

A. Voices from Africa

WISE is developing its pension programme

The Addis Ababa-based organization Women In Self-Employment (WISE) is currently working with poor self-employed women and girls to achieve self-reliance and improve the quality of their lives by supporting their empowerment. WISE is our main partner organization in Ethiopia and as part of our SETU Africa programme, a team of Ethiopian grass-root team leaders visited SEWA in April, 2014 to see the different work of SEWA. They also visited SEWA Bank to know about different financial services including pension and different need-based saving products. WISE colleagues said they were inspired by SEWA Bank to start up pension in Ethiopia.

Studies reveal that in Ethiopia an enormous number of women participate in the self-employment/ informal sector. However, they are not covered by any pension arrangement. As a result, they fall into the poverty trap after retirement. Although, currently there is no pension arrangement for those who are engaged in the self-employed sector in Ethiopia, we hope that there will be in the future.

The most of WISE's members have created some assets, sustainable income and work opportunities for themselves and others due to WISE's interventions. However, some members could not and do not have savings or assets for old age. Some members fall into the poverty trap when they quit work due to old age.

The organization learned of 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 Union of

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"Saving Today for Tomorrow"



A Poster in Amharic language to explain the importance of Pension

WISE SACCOs. Currently, the organization is promoting the programme to members using the picture shown here.

B. News from SETU Africa

Ethiopian Embassy team visited SEWA

The SETU Africa SEWA team visited the Ethiopian embassy in New Delhi to brief, Her Excellency, Dr. Gennet Zewide, Ambassador of Ethiopia to India, and the Ethiopian Embassy team about SEWA, the SETU Africa programme and our engagement with the sisters and brothers of Ethiopia. We explained to them about our experience in Ethiopia, about the workshop conducted and field visits held during our visit to Ethiopia. During our interaction, it



Ethiopian Embassy team interacting with SEWA team

was mutually agreed to strengthen our relationship through the SETU Africa programme. To start with, a team of embassy headed by Mr. Aklilu Kebede, Minister Counsellor-II, Political, Public Diplomacy & Public Relations and Mr. Henock Asnake, Second Secretary (Business), Embassy of Ethiopia visited Ahmedabad from 31st July- 2nd, August, 2014.

It was indeed pleasure to host our guests and share about our work, particularly about areas of engagement in SETU Africa programme. The team visited

different sister organizations of SEWA, including SEWA Academy, SEWA Bank, HomeNet South Asia, SEWA Federation and SEWA Social Security team. During their visit they also saw our different activities, including child-care centres, literacy classes and livelihood training centres. The guests visited SEWA Child Care Centre at Pathan ni Chali, Ahmedabad City and also got an opportunity to interact with the parents. The parents were happy to talk about SEWA's Child Care Centres. The experiences and narratives varied from appreciating the balsevikas' (child care workers) efforts to take care of their children, their ability to go out to work as the timings of the centres match with their work schedule, the good eating habits, the discipline and hygienic practices inculcated in the children, preparing them and laying the foundation to perform well in formal schools and later in life. Most importantly the child care centres have changed the lives of women workers; they are able to work without stress, they earn more and some mothers were even able to pursue higher studies. Some older children who have spent their early childhood in our child care centres also joined in the discussions. The guests were moved to hear their stories. Today, they are studying in different schools, some already in high school. With confidence and pride they narrated their achievements in

both academics and extra-curricular activities, while giving credit and recognition to the balsevikas for early childhood care and education given and providing that extra push in life to perform well. Some of them are class monitors, and aiming to become teachers, doctors and engineers.

The visit to the centre and interaction with the children and the parents was appreciated by the guests. It was their first such experience, as in Ethiopia there are no child care centres for the children of women workers of the informal sector. The Ethiopian government hopes to replicate SEWA's model of an integrated approach to early childhood care in their country which they believe will change the lives of both women and young children in Ethiopia.

During their last day, they also visited Sabarmati Ashram to see and know more about, Mahatma Gandhi and his role in India's freedom movement.

In the feedback session, our guests shared their views and told us that the visit was useful and that they would share their experiences with their government. They said that a good beginning had been made and now there would be a joint exhibition of Ethiopian crafts and some Indian ones in October. They said that both the class room and the field experience were enriching, and that there are many similarities among Ethiopian and Indian women and families.

C. Happenings at SEWA

SEWA Health and Child Care Programmes

Adolescent Boys: Adolescent boys in India have not obtained the attention that they deserve in India. . Realizing this, SEWA has taken the initiative to have regular education and awareness sessions with adolescent boys with a focus on topics like "Know your Body" which includes reproductive physiology and anatomy, nutrition and healthy food habits, addictions and its consequences, physical and mental development, issues of child marriage, issue of pre-natal sex determination and X and Y Chromosomes, reproductive tract infections and HIV/AIDS.



In Surat city, four such sessions, covering some of these topics were conducted with 100 boys. It was observed that the young boys liked to obtain such information and were particularly interested to obtain more information on HIV / AIDS, tuberculosis and cancer.

A new journey begins: At the age of 6 years the children are ready to leave our child care centers as they get admissions in the nearby schools. Our care of over four or five years prepares them well to face the outside world. In the month of May we organised a graduation ceremony for these children. The ceremony was organized with the support and contributions from the local community. All the children received a certificate from us, as well as a kit that contains a slate, pencil box, water bottle, lunch box and crayons. Principals and teachers of the neighbourhood schools were also present on this occasion. This year 135 children graduated from the 25 centres run by the Sangini Cooperative (SEWA's Child Care Cooperative).



Bringing health care to the community:

SEWA organizes health camps in the communities based on the need and demand of the members. A health check-up camp was organized in Ahmedabad city in association with Ahmedabad Medical Association with a participation of 76 patients. During the camp general physicians diagnosed the patients for diabetes and haemoglobin levels. Free medicines were also provided to all. Follow-up camps will be organised in the subsequent months to ensure treatment schedule is strictly followed and referrals to hospitals for further treatments is done as per the need.



The Loom Mool Story

Loom Mool's story starts and ends with weavers. They are the inspiration for the name and the reason for its creation. The starting point and objective of the brand is to support as many weaving families from Bihar as possible: the Mool or essence is the loom.

In the villages along the outskirts of Bhagalpur, Bihar, mud houses wind around small paths and patches of agricultural fields. Venturing into these homes you will find elaborate textile handlooms dug into the smoothed mud floors. The loom is the tool for sustaining the entire artisan community.

The families from these communities wait for middlemen to come with work. When they come, if they come, they work and get paid. These artisans are isolated and excluded. The middlemen

hold the thread that connects them to the outside world, to the market. So the artisans grab on to the other end. They can't negotiate for more money, despite the incredibly low wages paid for the skilled labor of their hands.

SEWA identified Bhagalpur as an area of need, but also of potential. In 2010, the SEWA Saheli Bunkar Cooperative was formed to give weavers a voice, break the cycle of poverty, and save traditional craft. Through the cooperative artisans are directly linked to the market and middlemen are cut out entirely.



Loom Mool store in New Delhi

SEWA is weaving hope into the lives of the artisans. Thread by thread it extends opportunities to break the cycle of exploitation and deprivation: fair wages, first-time bank accounts, and access to social, legal, and health services. Women are empowered with the cooperative's finances, and are brought into the face of business.

Loom Mool connect the artisans directly with the mainstream market. Sourcing from SEWA collectives, the

brand is traditional yet contemporary, a mix of western and Indian styles with a soul and a conscious. Loom Mool means sustained livelihoods in Bhagalpur and the continuation of a waning tradition and this is just the beginning. Loom Mool will have collections featuring crafts from all over India.

With beautiful products, at a competitive price, Loom Mool will appeal to a large audience. It will deliver fresh styles and graceful items, but also a message and stories. Women will appreciate the silhouettes of the dresses they purchase, and the time weavers spent working the silk threads between their palms and thighs to bring it to them. Loom Mool is a means for sustainable livelihoods, a direct market linkage, and a platform to give recognition to the artisans whose hard work brings beauty to the world.

Loom Mool begins and ends with weavers.



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