



VIDEO SEWA



"Video is a powerful and honest communication medium which should be in the hands of common people in a country like ours."

(Ela Bhatt, Founder member, SEWA)



OUR BACKGROUND

VIDEO SEWA is the outcome of a three week video production workshop in 1984 by Martha Stuart, a pioneer in bringing video to the people, at SEWA with the assistance of United Nations University and Video Village Network. It was attended by a group of twenty women, all poor, illiterate or semi literate and from the working class background. The women were from fields as diverse as vegetable vendors, head loaders and students. None of them had seen a video camera till then. Most of them had never operated or worked with any sort of electronic or photographic technology. But with adequate guidance and the freedom to experiment, it was not so difficult for them to learn to make video films. The women learned to use the various tools of film making, shooting, sound recording, lighting, dubbing, editing and duplicating. VIDEO SEWA broke the myth that sophisticated technology can only be used by people educated in the formal system. Since then Video has become an integral part of SEWA. It was registered as a member's cooperative 'The Gujarat Women's VIDEO SEWA Information and Communication Co-operative Society Ltd.', in 2000. It is the first cooperative of its kind in the whole of India of poor, illiterate, working women, which has used technology to empower women from the grassroots. Currently, VIDEO SEWA has seven full time staff who work in all areas of production- script writing, filming, editing, sound recording and audio dubbing. VIDEO SEWA Co-operative's members are self employed workers - vendors, handcart pullers, bidi workers, garment workers, block printers, dye workers, agricultural, labourers, housewives and childcare workers.

Since its inception in 1984 VIDEO SEWA has been working towards bringing technology into the hands of common people and using video as a tool for development communication. It has been instrumental in forging the SEWA ideology, capturing the various facets of the SEWA movement, informing its members, bringing their voices to the fore and initiating changes. It has learned, experienced, assimilated, voiced and also taught others to do the same in past twenty years. From a modest beginning VIDEO SEWA now produces professional, broadcast quality video programs. Women workers themselves are the producers, camera and sound persons, editors and shareholders. Till date it has made over two hundred documentaries and over four hundred documentation tapes. Moreover, it conducts over four hundred video replays per year. VIDEO SEWA not only produces in-house films but also welcomes orders from interested institutions and individuals. Several films of VIDEO SEWA have been

OUR WORK





broadcast/screened at various places within India and abroad and they have won several awards and recognition at the national and international levels. In fourteen districts of Gujarat alone, VIDEO SEWA connects over five lakh members of SEWA, all poor women workers.

The VIDEO SEWA team has, over the years, produced films on a vast range of issues related to gender, health, societal attitudes, literacy, income generation, employment, wage negotiations, trade facilitation, trade union movement, legal interventions, advocacy for policy change, eco-generation, dairy and nursery farming, housing, banking and saving services, etc.

VIDEO SEWA has always contributed towards the efforts of SEWA towards capacity building and self-reliance and has forged grassroots links and a sense of hope and solidarity amongst its members.

"Before joining VIDEO SEWA in June 1993, I worked along with my family as a head-loader. SEWA provided the opportunity to change the course of my life; it gave me a chance to do the work I enjoy and believe in. Without SEWA my life would have drifted aimlessly, I would still have been a head loader." says Manjulaben Shankarlal Raval, a VIDEO SEWA Crew Member.

Another member Leelaben Dantani of VIDEO SEWA comments "I come from family of vegetable vendors... that was life, until I got to know of SEWA. In 1984 I joined SEWA VIDEO. When I joined I didn't know how to read and write but now I can operate video equipment. I learnt that every woman shares the same fate until given a chance... Today, I do not feel alone, there are many others like me, waiting for an opportunity. I did not have electricity in my home but today, I am a video producer."

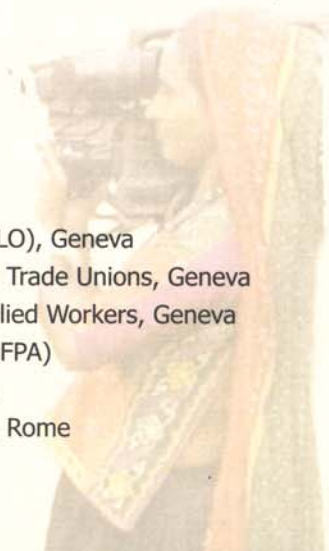
In the words of Namrata Bali, the General Secretary of SEWA and the director of SEWA Academy, "Everyone has the capacity and should be given the opportunity. Appropriate technology not only reduces the drudgery of the poor working class women but also empowers and lets them use it for their own purpose. Poor women feel inspired when they see their stories on the screen and helps SEWA movement to spread its message".





OUR CLIENTS

- Delhi Doordarshan,
- National Films Development Corporation
- Child in Need Institute (CINI), Kolkata
- Sanitation Water and Community Health Project, Udaipur
- Commission of Self Employed Women, Government of India, Gujarat, Orissa and Maharashtra
- State Bank of India
- Star Plus
- UNDP
- WIEGO
- United Nations University, Geneva
- International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Geneva
- International Union for Food and Allied Workers, Geneva
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Women's World Banking, New York
- Food and Agricultural Organisation, Rome
- World Water Forum
- Aurat Foundation, Pakistan
- Frauen Solidaritate, Austria



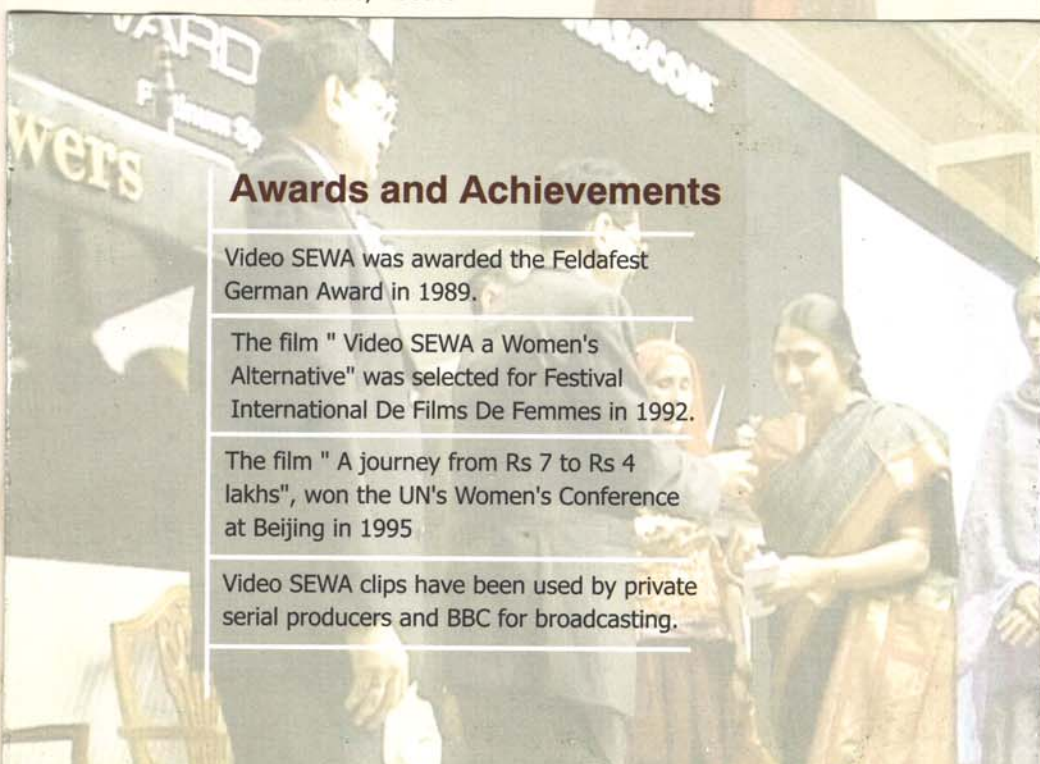
Awards and Achievements

Video SEWA was awarded the Feldafest German Award in 1989.

The film " Video SEWA a Women's Alternative" was selected for Festival International De Films De Femmes in 1992.

The film " A journey from Rs 7 to Rs 4 lakhs", won the UN's Women's Conference at Beijing in 1995

Video SEWA clips have been used by private serial producers and BBC for broadcasting.





OUR OBJECTIVE

For the poor, illiterate, self employed women from the unorganised sector who constitute the majority of the SEWA members VIDEO SEWA has been a tool for change, the voice of the SEWA movement. Their experiences have taught them that the visual media is one of the most powerful tools for communicating to a worldwide audience and for reaching out to a vast majority of members as in SEWA. Since watching videos doesn't require a high level of literacy or skill, it can be used as a tool to reach the audience that is marginalized by the mainstream society.

Rahima Shaikh, a ready made garment worker and union organiser in SEWA says : "Once we took a tape of the garment workers' procession to Lucknow where we were organising the women who do Chikan embroidery. We did some training with them and talked about the need for organising, coming out of their homes and giving up purdah. Then we showed them a film of our rally and long march for minimum wages and by the end of it they had planned their own rally. They were so excited that they jumped up to plan the route of their own procession. In reality, they were nowhere near the stage where they could take out a procession, but this enthusiasm was helping them to get organised. When women actually see that others like them have succeeded through organising, it makes a really big difference."



Objectives of VIDEO SEWA include

- Dissemination of information about SEWA, its philosophy and its work among its members and among interested others.
- Using video as a tool for training and teaching new skills, ideas, designs and methods of doing things to its members.
- Raising awareness among members about the social and economic issues that are central to poor and working women and using video as a tool to articulate their problems and demands and formulating strategies.
- Informing members about government policies and programs for the self employed, including national development plans and programs.
- Creating visibility and initiating policy changes for the issues related to the women by addressing decision makers and policy makers.
- Forging fresh connections and wider sharing of information with the SEWA members and with the world outside thus bridging the gap between the various groups and women and technology.



SERVICES OFFERED

VIDEO SEWA faces the challenge of functioning as a cooperative society in a very competitive market. VIDEO SEWA works as a freelance video production unit generating revenues which covers 70 percent of operating costs. It offers its crew service, footage, replay facilities, equipments for hire. It undertakes consultancy on entire productions from script writing right up to the final screening. The crew members themselves are the producers, camera and sound persons, editors and repeatative shareholders.

It has a wide and unique collection of about 130 films related to various issues concerning to self employed working women. Besides this, it has vast materials in the form of unedited footage of 900 hours in Umatic, Beta, High-8 and DV.

All its tapes are in colour. Video SEWA is ready to make its tapes and footages available to interested institutions and individuals on request, in formats specified by the client.

Rough footage cost per min @ 1500/-. VHS Tapes in PAL format cost Rs 1500/- each, CDs Rs 1000/- each and DVDs Rs 1500/- each. This price is not inclusive of the packing, freight and insurance charges.



FOR COPIES OF TAPES AND FURTHER DETAILS WRITE TO

VIDEO SEWA

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A photograph at the top of the page shows two individuals operating professional video cameras. On the left, a man in a light-colored shirt is seen from the side, holding a camera on his shoulder. On the right, a woman wearing a black headscarf and a dark top is also operating a camera, looking through the viewfinder. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

GRASS ROOT WORKERS AS FILM MAKERS

Neelam R. Dave, co-ordinator of VIDEO SEWA, joined SEWA as a photographer in January 1981. She was trained by Martha Stuart's Communications at the first ever video training workshop at SEWA. This opportunity enabled her to learn video techniques and production. Today, she is well-efficient in video production and have become the co-ordinator.

Leela Dantani, VIDEO SEWA crew member, was a vegetable vendor when she joined SEWA in 1972. In 1984 she joined SEWA Video. When she joined she didn't know how to read or write but now she is capable of operating all video equipments. She believes that every woman shares the same fate until given a chance. Today, she does not feel alone, there are many others like her, waiting for an opportunity. She believes she can help them get one.

Darshana Hasmukhbhai Parmar, VIDEO SEWA Crew Member, inspired by her mother-in-law to become self reliant, joined SEWA in 1981 as a child care worker. In 1987 she joined VIDEO SEWA and now she is a full fledged member of the Video Production unit.

Daxa Yashwantrai Mehta, VIDEO SEWA Crew Member, used to visit SEWA as a child with her mother who is a SEWA member. She was always inspired by SEWA's work. After passing S.S.C. examination she started sewing fall on sarees. It was only in 1993 that she joined SEWA. She believes that after joining VIDEO SEWA her life has changed. In her words "video can allow poor women to attain the unattainable, to touch the sky".

Aruna Haribhai Parmar, VIDEO SEWA Crew Member, used to organise women screen printers before joining SEWA. Her mother is also a screen printer. In June 1993 she got an opportunity to be a VIDEO SEWA trainee and soon picked up the technical know-how. She learnt to operate sound, lights, camera and editing. "Today, I am a totally changed person, thanks to Sewa Video" she says.

Manjula Shankarlal Raval, VIDEO SEWA Crew Member, used to work as a head-loader. along with her family before joining VIDEO SEWA in June 1993. She believes that without SEWA her life would have drifted aimlessly, she would still have been a head loader. VIDEO SEWA provided her the opportunity to change the course of her life.

Jayshree Hareshbhai Kedia, VIDEO SEWA Accountant, used to work in the Sewa Federation ten fifteen years back. She then got married, had children and in the process got disconnected from SEWA. The inspiration that she got from the women of SEWA and her own aspiration to work brought her back to VIDEO SEWA.