

# FROM ACCESS TO OWNERWHIP

**Water as Regenerative Input  
Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project  
Self Employed Women's Association**

*Promising Water Resources Management  
Approaches in the Drinking Water Supply  
and Sanitation Sector*

November 1996

**Reema Nanavaty**

Self Employed Women's Association  
SEWA Reception Centre  
Opp. Lok Manya Tilak Baug  
Bhadra, Ahmedabad - 380 001.

Phone No : 0091-79-5506477, 5506444  
Fax No. : 0091-79-5506444

210-96FR-15239



*Library*  
IRC International Water  
and Sanitation Centre  
Tel.: +31 70 30 689 80  
Fax: +31 70 35 899 64

# FROM ACCESS TO OWNERWHIP

**Water as Regenerative Input  
Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project  
Self Employed Women's Association**

*Promising Water Resources Management  
Approaches in the Drinking Water Supply  
and Sanitation Sector*

November 1996

**Reema Nanavaty**

Self Employed Women's Association  
SEWA Reception Centre  
Opp. Lok Manya Tilak Baug  
Bhadra, Ahmedabad - 380 001.

Phone No : 0091-79-5506477, 5506444  
Fax No. : 0091-79-5506444

LIBRARY IRC  
PO Box 93190, 2500 AD THE HAGUE  
Tel.: +31 70 30 689 80  
Fax: +31 70 35 899 64  
BARCODE: 1 5 2 3 9  
LO: 210 96FR



# C O N T E N T S

Summary.....	1
Setting.....	2
The Community.....	2 - 3
Map (Project Area by SEWA, Gujarat State)	
Background.....	3
Objectives.....	3 - 4
Photographs	
Methodology.....	4
Basic Principles.....	4 - 6
1.0 Need Based/Demand Driven Programmes	
2.0 Contributory Systems	
3.0 Mobilizing Local Government Resources	
4.0 Local Organisation Building	
5.0 Capacity Building of the Local Organisation	
Photographs	
6.0 Local Users, Managers and Owners	
7.0 Local Capacity Building	
Activities.....	6 - 8
1.0 Water as Regenerative Input	
(a) Water resources inventory	
(b) Activising the Pani Samitis	
(c) Rain Water Harvesting	
Map (Project Taluka by SEWA, Banaskantha District)	
(d) Water Campaign	
Water Use.....	8
Photographs	
Relationships.....	9
Project Achievements.....	9 - 10
Map (Activities of SEWA at Village Level)	
Photographs	
Annexures.....	I - III
Annexure - 1	
Secondary Activities Undertaken by the Project	

\*\*\*\*\*



# **FROM ACCESS TO OWNERSHIP**

## **Water as Regenerative Input**

### **Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project**

#### **Self Employed Women's Association**

#### **Summary 1**

Self Employed Women's Association, (SEWA), is a trade union of 2,05,270 members working for poor and self employed women in urban and rural areas. SEWA strives to provide a worker-producer status to self employed women through a joint struggle of union and co-operatives. In 1988 SEWA launched a regional development programme which now covers 60 villages of Radhanpur and Santalpur taluka of said Banaskantha district. The Government of Gujarat, under the Indo-Dutch bilateral programme, launched the Santalpur Regional Water Supply Scheme (SRWSS). The programme aims at providing assured water supply, health, sanitation, and income to the local communities through their active participation in its implementation; thereby improving the living and working conditions of the communities. The leadership is with women. The emphasis is to increase access, now, and create ownership of water by women water users.

The project is in a desert region. The hostile climatic conditions and frequent droughts have reduced the communities from subsistence to survival level, often compelling them to migrate to other areas. Women and children are the worst sufferers of this forced and involuntary migration.

SEWA was invited to get involved in the socio-economic development programme under SRWSS. The programme, Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project, is an outcome of the initial action-research of the Foundation for Public Interest (FPI). The project aims to provide full employment to women, i.e. assured work and income which would ensure better nutrition, shelter and social security, and thereby stem the forced migration of the communities.

To achieve this, SEWA has initiated income-generation activities based on available local skills, resources, and assets for women who live below the poverty line, or marginally above the poverty line. Around 43,500 women from 82 villages are receiving sustained work as well as employment opportunities. The access to water was through work.





### Setting :

Banaskantha district, in the North of Gujarat, is the most resource poor and under developed district of Gujarat. The project area - Santalpur and Radhanpur talukas in the West of Banaskantha - are desert areas, having an area of 1945.88 sq. kms and total population of 1,81,065 in total of 110 villages.

The area, a desert region, is having extreme climatic conditions. It has an average annual rainfall of 20 inches, experiences frequent droughts, with severe sand storms. The soil and water are saline. Total Dissolved Solids in ground water are exceeding 3500 ppm. The ground water table is sinking at the rate of 3 mts. per year. At the same time, flash floods visit every three years.

The major occupation of the local communities is agriculture, which is completely rainfed. The second major occupation is cattle breeding. The two major occupations being land based and cattle based, often have set back, due to extreme soil and water conditions, failure of rains and repeated droughts. The communities are therefore forced to migrate in search of work and livelihood.

This has reduced the communities from subsistence to survival level. Women and children are the worst sufferers of this forced migration leading to further desertification. Can situation be more hopeless?

### The Community :

And yet, the local women hold high hopes in their abilities and SEWA's work. The major communities in the area are traditional Hindu communities mainly comprising of Ahirs, Rabaris, Thakores, and Harijans.

The Ahirs are traditionally followers of Lord Krishna. Supposed to have migrated from Northern India and settled here this community has striking features and long cultural traditions. Their major occupation is cattle breeding and agriculture.

The Rabaris are the traditional shepherd community native of this region. They are cattle breeders - mainly breed sheep and goats.

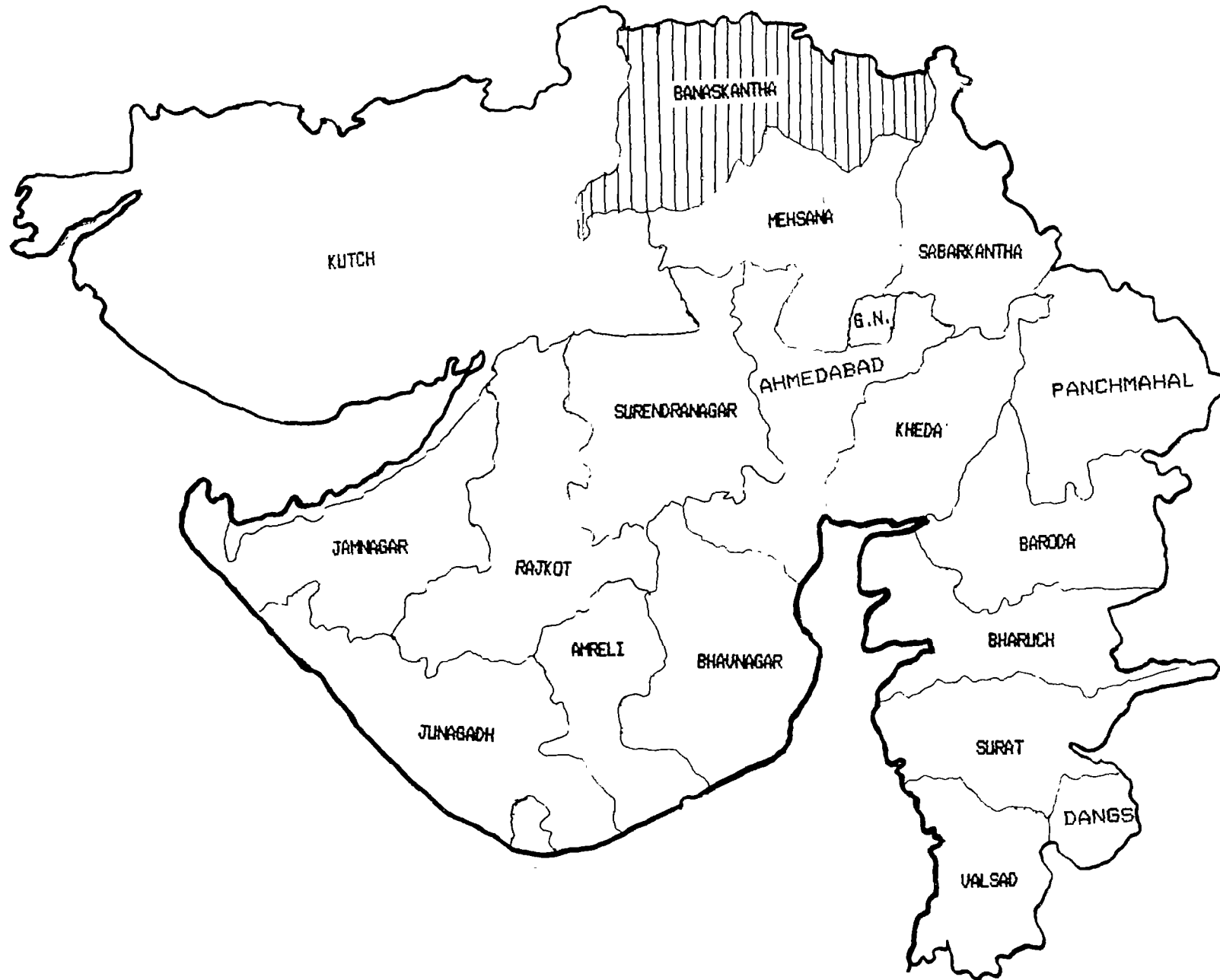
The Thakores is a dominant trading community, mobile, proactive, and in touch with the mainstream.

The Harijans are mainly cobblers and weavers, so far untouchables, up in education, active in social matters, and slowly establishing their own new role in the community.



# PROJECT AREA BY SEWA

GUJARAT STATE





The main occupation of the communities is agriculture and cattle breeding. The hostile climatic conditions, degraded saline soil and water, and frequent droughts, have turned agriculture into a disaster. The cropping pattern has changed, which further exploits ground water, leading to further desertification, non-availability, of fodder, food, fuel, and work.

The communities have few means of livelihoods, women and children are malnourished. This forces the communities to migrate in search of work and livelihood. As a result the district has the highest infant mortality rate in the State and lowest rate of literacy.

The region faces acute and persistent shortage of potable drinking water.

### **Background :**

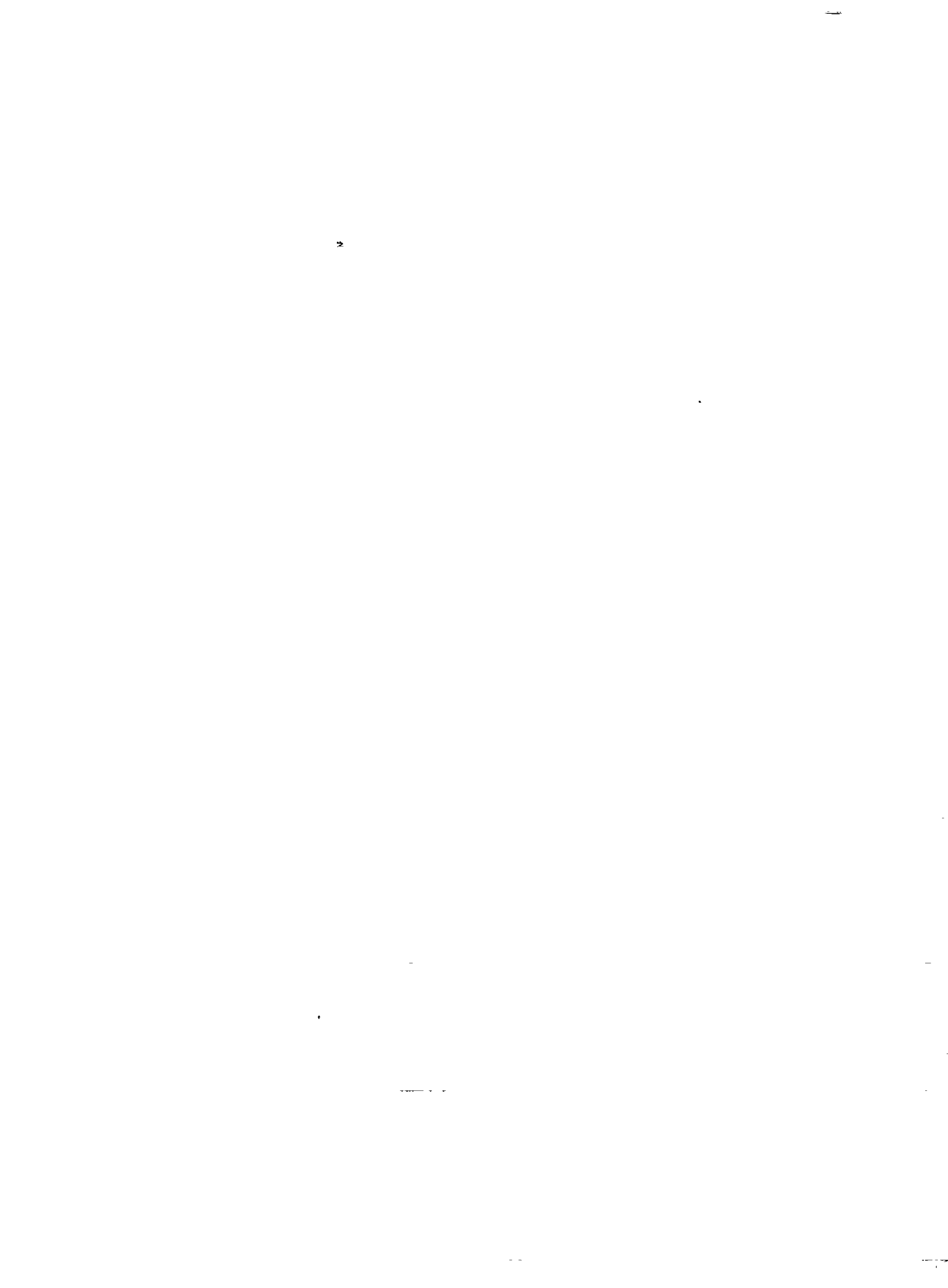
The programme was initiated by SEWA under the Indo-Dutch bilateral programme - (Water Sector) in October 1988. The Santalpur Regional Water Supply Scheme (SRWSS) is an integrated programme that aims at providing assured water supply, health, sanitation and income to the local communities. The programme has a budgetary allocation of about US \$ 60,000 per year.

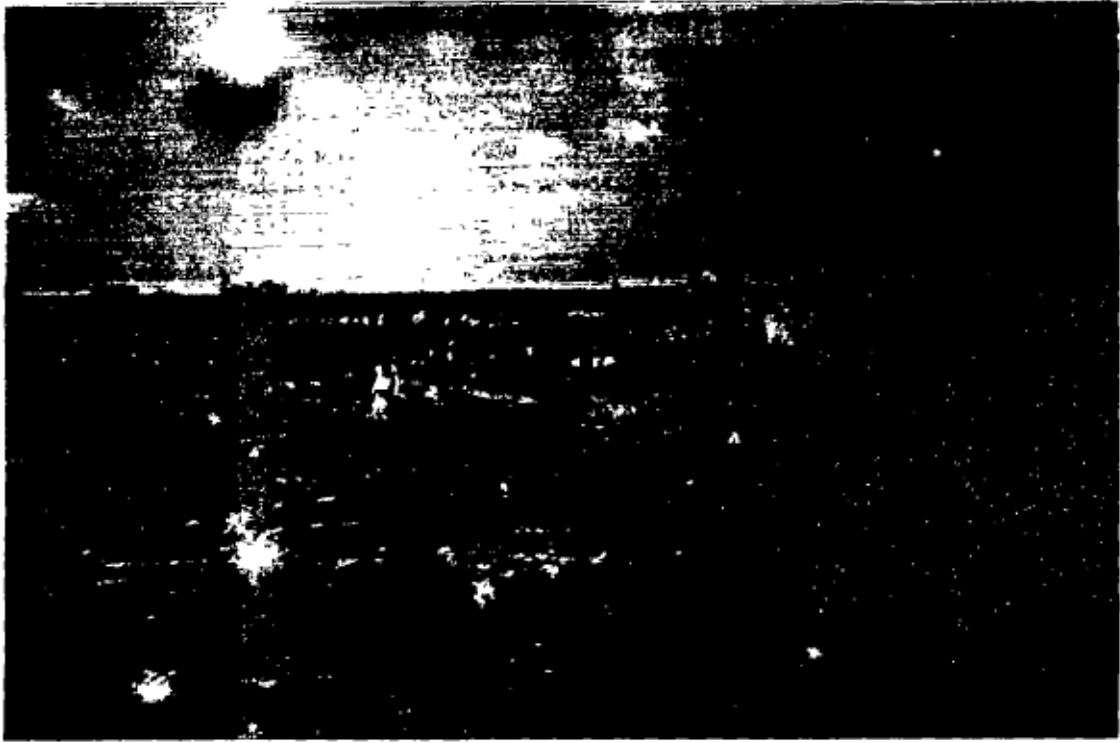
### **Objectives :**

The major programme objectives of the Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project are :

- (1) to enhance, on a sustainable basis, the economic position and social status of women in the region served by the water supply scheme and thereby at the same time raise their abilities to pay for water (O & M); and
- (2) to strengthen the integration between, on the one hand, piped water supply, and on the other hand, community-based management, operation, and maintenance of village facilities, health and hygiene, and cost recovery.

The availability of piped water decreases the amount of time women spend on collecting water. Further more, it improves their health and that of their households. Women will nearly always invest freed time and energy in their families, income-generating activities for their families, or in development activities such as community work. Some of these income-generating activities such as nursery plantation are dependent on piped water. The BWRDP programme offers women opportunities to generate an income and to benefit from special services and facilities offered through this programme.





1. Plastic Lining Constructed



2. Women Digging the Pond





The objective overarching the whole project that SEWA is especially interested in not only Banaskantha and Banaskantha women, but throughout SEWA's work: first access and then ownership of water by women water users. SEWA believes in this all water sector work it does.

### Methodology :

The Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project tries to identify and satisfy the needs of the local communities by strategically linking up the project activities with the existing Government programmes and schemes to enhance chances of sustainability. Water is a unitary resource. Two parallel water management system can not exist for long. All water sector systems must in the end be integrated.

The project area is arid, desert region, experiencing frequent droughts. The hostile climatic conditions, saline soil and water, severe heat and sandstorms has reduced the communities from subsistence to survival level. Agriculture is the major occupation, which is rainfed. Very often it fails due to drought. This forces the communities to migrate in search of water, work and livelihood. Therefore, the project has to address all these issues in integrated manner to achieve the project objective.

Thus the immediate need of the communities was for work. SEWA has initiated income - generating activities based on the (a) available local skill base, (b) available local asset (economic, social, physical, and human) base, and (c) available local natural and human resources.

Today the programme provides direct work and employment to about 14,500 households through their collectives, and, indirect benefit to around 43,500 women members of SEWA from 70 villages.

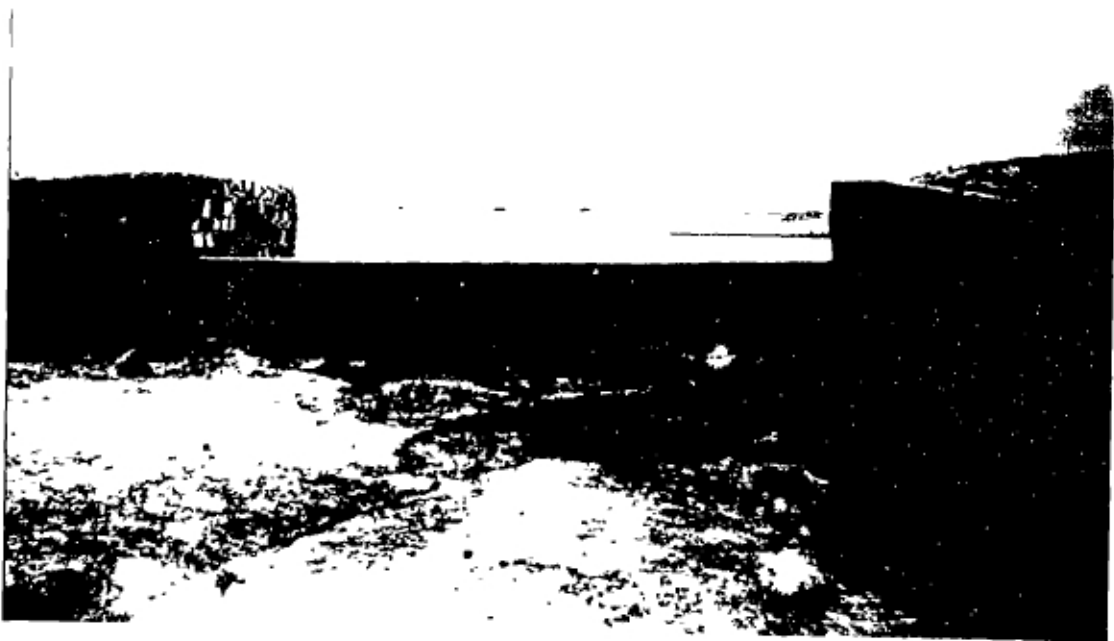
### BASIC PRINCIPLES :

The Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project works on the following main principles :

#### 1.0 NEED BASED/DEMAND DRIVEN PROGRAMMES :

All the project activities are need based or demand driven. Whenever or wherever there is a felt need for work of the community, communicated to SEWA through members, SEWA then, based on the available local skill or asset or resources facilitates members in initiating an activity to satisfy the need or demand. Therefore the project activities, automatically, are identified, designed and implemented by the local communities themselves, ensuring increasing "COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION".





3. Overflow Outlet



4. Plantation on the Bank



- leadership trainings
- activity management trainings
- group management trainings
- marketing management trainings
- accounts and book keeping trainings
- natural resource management trainings
- seasonability analysis
- financial management trainings
- reporting and project formulation trainings

#### 6.0 LOCAL USERS, MANAGERS AND OWNERS

The Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project ensures that the local women and the community are the users, managers, and owners of the programme. This is very important. Women are customers, managers, and owners. Therefore, most of the village level activities are identified, planned, designed, implemented, and monitored by the local village committee of the women users, managers, and owners who are SEWA members.

This brings transparency in the whole programme. The users also own the programme. They build their capacity to take up more and better work.

#### 7.0 LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING :

The organizers, to facilitate the village committees and groups, are also recruited locally : local use of local human capital. This also means that when the project ends or if the organizer leaves the project, the skilled human resource will remain within the community.

#### Activities :

SEWA, based on the above methodology, has initiated the Water as Regenerative Programme as one of major programme.



## 1.0 Water as Regenerative Input :

Water conservation and water harvesting activities call for immediate attention for the eco-regeneration of the desert region. In fact Gujarat itself is suffering from water crisis. SEWA has mobilised local communities and local resources for water harvesting activities including:

- pond lining to harvest rain water;
- cleaning of wells and canals; and
- constructing minor irrigation structures.

So far, the local Village Water Committees were assisted by SEWA in constructing agrifilm lined ponds in 2 villages of Gokhantar and Datrana. The village water committee, mobilised local resources (20% of the total cost) and the rain water harvesting structures were constructed by local planning, local execution and local management.

The local communities, under women's leadership, are involved in following programme activities :

### A. Water resources inventory :

A local team of women and youth are trained to conduct a survey of all the existing water resources, traditional and recent. To build inventory of all the water resources that could be revived or augmented. This is important for having a comprehensive picture of water resources shared by the entire community.

### B. Activising the Pani Samitis :

SEWA is involved in constituting and building capacity of the village Pani Samitis (Water Committees) to take over the operation and maintenance and cost recovery of the SRWSS, in co-ordination with the Gujarat Water Supply Sewerage Board.

### C. Rain Water Harvesting :

The local communities, under women's leadership, take up Rain Water Harvesting programmes such as augmenting the village ponds, with plastic lining. Ground water recharging by diverting the surface run off water into wells is also taken up.

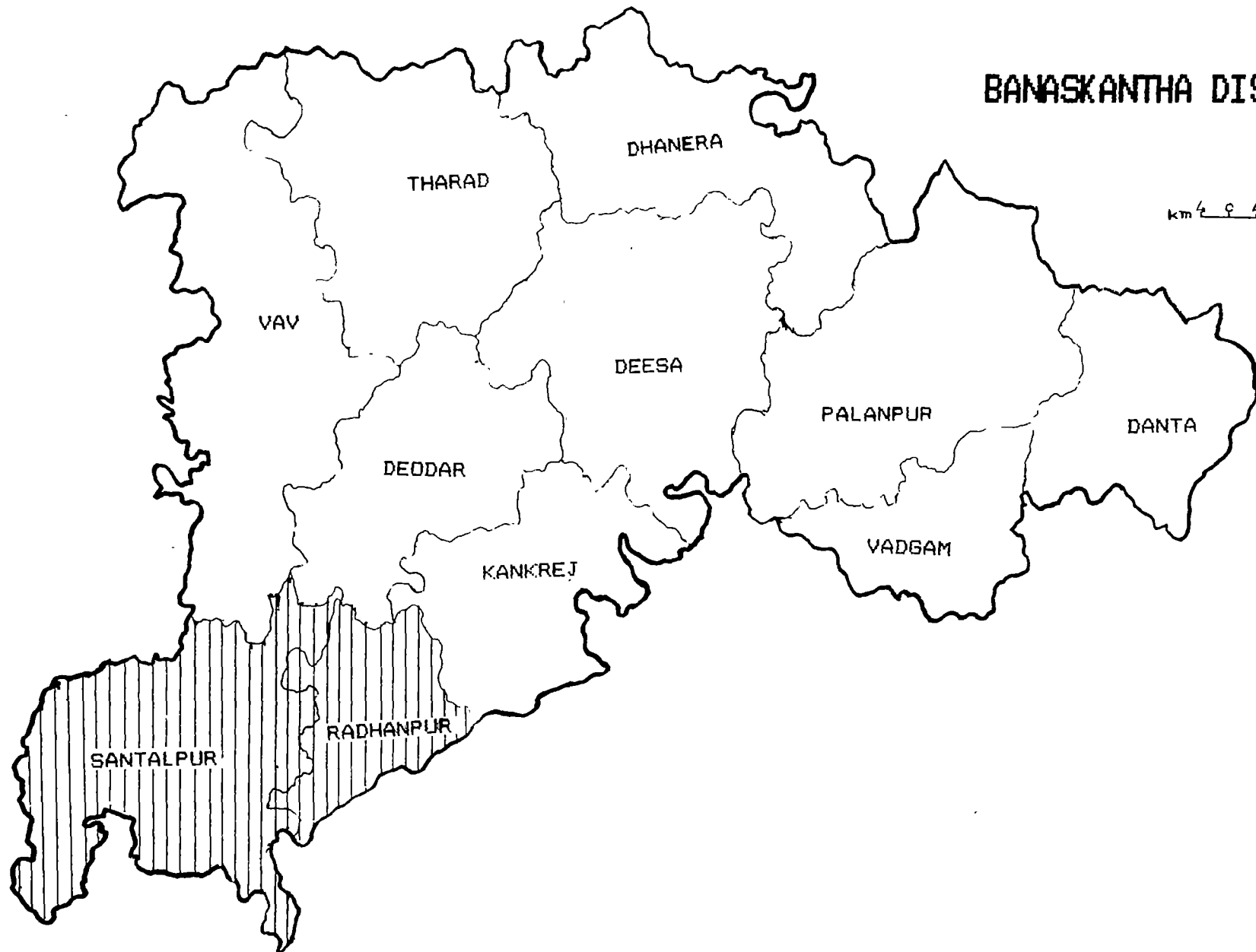
Roof rain water harvesting, by harvesting the roof rain run of water, for domestic use is something being worked out.





# PROJECT TALUKA BY SEWA

BANASKANTHA DISTRICT





All the above activities are planned, designed, and executed by the local communities, with some local contribution. These activities back-up the RWSS, reduce the pressure on the piped water supply, and augment it.

D. Water Campaign :

SEWA mobilised the local communities from the villages covered under the SRWSS, in reviving and augmenting water sources. Co-ordinating with the local Government agencies for assured supply of water to the village is taken up. As a result around 43,000 local women joined the campaign. In one year more than 16 villages directly benefited through this campaign. This year the number will be even higher. This ensures actual and effective local use of budget allocation by the Government for water sector.

Water Use

Project region :

The Project area is a dry and desert region with high salinity ingress. The soil and ground water are saline. Salinity exceeding 3500 ppm. The surface water also turns saline on storage for more than four months. The river and traditional water sources such as ponds and wells have dried, turned saline and are neglected. Thus the area faces acute shortage of water. Even availability of potable drinking water through traditional sources is not guaranteed beyond November.

Water for irrigation is almost not available. The ground water table is falling at the rate of almost 2 mt. per year. Further exploitation of ground water, adds to salinity ingress. Creating Borewells is not advisable, as ground water is only available at the depth of 900 ft.

As a result the communities migrate to better areas. The only source of potable drinking water is the Santalpur Regional Water Supply Scheme. The water is pumped from 6 tubewells dug in the riverbed. This water is transported through pipelines over a distance of 110 kms, mostly by gravity. The water in the villages is supplied through standpost, 45 lts per head per day.

SEWA is involving the local communities in water harvesting and recharging, by taking up constructing of small farm ponds, lining of village ponds, recharging of wells and watershed development programmes.





5. Soil Condition



6. Pond Leveling



### Relationships :

The project is being implemented in close co-ordination with the Gujarat Water Supply Sewerage Board. The project also has established close relationships with the Government bodies such as District Rural Development Agency, Minor Irrigation Department, and District Health Department.

The project also works closely with the local authorities such as the Taluka Panchayats, and Village Panchayat. The Project activities are linked with these agencies, under Governments development schemes. Thus the project gets financial assistance.

The activities are planned in collaboration with the local authorities, to gain their support.

SEWA also has different degrees of working relationship with local NGOs, CBOs, VOs, trade associations, marketing boards, and dairy development boards. Some of the examples are Foundation for Public Interest, Disaster Mitigation Institute, Banaskantha Vikas Mandal, National Dairy Development Board etc.

The activities involve the local authorities, village groups in implementation.

### Project Achievements :

In the following three ways the SRWSS is strengthened by the BWRDP.

First, a substantial decrease in migration rates can be observed among families involved in the BWRDP. Due to the generation of higher and sustainable incomes by female family members, the number of families having to migrate as a matter of survival has decreased. Data (collected in 60 villages) show that 332 families migrated in 1994, whereas 1524 families migrated in 1989. This is an almost 80% decrease in the number of BWRDP related families migrating. Naturally, these data are influenced by geographical factors such as good years or drought years, but the decrease in migration rates remains significant.

Decreasing the migration rates of families within the Banaskantha district increases the effectiveness of the SRWSS. Migration negatively influences the development potentials of an area. It weakens the community bonds and the operation and maintenance of village facilities, increases the administrative neglect, and adds to rapid desertification.

Second, through the BWRDP more than 15,000 women in the Santalpur region have been able to enhance, on a sustainable basis, their economic position and social status. This has generally improved the resource position of their households and thus increased the abilities of these households to pay for water.





Third, the BWRDP enhances the autonomy of women through economic, social and political empowerment. Full employment (i.e. employment through which the female workers and producers are assured income, food and social security) and self-reliance (i.e. being self-reliant individually and collectively, economically and in terms of making decisions) are the key goals. Enhancing the autonomy of women will improve their position to assume a leading role in community-based hygiene and cost recovery. Active participation of women in all aspects of the development process is a precondition in order to improve the living and working conditions of the communities in the Santalpur region. Furthermore, active participation of women in decision making processes on water issues is crucial since they are the main users of water. Women are central to water sector.



# ACTIVITIES OF SEWA AT VILLAGE LEVEL



## ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES	SYMBOL
CRAFT	⊕
DAIRY & FODDER SECURITY SYSTEM	⊗
ECO-REGENERATION PROGRAMME	⊗
SAVING & CREDIT PROGRAMME	⊕
GUM COLLECTION	◐
SALT FARMING	●
WATER HARVESTING	⊗
DAY CARE CENTRES	⊗





7. Constructing Inlet



8. Women Learning Masonary



## **ANNEXURE — 1**

### **Secondary Activities Undertaken by the Project :**

#### **Women Artisans Support Programme :**

Women in Banaskantha have a rich heritage of crafts; the Aahirs are known for their fine embroidery, the Rabari women for beautiful mirror work, the Mochis make attractive leather items and the Harijans do patch work and bead work.

A craft development centre was set up at Radhanpur, which provides skill training, design documentation, product development, supply of raw materials and marketing.

About 3000 women artisans have organised into local groups under a government programme called Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA). Out of 42 women-managed DWCRA groups, 22 have achieved self sufficiency. Though the programme wateruser women team how to measure modules, this is useful in water managers cost recovery of O & M.

#### **Eco-Regeneration Programme (Nursery and Plantation) :**

The women of this region are being introduced to antidesertification activities. Around 300 landless women are engaged in raising 10 lakh fruit and non-fruit saplings annually. Training and technical input is provided by the Gujarat Agriculture University (GAU). SEWA trains them in plant grafting which provides additional income. Some 350 acres of panchayat wastelands have been afforested under an agro-forestry and silvipasture programme. Increase in ecological asset, the vision lead to general achievement of the other natural resources such as land and water.

#### **Dairying and Fodder Security System :**

SEWA in co-ordination with Local Dairy, has revived 75 defunct primary milk co-operatives. Today, the daily collection of milk is around 8,000 liters.

SEWA is now concentrating on involving women to form women's cooperatives in villages in the area.





A detailed study by FPI resulted in the launching of the Fodder Security System (FSS). Fodder (dry stacks of Jowar and Bajara), is purchased and stored during the harvesting season and distributed to members of the cooperatives during the lean summer months. With the assistance of SEWA, a committee of representatives of local communities manage the purchase, storage, distribution and financial activities. Where there is fodder for the animal the cattle owners do not migrate. When they stay on in the village they are more likely to demand assured supply of drinking water as well as on their own improve the existing sources.

#### **Salt Farming :**

Salt farming is another activity in the area involving around 10,000 people. Based on a study conducted by SEWA and FPI, SEWA has launched two major programmes for salt workers.

1. Co-operativisation of Salt Workers.
2. Salt Worker's Welfare Programme.

Instead of considering saline water as a waste its availability is considered as an opportunity for income-generating activities.

#### **Savings and Credit :**

About 70 local savings and credit groups of 2500 women are formed with a monthly saving of Rs. 10 each. Their total savings is Rs. 3, 50,000/-

About 300 women have been given credit worth Rs. 1,36,000/- mainly for agriculture activities such as purchase of seeds, manure or land development, for house repair and purchase of cattle. This will directly increase the income of the family and improve the living conditions. When women manage money they enhance their decision making competence. This is useful in making operation and maintenance as well as cost-recovery more effective.



### **Minor Forest Produce Collection :**

A desert tree, prosopis Juliflora, popularly known as Ganda Bavai, is a source of resin gum. SEWA has organised 1500 women gum collectors into eight DWCRAs groups. These groups are licensed for gum collection by the Gujarat State Forest Development Corporation (GSFDC), the sole purchasing agency owned by the state for all forest produce. SEWA is now negotiating with the government for a fairer price. Vegetation is difficult to separate from land and water. Better vegetation management also to better land and water leads management.

### **Social Security Schemes :**

SEWA has launched various social security schemes for its members which include :

#### **A. Health Care :**

Some 1,000 women artisans were examined for eye ailments. Some 876 women were provided spectacles.

Some 4,000 members were insured under a social security package which covers a compensation of Rs. 10,000 in case of accidental death; Rs. 1,000 as mediclaim in case of illness; and Rs. 5,000 towards damage to house or goods due to floods and riots. More than 6,000 members have life-insurance. Water, and health and hygiene can not be separated. Safe and sustained water is directly linked with enhanced health and hygiene of the community.

#### **B. Food Security :**

Most of the villages under this projects are in remote areas with no approach road. Food supply through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Fair Price Shops (FPS) is irregular and inadequate. After water food is the first more important next step. Therefore, how can water be separated from food.



