



## SEWA Bharat

New Delhi, India



Applications  
due:  
November 1

SEWA Bharat is a national federation of all SEWA institutions (i.e. unions, social enterprises, programs, trusts, foundations) in India and is tasked with the mandate of spreading the SEWA movement. The SEWA Movement focuses on women in the informal economy and works for their rights and development. Due to its union structure, grassroots women workers hold all leadership positions and have the decision-making power within the federation. In 2019, 1.9 million direct members were affiliated with the movement across 18 states in India.

SEWA Bharat is very grateful for the opportunity to work with UVA students and strengthen collaborative networks. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in India, our work priorities have shifted and simultaneously become even more critical, given our long history of working with women in the informal economy, and supporting them in their advocacy for their rights.

### Description of virtual internships:

SEWA Bharat operates across a series of “verticals,” or units focused on different issues/projects. Virtual interns are sought by the following verticals:

- Research and the Data Team: The research and data works on collecting data across indicators at SEWA Bharat, with a specific focus on collective enterprises, micro-enterprises, mobilisation, and the value of the collective model. The team is also responsible for designing research on topics related to the informal economy, collecting data, and writing and publishing outputs relevant to those working in these areas. We're looking for those interested in research on informal economy, with solid research and research design skills, and interest in/experience with survey design, primary interviews and instrument design, and finally, data analysis.
- Land Rights: The land rights vertical works on ensuring better access to services and residentially tangential entitlements, as well as improving tenure of their housing. In the informal economy, housing is very closely related to livelihood opportunities so improving land rights is critical. The team is looking for those with research backgrounds but with a focus on strong visual skills and the ability to represent data and stories in modalities other than reports and briefs.



- Enterprise Support System: The ESS works to support collective social enterprises scale and move towards profitability. This covers working on marketing, digital capacity building, training and upskilling, scoping for markets and new avenues of livelihoods generation, as well as incubating and brainstorming new enterprise ideas. The team is looking for those interested in exploring ways to strengthen social enterprise models, conduct market research and market scoping, design and support with multiple non-traditional advertising approaches (case studies, documented histories, P2P, etc.).
- Communications: SEWA Bharat has recently set up a Communications Team who have been tasked with coming up with communication strategies that both highlight the stories of informal economy workers while simultaneously strengthening the solidarity amongst members through these communication outputs and strategies. Interest in media, journalism, social media, podcasts, videos, etc. are strongly encouraged by the team.

SEWA Bharat has also recently launched its own webinar series, as well as a podcast. Support with designing, scaling, and planning these forms of new media would be appreciated.

- Leadership: The SEWA model is predicated on the strength of our grassroots leaders. We work very closely with these elected and nominated women to support their visions for the community. For more information on this model, please read [The Last Mile Model](#), a report that was co-authored with a previous UVA virtual intern. This vertical is looking at ways of evaluating the current program and learning from past work and work done by others, as well as documenting and disseminating lessons, successes and modules for expanding the work.
- Capacity Building: This team is focusing on building up local SEWA members/team capacities across a variety of skills - Google, GMail, Drive, Canva, Data collection, Digital phones to name a few. Modules are being piloted and then revised, scaled and tested. Support from those interested in training, skills work, and adult education would be greatly appreciated.

### Preferred qualifications:

- SEWA Bharat is interested in people who want to learn, are open to asking questions and engaging with new people, and are keen to play a supporting role to the work done by informal economy workers. We are very, very community-oriented.
- Any and all documentation skills will be greatly appreciated and always in demand. If you can write coherently, structure PowerPoints or other ways of representing data, provide support with social media framing and updates, do graphic design, offer support with survey design and implementation, and/or engage with analysis and reporting of findings, we need you.
- An ideal candidate for this position would have some previous knowledge of or be actively fascinated by women's issues and/or South Asia. Students should be interested in learning as much as they can about India- its peoples, its cultures, and its particular conditions.



- Candidates must have the strong motivation to work in diverse teams and across language and technology barriers, if necessary, to facilitate projects in an inclusive and cooperative manner.
- Interns must be highly independent and self-motivated so they can successfully complete projects as assigned and as established by themselves.
- Students must be supremely flexible and willing to contribute to the changing needs of the organization in whatever ways are most useful.

### Language:

- English is spoken by most supervisors and interns at SEWA Bharat. Students who have knowledge of other Indian languages (Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, etc.) may be able to engage with a wider range of SEWA-affiliated individuals in their work for the organization.

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## Previous interns' reflections:

This summer I was a virtual global intern for SEWA Bharat based in India, which focuses on women's empowerment in informal communities. Through conducting thorough research, I was able to get a firsthand glimpse the plethora of ways in which they can be empowered, ways in which I as an American would never have considered. It was a privilege to work within a different cultural context, and this particular experience allowed me to build on my ability to communicate and connect with different people. Being physically apart from your workspace and your colleagues helped me learn about myself as a worker, especially my strengths and weaknesses. While it may have been daunting to be on my own at first, I learned how to thrive as an independent worker and found myself welcomed in a community that was always willing to collaborate. Working remotely with SEWA encouraged me to keep an open mind towards the different ways the professional landscape is changing. I got to learn about myself, my colleagues on the other side of the world, and the possibilities for my future career under the most unique of circumstances. I would encourage anyone to immerse themselves in the world beyond us and take on a global internship.

~AIRA MATIN (Summer 2020)

Pursuing a remote virtual internship with SEWA Bharat provided me a unique opportunity to work cross-culturally in the midst of a global pandemic. In my internship, I was able to delve into an independent and self-directed collective enterprise research project, enabling me to gain transferable qualitative analytical skills and contribute to the organization's ongoing external enterprise evaluation process. Additionally, I appreciated the opportunities to engage in



productive conversation sessions with interns and workers to learn about on-the-ground projects seeking to improve the livelihoods of women in the informal economy. As someone eager to pursue a career in international development, it was especially valuable to be immersed in the daily inner-workings of a global organization and learn about how SEWA Bharat has adapted its leadership and management to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on its members. Partaking in this internship has allowed me to explore the intersections of development theory and practice, providing new insights that I will carry with me in future UVA courses and experiences. Overall, I am grateful for this challenging yet rewarding experience, and I recommend a global internship to anyone seeking to learn in a cross-cultural work environment.

~LEIGH MANTE (Summer 2020)

When I decided to participate in this virtual internship with SEWA Bharat, I expected to gain skills in policy analysis, research, and cross-cultural engagement; however, I also learned to be a protagonist for gender equality.

Achieving gender equality means much more than being paid the same. It means recognizing that women have equal capacity to learn, create, and lead and advocating for them to be given equal opportunity to do so. One supervisor at SEWA Bharat told me one of the biggest hurdles a woman faces is recognizing the importance of her role in society. Many SEWA employees spend their time educating women that they do add value to society and that their work matters. I was inspired by SEWA's grassroots approach to solving women's issues in India's informal economy because it showed me that elaborate plans are not the only pathway to women's advancement; supporting women one-on-one can also lead to momentous changes.

I did not expect to learn this, but I cherish my time with SEWA because it taught me to see the role I can play in providing service to humanity as well as realizing that capacity to be an agent of change in others.

~ALYSSA PRICE (Summer 2020)

Like the rest of the workforce, my fellow Global Interns and I had to transition to virtual work. I spent eight weeks of my summer becoming a morning person as I hopped on 8am WhatsApp calls with my New Delhi-based colleagues at SEWA Bharat, a federation of trade unions for women working in the informal sector. I was disappointed that I had to trade New Delhi's sweltering heat and perfectly ripe mangoes for my air-conditioned Charlottesville apartment and Trader Joe's frozen meals. However, this remote internship proved to be a fantastic stepping stone into what I hope will be a lifelong journey of inquisitive and reflexive global engagement!



Ironically, the realities of virtual work have been incredibly humbling. Working from the comfort of my home helped me recognize my positionality, and what this would both prevent me from and allow me to offer. I realized that my curiosity and openness, rather than my knowledge, would be the most valuable thing I could provide during this remote internship experience. One of my significant contributions has been a series of concept notes, drawing on data from online interviews and literature reviews, that propose areas for further research. I was able to use an outsider perspective to bring attention to new lines of inquiry that I am now discussing with SEWA staff and may be taken up by their research team. Overall, my remote internship has taught me the importance of taking an inquisitive approach to global engagement. In a new cultural context, one must first ask questions instead of seeking to provide answers. These questions are the starting point for the productive conversations that are essential to building cross-cultural bridges.

~KARINA ATKINS (Summer 2020)

It is undoubtedly an intimidating prospect to embark on a global internship, perhaps even more so when the intensity of an experience abroad will be conveyed through a computer screen. This was the adventure into which I ventured this summer: an internship with SEWA Bharat, an Indian organization of advocacy and support for women in the informal sector. From the outset, the experience has been challenging, educational, intense, and fulfilling. I was given the opportunity to exercise a range of skills including research, writing, editing, and design, and I was able to work with passionate individuals across the organization—I truly felt as if I built friendships with my coworkers. Most important to me, though, was the multitude I learned and my freedom in doing so. At the onset, it was certainly daunting to feel relatively inexperienced, but the encouragement to dive in headfirst fostered my own dynamism, confidence, and rapid edification. My coworkers were more than willing to answer questions and were dedicated to interns' education while we were with SEWA. I was empowered to explore fascinating themes such as migration, data justice, socio-environmental-economic linkages, and global commercial flows. It is an experience I will both cherish and draw upon for the remainder of my global education.

~TAHI WIGGINS (Summer 2020)