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Utthan

Utthan envisions a society that imbibes and ensures the values of gender justice, equality and peace, in practice, resulting in happiness for all.

# What is unique to Utthan

- Demonstrated integration of gender equality and justice into all development and empowerment efforts.
- Through such demonstrations, Utthan has established its identity as an organization with socio-technological alternatives that address the issues of the most marginalised
- Created local teams of youth, both men and women to address local issues and manage local programmes. A sizeable number have been associated with Utthan for over 15 years, reflective of the organisation's growth and learning space.

## Achievements

Utthan's intense work for nearly 40 years has been in the drought-prone coastal districts of Ahmedabad, Amreli, Bhavnagar and Kutch and the poverty-stricken tribal districts of Dahod, Panchmahal and Mahisagar. Today, Utthan directly touches the lives of more than 12 lakh people of 265 villages in six districts of Gujarat. Continuing its quest for exploration and sharing of learning's, Utthan's leadership and work has extended to neighbouring districts and communities in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and other States as well as to movements in South Asia and across the world. Some direct achievements in collaboration with various local institutions include:

- Establishment of Mahiti, an independent CBO, which in turn, has now initiated a number of local institutions
- Supported 20000+ women to access their right to resources - rightful land, property, social welfare & livelihood schemes and freedom from domestic and public violence
- Introduction of improved local and organic varieties of maize, pigeon pea, paddy, gram, fruits to promote biodiversity with nearly 7200 farmers
- Directly supported nearly 1 lakh persons through Integrated Water Resource development on 30000 hectares of land
- Facilitated building of resources to provide over 360,000 people with sustainable and equitable access to safe water
- Facilitated adoption of eco-sanitation toilets with more than 300 families & 225 toilets catering to people with disabilities

The process of replication, adaptation and movement building continues.

Utthan has an inherent culture of sharing, through the medium of capacitated local institutions & the active engagement of its own leadership at national, regional and global levels. Utthan's empowerment and mobilization approach has been pivotal in building a critical mass of leadership amongst women, men and youth. The several formal and informal community based institutions play an important role in furthering this sharing. These institutions include Women's Federations, Credit Cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organisations, Area Resource Groups on, Livelihood, Peace, Water & Sanitation, Watershed Management, Youth issues, Economic Empowerment, Women's Land rights, alternative mechanisms for Justice for violence survivors; some mixed and some comprising only women.

**Impact at the national, regional & global level:** Advocacy done at national, regional & global level is a result of Utthan's powerful local actions and demonstrations. Having been instrumental and active in the setting up of State level Networks like Pravah, Mahila Swaraj Abhiyan & Working Group for Women & Land Ownership, has helped contribute to the larger human rights and development discourse. Utthan's leadership has been able to voice local concerns at the international level, be it the World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference, Hague, March 2000, at which Gujarat's Vision 21 was ratified by the international community and led to initiation of decentralized WASH systems in India or the Berlin Conference of Peace leaders from the world, where local context and strategies were shared.

A clear multiplier impact of direct technical and social demonstrations through various strategies clearly shows the powerful influence a group such as Utthan can wield.

## Looking Ahead

As Utthan looks back and looks ahead, a two-fold strategy emerges of 'Deepening existing efforts and influence' & 'Scaling up', while still holding innovation, experimentation and learning as extremely relevant. Equity, in its original meaning, will remain its steady purpose, and as the anchor in all its efforts at resolving conflicts. Amartya Sen's concept of going to scale - "Expansion of freedom, both as the primary end and as the principal means of development"- lends voice to Utthan's interests and aspirations for the future. The challenge here is to strengthen Utthan's team towards this objective.

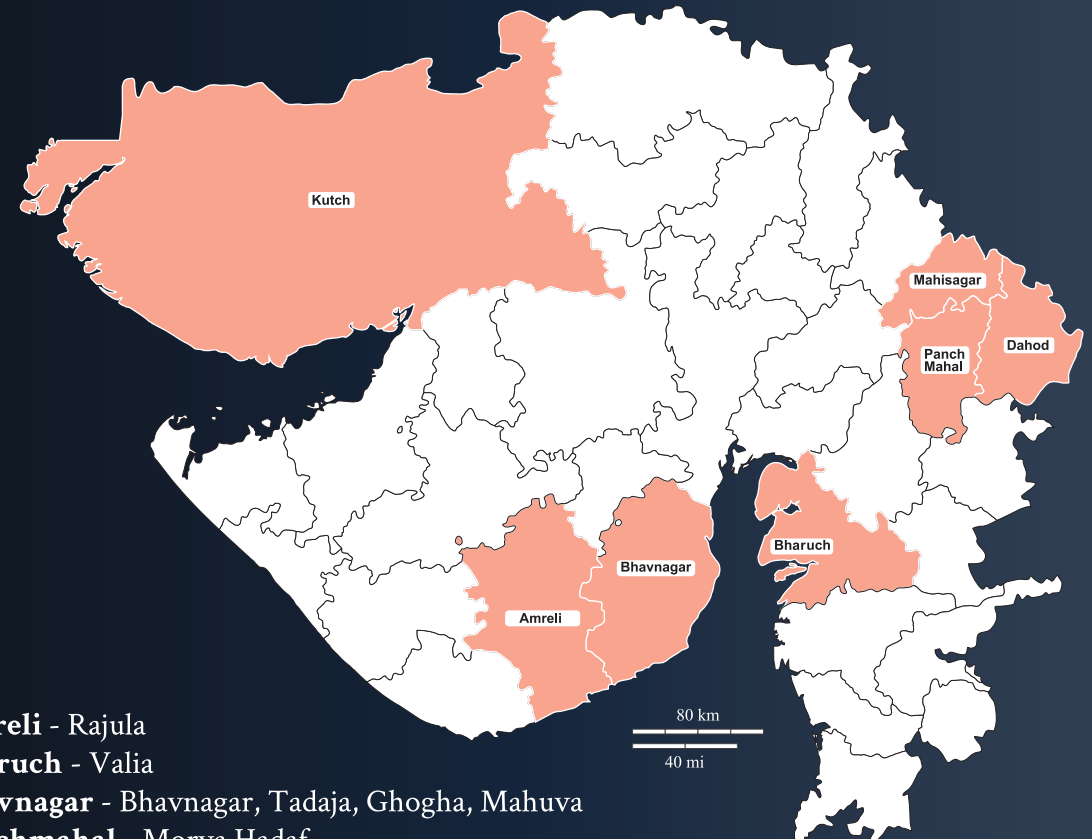
# The Beginnings

Utthan's journey began in 1981, when four women chose to work in the desolate Bhal region of Gujarat, helping marginalized communities to self-organise around critical livelihood issues and develop local leadership. Utthan, which means 'upliftment' in Hindi, initiated a people's movement comprising a large number of women and youth, to address their rights to regular, safe drinking water, protecting and accessing common land for their livelihood security, challenging patriarchy, feudal exploitation and caste discrimination at local levels. In the process, Utthan facilitated the formation of a community-based organisation known as Mahiti (knowledge), which has been a local force since 1994.

To initiate sustainable gender sensitive, grass root processes of empowerment amongst the most vulnerable communities; through a process of inclusion, building conscientiousness, and organising around their major issues.



## Direct Outreach of Utthan



**Amreli** - Rajula

**Bharuch** - Valia

**Bhavnagar** - Bhavnagar, Tadaja, Ghogha, Mahuva

**Panchmahal** - Morva Hadaf

**Dahod** - Fatehpura, Dhanpur, Sanjeli, Jhalod, Singvad, Limkheda

**Mahisagar** - Santrampur, Kadana





## Approach and Strategy

Inspired by Gandhi, Utthan's interventions seek to address the challenges of translating constitutional rights and values in society. Utthan is an evolving exploration in community-based, community-led change founded on a core of non-negotiable values: equity, democracy, liberty, secularism and social justice. The realisation of these values link everything Utthan does, and every capacity it tries to build and sustain.

Promoting peaceful coexistence, ensuring human rights, gender justice and inclusive, sustainable development for positive change in the status of the marginalized (women, youth and children from Dalit, tribal, minorities, other backward and economically poor communities) thus forms the core of its approach.

Strategies which have evolved through our experience and continue to be relevant:

- Participatory situation analysis of challenges in multiple, intersectional contexts
- Awareness raising & organising around issues: building community agency through participatory communication
- Strengthening leaders & institutions: collective prioritisation & planning
- Demonstrating best practices: social & technical alternatives based on people's knowledge and new innovations
- Building a body of Utthan learnings for sharing and exchange: strengthening its team as a resource pool with core competencies for influence & growth
- Policy advocacy through networking and partnerships with various Government & non-Government stakeholders

# THRUST AREAS

Utthan has built a capacity to work with a wide range of stakeholders at the micro, macro and international levels, integrating lessons learnt from each. Utthan's thrust areas are intrinsically linked to each other, and have emerged as major issues during its journey for social justice in Gujarat.

## Gender Equity & Women's Rights

Initiatives within this thrust area address existing inequalities in society by challenging patriarchal attitudes embedded in formal and informal structures and institutions. With a focus on protecting and securing rights of women and girls, Utthan has intensively worked on the issues of Right to Safety and Security, Resource Rights (Land, Property, Forest, Credit), Right to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Political Participation and Access to Basic Entitlements. Integrating a feminist approach in all thrust areas has been a priority.

## Livelihood Security

The focus is toward the livelihood security of the marginalized, improving their abilities to enhance the quality of life. Sustainability, equity and a people-centred approach is the common thread in designing and implementing gender sensitive, inclusive natural resource management initiatives to protect and augment livelihood resources through the demonstration of innovative alternatives.

## Conflict Transformation towards peace and justice

Over the years and in response to conflict in the state, a strategy has evolved to work through women and youth, and build inclusion into every initiative, so that issues of peace, equity and justice can be understood as essential to sustainability.





## Access to Safe Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Utthan's key experiences in this thrust area lie in developing gender sensitive institutional mechanisms and technologies interwoven with the idea of women's leadership and community participation in planning, implementation and monitoring and feeding these learnings at the policy level. Additional experience in sanitation (tailor made according to geography, ability and sustainability) was gained through Utthan's People's Learning Centre on Water & Sanitation. It is currently sharing its experience with 11 organisations through training and monitoring support in 4 other states, along with continued advocacy on the issue.

## Institutional Building and Leadership Development

Within this thrust area, there is a two-fold focus; one, of Strengthening Utthan as a learning institution and the other, Building self-reliant local institutions with the capacity to independently sustain empowerment and inclusive development processes. As an institution, Utthan has demonstrated the concept of collective leadership and proactively addressed succession and growth.

## Partners

Utthan's main partners include the communities we work with and their local institutions. Utthan networks and allies with more than 20 civil society entities to bring issues which impinge on people's rights and entitlements to the table of local governance institutions, administrative bodies and policy makers.

## Recognition & Awards

- Best Performing WDF Project, Outstanding work on Watershed Development, NABARD: 2018-19
- Best State Nodal Agency & Best Performance Award, Vikaspedia, Center for Development in Advanced computing: 2014-15 & 2015-16
- National Environment Awareness Award, Bharatiya Khadi Gram Udhyog, India: 2008
- T.N Khoshoo Memorial Award, Working with communities to achieve self-reliance: 2005



## Utthan's Board

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Managing Trustee, Janvikas

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and Bennett University, Noida

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**Utthan is a public charitable trust registered in 1981 under the Bombay Public Trusts Act 1950. Donations to Utthan are exempt from Income tax under Section 80G of the Income tax Act, 1961. Foreign donations are also authorized as per Utthan's registration under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act.**

### Ms Nafisa Barot

former Director & Founder, Utthan

### Ms Neelima Khetan

Partner  
Nous Consultants

### Dr Sara Ahmed

Adjunct Professor,  
Centre for Water Research, Dept of Humanities  
and Social Sciences, IISER, Pune



A quest for justice, dignity and hope.

36, Chitrakut Twins, Nehru Park,  
Near Management Enclave, Vastrapur,  
Ahmedabad, Gujarat 380015 India

+91.79.26751023

[www.utthangujarat.org](http://www.utthangujarat.org)  
[utthan.ahmedabad@gmail.com](mailto:utthan.ahmedabad@gmail.com)  
[www.gu.vikaspedia.in](http://www.gu.vikaspedia.in)

Reg. No. F / 757 / Ahmedabad