



## A. News from Setu Africa

### Meeting of SETU Africa team with the Tanzania High Commission

The SETU Africa team met with Ms. Leluu O Abdallah, Counsellor Political & Economic Affairs Tanzania High Commission, in New Delhi on 19th December, 2014 to appraise her about our programme and to find some common ground between the women of our two countries, their issues and the overall well-being of our peoples. We exchanged our views on how we can build further solid bonds between our two countries with women in the lead. We discussed about our SETU Africa programme in detail and role and support by the Government of India, and the possibilities it holds for Tanzanian and Indian women, in particular. Her response is shared here:

*"Dear Mr. Kumar,*

*A Very Warm Greeting from Tanzania High Commission!*

*We acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your above mail. Kindly note that, we [Tanzania High Commission] are equally grateful to have a constructive interaction with the esteemed delegation of SEWA's management. We also believe that our productive discussion denoted our seriousness and commitment in promoting further mutual development aspirations of our countries.*

*In view of above together with a specific focus on women development Tanzania High Commission is highly commending the Indian Government sponsored programme "strengthening African People's Organisations and NGOs-SETU Africa" as well as the SEWA's operation of that programme through the integrated approach in poverty reduction and self-reliance for women and their families. Consequently, On behalf of the Head of Mission, the People and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government of India for including our country in this commendable programme.*

*The people and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania feel extremely honoured to*

### In this issue

#### A. News from Setu Africa

- Meeting of SETU Africa team with the Tanzania High Commission
- WISE started micro- pension scheme with the help of SEWA

#### B. News from SEWA

- Participation of Megha Mandli members in Sattvik Mela for directly linking primary agricultural producers with the formal market
- Empowerment of adolescent girls through computers and life skill training by SEWA Academy
- Technology in the hands of women



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*be integrated in this pro- economic development programme which has been in addition effectively and productively conducted by your Organisation [SEWA].*

*The programme is extremely important and it's an appropriate encouragement mechanism for speeding the development of individual, families the nation as well the whole.*

*Hence, Tanzania appeals for SEWA leadership to maintain the harmonizing tempo for the implementation of the aforesaid programme which has been vastly and warmly welcomed not only by women but with all People and the Government of Tanzania with great hope that they will soon witness and cherish its effective achievements.*

*With Warm Regards,  
Ms. Leluu O Abdallah  
Counsellor Political & Economic Affairs  
Tanzania High Commission  
EP-15 C, Chanakyapuri  
New Delhi-1100210*

## **WISE started micro- pension scheme with the help of SEWA**

Organisation for Women In Self Employment (WISE), our partner organization in Ethiopia, has started its micro-pension scheme after getting some help and information from SEWA Bank. The organization learned from SEWA's experiences regarding pension for those who engaged in the informal sector. Accordingly, the organization designed a micro-pension scheme called "Saving Today for Tomorrow" for WISE cooperative members. The program is linked with the WISE-promoted SACCOs or savings and credit cooperatives, and their union.

In this regard Ms. Tsigie Haile, Director, WISE, shared that "WISE has already started the micro-pension scheme. To date we have 579 members who have started saving at least Birr 30 per month. Some save more. I will send you the English policy and procedures soon. It is not yet translated from Amharic. The amount of money collected has reached Birr 47,700. This is a good start. It is managed by the Union. We hope one day the government will embrace self-employed people in its pension scheme. Thank you for sharing your experience. We learnt from you."

This is an encouraging development and a concrete outcome of our SETU-Africa programme.

To know more about WISE, please visit- <http://www.wise.org.et/>

## B. News from SEWA

### Participation of Megha Mandli members in Sattvik Mela for directly linking primary agricultural producers with the formal market



Figure 1 Megha Mandli Stall for selling agricultural produce

The Tapi Jilla Megha Adivasi Mahila Kheti Utpadak Co-operative Mandli Ltd. is a primary agricultural producers' co-operative promoted by the Gujarat State Co-operative Federation. It is a district level co-operative in one of the tribal districts of Gujarat in India. It has 434 shareholders, all tribal women, and provides different inputs and services for agriculture. It also helps in linking them directly to the market so that they can get good prices for their produce

directly, eliminating middlemen. A team of 11 Megha Mandli members participated in Sattvik Mela held from the 20th to 22nd December in Ahmedabad. This annual mela is organized to stimulate demand for local crops and their varieties from different regions of Gujarat, thus promoting their consumption and a market for small farmers. The Megha Mandli arranged two stalls, one for their agricultural produce and another for the local Adivasi (tribal) food. The Megha Mandli was among the very few participating organizations which is from a tribal area, and the only women's co-operative from Tapi district. This was the first such exhibition or mela in which mandli members were participating. The idea was to provide exposure to co-



Figure 2 Ms. Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India, visiting Megha Mandli's stall

operative members and gauge the market demand for their produce. During the three day mela, members learned about the supply chain,



from farm to market, including which types of products should be exhibited, their grading, pricing, packaging and other aspects of marketing. Through their combined efforts, they sourced different produce like millet, maize, jaggery, sesame seed, bamboo crafts, local variety of rice and Nagli Papad from 8 villages. One stall served the traditional Adivasi food, all freshly cooked food items. Most of them were cooking for public consumption for the first time. After getting positive feedback from customers, their confidence increased. They sold different types of food like rotis made of maize, bajra, jowar, rice and nagli. Some traditional hot beverages like green tea and Vadku (a traditional soup made of jowar flour and butter milk) also sold very well.

A total of 700 customers visited this stall in three days and cooperative members handled them without any external help. They were cooking, serving and also managing the cash counter. On the inaugural day, Ms Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India, visited the stall and asked about different dishes and also about the activities of Megha Mandli.

### **Empowerment of adolescent girls through computers and life skill training by SEWA Academy**

The Indian Academy for Self-Employed Women or SEWA Academy is the focal point of SEWA's capacity- building efforts. SEWA Academy functions as SEWA's "University", providing our members their first introduction to a formal learning environment .It is also known as the "training center" for poor self – employed women. SEWA Academy plays an important role in furthering the SEWA movement among the women. In grassroots movements like SEWA leadership must develop from the workers themselves, so that the organization can remain dynamic, effective and unified. To evoke and inspire such grassroots leadership, education is fundamental. Besides education and capacity- building it is also important to understand the life and work of self-employed women and convey this understanding to policy makers, activists, academics and the general public.



**Figure 3 Girls participating in computer training at one of the centre**

The Indian Academy for Self-Employed Women empowers self-employed women through a two-way process that increases their level of confidence as well. It develops them into leaders and takes them forward towards their own development. SEWA Academy creates awareness about the struggles, the issues and the experiences of SEWA members among the general population and the policy makers. It does this through efforts like training, literacy, research and

communication. The latter includes the Ansooya newsletter, Akashganga monthly booklet, Video SEWA (films made by women) and Rudi no Radio (community radio)

SEWA has learned from its experiences over the years that the tools of information and communication technology can be used as an important means for educating and exposing its members to better livelihood options and opportunities. The demand for such information and technology-related literacy is increasing. A major initiative has been the computer training course for its adolescent members.

### Technology in the hands of women

Video Sewa Cooperative was invited to participate in Ankur Film Festival. 'Aa nagar man marun



Figure 4 Video SEWA team conducting interview of one of SEWA members

pan sthan che' ("I also have place in the city") and 'Mare akash ambvun che' ("I want to reach the sky") were screened at the festival. This was followed by a panel discussion on the outreach and impact of videos by the cooperatives. There was much appreciation that the videos were made by the grassroots' women and also presented by them. Video cooperative, with a membership of 680, endeavors to create awareness for socio-

economic development of poor self-employed women. The cooperative's outreach is about 24,000 members and their families in urban and rural areas, through replays.

Many members enrolled their daughters in schools after watching "Kanya Kelavani Mahotsav" (young girls' education) and "Kanyaratna" program focused on the development of young girls. After watching the video "sat rupiya thi char lakh sudhini safar" ("The journey from Rs 7 to Rs. 4 lakhs"), many women opened their bank accounts. In many villages, the views of our members on child marriages have changed, after they saw the replay of "Bal Lagna" (child marriage) video film.

In order to link more members with technology, the cooperative gives training on video replay and photography. The cooperative plans to develop a photography club, where the children of SEWA member's will present their ideas through photography.



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