



# Empowerment of Rural Women through Self Help Groups: A Socio-Economic Analysis

Santosh Kumar Samantaray and P N Ananth

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ganjam-I,OUAT, Bhubaneswar (Odisha)

---

## ABSTRACT

The empowerment of women is crucial for the development of the country. Women empowerment is a process in which women challenge the existing norms and culture, to effectively promote their well being. The Indian Constitution grants equality to women in all aspects. In this regard, the year 2001 was celebrated as the year of women empowerment. The concept of self help groups (SHGs) introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development has taken its roots in nook and corner of the rural, semi-urban and urban areas, which help improve the living standards. The present paper examines the socio-economic empowerment of the rural women through the SHGs. The study was conducted in two districts i.e. Ganjam and Malkangiri of Odisha. Primary data were collected through structured interview schedule from 192 members of 48 SHGs. The study proved that there were not much of developments of the group members. Very poor responses were observed towards developments on various aspects of technological, economical, income generating activities and marketing. Significant developments were also not observed on socio-cultural aspects. It was suggested that the organisations promoting SHGs have to organize the rural women, make them technically sound and increase their risk bearing ability enabling them to undertake income generating activities on commercial basis and empowered them with regular income.

**Key Words:** Empowerment, Socio-Economic, Self Help Group, Women.

---

## INTRODUCTION

In developing countries a large section of the women are vulnerable and marginalized due to lack of education, access to resources and employment opportunity. All round development and harmonious growth of a nation is possible only when women are considered as equal partners in the developmental process. Women empowerment is the most important instrument for the socio-economic development of a nation. Bringing women into the mainstream is one of the major challenges for every government (Perumal, 2005). A series of development programmes have been implemented for the development of economy. These programmes no longer can achieve their target without the participation and contribution of women.

The role of women and need to empower them are central to human development programmes

including poverty alleviation. In spite of safeguards provided in many of poverty alleviation programmes, it was observed that women in rural areas especially from poor families could not be included. A whiff of change was caused by the 74th amendment to the Constitution of India, which has guaranteed women a substantial role in the local governance. Women empowerment is multifaceted concept that extends to the psychological, economic, social, cultural, political and institutional spheres of women's lives. The ability to generate own income would perhaps help women to derive more power and choices related to household decision making in consumption, education and health related matters, and also open up opportunities to take part in other socio-economic activities. It has led the women to understand their potentials, rights, entitlements and their responsibilities as mother at home, as labourer in different activities they engage with and as a citizen in the country (Das, 2011).

---

Corresponding author's Email: santoshy2k@gmail.com

\*Scientist (Agril. Extension), KVK, Ganjam-I, OUAT

The SHG is a viable organized set-up to disburse microcredit to the rural women for the purpose of making them enterprising and encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities (Kumar, 2005). In most cases, SHGs are constituted by persons known to one another and coming from the same village community or neighbourhood. These groups start with saving and not with seeking credit from the group, then uses its savings to extend loans to SHG members to meet their emergency and other attendant needs (Lalitha and Nagarajan, 2002). The empowerment of women through SHGs would give benefits not only to individual woman but also for the family and community as a whole through collective action for the development (Usha *et al*, 2004 and Rajagopal, 2005). SHGs have not only produced tangible assets and improved living condition of members but also help in changing much of their outlook, worldview and attitude (Olekar, 2011). An attempt was therefore made to assess various aspects of developments of rural women through SHG activities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

There are around 2,79,288 SHGs organised and functioning in Odisha covering all the thirty districts. Ganjam as the advanced coastal and Malkangiri being a tribal dominated district were selected purposively for the study. A sample of 96 rural women from 24 SHGs of two blocks from each district was selected randomly. The data was collected personally through a structured schedule. Information collected on 3 point scale i.e. strongly agree, agree and disagree were analysed with score value of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Statistical tools such as mean score, critical ratio test and path analysis were employed to reveal the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Income generation through vocational activities is the motto of SHGs. The organisations promoting SHGs were liaoning with the experts for knowledge and skill developments for managing the vocational enterprise. But, the study revealed

(Table 1) that there were not much of technological developments. Though, the respondents of Ganjam districts had stated some developments, on exposure to vocational activities, but poor responses were observed on other aspects. Similarly, there were not much of economic developments of the respondents in both the Malkangiri and Ganjam districts. Poor responses were observed on employment generation, regular cash availability, increase in financial position, access to credit facility and self-dependent for own requirements. When there were not much of technological developments, the respondents were not managing their vocational activities commercially, due to which poor economic developments might have occurred.

The organisations promoting SHG activities are also liaoning with traders and business men for easy disposal of the produce. But, the respondents of both the districts were not agreed (Table 1) for the developments on marketing. Poor responses were observed on their access to marketing network, support of the Government in marketing as well as participation in exhibitions and fair for sale promotion. These might be due to untimely disposal of the produce at remunerative price, not assured and untimely payment. Similarly, there were also not much of the developments on their income generating activities. Poor responses received on developing essential infrastructures, expansion and addition of new enterprise, increase in managerial efficiency, competency in selection of enterprise, exposure to profitable enterprise, easy access to expertise and guidance indicating that respondents were simply managing their income generating activities.

Comparative analysis of the developments revealed (Table 1) that respondents of both had almost of similar opinions as significant differential opinions were not observed. Poor developments were observed on technological, economical, marketing and income generating activities. Poor developments on these aspects indicated that rural women were not properly organised, not conscious

## Empowerment through Self Help Groups

**Table 1: Study on extent of developments by Women under study in different sectors**

<b>Technological development</b>						
Sl. No.	Development	Mean score		Diff. (%)	Pooled mean score (n = 192)	Gap (%)
		Malkangiri district (n = 96)	Ganjam district (n = 96)			
1.	Knowledge and skill competency on vocation	1.86	1.86	0.00	1.86	38.00
2.	Exposure to vocational activities	1.74	2.05	15.12	1.90	36.67
3.	Permanency in information flow	1.58	1.61	1.86	1.60	46.67
4.	Adoption of recommended practices	1.17	1.31	10.69	1.24	58.67
5.	Increase indecision making capacity	0.82	0.54	34.5	0.68	77.32
6.	Optimum use of resources	1.55	1.78	12.92	1.67	44.33
7.	Better access to inputs and materials	1.83	1.89	3.17	1.86	38.00
<b>Economic development</b>						
1.	Generation of employment	1.15	1.36	15.44	1.26	58.00
2.	Regular cash availability	1.36	1.23	9.56	1.30	56.67
3.	Increase in financial position	1.58	1.57	0.63	1.58	47.33
4.	Access to credit facility	1.77	1.61	9.04	1.69	43.67
5.	Self-dependent for own requirements	1.77	1.65	6.78	1.71	43.00
6.	Better education to children	2.04	1.89	7.35	1.97	34.33
<b>Marketing development</b>						
1.	Access to marketing network	1.30	1.10	15.38	1.20	60.00
2.	Timely disposal of the produce	1.89	1.79	5.29	1.84	38.67
3.	Remunerative sale price	1.71	1.53	10.53	1.62	46.00
4.	Assured payment	1.52	1.70	10.59	1.61	46.33
5.	Timely payment	1.55	1.66	6.63	1.61	46.33
6.	Scope to participate in exhibitions and fair	1.08	0.91	15.74	1.00	66.67
7.	Govt. support for marketing	0.65	0.71	8.45	0.68	77.33
<b>Developments on vocational activities</b>						
1.	Competency in selection of enterprise	1.53	1.46	4.58	1.56	50.00
2.	Exposure to profitable enterprise	1.74	1.84	5.43	1.79	40.33
3.	Increase in managerial efficiency	1.54	1.64	6.10	1.62	46.00
4.	Easy access to expertise and guidance	1.93	1.85	4.15	1.89	37.00
5.	Expansion of the enterprise	1.65	1.32	20.00	1.49	50.33
6.	Addition of new and related enterprise	0.78	0.63	19.23	0.71	76.33
7.	Developing essential infrastructure	1.22	1.07	12.30	1.15	61.67
<b>Comparative analysis of the developments (An overall view)</b>						
1.	Technological	1.51	1.58	4.43	1.55	48.33
2.	Economical	1.61	1.55	3.73	1.58	47.33
3.	Marketing	1.39	1.34	3.60	1.37	54.33
4.	Vocational activity	1.48	1.40	5.41	1.44	52.00

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

**Table 2: Path analysis of socio-economic variables on developments (n = 192)**

Sr. No.	Variable	Total effect	Total direct effect	Total indirect effect	Substantial effect		
					I	II	III
1.	Age	0.597	-0.110	0.707	0.304 ×5	0.209 ×11	0.189 ×4
2.	Education	-0.537	0.350	-0.887	0.176 ×9	-0.104×7	-0.094×12
3.	Caste	0.678	0.174	0.504	-0.173×14	0.097×13	-0.034×4
4.	Family type	0.309	0.014	0.295	-0.312×10	0.279×8	-0.188×6
5.	Family size	0.641	-0.154	0.795	-0.201×1	0.132 ×12	-0.077×5
6.	House type	-0.514	0.320	-0.834	0.116×7	0.098×6	0.055×11
7.	Occupation	0.437	-0.217	0.654	-0.208×10	-0.104×5	-0.077×13
8.	Holding size	-0.321	-0.340	0.019	0.205×1	-0.158×3	0.110×9
9.	Communication materials	0.521	0.110	0.411	-0.209×2	-0.135×7	-0.124×10
10.	Household articles	-0.075	-0.191	0.116	0.224×6	0.106×4	-0.092×1
11.	Social participation	0.341	-0.314	0.655	0.167×4	-0.133×13	0.019×12
12.	Cosmo politeness	0.321	0.210	0.111	0.113×2	-0.034×9	0.015×10
13.	Extension contact	0.518	0.180	0.380	-0.211×10	0.139×11	0.101×2
14.	Annual income	-0.038	-0.340	0.620	-0.215×13	0.187×5	-0.122×7

**Residual effect – 0.113**

**Highest indirect effect – Education**

about the group approach and enhancing their risk bearing abilities for which the group members might have undertaken income generating activities casually. Path analysis concluded (Table 2) that socio-economic attributes had not much contribution towards various aspects of the developments of the respondents. However, educational background of the respondents had the highest indirect effect and associated with only three attributes.

### CONCLUSION

The study revealed that there were poor developments on various aspects of technological, economical, income generating activities and marketing. It is therefore suggested that the organisations promoting SHGs have to organize the rural women with clear understanding of the group approach, making them technically sound so that they could increase their risk bearing abilities and undertake income generating activities in a commercial manner with regular income through assured marketing leading to their empowerment.

### REFERENCES

- Das S K (2011). Women empowerment and Self Help Groups: An analytical study of constraints in KarbiAnglong districts of Assam. *Journal of North East India studies*, 1(1): 1-22.
- Kumar R (2005). *Sustaining rural development: Micro finance in Haryana, strategies for sustainable rural development*. Deep and Deep publications, New Delhi: 268-281.
- Lalitha W and Nagarajan B S (2002). *Self Help Groups in rural development*. Himalayan Publications, XII Edition, New Delhi: 78-79.
- Olekar R (2011). An Overview of SHGs in India, *Third Concept*, 24(288): 40-44.
- Perumal V M S (2005). SHGs: Empowering Women at the Grassroots, *Social Welfare*, 52(6).
- Rajagopalan S (2005). *Micro Credit and women's empowerment*, SAGE Publication, New Delhi: 245-285.
- Usha R, Reddy D P J and Reddy M V S (2004). Women development: Empowerment through Self Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh, *Communication and Empowerment of Women*, The Women Press, New Delhi, 2: 614-624.

Received on 23/10/17

Accepted on 20/12/17