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*Self Employed Women's
Association (SEWA)*

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[WOMEN, WORK AND PEACE: SEWA'S EXPERIENCE]

The paper prepared by SEWA shares the experience of SEWA on the process of organising women workers in the informal economy in different socio-economic backgrounds in south Asia and Africa. The approach that leads to economic empowerment of women, how women to women learning, knowledge sharing as an approach leads to replication in the different countries of Africa and south Asia.

Women, work and Peace: SEWA's Experiences

A Paper

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Key Message

To be poor is to be vulnerable. The condition of being poor, of being self-employed, and of being a woman are all distinct yet interrelated states of vulnerability. Poverty makes one become a chronic victim of forces beyond one's control. With every misfortune, problems compound, leaving one increasingly powerless and setting in motion a spiral descent into starker poverty. Only work, a steady source of income, and asset ownership can break one's fall. Peace is not just absence of war but poverty is also violence. For SEWA, peace means women's work, growth and equality. Productive work is the thread that weaves a society together - Ela R Bhatt



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I. Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a member based organization of poor informal sector women workers established in 1972 by Shri Ela R Bhatt with the twin goals of 1) Full-employment and Self-reliance. **Full employment** of members helps achieve work security, income security, food security and social security viz. healthcare, childcare, nutrition and shelter. **Self reliance** denotes making the members autonomous and self-reliant at both individual and community levels in terms of decision making abilities. These twin goals of SEWA are achieved through the strategies of struggle and development. The struggle tries to overcome the constraints and limitations emerging as a result of poor socioeconomic conditions. Development strengthens the women's economic status, thereby enhancing and achieving social security. SEWA's experience says that the foundation of development for women is stronger if built on four core pillars of 1) organizing, 2) capacity building 3) capital formation 4) building women's own enterprises. Accordingly, SEWA members own 4813 SHGs, 160 cooperatives, 15 economic federations and 3 producer companies.

II. Vulnerability of Women in Informal Sector

SEWA's guiding principles were based on the Gandhian philosophy that lies at the heart of all work. The approach of SEWA in war and conflict areas is "women work and peace". SEWA believes in philosophy of rebuilding lives through economic rehabilitation of women. The philosophy has been developed based on the work done by SEWA since last 16 years with affected women in various countries of South Asia. SEWA has worked with the women and their families affected by earthquake, tsunami, cyclone, riots, internal conflict war etc. SEWA's experience has shown that inspite of suffering with trauma and loss of livelihoods, work is a healer. However, our experience has also shown that when women suffer not only from natural disasters but also from social oppression, women loose all hope therefore it is first essential to understand situation of women and children even before starting work with them.

Our founder Elaben says that "Poverty is nothing but a form of violence, an injustice which is perpetuated at behest and with consent of the society. Even the illiterate can run their businesses and earn, run households. Thus, women's work is part of economy of

nurturance. Women from war torn countries say that peace is food on table, peace is work that brings income and create assets, peace is children going to school and peace is feeling of security to be able to plan for the future.”

SEWA’s experience has shown that whether they are affected by cyclone or earthquake, the women demanded work. Women want to rebuild the lives and livelihoods through work and income security.

“After the earthquake, we sat in group of about twenty people. Even at night we wanted to be together. The embroidery work only supported us. Then we formed a committee for the village and it took over all the reconstruction. But I would like to emphasize that it was our embroidery work that was crucial. Every 10 days we would get paid out of our embroidery work. Money in our own hands gave us dignity and assurance for existence and think about future. Through that we gained our confidence and now we have been able to rebuild our lives. We at SEWA call this ownership, community owned rehabilitation under women’s leadership.” Gauriben Brahman, Bakhutra village, Radhanpur, Gujarat, India

Women look for dignity rather than charity SEWA’s 46 years of experience has helped us believe that the key to fair, peaceful and secured society is in hands of women, economic empowerment and their organized strength.

III. SEWA’s Approach: Vulnerability to Strength

“How to work on Women’s Economic Empowerment within conflict ridden societies, in most difficult situations, where the strength of the society is attacked; the society’s fabric is breaking” For SEWA, the challenge while organizing women in conflict affected states or countries is also how to work on women’s economic empowerment.

SEWA believes in Gandhian ideology of truth, non-violence and women’s self reliance. The SEWA’s approach of sister to sister learning and knowledge sharing bring in sisters from other countries to visit SEWA for three to four weeks for exposure visit and trainings. During these visits, they meet SEWA members and visit economic organization owned by SEWA members to know about their life stories, their struggle and challenges and how they overcome the struggle. The women learn as to how collective organizing developed sisterhood, solidarity and strength to overcome their challenges which leads

to economic empowerment of women. These women to women learning, knowledge sharing as an approach leads to replication in the different countries of Africa and south Asia.

Dabire Elina, a participant from the Burkina Faso team said that, " SEWA's message is for all our African sisters. The groups of Burkina & Mali are functionally different, where as in SEWA a commonality runs through all the groups. The master trainers have very good command on what they deliver and they have good information of the topics. Moreover the leaders articulated very well about their life stories, struggle and how they overcame struggle and they are also aware of the current affairs. The RUDI value chain was a great learning for me. The way in which the Rudibens do marketing is amazing. All these will help us in Africa.

Having worked in disasters and conflict affected regions, SEWA's approach to economic rehabilitation which brings work and income security which brings hope and peace. This has been tested and proven. Based on the same approach and experience, SEWA works on sisters to sisters connections for peace and development in neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar.

In Africa, SEWA works on sister to sister knowledge sharing through support of various UN agencies such as FAO, IFAD and through Ministry of External Affairs of Government of India.

IV. Women work and peace in South Asia : SEWA's Experience

A. Earthquake in Gujarat

The roots of SEWA's learning on economic rehabilitation goes back to 2001 when SEWA started relief work where entire villages were destroyed and tremors were still continued and the very first thing women asked was work. Women shared that work provides income, dignified life, constructive occupation, reduces anxiety and weaves positivity which develops strength to impend against the fear.

SEWA's experience says that during natural or manmade disasters, if women get work and income in their hands then they take charge of economic rehabilitation by involving themselves in productive, meaningful and sustainable work. Slowly women get economic security and then she is able to deal with very many vulnerabilities and social issues. At SEWA we call it as "women work and peace". Once she has economic security

then they are able to access healthcare, education to children, asset building small savings tools and equipments etc

IFAD partnered with SEWA to work on economic rehabilitation and rebuilding the livelihoods of earthquake affected communities. SEWA led to brining back strength of people's participation, restored livelihoods and consolidated community solidarity with generating alternative employment and have contributed to children's education and women empowerment.

B. Organising Women in Jammu & Kashmir and North East Indian States

In 2009, SEWA started working in Jammu & Kashmir to help the conflict affected rural poor women in the areas who are witnessing ongoing struggle in Valley since many years. SEWA's members reached out to the affected women of Jammu & Kashmir's remote terrains, and became conversant and developed familiarity and understanding them and their families who put in trust on SEWA and slowly the path of development started by setting up Shahjar Community Business Resource centre (SCRC) in Kupwara where the women started learning not only new skills but also developed self confidence, sisterhood and Gandhian values which motivated them to take leadership to develop local fragile economy and new avenues. We believe that the livelihoods sources in hands of women will gradually slow down the dependency on terrorist income sources. Now there are about 5000 women from Kupwara, Uri, Ganderbal, Pulwama, Sri Nagar and Leh districts who have been trained by SEWA and involved in activities of Cutting and Tailoring, Handicraft, Agriculture, Solar Energy, Food Processing Handloom for which the centre provides value chain support. Currently SEWA is encouraging the Kashmiri women to form their own economic organization. The work of SEWA has been spread now in more 100 villages of Kashmir.

SEWA's approach of organizing exposure visit and conduct training of trainers at SEWA through SEWA Manager ni School¹ (SMS) leads to immense learning through sharing of experiences. It also leads to confidence building amongst the women. One of the sister's life story is as follows.

¹ **SEWA Manager ni School – SMS** is a resource organization of SEWA for building managerial capacities among grassroots women.

It is usually the old who want peace, but our organization is young, then why did it remember peace now? For SEWA, peace means work. Shri Elaben Bhatt gave example of Bachiben who engaged in embroidery work. Bachiben had some tension with her husband. Her husband punished her and took away her embroidery work. Bachiben was very disturbed. When women engage in stitching, embroidery, bidi making work they are engrossed and they forget agony and pain. Bachiben was miserable as her embroidery was taken away. She substituted embroidery by tattooing her legs, day and night. However, peace is not passivity. If we accept injustice, peace can never prevail. To retain peace and equality, work is vital. Motherhood, care, affection are integral in women. Women have unique positivity in them. Our work contributes in the progress of society. Everyone has work on hand, and this work has growth and peace within it. SEWA engages in such work which reduces debt, increases savings, and access to learn new things. If we all hold each other's hand, we can create our dream society. We are already heading on the footsteps. **Shri Elaben Bhatt:**

"I lost my father in political turmoil. He was the only bread earner of the family. The life after his death was challenging as day in and out was struggle for food and other basic necessities. I wanted to continue study but had to leave half way to help my mother. In my home town around Kupwara, rarely do we have

electricity and thus mostly we have to collect firewood for cooking and eating. I was lucky to get a chance to undergo training at SEWA on assembling and repairing solar lights with a group of 25 women. After learning, I wanted to bring this to Kupwara to reduce drudgery of collecting firewood. The training at SEWA was life changing, I became strong, confident and determined girl from the shy and limited speaker. The stories of overcoming struggle inspite of all odds of the SEWA women, brought me confidence that I can also do. On return to Kupwara, I formed a group of women to assemble and sale solar lights. It was not easy for a young girl to form an enterprise. The male members of the village challenged me to repair the light of the village mosque which was out of order for two years. I applied my SEWA learning and confidence which I gathered and I repaired the light and it fleshed. I felt so honored when the Maulwisaheb came to my house to honor me. It was a life changing incident for me as we as for the entire village women of my village. I truly understood the meaning of SEWA's strategy of struggle and development with this incident." - **Rubina Akhtar** – 21 year old single parent daughter from Kupwara, Kashmir.

Similarly SEWA has also reached out to the women in North Eastern State of India since 2006-07 e.g. Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya to support women overcome their ongoing struggle and internal disturbances. By understanding the needs and challenges, SEWA has set up Community Learning cum Business Resource Centres and helped develop cadre of local master trainers and needed technology which has now created the

women led value chain in the common trades where women are involved through developing the skills e.g. bakery and food processing, service industry, banking etc.

"We had seen conflict in my region as well as my home. I had passed through the physical abuse from my husband. It's been a long journey from life of fear to dignified fearful life for me. SEWA with Kokila Vikas imparted training to us and convinced my husband to send to SEWA for training. Journey from Assam to Gujarat to SEWA was life changing journey for me. Train ride, professional training in food processing and management helped me to come out of my shell of shyness, bring confidence and start work of making papads through with other sisters like me at Community Learning Centre set up by SEWA in my area. Income, food and security through my income have certainly brought peace within me, my family and my area." Aaronaben Bora, Pur Bhogra village, Assam

SEWA always believes in sisterhood and solidarity. When women come together, it helps them in building self confidence. She feels that I am not alone but there are 100s and 1000s of women who are in the same situation and if they are able to change their lives, she can also change. The Integration of women in economic activities is vital to increase the pace of development and household level food security. By this approach, SEWA could successfully rollout programmes across south Asia.

C. Organising Women in Neighbouring South Asia

On similar approach and experience and a wish to bridge sister to sister connection for peace and development, SEWA took the responsibility for rebuilding lives of the affected women in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar.

Now, SEWA has been working in South Asia, for almost 9 years. Women being 48% of the total population of south Asia represent 2/3 of the poor in Asia. Some countries like Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are the worst sufferer of consecutive 30+ years of internal conflicts and recurring disasters. All these have not only destroyed the physical and human assets but also fabric of the society and killed the hope in humanity and peace. The worst suffers are the women who are widowed with burden of nourishing families or disabled husbands in a harsh socio-political environment with lack of education, skills, employment, income and security.

D. Sabah Baghe Khazana Social Association (SBKSA) – Women's owned Social Enterprise in Afghanistan

SEWA's journey of hope and survival of Afghan sisters began in 2006 when 1.5 million widows alone in Kabul were struggling with survival of large family with day to day challenges due to their illiteracy, social oppression and absence of income to feed their family. SEWA with its moral responsibility, initiated work of skill building first by setting up Women's Vocational Training centres in Kabul. The only soothing touch for Afghan women at that point was getting income by which they can feed their children.

SEWA set up vocational training centre in Kabul to impart vocational skills including entrepreneurial aptitude and build a collective enterprise. Again how do we work on economic rehabilitation and reduce the drudgery of women in order to build the local capacity and turn it into the women owned organisation, a cadre of master trainers was trained at SEWA in India. When the women came to SEWA and saw how women members of SEWA has come out of poverty through their collective enterprises it helped in building confidence of Afghan sisters as well from completion of vocational skills through the women returned back determined to set up their own local organisations and a training centre to train the other conflict affected sisters. The Afghan women formed their own social business Association called SABAH Bagh-e-Khazana Social Association (SBKSA) which has revenue of USD 1,77,400 and 70% income to sisters upto 15000 Afghani per sister. Today the centre has now become only a training centre that impact skills and livelihoods opportunities but a hub of development, sisterhoods where women can come and share freely and find solace and return back with hope for a healthy future.

Since 2015, with the support of USAID, Ministry of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan and Ministry of External Affairs of India we are now expanding to provinces. Currently SEWA has enabled the social enterprise BaagayKhazana SABAH Association in setting up and run vocational training centres in Mazar-e-Sharif, Istalif and Kabul while process is on for Herat and Kandhar.

"I am Payeenda bibi living in Baracki, Kabul. God has always taken away my loved ones since my childhood, I became orphan at the age of 3. I lost my father when I was 1 and in two years my mother died. My uncle took me to his house and I grew up with his daughter. My uncle didn't allow me to go to school. I had to start earning to sustain myself by making threads for embroidery from very tender age.

My uncle arranged my marriage at 16 years to a husband who was illiterate. We had six children but very less income from labour work. The second shock of my life came during Taliban days, when I lost my husband in rocket attack. The life became very miserable with six children and with no source of income to feed my children and to fulfill basic necessities. Life is a struggle. I underwent SEWA training and started working from home. The income that I earn from work is a blessing to me.” - **Payeendabibi Khadem Hussain**, 40 years, Baracki, Kabul, **Afghanistan**

E. Women’s Self Employed Development Cooperative Society : Women’s owned Social Enterprise in Sri Lanka

Having seen the success and results of economic rehabilitation programme of Afghanistan, the Government of India invited SEWA to initiate the similar economic rehabilitation programme in Sri Lanka. SEWA started the sister to sister economic rehabilitation programme after understanding the needs and challenges of war affected sisters in Eastern Province. SEWA started developing bonding with the sisters and set up Community Learning Centre (CLC) and Trade Facilitation Centres (TFC) in Batticaloa by inculcating the Gandhian principles. A cadre of master trainers was trained at SEWA in India who eventually trained war affected sisters through CLC and TFC. The trained sisters formed the first ever cooperative society called Women’s Self Employed Development Cooperative society (WSDCS). The cooperative has achieved turnover of USD 107,376/- with avg income of USD 27 to USD 183 a month in hands of sisters.

“In 2009, I was living in Northern Province of Sri Lanka with my husband and one year old son. We had to relocate several times from village living behind everything. Once we were hiding in small underground earthen narrow water licking cave during heavy gun shots and a bomb was exploded then. We came out and started running on the open ground to save our lives. One bullet hit my husband and he fell on the ground in blood pool. I was with my 1 year old son and bullets were still on. My husband told me to save my and son’s life. I had to leave my husband dying in the middle of the ground. Now I and my little son are struggling for life. I lost everything in war, my husband, my house, my belongingseverything.....I underwent training on garment making at SEWA and became master trainers and started earning which helped me became sustainable and now my elder mother stopped migration to Qatar to sustain us. - **Sumathy Chandrasekaran**” - 29 years Beach road, Kaluthavalai village - 04, Kaluvanjikudy DS, Batticaloa, Eastern Province, **Sri Lanka**

SEWA's Women, Work and Peace			
Sr. No.	Country/State	No of Women covered	Earning Range (Local Currency)
1	Gujarat Internal Conflict	235	upto 10000
2	Kashmir Internal Conflict	5750	upto 10000
3	North Eastern India	4412	upto 12000
4	Afghanistan	3500	upto 22000
5	Sri Lanka	2650	upto 40000

V. Women, Work and Knowledge Sharing to Build the Economic Enterprises in Africa: SEWA's Experience

Poverty in Africa is predominantly rural. More than 70 per cent of the continent's poor people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for food and livelihood. In Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 218 million people live in extreme poverty. Among them are rural poor people in Eastern and Southern Africa, an area that has one of the world's highest concentrations of poor people. The incidence of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is increasing faster than the population.

In Africa, 85 percent of farms are less than 2 hectares. These small farmers are dispersed and suffer from high transaction costs and poor access to services, infrastructure, information, knowledge and productive assets and markets. According to the *State of Food Insecurity Report 2012* (SOFI), in the rural household, the landless or land-poor (those who own small plots of land or unprofitable land and lack the resources to maintain its fertility or improve the quality) are often the poorest of the poor, with a high proportion of these people being women. Women comprise a significant share of the labour force engaged in agriculture: as farm labourers, producers, marketers, and agricultural entrepreneurs. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 50 percent to 75 percent of the agricultural labour force is supplied by women. Closing the gender gap in agriculture would put more resources in the hands of women and strengthen their voice within the household – a proven strategy.

At SEWA, majority of its members (almost 54%) are small farmers or agriculture workers. The challenge is why does a farmer remain hungry? SEWA has initiated the agriculture campaign to address this challenge and to give recognition to women as farmers. The agriculture campaign also works on the approach of treating farm as an enterprise. Through the agriculture campaign, SEWA has also built women farmers' owned and managed agriculture supply chain. This strengthens their farming and builds climate resilient farm practices.

It is this experience of SEWA which has been recognised by the UN agencies like FAO, IFAD, World Bank to help strengthen agriculture and farming in Africa under women's leadership. The very first such initiative was in 2010.

SEWA was approached by Global Fairness initiative (GFI) that works for Shea Nut Economic Empowerment programme to help organize the women farmers in Ghana with the same approach. GFI with support of World Bank designed the PASNSPA - Ghana women farmer's partnership programme with an objective to improve the Ghanaian producer's skills to benefit from the value chain of shea nut production. The programme was conducted in September 2011 where the women farmers from PASNSPA Ghana visited SEWA and met the women farmers of SEWA in rural areas to understand collective farmers groups and how SEWA helps and integrate, builds capacity of women farmers to strengthen the supply chain of the women farmers and hire up in value chain. The groups were imparted community based organising training apart from the practical visits to the group members and RUDI processing centres to understand how the women farmers came out of poverty. The PASNSPA has become a more effective organization by adapting to the innovations introduced by SEWA in their new strategic plan, the exchange meant as an inflexion point to think more broadly on how to build a better future, and commit their workers to a broader vision of the activities they can accomplish by taking external advises. Pagsung indicates that the exchange was indeed a unique opportunity for the women to learn strategies for overcoming economic, legal, and cultural barriers and to develop practical business practices that adapt to women producers' needs. The program economically empowered women producers by establishing greater ownership over their supply chain, building capacity among producers, and improving production quality to facilitate access to regional and international markets.

The India-Ghana Women Farmers Partnership is premised on three fundamental principles:

1. Women - especially poor small holder farmers - offer one of the greatest untapped potentials for promoting sustainable economic growth and food security.

2. Broad and sustained poverty alleviation requires livelihood opportunities, improved access to markets, enabling policy environments, and resources to make proven models accessible to women small-holder enterprises in developing nations.
3. Successful models from the South provide valuable learning and effective partners for other South countries.

Currently, women export almost 20 tones of Shea butter to Japan. For every 1 container of Shea butter, women collectively receive 30 Euros from it, coming to a total of 600 Euros from this recent contract.ⁱ

Having seen the success of women to women learning, sharing of experiences and knowledge, how it leads to replicate. SEWA has been working on organizing such exposure and dialogues programmes regularly for the women farmers of Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Kenya,

“Some Johhana opined ,” I was very impressed by the structure of SEWA. I feel that structure is very necessary in order to connect with the group. The union of groups unlike in SEWA is not differentiated. Every member respects one another. If you respect someone you get the respect back. It is SEWA that gives confidence to its members and the members in turn trust their SEWA. I am impressed by the way SEWA works by identifying the issues in a village. It may be possible that few members may not agree with certain things but SEWA does not impose anything on its members.”

A group of West African women leaders representing women professional organizations participated in an Exposure and Dialogue program (EDP) hosted by SEWA in 2010 as part of institutional and organizational strengthening. The aim was to allow African women leaders involved in basic agricultural commodities, to acquire insights and a deeper understanding of some of the factors, processes, policies and institutions that constrain or enable access by the women farmers to the markets. Further a programme to help foster producers organizations and cooperatives was developed for developing capacity to integrate markets and improve the economic services to its members. In November 2011, a workshop was organized in Mali which was attended by a senior team who put forth recommendations to address the existing needs and issues for income generating activities, the structure and governance, degree of integration into the market, access to market integration, access to credit, training and capacity building of the members of the organizations run by the African women.

Based on the recommendations by SEWA and the approach developed by the FAO, exposure and training visit was organized for Ten Tietaa Union from Burkina Faso who

are into cereal production visited SEWA in November 2011. The women attended training programme at SEWA Manager ni school on management and regulatory affairs for the unions established by them. The team visited the various women's collective organizations of SEWA to understand the working of executive committee of cooperative, mobilizing communities, forming women's collective and women led supply chain model.

In 2011, the Mali team from Femmes en Action underwent training with SEWA. It has approximately 1500 total members and they are primarily involved in processing cereal and fish. Few of the members are also involved in horticulture, fabric dyeing, sewing and imparting pottery trainings. It has in all 39 cooperatives comprising of 34 female and 5 mixed-gender. The head quarters is centered in Bamako. It is built on the idea of "defense of women's interests and socio-economic empowerment within their member organizations"

SEWA's mandate on ensuring fundamental characteristics: both focus on poverty alleviation and food security, with a strong emphasis on the empowerment of rural women engaged in agriculture. While FAO contributes to improving the livelihoods of poor rural farmers through policy and programme support, standard setting and knowledge generation, SEWA contributes to the empowerment of small and marginal women farmers and informal sector workers through its grassroot campaigns and social mobilization. SEWA, as a labour union, works primarily to strengthen the position, and advocate for the rights, of the informal waged labour force. By building the economic organizations of its members, SEWA helps them make the transition from wage labour to becoming the owners and managers of their own trades, thus creating alternative livelihood opportunities.

Both FAO and SEWA operate in collaboration with other development organizations to reduce poverty and food insecurity in the world. Looking at the situation and to reap the benefits of the SEWA experience in Africa, a series of Exposure and Exchange Programmes (EEP) has been organized between women from cooperative and producer organizations in West Africa and SEWA in the framework of South-South cooperation. These South-South exchanges and the sharing of experiences through peer-to-peer training enhanced managerial skills, and financial literacy to produce, process, package and market more effectively.

The African delegations got learning on SEWA's approach of economic rehabilitation through setting up women's own economic organizations and women led value chain especially in Agro food processing. This also helped in replicating the SEWA's value based work in countries like Ethiopia, Mali, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique etc which is long standing and growing.

Similarly, SEWA founded StreetNet, an international movement for street vendors based in Durban at the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU), SEWA's sister union in South Africa, as well as the "National Alliance of Street Vendors of India".

"Rahema, a woman leader, who was part of the African delegation said, "We want to have our own women's bank like SEWA bank, so that we can get working capital to build our businesses."

African Development Bank invited SEWA to be part of the annual general meeting held in our own state, Gujarat India in 2017 to share our own experiences with the organizations of Africa during the panel discussions as well as side events. SEWA has learnt that there are many similarities between the women with whom SEWA is working in India and the African women in terms of the trades, economic situation, challenges and opportunities. SEWA organised a round table conference to bring out nexus between Energy, Agriculture, Work and Women and its impact on Sustainable Agriculture.

SEWA-Africa relation is on an equal footing and has so much to learn from each other. SEWA propose a SEWA-Africa Women Economic Partnership which can focus on three areas: Women's access to ownership of ecosystems-based agriculture, women's ownership of renewable energy products and women's access to capital to strengthen livelihoods. The objective was to organize informal economy in African countries through integrated approach. Under the programme SEWA worked in nine countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, South Africa.

SEWA explored trade linkages with five African nations – South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal and Tanzania – under the aegis of its six-year-long 'SETU Africa programmes' to help strengthen their women cooperatives. A few of SEWA's best practices that these African woman leaders hope to replicate include our board structure existing in sister organisations, Bal Seva Kendras and how to strengthen cooperatives.

The Tanzanian delegation along with a three-member team from Mozambique visited SEWA to learn about how to organise women workers at the grassroot level and help them build their own sustainable MBOs through an integrated approach.

VI. Outcomes under South-South Cooperation: Knowledge Sharing by SEWA

The development experiences are shared between the countries to reap the benefit of the tested and proven on-field experience, SEWA's four decades of experience on various geographical, cultural and trade areas has helped in following achievements under south-south cooperation.

- a. Under south-south cooperation, SEWA could successfully replicate the SEWA's experiences on economic empowerment in **9 countries** of Africa directly reaching out to more than **10000+ African women**.
- b. SEWA's programme directly worked with **16000+ women** from the disasters affected areas (including India) but the actual benefit reached to **52000+ people**. When the charge of development is given in hands of women then the **income goes in hands of women** and thus the benefit trickles down to entire family. Women priorities their children and family members needs first and thus the money is mostly spent to satisfy basic needs of food, shelter, education.
- c. SEWA has set up **182 registered economic organizations owned and managed by women of informal sector** in India and other countries. SEWA could set up women's economic organizations in any situations, be it the most oppressed society for women in Afghanistan or the most conflicted affected zone of Kashmir. All the economic organizations promoted in all the countries are efficiently operational and providing platform to more and more affected women. Thus the tested methodology of SEWA is successfully working in any situation.
- d. SEWA's programme helped organizations of these countries to take up **approach of** development through developing **enterprising** skills and forming **women's economic collectives**.
- e. The skill development programme of SEWA under aegis of SEWA Manager ni school (SMS) provides platform to the poor, illiterate women of informal sector to the business schools reached to **8,00,000** women to form **4813 SHGs**. SMS focuses on practical training and the techniques of the training which can be easily grasped by the informal sector women of any geographical and country area.
- f. SEWA integrated **programme is designed collectively and inclusively** with the local governments/organisations and communities by including

the needs, demands and local market condition of the women and area. The interconnected programme of skills development and value chain support ensures conversion of skills into livelihoods. Almost **65 to 70%** of the **women** in these countries have been linked to **decent income**.

- g. **Women led value chain** has been set up in these areas for **farm and non-farm trades in 8 countries of Asia and 5 countries of Africa** which helped women to **hire up** in value chain.
- h. SEWA has helped the women of informal sector and women headed families for **financial inclusion** and the women could buy **productive assets** on their own name.
- i. SEWA has developed **informal sector trade friendly technology** for **technological inclusion** of the informal sector women.
- j. SEWA was invited by African Development Bank (AfDB) at its recent held Annual general meeting in Gujarat in Indian in May 2017 to hold a round table on "*Sustainable Agriculture - nexus of Women, Agriculture, Energy, Water and Livelihoods*" wherein SEWA's approach of agriculture campaign and building women owned Agriculture Supply Chain and the model of RUDI² has been highly appreciated and accepted by the AfDB to be replicable in its members countries.

VII. Learning from SEWA Experience

From years of experience, working with women of war and conflict affected regions of India and south Asia we learnt that economic rehabilitation plays on key role in providing dignity, food security and economic security to households. SEWA's approach has been to identify the needs or issues of women and work on addressing them. This encourages participation of local women and gradually their communities. There is mutual accountability, a sense of belongingness.

SEWA firmly believes that exposure and training at SEWA, by the SEWA member's own economic organizations is the key turning point. Talking to and listening to the life struggles of other women, and how they overcame them made sisters of Africa realize that they were indeed strong. They could make a difference. They need to organise.

² **RUDI Multi-trading Company** is a small and marginal farmer's owned and managed company under which SEWA has set up women led supply chain to directly link small marginal farmers products with markets.

This is SEWAs women to women organizing. It helps not only transfer the knowledge and skills, but helps inculcate values, ideology and tremendous confidence building.

Once the women have economic security, SEWA works on building their own local organization. This becomes local women's social enterprise – which then sustains, scales and expands to many provinces.

SEWA's "sister to sister" approach of women, work and peace has taken a shape of movement now from moving towards Africa from south Asia In the current arena where many of the countries in world are facing challenges of war, conflict or disturbances, it is very essential to work on the Gandhian principles to bring affected women out of trauma, regain faith in humanity and rebuild their lives. SEWA considers it a moral responsibility to work for the affected families under women's leadership in Africa.

This is women to women organizing- People's partnership. We are only the facilitators. This is SEWA !

SEWA values and gives importance to SEWA Africa south-south cooperation on access to markets, developing social protection net, constructive organizing and shaping global and regional policies.

ⁱ International Institute of Social studies December 2013 report on "Transforming the lives of Poor Rural women in the Shea Butter Industry through Entrepreneurship"