

**IMPACT OF SHGS ON INCOME, EMPLOYMENT AND
POVERTY AMONG THE MEMBERS IN GOALPARA
DISTRICT OF ASSAM**

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Abstract:

Goalpara district is economically backward and zero industry district of Assam. The people living in Balijana block are mostly Tribal Communities, i.e – Rabha, Bodo, and Garo whose are socio-economically backward. The income, employment, borrowing capacity, literacy rate etc. are very low. To some extent it becomes very difficult to implement developmental schemes and to find out the proper beneficiaries of the scheme of the poverty alleviation Programme for the removal of poverty. The present paper is an attempt to study the impact of SHGs on women in terms of various indicators such as access to income, employment, social activities, saving habits etc. in Goalpara district of Assam. The present paper is an attempt to study the impact of SHGs on women in terms of various indicators such as access to income, employment, social activities, saving habits etc. in Goalpara district of Assam. Keeping objectives in mind the study is designed purposively to select 60 samples from various Self-Help Groups from one development block out of eight development blocks. The samples are selected randomly from 6 villages. This study covers the impact and performance of various economic activities and of self-help group members for their all-round development.

Key Word: Self-Help Group, Income Generation, Employment Creation.

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Introduction:

Our rural population is mostly confined to the barriers of poverty due to lack of economic development. They live in acute financial crisis unable to fully utilize their full potential. Rural populations are mainly agro-based communities. In recent years there has been many policies framed out for economic upliftment of these communities. One aspect of the policies is the formation of Self-Help Groups. Formations of groups help the stakeholders to benefit from the sharing of ideas and human resource for overall development of the individuals through economic activities. It empowers the individuals to voice out the concerns and grievances as a unit. It is for this reason that so much of the importance is attached to group formation in SwarnaJayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). Self Help Groups generally comprise 10-20 individuals from homogenous class. They are encouraged to make small savings on regular monthly basis and lend them to their respective members at low rate of interest. Gradually they learn the basis of account maintaining and other aspects of financial transactions. Once these groups are stable enough, the Banks are encouraged to make small loans in certain multiples of their savings. They are encouraged to concretize some ideas they are willing to take up for their income generation. The groups are thereby able to take up some livelihood activities like animal husbandry, handicrafts depending upon their capability or even continue their process of loan making to its members. Thus Self Help Groups have the potential to bring social change in larger scenario in course of time. In the mean time they undergo various capacity building programmes of various Govt. Agencies and NGOs to bring out the best in them. This study will help to understand the role the SHGs has been playing in bringing the social change

Objectives-

- In the present study an attempt has been made to access the impact of SHGs on employment status, income and savings ratio of the SHG members.
- To access the level of poverty among the members before and after joining the groups.

Methodology:

The study used both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected by using a questionnaire schedule among 60 SHG members in Balijana block of Goalpara District Assam, who claimed to have successfully engaged in the self-employment programme after joining the

SHG. The sample selection was on systematic random sampling. The schedule was developed to assess their socio-economic development after their participation in SHG.

Secondary sources included books, journals, articles and reports from newspapers, weekly's, magazines, etc. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources were quantified and analysed in qualitative terms which revealed that there was considerable improvement in the socioeconomic status of women who participated in SHG.

Results and Discussion:

Balijana block of Goalpara district, the dominant Rabha and Bodo communities are mainly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. 67% of the people are dependent on agriculture, 20% earns their livelihood by daily wage labour and rest 13% earns money from various government and non-governmental organisations. The scenario of the literacy rate is poor its about 48% and school-drop out ratio is 40%. The unsound economic condition of the Tribal people can be regarded primarily responsible for it. It has been few years that the women are formed SHGs in the respective block understanding its potential as economic drivers. Considering its remoteness and lack of opportunities in the block and also the lack of educated class which are barriers for development and SHGs could play a major role in bringing drastic change in economic upliftment of the people.

Table No. 1

Table 1: primary motives of joining SHGS on the part of respondents:

Causes of joining SHG	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Income Generation	39	65.00%
Employment Generation	20	33.33%
Social Status	1	1.67%
Total	60	100.00%

Majority of the respondents (65%) were found to have joined SHGS with the native of generating some income whereas 33.33% of respondents have joined SHG for the sake of employment and rest 1.67% have joined SHG to get some social status.

Table No. 2

Table: 2 sources of initial funds to join SHGS for the respondents:

Sources of initial financial contribution	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Assistance from guardian	49	81.67%
Early savings	6	10.00%
Joint operation of members	5	8.33%
Total	60	100.00%

It was found that most of the respondents, 81.67% were made initial financial contribution to the group through assistance from respective guardians and 10% did made it happen for them through early savings, while 8.33% respondents work in the unorganized sectors to draw the required amount.

Table No. 3

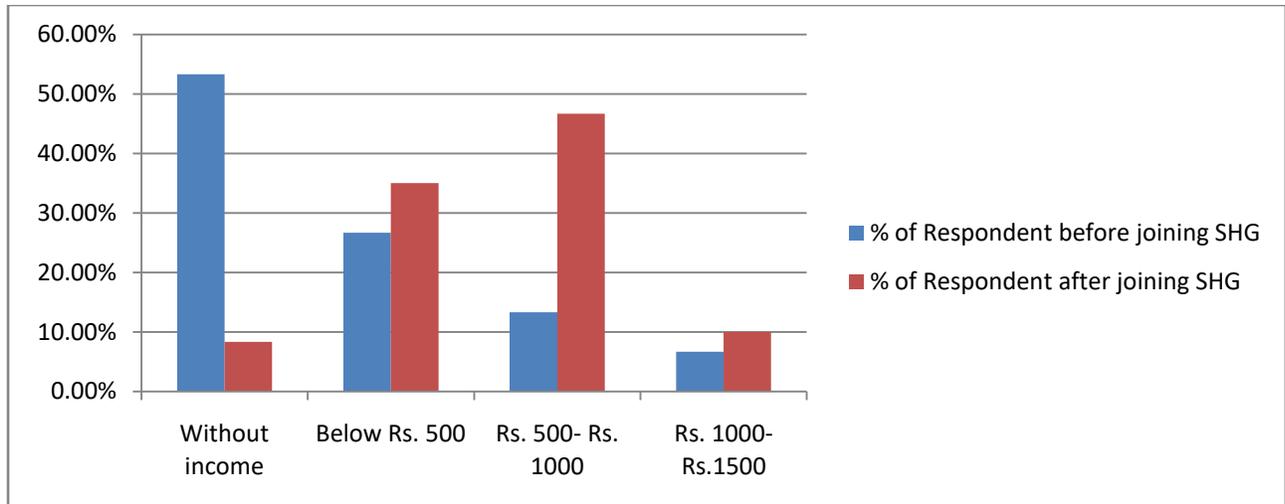
Table: 3 educational statuses of the respondents:

Educational Status of Respondent	No of Respondents	% of Respondents
Illiterate	15	25.00%
Primary	25	41.67%
Under H.S.L.C.	17	28.33%
H.S.L.C	3	5.00%
H.S.S.L.C.	0	0.00%
Graduate	0	0.00%
Total	60	100.00%

An educational qualification of the respondents was not found to be satisfactory enough. About 25.00% of them were illiterate and 41.67% were educated only up to the primary level, where 28.33% of them were under HSLC and 5% are HSLC qualified.

Diagram. 1

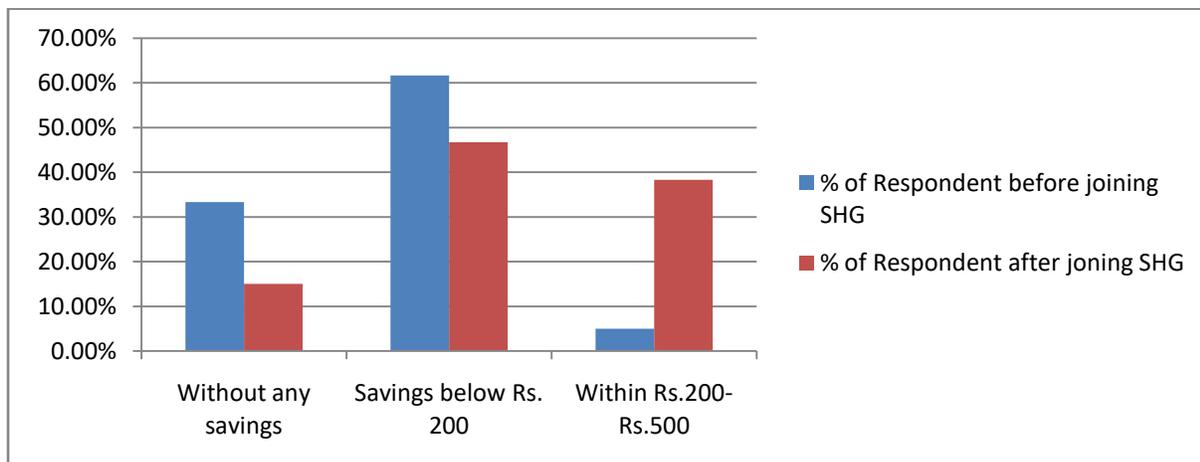
Diagram: 1 Personal Income generation position of different respondents before and after joining SHGs:



It has been found that membership of SHGS has really proved helpful to the respondents in generating some income of their own. About 53.33% did not have any personal income before joining SHGS. This number has been reduced to 8.33% after their being members of SHGs.

Diagram. 2

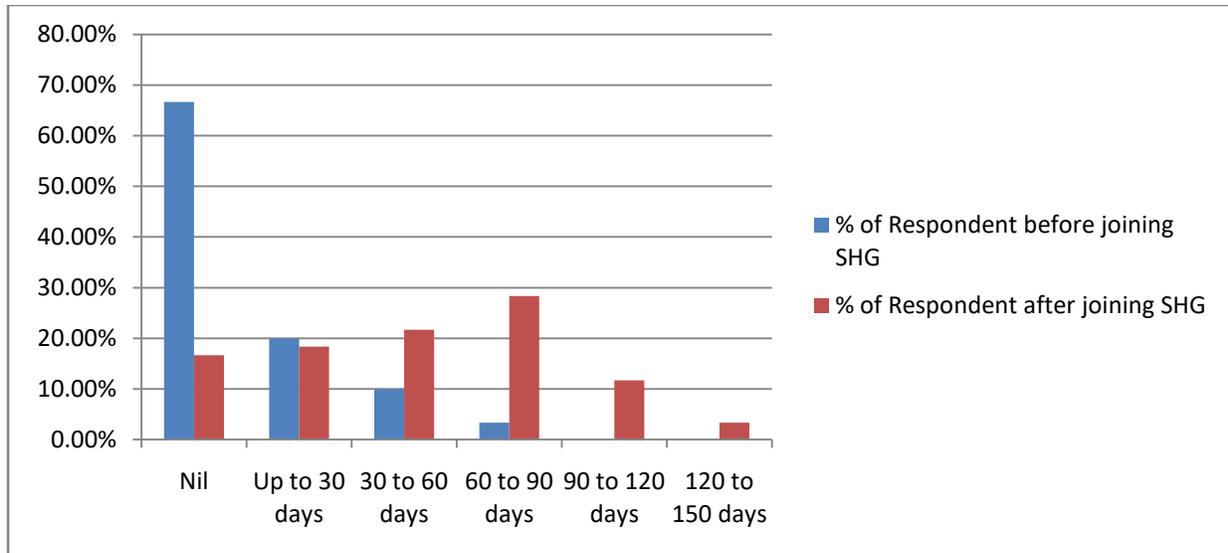
Diagram: 2 Personal Savings generation of Respondents before and after joining SHGS:



Membership of SHGS has also proved to be helpful for the respondents to have some savings in personal account. About 33.30% of the respondents did not have any savings before joining SHGS. But after joining only 15% of them remain in the same position without savings and the rest have got some amount as personal savings per month.

Diagram. 3

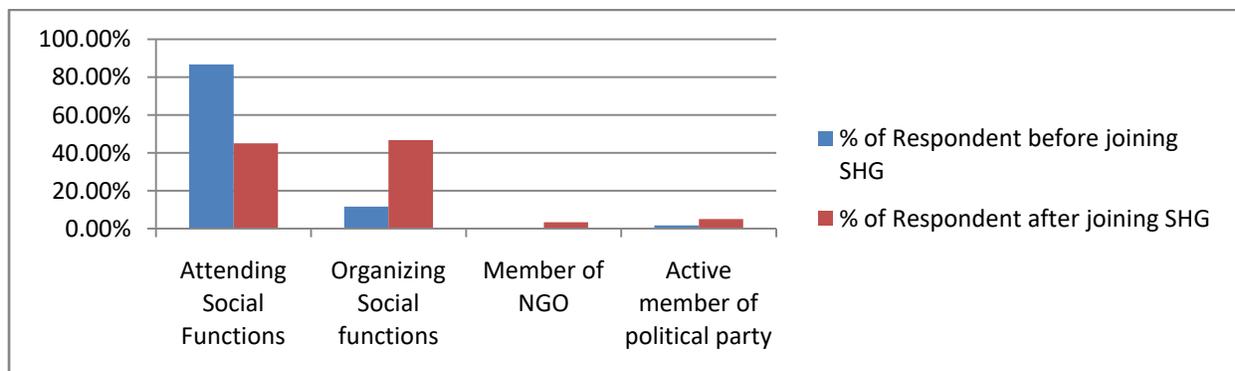
Diagram: 3 Employment positions of Respondents before and after joining SHGs:



It is also observed from the above Table that 66.67% of respondents did not have any employment opportunity before joining SHG, where 20% of them were able to generate employment only up to 30 days per year. 10% of them were employed up to 60 days, and 3.33% of them were employed up to 90 days per year. But after having membership of SHG the number of respondents without any working days reduced to 16.67% and 18.33% of them get employment up to 30 days, where 21.67%, 28.33%, 11.67%, and 3.33% of respondents able to secure employment up to 60, 90, 120 and 150 days per year respectively. However, it has been found that the numbers of working days per year vary from member to member.

Diagram .4

Diagram: 4 position of social mobility of the Respondents before and after joining SHGs:



Membership of SHG has some positive impact over the social mobility of the respondents, as it gives some opportunities on the part of respondents to get interacted with the society to a greater

extent than ever before. It was really good to observed that besides attending different social functions and ceremonies about 46.67% of the respondents were found to play active role in organizing different functions of social interest after joining SHGs.

Table No. 4

Table: 4 conditions of household violence in Respondent's family before and after joining SHGs:

Condition of Household Violence	No. of Respondent	% of Respondent
Retain in same position as it was before joining SHG	18	30%
Gets better off to some extent after joining SHG	39	65%
Purely illuminated after joining SHG	3	5%
Total	60	100.00%

In respect of household violence in the respondent's family, it was found that after joining SHGS some of the respondents were able to avoid household violence, which primarily originated from the poor financial condition of the family. A total of 39 nos. of respondents gets better off to some extent after joining SHG and membership of SHGS help majority of them to get rid of it at least to some extent.

Table No.5

Table : 5 conditions regarding Role of Respondent in family decision making:

Condition in respect of family decision making:	No. of Respondent	% of Respondent
Retain in same position as it was before joining SHG	15	25%
Improved to some extent after joining SHG	28	46.67%
Improved to considerable extent	17	28.33%
Total	60	100.00%

In the above table 25% of respondents feels that their position in respect of family decision making retain in same position even after joining SHG. Where 46.67% of respondents opined that their role in family improved to some extent and 28.33% said that there is considerable improvement in respect of decision making in family after joining SHG. It has been observed that after joining SHGS most of the respondents were able to secure deserving role in decision making affairs of the family as membership of SHGS provided helping hands to them to generate

some income personally. Membership of SHGS has also included some consciousness among the respondents in respect of the education of their children. It also makes them realize the difficulties to be faced by the illiterate persons and motivates them to move towards literacy.

Recommendations:

The present selection deals with some recommendations on the basis of experience gained in the process of entire study which may be useful in empowering women under study area through membership of SHGS. The major recommendations are as follows:

- A considerable member of respondents of present study was found to be illiterate. So government should take required step for their education, so that they can smoothly carry-on respective responsibility as member of SHGS and society in broad.
- It has been found that SHGS are helping its respective members to generate income and employment, so it is highly recommended that government and bank should a lot adequate financial help to these groups.
- It was seen that group movement helps in improving the positions of respective members in society. Such benefits can be further increases by actively involving women in promotional activities.
- Most of the respondents as member of SHGS are untrained. So it is required to arrange short duration professional training courses with a convenient distance.
- Government should make necessary arrangement for monitoring the real activities of SHGS in the field level to explore different problems faced by the SHGS in their operation.

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