

SETU Program, Kutch Nav Nirman
Abhiyan

ANNUAL REPORT

2014-2015

SETU's journey

SETU emerged from the chaos and distress of the earthquake - literally three days after January 26, 2001. Playing a bridge role, SETUs facilitated relief and rehabilitation efforts through 33 relief coordination centres set up by Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan¹ covering 468 affected villages.

Over the past 14 years, the 'SETU' concept and its work matured and stabilized as a model, distinct in its approach that defines a turning point in the way developmental transformation can be undertaken in a fast changing development environment. SETUs have attempted to evolve as a human resource support system to the local governments – thus reinforcing citizen's confidence in themselves, in the gram sabhas, and their local governance bodies; and supporting them in identifying their local issues, facilitate knowledge, information, expertise and financial resources by which village communities and Local Governments emerge as informed decision-makers, implementers and governing institutions. Through this facilitative approach, it has sought to build a sense of ownership amongst the communities for any work that they undertake, rather than become dependent on the SETUs, other NGOs or the Government. This way it bridges resources between the community and the external environment be it the Government, donors, NGOs or other professional institutions.

Since 2010, SETUs started working on issues of urban governance initiating at Bhuj and thereafter extending to Rapar Municipality.

In Kutch, today, 8 SETUs (6 in rural and 2 in urban) are fully operational, covering totally 336 revenue villages, 154 Panchayats and two Municipalities.

The concept of the SETU as a facilitating centre has been widely accepted and replicated in other parts of India by Abhiyan with local partners. In Tamil Nadu, post the Tsunami in 2004, the concept of a SETU was introduced in the most affected district of Nagapattinam. These centres became the critical facilitating node between the affected communities and the Government, as well as NGOs. Similarly, 8 SETUs were set up by the Government of Bihar in partnership with ODRC² in the Kosi region which was affected by the Kosi flood in 2008. These are called the SETU Kosi Kendras. Thus, in post disaster situations where Abhiyan has contributed to strengthening the governance of disasters with State Governments and local civil society, the SETU model has got replicated in other States.

¹ Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan (Abhiyan) is a district network of 33 development organizations. While all of these organizations have their own area and focus of work, Abhiyan collaborates with its network organizations on issues pertaining to the District

² Owner Driven Reconstruction Collaborative (ODRC) is a resource group which enables States to develop mechanisms for mainstreaming the application of Owner Driven approaches in post-disaster situations. ODRC has been constituted by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Kutch NavNirmanAbhiyan (KNNA), Hunnarshaala Foundation for Building Technologies and Innovations (HSF), People-in-Centre (PIC), Unnati & Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS).

In Mar 2014, SETU Abhiyan became registered as an independent organization. The 1st board meeting post registration was held on 29th Apr 2014.

This Annual Report 2014 – 2015 covers glimpses of the approaches and achievements of SETU Abhiyan in the 1st year of its existence. As a new organization, while ample time was devoted in working out the organizational strategies, defining our work areas, our approaches, our values, focus was also streamlining organizational systems and on trainings and capacity development of our staff according to the analysed need of the staff members.

Organisational shifts / New concepts in place

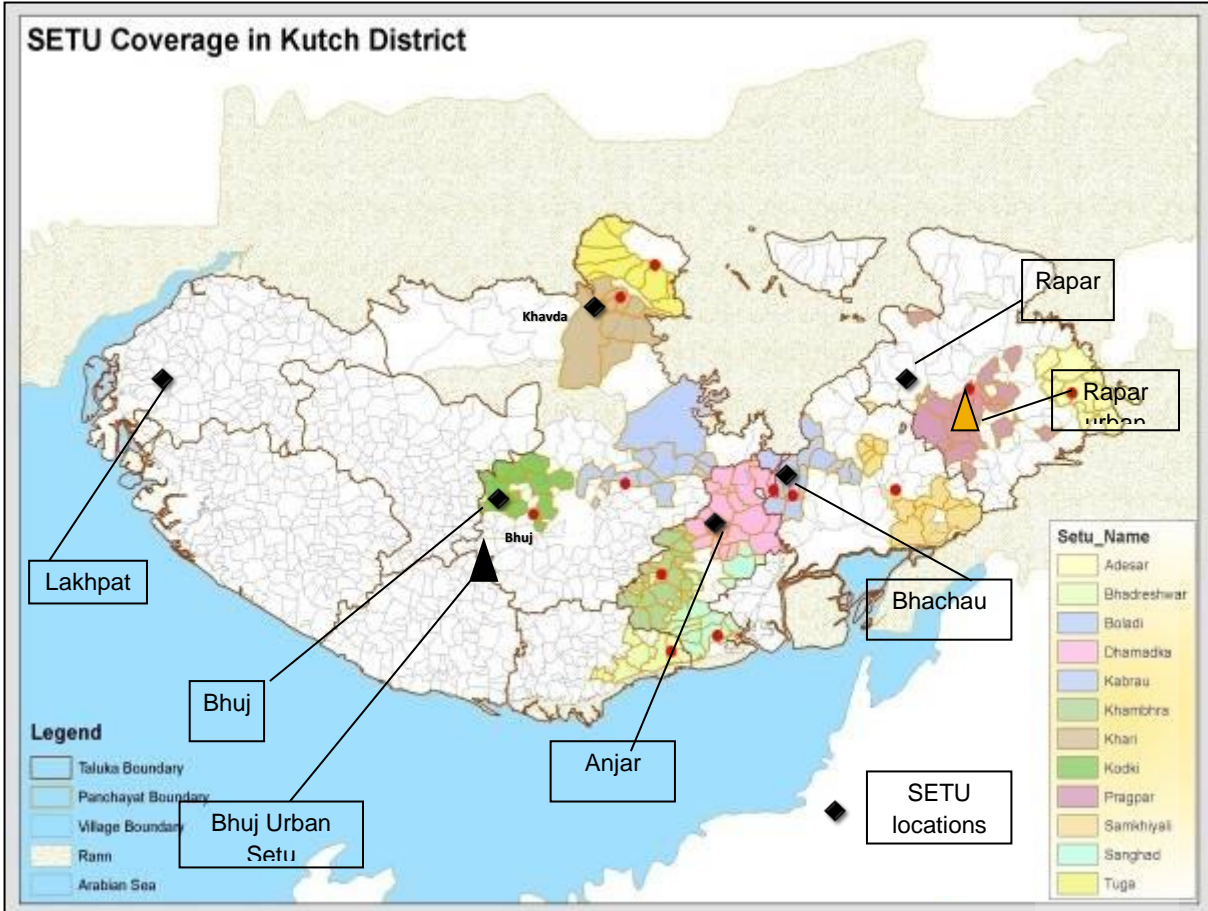
2014 was a year when with the birth of SETU Abhiyan, series of interactions with the overall staffs were organized for revisiting and reflecting on the approaches, focus areas and the achievements in the past years. Not only consolidating what has been achieved, the sequence of exercises with mentors, Board members helped in reconsidering the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats in the present context of SETU Abhiyan's functioning. This led to redefining the vision, mission, and re-strategise the approaches of SETU Abhiyan. With this, the year 2014 marked the following major strategic shifts:

A. Functioning from cluster level to block level:

After a decade of cluster-wise approach since 2001, SETUs strategically shifted its approach from cluster level to block level. This shift went through a rigorous process of interaction with the primary stakeholders, the block officials, and reassessing the potentials of shifting to the block level. SETUs planned their future interventions based on the scopes at the block level and thus defined common agenda that they need to take up as common agenda in all the blocks and the autonomous agenda specific to each block. The year was also marked with shifting of locations of the SETU offices considering easy accessibility to the villages in the block, and the legality of the SETU premises.

Responding to the need of Lakhpat, the westernmost block of the District, SETU Abhiyan extended its work to this region in 2014.

The human resource structure accordingly was redefined at the block level as One Block coordinator with two cluster coordinators for each block.



B. Institutionalising the Learning Lab for Local Governance (LLLG)

With the concept of experimenting, documenting and upscaling SETUs' innovations in strengthening local self governance, SETU Abhiyan conceived the idea of institutionalising Learning Lab for Local Governance. The LLLG intends to promote and give space for experimenting, conducting research, training as well as ploughing back research analysis into action with regard to Local Governance.

This Annual Report 2014-2015 reflects the highlights this year

Objective 1: To support Communities, citizens and the State in implementing the 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution in letter and spirit

Piloting the Block Development Plan in Anjar Block

SETUs' initiative creating access to the untied fund - Village Governance Fund (VGF) till 2013 emerged as a strategy for building local self governance capacities within Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and also developing confidence among the PRIs to strengthen their demand for financial devolution at Block and District Panchayat levels. So far the VGF had its concentration on the lowest tier of the Panchayati Raj system, the Gram Panchayat. However, if the 73 CAA has to realize its full potential, equal attention has to be paid to make the entire three tier system functional. In view of the fact that the SETUs have been able to build an understanding and momentum for local governance amongst the gram panchayats of the different blocks in Kutch, in 2014, SETUs facilitated the Gram Panchayat Association in Anjar Block to move one step forward and partner their Block panchayat to undertake a rigorous process of block level planning based on GP plans. In this process, SETUs facilitated collection of information of all village Panchayats in the block which would be linked to the database at the block level. A block profile containing the details of the block has been developed and submitted to the Block Panchayat.

Village Development Plan linked with CSR

With the introduction of the CSR Act in April 2014, SETU Abhiyan took it up as a potential scope to tie up the village Panchayats in Anjar block with the CSR departments of the many industries in Anjar block. While SETUs facilitated the village Panchayats for developing their village development plans, the Anjar Panchayat Association (Anjar Panchayat Association was formed in 2008 and is a federation of 53 Panchayats in Anjar block) took it up as their prime agenda to meet the CSR heads of the companies in Anjar area and leverage funds for their planned interventions.

13 village Panchayats from Anjar block planned in detail on their agriculture and natural resource planning out of which 4 Panchayats were linked up with the CSR initiative of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) in collaboration with Sahjeevan.

SETUs facilitated 4 Panchayats from Rapar, Bhachau and Bhuj blocks to leverage funds from government departments / institutions on presentation of their Village Development Plans. The

Panchayats have set examples of good practices by setting norms for the governance of the village assets developed.

Reaching out to Lakhpat

Lakhpat block covers an area of 1945 sq km, 33 village Panchayats and 100 villages and is sparsely populated (50120 as of census data). The block remains highly backward and deprived of basic services. Initial interactions with the Block Panchayat officials, the local organisations and village Panchayats of the Lakhpat block revealed lack of drinking water as well as for domestic use as one of most pertinent issues coupled with drastically low literacy rate of the block.

In the year 2014, SETUs intervened in the block interacting with the communities, Panchayat members developing an understanding of the region, making village level and Panchayat level profiles. This process would cover the whole block to create a database of the villages and the Panchayat members.

Governance of natural resources

SETU in Bhachau block made an effort to empower the village communities and the Panchayat towards conservation of biodiversity in the region. While SETU played the role of a social facilitator in dialoguing with the Panchayat members, developing an understanding of the importance of biodiversity conservation, the technical support was extended by Sahjeevan. This intervention was done in collaboration with the Gujarat Biodiversity Board, Gandhinagar. As a first time experience for SETU, this intervention enhanced the practical knowledge of SETU staffs in knowing the flora and fauna of the species and the traditional knowledge the communities held with regard to the species around. In 2014, SETUs facilitated the formation of 10 Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) in Bhachau block. As a documentation of the existing biodiversity and the traditional knowledge of the communities, two Peoples Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) have been developed for Baniari and Jangi of Bhachau block. The PBR includes the action plan for the conservation of natural resources in the villages as well.

Governance of Educational initiatives

SETUs have been facilitating and working in 30 villages in the northern and Eastern most part of Kutch district intensively to improve the educational quality of children aged below 14 yrs. The year 2014 Setus focused on strengthening the SMCs (School Management Committee) in realization of their roles and responsibilities towards the governance of the schools. The SMC members started playing a relatively active role in meeting the parents of the children not attending school, developing plans according to the needs of the school. The reach out and the concept of Learning Centre was shared at the district level workshop organized in the month of Jan 2015. 26 School Development Plans developed by the SMC members for their schools were submitted to the District Education Department of Kutch district. Additionally, Panchayat and SMC members of 6 villages from Banni region submitted application to the Education department in demand of separate sanitation units for girls in the schools. This has been a major achievement as the importance of these issues has been realised and efforts made for the same.

In Urban Areas:

The SETU concept was extended to the urban area and the first BHUJ SETU was set up in 2010. Over the years, Bhuj SETU was able to establish itself in a facilitation role and also as the key accountable organization for local governance related initiatives in urban areas. As a pilot approach to facilitate urban local governance in small towns, Bhuj setu facilitated mechanisms enabling the urban local bodies and the citizens to be the key change agents towards improved governance and holistic development of the towns.

In the year 2014, Bhuj SETU facilitated the formation of Ward Committees (WC) in two wards - Ward No. 2 & 3 respectively (known as *Ward Vistar Vikas Samiti*).

To strengthen the ward level institutional mechanism of the ULBs, Ward Offices in Ward No. 2 and Ward No.3 were set up. The ward offices, as per its mandate, started acting as a common ground that connects ward councilors, committee members with the ward citizens to discuss questions pertaining to the ward and also functions as decentralized democratic planning units within the wards. Setus facilitated the Ward committee members for the development of a ward plan for Ward no. 3 and thus ensured coordination with the Municipality for planned interventions.

Interventions influencing urban governance in Rapar block were initiated this year as a response to the demand expressed by the MLA, Rapar. A detailed presentation of SETU's concept and approach was made before Rapar Municipality officials and an agreement signed on mutually decided accomplishments in the next three years. Rapar urban SETU conducted meetings in smaller groups and individual interactions with the 21 councillors, citizens of the 7 wards in Rapar as well as the representatives from local organisations in Rapar. A GIS based software named as Urban Governance Support System (UGSS) has been developed by Klink Foundation and data collection started for the same. The UGSS would enable informed planning while developing the ward plans.

Objective 2: To facilitate and sensitise local Governments in the villages and small towns to envision, plan, partner, and implement policies, programmes and activities; In a way that addresses the concerns, priorities and dreams of children, youth, women, the poor, livelihood practitioners, the aged, the differently abled, vulnerable sections, as well as their society at large.

Towards inclusive planning

With an effort to make village level planning inclusive and thus facilitating local governments to understand and give space to issues pertaining to social justice, SETUs worked on sensitizing the Panchayat members as well as the Social Justice Committees (SJC). While working on such issues, SETUs realised the importance of understanding the rituals and the practices within communities in the region and their impact and at the same time identify and promote good practices initiated by communities as a stand to prevent child marriage, dowry and other such evils of the society. As a primary initiative, SETU identified the *Dhebar Rabbari* community who declared that no girlchild will be married off under the age of 18years. The Anjar SETU documented the practices of the community in detail including their traditional occupations, their beliefs, their cultures etc.

A workshop with SJC members of 10 village Panchayats from Rapar block revealed the present issues being handled by the SJC members, their successes and their challenges. A prioritization of issues concerning social justice was completed and a plan developed to address such issues. As an outfall of this exercise, SETUs facilitated SJC members to identify the 750 families who do not avail ration card or BPL cards from two villages of Rapar block. SJC members played an effective role in developing effective measures for enabling access to such entitlements by the families. SETU took this up as an approach to enhance relation with the block level officials as well as to activate the SJC members of the villages.

Strengthening Mahila Sabha

The Government Regulation on making Women's Gram Sabha (known as *Mahila sabha*) mandatory was approved in Gujarat in Nov 2013 with the objective of prioritization of issues concerning women and thus develop concrete action plans to address those issues.

A study in collaboration with *Sushasini* (the Panchayat Knowledge Cell of Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangthan) was undertaken in 2014 to assess the status of *Mahila Sabha*. This was done to have an analysis of the type of issues discussed in the Sabha, how are they prioritised in the Gram Sabha, how much are the issues integrated in the overall planning of the village etc. SETU facilitated the *Mahila Sabha* in villages of Anjar, Rapar and Lakhpat block. Livelihood opportunities for women and lack of access to adequate water for drinking and domestic use

emerged as prominent issues in the meetings. SETUs facilitated the outcome of the Mahila Sabha to be integrated within the Village Plans.

Objective 3: To enable local government bodies and citizens to enhance their access to knowledge systems, information, skills, perspectives, learning opportunities, and other resources by which they can improve their capacities for decentralized governance.

As a first step towards developing the Block Development Plan of Anjar, SETUs in discussion with the Anjar block level officials realised the need to develop a consolidation of all the information with regard to the block that can be accessed and used for planning by village and block Panchayat members. The idea of having a Block Panchayat website was thus conceived in which all sorts of information relevant to the block are available. In the 2014, SETUs facilitated the development and launching of Anjar Block Panchayat website with links to all 53 village Panchayat websites as well. This Block level database and further mapping of various resources at the GP level, including that of revenue lands (which do not fall under Gram panchayats) will lead to identification of the priority areas, analysing the existing status of resources and thus planning of future interventions.

SETUs facilitated the conduction of 11 legal clinics in 2014 in which 80 citizens were informed about the womens' rights, land rights, consumer rights, compensation related issues and PIL (Public Interest Litigation). Additionally, legal workshops were organized in Rapar in which 110 citizens from 3 Panchayats participated. The topics focused on Forest Rights Act, Government land issues and land allocation. 58 RTI cases have been applied for by Panchayat members and citizens related to environment clearance, land allocation by Government. SETUs facilitated the farmers for their compensation from Hindustan Petroleum Chemicals Ltd. A collective of 158 farmers from 11 villages were benefitted.

In Bhuj town:

The '*Mahiti Mitra*' ('Information friend') centre was set up within the Bhuj Urban Setu office in 2010 to facilitate people's access to entitlements and enable their participation in governance. It tries to integrate information and communication technology to strengthen the Councillors access to information, reach citizens and enhance people's participation in governance. In 2014, a Mahiti Mitra has been inaugurated at Ganeshnagar in ward no.13 of Bhuj town.

Bhuj Bole Chhe (Voice of Bhuj)

With the objective of creating an enabling environment for improved local governance, and facilitating ULB's engagement, towards a better town, a communication platform known as *Bhuj Bole Chhe* (www.bhujbolechhe.org) was developed in 2013. More than just a website, *Bhuj Bole Chhe* emerged as a social media platform and a movement to mobilize citizens as well as ULB representatives, their opinions, perspectives, ideas, and actions vis a vis the city's issues and concerns. This has developed as a platform thus bringing ULBs and citizens closer especially the youth who are accessing a range of social media and technology applications, across classes and urban section of the society. *Bhuj Bole Chhe's* focus has also been to develop linkages with other media, as well as organize concrete events and programs which are rooted in the cultural, political and environmental contexts of the town.

In 2014, *Bhuj Bole Chhe* made efforts in training and motivating the youth of Bhuj who were recognized as the "Ambassadors of Bhuj" who were engaged into promoting good practices within the town.

An informal documentation of the communities in Bhuj was started in 2014 with the objective to have a record of the lifestyles, the practices, the rituals followed by the communities. *Bhuj Bole Chhe* completed the documentation of Kolivas Community, Siddhi, Marvada, Devipujak, Koli and Nagar Communities.

Bhuj Bole Chhe launched a slum archiving initiative to document slum communities in Bhuj. In a short period of time, the slums in Bhuj will give away to newly planned and constructed settlements. These slums carry within themselves stories of times and events it has witnessed; stories that need to be preserved and passed on to our future generations. The archiving through *Bhuj Bole Chhe* served as an opportunity for the slums communities to rediscover their identities and present their own identities with dignity. Bhimrao Nagar was the first slum to be documented as a part of this project. A short movie was filmed. The initiative shall cover different slum communities across Bhuj.

OBJECTIVE 4: To encourage and facilitate platforms of action, research and sharing of healthy practices between local governments, citizens, and organizations

Institutionalising the Learning Lab for Local Governance (LLLG):

Having incubated various innovative strategies with more than 150 gram panchayats and two municipal towns, SETU Abhiyan believes that it needs to disseminate and upscale the learnings from these practices, even as it continues to fulfill the growing demand for capacity building from local governments in and outside Kutch. SETU Abhiyan thus initiated a **Learning Lab for Local Governance (LLLG)** which serves as a platform to teach, learn, share, and develop a repository of knowledge resources for Local Governance. Being the first of its kind, the process of institutionalising the Learning Lab for Local Governance (LLLG) started in Aug 2014 with discussions with the SETU team members and also with various institutes, networks and Government departments. While the core areas for the functioning of LLLG were defined, an advisory committee was set up for mentoring and guiding the LLLG's interventions. A coordinator for LLLG has been engaged in February 2015 for coordinating and leading the LLLG activities.

This year the LLLG hosted a group of staffs from AKRSP (Aga Khan Rural Support Program) who approached SETU for an exposure to understand the SETU concept and the interventions in strengthening local governance in Kutch District.

SETU Abhiyan has been a member of the LOGIN (Local Governance Initiatives and Network), a network of national and international organisations working on decentralisation. As an initiative of the LLLG, SETUs in collaboration with LOGIN defined SETU's learning offers and learning demands for the year 2015 in areas of Decentralisation and local governance.

SETU Abhiyan partnered with the LOGIN network (Local Governance Initiative) to host participants from 6 South Asian countries for a three days travel workshop focusing on collectivization / federating local governments and thus included a visit to the Local Government Associations in Kutch district. The total number of participants was 21. The workshop focused on the sharing of the knowledge and experiences on the formation of Local Government Associations, their achievements and challenges. As a participant from Kutch, the president of Anjar-Gandhidham Panchayat Association interacted with the Local Governments of Kerala and Mumbai.

LLLG in coordination with LOGIN facilitated a visit made by Ms. Tashi Pem from Helvetas, Bhutan to understand SETUs work on strengthening local governance. During this visit, she also shared the structure and status of local governance in Bhutan and the functioning of the Local Governments in Bhutan.

In November 2014, SETUs hosted a team of representatives from civil society organisations from Bhutan who came to understand the experiences and synergies of a network, the evolution of programs and to understand the local governance including the elected women representatives in Kutch. The networking gave a scope to share SETU's experiences as well as also learn the status of local governance in Bhutan and the organisational initiatives in the country.

So as to offer on site learning opportunities for students, while also commissioning studies, surveys, and research, LLLG collaborated with institutes like XIMB (Xavier's Institute of Management – Bhubaneshwar), DAIICT (Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication Technology- Gandhinagar) and with Kurve Wustrow, Germany for sending volunteers this year to SETU Abhiyan.

A Course on Decentralization for Social Facilitators:

The LLLG successfully entered into partnership with AKRSP and DSC for facilitating a team of 30 grass root professionals for undertaking 3 – 4 months' structured training on 'Decentralization'. The course was segmented into three modules named as *Prajatantra* (Democracy), *Ajoyan* (Planning) and *Bhavishya* (Future).

Trainings / Exposures organized for SETU staffs are mentioned below:

Topic	No. of persons attended	Resource person/ Institutions
ToT	2	Jagori, New Delhi
Budget Analysis	1	Patheya,Ahmedabad
Urban governance	25	Avantha Foundation

Support towards strengthening marginalized livelihoods

With an effort to organize the traditional livelihood practitioners in Anjar and Rapar blocks, SETUs have been working with the cattle rearers in Anjar, the saltpan workers in Maliya and Rapar and dryland farmers in Rapar. The producers have been organized and formally registered under Producer Companies.

A. With Dryland Farmers:

With the registration of the Producer Company of the agriculture producers as *Adesar Vistar Khet Utpadan Producer Company*, the members have gained a relatively better understanding of the functioning of the Producer Company by the Shareholders and the Directors of the Producer Company. The number of Share Holders of the company is 200 and is governed by a Board of 10 members. In 2014, the Company recruited a new Chief Executive Officer who has qualified Management of Business Administration. The DIN numbers of the Directors and the PAN and TAN number of the Producer Company has been received. The organic certification process was completed under the name of the Company. As an initiation to function on its own, the directors played a substantial role in leading the production, in various sectors, undertake Directors' meeting regularly, maintaining the quality of the production and purchase and sales of the product.

Through input supply service, the Producer Company's turnover in 2014 has been raised as revenue through service charge. Farmers have gained improved understanding on value addition like grading, packaging and thus on quality improvement of crop.

With the functioning of the Producer Company getting initiated, the farmers have started meeting regularly and tapping potential markets. In 2014, in collaboration with the Castor Product Company, Gandhidham, the farmers have gained 18% premium on the castor seed and thus there has been increased participation of the farmers in promoting organic farming.

B. With Saltpan Workers

The NAMAC Small Salt Producer Company covers Adesar of Rapar block and Maliya. The producer company has 110 Share Holders and a Governing Board of 10 members including 3 women.

SETUs facilitated the Producer Company in tapping potential markets, and improving the salt quality through developing linkages with research institute CSMCRI.

In 2014, linkage was established with an industrialist from Kutch who took interest in the sector. After visits to the saltpan and inspired by the work done in the region, he came forward for providing a loan amount to the saltpan workers for the purchase of 10 solar pumps. A business plan to return back the loan amount has been worked out. It has been analysed that there will be 50% reduction in the production cost of the salt producers on using the solar pumps. The use of solar pump will also encourage environment friendly mechanisms.

While dialoguing with financial institutions, the NAMAC Producer Company has received an overall positive response with the continuing support from FWWB. The success of the business

in the first phase has been able to give confidence to the investors and thus have been able to attract a greater number of institutions for investment.

C. With Cattle breeders

The cattle breeders' Company known as Upaj Producer Company faced setback due to no rainfall this year. The 1st credit cycle of Rs. Ten Lakh with FWFB was successfully completed by the Company. The Cattle feed centre gradually developed as one stop village shop for milk producers alongwith the support of the local Government and this has saved on the expenses for travelling to main town for purchase of cattle feed.

The year 2014 marked with an increase in the share holding of company members and also the increased turnover resulted in direct benefit to the members. Additionally, eco-friendly activities like composting, use of bio- fertilizers were promoted.

Upaj Producer Company extended its services through providing artificial insemination service for cattle breed improvement and vaccination. The service covered 12 village panchayats and 4941 cattle.

SETU RESOURCE SUPPORT CENTRE

With SETU Abhiyan getting registered as an independent organization, the board set up a Management Committee for the management of the day to day affairs within SETU Abhiyan to take decisions with regard to administration and financial aspects. The committee is formed of 4 members including the Joint Director of SETU Abhiyan.

In the Governing Board meeting dated 14th Mar 2015, a finance committee has been set up to monitor and overlook the finances of the organisation. The finance committee is represented by the Board members and the internal auditor of the organisation.

SETU Abhiyan finalised its HR policy and got it approved by the Board in 2014.

SETU Abhiyan got into a partnership with Avantha Foundation in 2014.

A partnership with AJWS was discussed in 2014 for initiatives towards enabling community institutions prepare holistic planning and development thus addressing gender and social justice, conservation of natural resources and responding to vulnerabilities of traditional livelihood dependent communities. This partnership was formalized and application submitted for seeking prior permission from MoHA completed.

In partnership Khamir, Setu completed a survey of the traditional potters in Kutch district to demarcate the clay sources. This was done to create a base for advocacy on conserving the clay sources as these sites are now under threat.