
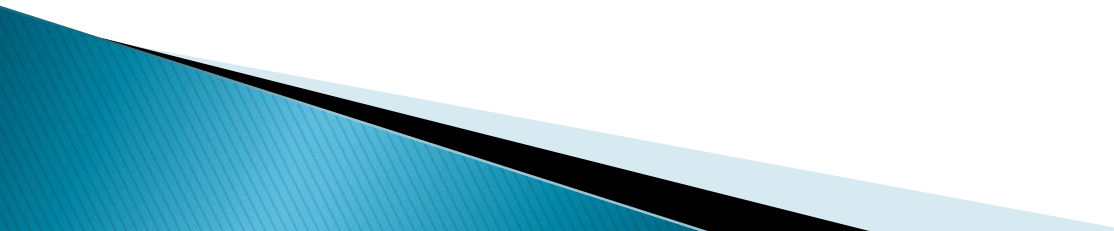


# Collectivising Domestic Workers through Professionalisation

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- ▶ Exploring the possibilities of the care economy
  - ▶ It is normally considered as an extension of women's household work
  - ▶ The ways to capitalise the skills of women
  - ▶ Inclusive approach of rights, skills and well-being
  - ▶ Carefully looking at private 'home' being the workplace
  - ▶ Is it a tactful tradeunionism?
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- ▶ SEWA Movement in Kerala emerged through seeking ways to address the crisis of women in traditional sectors who lost their jobs and were searching for new livelihoods.
  - ▶ Even as they struggled to retain these livelihoods when access to natural resources declined, several of them were also in need of fresh livelihood options.
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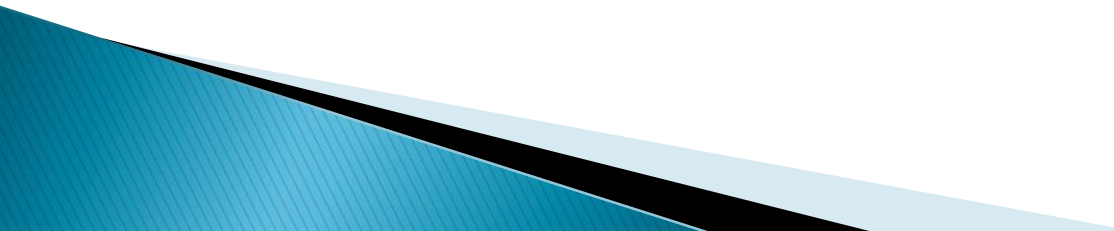
Organising  
Workers at  
Local Levels

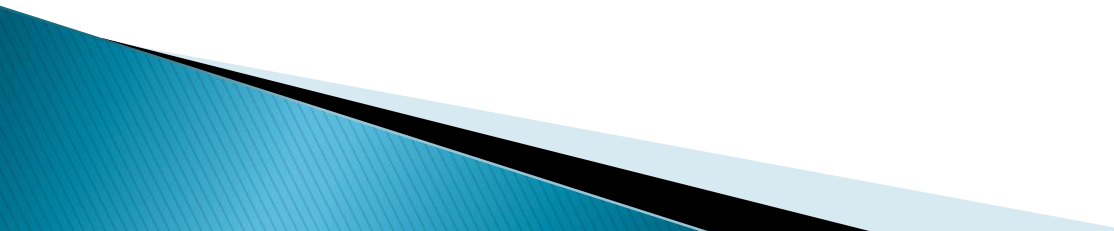
Both in  
origin and  
destination

Trade  
Groups of  
domestic  
workers

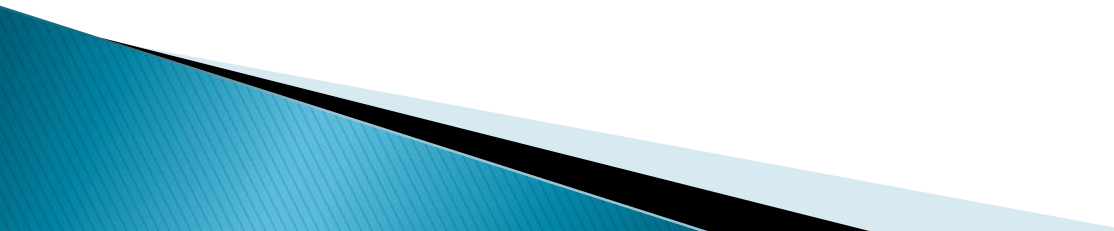
Regular  
Gatherings



- ▶ The women exerted pressure to have some supplementary economic activity
  - ▶ there was a sense of uncertainty in entering into a new field of work,
  - ▶ the initiators were quite confident about the possibility of women being trained to perform as nursing assistants in hospitals or homes
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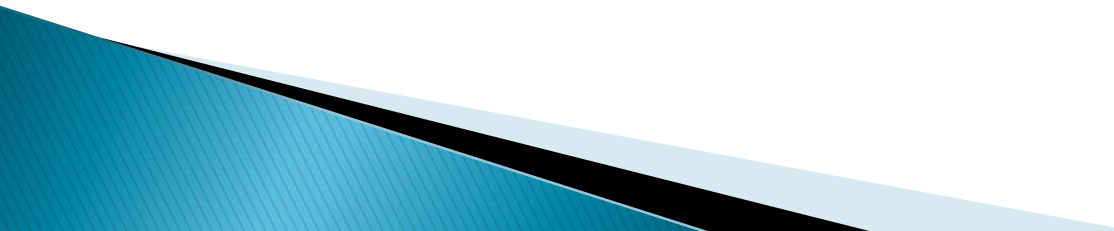
- ▶ The first nursing assistants training started in early 1987 with 25 women.
  - ▶ Both theoretical inputs and practical trainings were given to them through professional nurses.
  - ▶ There were other subjects like the role and space for women in society and in development, how women could organise and the role of SEWA as a women's and workers
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# Means of formalising

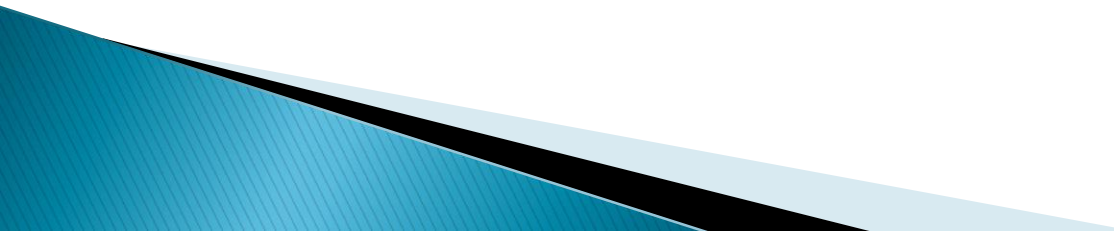
- ▶ Local identification mechanism
  - ▶ Fixing minimum wages
  - ▶ Code of Conduct for the Employers
  - ▶ Means of Social Security
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- ▶ Most of the workers with SEWA have taken to domestic work either because of economic problems in the family, alcohol addicted partners, the loss of the husband due to death or separation, so that earning an income is indispensable

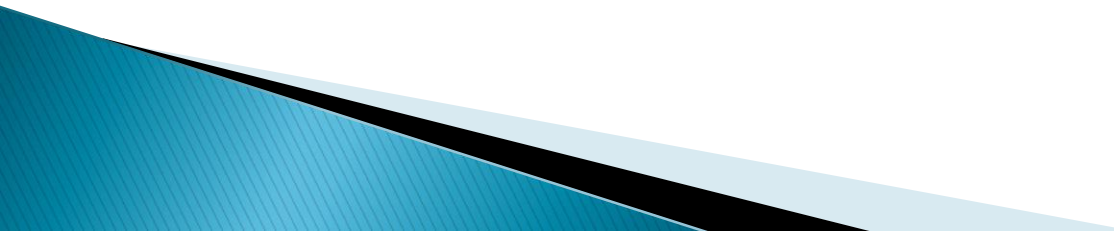


- ▶ Once the women started getting a regular wage, things also improved for them in the family.
  - ▶ Not all their husbands and children were happy about the fact that the mother/wife was going out to work.
  - ▶ Meeting with husbands
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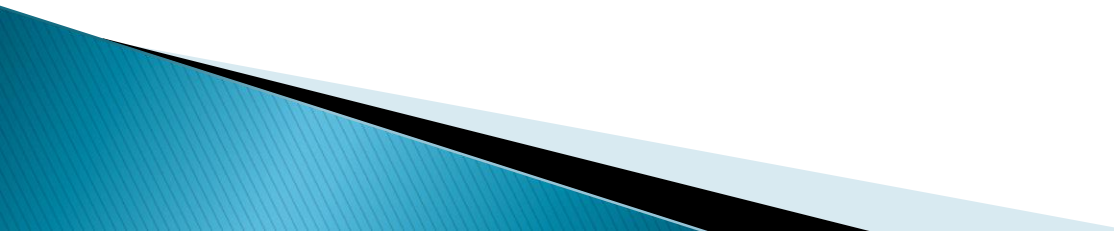
# Flips of Patriarchy

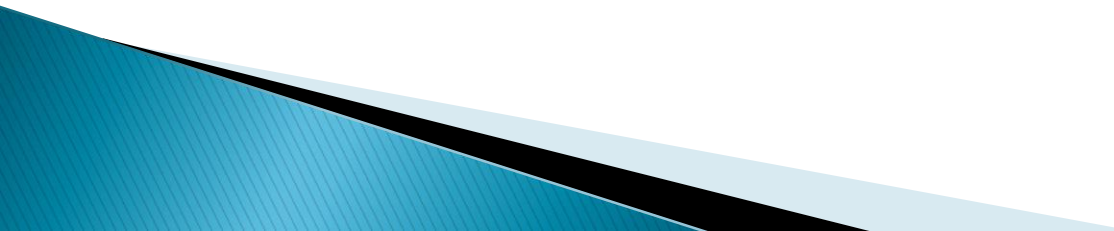
- ▶ Gradually things began to change when women brought home their wages, and also gained in confidence with the input sessions that they received
  - ▶ Women were simply granted better status in the home with economic independence.
  - ▶ Men continued to assert their dominance, some by demanding the money from their wives, others with their drinking and violence, while some borrowed money and made the wives repay their debts
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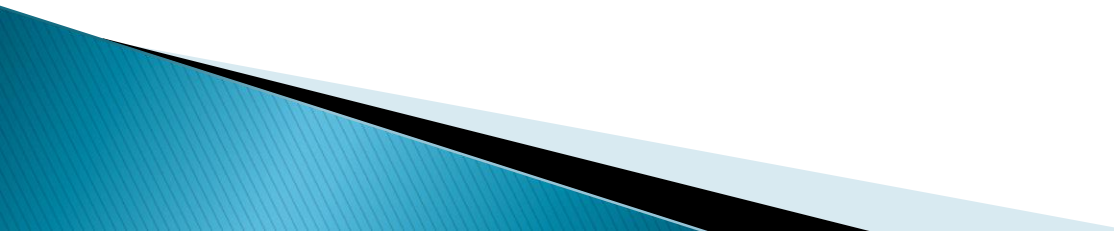
# Constraints and Challenges

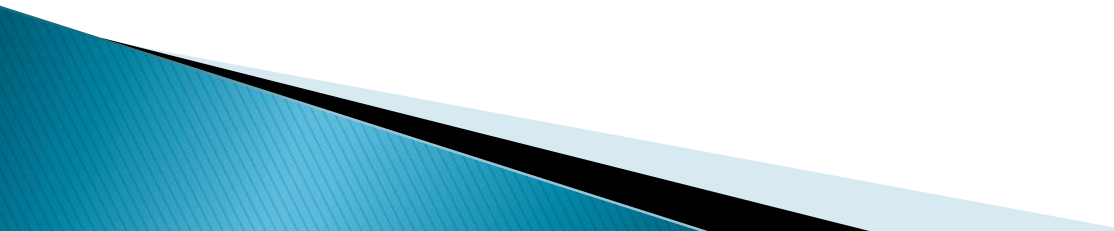
- ▶ Pressure from the employer to keep away from the organisation
  - ▶ Offering gifts and loans in kind
  - ▶ Only three months in a house continuously
  - ▶ Local women's groups which are the basic units of the collective
  - ▶ Committee representatives are selected from these groups
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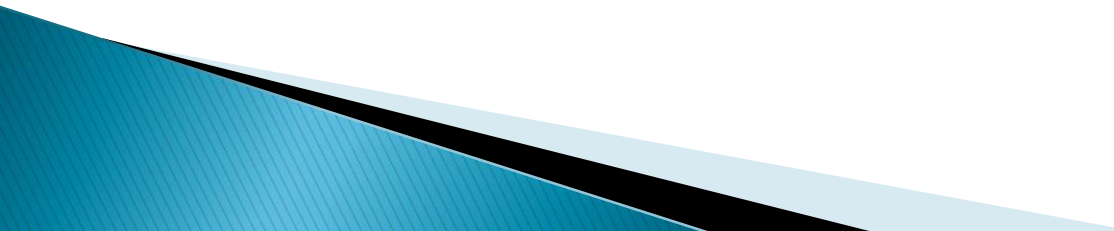
# Organisation of the work

- ▶ Local groups (Vanitha Vedi's) meet once in a month
  - ▶ Fixed timings
  - ▶ Full time live-in, full day, part time
  - ▶ For live-in paid weekly offs and proper rest
  - ▶ Full day one day paid off
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- ▶ Skill trainings according to the choice and women
  - ▶ The service started with nursing assistants with child care, care for the sick and old and post natal services
  - ▶ then extended to cooking, cleaning etc
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- ▶ Women managing committee managing the system
  - ▶ They appoint the staff to run the collective
  - ▶ The clients have to contact office and the women is linked through the office
  - ▶ They have a work card for each house to be signed at the end of the day with proper timings
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- ▶ The office used to collect the salary and disburse to the workers
  - ▶ The taxing system has hit the women workers with huge amount of service tax and now GST being imposed for the wage of these workers
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- ▶ Supervision of work by members' representatives
  - ▶ Uniform for all the workers
  - ▶ Good relationship with the service takers
  - ▶ Division of jobs and time restrictions
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# Process of unionisation

- ▶ All the members of the collective are members of SEWA–Union
  - ▶ Developing confidence into workers
  - ▶ Right based thinking
  - ▶ Collective bargaining process
  - ▶ Demand for minimum wages and welfare boards
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