

October 2022

WORKSHOP IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE
Preliminary Terms of Reference
Fall 2022 – Spring 2023

Project Title: **Assessing the Impact of Climate-Induced Heat Waves on Poor Women Workers and their Communities in India, and Gender-Sensitive Response Strategies**

Client/Host Agency: **Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)**
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Background: Founded in 1972, SEWA is an internationally recognized member-based organization of poor self-employed women workers from the informal sector of the economy. With headquarters in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, it has a membership of about 2.1 million women workers in 18 states of India and also works in other South Asian countries.

Women who work in the informal sector of the economy do not have a fixed employer-employee relationship. SEWA’s main goal is to organize women workers for full employment and self-reliance. Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter). By self-reliance, SEWA means that women should be independent, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of decision-making ability.

Over its 50 years, SEWA’s membership has grown to include vendors and small business women, home-based workers, small farmers, salt producers, waste recyclers, construction workers and other manual labourers including domestic and laundry workers. SEWA members are spread across four major categories – home-based workers, vendors and hawkers, manual labourers and service providers. SEWA’s services to its members, and to their households, have also expanded to include savings and credit, health care, child care, insurance, housing, legal aid, capacity building and communication services, among others.

Under the SEWA umbrella are a large number of cooperatives, producer and savings/credit groups and alliances, as well as several affiliated organizations such as SEWA Bank, SEWA Insurance, SEWA Housing, SEWA ICT, SEWA's agriculture enterprise RUDI, and the Trade Facilitation Centre. SEWA has also played a leading role in national and international advocacy for the rights of informal sector workers, and has received numerous national and international awards for its innovative work.

In recent years, SEWA has embarked on several new initiatives to build on its successes, and address the changing aspirations and needs of its members, especially of the roughly 40% of SEWA's current members who are young women, as well as of future SEWA members. Younger members want to learn newer skills and use the latest technology, and many of them also aspire to run their own enterprises. For these reasons, many current SEWA initiatives and programs promote women's economic empowerment through leveraging new technologies, and through women-owned enterprises, and building women-led supply chains in areas such as energy, agribusiness, food processing, and waste recycling. These initiatives include Hum Sab Ek Hai, a rural homestay enterprise that partners with Airbnb (which a SIPA workshop team advised in 2019-20) and RUDI (Rural Urban Distribution Initiative), an agricultural enterprise and supply chain linking 15,000 farmers, 600 processors and 7,200 retailers (Rudiben), operating 11 agroprocessing centers across 9 districts of Gujarat and 10 centres across other states. SEWA has also recently started a rural call centre in one district in Gujarat to provide sustainable livelihood to young rural women.

Across its programming, SEWA has also been increasingly focused on understanding the impact of climate change on its members, including from more and more extreme heat waves in India, and on empowering its members with mitigation tools and strategies to address these impacts.

The poor generally, and women in particular, are disproportionately vulnerable to climate impacts, and at the same time women have been less able to participate in finding and benefiting from solutions. According to reports from SEWA's grassroots leaders, increased temperatures have resulted in adverse effects on the health and livelihoods of SEWA members who are poor workers, in both rural areas and urban slums. Increased heat and exposure to warmer conditions compromise their ability to regulate temperature and can result in a cascade of illnesses, like heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Several cases of heat-related illnesses have been observed in members especially farmers, salt-pan workers, street vendors, waste recyclers, head loaders, and construction workers. In order to earn livelihoods, these members work long hours in the heat and have experienced symptoms of dehydration including nausea, vomiting, dizziness and hypotension. Many of them live in makeshift tin houses without adequate ventilation. The extreme temperatures are also worsening chronic conditions like cardiovascular and respiratory disorders, and other non-communicable diseases like diabetes and

hypertension. As a result, SEWA members face loss of livelihoods and adverse effects on their health.

In response, SEWA has been working on immediate relief and recovery initiatives, and taking other steps to build climate resilience amongst its members and their communities, including to promote economic empowerment through women-centered clean energy projects. One of the most exciting of these new initiatives is SEWA's work with members on Green Livelihoods, to develop and use renewable energy and other measures to mitigate the effects of extreme heat and capture the livelihood benefits of women-led climate and clean energy solutions. In collaboration with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and other stakeholders, SEWA has been piloting Green Villages through capacity building and the implementation of practical, assessable tools such as a biogas plant, cool roof paint, solar pumps, and precision irrigation systems, among others. Over 10 Green Villages were piloted in 2021-22, with a goal of scaling up to 100 Green Villages by 2025.

SEWA plans to train its grass roots leaders to digitally collect data on climate impacts, especially extreme heat, in order to better understand the nature and extent of impacts on women and their communities, and better inform future response program designs. SEWA would also like to examine the successes and challenges of current resilience initiatives, such as Green Villages, to understand and quantify their impact.

Objective:

To inform future heat and climate program design, SEWA would like the assistance of a SIPA workshop team to develop a framework for collecting and analyzing the impact of extreme heat on its members, and the effectiveness of community resilience initiatives. SEWA would also like the SIPA team's assistance in a close examination, and development of a case study, on the Green Village initiative in particular.

Tasks:

The expected project tasks will involve;

- Background study and expert interviews to understand the economic, social, and gender context in India (and Gujarat in particular), as well as climate change and heat-related health impacts on the poor and women in India; and good practices in evaluating these impacts and mitigation strategies;
- Review of SEWA documents and materials on climate and heat wave impacts, heat wave relief and mitigation programs, and SEWA's green livelihoods program, including SEWA's collaboration with NRDC on the Green Villages initiative;
- Review of relevant findings and lessons from other gender-sensitive climate impact assessment studies and from other women-centered clean energy or climate mitigation initiatives in India and globally;
- Discussion with SEWA leaders and staff, as well as NRDC and other relevant stakeholders, to understand the current operations, successes and challenges of the Green Villages Initiative;
- Interviews with experts on climate impacts in India, and on women-centered responses;

- Visits to impacted member communities in Gujarat, and to promising response initiatives, including to a model Green Village in Gujarat; and
- Development of recommendations for the ongoing assessment of heat wave impacts on SEWA members and communities, and response strategies; and development of a Green Village case study.

Deliverables:

The expected deliverables for the project include:

- A detailed workplan;
- Draft report outline;
- Draft report and final report, including a framework tool for the collection and evaluation of heat wave impacts on SEWA members, and mitigation strategies, and a model Green Village case study; and
- Presentation of key findings and recommendations at SIPA in late April 2023. (A Zoom/Skype presentation for SEWA leadership and staff can also be arranged.)

Requirements:

An ideal team (of about six students) would include the following experience, skills and interests:

- Experience, coursework or interest in climate and heat wave impacts on the poor, in gender-sensitive climate impact evaluation, in women-led climate and energy responses, and/or in gender and development;
- Familiarity with field research methods;
- Strong analytical skills, including data analysis skills (both qualitative and quantitative);
- Strong writing/communication skills;
- Regional experience would be a plus; and
- Knowledge of Gujarati or Hindi would be preferable (for at least two students).

Logistics:

The SIPA team will conduct desk research and informational interviews in New York City beginning in November 2022. Subject to further consultation with SEWA, the team will conduct field study in India in January and March 2023 (including meetings and interviews with SEWA leadership and staff, and relevant partners and other stakeholders, and interviews or focus groups with SEWA members in Gujarat). The SIPA team will establish a Zoom/Skype conference schedule with SEWA staff, at a regular weekly time convenient for SEWA.

SEWA will arrange for the team to receive relevant background documents and information, and will provide guidance and feedback on draft deliverables. While in India, the team will be based in Ahmedabad, and will visit relevant districts in Gujarat. SEWA will provide transportation, accommodation and meals during these visits.