



# Grassroots women leaders transforming lives

The bridge from fear to hope,  
from dreams to reality



## Eunice Mukai

Poultry farmer

Makueni County, Kenya

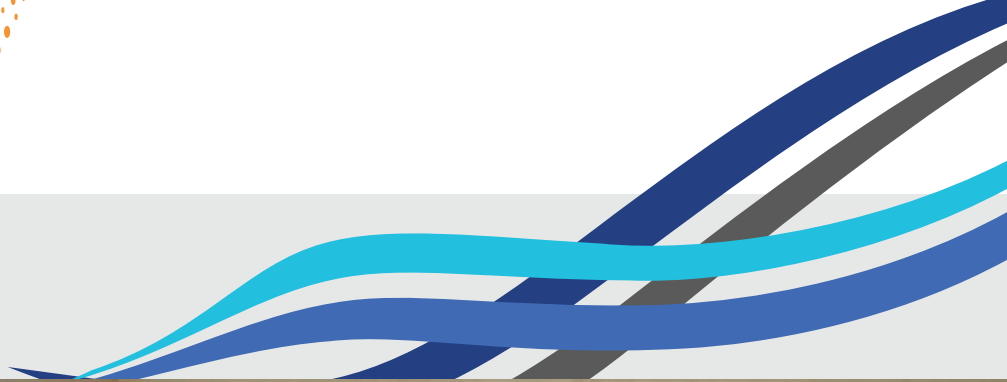
Eunice is a seasoned trainer in poultry farming and an experienced motivational speaker, especially in women empowerment. She also teaches women how to save effectively using straightforward savings and any available resource at the farm level. She has employed 12 women on her farm and trained more than 3,000 women since she began her entrepreneurship journey 10 years ago.

Since 2013, Eunice has participated in field days, trade fairs, and exhibitions where she exhibits chicks and poultry inputs. In 2014, she participated in the World Food Day celebrations, where she was awarded as the best indigenous chicken farmer and small-scale hatchery in Makueni County.



**I have experienced many challenges throughout my entrepreneurship journey, including high costs of loans from banks and micro-financial institutions and steep production costs. However, I continue to soldier on to grow my business and financially empower other fellow women through financial training.**





## Semhal Guesh

### Entrepreneur Ethiopia

Semhal Guesh, an architect by profession, is the founder and CEO of Kabana Leather. Kabana Leather is a leather manufacturing company in Ethiopia. Semhal has propelled Kabana to become one of the leading leather companies in Ethiopia through her passion for design coupled with hard work and resilience. The company employs more than 130 staff members, of which 80% are women, majorly from vulnerable communities. Semhal plays a pivotal role in women's empowerment and has raised the bar on women's equality, safety, wages, and benefits in the workplace.

At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Semhal led a consortium of 12 companies to repurpose their factories to produce masks and other personal protective equipment. The consortium funded by the Mastercard Foundation saved and created 1,060 jobs.

Several organizations have recognized her resilience and ability to guide her company through the pandemic. She was awarded the 2021 Jet Age Nation Builders award, 2021 Dinknesh award, and the Enat Bank award. She was also named the 2018 UNDP Young Female Entrepreneur. Semhal now seeks to expand into new markets like the EU, starting with Germany through product diversification.



## Dominique Maritime Executive Côte d'Ivoire

Dominique Bédié is a maritime executive at the Autonomous Port of Abidjan. Passionate about gender equality, she has played a leadership role in strengthening and bringing together women's organizations.

Dominique is also the president of **the Federation of Women's Organizations for Development (FOFEDES)** in Songon, where she is originally from. The federation originated in February, 2019 and has 22 women's associations to date. It works to empower women and girls of Songon and strengthen the visibility of their contributions and their active role in decision-making in the development of their community.

As a gender equality champion, Dominique acts as a key link between FOFEDS and organizations that promote gender in Côte d'Ivoire. Such organizations include the Ministry of Women, Family and Children; the State Secretariat in charge of Women's Empowerment; ONUFEMMES, and other organizations that fight for women's empowerment.

The FOFEDS organizes several activities, including awareness campaigns on breast cancer and distribution of school kits. Women are also trained to carry out income-generating activities. They receive basic training in accounting, which enables them to learn how to save. In the early days of COVID-19, the federation carried out awareness-raising activities among all the associations under it to ensure compliance with barrier measures.





**Managing an association with so many women is not easy,” says Dominique. Indeed, associations face several challenges. They face hurdles while gathering women, leading them in an association, and then keep these associations alive for at least two years.**



To overcome these difficulties, awareness and proximity to women are the best assets, Dominique says.

The women of Songon have high hopes in FOFEDS. It is their collective voice.

They hope to see their projects come true. This is why Dominique and her team are working hard to find funding or investors capable of providing these women with equipment for their activities.



## Astini

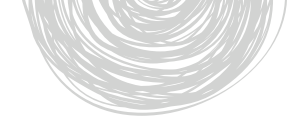
Field Facilitator at PEKKA  
Foundation  
Tangerang, Indonesia

Astini—connecting women’s  
cooperatives with digital  
financial services in rural  
Indonesia



Women’s cooperatives are often small and traditional. I want them to go to the next level, serve more women in the rural areas, and expose them to more digital financial products that cater to their needs. I started as a PEKKA Union Leader in Tangerang years ago. Together, we work alongside poor female heads of households and eradicate negative perceptions toward widows in the community through various women’s empowerment activities like forming women cooperatives.





MSC's initiative to connect women cooperatives with the agent network will help poor women access various financial services and products in the last mile. It will also strengthen

the cooperatives as an organization. Currently, we have around 142 active members, 33 groups, in seven subdistricts, all women and several female-headed households.”



## Sri

Field Facilitator, Pekka  
Foundation  
Central Java, Indonesia

**Sri—empowering women  
through cooperatives and  
digital financial services**

I also hope that through the Women Digital Ambassador program with MSC, more women can be empowered economically and informed about their finances.



**In the past, I saw how cooperatives helped my small business survive. More women can access loans at low-interest rates and without collateral through cooperatives. They can use the loans for business or other productive purposes. Cooperatives can protect women from loan sharks. Now, I actively encourage all members to save and borrow. I also connect with stakeholders to accommodate the members' legal needs. More participation will help and inspire other women to join the community.**





I am glad that through PEKKA, women have more power and confidence to contribute to society regardless of their marital status. Currently, more than 700 PEKKA members are spread across five subdistricts. I hope this number multiplies many folds.



## Nguyen Huong

Entrepreneur

Vũng Tàu, Southern Vietnam

### Young woman entrepreneur in Vietnam takes her business digital to deal with the pandemic

I run a microenterprise that sells garments, shoes, and fashion accessories in Vũng Tàu, Vietnam. Before the pandemic, my business depended extensively on daily cash flows. When the pandemic started, I struggled with a shortage of working capital due to lack of demand and low revenue. My enterprise also suffered because of restricted mobility due to lockdowns that suspended public transport and affected the logistics of input supplies and finished goods. The ongoing shift to digital consumerism has had a significant impact on how my enterprise operates. I was forced to find new and better ways to engage with my customers and cater to their demands. From a small shop in Vũng Tàu, I can now reach millions of young women across Vietnam. Going digital has helped my business survive



and grow. I plan to use social media and messaging apps to increase online sales, and showcase my merchandise and client testimonials to potential buyers. The pandemic has changed my business for good. With time, I expect more walk-in customers will become familiar with digital payments, such as mobile money or QR codes, as they are safer and more convenient. For a change, the pandemic may help my business grow digitally.



**Amrita**  
**Handicraft producer**  
**Delhi, India**

**Finding a silver lining in dark clouds**

My husband died of an injury back in 2015. It was the most difficult time for me. Before that, I trained blind women in stitching, which I had to stop as our community did not allow a widow to step out of the house. I also had to support my aging mother-in-law who had dementia. I then came to know about Insha-e-Noor, a craft-based women's

enterprise set up under Aga Khan Trust for Culture's Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative project. With the help of their training, I honed my skills in stitching and joined them as a producer. I also learned new techniques and other craft forms. I led and managed the exhibitions organized in my basti. Today, as one of the directors of the producer company, I manage high-value orders from reputed clients like Fabindia. For me, the best part about the job is that our workshop is right in my basti and that allows me to take care of my two children, an aging mother-in-law, and manage housework while being the breadwinner of the family.



## Noorjahan Chef Delhi, India

### Beating the odds to become a successful businesswoman

I always wanted to make it big in life. I wanted an identity for myself but had only studied up to the sixth grade in school and got married at an early age. I used to work from home as a tailor while finishing my household chores. One day, my sisters associated with the Aga Khan Foundation asked me to help as they put up a stall at the annual *mela* in Nizamuddin Basti. I reluctantly went as I did not step out of the house much and helped them to make posters for the stall.

The next day, the coordinator inquired for me. When she came to know that I was not a member, she visited me and invited me to join them. When I joined Zaika, we made sweets and snacks and earned a revenue of INR 100 per day, which was not enough. People told us that we were wasting our time and that running a business is not something women in our community do or be successful at. Yet we did not lose hope and kept on going. We decided to serve the local cuisine of Nizamuddin in the next *Mela*. We served what we knew best—paranthas with kababs, along with our laddoos and namkeens. Since then, there has been no looking back.





Today, we serve a range of customers who demand the best quality. We could pull it off by constantly improving our business model and tweaking our 700-year-old recipes with what the contemporary customer wants. I feel proud when my family members tell me whenever Zaika is covered in the news or when I get to know that we catered

to some very famous people once we deliver the order. Just the other day, we came to know that we had delivered to the famous Mira Nair! I am delighted and proud about our journey as an individual, as a group, and as the group's coordinator. Together, we want to take Zaika to greater heights every day.




## Shahjahan

Director, Association for Development of Nizamuddin (ADN)  
Delhi, India

### A changemaker in the Nizamuddin Basti of New Delhi

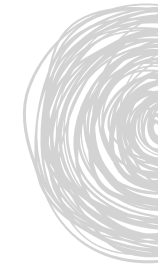
A few years ago, members of Aga Khan Trust for Culture asked me to join a health workshop in the neighbourhood. I was overweight at that time. I did not dare tell my husband about stepping out of the house. But I did it anyway without informing him. After the end of the workshop, I was chosen to be one of the *Sehat Aapaasha*, one among a 50-member team that served as a link between the community and public health services. I was responsible for 200 households and had a team of four *Sehat Sahelis*. None of us had ever worked outside the house before, and I had studied only up to the 10th standard. We had to be trained in a range of subjects. I felt extremely under-confident and received no support from my family. Even though I wanted to study, I could not resume my education.





I discussed it with the Aga Khan team and went back to academics. AKF had agreed to support my education. One night, my husband tore my books and threw them away. I was determined to fulfill my unfulfilled dreams of studying and would not let this opportunity go. So I studied during the day while taking care of my two children and also worked as a *Sehat Aapaa* of my basti to improve health conditions. Since then, I have completed my Masters in Social Work, having finished senior school and securing a first division in my Bachelor's in Social Work. Beginning

with health, our newly registered community-based organization has ventured into education, sanitation, hygiene, and other sectors. The local government has recognized our work. From an intimidated trainee, I am now a trainer who imparts a dozen modules on different topics of personal development to adolescents. We worked through the support of the AKTC, but now we have registered our own entity, and I am a Director and a signatory. But ultimately, I am and always will be a *Sehat Aapaa*, as that is how I am known in my community.





## Suman Devi

Krishi Sakhi and Natural Farmer  
Uttar Pradesh, India

A female farmer from Uttar Pradesh leading the way in natural farming



As they say, nothing comes easy. My journey was also full of challenges.



I am a 30-year-old housewife and mother. I am now a master trainer of natural farming and an active member of my self-help group. I am trained as a *Krishi Sakhi* to promote zero-budget natural farming. People would taunt me when I started training women on natural farming methods and worked door to door as a *Krishi Sakhi-Pashu Sakhi*. People criticized and mocked my education, as I would carry cow dung and do farming all day long. I even used to hide my face while leaving my house for work. I am now a professional trainer. My efforts were recognized, and I received the “State Woman Award” with



an appreciation amount of INR 75,000 from the Chief Minister. I was the only female farmer who got a chance to interact with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and shared my on-field work experiences related to agriculture, which was appreciated. When COVID-19 disrupted the foodgrain supply chain from our farms, I motivated female farmers in my village to diversify and adopt fish farming. My organization, *Pooja Mahila Swayam Sahayta Samuh*, gave a loan of INR 25,000 to each fish farmer. This yielded them a profit of INR 150,000 lakhs each after a few months when the COVID-induced restrictions eased.

## P. Uma Devi

Entrepreneur  
Andhra Pradesh, India

**P. Uma Devi: Microbusiness founder showed resilience and diversified her jute bags business during the pandemic**

COVID-19 shattered my business. As the frequency of social events went down, demand decreased from B2B

customers and mass orders stopped completely. I motivated my 15-member all-women team to start selling B2C with attractive bag designs on the internet. To my surprise, orders came in, and our sewing machines were back to work. Our team upheld the spirit of entrepreneurship and found a way to succeed. Today, I boast about my loyal team working toward generating enough profits so our entire staff can fund our children's education.



## Rojalin

Entrepreneur  
Odisha, India

Rojalin Das: Grassroot leader moving against all odds

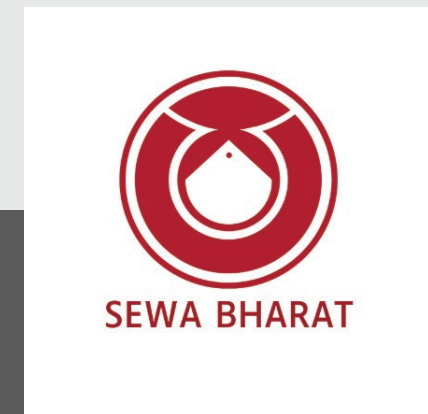
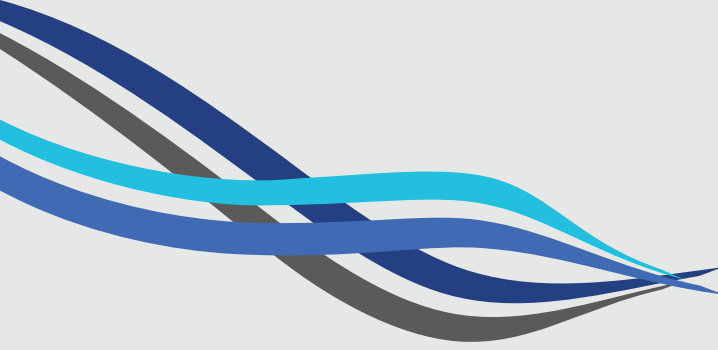


We are a self-help group which started in the year 2019 with the help of a loan from SBI and the Odisha Jibika Mission. The SHG has 12 members, and all of us are differently-abled women. We buy fruits from Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and sell them in our local market. We process the remaining fruits to make products, such as jam. The turnover of the group is INR 7 lakh per annum, and we are proud of where we have reached today, against all odds.



VIDHI | Centre for  
Legal Policy



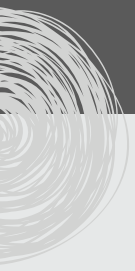


## SEWA's grassroots researchers

### Their experiences and insights from the last mile

The idea of having 'Grassroots Researchers' originated as SEWA's attempt to decentralize creation of knowledge, while building capacity and increasing community engagement. It is our way to remedy the power dynamics between researchers and the community. A grassroots researcher is typically a member of the informal sector who provides a unique insight into the lives and livelihoods of the women from their own communities.

For International Women's Day 2022, we aimed towards bringing forward stories and celebrating 7 grassroots researchers who have documented stories and advocated for their community's cause.



## About the Neha ben

A creative artisan and a natural leader, Neha ben is a pillar of strength for the women in her community. During the pandemic, she was not only instrumental in coordinating relief efforts and ration distribution on the ground, but also took part in documenting the challenges faced by our bens.

Neha ben has a penchant for writing poetry and often weaves her experiences into poetic words. This poem creatively expressed her thoughts on gender equality.

#sewa #sewabharat #sewamovement  
#sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022  
#womenempowerment



**आओ बाटे सबको ज्ञान ,नर और नारी एक समान**

आओ सुनाएं सबको नर और नारी की कहानी,  
सुनते ही लगेगी कुछ लोगों को यह जानी पहचानी।

नर के बिना नारी है अधूरी, नारी के बिना नर है अधूरा,  
दोनों के तालमेल से ही होता है सारा संसार यह पूरा।

दोनों ही है एक समान, दोनों को मिले समानता का वरदान।  
पढ़ाई लिखाई है दोनों के लिए जरूरी,  
अब ना रहे किसी की कोई भी कामना अधूरी।

निर्मल बहन है मेरा नाम,  
घर और बाहर काम संभालना है मेरा काम।  
विपिन जी है मेरे पति का नाम,  
उनके बिना नहीं होती मेरी सुबह और शाम।

हमारे बच्चे हैं हमारे आंगन के दो प्यारे फूल,  
हम उनके भविष्य को लेकर नहीं करेंगे कोई भी भूल।

मेरी पत्नी घर के साथ बाहर का काम भी करती है,  
अपने साथ हमारे पूरे परिवार का ध्यान भी रखती है।

मेरे पति भी हर काम में देते हैं मेरा पूरा साथ, इसीलिए  
हम दोनों मिलकर दे सकते हैं हर दुख को मात।

हम दोनों में काम को लेकर ना कोई झगड़ा ना कोई लड़ाई,  
इसीलिए तो सभी लोग करते है हम दोनों की बहुत बढ़ाई।

यदि सभी नर नारी एक दूसरे के कामों को दे पूरा मान सम्मान,  
तो बताओ कैसे पीछे रहेगा दूसरे देशो से हमारा हिंदुस्तान।

### English version

Neha ben's poem talks about gender equality and how one is incomplete without the other. The poem also touches upon a couple, Nirmal and Vipin who talk about sharing responsibilities and being celebrated by their community for being a couple who support each other. Neha ben talks about them and ends the poem with a statement - If men and women give equal respect to each other in India then we are not far off from a wonderful world.

\*Disclaimer: Since meaning gets lost in translation we did not want to control the narrative of our grassroots researchers. These poems and songs are their intellectual property and SEWA works towards spreading their life story and celebrating them.

## About the Sita ben

Originally from Jammu, Sita ben has always been inclined towards building a life of her own and being financially independent. Her career took a turn when she got a job as an admin at a school. Sita ben ensured that she made most of her opportunities and upskilled herself by doing a Diploma in Computer Application. Post Covid, Sita ben learnt how to collect data through digital tools and since then has transitioned into the role of a grassroots researcher. Through this poem, Sita ben explores her creative side and raises questions against the hypocrisy faced by women. She hopes that society understands the importance of acknowledgement towards a women's contribution.

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#sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022

#womenempowerment



घर का काम और परिवार भी संभाला,  
बात आई पहचान की तो किसी का जवाब ना आया?

वक़्त देती हूँ नित दिन सुबह से रात,  
फिर भी कहते हो करती हो क्या?

खुलते ही आँख, ज़िम्मेदारी नज़र आती है,  
सुबह से रात काम करने में गुज़र जाती है।

घर का काम और परिवार भी संभाला,  
बात आई पहचान की  
तो किसी का जवाब ना आया?

काम पूरा नहीं होता मेरे बिन खेती का,  
पर जब भी हक की बात आई  
तो नाम सिर्फ पुरुष का?

पुरुष प्रधान इस दुनिया में साथ  
महिला भी देती है, थोड़ा सा वक्त दिया  
कहकर उम्र बीत जाती।

घर के खर्च का हिसाब हम रखते,  
फिर कैसे कहते हो हम गणित में कच्चे?

अब हम भी मोल भाव कर सकते है भरोसा तो करो,  
एक बार तो कहदो हम तुम्हारे साथ है,  
तुम आगे तो बढ़ो?

वक़्त बदल रहा है अब मान भी जाओ,  
हम मे भी है क्षमता यह जान जाओ।

मुस्कराहट दर्द भुला कर रिश्तों में बंधी है एक नारी,  
हर राह को रोशन करने वाली शक्ति है एक नारी!

### English version

Sita ben's poem questions the hypocrisy faced by women in society. How a woman's contribution in running a household is often not considered as 'work' and how it is time to stop questioning her productivity and her role in day to day's responsibilities.

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## About the Sangeeta ben

A former seamstress, Sangeeta ben's journey at SEWA Bharat began as a field mobilizer. The nature of work taught her the skills of interacting with bens on the field, becoming a good listener, identifying the local community issues, and turning confident in traveling independently. Sangeeta ben is now a seasoned member of SEWA Bharat, working with its two collective social D3enterprises - Sarthak and Karnabhumi. She D3 finding contentment in the work is key to one's progress in life. #sewa #sewabharat #sewamovement #sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022 #womenempowerment



**महिला समिति बनाओ ,बनाओ मेरी बहना**

महिला समिति बनाओ,बनाओ मेरी बहना  
अपने जीवन को सजाव,सजाव मेरी बहना।

मर्दों के शासन में रहना नहीं है  
आगंन में घुट -घुट कर रहती है बहना

ऐसे शासन को हटाव ,हटाव मेरी बहना  
महिला समिता बनाओ,बनाओ मेरी बहना।

तिलक दहेज से मरती है बहना  
घर परिवार को रुलाती है बहना

ऐसे कलंक को मिटाव, मिटाने मेरी बहना  
महिला समिति बनाव,बनाव मेरी बहना।

मांगों ना मर्दों से रूपिया ना पैसा  
जीवन जीने की लो तुम शिक्षा

बाहर निकलकर कमाव ,कमाव मेरी बहना  
महिला समिति बनाव,बनाव मेरी बहना।

मंजील पाने का जज्वा उठाओ x2  
झांसी की रानी बनके दिखाओ

दिखाओ मेरी बहना x2  
बुलंदी की रानी बनके दिखाओ,

दिखाओ मेरी बहना  
महिला समिति बनाओ ,बनाओ मेरी बहना।

### English version

Sangeeta ben's song was co-written by her and a colleague of her's named Punam ben. The song talks about motivating women to mobilize and raise their voice against injustice.

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## About the Khushboo ben

The youngest of the lot, Khushboo ben has known about SEWA since 2008 when she would accompany her mother to the organization's mohalla meetings with the members. The idea of members coming from diverse backgrounds and expressing solidarity built her interest to join in fulfilling SEWA's larger vision. Khushboo ben has since run multiple covid-awareness campaigns and worked as a data collector with SEWA Sarvekshan. Since she closely understands the challenges faced by informal women workers, her writing captures a lot of nuances on the topical issues and the lived experiences of our bens. This enables her to paint a picture with words on paper. #sewa #sewabharat #sewamovement #sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022 #womenempowerment





**Through this drawing, 19 year old Khushboo ben wants to express that a women plays numerous roles in her lifetime.**

**19 वर्ष की खुशबू बेन अपने हाथों से बनाये इस तस्वीर के माध्यम से यह बताना चाहती है कि नारी अपने जीवनकाल में असंख्य भूमिकाएं निभाती है।**

## About the Anita ben

Anita ben considers herself a ‘pahadi’ woman. Born and raised in Almora, she completed her graduation from Kumaon University in 2018. Her introduction to SEWA Bharat happened through her sister who has been working with SEWA Atithi (add Atithi’s Insta handle) since 2017. She learned about the interventions carried out by the organization to address the challenges faced by women from the informal sector. This inspired her to contribute towards engaging with the issues of her community members.

After getting trained on collecting data digitally, she joined the SEWA Sarvekshan team and eventually transitioned into the role of a grassroots researcher. This case study shared by Anita ben is a story of determination, hope, and newfound recognition.

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#sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022  
#womenempowerment



There are many names given to what a man does, which earns them respect.

Homestay is the name of my work  
The work that has given me a new identity.

Through my homestay I greet guests and feel immense pride in doing the same.

After the departure of the first wave, her first guests came from SEWA and after a few days, the guests started coming from time to time.

When she was asked why she started this work, she said that due to lack of income in animal husbandry and farming, the people of the village had started migrating to the cities in search of work.

Guddi Devi, who lives in Kandara, a small beautiful village in Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand, has been associated with SEWA for the last 10 years. She started running her homestay in 2019. Guddi Devi took training to run her homestay but due to the pandemic the guests stopped coming.

Guddi Devi did not want to leave her village family and go out, she wanted to stay in the village and grow her business.

Today her identity stands as  
**Guddi Devi - The homestay owner**

पुरुष के काम को दिए जाते हैं कई नाम  
जिससे मिलता है उन्हें पूरा मान-सम्मान।

होमस्टे है मेरे काम का नाम  
जिसने दिया मुझे एक नूतन पहचान।

इसके द्वारा अतिथियों का सत्कार करती हूँ  
इस बात से गर्वित महसूस करती हूँ।

पहली लहर के जाने के बाद बहन के घर सेवा की  
तरफ से गेस्ट आये और उसके बाद कुछ दिनों बाद  
ऐसे ही समय-समय पर गेस्ट आने लगे।

जब उनसे पूछा गया की उन्होंने ये काम क्यों शुरू  
किया तब उन्होंने बताया की पशुपालन और खेती  
के काम में अधिक कमाई ना होने की वजह से गांव  
और आसपास के लोग काम की तलाश में शहरों  
की ओर पलायन करने लगे।

उत्तराखंड के रुद्रप्रयाग जिले के एक छोटे से  
खूबसूरत गांव - कंडारा मे रहने वाली **गुड्डी देवी**  
पिछले 10 सालो से सेवा से जुड़ी है। 2019 मे उन्होंने  
अपने होमस्टे की शुरुवात की। होमस्टे चलाने की  
ट्रेनिंग लेकर गुड्डी देवी ने शुरुवात तो की पर  
महामारी के कारण गेस्ट आने बंद हो गए।

गुड्डी देवी अपने गांव परिवार को छोड़कर बाहर नहीं  
जाना चाहते थी, उनकी इच्छा थी की वो गांव मे  
रहकर व्यापार करे।

आज उनकी पहचान  
**होमस्टे वाली गुड्डी देवी** के नाम से है।

## About the Kulwinder ben

Kulwinder ben from Moga, Punjab dreamt of becoming a teacher but familial responsibilities and pressure prevented her from fulfilling this. However, undeterred, she mastered the art of stitching and started teaching this skill to young girls. The first lockdown during the pandemic disrupted her livelihood, so she took up mask-stitching work assigned by SEWA Bharat. During this course, her leadership skills and contribution to COVID relief efforts resulted in her being chosen as an Aagewan. Now, she works as a full-time grassroots researcher and hopes to continue her association with SEWA in the future as well. #sewa #sewabharat #sewamovement #sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022 #womenempowerment





40 years old **Sukhwinder ben** has seen many highs and lows in her lifetime but today, her head is held with pride. Sukhwinder ben has been associated with SEWA for the past 5 years and she has been earning her daily bread by working as a domestic worker for the past 15 years.

Her husband left her 12 years ago and to this day, she has been running her household.

40 वर्ष की **सुखविंदर बेन** ने अपने जीवन में कई उतार चढ़ाव देखे हैं पर आज उनका सर गर्व से ऊँचा है। बहन को सेवा से जुड़े हुए 5 साल हो गए हैं और वह पिछले 15 सालों से घरेलू कामगार के रूप में अपनी आमदनी कमाती है।

बहन के पति ने उन्हें 12 साल पहले छोड़ दिया था और तब से आज तक बहन अपने बच्चों के लिए घर चलती है।

She lost her daughter during the pandemic but did not lose hope. She got access to an auto from the government and started earning her daily bread again.

She connected SEWA with many women in her locality and got selected as an **aagewaan** as well. Her story and attitude towards life inspired me and I truly salute her courage and passion.

महामारी के वक्त इनकी बेटी का देहांत हो गया पर बहन ने हिम्मत नहीं हारी। सरकार की तरफ से उन्होंने ऑटो रिक्शा लिया और अपना घर वापस से चलने लगी।

इन्होंने अपने मोहल्ले में बहुत सारी बहनों को सेवा से जोड़ा और **आगेवान** भी चुनी गयी। इनकी कहानी और स्वभाव से मुझे बहुत प्रेरणा मिली और बहन के इस जज़्बे को मेरा प्रणाम।

## About the Renu ben

The most experienced and senior member of the Grassroots Researchers team, Renu ben began her journey with SEWA in 2007. She has donned numerous hats over the years and worked with a lot of social enterprises. Due to the pandemic, active operations of Solar shut down. That is when she transitioned to the role of a digital data collector under SEWA Sarvekshan and eventually joined the research team. Her greatest asset is her humble manner of communicating and explaining nuances from the field in a simple manner. Through this case study, Renu ben wanted to share the hurdles women had to clear in order to survive during the first lockdown. She marvels at the bravery displayed by Sanjana ben. #sewa #sewabharat #sewamovement #sewaresearchers #womenofsewa #IWD2022 #womenempowerment



The pandemic was tough for many people but unlike most of us, **Sanjana ben** from Madhopur, Munger was forced to break rules.

Few years ago, her husband passed away due to a heart attack because of which the burden of all the household responsibilities came on her shoulders. With her children's support and courage, she decided to open a food stall.

महामारी का समय बहुत लोगों के लिए कठिन था पर माधोपुर, मुंगेर की **संजना बेन** को नियमों का उलंघन करना ही पड़ा।

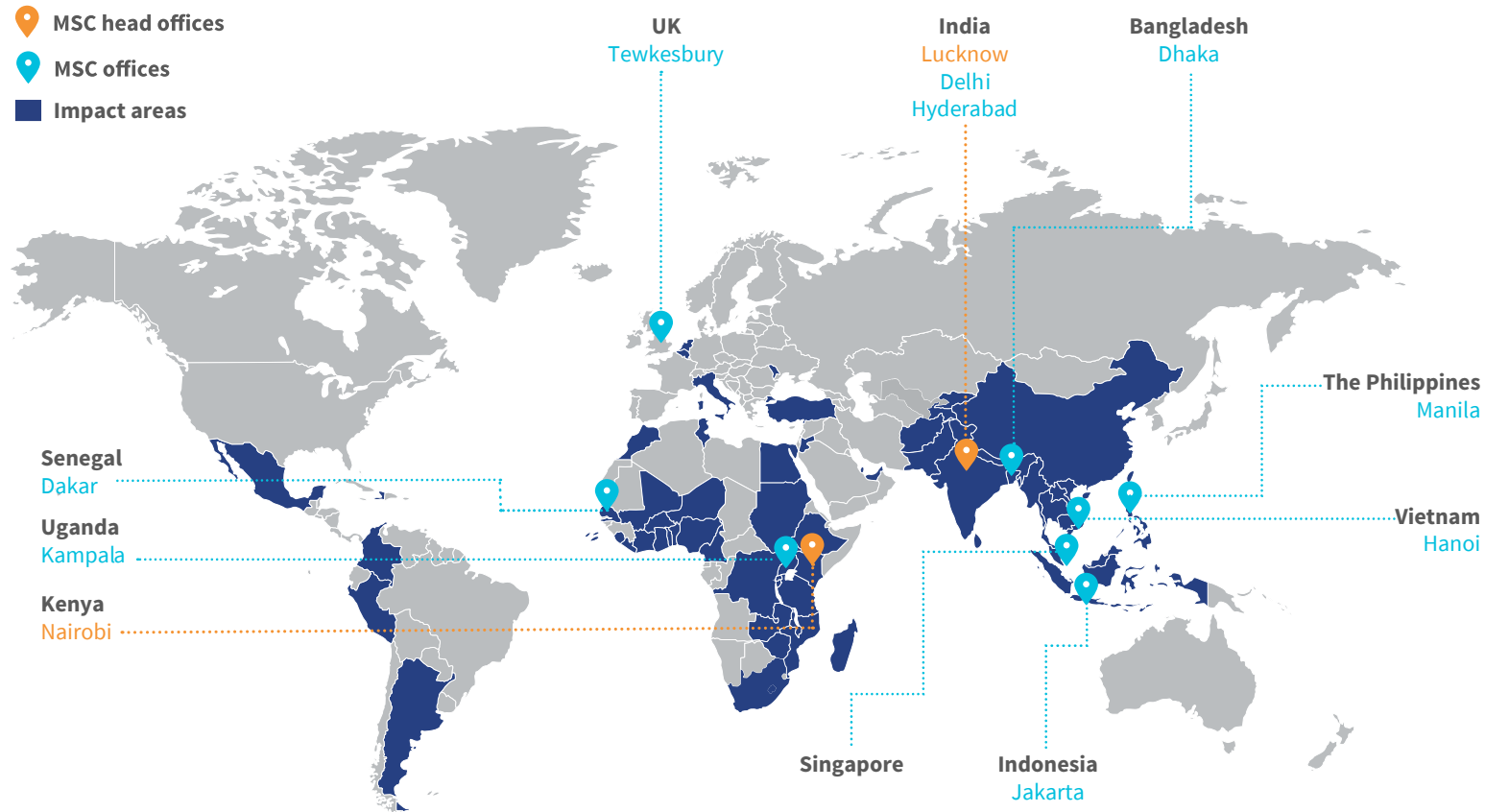
कुछ सालों पहले बहन के पति की मृत्यु हार्ट अटैक के वजह से हो गयी जिस वजह से घर के सारे ज़िम्मेदारियों का बोझ उनपर आया। बहन ने हिम्मत और अपने बच्चों के सहयोग से ठेला खोला।

Without any support from her in-laws and some savings, she opened her stall. During the pandemic she had no other means to support her financial needs. This forced her to hide from the authorities and run her business, due to which she was prosecuted.

Times were difficult for her and she had to take tough decisions but the courage she displayed for the sake of her children and herself is truly commendable.

उनके पास पहले के कुछ बचाये हुए पैसे थे और ससुराल से बिना किसी मदद के उन्होंने अपना ठेला शुरू कर दिया। महामारी के वक्त उनके पास पैसे कमाने का कोई साधन नहीं था जिसके कारण उन्हें छिपकर अपना व्यापार चलाना पड़ा जिसके कारण उनपर मुकदमा चला।

बहन को कठिन फैसले लेने पड़े और समय ने उनका साथ नहीं दिया पर उनका सहस्र सचमुच काबिले तारीफ है।



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