

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

March 3, 2021

About the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

- SEWA is a national trade union registered in 1972 with a membership base of over 1.5 million (2018) poor, self-employed women workers from the informal economy across 16 states in India.
- Formation: It was formed SEWA in 1972, in Ahmedabad.
- SEWA was founded in 1972 by Gandhian and civil rights leader Ela Bhatt as a branch of Textile Labour Association (TLA), a labour union founded by Gandhi in 1918
- It grew out of the Women's Wing of the Textile Labour association, TLA, India's oldest and largest union of textile workers founded in 1920 by Anasuya Sarabhai and Mahatma Gandhi.
- The original purpose of the Women's Wing was to provide training in sewing, spinning, knitting, embroidery, and other welfare activities to the wives and daughters of mill workers.
- By 1981, relations between SEWA and TLA had become strained. The interests of TLA, representing workers in the organized sector did not align easily with the interests of SEWA, representing unorganized women workers.

Why was it created?

The SEWA movement is a confluence of 3 movements: the labour movement, the women's movement and cooperative movement . Its vision is therefore influenced by the 3 of them which seek to improve the lives of marginalized social groups. Its principles are also inspired by Gandhian ethics of truth and

non-violence, collective strength and unity of worker of all communities, leadership by women, workers and work/employment for all

Its principles

It follows the Gandhian principles of Satya (truth), Ahinsa (non-violence), Sarvadharm (integrating all faiths. all people) and Khadi (propagation of local employment and self-reliance)

Goals

SEWA has been working for almost 5 decades to improve the livelihoods of poor self-employed women workers from the informal economy, through various initiatives using technology, technical training, microfinance, market linkages, natural resource management etc. across over 125 different trades with the twin goals of

- **Full Employment:** Achieve work security, income security, food security and social security viz. healthcare, childcare, nutrition and shelter and
- **Self Reliance:** Autonomous and self-reliant at both individual and community levels in terms of economic as well as decision making abilities.

To achieve its goals of Full-Employment and Self-Reliance for its members and to facilitate representation, economic empowerment, collective strength & increased bargaining power of its members, **SEWA follows integrated approach of**

- Organizing for collective strength
- Capacity building to stand firm in competitive market
- Capital formation for risk mitigation & fight poverty
- Social security to enhance well-being & productivity