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The Role of Women Self-Help Groups in Rural Development in the State of Jharkhand, India

Dr.Ranjeet Ram**Abstract**

In the present day, the problem of rural poverty is spreading dramatically in the Indian environment. Different ways of fighting poverty have been practiced in the Indian situation. Main support for the economic empowerment of rural people, and rural women in particular, goes a long way in controlling rural poverty. Assistance or a loan to rural women helps in the way that rural women become not only economically empowered but will also become socially empowered. It will result in the strengthening of the entire society. Therefore, the above research work remains in the background. It will enable the examination of the connection between the women of the state of Jharkhand. Appropriate suggestions will then be provided for enhancing the impact of the work being done for the SHG in order to develop the socio-economic background of the rural people. For the above purposes, primary research work will be undertaken through surveys in the area of Garhwa District of the state of Jharkhand. There is the possibility of collection of data through the publication of books.

Keywords: Self-Help Groups, Rural Development, Rural Poverty.

Introduction

Rural development represents an integral part of inclusive and sustainable growth in developing countries like India. A large proportion of India's population resides in rural areas; thus, rural development will contribute to the overall development of the nation. The State of Jharkhand, which was created in 2000 when it was separated from the State of Bihar, has abundant resources, but it faces severe socio-economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, lack of education and poor health indicators and Gender Inequality. In rural and tribal areas, women continue to be amongst the most disadvantaged people. Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have become a powerful tool for grassroots development initiatives within Jharkhand through their ability to assist in alleviating poverty, promote livelihood opportunities, provide financial access and ultimately lead to the empowerment of women within their communities.

Concept of Women Self-Help Groups Self-Help Groups consists of a small and voluntary association of women, typically between ten to twenty, which are formed to solve their economic and social issues. The general principle behind SHGs is built upon the foundation of self-help, mutual trust, and democratic decision-making. Members contribute to the SHG by saving regularly, forming a common fund, and providing each other with small amounts of credit to each other to meet emergency or livelihood needs.

The Self Help Group (SHG) Model Encourage:

- Encourage Saving and Thrift
- Access to Micro Credit
- Encourage Entrepreneurial Development
- Enable Social Awareness and Empowerment

In Jharkhand, the Self Help Group model is vital due to the predominance of Tribal communities, limited access to Formal financial institutions, and extensive rural poverty.

Growth of Women Self Help Groups in Jharkhand**Correspondence:****Dr.Ranjeet Ram**

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The Government of Jharkhand, Banks, and NGOs support the growth of Women Self Help Groups. For example, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) have assisted in establishing Women's SHGs from Rural Women and linking them with Financial Institutions.

These initiatives have resulted in the establishment of thousands of Women Self Help Groups throughout Jharkhand including in Remote and Backward parts of the State. These group acts as a platform for women's collective action, Skill Development and Economic Participation.

Role of Women Self Help Groups in Economic Development

1. Promotion of Savings and Credit

The establishment of savings wealth among rural women is the most important contribution of Women Self Help Groups. Even women with little and irregular income begin saving; thus creating wealth as a result of pooling their resources together into a Group Fund that becomes available for loaning to Group Members at lower interest rates.

SHGs help support women with money and financial services, as the money lenders will take advantage of poor women to provide extremely high-interest loans. By providing women with accessible sources of affordable credit, SHGs help build a family's financial resilience and stability in times of financial crisis.

1. Livelihood Creation and Income Generation

In Jharkhand state, women SHGs have begun many income opportunities, including:

- Agriculture and related activities
- Dairy farming, goat rearing, and poultry farming
- Traditional tribal art and handicrafts
- Forest-derived products such as lac and sal leaves, mahua, and tamarind
- Small retail and food production businesses

As a result, SHGs create income for families, decrease unemployment, and contribute to enhanced development in rural areas. SHGs also encourage women to open their own businesses as opposed to just being employed as workers.

3. Inclusion in the Financial System

SHGs are a significant connection between rural women and the formal banking systems. Via SHG Bank linkages, women can connect to:

- Bank account access
- Consumer loans through micro-loan opportunities
- Insurance policies
- Digital payments

SHGs allow women to manage their finances on their own terms and participate more fully in making household economic decisions.

The Value of Women SHGs for Empowering Women in Society

1. Increasing Self-Confidence and Leadership Skills

Being part of a SHG gives women more self-confidence, improves their ability to communicate with others and increases their ability to lead. As a result of regularly attending meetings with other SHG members, women become more comfortable speaking in public, sharing their opinions, becoming involved in SHG decision-making, and being accountable for the decisions made by the group.

2. The Importance of Education, Healthcare, and Social Awareness to Female Self-Help Groups

Female self-help groups are extremely effective at creating awareness regarding education, health care, nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene. The members of self-help groups advocate within their families to encourage their children, especially their daughters, to receive an education. They also promote healthy maternal and child healthcare practices.

Female self-help groups support immunization campaigns, nutrition programs, as well as provide safe drinking water to their communities, which helps improve the overall quality of life for those living in rural areas.

3. Empowering Women through Gender Equality

Female self-help groups provide many women with the ability to establish their economic independence and build collective strength, which often counteracts the traditional gender roles that women often endure. As women begin to contribute to the income of their households through their involvement in self-help groups, their status within the family and the community increases.

With an increase in the ability of women to make decisions within households, there is also an increase in gender equality and a decrease in discrimination against women.

4. The Role of Self-Help Groups in Supporting Women's Political Involvement and Local Governance

In the state of Jharkhand, female self-help groups are a main contributor to the development of grassroots democracy. Many of the female self-help group members are actively involved in:

- Local gram sabha meetings
- Panchayati raj institutions
- Monitoring of various development programs

Some female self-help group members also run for and win local elections, thus increasing female representation in local government. Female representation in local government can help to ensure that local government policies address the needs of rural women.

Implementation of Government Schemes

Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) play an important role in implementing the various welfare schemes of the Government. They do this by:

- a. Providing information on the schemes
- b. Assisting in the identification of genuine beneficiaries
- c. Ensuring that there is transparency and accountability in the implementation of these schemes

SHGs are also used to deliver programmes related to improving livelihoods, providing food security, health care and sanitation, and other social welfare schemes to the most disadvantaged rural households in a much more efficient manner than other methods.

Women SHGs in Jharkhand are facing several challenges, in spite of their many accomplishments. These are:

- a. Low literacy rates among members
- b. Limited access to markets
- c. Lack of advanced technological skills and tools
- d. Poor infrastructure and transportation systems
- e. Problems with managing and sustaining the group.

For Women SHGs to be able to have the maximum impact on rural development, it is necessary that they be able to overcome the challenges they are currently facing.

Recommendations for Improving Women SHGs

To improve the functioning of Women SHGs in Jharkhand, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Regular entrepreneurship and skill development training for the members
- b. Improved marketing linkages and branding for SHG products
- c. Use of digital technologies to facilitate financial transactions
- d. Increased support and monitoring from institutions
- e. Collaboration between government, NGOs and the private sector.

Objectives of Study

To meet the objectives of this study, the following objectives must be studied: i) Examine if SHGs have increased socio-economic development within the rural community of Jharkhand and in particular for economically backward women. ii) Evaluate the effectiveness of the SHG Bank Linkage Programme as it relates to building competencies of individuals and families, increasing employment generation, and improving women's economic status. iii) Examine how SHGs are used to empower women by providing access to economic resources. iv) Recommend ways to improve the operation of SHGs, and to promote socio-economic development in rural areas.

Hypotheses:

This impact study will assess the following hypotheses: i) The SHG concept increases savings and builds capacity in

individuals and households. ii) The SHG concept improves household income and production levels thereby decreasing the severity of poverty experienced by members. iii) SHGs are effective tools for the development of rural poor in India.

Major Findings

Economic empowerment of women living in rural parts of Jharkhand has been achieved through the formation of women's self-help groups (SHG). These groups provide rural women with a way to save money on a regular basis, access microloans, and participate in income generating activities. By doing so, the overall economy for rural women is positively impacted because they now have financial independence and reliance on informal moneylenders has decreased significantly.

SHGs are creating long-term livelihoods for rural women through their involvement in activities including agriculture, livestock rearing, forestry based products, handicraft businesses, and small scale businesses. A direct result of the actions taken by SHGs has been the creation of many new sustainable livelihoods - reducing unemployment in rural areas and increasing household income.

Financial inclusion of rural women has been positively impacted through their participation in SHGs. SHGs assist rural women with obtaining formal bank accounts, loans from banks or other financial institutions, insurance, and digital payment systems. This increased access to financial services has resulted in greater levels of financial literacy among rural women and increased participation in economic activities.

The empowerment of women socially and psychologically has greatly increased their self-esteem and confidence in themselves, in their ability to become leaders, and in their decision making abilities. Through the support of SHGs, rural women have taken on more active roles in their families and communities.

Through SHGs, rural women have increased their knowledge of education, health, nutrition, and the need for sanitation and hygiene. The result of this has been increased rates of school enrollment, improved maternal and child health, as well as improved living conditions for the entire family.

SHG members have increased participation in the local governance of their communities by actively participating in Gram Sabha meetings and through participation in local Panchayati Raj Institutions. Their involvement has strengthened grassroots democracy and ensured better implementation of development programs.

Effective Implementation of Government Schemes;-SHGs act as an important link between the government and rural communities. They help in identifying beneficiaries,

spreading awareness, and ensuring transparency in the implementation of welfare schemes.

SUGGESTIONS1.

Skills Development & Training Programmes

SHG members should be trained on a regular basis by way of training programmes for entrepreneurs, financial management, digital literacy & latest technology in manufacturing so that their productivity & sustainability may be improved.

2. Strengthening Market Linkage

Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) must extend full support to SHGs for their marketing, branding, packaging and sale of their products in the form of cooperative markets, online platform etc. and exhibitions.

3. Access to Modern Credit Facility

Banks must provide timely and sufficient credit facility to SHGs at reasonable rate of interest. SHGs having micro-enterprises will be entitled to special flexible loan products designed by banks.

4. Use of Digital Technologies

Digital technologies including Mobile Banking, Online Accounting and E-Commerce Platform must be promoted to bring about greater transparency and better efficiency in the functioning of SHGs.

5. Improved Infrastructure

Better transportation facilities, storage facilities and other rural infrastructural facilities will help in increasing the productivity and market accessibility of SHGs.

6. Capacity Building & Leadership Development Programme

Capacity Building and Leadership Development Programme must be organized for developing the leadership skill amongst the women SHG members so that they may participate actively in local governance and decision-making process.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanism

Monitoring, Evaluation & Mentoring of SHGs must be done periodically to ensure the sustainability, accountability and long-term impact of SHGs.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it is evident that Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) have played a pivotal and multi-dimensional role in rural development in the State of Jharkhand. The significant contribution made by SHGs has been towards economic development, poverty alleviation, social empowerment and democratic participation. Empowering the rural women economically and socially, the SHGs have also helped in strengthening the households, community and local institutions.

The Women SHGs are an inclusive and sustainable model for rural development. Thus, with sustained policy

support, capacity building and institutional strengthening, the SHGs can emerge as a transforming force in addressing the rural poverty and promoting the overall development of Jharkhand.

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