

Women's Leadership in Community Development:

A Transformative Story from Saragwada Village (2005-06)

In the heart of Saragwada village, Dholka Block, a powerful example of grassroots women's leadership is unfolding. With the facilitation of Mahiti Trust, three dynamic women's groups—Laxmi Krupa, Shakti Krupa Group 1, and Shakti Krupa Group 2—have come together to initiate and lead impactful community development projects under the *Swashakti Community Asset Building Initiative* of Gujarat Women's Economic Development Corporation.

These women, driven by a deep understanding of their local needs, made collective decisions to develop essential community assets that specifically support and ease the daily lives of women and their families. Their approach was not only participatory but also inclusive and sustainable.

Identifying Needs, Creating Solutions

- The members of Shakti Krupa Groups 1 and 2 recognized the daily hardship women faced in fetching water from a distant village trough. They proposed and built a new water trough closer to their *Faliya* (residential hamlet), significantly reducing the burden on women and improving access to water.
- The Laxmi Krupa group, who frequently used nearby hot water streams for bathing and washing, identified the need for privacy and dignity in these activities. They took the initiative to construct a dedicated women's bathing space near the stream.
- The women also noticed a broken water trough near one of the streets and made plans to repair it for better usage. Moreover, all three groups united to propose a sustainable solution—connecting the village's main water storage tank to the community troughs by installing a 1000-meter-long pipeline, ensuring reliable and closer water access for all.

Collective Planning and Leadership

These women didn't stop at identifying the problem—they took full ownership of the solution. Together, they:

- Passed internal group resolutions and facilitated approvals at the panchayat level.
- Submitted comprehensive proposals, including all necessary documentation, to the Swashakti project.
- Mobilized community support, with a commitment to contribute 10% of the project cost through cash or kind, while the remaining 90% was funded by the project.

Women at the Helm of Execution

Once approved, the implementation process became a beacon of women-led development. From planning to supervision, procurement to construction, every step was managed by the women themselves. They formed teams, divided responsibilities, and undertook the physical construction work—including digging, plastering, masonry, and pipeline laying—with remarkable dedication and unity.

This initiative not only created essential community infrastructure but also reshaped perceptions around women's capabilities in leadership, construction, and governance. The women of Saragwada have demonstrated how collective strength, when supported with opportunity and trust, can drive meaningful and lasting change.

Mahiti Trust is proud to support and walk alongside these remarkable women leaders—building stronger communities, one step at a time.