

**IMPACT OF SELF HELP GROUPS ON HOUSEHOLD  
RESOURCE GENERATION AND POVERTY  
MANAGEMENT**

**Dr. Kunal Chakraborty\***

**ABSTRACT**

Self-help micro-credit programme evolves in India as an effective strategy to combat with poverty and to improve the socio-economic condition of the poor especially the poor rural women. Promoting self-help-groups (SHGs) among the poor has proved to be effective in many countries in alleviating poverty and enhancing rural development. The paper is to develop the microeconomic perspectives in assessing structural contexts of poverty reduction in India. The methodology of the present study includes both quantitative as well as qualitative techniques. The paper seeks to explore the impact of SHGs in household resource generation and poverty management in parts of Mohammad Bazar Block of Birbhum District in West Bengal. Essentially, the paper discusses opportunities and constrains behind success and failure of the poor households to make their livelihoods sustainable through self-help-group approach. Evidence from the field survey reveals that instead of procuring some sustainable livelihoods resource generation, the poor are relying more on the SHGs for the sake of their easily accessible source of credit supply during crisis with affordable interests and repayment flexibility compared to other informal money lending sources. However, attempts have also been made to find out how SHGs intervention has changed the attitude and behaviour of the women towards savings, income earning capacity, mobility and expansion of assets. The research finally recommends that in order to transform self-help programme into a genuine livelihood diversification and livelihoods generation, the question of women's empowerment need to be reinforced from mere theory to practice. Therefore, the study raises question of the viability of microfinance as poverty alleviation strategy in selected villages of Mohammad Bazar Block of Birbhum District.

**Key words:** Self-help-groups, poverty management, livelihoods, indebtedness, credit sources

\* Asst. Prof. in Geography, S.N College, Labpur, Birbhum, West Bengal

## Introduction

Poverty and unemployment are the two fundamental problems faced by the poor in developing countries and women are the most vulnerable group affected by it (World Bank, 1995). In consequence poor women in India, suffer from triple disadvantages of poverty, social backwardness (usually overlapping) and being women (DFID 2000). However, women constitute around fifty per cent of the total human resources in our economy. Yet women are the more poor and under privileged than men as they are subject to many socio-economic and cultural constraints (Sundaram, 2012). The situation is more severe in the rural and backward areas. Now it has been well-documented that an increase in women's resources results in the well-being of the family, especially children (Mayoux, 1997; Kabeer, 2001; Hulme and Mosley, 1997). For this, empowerment of women should be seen as the key issue of development discourse (World Bank, 1995).

According to planning Commission of India (2011-12) the number of poor living below the poverty line is estimated to be 270 million i.e. the per centage of persons living below the poverty line is 21.9 per cent, in rural areas it is 25.7 per cent and for urban areas it is 13.7 per cent. While India's unemployment rate has declined from 9.4 per cent in 2010 to 3.8 per cent 2012, the number of jobless is still huge in reality (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2010). Moreover, according to International Labour Organization (ILO) the unemployment scenario of India over the last two years has been showing a rising trend.

Due to the impact of poverty and unemployment, the people in rural areas have to borrow loan and other financial services from unorganized sectors consisting of commission agents, moneylenders, landlords, etc. The experience from different Central as well as State sponsored anti-poverty or welfare programmes support the necessity of community based approach with the participation of local people. In this regard, Self-help groups (SHGs) approach has argued much for social, political and economic empowerment (Dhanya & Purushothaman, 2008). Self-help micro-credit programme evolves in India as an effective strategy to combat with poverty and to improve the socio-economic condition of the poor especially the poor rural women. For providing credit service to the poor, at first National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) launched a scheme in 1992 for organizing the poor in Self-help-groups (SHGs) to link the SHGs with banks for the betterment of the rural poor in general and women in particular. NABARD (1997) defines SHGs as "small, economically homogenous

affinity groups of rural poor, voluntarily formed to save and mutually contribute to a common fund to be lent to its members as per the group members' decision". According to Rangarajan Committee's report on financial inclusion, the SHG-bank linkage programme can be regarded as the most potent initiative since independence for delivering financial services to the poor in a sustainable manner. Microfinance to the rural self-help-group is a way to raise the income level and to improve the living standards of the rural women (Sundaram, 2012). Today, SHG has become a great movement in India and in many other Asian countries. While there are a lot of successful evidences, the debate centers around the future of SHGs in India. Too much is claimed for such microfinance programmes and that expectations are in most cases grossly exaggerated (Harper, 2007). In this study the impact of such microfinance programmes have been analyzed to evaluate its role in poverty alleviation and livelihood generation in backward region like Mohammad Bazar.

### **Objective and Methodology**

The present study is an attempt to look at research which looks at the role of SHGs in household's livelihood generation and poverty management in a backward rural setting especially among the poor community. This research study examines the effectiveness of women SHGs, specifically, under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) scheme, in the promotion of micro enterprises, for the development of social and human capital and to help poverty alleviation. The 'Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana' (SGSY) is effective from 1st April 1999 in rural areas of the country and it covers all aspects of self-employment such as organizing the poor into SHGs, training, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing. The SGSY is an integrated scheme by restructuring the previous schemes namely, Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY), and Million Wells Scheme (MWS). In understanding the role of SHGs to ameliorate poverty and to generate livelihood assets and activities, the major issues addressed over here are access to credit service, saving behaviour, decision making ability, mobility, making self dependent and confident, development of knowledge and skill etc.

The research tool adopted for the present study is primary survey entirely based on intensive field work in Mohammad Bazar Block of covering 100 Swarozgaries Yojana' (SGSY) women groups and 100 individual women during 2014. Due to some physical and socio economic correlates of poverty and backwardness it has been found that the western and the southern part of the block is most poverty stricken, therefore, the selection of the groups is done on the basis of purposive sampling taken mostly from the southern and the western part. The groups having at least three years of work experience are selected to understand the impact of microfinance schemes on livelihood generation and poverty alleviation for the poor women, mostly among the backward community. The field survey includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative information is obtained through structured questionnaire survey and qualitative data are acquired through semi-structured questionnaire survey, focused group discussion, informal interviews, participant observation etc.

### **SHGs in the Birbhum District**

Micro-finance is now widely acknowledged as significant tool to poverty management among all poverty alleviation programmes. Today, self-help-group approach has been proved to be an effective option so that it can enables the poor to enter into the new domain of economic empowerment and social upliftment. Therefore, India has witnessed a rapid growth in micro-credit over the last decades in terms of its outreach of financial services to the poor.

Under the SGSY scheme in the Birbhum district about 19,205 SHGs have so far been formed of which 70 per cent are exclusively women's group. In all the blocks more than half of the SHGs are women's group. It has been found in the official data that in Birbhum in comparison to growth rate the defunct ratio is much lower. Approval of loan from lower to higher grade through SHG bank linkage programme is a sequential process in which the groups have to move from grade-I to grade-II and consequently towards the project loan. Form the district level analysis it is found that in respect to total SHGs formed since initiation for all the blocks of Birbhum, the percentage of SHGs passing grade-I is above 60 per cent. However, in case of percentage of SHGs passing grade-II, the result shows a meager success. Apart from these, about 66 per cent of SHGs have passed grade-I level for taking up economic activities and it is much lower for grade-II level.

Along with SGSY schemes there are some agencies for promoting financial services among the poor and enhancing livelihood resources. Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT) is such an NGO engaged in empowering the underprivileged sections of the rural and urban communities even long before the introduction of SGSY in Birbhum. During the year (2011) the project unit focused on the economic upliftment of the poor and marginalized families through various initiatives such as apiary, duck rearing, animal husbandry, vermin composition, on-farm demonstration and extension programme of System of Rice Intensification (LWSIT Annual report, 2012). Legal and illegal mining and quarry operation mainly in the western parts of the districts have influenced negatively the environmental and economic status setting up a culture of destruction and exploitation. The direct impact of these operations falls on the lives of the innocent tribal population. LWSIT has taken certain steps for providing development support programme for the stone quarry affected communities mainly for the tribal. In Mohammad Bazar block where stone quarry sector has gave rise to a number of socio economic and environmental hazards, the role of LWSIT is really worthy to be mentioned. LWSIT has carried out a number of training and awareness campaign namely right to occupational safety and health, right to livelihood and food security, right to health, water and sanitation, right to problem and management of environment, right to education and right to information and human right in order to safeguard the livelihood of the poor living in quarrying sector. Along with such development practice, LWSIT has also supported bank linked SHG programme. In Mohammad Bazar block, more than 150 SHGs have been formed under the direct supervision of LWSIT. Apart from the aforementioned initiatives, LWSIT has popularized the programme of seed bank or *dharma gola* all over the block. LWSIT supported *dharma gola* programme has achieved a tremendous success in promoting sustainable livelihood among the poor during their period of crisis.

### **Socio-economic profile of SHG members**

A brief profile of the research participants have been discussed here under the following heads:

- a. **Age profile:** Most of the SHG members are from young age group. As per as the present study is concerned about 42.22 per cent of the research participants belong to 25-35 years of age. While age group from 35-45 years constitute 28.88 per cent of our total sample population.

- b. Educational attainment:** The empirical study finds that 52.17 per cent of the SHG members are illiterate and only 24 per cent are literate up to 4<sup>th</sup> standard and 19.56 per cent upto 8<sup>th</sup> standard respectively. This implies that bulk of SHG members in the concerned block lacks human capital in the context of educational attainment.
- c. Occupational status:** In terms of occupation about 34 per cent are non-earning members i.e. housewife and 35 per cent are agricultural labourer. Due to dynamic interplay of poverty and lean season unemployment in rural areas women from low income groups seek self-employment for household resource management and to cope with poverty situation.
- d. Caste composition:** Scheduled tribe (ST) population constitutes about 51 per cent of the total population. While scheduled caste (SC) and other backward caste cover (OBC) 18 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. Being located in a tribal dominated area, most of the SHG members belong to these particular communities where chronic poverty seems to be much prominent.
- e. Household's financial status:** About 67 per cent of the sample lives in houses which have thatched roof and 98 per cent have houses which are made of mud wall. Only 53 per cent of the populations have ownership of land and 95 per cent of the households have their own houses. About 95 per cent of the household have to collect water from the outside sources. The survey also demonstrates that no households have their own latrine facility.

### Impact of Self-Help-Groups on SHG members

#### a) Savings and financial decision making

The primary objectives of participation in the SHG is to get opportunity to save regularly, having access to formal saving institution and participate in the management of these saving. If they save regularly from their hard earned money and make deposits into their account, SHG may provide a good impact as the SHG members can receive easy access to loan with a small rate of interest to start their micro unit enterprise. It is found during survey that before joining the group majority of the research participants were outside the financial inclusion. About 85 per cent of the SHG members did not have any bank account. However, after joining the group the scenario has changed completely. Even now-a-day's 65 per cent of the research participants are able to

save outside their group account for their vulnerable future and that is why about 60 per cent of the research participants have their own insurance policy to combat with the future crisis. However, living in a poverty stricken backward area, the poor members are not always able to save even tiny amount of money on a regular basis which hampers their bank linkages. For this, even after three years or more, SHG intervention about 82 per cent of the SHG member considers that their household financial condition is not under their control due to several financial crises.

However, SHG interventions among the poor women have impacted a lot in improving the status of understanding the financial management and in increasing the habit of saving among the poor members. The present study found that 80 per cent of the group members think that SHG intervention improved the household money management behaviour in a positive direction. Consequently, 87 per cent of the groups members are think that there is an increase in their family income. However, about 18 per cent of the members still expressed their dissatisfaction with the role of SHGs in improving money management behaviour among the poor.

#### **b) Access to credit**

SHGs are expected to function as a 'catalyst' for change among the poor especially among the marginalized women, which can reduce poverty and unemployment situation. Moreover, at the same time it can become the 'change agent' by improving the socio-economic condition of its households' members and in creating successful entrepreneurs from the SHG beneficiaries. Due to chronic poverty and lean season unemployment situation and various necessities throughout the year, the people have to depend on a multiple formal and informal credit sources. During the survey it has been found that the poor women go for the loan for many reasons such as agriculture, festivals, marriage, medical emergency, education, household consumption etc. In providing short term credit with low interest rate, the role of SHGs is found to be notable. As per the peoples' perception related to having access to credit supply there are a variety of formal and informal money lending sources such as bank, SHGs, relatives, moneylenders, NGOs, neighbour etc. However, in providing short term credit with easy availability and repayment flexibility, our study finds that in disbursing credit or loan the role of SHGs seems to be phenomenal. In comparison to aforementioned money lending agencies about 39.66 per cent of research participants believe that they have to continue to their groups with utmost priority for their small

loans when they are in need. Most of the participants optioned that SHGs is found to be best option for borrowing loans in comparison to other alternatives. According to *Patamony Marandi*, one of the research participants, “because of low interest rate, easy availability, flexibility in repayment pursuing loan from the group is most suitable compared to other informal sources of credit. If I take a loan from the money lender, it will count high interest rate. Even taking loan from the relative sometimes hampers family relationship. Above all loan from the group helps to increase group savings (October 2014)”.

In rural areas of Mohammad Bazar, the poor people have to depend on diverse portfolios of income for their household poverty management in certain circumstances. The present study demonstrates that about 67 per cent of the surveyed population needed some special expenditure due to arising out of certain circumstances such as medical or marriage purpose. As a result, the only viable option they have is nothing but borrowing from other sources such as borrowing from money lender or SHGs or relatives. The study have argued much that for providing short term monetary assistance during crisis borrowing from relatives (40%) and borrowing from money lender (23%) seems to be more significant than to seek loan from the SHGs . Actually, disbursement of loan from SHGs requires some formalities such as unanimous decision making regarding sanctioning a loan, making resolution among the group members which ultimately delays the credit disbursement mechanism. Hence, the people who are in crisis seek some other alternatives for fast access as they cannot wait long. In rural areas of Mohammad Bazar Block this is one of the main reasons for being indebted to the moneylenders and poor performance of SHGs.

### c) Income generating activities

The introduction of SHG programme has generated the self employment opportunities in a significant way. Even after several ups and downs, over 95 million poor rural households are now part of this world’s largest micro Credit initiative (NABARD, 2012). There are a lot of debates, facts and figures which question the role of self-help-groups in fulfilling its goal in creating employment opportunities to alleviate poverty among the poor in backward rural area. However, it is a fact that the main function of the SHGs lays in employment generation for creating households assets which can lead to better standard of living. As per as the empirical observation is concerned, it is found that 63 per cent of our research participants are engaged in mid-day meal work, 8 per cent of the population are engaged in poultry farming and only 2 per



cent in rice processing. While 26 per cent of the SHG members at present have no livelihoods alternatives other than household related work. From this observation it can easily be apprehend that except providing mid-day meal work the functional manifestation of SHG proves to be less satisfactory. In terms of providing other livelihoods activities SHGs have made a very minimum outcome.

#### **d) Development of knowledge and skill**

Self-help-group plays a vital role in managing poverty and livelihoods through enhancing human capital. The poor members of the SHGs often lack proper knowledge and skill for their low levels of education, a very substandard way of living and other ethnographic factors. For this, in a tribal dominated area like Mohammad Bazar, the problem becomes more acute. A successful intervention for empowering women necessitates several elements – an important one is imparting of new skills: the consequence of women assuming new roles is also support through training for enabling them to perform these roles (Umashankar, 2006). From the very initial phase of SHG intervention, the Government official or NGOs have taken many steps for pertaining training and awareness programme among the members. During survey it is found that only 56 per cent of our sample population has got training as yet and the rest are not. According to many of the research participants, due to lack of effective participation of the group leaders or resource persons, people have very little knowledge about the initiatives taken by Government or other agencies for disseminating training or skill development programme. Therefore, from the present study the impact of the SHG movement in enhancing human capital is found to be less effective.

#### **e) Financial well-being**

The prime objective of microfinance is to provide a range of financial services to the poor people. Access to finance indeed empowers people, provides them the opportunity to have an account, to save and invest, to insure their families or to take a loan and in many cases to liberate from the clutches of poverty (Peachey and Roe, 2006). According to Rhyne (2001), microfinance can be defined as the provision of financial services such as deposits, loans, payment services, money transfers and insurance to the poor and financially excluded people to enable them to raise their income and in turn living standards. Empirical experiences worldwide have revealed that microfinance particularly in the form of Self-Help Group approach is most suited for

sustainable rural development through the participation of the stakeholders at all levels (Swamy & Tulasimal, 2013).

According to SGSY guideline, SHGs should be used as channels to flow credit cum subsidy assistance to below poverty line section to bring them above the poverty line within three years by creating monthly income upto Rs. 2000 from the activity undertaken (Kalpana, 2005). However, the survey finds that only 7 per cent of the sample population has achieved the target of earning Rs. 2000 per month. There are many groups in the study area who earn nothing from it.

As per as the present study is concerned, for the 60 per cent of the research participants, the monthly income from SHG activities is limited upto Rs. 200 per month. Only 7 per cent of the beneficiaries earn upto Rs. 3000 per month. Further, the study also finds that at present 21 per cent of the participants has no earning from SHG related activities. Consequently, if the nature of savings of the SHG beneficiaries is taken into consideration, it shows a very bleak picture. As majority of the research participants earn upto Rs. 200 and have a very limited access to livelihood activities other than mid-day meal work; their savings per month (63%) is also limited to Rs. 100 in their individual account. Again, moving on to the status of household resource generation through SHG intervention, it is found that only 21 per cent of the sample beneficiaries have an affirmative answer whereas 79 per cent has not been able to create any SHGs to create household assets such as jewellery, cattle, bi-cycle, households utensils etc. with the help of SHGs activities. Therefore, by considering all these aforementioned aspects of financial well being it is found that the participation of women in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has not really made any profound impact on their economic aspects of life in a backward rural setting.

#### **f) Confidence, family respect and mobility**

Now-a-day the income based poverty measures is considered to be an inadequate indicators of poverty. The mere access to credit cannot be seen as addressing all aspects livelihood concern. Poverty alleviation thus needs to be addressed within the broader perspective of social well being, capacity building and freedom of choices. Therefore, beside economic status; mobility, decision making ability, self-confidence are important parameters which can change within short span of time due to change in income earning status. Microfinance should be seen as a strategy which encompasses issues related to empowerment, capabilities, social interaction and activities.

Increasing self confidence is a necessary precondition of women empowerment. Self-esteem and self-confidence are evident manifestation of women's psychological empowerment which facilitates other dimensions of empowerment (Stacki and Monkman, 2003). Self confidence is a complex concept related to both women's perception of their capabilities and their actual level of skill and capabilities (Cheston and Kuhn, 2002). According to Longwe (1991), control over resources is the ultimate proof of women's economic, social and political empowerment. In this specific study, women's perception have been measured related to change in their level of self confidence. About 91 per cent of the women have perceived a positive change after joining the group.

Women's subordinate position in society is perpetuated and reinforced by her limited access to and control over resources. Although poor in general have limited access to assets and resources, the women have comparatively less control over whatever resources they possess (Samanta, 2009). Women thus get doubly marginalized – by virtue of being poor and being women (Vijayanthi, 2002). From the primary survey it has been found that after joining the group the entitlement of the women over the resources is improved to a certain extent because control over money gives women a degree of authority (Samanta, 2009). About 81 per cent of the women have perceived that their opinion in the family is getting value after they have started earning. Even 80 per cent of the women opined that their respect in the family has increased than earlier they had.

Change in the mobility behaviour is one of the significant aspects of women's empowerment. In order to participate in the SHG activities the women require to go out of their home for specific causes such as to attend meeting, to collect monthly subscription, to update their bank account etc. According to the IFAD/OE (2000) study women have become more mobile and begun to have new interactions with persons from a range of class after joining microfinance based livelihood project. According to the survey, after joining the group, 87 per cent of the women believe that their mobility has increased upto certain level.

### **Microfinance and the social capital**

Social capital – popularly defined as local forms of association that express trust and norms of reciprocity – can contribute significantly to the alleviation of poverty worldwide (World Bank, 2001). The role of organizing and disseminating knowledge as public good has become a major

preoccupation of international development organization. More recently, the microfinance 'best practice' deposited in, and disseminated by, these international organizations have been associated with social capital (Ito, 2003). The process of group formation and the practice of microfinance enhance social capital formation. In assessing the role of microfinance model in nurturing social capital it is found that the mutual dependency and trust among the members helps them to obtain loan in a convenient way when urgency arises. As availing loan requires consensus among the members, it also delays the borrowing process. Thus, the research explores that 87 per cent of the research participants have mutual co-operation among them within their concerned group. This collaborative group support approach also makes the poor to avail easy access to credit and repay loan in a flexible manner. Further, this group approach is also able to generate a cohesive bondage between the group members and the group leader.

### **Impact of participation: Overall performance evaluation**

The forgoing discussion has highlighted several issues on the impact of SHGs on the poverty and development debate, livelihood generation and women's empowerment. In this specific section, the ultimate impact of participation of the SHG members has been evaluated. It is evident during the empirical survey that SHG has helped to foster certain key consideration for a better livelihood management practice. The impact of SHGs (Table 1) has been found to be most powerful in enhancing the ability to become self-dependent and confident, increasing the mobility behaviour and improving the decision making ability. Moreover, in terms of inculcating the habit of saving among the poor, as a source of credit supply and development of knowledge and skill, the SHG intervention has made a moderate outcome. However, for providing short term credit service during the period of emergency, generation of livelihoods assets and exaggeration of monthly income, the impact of SHGs has been found to be very less effective. Thus, the study finds that microfinance has a profound influence on decision making, mobility, financial literacy and better financial management and social and cognitive empowerment. However, given the understanding of the role of SHGs in household resource generation, financial well-being and income earning capacity and crisis management, the microfinance could not make much difference in poor people's livelihoods management.

**Table 1: Overall Impact assessment of SHG Members**

Impact	%	Rank
Making self dependent and confident	91	I
Increase in the mobility behaviour	86.96	II
Improvement in the decision making ability	80.95	III
Inculcate the habit of saving	79	IV
Best suited for availing loan from SHGs	77.27	V
Development of skill	54	VI
Ability to generate livelihood assets and activities	10.20	VII
Ability to meet emergent and small credit need	8.6	VIII

*Source: Field Survey, 2014*

Above all, certain corollary of facts, figures, field observation and informal interaction with the poor suggest that earlier they were not much accustomed with the behaviour of saving or even they did not know how to save while living in great hardship to combat with poverty. Further, the research also explores that before the initiation and rapid spread of SHG programme; the poor women have to depend much on money lender for their short term crisis management. But, after the quick spread of SHG programme, now the poor can avail debt with easy access from their group. Hence, it can be stated from the above understanding that SHG intervention has paved the way for the near future to avail basic financial services to facilitate women to command over households' resource generation. Such insights, therefore, provide a fundamental challenge to the common practice of micro-finance in contemporary perspective.

### **Concluding note**

Similar to all other development initiatives, the Self-Help micro credit programme is not free from many shortcomings. In spite of its several limitations, the study explores that self-help micro credit programme have induced improvement in certain circumstances. Women's participation in SHGs enabled them to discover inner strength, gain decision making ability, self confidence, social and cognitive empowerment and capacity building. Moreover, Self Help credit based economic activity has facilitated the women to think about their households' financial management policy in a better perceived way. However, in case of generation of livelihood

resources, creation of households' assets, increasing monthly income and as a source of credit during crisis, the role of SHGs must be addressed in a more critical manner. Besides, there are several factors acting against the proper functioning of SHG programme in the research area. Due to the fear of falling in financial uncertainty in near future, lack of unity among the group members in availing project loan is making the micro-finance strategy a less viable sustainable livelihood option among the poor. Further, lack of efficiency and effectiveness of the group leader is also found existing. The study shows that lack of effective participation and irregularities in monthly deposit are also affecting the overall performance status of the SHGs in dealing with availing loan, group saving etc. In the context of present study region where stone quarry industry is one of prime source of employment generation, according to most of the research participants employment in the quarry field is more economically viable option than compared to mid-day meal work, the mere livelihood activity provided by SHGs. In order to transform self-help programme into a genuine livelihood diversification and livelihoods generation, the question of women's empowerment need to be reinforced from mere theory to practice. To maximize the contribution of Self-Help micro-credit programme, dissemination of proper knowledge and skill is required, so that the poor can access opportunities. Therefore, the study raises question of the viability of microfinance as poverty alleviation strategy in backward rural areas.

### References

- 1) Cheston, Susy and Lisa Kuhn, 2002, Empowering women through microfinance, A draft report, UNIFEM.
- 2) DFID, 2000, Poverty elimination and the empowerment of women: Strategies for achieving the international development targets. London: DFID.
- 3) Dhanya, B, and Seema Purushothaman, 2008, Assessing the Role of Self- Help Groups in Ensuring Conservation linked Livelihoods in MM Hills, Karnataka
- 4) Harper, Malcolm, 2007, Some final thoughts' in Dichter, Thomas and Malcolm Harper (2007) What's Wrong with Microfinance, Practical Action Publishing, UK
- 5) IFAD/OE , 2000, Tamil Nadu women's development project: Completion Evaluation, Report 340- IN, Rome, April.

- 6) Ito, S., 2003, Microfinance and social capital: Does social capital help create good practice? *Development in Practice*, Vol. 13(4) pp. 322-331.
- 7) Kabeer, Naila , 2000, Reflections on the measurement of empowerment, discussing women's empowerment — theory and practice, *SIDA Studies*, No. 3, Stockholm.
- 8) Kalpana, K , 2005, Shifting trajectories in microfinance discourse, *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 40(51) pp. 5400-09.
- 9) Longwe, S. Hlupekile, 1991, Gender Awareness: A Missing Element in the Third World Development Project' in T. Wallace and C. March (eds.), *Changing Perceptions, Writings on Gender and Development*, Oxford: Oxfam GB
- 10) Mosley, P. and D. Hulme, 1998, Micro enterprise finances: is there a conflict between growth and poverty alleviation? , *World Development* 26(5), pp. 783-790.
- 11) Peachey, Stephen and Alan Roe., 2006, Access to finance: What does it mean and how do savings banks foster access, *Perspectives*, Vol. 49, World Savings Banks Institute (WSBI) and European Savings Bank Group (ESBG), Brussels.
- 12) Rhyne, Elisabeth, (2001). *Mainstreaming Microfinance*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press.
- 13) Samanta, G ,2009, Microfinance and Women: Gender Issues of Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment, *The Microfinance Review, Journal of the Centre for Microfinance Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Bankers Institute of Rural Development, Lucknow, India.
- 14) Stacki, Sandra L. and Karen Monkman., 2003, Change through empowerment process: Women's stories from South Asia and Latin America', *Compare*, 33(2), pp. 173-189.
- 15) Sundaram, A, 2012, Impact of Self-help group in socio-economic development of India, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (JHSS)* ISSN: 2279-0837, Vol. 5, Issue 1, pp. 20-27.
- 16) Swamy, T.S., and Tulasimala, B.K., 2013, Does microfinance impact on food security and living standard of the poor? , *Journal of Business and Economic Management*, Vol. 1(5), pp. 069-081.
- 17) Umashankar, D, 2006, Women's empowerment: Effect of participation in Self-Help Groups, PGPPM Dissertation, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.
- 18) Vijayanthi, K.N, 2002, Women's empowerment through self-help groups: A participatory approach, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 263-274.
- 19) World Development Report. , 2001, *Attacking Poverty*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.