the SEWA childcare centres enable these women to continue their work and to support themselves and their families.

The SEWA childcare centres also help prepare the children of Ahmedabad for entry into public school and success as students. Ultimately, this good start in life may help the children to become educated, contributing members of society.

As mentioned above, the children in SEWA childcare centres are both immunized and comparatively healthy, which is good for their own growth and for society at large.

**Critical Success Factors**

SEWA’s success in establishing its childcare centres is due in large part to gaining and maintaining the trust of parents. This trust has been achieved through regular and open communication with parents; adjusting hours of operation to suit parents’ work schedules; proactive measures focused on the well-being of the children, such as providing them with daily nutritious lunches and ensuring their immunizations are up-to-date; consistency of routines; and taking into consideration the women’s entire families, including older children.

The SEWA childcare centres in Ahmedabad are faced with major infrastructural handicaps. Most centres are cramped in a one-room space (10 ft. by 12 ft.), with an attached or provided toilet. In a few cases, toilets were not available, and children had to be taken either to a neighbour’s house or out in the open. Very few centres have a verandah and open space where children can play. The children have to study, learn, and play in the same small, enclosed space.

SEWA is handicapped in addressing these challenges as rents in Ahmedabad are increasing and the monetary support needed to sustain the centres doesn’t match the demand.

**Conclusion**

SEWA has invested a lot in managing their own childcare centres, and these have had a far-reaching impact. However, when comparing the number of centres run by SEWA (27) to those run by the Municipal Corporation (1,845), it’s clear that SEWA’s contribution is relatively small.

SEWA’s long-term vision is for the municipally run centres to develop the same quality as exists in the SEWA centres and to be proactive in building trust with parents. Ideally, the municipal system will be able to absorb the SEWA centres and add even more to meet the demand among workers in the informal economy for quality, accessible childcare.

The Municipal Corporation is taking a pro-active role in managing Ahmedabad’s childcare centres through non-government organizations. This is a positive step, but the ICDS centres will have to increase their commitment to implementing welfare-oriented policies mandated by the municipal governing body, such as the requirement to provide children with daily, healthy lunches, in order to gain parents’ trust—a process that took SEWA more than 27 years to achieve.
SEWA Academy's Literacy Intervention in Ahmedabad

Overview

SEWA Academy was created in 1991 and registered as a self-governed body in 2005. It acts as the focal point for all of SEWA's member education, capacity-building, communications (print, radio, and video), and research efforts. It was created in response to the needs of the poor working women of the informal sector, especially that of capacity building. The focus was on providing members with their first introduction to a formal learning environment.

Table 8 - SEWA Literacy Classes by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Literacy Classes Running</th>
<th>Number of Learners (Average of 20 Learners Per Class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since its inception, SEWA Academy has played a vital role in fulfilling SEWA's mandate of bringing about change and strengthening women's capacities so that they become self-reliant and fully employed. Preparing the leadership cadre, which takes the SEWA movement forward and hands over the flame to a new generation of leaders, is also among the Academy's prime objectives. The Academy also develops, preserves, and disseminates resources, which includes both its own history, learnings, and information on what's happening globally in the informal economy. The Academy's activities are spread across 14 districts in Gujarat and in nine other states.

Literacy Programme

The demand for a literacy programme came from the members of SEWA who felt an acute need to learn numbers so that they could manage their income. They also wanted to learn how to commute around and outside the city and to become literate so they could read and sign documents. Thus, in 2009, the literacy programme, under the Inclusive Cities project, began. The programme’s motto was empowering women of the informal economy, particularly SEWA members. Since that time, the programme has succeeded in providing basic elementary literacy skills to 5,200 women.

The SEWA members who took part in the literacy classes ranged in age from 18 to 70 years. They had either never been to school or they had not studied higher than the 3rd or 4th standards. The participants mostly worked in the informal economy, with an average income ranging between INR 100-200 (US $1.7-3.3) (those above the age of 60 were not as economically active as younger participants). A few of the participants were housewives and mothers of infants who had previously worked in the informal economy. As a group, they represented great occupational diversity, including domestic work, spoon packing, waste picking, thread cutting from stitched clothes, and factory work. Most were migrants to Ahmedabad through marriage and were from the rural areas of neighbouring districts, including Patan, Surendranagar, and Banaskantha.

Legal and Policy Framework

In 1998, the Government of India initiated the National Literacy Mission with the aim of making all citizens between the ages of 15 and 35 years literate. The adult literacy classes, as they are called, were conducted in the evening for a couple of hours. The programme did not achieve significant success for multiple reasons. One major reason is timing. The classes were in the late evening—the time when women were finishing their domestic chores. As a result, very few women were able to attend. In addition, the Mission had a heavy focus on rural rather than urban centres. In the urban localities we visited, not a single person had heard about the classes.
Situation Prior to Intervention

In the 2001 Census, Gujarat ranked 21st out of 28 states and seven union territories in literacy rates. This poor showing forced Gujarat’s government to constitute a special mission called “Sarswati Yatra” to enhance literacy in the state under the Director of Literacy and Continuing Education. The programme, ongoing in most parts of Gujarat, is largely focused, again, on rural rather than urban populations. As with government’s National Literacy Mission, most of the informal economy workers we met with in Ahmedabad hadn’t heard about it.

Model of Intervention or Theory of Change

Like most people, workers in the informal economy have desires and aspirations beyond basic survival. The second generation of workers in the informal economy often don’t want to engage in their parent’s profession. They want career choices, but they need opportunities that will help them engage with the wider world beyond their home. Such opportunities and empowerment begin with basic literacy.

Intervention: Details of Strategies

To address deficiencies in the literacy rates among women working in the informal economy in Ahmedabad, SEWA Academy initiated and grew a literacy programme.

Growing the Literacy Programme

After the programme was started in 2009, many women, who had heard about the programme from other SEWA members, through other training sessions, or through movies shown throughout the city by the Mobile Van, approached SEWA academy to initiate programmes in their localities. To start a programme in a locality, the Academy invited applications from facilitators or trainers who would run the class in a given area. In order to be eligible, candidates had to have passed the 10th Standard, which might be relaxed for those who exhibited the needed skills. Preference was given to candidates who resided in the area where the class was to be initiated. After they were selected, facilitators were requested to conduct a survey of the area to gauge interest and to arrange an appropriate space. If 20 or more learners enrolled with the facilitator, then a class began. The selected facilitator was offered compensation of Rs. 450/month for daily two-hour classes. After the first year, when classes were only six months long, the literacy class course now spans a year, with each session beginning in January. Learners do not pay any fees.

Curriculum

The Academy designed the curriculum after studying the needs of women in the informal economy. The curriculum includes:

- Barakhhaadi (Gujarati Alphabet)
- Numbers in Gujarati Script (1-100)
- English (Arab) Numerals (1-12), to enable learners to read the numbers on a clock and dial numbers on a mobile phone
- Simple to complex spellings
- Names of days and months
- How to sign one’s own name
- How to spell one’s own and family members’ names

In order to assess participants’ learning levels, three tests are conducted. A mostly oral test is given at the beginning of the session in order to ascertain base levels. The next test is given at the programme’s six-month mark, and the last one is conducted at the end of the year. The goal is to have most of the class reach the “A” level, which means they are able to write short sentences (4-5 words), read and write numbers in Gujarati script (1-100) and 1-12 in English numerals, and spell the name of their family members and their occupation. Facilitators themselves are given training in classroom management and pedagogy, and the process is supplemented by the regular visits of supervisors, who also engage with the class.

To avoid making the classes dry by over-emphasis on reading and writing skills, learners are also invited to the SEWA office for inter-community competitions and literacy games. The weekly schedule also includes songs and games for entertainment. To make classes inclusive, a convenient time in the afternoon is chosen when the women in the house are most likely to be free (e.g., 12-2 p.m., 2-4 p.m.).

Achievements and Outcomes

To learn about the impact of the literacy classes, we created a questionnaire for learners, facilitators and other members of the Academy to answer in a focus group setting. Because the programme stretched across multiple localities in Ahmedabad and because we could not reach all participants, we chose nine localities for focus groups: Ignash Park (Odhas), Keshav Nagar (Sabarmati), Shantinagar (Chandalodia), Akash Ganga Society, Indiranagar Lambha, Fatehwadi, Giridhnagar, and Amariwadi.

The impact of the literacy programme is vast and spread across several dimensions.

1. Learning how to sign names
   Being able to write their signature was, for many, a sign of liberation as a thumbprint is considered a symptom of backwardness. Almost all respondents were happy to learn how to sign, and they use it for withdrawing cash and responding to notes from the teacher.

2. Participating in their children’s education
   Mothers with small children going to 1st or 2nd Class now help them in their studies. Even grandmothers who are over 60-years-old are now keen participants. One grandmother shared that she contributed to her children’s studies by helping them with their homework and by knowing what her children were studying. Another respondent shared that in the past, she had to wait for her husband or ask her neighbours to decipher notes sent home by teachers, but that is not the case anymore.

3. Ease in using buses
   Many women stated that before they were able to read numbers, people used to mock them and sometimes suggest the wrong bus route, which was a major cause of concern. After taking a SEWA class, however, many now know the bus route numbers. A few can also read the destination names. In Keshavnagar, when the respondents were asked whether they could go to Himmatnagar or any other destination alone by reading the bus route, the answer was affirmative.

Inclusive Cities Project
4. **An increase in Gujarati literacy**

The facilitators from Muslim localities like Juhapura, where most women know Urdu, shared that their students found learning Gujarati helpful. The state government and municipal authorities issue all the forms and documents in Gujarati, so those who are literate in other languages like Urdu and Hindi are unable to understand the procedures and other requirements of the documents provisioned. The Gujarati classes were believed to be helpful for all non-Gujarati speakers as they can now read and understand the documents well.

5. **An increase in confidence**

Both facilitators and learners shared that they are now far more confident in their ability to negotiate their daily lives. Whereas once they were unaware of what existed beyond their communities, now they commute around the whole city and can also travel outside the city.

6. **Earners learning new skills**

A lot of women in the programme were already earning and had some source of livelihood, like embroidery or cleaning in factories. They stated that the course helped them to learn how to calculate their money; now they know how much they earn and how much to save, whereas before they rarely calculated to see how much their work was worth.

Women also learned to read newspapers and advertisements and to dial numbers on mobile phones. Learning the names of the months and days helped the women to keep up with their medical or financial requirements. In most cases, family members supported these students in joining the classes, but in a few cases, some women were mocked by their family members who would say “is this the age to go to class?” or “better take care of children then gossiping there”.

The dropouts were low and were often related to moving house or family emergencies. All learners were positive in their feedback for facilitators.

**The Mobile Van**

The Mobile Van has helped the literacy programme gain considerable momentum because organizers used the screenings as an opportunity to enroll women in classes. 2011 survey reports state that out of the 214 women interviewed, 24 enrolled in literacy classes post-screening. When it visited communities, the Mobile Van team shared details of various government welfare schemes and identity cards. By sharing the details about this Unique Identification Number Card, the SEWA team helped ensure that women got ration cards free of cost and could access subsidized food.

**Lessons Learned**

All the stakeholders—from the learners to the literacy team—helped us to find the way forward for the programme. Through the period of reflection necessary to write this report, we found that the following corrective measures will help make the programme better:

1. **Follow up with literacy class alumni**

   It was evident in the Akash Ganga Society, Amraiwadi, that follow-up is indeed important because many learners who had participated in the 2009 class lost their skills through the passage of time. Most of the participants there are still unable to read and few remember the numbers they had learned. It’s clear more processes are needed to keep their basic skills up.

2. **Ensure evolving pedagogy for aged and specially-abled women**

   Facilitators shared their frustrations when they had to deal with specially-abled or aged women who are considered to be slow learners. Helping those who are in that category is important to helping them become self-reliant and cannot be ignored at any cost. Learning new techniques to teach to such a group is worth looking into.
3. **Update curriculum to reflect external changes**

Gujarati (Devanagari) numerals, for instance, have lost significance in the wider culture. The route numbers of the Bus Rapid Transit, for instance, are not in Gujarati Script anymore because English (Arab) numerals have replaced them. The focus on English (Arab) number symbols must become very important in curriculum design.

Women learners also want to learn how to use modern technologies. For instance, they would like to be able to use government services like booking gas cylinders through text messaging.

Finally, the curriculum itself needs to be updated because in many places, it is repetitive and dry.

**Conclusion**

The literacy programme has played a significant role in shifting the participants perceptions of themselves and the opportunities available to them. By upgrading their literacy skills, they are able to better negotiate the city in which they live and work, and are consequently able to bring additional income to their families.

While we have made a very good start in implementing the literacy programme, we’ve also learned that there is more to be done in terms of curriculum upgrading and rigorous follow-up to make sure the women have more opportunities to use and benefit from their new skills.

**References**

**Street Vendors in Ahmedabad: Organizing for Job Security**


**Home-Based Workers in Ahmedabad: Organizing for Income Increases and Social Protection Measures**

Acknowledgements

- Home-based workers and members of SEWA for providing valuable information.
- Ms. Jaitun Pathan and Ms. Subhadra Bhoga Trade Union leaders for providing information about minimum wages and other provisions.
- Ms. Shalini Trivedi policy coordinator & Ms. Janhavi Dave Coordinator Inclusive Cities Programme.
- Manish Gautam- Researcher in Indian Institute for Human Settlements for helping in Data Analysis.

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SEWA Academy’s Literacy Intervention in Ahmedabad

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About WIEGO: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global network focused on securing livelihoods for the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities and rights. WIEGO creates change by building capacity among informal worker organizations, expanding the knowledge base about the informal economy and influencing local, national and international policies. Visit www.wiego.org.