

# Umargadh's Road to Resilience

## A Community-Driven Path to Progress

(Case of Year 2009)

In the remote village of **Umargadh**, nestled within Gujarat's Dhandhuka Block, a powerful story of grassroots determination, collective effort, and women's leadership has emerged—one that exemplifies the essence of self-reliance and community solidarity.

For many years, Manasar Road, the sole lifeline connecting Umargadh to the town of Dhandhuka, had remained in a state of severe disrepair. Stretching over 6–7 kilometres, the road had become nearly impassable due to large potholes and uneven surfaces, especially during the monsoon season when accessibility was most critical. Despite its poor condition, the road remained indispensable—linking the village to markets, healthcare, education, and other essential services in Dhandhuka.

Repeated appeals by the village Sarpanch and local residents to government authorities yielded no results. With institutional support absent and hardship mounting, the community decided to take the matter into their own hands. This time, however, it was the village women—empowered through Mahiti Trust-supported women's collectives—who led the way.

### Women at the Forefront of Change

The women's groups, drawing strength from their training in participatory leadership and community mobilization, initiated action. They reached out to young diamond workers from the village, many of whom worked in urban centres but maintained deep ties with their native community. Motivated by a shared sense of responsibility, these young men contributed generously to the initiative.

The funds raised were used to procure two tractor loads of road metal, and what followed was an inspiring act of collective labor: women themselves stepped onto the road, tools in hand, and began filling potholes—restoring the route that for years had symbolized neglect into one that now stands as a monument to unity and local action.

### A Model for Grassroots Empowerment

The repaired road is now safe, functional, and a symbol of what is possible when communities lead with courage and conviction. Beyond the immediate impact on mobility and safety, this initiative stands as a profound example of community-led development, youth engagement, and above all, women's leadership in action.

At Mahiti Trust, we believe that sustainable development is not imposed—it is nurtured from within. The story of Umargadh illustrates this belief vividly. When communities are empowered with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to act, transformative change becomes inevitable—even in the face of persistent challenges.

This experience also reinforces the broader lesson that resilience is not just about infrastructure—it is about people. It is about women rising as agents of change, youth reconnecting with their roots, and entire communities uniting to create better futures.