

2022-23 Annual Report



**Kutch Mahila
Vikas Sangathan**

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About Us

Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS) is an organisation working to empower rural women and girls in the Kutch district of Gujarat since 1989.

The overarching mission is to empower, conscientise and organise youth, community organisations and local governance institutions to address gender inequities and ensure a compassionate and safe environment for women and girls. Since its inception, KMVS has been working towards fostering women's leadership in economic, political, social, and cultural arenas through building awareness and agency. The foundations of the process include organisation and mobilisation into local collectives to build a network of women and youth leaders at various levels - village, block, and district to build safe, compassionate and gender-just institutions and communities.

While rural women have formed the core of KMVS's initiatives right from the beginning, it is now also engaged with urban women and young girls through various initiatives. KMVS has thus grown from a single collective of rural women to a network of seven grassroots women's organisations, operational across the district, comprising more than 13,000 women - which include single women, women with disabilities, women from socially and economically disadvantaged communities, female sex workers - coming together as organised collectives to facilitate a range of impacts in the larger environment.

Vision

To empower womxn to spearhead a gender-transformative movement across communities, citizens, youth, and institutions. We aim to cultivate a proactive, safe, and empathetic atmosphere that nurtures intersectional and inclusive perspectives, actions, ideas, and policies devoid of violence, patriarchy, and gender-related vulnerabilities.

Mission

Our primary mission is to empower and mobilize women, youth, community organizations, and local governance institutions that are deeply dedicated to tackling gender inequities. Through our efforts, we strive to establish a nurturing and secure environment where womxn and girls can thrive without fear or discrimination.



Programme Highlights

**Recapping Last Year's Program
Successes: Activities,
Achievements, and Impact Stories**



Safe District Programme

The Safe District Programme, launched in 2016 in conjunction with the Hello Sakhi Helpline, marked a pivotal shift in KMVS's approach. It aimed to delve deeper into the multifaceted factors contributing to women's safety in society, recognizing the complex dynamics at play. KMVS sought to address women's issues and transform entrenched gender norms by engaging various stakeholders effectively.

The program focused on two key stakeholder groups:

- 1. Institutional Stakeholders:** This category encompassed district police, educational institutions (schools and universities), women and child helplines, panchayats, and sarpanchs.
- 2. Community Stakeholders:** Comprising adult women, men, adolescent girls and boys, as well as vulnerable and ethnic minority communities.

- **Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships:** Building upon partnerships established during the first phase to mainstream the concept of "safety" at every level of society.
- **Decentralized Safety Centers:** Operationalizing a decentralized safety centre approach, ensuring their sustainability within community spaces.
- **Gender Equitable Pedagogies:** Developing and implementing gender-equitable pedagogies in schools and educational institutes, fostering more inclusive educational environments.
- **Mobilizing Adolescent "Salamat Sakhis":** Empowering adolescents as "Salamat Sakhis" (Champions of Safety) to advocate for issues of consent, sexuality, and personal choices across all aspects of their lives.
- **Safety Audits and Local Governance:** Creating safety audit tools adopted by local self-governance institutions to enhance the safety of their citizens.
- **Engaging Informal Justice Systems:** Expanding the dialogue on women's safety within informal justice systems, particularly in caste-based societies.

These activities collectively contribute to the comprehensive approach of the Safe District Programme in promoting women's safety and transforming societal attitudes toward gender norms.

Enhancing Hello Sakhi Helpline and Safety Centers' Legal Support Outreach

Hello Sakhi helpline, established in 2010, pioneered a unique collaboration between district police and a civil society organization, KMVS, in Gujarat. Managed jointly by KMVS and dedicated police personnel, this helpline offers psycho-social and legal support to survivors. An informal network of paralegal cadres was established, including a core group, by training women who exhibited leadership skills from within collectives. These women leaders served as the link between women in the communities and legal aid through safety centres. KMVS has formed a core paralegal cadre of 60 and a community-level paralegal cadre of 450 women, with 5 safety centres and 2 sub-centres in 5 blocks: Bhuj, Mandvi, Nakhtrana, Anjar, and Bhachau.



Addressing the lacunae of safe spaces for women survivors of violence - facilitating survivor support services



Building solidarity and safety net by forming core group of women paralegals with perspective and legal knowledge, who take leadership in dealing with violence against women and efficiently manage the Safety Centres



Extending outreach of the women's safety program and the 'Hello Sakhi' helpline



Developing gender sensitive lens and perspective in judiciary systems and police



Addressing cases of VaW and extending legal and psychosocial assistance:

The Hello Sakhi Helpline is operational in the district, including Bhuj, Nakhtrana, Mandvi, Anjar, and Bhachau blocks, with two sub-centres operational in Naliya and Bhuj. Over the last year, these centres registered more than 2307 cases, providing crucial assistance to survivors of violence. Each survivor received counselling and mediation for legal and social issues, and all cases were linked to the Hello Sakhi Helpline for further support. Notably, more than 1500 cases were related to domestic violence, encompassing various issues such as marital conflicts, financial problems, extramarital affairs, and property disputes, among others. Additionally, the centres addressed over 50 cases of inter-caste and love marriages, education, and employment concerns of young women, along with 18 cases of POCSSO and 65 cases of mental health challenges.

The Women's Safety Centre efficiently processed all these cases, witnessing a significant increase in the role of paralegals, counsellors, and lawyers as essential social leaders. Moreover, the centres actively contributed legal input in caste-related cases, fostering inclusivity and resolution at the Sub Centre Nalia and Conflict Resolution Centre of Devipujak Samaj.

Women's safety campaign and extending the outreach of the helpline:

The Campaign was conducted in 120 villages across 7 blocks, including Bhuj, Mandvi, Nakhtrana, Anjar, Bhachau, Abdasa, and Gandhidham in the district. Follow-up work was diligently carried out, even amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a notable improvement in the situation. Trained paralegals played a vital role in designing the campaign, creating materials like posters, safety frames, handbags, and pamphlets with essential helpline and safety messages. A door-to-door campaign was conducted in each village,

distributing these materials and spreading awareness about women's safety. Additionally, discussions and meetings, such as FGDs and ward meetings, were held at local bodies, Gram Panchayats, Police Stations, Urban Ward areas, and Anganwadis, effectively linking issues of violence against women and safety to the Safety Centre.

Capacity enhancement of the paralegal core group: The core group consisted of 60 individuals who participated in about 11 training workshops with a focus on perspective building and gender-based violence, including topics such as feminism, sexuality, and laws like the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Evidence Act, and women's laws on triple talaq. Training was also provided on casework, communication, counselling, and promoting equality in the role of paralegals. Approximately 15-18 paralegals from the core group continue to work actively, receiving training and conducting casework with a socio-legal approach. Some paralegals were themselves survivors who have successfully prosecuted their cases in court and taken up leadership roles in social and organizational structures, including the police, DLSA, and other socio-legal structures. They now provide counselling within their communities, challenging gender norms and promoting greater equity. Approximately 230 non-core paralegals have been trained in violence and safety. 30 paralegals have been attached to the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and Legal Literacy initiatives.

Enhancing gender sensitivity in Judiciary and Police:

In pursuit of developing a gender-sensitive perspective within the judiciary and police systems, our efforts encompassed a range of activities. A workshop, in collaboration with the District Cyber Cell, engaged 130 non-core paralegals, addressing the intricacies of cybercrime, stalking, and sexual harassment prevalent on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Simultaneously, 22 lawyers underwent a comprehensive training session on gender-based violence and sexual harassment laws. Further strengthening our initiatives, we provided training to 15 female police staff, specifically focusing on issues surrounding the exploitation of underprivileged girls and children, with a particular emphasis on the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. As a culmination of these endeavours, an awareness program on Safe Touch and Bad Touch was conducted for 230 children, thereby contributing to a more informed and sensitive approach within the legal and law enforcement sectors.

Empowering Women and Youth in the Digital Age: Four cybercrime workshops engaged 480 women and girls, addressing online fraud, safe social media practices, and vigilance in digital spaces, leading to seven reported cases, with safety centers aiding justice in three instances, in collaboration with the Kutch district cyber cell police, underscoring our commitment to women's safety and cybersafe awareness.

Partnering for Gender-Equitable Education and Youth Advocacy

KMVS has launched an initiative targeting adolescents to create a "safe district." The initiative involves collaborating with schools and the State education department to develop gender education modules, covering topics like safe touch, understanding psychosocial changes, dispelling menstruation taboos, and challenging ingrained gender norms. It also aims to empower disengaged adolescent girls to voice their concerns and choices. After initial years, the initiative recognizes the importance of scaling up discussions and engaging educators to integrate gender concepts into formal education.

Gender education in schools was mainstreamed through publications and sensitized teachers, with a focus on topics like consent, body anatomy, sexuality, masculinity, and femininity. Teachers were trained collaboratively with district education, samagra shiksha, and DIET departments to promote gender mainstreaming in schools. Schools conducted gender audits to identify entrenched norms and selected action points for gender equity. Safety audits were conducted, and schools created forums for children to learn about safe touch and report violence. Campaigns were conducted twice a year, using creative methods like experiential learning and debates. Young women leaders were mobilised, empowering them with knowledge of gender, gender-based violence, sexuality, health, and media, to advocate for their rights and entitlements. The youth program is active in 19 low-income settlements in Bhuj urban and 55 villages in Anjar and Bhachau blocks.



To promote gender equitable behaviour among school students for an equitable society through comprehensive workshops with students and teachers



Mobilising and collectivising adolescent girls for youth-led village-level campaigns on safety, early marriage, mobility and intersectional sexuality issues



To bridge the gap and re-enrol girls in school and facilitating non traditional skill building training for economic indeoe



Creating an inclusive learning environment in schools through gender audit process with schools and Education Department



Sessions, activities and events with school children on gender equity:

A gender equity activity was conducted in 16 primary schools in Bhuj, Anjar, and Bhachau talukas, involving 1001 children (539 boys and 460 girls). The activity aimed to change attitudes towards various genders, religions, and castes, encouraging boys to help with household chores and girls to pursue biking and career aspirations. Sessions on mental health, peer pressure, bullying, and body shaming positively impacted around 1600 children. The World Girls Education Day celebration raised awareness about gender discrimination, child marriage, and other social issues among 347 children. The Maldhari/ pastoralist exhibition helped 291 children understand the importance of the Maldhari community's contribution to society and their religious beliefs. The International Women's Day campaign motivated 350 children to talk about removing discrimination against girls in using technology. Schools are actively supporting girls' education and gender diversity. For instance, a Muslim girl visited a village temple for the first time, exhibiting newfound confidence and freedom. Boys have pledged to teach their mothers how to use mobile phones and to support their female classmates in

achieving their goals after school hours while engaging in dialogues with their parents. SRHR sessions have taught students to respect individuals with disabilities and those with different attire choices, reducing teasing and encouraging self-acceptance.

Collaborating with Educators for inclusive and gender-ameliorative teaching:

Several programs engaged 69 teachers/CRC coordinators in Bhuj, Bhachau, and Anjar blocks, fostering discussions on vital topics like gender equality and sexual harassment. Recognizing teachers' influential role in shaping children's perspectives, gender and diversity/marginalization training sessions were organized to nurture progressive ideas. Collaborative curriculum workshops with DPEO and DIET involved 10 teachers in developing more gender-sensitive teaching methods and incorporating gender-related aspects into periodic teacher training. These workshops aimed to contextualize lessons, making them inclusive and inspiring for all students, including those with special needs, and highlighting achievements of notable individuals irrespective of gender, thus promoting interest in various subjects among children from diverse backgrounds.

Gender and inclusivity audit of primary schools:

The process of "Gender and Inclusivity Audit" has been implemented in 28 primary schools of Bhuj, Bhachau, and Anjar blocks. This includes creating a child-friendly and inclusive environment in schools, implementing policies for gender equality, and encouraging active participation of children in cultural activities and discussions related to gender issues. The process involves collaborative discussions among teachers, students, and staff members to address gender-related concerns. In the first phase, 28 primary schools participated in the Gender Audit process, wherein primary information about the schools and teacher's details were collected through formats. In the second phase, children actively participated in the process by creating maps of the school, identifying safe and unsafe areas, and suggesting improvements. Books were used to identify favourite characters, authors, and subjects among teachers and to determine which activities and programs were more appealing to students. Changes were made in schools after the gender audit process, such as boys and girls playing together on the same ground, teachers sitting together in the staff room, and girls being taught about the safe use of technology and cybercrime. Girls are given responsibilities like setting tables and chairs and recruited into school committees, and sitting arrangements have been changed in some schools to include boys and girls.

Young women leaders initiating peer discourses and campaigns in their villages: In Bhuj and Mandvi, KMVS

identified and mobilized 95 young women leaders based on education, age, willingness to attend training and volunteer in their villages, and availability for communication. These leaders received training on gender, sexuality, and gender-based violence, where they learned about various forms of violence, both inside and outside the home and the legal remedies available. Girls from different villages showed significant progress in breaking gender stereotypes and restrictions. For example, the girl from Sherdi village who was afraid of going to Mandvi alone, for the first time, 5 girls came alone from their village to attend the training. Similarly, after having multiple dialogues, the girls of Dakdai village came to Bhuj training alone. After the training, 10 teenage girls talked to their parents about their choice of partner and got engaged to the boy they liked. The girls of Nana Laija's community gathered alone for the first time and freely talked about their aspirations. Girls of Samatra village play cricket every month and break gender stereotypes.

The "Ek Saanj Mari Saanj" campaign, spanning 50 villages across Bhuj, Mandvi, Anjar, and Bhachau blocks, addressed gender and public safety concerns. This initiative invited 660 girls to express their thoughts through poetry, drawing, and video, with 320 participating in evening gatherings—a groundbreaking achievement as girls were seen in public spaces after 8 pm for the first time. This event sparked crucial discussions at home about the reasons behind prior restrictions and brought smiles to the girls' faces as they danced and celebrated their newfound freedom.

Akhar Centres and skill enhancement: For adolescent girl dropouts facing social and financial challenges, 23 "Akhar Centres" were established to provide supportive education to around 200 girls in grades 10 and 12. These centres focus on interactive discussions to address various issues, including gender, uniqueness, and freedom. Mental health sessions are also conducted to support the girls in overcoming stress and violence, empowering them to pursue their education and dreams. The "Ek Saanj Maari Saanj" campaign was conducted, where around 60 adolescent girls expressed their freedom and rights through video graphics on social and societal issues. Following this, 20 girls participated in a photography and videography course to understand gender biases and how to professionally shoot photos. They learned to present their work using technology. 30 adolescent girls from Bhuj, Bhachau, Mandvi, and Anjar blocks are enrolled in a 3-month Nursing General Duty Assistant course covering various topics like infection control, emergency medical assistance, first aid, and more. Additionally, 30 girls are receiving professional videography training in Kutch.

Urban Kishori Programme: It aims to create transformative change in societal perceptions of women and gender roles by organizing adolescent girls. This initiative has two key approaches, organizing daughters of women in the Sakhi Sangini Sangathan and providing gender training in schools and Anganwadi. These girls form the Kishori Sangathan, totalling 400 members, with 50 of them demonstrating exceptional leadership qualities. Through various activities like Kishori charchas, Samuh Charchas, dialogues, and exposure visits, the program empowers these girls, to find their voices and take on leadership roles. Seven outstanding young girls have emerged as proactive community mobilizers, with two of them working full-time on the project. Additionally, three girls challenged gender norms by learning auto driving, demonstrating their determination and opening new doors of opportunity. In the past year, 15 girls underwent Chakda driver training, 20 entered nursing programs, and eight are now employed in hospitals. These accomplishments reflect the program's dedication to empowering adolescent girls and fostering inclusive and safe environments.



Partnering with Local Governance Institutions for Women's Safety

KMVS aimed to increase women's participation in local governance following the Beijing Platform for Action. The initiative focused on politically empowering rural women through Panchayati Raj Institutions and promoting transparency and accountability in village development. The 'Sushasini' initiative supported Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in leadership roles for inclusive village development. Over time, governance issues gained prominence, and Sushasini interventions created an enabling environment for EWRs to fulfill their responsibilities. Women representatives formed 'Gramshasini' collectives, advocating for gender-equitable agendas. Mahila Sabhas and district-level symposiums were used to assert the rights and entitlements of EWRs. Collective advocacy addressed women-specific issues, including safe spaces, transportation, and anti-addiction campaigns. Information centers were established to resolve entitlement-related issues. KMVS also facilitated capacity and perspective building for Elected Male Representatives to prioritize women's concerns in developmental agendas and foster active participation in collectives and associations.



Capacity building and collectivisation of elected women representatives in the district for active participation in local governance and prioritising women's safety issues



Building capacities, leadership, and perspectives of the core group members around women's safety who initiate discussions around gender equity with citizens in their villages and support elected women representatives



Developing a common planning and safety tool for Panchayat planning in consultation with the Panchayat Associations and their representatives

Women's Sarpanch Survey

In the past year, significant progress has been made in working with local governance institutions, following the election of new representatives. In December 2021, elections took place in 338 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in Kachchh district, Gujarat, resulting in the election of women Sarpanchs for 279 seats out of the 250 seats reserved for women. A Women's Sarpanch Survey was conducted, which provided strategic insights into the motivations, aspirations, and learning needs of the 226 women sarpanchs surveyed from across the district.

The women who responded to the survey expressed that safety concerns encompass various aspects, including access, availability and quality of essential services such as healthcare, water supply, street lighting, and a focus on safe mobility for girls' education and to promote their economic independence.

Most respondents expressed the need for information, training, and capacity building on panchayat functioning, government schemes, and budgetary provisions to effectively carry out their duties as village sarpanchs. They also emphasized the importance of

support from the panchayat committee members and the village community to fulfil their roles successfully. This survey enabled us to identify active women sarpanchs and elected women representatives, which facilitated the planning and execution of capacity-building workshops in each block. Markedly, a key learning need identified by many sarpanchs was to understand the budgetary provisions and income sources for the gram Panchayat. To address this need, sessions were conducted at the block level on the rules of the Gram Panchayat committee, the Talati, the Sarpanch, and budgetary provisions under the Finance Commission and the Gram Panchayat Act. As a result of these workshops, women sarpanchs have acquired a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities, enabling them to actively participate in regular meetings and make informed decisions. Additionally, it was observed that women who assumed their positions voluntarily were more eager and proactive to perform their duties effectively after receiving adequate information, while those appointed against their will were less motivated.

Approximately 33% of women Sarpanchs stated that their decision to run for the elections was independent and self-driven.

Out of the 226 women Sarpanchs surveyed, 49 had prior experience serving multiple terms in panchayat committees, with 21 of them previously serving as Sarpanchs.



Workshops with Panchayat Associations on addressing issues of safety in governance:

Six meetings with Bhuj and Anjar Associations tackled key agendas, such as enhancing facilities for women and girls within Panchayats and promoting their active engagement. New women leaders joined these groups, and a one-day workshop on the Gender Index tool empowered the Bhuj Sarpanch Association in inclusive panchayat planning. Over five Panchayats embraced partnership and leadership in this initiative. The Anjar and Bhuj Associations are taking steps to ensure women's active participation in decision-making processes. They had a 33% reservation for women in the core committee, aiming to promote good governance and facilitate representation for special groups of women. However, the participation rate has exceeded the target, with 40% of active women joining including members from the core group.

Capacity enhancement and collectivisation of newly elected women Sarpanchs:

Women sarpanchs are receiving policy training to empower them in their positions. The associations are also taking ownership and organizing training workshops to create a supportive environment for women. Workshops were held in Lakhpat, Nakhatrana, Mandvi, Abdasa, Rapar and Bhachau blocks with women sarpanches, EWRs, women leaders, and government officials. The larger aim is to bring together a group of women sarpanchs at the district level from all blocks. More women are participating in training workshops with a core group, contributing to discussions on gender equity and women's collectives. 49 women from 9 talukas attended a GPDP training session at Bhuj, co-facilitated by the Pathey organisation where they learned about budget and revenue tools to raise panchayat income and improve governance resulting in more women participation in the budgeting process in more than 10 villages.

Fostering Core Group Leadership for Gender Equity Discussions and EWR Support:

KMVS facilitates interactions and sessions on women's safety with core group leaders, women leaders, and the paralegal group, as well as Panchayat representatives, to prioritize it as an agenda. An informal core group consisting of 22 villages and about 60 core members was established. Meetings were conducted in 22 villages involving Panchayat members and village core groups. Training sessions covered understanding gender and patriarchy - its control through various social institutions, understanding power in social relations and how it impacts women and girls' safety, and vulnerability and understanding democracy and intersectional inclusion. The core group has been discussing women's safety, highlighting the disempowerment caused by patriarchal control and structural barriers in social and government institutions. Women are leading safety audits in three villages, proactively addressing their concerns and highlighting them to new Panchayat committees. They have requested more village-level sessions in the coming months. Women from the group are taking action and addressing issues, with some Panchayats led by women Sarpanchs initiating projects like menstrual pad vending machines in one village and facilitating employment oriented training in two villages. Women sarpanches received budget training, which helped them allocate funds for GPDP planning and expenditures, resulting in some Panchayats allocating funds for

Balika Panchayat in one village, to improve women's health, education, and sports, regular vaccination of adolescent girls by the AAW in one village. In addition, various government entitlement and social security schemes have been extended to women over the last year, including financial assistance under the Ganga Swaroopa scheme for 64 women, 23 receivers of the Kuvarbaina Mamera Yojana, 5 of the Vali Dikri Yojana, and 11 children who have benefited from the Palak Mata-Pita Yojana. Assistance was also provided to 68 women from low-income groups to fill out forms under the Manav Garima Yojana, considering caste and income patterns. Further, one form each for Divyang marriage and Inter-caste marriage was also filled out. Core group members have led the facilitation of most of these schemes.

Prior to the statutory Gram Sabha meetings, Mahila Gram Sabhas were held in two Gram Panchayats (GPs), led by core group where 95 women actively participated. Women discussed and prioritized crucial issues, including the establishment of a special assembly hall for women, door-to-door garbage collection, and the establishment of a health sub-centre in their village, which were later presented in the Gram Sabha meetings. In addition, an online meeting with women Sarpanchs was conducted to discuss the provisions for organizing Gram Sabha, with the goal of enhancing women's active and meaningful participation in their village Gram Sabhas. This initiative engaged 44 women and involved the participation of women from 30 Gram Panchayats in their respective village Gram Sabhas.

The Urban Programme

The urban division of KMVS has been actively engaged in assisting the low-income urban communities of Bhuj for the last four years. Their efforts have yielded significant results, facilitating the formation of a women's collective within different slum areas. Through the Nirmal Gujarat Yojana, the number of groups and members has seen significant growth, with 263 groups and 4,000 women as members in 2023. Workshops were conducted to empower the core group, allowing them to make autonomous decisions and manage their own separate office, exemplifying a self-sustaining model of leadership. Women leaders underwent detailed capacity building, nurturing their self-identities in the context of the world around them, understanding social hierarchies and gender identities, and learning about the women's movement and crucial issues like reproductive health, governance, and climate change. The organization's efforts to create awareness through gynae camps have yielded significant results in breaking the taboo around reproductive health discussions. Prior to the workshops and camps, discussing such issues, even with their mothers, was considered taboo. However, after participating in these awareness programs, adolescent girls have become more open and comfortable about discussing their reproductive health concerns. They are now coming forward to share

their experiences, concerns, and confusions related to menstruation and reproductive health. This positive change is not limited to young girls alone; even young mothers have started expressing their concerns about issues like white discharge or late periods. This increased awareness and willingness to discuss reproductive health openly signify a significant step towards promoting better health outcomes and breaking the barriers of silence and stigma surrounding these essential topics in the community. KMVS focused on providing information about government schemes, enabling women to make informed decisions about family planning and the number of children they wish to have. As a result, women have started expressing their desires in married life and taking control of their reproductive choices.

The organization initiated a clear objective of articulating the issues of women and girls' safety in public spaces. The safety mapping exercise was conducted in 15 areas using the Safetipin app, facilitated by Jagori-Delhi. This initiative allowed them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the safety situation and identify key issues in the community. A pressure group was formed, comprising proactive individuals committed to addressing the area's concerns, which became a crucial platform for advocating and raising awareness about the community's issues.

Through their efforts, they were ready to take forward and address the safety and security challenges faced by the residents. The group played a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of the community, shedding light on safety gaps and advocating for solutions. By using technology to conduct safety mapping and forming a dedicated pressure group, the organization empowered the community to voice their concerns effectively. Women have now developed the ability to differentiate between safety and security and comprehend the nuanced impact of these concepts. This approach not only facilitated the identification of safety-related problems but also paved the way for community-driven solutions and initiatives to create a safer and more secure environment for everyone.

The slum rehabilitation scheme, initiated in 2016, formed a crucial base for KMVS's work in making the area self-sufficient and sustainable. Through meetings in various areas, people were made aware of land and housing rights and various government schemes. The local residents actively participated in the process of making land surveys, house models, and maps. A core group, along with area-wise leaders, was formed to work on these issues, leading to significant progress in land applications and rehabilitation plans. The work done in the

land and housing scheme has increased awareness among people, leading to improvements in their basic facilities.

A Land Housing Rights Forum has been established at the city level as a part of the Homes in The City Programme, to address any land or housing issues in the area, providing a platform for resolving these concerns effectively. It's encouraging to see that the government is responding positively, and the committee is determined to push forward and advocate for the transfer of land in the name of women. This step is essential in empowering women and ensuring their rights to land and property ownership.

A forum was established in one area to address infrastructure and land rights, along with children's infrastructure like Anganwadi. The forum advocates for people's rights through petitions, rallies, and engagement with the government. There are now 26 well-functioning Anganwadis in Bhuj, providing essential services to both adolescent girls and children. This success has prompted the government to build another model Anganwadi in response to the advocacy and dedication of these women-led initiatives.



Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan

Mobilising Female Sex Workers' Collective for Entitlements and Advocacy

KMVS encountered a deeply marginalized and socially ostracized group – female sex workers – during its community organizing efforts. In Kutch, sex work remained a hidden and unacknowledged reality, with no established brothels or safe spaces for these professionals. This invisibility made it challenging for sex workers to come together and advocate for their rights. Furthermore, the absence of policies or legal protection left sex workers vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen, customers, and law enforcement. Health issues, including HIV/AIDS and STDs, added to their vulnerability. In 2015, the Urban Cell initiated an effort to understand the lives of marginalized female sex workers in Kutch. Given their secretive lives, it took three years to establish meaningful engagement. Collaboration with other NGOs, such as the National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW), and government agencies like the District Health Officer and National Urban Health Mission, helped build trust. KMVS distributed condoms and established a rapport with sex workers. As the program evolved, KMVS worked in partnership with various governmental and non-governmental organizations, including Kutch NP+, the Indian Council of Social Welfare, Integrated Counseling and Testing Centres, and the Women and Child Welfare Department, to strengthen the overall initiative. In 2018, the community-based organization 'Samvedna' was established, uniting female sex workers into a collective to advocate for their basic rights and entitlements. Samvedna also addressed livelihood issues, health concerns, and challenges such as violence, discrimination, and exploitation. The initiative also focused on the education and well-being of the children of sex workers. A dedicated drop-in centre was established as a learning and resource hub accessible to collective members from across the district.



Collectivising and strengthening the knowledge and capacity of Female Sex Workers on gender, rights, entitlements, and legal provisions to promote inclusion and advocacy



Engaging in collaborative networking locally and nationally to advocate for policy inclusion addressing the unique health and safety needs of Female Sex Workers

Over the past year, the Samvedna Group conducted interviews and profiling of 370 women, with 70 new profiles added during this period. The group resolved 21 cases of violence, demonstrating their commitment to addressing crucial issues within the community. Efforts have been made to further expand the impact of the Samvedna Group by nurturing new leadership and enhancing their presence through a drop-in centre in Anjar and Gandhidham blocks. Collaboration with the leaders of the Sakhi Sangini Association has resulted in mutual understanding and support, strengthening their collective efforts. To empower and amplify their voices, the group has engaged in various trainings, enabling them to advocate for their rights at both the local police level and on a national platform like NNSW.



On Women's Day, the Samvedna Group, comprising women and girls from KMVS across the district, celebrated empowerment and confidence. This event provided a platform for women to address issues, engage in dialogues, and express their views. Members actively contributed by sharing success stories, challenges, and experiences. Their newfound confidence eliminated fear and guilt about their profession, recognizing sex work as legitimate. They articulated their rights and desires, pledging to end exploitation. Collectively, they advocate for their rights, bolstered by assertiveness and self-awareness, enabling informed choices and active participation in public platforms

A core group of 20 competent women leads the collective, elevating their articulation around sex work as legitimate work and dispelling notions of exploitation by clients or local authorities. Through comprehensive training programs on Gender, Social Perspective, Sexuality, Leadership, Health Government Schemes, and Human Rights, approximately 200 women have actively participated, fostering a deeper understanding and empowerment within the collective. If the core committee becomes aware of anyone being coerced, forced, or blackmailed into the trade, they promptly intervene and take necessary steps to address the issue, prioritizing the consent and safety of the women involved. This heightened sensitivity towards consent and well-being reflects the group's evolving awareness and commitment to supporting its members effectively.

Transformative work with Ethnic Community Structures

In response to the prevailing religious polarization in society, the rise of identity consciousness within religious sects and caste-based communities has been observed, resulting in the enforcement of stricter norms that limit the freedom of women and contribute to the "othering" of women from other communities. These developments have led to increased control of community norms over the lives of women and girls, with traditional practices like early marriage taking on new interpretations. With the intent of holistic community development, KMVS started working with such communities in the year 2016, beginning with the Devipujak community, and later with the Jatt community in 2020. KMVS's longstanding engagement with rural communities, including the Devipoojak samaj in Bhuj's urban slums, has provided an opportunity to raise awareness among caste-based communities and foster dialogue between community leaders and women and girls. This process has also encouraged traditional community leaders to place their trust in the judicial system for resolving marital and other disputes, rather than relying solely on the discretionary powers of caste-based panchayats. The key activities included sensitisation and transformative work to enable a safe environment for women and girls, through awareness campaigns and facilitation of access to legal rights and government schemes.

Over a decade, the organization has been working with the Devipujak community to improve gender equality. Leaders have initiated counseling sessions to address early engagement and daughter marriages against their will. This has led to daughters challenging traditional customs and asserting their will. The organization has also facilitated discussions among young girls about early and selective marriages, supported by women leaders.



Promoting awareness and nurturing leadership among Devipujak community leaders for transformative efforts in addressing gender-based violence and fostering a safe environment for women and girls



Mobilizing Jat community leaders to comprehend and tackle issues related to violence against women, access to education, early marriage and mobility for young girls



The Devipoojak community has achieved remarkable success through their community-led transformation process. Both men and women actively participated, displaying a genuine desire for positive change within themselves and their society. By conducting campaigns in five areas, they established 22 dynamic committees composed of dedicated leaders. Expert-led trainings on various issues, including the complex judicial process, sparked impactful discussions and empowered the community members to take charge of resolving conflicts. As a result, they successfully established a "conflict resolution centre," skilfully led by committed sisters and youth. The centre has effectively handled around 97 cases, primarily focusing on marital disputes, domestic violence,

and other serious crimes, with 12 of them successfully filed in court. Its reputation has spread, attracting people from neighbouring areas seeking assistance for its efficient, affordable, and legally sound approach, which ensures faster resolutions compared to traditional patriarchal processes. Such significant achievements have empowered the community and earned them their own space in Samajwadi to operate the centre confidently. The impact of their work extends beyond Bhuj Urban area, reaching communities in Kathiawar, Dayapar, Desalpar, Gandhidham, and more, where the centre has offered tailored solutions to address specific challenges. Community has prioritized providing its members with basic law training delivered by seasoned advocates from KMVS, enabling them to process applications with a strong legal perspective during the counselling process.



Training workshops and sessions involved discussions with the Jat community women, where leaders from the Devipujak Samaj were invited to share their experiences, highlighting their journey from joining the organization to assuming leadership roles. Women from the Jat community, inspired by these narratives, expressed their readiness to take on leadership positions. Mothers among them pledged active support for their daughters' education. Additionally, a training workshop brought together young girls, including 15 from the Jat community and 3 from the Devipujak community. During this session, the Devipujak girls shared insights into the management of a library and sports centre in their area, demonstrating their leadership in these initiatives.

The Devipoojak community came together to hold a protest rally and sought justice for a 17-year-old girl who was gang-raped. The community centre played a crucial role in supporting the survivor through filing an FIR and providing psychosocial support. The biggest success lies in the young girls from the Devipoojak society speaking up for their choice of kinship and marriage. They are now well aware of the importance of addiction and are planning advocacy campaigns to combat addiction in their area. The committee members have conducted counselling for a total of 97 separate cases, showcasing their active participation and support for women and girls. The committee members have been trained in various laws and skillfully use this knowledge during counselling sessions, making a significant impact. Moreover, the

community members voluntarily organize campaigns to help individuals access government assistance or coordinate with government structures for entitlements or social security schemes. As a result of the Devipoojak community's collective efforts, significant progress has been observed in girls' ability to make choices in their own lives and actively raise their concerns, ideas, and solutions on public platforms. Notably, the empowerment of young girls in the community has resulted in increased educational opportunities and diversified livelihood choices. Some girls have secured jobs with organizations such as Dmart and the Home Guard, while others have broken barriers by participating in traditionally male-dominated professions, like driving chakda vehicles. These achievements signify a remarkable shift in the community's mindset towards gender equality and the recognition of girls' agency in shaping their futures.

Various participatory initiatives have empowered the Devepujak community, granting them a dedicated space in Samajwadi for confident operation, facilitated women's participation in Gnati Panch meetings for equitable conflict resolution, inspired women leaders to encourage young girls to pursue education, motivating dropout girls to do the same, and effectively intervened in early marriage cases, persuading both parties to postpone marriages, thereby enabling girls to safely access education and employment opportunities.

Human Interest Stories

Cyber Harassment Survivor to Empowered Paralegal

Alishaben, living in Bhimronagar, endured a distressing experience of cyber harassment on Facebook. Someone from her area misused her vacation photos, manipulated them, and posted defamatory content. This led to lewd comments and the sharing of her phone number with obscene remarks, causing immense mental anguish. Her family suspected her of wrongdoing, damaging her social standing and livelihood.

Another local resident faced a similar attack and traced the perpetrator. Alishaben connected with this person, leading her to seek help from a local safety centre. She filed a police report and began her journey to justice. Engaging with the safety centre transformed her life. She attended workshops, became a paralegal worker, and even handled her case in court. Her family and community realized their mistake, and Alishaben regained her respect.

Today, she's a vocal advocate for safety, referring cases to the Safety Center and raising awareness in her community. Alishaben's story showcases her resilience and the power of support and empowerment in overcoming adversity.

*Name and location changed for privacy.

Promoting Women's Empowerment and Active Political Participation in Governance

Devaiben, in an unusual move, aspired to become the Sarpanch of Nagavaladia Gram Panchayat in Gujarat's December 2021 elections, despite no reserved seat for women. She won uncontested, promising social justice, women's empowerment, and financial development.

Recognizing women's unvoiced concerns, she abolished the mandate for widowed women to wear black clothing. This progressive step earned her community's admiration.

Devaiben further broke barriers, becoming the first female president of the Anjar Block Panchayat Association. Her journey faced early resistance, but her family eventually supported her active role.

She passionately engages with adolescent girls, addressing issues like menstrual hygiene by installing a vending machine for sanitary pads, already benefiting over 100 women.

Devaiben's mission extends to promoting women's participation in local governance through training workshops. Her aim is to replicate her village's successes and empower more women to champion social justice and economic development.

Overcoming Societal Barriers: Empowering Girls Through Mobile Technology

In today's tech-driven world, where technology and AI reign supreme and even the remotest parts of India have mobile phones and internet access, it's concerning that many girls and women still lack these resources. This digital gender gap is exacerbated by conservative societal norms and patriarchal attitudes.

However, in the villages of Varnora, Kuwathda, and Nagiyari in Bhuj Takula district, change is brewing. Despite orthodox beliefs, these predominantly Muslim communities are gradually embracing gender awareness and discussions on women's rights.

Monthly girls' meetings tackle topics like gender, sexuality, and education. During one such meeting, they were introduced to the Gender School App, sparking eagerness to download it. However, most lacked their own phones, so they had to use their fathers' or brothers'.

In Varnora, around 7-8, girls overcame resistance from sceptical family members and downloaded the app. Kuwathda saw 4-to 5 girls after persuasive dialogues with fathers and uncles. In Nagiyari, where girls aren't even allowed to attend school, a few courageous girls attended the meetings, requested phones, and, after discussions on gender equality and education, convinced their fathers to let them download the app. This slow transformation showcases the power of dialogue and awareness in breaking down barriers.

Defying Societal Norms: The Inspiring Transformation of Rashida Jat

Rashida Jat, a 20-year-old from Kodki village in Bhuj, is a remarkable young woman defying tradition and empowering her community. In her conservative Jat community, girls are often married off by the age of 15 or 16 and education beyond the fifth grade is discouraged.

However, Rashida's determination shone through. She pursued her studies until the 12th grade and fought for her right to make choices about her life. Initially, her family resisted, but she persisted and gained their support. Her marriage was finalized under the condition that she could continue her education and work.

Joining KMVS, Rashida began teaching girls in her community to read and write, recognizing that many girls like her were dropping out of school. She faced initial resistance but, with organization support, established an Akhar Center in her village, teaching 17-18 girls to read and write. Rashida also engaged with her community, advocating against child marriage and for girls' education.

She fearlessly interacted with male members of the village and provided counseling in cases of violence against women. Rashida even fought for her sister's right to marry the person she loved, overcoming family objections.

Currently, Rashida is dedicated to educating young girls and working to end child marriages in her community, serving as an inspiring role model for girls' agency and empowerment.

Future Vision and Plan

During the organization's second phase of the safety program, we are dedicated to fostering a grassroots movement through community cadres. Our goal is to expand our reach to new geographical areas, starting with Rapar, by establishing additional safety centres.

To ensure the sustainability and impact of our efforts, we will be focusing on strengthening our linkages with government bodies, including the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and the Education Department. This collaboration will help mainstream the perspective of safety and ensure it becomes an integral part of government policies and initiatives.

To enhance our communication and engagement with the community, we will be implementing innovative tools such as the Theatre of the Oppressed. This approach will empower individuals to articulate their concerns, fostering a more participatory and inclusive dialogue.

Additionally, we recognize the importance of robust data management and information systems. We will be dedicating efforts to strengthen our MIS (Management Information System) and data management systems to effectively track progress, measure impact, and make data-driven decisions. This will enable us to continuously improve and adapt our programs to better serve the communities we work with.



Financial Statements

Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan

P. T Registration No. F-168 (Kutch) Dated: 29.06.1989

16 "Yogeshwar", GYM Khana, Ganshyam nagar, Bhuj-Kutch, 370001.

Bank A/c No. of the Trust for transaction of Foreign Contribution is SBI NDMB Delhi SB A/c no.4052265312 & FCRA No. 942050043 Dated:24.02.2004

Balance Sheet As On 31st March - 2023

Funds & Liabilities		Sc.No.	Amount Rs.	Assets & Properties		Sc.No.	Amount Rs.
(I) Trust Funds	1A	27,374	(I) Immovable & Movable				
(II) Corpus & Other Funds	1B	7,39,41,193	Properties				
(III) Other Liabilities	2	1,36,07,324	(a) Gross Block	4	1,29,81,815		
(IV) Income & Expenditure A/c	3	2,03,27,551	(b) Less : Depreciation Fund.	4	56,19,572		
			(c) Net Block (a-b)	4	73,62,243		
			(II) Investments & Deposit	5	4,32,67,886		
			(III) Loans and Advances	6A	1,73,510		
			(IV) Receivable	6B	32,29,443		
			(V) Other Current Assets	6C	15,78,000		
			(VI) Cash and Bank Balances	7	5,22,92,360		
Total Rs.		10,79,03,442	Total Rs.		10,79,03,442		

Significant Accounting Policies and Notes on Accounts

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For and on behalf of the Governing Body

As per our Report of even date.

For, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan

For, Pravin C. Doshi & Co.

FRN:106157W

Chartered Accountants

Aruna Dholakiya



Pravin C. Doshi

(CA Pravin C. Doshi)

Partner

Membership No. 037012

(Mrs. Aruna Dholakiya)

Secretary & Member-Governing Board

Place : Bhuj - Kutch

Date : 23 OCT 2023

Place : Bhuj - Kutch

Date : 23 OCT 2023

UDIN: 23037012B6U ZUV J735

Donor and Partner Acknowledgements

- 1) American Jewish World Service
- 2) EdelGive Foundation
- 3) The GROW Fund (EdelGive Foundation)
- 4) DASRA
- 5) Sir Dorabji Tata Trust
- 6) Global Fund for Women
- 7) Carbon Edge
- 8) WabTech

Governing Board and Team

Lakshmi Lingam	President	Development Consultant
Vijaybhai Parmar	Vice President	Social Worker Ex-Officio
Aruna Dholakiya	Secretary	Service
Farah Naqvi	Member	Social Worker Ex-Officio
Sachin Sachdeva	Member	Development Consultant
Mohanba Padhiyar	Member	Social Worker
Hansaben Vaghela	Member	Social Worker



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