

The Role Played by Self Help Group in Women Empowerment - A Case Study of a Self-Help Group in Trivandrum

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Abstract: Empowerment of women section to the modern economy is one of the most important contributions of the self-help group. The micro credit facilities provided for development plays an important role in this. Unemployment incurs a serious threat on mankind for development. Kudumbashree is one of the women empowerment and poverty eradication program, framed and enforced by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) of the Government of Kerala as part of this. The aim of the study is to study the economic empowerment of the women which includes change in the standard of living, change in the nutrition level of the family members, study the status of a member of SHG in the family, the status of a member in the society, the social awareness, awareness about the national issues and political participation of a member of the SHG .Primary data process includes the questionnaire method and also the secondary data sources. A Self-Help Group (SHG) is a village-based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10–20 local women or men. The financial availability limits the growth of many SHG'S.

Keywords: SHG, Nabard, Ayalkoottam, SHG bank linkage

1. Introduction

Human development is a process of widening people's choices as well as raising the level of wellbeing achieved. The population explosion is a central problem in our economy. According to the demographers the relation between the size and growth rate of population on one hand , the economic development on the other, creates serious problems. The increasing level of population makes employment opportunity also difficult. Employment structure of an economy is the normal instrument that can cause a change in inequality in either way, i.e. an increase or a decrease in the inequality. Other economic instruments such as target group policies and programmes have a short term impact, but the redistribution through employment is sustainable. Since the governments function within the administrative and fiscal constraints, the target group programmes normally have a marginal impact on income redistribution. An important aspect of economic development depends upon how efficiently the resources are being employed. Because an economies workers keeping as idle is a serious problem. The study conducted by the Bureau of Labour statistics reflect that the booms and busts of the business cycles influences the labour force participation rate. The

importance of Self Help Group has an important role to play in this regard. A self-help group (SHG) is a village-based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10–20 local women or men. Self Help Groups are mostly found in South Asia and Southeast Asia. In India these groups are linked to banks to get access to the micro credit facilities. It may be registered or unregistered. It typically comprises a group having homogeneous social and economic backgrounds; all voluntarily coming together to save regular small sums of money, mutually agreeing to contribute to a common fund and to meet their emergency needs on the basis of mutual help. These Self Help Group bridges the gap between high-caste & low-caste members. Many self-help groups, especially in India, under NABARD's 'SHG Bank Linkage' program, borrow from banks once they have accumulated a base of their own capital and have established a track record of regular repayments. According to Tuckman (1965), each group passes through distinct stages of development. Initially, with limited resources – both financial and human resources- most of the SHGs dependent on the promoters support and limit their operations only to meet the emerging financial needs.

In India three different models of linkage of SHGs to the financial institutions have emerged. They are:

- Banks, themselves, form and finance the SHGs.
- SHGs are formed by NGOs and other agencies but financed by banks.
- Banks finance SHGs with NGOs and other agencies as financial intermediaries.

2. Need of Self Help Group

- It provides a cost effective delivery mechanism for small credit to its member
- The SHGs enables the members to learn cooperate and work in a group environment.
- The SHGs significantly contribute to the empowerment of poor.
- To sensitize people of target areas for the need of SHGs and its relevance in their empowerment process.
- To create group feeling among members.
- For equitable development of all the section of society

especially the urban slums, tribal areas, people on the margins because they do not receive much benefit.

- To enhance the confidence and capabilities of members.
- To develop collective decision making among members.
- To encourage habit of saving among members and facilitate the accumulation of their own capital resource base.
- To motivate members taking up social responsibilities particularly related to development.

3. Kudumbasree a unit of Self Help Group

Kudumbashree is the women empowerment and poverty eradication program, framed and enforced by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) of the Government of Kerala. Its main aim was to remove within 10 years. The 73rd and 74th amendment gives prominence for these Self Help Groups. The programmes initiated brings in poor to more of a community based organisations. The unemployment rate at present shows an increasing tendency where the labour market turnover, flows into and out of unemployment and between jobs is very large. Kudumbashree, is a female oriented, community based, poverty reduction project of Government of Kerala. Kerala is an Indian state lying in the south-west part of Indian subcontinent, where many development experiments are being tested, refined and implemented. The mission tries to make women community come into the forefront of the society. Kudumbashree movement was launched by former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee at a function chaired by the then Local Administration Minister Paloli Mohammed Kutty at Kottakkunnu in Malappuram on May 17, 1998. The program has derived from the works of Fr. Edwin John in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, who started the movement called Neighborhood Community Network.

AYALKOOTTAM are the basic units of kudumbasree. Women from neighbourhood representing each house forms a group. It is a group of around 10-20 members with directions mainly for reducing poverty. The working of a small unit of Ayalkoottam named POOJA in Trivandrum offers a wide spread recognition for women empowerment. Poojaayalkoottam is a unit of kudumbasree a woman oriented SHG. The group which started operation for 2 years has around 15 members. The age varies from 18 to more than 60 years. Most of the ladies are temporary workers doing domestic work. Only a few is unemployed and comes under below poverty line. The initiatives of the group includes

- Members collect money from its members to any relatives of the member dies. They collect Rs.1000 and provide to the house where the loss has occurred if they are of the family. Till this time, they have given money to more than four houses.
- The members have taken dengue awareness to public. They went from house to house giving awareness

classes, instructing to clean the surroundings not to allow water unfloated in and around houses, using of mosquito nets etc...this was done under the supervision of community development society. They were offered Rs. 5 per house but didn't receive it.

- They have collected funds to celebrate festivals by distributing rice grains to orphanages and old age homes. They have collected Rs. 50 from each member.
- They plan to extend their activities by availing for different funds but they are ineligible due to certain criteria's.

4. Funds

A. Internal loan

This is the amount that an ayalkoottam lends to its member if there comes an emergency. The amount refers to the deposit that the group invested in bank collected from the poojaayalkoottam fund invested in cooperation bank, Nalanchira. The amount should be in proportion to the deposit in bank. Interest is also charged ie;2% per 100 rupees. It is necessary that the need of the member should be valid. Also, the group should be confident about the member in repaying the loan. There is a form from bank to fill it. After discussions the amount is mentioned in the cheque and is signed by the secretary and president.

B. Bank linkage loan

This is the loan provided by the bank to the group as a whole and not to individual in order to meet their demand for basic activities. If the internal loan is not able to meet their needs they could request for bank linkage loan which could provide 5 to 6 times of their total income. But this could be availed to only those "ayalkoottam" which has a grading point of more than 80% grading is done under the supervision of bank as per NABARD guidelines. There are around 15 criteria's with 10 marks weightage. The group should secure at least 120 out of 150 marks i.e., 80%.

C. Revolving fund

Revolving fund allots Rs.10000 to rs.15000 to group. This fund cannot be divided among the members. This could utilize only for internal loan purposes. It will be provided after 3 months

5. Observations

It has been revealed from the study that the participation of the women community in all areas of the society creates immense contribution. Empowerment provides a greater access to knowledge and resources, more autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan lives, more control over the circumstances which influence lives, and freedom from customs, belief and practices. The study revealed that the establishment of these units helps in women empowerment. Traditional days women were merely depicted for household

activities but now the world had changed a lot. Establishment of these Self Help Groups plays a lot.

6. Results and discussions

From the analysis undertaken it was clear that the majority of the members are from the beginning or from the formation of group. It is sensed that most of the members are actively involved in this group. They do not get help from institutional group which points out that they are not active in functioning of innovative activities like starting small enterprises, business ventures, shops, canteens etc. So there does not come a chance for any help from institutional group. The ladies who are employed are doing domestic work i.e., they are temporary workers i.e., sweepers, maid, nursery helper etc. So they do not get any credit facilities but still they are comfortable at their place of work. A plus point is that all the members are punctual in repayment of loans and maintain their financial statements. They all believe that SHG's have improved their lives financially and mentally. It has provided an opportunity to act socially as well. They became more independent and feel empowered. But they also think that certain improvements are required. The results of the questionnaire are as follows;

- Around 2 people are working for 6 months and the rest 7 are in the group for more than 1 year.
- All of them says that they get no help institutional groups.
- Out of 9, 7 are employed in which no one face any difficulty at their place of work. 2 of them are unemployed.
- All of them agree that their group is involved in charity activities like giving money to the relatives of dead, fund for orphanages.
- They all agree that SHG's are beneficial to the economy.
- Employed ones do not get any credit facilities.
- They agree that their financial statements are maintained.
- They all believe that improvement is required in the functioning of the group.

A. Advantages and disadvantages of self-help groups for women's

1) Advantages

- Punctual repayment of loans
- Timely recording of attendance and thrift in pass book
- Able to meet the demands of members

- Thrift is paid on time
- Meeting is held regularly

2) Disadvantages

- Lack of attendance
- No initiative for starting enterprises
- Conflict among members
- Lack of invigilation from authorities
- Lack of awareness about kudumbasree

7. Conclusion

Thus the working of self-help group tries to bring a new way of life to the women community. PoojaAyalkkootam is only an example of a minor Self Help Group', groups like this has encouraged the socially disadvantaged groups i.e., women to come forward and engage in collective action and improve their lives. This Self Help Group has enhanced women empowerment in INDIA especially in Kerala. It has helped in improving their financial conditions as they could take a loan at a simple rate easily within this group. They need not want to follow the procedure and pay a big interest rate in banks. Considering the huge benefit these groups have provided to us it is essential to encourage more effective participation of women to this. There are poor people but their conditions are worst, so they are deprived of many facilities which deeply affect at least a few. Providing more help or measures or necessary guidelines would result in a better functioning of the group from governments and authorities would certainly make a difference. As Keynes said "The strength of the self-adjusting school depends on its having behind it almost the whole body of organized economic thinking and doctrine of last hundred years".

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