

## **Solving Their Own Problem - A Story of Collective Action** **from Umargadh Village When People Unite Change Begins - 2003-04**

In the remote village of **Umargadh**, located in the Dhandhuka Block of Ahmedabad District, Gujarat, the values of unity, self-reliance, and determination came to life through a remarkable act of collective action.

For many years, the only road connecting Umargadh to the nearby town of Dhandhuka—known as the Manasar Road—was in a state of severe disrepair. Stretching over 6 to 7 kilometres, it was marked by large potholes and uneven surfaces, making travel difficult and unsafe, especially during the rainy season. Yet, the road remained a lifeline, essential for reaching markets, healthcare, and other services in Dhandhuka.

Despite numerous efforts by the village Sarpanch to seek help—through applications and appeals to local authorities like the Taluka and District Panchayats—no action was taken. After years of waiting, the community, with the encouragement and support of women's groups guided by Mahiti Trust, decided to take matters into their own hands.

### **Women at the Forefront**

The local women's group took the lead. Under the leadership of the group's head, they mobilized the village youth—many of whom work as diamond cutters in cities—and began raising funds from within the community. With the money collected, they purchased two tractor loads of road metal.

In a powerful display of solidarity and self-initiative, the women of Umargadh, along with the youth, filled the potholes themselves. Working side by side, they repaired the road—restoring it to a usable condition and making travel safer for all.

Today, thanks to their collective effort, the Manasar Road is once again functional, ensuring easier access to Dhandhuka and improving daily life for the villagers.

This inspiring initiative not only addressed a long-standing issue but also stood as a testament to the strength of community action—highlighting the leadership of women, the involvement of youth, and the power of people coming together to create meaningful change.

*At Mahiti Trust, we believe that sustainable change begins when communities take ownership. The story of Umargadh is a testament to the power of local solutions driven by courage, cooperation, and commitment.*