

MANAGEMENT OF SELF-HELP GROUPS

By taking part in Self-help Group activities, women have become familiar with different types of aspects which were totally unknown for them earlier. It helps to create confidence and knowledge. An attempt is made to know women's empowerment through the analysis of their group activities. This chapter deals with management of groups and groups funds; providing credit and linking with banks.

5.1 MANAGEMENT OF GROUPS

After involvement in Self-help Group women have achieved the qualities like leadership attitude, ability to select or elect their group leader on different grounds, good communication skills with outsiders, arrangement of meeting etc. These qualities have made their confident level high and made them able to face any situation outside their family. For the smooth monitoring and management of their Group, members of the sample Self-help Groups select/elect their group leaders. Time to time they arrange group meeting to discuss on various grounds relating to income, savings, repayment of bank loan, maintenance of accounts, marketing of their productive goods etc.

5.1.1 Procedures of Selection of Group Leader

The women elect/select their leaders on democratic principles. The group leaders are expected to help the group members in taking decisions. They have to resolve conflicts among members, maintain books of account and to conduct their meetings. The whole processes in the Self-help Group proceed in a democratic manner. Through this, women members have learnt how to manage their group. They have learnt to take a conscious effort to fulfill the aims of their group.

The selected Self-help Groups follow both the procedures of selection and election to choose their group leaders. Each of the sample Self-help Groups has president and secretary who are selected/ elected by the group members as their group leaders. This type of procedures which are followed by the groups have taught the members democratic manner to choose their leaders.

Table 5.01 Procedures of selection of group leader

Procedures	Frequency	Percentage
Election	61	42.06
Selection	84	57.93
Total	145	100

Source: Field data in Sonari Development Block

Data from the above table show that 42.06% of total 145 Self-help Groups under study follow the process of election and 57.93% Self-help Groups follow selection procedure for their group leader.

5.1.2 Different Grounds of Selection/Election of Group Leader

The members of the selected Self-help Groups select or elect their president and secretary as their group leaders on the basis of different grounds like educational quality; ability of taking decisions and risk; good communication skill and leadership attitude etc.

5.1.3 Arrangements of Group Meeting

The group leaders facilitate the members to discuss on important matters relating to their management of group or other aspects i.e. loan, income, saving, income generating activities. The group decides the periodicity and time of the meetings. Regularity in the holding of the meeting and the attendance during meeting gives an indication of group functioning, discipline and devotion of the members to their group activities. Women, outside their home, have got an environment to upgrade their knowledge by sharing opinions among them in group meetings.

The selected Self-help Groups arrange group meeting to discuss and take decisions on different aspects such as income of the group, saving, deposit, credit and management of groups. Group members have to pay fine from Rs 2.00 to 5.00 if they continuously remain absent in group meeting.

Table 5.02 Arrangement of group meeting

Arrangement of meeting	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	145	100
No	0	0
Total	145	100

Source: Field data Sonari Development Block

Table 5.02 shows, the entire 145 sample Self-help Groups (100%) arrange their group meetings.

5.1.3.1 Time of meeting

Arrangement of group meeting is very much important to achieve success. Time to time arranging meetings help the groups' members to deliver their opinions, to take decisions on various aspects of their groups and to find out the problems relating to their groups. Self-help Group Implementing and Promoting Agencies point out the indicators for grading of Self-help Groups-- four times meeting within a month is very satisfactory for the success of the group; two times meeting within a month is satisfactory and less than two times meeting within a month is not satisfactory.

The entire selected Self-help Groups arrange meetings in different times.

Table 5.03 Time of group meeting

Time of meeting	Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	47	32.41
Fortnightly	85	58.62
Monthly	13	8.9
Total	145	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Out of 145 Self-help Groups 47 (32.41%) numbers of Self-help Groups arrange their meetings weekly, 85 (58.62%) numbers of Self-help Group arrange fortnightly and 13 (8.9%) numbers of arrange their meetings monthly

5.1.3.2 Right to Give Opinion

It is important to note that in their group meetings every member has right to present her opinions independently. This type of rule increases women's capacity building, self confidence and sense of equality. In group meetings arranged by their groups or NGOs, women independently keep their opinions on different grounds and on the basis of their opinions and suggestions, group takes decisions.

5.2 MANAGEMENT OF GROUP FUNDS

Success of Self-help Group mainly depends upon management of group's funds. For well management of group the aspects like maintenance of accounts, regular meeting and cohesiveness of the group, management of their income generating activities and repayment of loan have been noticed.

5.2.1 Keeps Internal Records

Keeping records of the group is considered as an important criterion to assess the functions of Self-help Group. This gives details of meetings held, decisions taken in the meeting, amount of savings, credit availed, repayment of loan etc. Each of the selected Self-help Groups follows attendance register, maintains cash book on income, saving book, loan receipt and payment voucher. Basically they keep the internal records of their group with president and secretary. Every member has right to see their groups' record, especially during the time of meeting. It is a sign that Self-help Groups teach groups' members sincerity in performing group activities and management. By involving themselves in such type of activities women have created responsibility towards the group. They have become active in doing group activities.

5.2.2 Providing Credit to Members and Outsiders

In Sonari development block the selected Self-help Groups are providing credit with interest to their members as well as outsiders on the basis of different grounds.

Table 5.04 Providing credit

Provide loan	Frequency	Percentage
Only members	76	52.41
Both members and Outsider	69	47.58
Total	145	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Data shows in the table 52.41% of total Self-help Groups are providing credit only to their members and remaining 47.58% are providing credit to both members and outsiders.

5.2.3 Rate of Interest of Credit

Every selected Self-help Groups has fixed the rate of the interest on credit to their group members and also for outsiders. The rate is fixed at Rs 2.00 to 5.00 per Rs 100.00.

5.2.4 Reasons of Demanding Credit

The members of selected Self-help Groups demand loan from their groups on different ground. These are as following:

- a. Members claim credit for their children's education.
- b. Sometimes they demand credit for some family functions such as marriage ceremony, religious functions etc.

- c. For own or other family members' health related aspects, they claim credit from their group.
- d. Sometimes members claim credit from their groups for family consumption related aspects.

5.2.5 Taking credit from groups

The Self-help Group provides credit to its members. Women can claim to get credit from their own group. By taking credit from Self-help Group the members have become free from traditional money lender system. Self-help Group helps its members to fulfill their requirements. After getting membership in Self-help Group women have become one of the earning members of their family.

Most of the members of the selected Self-help Groups have taken credit from their group. It shows that the women who have no income source earlier they became able to take credit from their group whenever they require.

Table 5.05 Taking credit from groups

Taking credit	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	212	73.10
No	78	26.89
Total	290	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Data from the above table shows 73.10% of 290 respondents have taken credit from their group and 26.89% women did not take.

5.2.6 Regular Payment of Credit

Regular payment of interest indicates running through a good economic condition of the person who avail credit form an institution. After getting membership in Self-help Group women have become earner of their family. As well as they have become able to claim credit and repay interest in time. It shows their sincerity, regularity, good and stable economic condition.

Most of the respondents who took credit from their group are regularly repaying their interest. It is a good sign of their regularity in repaying interest, knowledge gaining through group activities and rising of economic condition.

Table 5.06 Regular payment of credit

Regular payment of interest	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	176	83.01
No	36	16.98
Total	212	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Table 5.05 shows, out of 290 respondents 212 have taken credit from their group. Data further show in the table 5.06 that out of 212 respondents 83.01% regularly repay interest of credit and remaining 16.98% did not maintain regularity in payment of interest.

5.2.7 Irregularity in Payment of Credit

Sometimes the members who had taken credit from their own groups show irregularity in repay their credit due to some reasons.

- a. Family needs. Women could not show regularity in repay credit due to their growing family needs. Their income could not cover their family expenditure, demand and needs.
- b. Strict time schedule. Sometime strict time schedule of payment of interest of credit women unable to regularly payment of credit.
- c. Less income. A few women could not regularly repay credit due to less income.

5.3 LINKING WITH BANK

In 1992 NABARD emerged as a provider of micro credit to the poor through Self-help Groups-Bank Linkage programme in India under the scheme Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna (SGSY). Under this scheme banks have provided subsidy and revolving fund to Self-help Groups. There are various funding options available with SGSY for Self-help Groups. These can be grouped under three headings--- (i) Contribution of group members, (ii) Group Revolving Fund and (iii) Loan from Financial Institutions.

The main aim of SGSY is to assist any group so that they can start a productive activity. A group may avail the benefit of Rs. 25,000 comprising the contribution of government and bank loan or may be provided under an approved project. The Revolving Fund is provided to the Self-help Groups for the use of buying raw materials to start or to continue income generating activities; development of infrastructure; supplementing thrift and credit funds or any other activity relating to their productive goods.

The Self-help Group is provided a bank loan for starting an income generating activity and to enlarge the productive activity. There are some criteria on the basis of which the Self-help Group is normally considered to be eligible for a bank loan:

1. If Self-help Group is running successfully for six months it is eligible for taking bank loan. This is known as bank linkage or credit linkage of the Self-Help Groups.
2. Before extending any credit facilities to the group, bank is to be satisfied whether the Self-help Groups is functioning well or not. There is a check list to assess Self-help Group in a simple and effective manner.
3. The loan is sanctioned in the name of Self-help Groups not in the name of any person.
4. The quantum of the loan to be sanctioned is 1:1 to 1:4 against the corpus fund. The corpus fund constitutes the group's balance in SB account, cash in hand with the authorized person, lent out to its members as internal lending, amount received as interest from the members against loans and any other contribution received by the group.
5. The purpose of loan is as per group decisions. It may be for various purposes. Bank gives the loan to the Self-help Group and subsequently Self-help Group disburses it to its members. But bank ensures and supervises that the loan is disbursed to the concerned members.
6. The group is collectively responsible for repayment of loan.
7. Besides all of the above criteria banks provide loan to that group which must have a minimum savings.

5.3.1 Saving Account in Banks

Savings is necessary element for the security in future. It also shows one's credit to save his earnings after all expenditure. Regular savings of Self-help Group in

bank account indicates a good earning of that group and smooth running of their income generating activities.

The Self-help Groups and members opened their saving account in various banks such as State bank of India (SBI), Asom Grameen Vikash bank (AGVB), Union co-operative bank (UCO), United Bank of India (UBI) etc. In Sonari development block most of the Self-help Groups and their members are linking with AGVB of Kakatibari, Moran, Sepon and Patsaku.

Table 5.07 Saving Accounts of Self-help Groups in Banks

Name of the Bank	Frequency	Percentage
SBI	36	24.82
UBI	9	6.20
UCO	27	18.62
AGVB	73	50.34
Total	145	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Data shows in table 5.07 that out of 145 Self-help Groups 24.82% Self-help Groups have their saving account in SBI, 6.20% have in UBI and 18.62% have their saving account in UCO bank. Most of the selected Self-help Groups (50.34%) have saving accounts in AGVB.

5.3.2 Groups' Saving in Banks

Careful and detail analysis of the saving books of the selected Self-help Groups have showed that the average savings per group per month is Rs 2000 to 5000 or sometimes more than Rs 5,000. It is also noticed that there is an increasing and

decreasing trend in their savings pattern. Sometimes some groups could not save more than Rs 1000.

Table 5.08 Groups' saving in banks

Groups' Saving	N= 145 SHGs	Percentage
Very good (more than 10,000)	08	5.51
Good (Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000)	108	74.48
Unsatisfactory (less than Rs 5,000)	29	20
Total	145	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Data show in table 5.08, 5.51% of total selected Self-help Groups' saving per month in bank is very good, 74.48% is good and 20% groups' saving is unsatisfactory. It shows that most of the selected groups of Sonari development block are progressing.

5.3.3 Releasing Revolving Fund and Loan Provided by Bank

Under SGSY programmes banks have provided subsidy to the Self-help Groups in Sonari development block. After six months of formation of Self-help Group, revolving fund facility is provided. Then after another six months on the basis of successful performances of Self-help Group, bank loan is provided by the government in a joint inspection with the representative of block office. Under the schemes of piggery farming, tea plantation, fishery, goatery and poultry farming; banks have provided subsidy and loan to the Self-help Groups in Sonari development block.

5.3.3.1 Releasing Revolving Fund for the Self-Help Groups

Revolving fund is provided to the Self-help Groups which are in existence from six months. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) may release revolving fund for groups with a minimum of rupees 5000 and a maximum of rupees 25,000 linked with bank credit. The entire selected Self-help Groups have got revolving fund of rupees 10,000 from banks.

5.3.3.1.1 Releasing Subsidy and Bank Loan under SGSY

Under SGSY programme bank has released subsidy for the Self-help Groups. Out of 145 numbers of Self-help Groups 78 has got subsidy and loan from banks. The following two tables viz. Table 5.09 and Table 5.10 show the amount of subsidy and bank loan provided to the groups of selected Self-help groups.

Table 5.09 Releasing subsidy under SGSY

Subsidy (in Rupees)	Frequency N=78	Percentage
25,000-50,000	19	24.35
50,001-75,000	48	61.53
75,001- 1,00,000	11	14.10
Total	78	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Data shows out of total 78 numbers of Self-help Groups 24.35% have got subsidy of rupees from 25,000 to 50,000 from banks, 61.53% Self-help Groups have got subsidy of rupees 50,001 to rupees 75,000 and 14.10% groups have got subsidy of rupees from 75,001 to rupees 1,00,000.

Table 5.10 Releasing loan to the Self-help Groups

Bank Loan amount (in Rupees)	Frequency N=78	Percentage
75,000	18	23.07
1,50,000	34	43.58
1.80,000	8	10.25
2,25,000	9	11.53
2,70,000	9	11.53
Total	78	100

Source: Field data, Sonari Development Block

Data show out of total 78 numbers of Self-help Groups s 23.07% have got bank loan of rupees 75,000, 43.58% have got rupees 1,50,000, 10.25% have got loan of rupees 1,80,000. 11.53% have got loan of rupees 2,25,000 and remaining 11.53% have got loan of rupees 2,70,000 from bank.

5.3.3.1.2 Regular Repayment of Loan

Most of the Self-help Groups regularly repay their loan and it indicates progressive status of the Self-help Groups. But due to various reasons a number of Self- help Groups are unable to regular repay the bank loan.

Table 5.11 Regular repayment of loan

Repayment of loan	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	69	88.46
No	9	11.53
Total	78	100

Source: Field data Sonari Development Block

Data show in Table 5.11 that 88.46% of total 78 numbers of Self-help Groups regularly repay their loan and 11.53% Self-help Groups unable to repay their loan regularly to bank.

5.3.3.1.3 Reasons of Not Repayment of Loan

Data in table 5.11 shows that total 9 numbers of the Self- help Groups are unable to repay their loan due to several reasons. These are as following:

- a. Sometimes their products do not get adequate market and it affects Self-help Groups' income.
- b. Sometimes they do not get enough profit.
- c. Irregularity of members as well as outsiders in repaying credit to Self-help Groups.
- d. At the time of harvesting the members are generally busy in paddy field and can not give sufficient effort in functions of their groups. It decreases income of the Self-help Groups.

5.3.3.2 Getting Benefit by Availing Loan

After availing loan, most of the Self-help Groups have got benefit. The groups have become able to start a new business to gain more income. But few numbers of the selected groups have not been benefited fully. The following table shows Self-help Groups in three categories to show their satisfaction of availing loan.

Table 5.12 Benefit through getting loan

Opinion	Frequency (n=78)	Percentage
Benefited	43	55.12
Highly benefited	24	30.76
Not benefited	11	14.10
Total	78	100

Source: Field data Sonari Development Block

Data in the table shows that out of 78 numbers of Self-help Group 55.12% have replied that they have been benefitted by availing loan, 30.76% have been highly benefited and 14.10% have not got much benefit by availing loan.

5.4 TRAINING OF SELF-HELP GROUP

In order to get success of Self-help Group the capacity of members has to be built up. The purpose of training is to develop skills, build confidence and managerial capacity of the members and to encourage them in their attitudinal change. It is the responsibility of the Self-Help Groups Promoting Institutions (SHPIs) to ensure training programmes for the Self-help Groups. In Assam, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) is the main provider of training cum capacity building programmes for Self-help Groups to uplift them from grass root level.

Some of the respondents of the selected Self-help Groups have not attended the training programmes.

Table 5.13 Training programmes attended

Attended training programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	124	42.75
No	166	57.24
Total	290	100

Source: Field data Sonari Development Block

Data show in the table 5.13 that out of 290 respondents only 42.75% women have attended training programmes and other 57.24% women have not attended any training programmes.

5.4.1 Purposes of Training Programmes Attended by the Respondents

42.75% women have attended training programmes relating to various aspects.

These are as follows:

- a. Skill development programme
- b. How to uplift their income generating activities
- c. Management of group
- d. Knowledge on thrift and credit

5.5 CONCLUSION

Discussions in this chapter have shown that after getting membership of Self-help Group, women have become familiar with various group activities. Collectively they perform their group activities i.e. management of group funds, choose group leaders, arrangement of group meeting. Women of the selected Self-help Groups have been successfully doing their group activities. Regarding the management of group,

they choose their group leaders in a democratic manner. It has made them responsible towards their group and aware of getting success. They have become able to manage their groups through taking active role in managing group funds, thrift and credit disbursement activities, choosing their group leaders and taking part in training programmes.

It can be judged that Self-help Group is a powerful appliance in empowering women. Women of the selected Self-help Groups have acquired qualities like leadership attitude, good communication skills with outsiders and high confidence level in performing their group activities. Women, who were only busy within their family boundaries, have got an opportunity to attach with some other activities outside their family which were totally unknown to them earlier. Women have gained knowledge about thrift and credit system, saving in bank, knowledge about banking services, managerial activities, democratic process etc. Most of the women members who took credit from their group are regularly repaying their interest. It is a good sign of their regularity in repaying interest and raising their economic condition. Most of the Self-help Groups have benefited by getting bank loan.