

Ms. Hansaben Kambad - 2022-23

A Torchbearer of Sustainable Farming in Dholera's Changing Landscape a Case Story of Rajpur Village of Dholera Block, Ahmedabad District

With the development of the Special Investment Region (SIR) in Dholera, land prices have soared, and agricultural land is rapidly being sold off to corporations. As cultivation declines in the region, one woman farmer stands resilient—Hansaben Dhanjibhai Kambad, a 43-year-old resident of Rajpur village in Dholera Taluka.

Farming has been central to Hansaben's life since her early years at her father's home. Today, she continues to farm and rear livestock with her family, which includes her in-laws, husband, three sons, and a daughter. For over two decades, Hansaben has been actively engaged with Mahiti Trust and is a long-time member of the **Bhal Women's Savings and Credit Cooperative Society Limited** formed and strengthened by Mahiti Trust. Her involvement extends to networks like the **Working Group for Women and Land Ownership (WGWLO)**, where she has been part of initiatives promoting women's land rights and sustainable agriculture since 2022.



Inspired by an awareness meeting in her village organized by Mahiti Trust, Hansaben became interested in shifting from chemical-intensive farming to sustainable practices. Though initially hesitant, her husband agreed to let her experiment on a small plot.

*With support from WGWLO and guidance from Mahiti Trust, she established a **demonstration plot** for Chana (chickpeas) during the Rabi season. While the yield was modest compared to chemically-grown crops, the chickpeas were tastier, more nutritious, and significantly cheaper to cultivate.*

Encouraged, she expanded her efforts during the Kharif season by planting jowar and starting a kitchen garden. That year, heavy floods destroyed most crops in the area, but Hansaben managed to salvage her Brinjal (eggplant) plants and later replanted them

on two bighas of land. Using organic fertilizers and bio-pesticides made under the guidance of the Mahila Kisan Sakhi, her brinjal crop flourished. Her chemical-free produce gained local popularity, especially during community functions and weddings.

Seeing the benefits firsthand, her husband gradually adopted sustainable methods. Together, they now cultivate 20 bighas of land using organic practices and advocate for sustainable farming among fellow villagers. Hansaben's field has become a learning site for other women farmers, especially during organized field days.

Following her father-in-law's passing, Hansaben also navigated the legal inheritance process with support from Mahiti Trust. This enabled her family to access government schemes such as the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana and widow assistance programs, enhancing their financial stability.

Today, Hansaben is recognized as a leader and inspiration in her village. She not only champions sustainable farming but also empowers women through knowledge-sharing and by advocating for land rights and financial inclusion. Her journey reflects resilience, adaptability, and a deep commitment to preserving farming as a dignified and viable livelihood in the rapidly transforming landscape of Dholera.