

A Constructive Way to Counter Violence –

‘Economic Empowerment’



Presented by:

Self Employed Women's Association

Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India



Presented at:

PSI Asia Pacific Regional Forum on “Quality Public Services”

Bangkok, Thailand

Informal Sector Workforce

In India 93% of the workforce is in informal sector out of which 60% are the women workers.

- The livelihoods of the women workers of the informal sector are highly diversified, unstable, and unsustainable.
- Lack of Income security and Work Security makes them more prone to poverty. This makes them more vulnerable to violence.
- One of the reasons the women face violence is the poverty.

Poverty is a passive form of violence.

- When a woman does back breaking work for ten hours a day but cannot feed her family with her earnings, society has scorned her labor.



SEWA Members

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), is a trade union organizing women workers of the informal sector since 1972.

Today SEWA has organized 1.7 million workers in 14 States of India with a twin goal of **full employment** and **self reliance**.

SEWA has organized the women workers in the four categories namely:

- **HOME BASED**
- **LABOUR AND SERVICE PROVIDERS**
- **STREET VENDORS**
- **PRODUCERS.**



Based on the Gandian Values, full employment for women means work security, income security, social security and food security.

SEWA strongly feels that if women are secured economically they will be less subjected to violence. We at SEWA translate this into Doosari Azadi - Second Freedom.

Different Faces of Violence these Informal Sector Workers face

- A women street vendor faces violence from the hard-hitting policeman or the local strong man of the natural market.
- The construction workers are subjected to various forms of disregard from cold-hearted employer, or a vicious contractor.
- The waste pickers who collect waste early in the morning is subjected to abuse from the security guards and many other. Home based workers face ill-treatment from the contractors.
- Women domestic workers face the worst sort of humiliation ever.



Violence on Women and The System

Our System spells out humiliation and injustice...

- The government labour department, the municipality, or the court that takes years to deliver judgment.
- Policy and law makers are in complete disconnect with the realities of the poor women workers, and are responsible for the outdated, irrelevant, impractical, unenforceable laws and policies.
- These women in India, as elsewhere, have highly unstable livelihood which makes them vulnerable to poverty and subsequently to violence.



Violence against Women Waste Pickers

Early in the morning before we wake up, we will see a woman carrying a sack on her back collecting garbage from roads. She picks up the waste papers, torn shoes, broken glass, wood pieces, hair and even thin polythene bags from there.

40% of Ahmedabad population is urban poor, 40,000 of them are waste pickers collecting almost 300 tones of the 3,500 tones daily. Waste pickers in Ahmedabad are mostly self-employed women. Most of the lower strata of the society. Thus they play the vital role is environment conservation.

Waste pickers are of the following type:

- Those who collect waste from the roadsides
- Those who collect waste from residential houses
- Those who collect waste from commercial complexes/premises
- Those who collect waste from land filled sites.

All of them are engaged in informal sector and are self-employed.



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Violence faced by Women Waste Pickers

- Unrecognition of their work and lack of voice, representation and validation results into violence in many ways. As they go to collect waste early in the morning, the roads are almost empty. The Security guards taking advantage of the same and molest them.
- Secondly if they go to pick up the waste from the society, the Municipal workers harasses them.
- If they go to pick up the waste from the municipal waste bins, the municipal guard over there pester them and extort money.
- The waste pickers collecting the waste at the land fill site face the worst sort of harassment. Other male waste pickers who are migrants from the Bangladesh beats the women waste pickers and molest the young women.
- And as if this is not enough, as the waste pickers are in the perpetual need of money they take advances from the scrap shop dealers, this makes them easy target of exploitation by the scrap shop dealers.
- Lastly the police and Municipal authorities also beat them up and cease the waste collected by them.

Thus the waste pickers are subjected to the various forms of violence....

Economic Empowerment: Surest way to counter Violence

SEWA experiences that by raising incomes and creating income generating opportunities, the poor can be economically empowered.

- This checks vulnerability problem and women workers become stronger both in the society and at the household level which in turn curbs violence.
- Over years, SEWA has developed a great faith in the leadership of poor women in building a non-violent and prosperous society.
- When a woman has work, there is an incentive to maintain a stable society.
- They not only think of the future but can plan for the future and further build assets that reduces vulnerability which in turn gives strength and security.

SEWA believes that sustainable livelihood is the thread that first weaves the women and family and eventually a society together.

SEWA's efforts for Self-reliance of Waste Pickers

SEWA has a dual strategy of struggle and development. Struggle through organizing and development through forming their own economic institutions like cooperative:

1. **Gitanjali Cooperative established in 1995.**
2. **Ensuring and enhancing the livelihood of the waste pickers by Inclusion in the Solid Waste Management system of the city.**
3. **Door to Door Waste collection in Slum areas.**
4. **Linking the workers with the decent livelihood such as cleaning work in the residential and commercial complexes.**
5. **'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' Category waste collection**



Story of a Waste Pickers...

LALITABEN's Story.....

Latitaben is the waste picker living in the slums of Vadaj area of the Ahmedabad city. She used to earn Rs 25/- to 30/- per day by collecting waste from the road side. She had to walk long distances and was harassed by many guards and municipal personnel just to collect waste. Even though doing such a hard work at the night she had to go and beg for the food. She was susceptible to all form of violence

SEWA linked her with the door to door collection in the Vadaj slums. Her working conditions improved and also her income. She now earns Rs 4500/- per month and works 6 hours a day. Her living standards have improved which led to increase in her self esteem which resulted into the increased status in the society. She became self confidence and spirit to fight the violence increased. In her own words “ I had never seen so much money together. I used to buy food items on day to day basis. But now with income and work security I buy food for whole month”..



SEWA strongly believes that women are at the centre of the society and play a vital role in maintaining peace and security. A more holistic and integrated view of development is need for this.

Economic Empowerment- Doosri Azadi as SEWA calls it, as it is the surest way to restore balance and harmony which will ultimately lead to restrain violence against the women to the great extent.....





THANK YOU