

# ***Research and Action at SEWA***

Shalini Sinha

**Self Employed Women's  
Association (SEWA)**



# SELF EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (SEWA), INDIA

- Member based organization of women workers in the informal economy
- Nearly 1 million members, all over India
- Rural as well as urban members

# RESEARCH at SEWA

- 'Action' oriented research
- Research guides and strengthens policy advocacy efforts
- Research informed by members and disseminated to the members
- Research guides SEWA's interventions

# Small and Marginal Farmers

- Study conducted in 2005, by SEWA
- Objectives –
  - Study the impact of liberalization on this sector
  - A baseline profile of SEWA's small and marginal farmer members
- Two rural districts, small and marginal farmers SEWA members; total sample size 250

## **Small and Marginal Farmers - *Findings***

- **Women perceive their contribution as cultivators to be small relative to that of men**
  - Only 18% of the women list agriculture as their occupation
- **Dramatic increase in use and costs of pesticides and chemical fertilizers**
  - Increase in fertilizer costs by 94%, pesticides – 88%
- **Increased costs and increased demands for water**
  - Only 10% own bore wells and dug wells; costs – Rs 36/hr in 1997, Rs 51/hr in 2002;

# SEWA's interventions

- Disparity between reality and perception of women farmers had implications for SEWA's **member education and leadership programs**
- **Increase productivity** –
  - Programmes for harvesting rain water
  - Access markets – farmers meet trades directly,
  - ‘grain banks’, seed banks’,
  - tools library – for rent

# Study of Street Vendors

- Conducted by NASVI, where SEWA is a member
- 7 cities
- Objectives
  - Understand the problems of street vendors
  - Support advocacy efforts by providing a holistic understanding of work and contribution of street vendors

# Study of Street Vendors - Findings

- Estimate of the numbers of street vendors - 2.5 5 of the urban population
- Increase in numbers of street vendors due to migration and retrenched formal sector workers being pushed into informality
- Caters to the urban poor
- Women- small numbers, selling cheaper, small quantities, perishable goods
- Grueling working conditions and low income
- costs of doing work - 'illegal'

# Street Vendors Study

- 2004 – NATIONAL POLICY ON STREET VENDORS
- ‘ .... ensure that this important section of the urban population finds recognition for its contribution to the society, *and is conceived of as a major initiative for urban poverty alleviation*’
- But ....