

PREFACE

Development and progress in every sphere of a nation is possible when it is considered that women are equal with men in society. Women can also take part in a nation's development tasks as men, but in male dominated society like India, it is considered that women are inferior to men and therefore still women of our society are lagging behind in every sphere of human life. Moreover, women contribute one half of the segment of population in India. So it cannot be afforded to keep them out of the mainstream. Women empowerment through microcredit by Self-help Group is very new strategy taken by the government and policy makers. The raising influence of feminist writings on women's deprivation and gender equality assist Government and many non government institutions to emphasis on targeting women in their microcredit programme through Self-help Group model. From the last three decades, numbers of countries including India identified micro credit through Self-help Group model as a major implementation on women's ability to earn an income.

After reviewing literatures on Self-help Groups and women empowerment, it is observed that Self-help Groups are working as a tool to accelerate social as well as economic empowerment of women. The studies have revealed that through microcredit Self-help Group model linking with banks help the rural poor, especially women, to generate income generating activities and have realized them their existence in society. It is found that in the state of Assam, Self-help Groups play significant role in giving financial support to the poor rural women and they have been much influenced by the Self-help Groups model and willingly working as members of the Self-help Groups. But the study on roles of Self-help Groups in women's empowerment in Assam is not much more than the studies conducted in other states of India. Therefore, a sociological study on the role of Self-help Groups is relevant to

know the growing socio-economic empowerment of women in Assam, especially in Sivasagar district.

The study is discussed dividing into eight chapters, bibliography and one Appendix.

The foremost chapter contains introduction, theoretical perspectives of women empowerment, concept of Self-help Group and Microfinance and framework of the study. The first chapter also contains Review of literature which shows the role of Self-help Groups in empowerment of rural women in different parts of India and abroad

The second chapter contains Methodology of the study. This chapter deals with the methods and techniques, which have been used in this study.

The third chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, historical background of Self-help Groups in India is briefly discussed. In the second part, an overview on Assam in general and Sivasagar District and Sonari Development Block in particular is briefly discussed. An account of Self-help Groups in Assam is also included in the second part of this chapter.

The fourth chapter deals with the socio-economic profile of the respondents of Sonari Development Block of Sivasagar district.

The fifth chapter discusses women's empowerment through management of groups, groups funds; providing credit and linking with banks etc.

The sixth chapter analyses role of Self-help Group in socio-economic empowerment of women by assessing different indicators.

The seventh chapter contains the barriers and constraints confronted by the women on path of achieving empowerment.

The eighth and last chapter discusses the findings of the study. The study have been summarised under objectives achieved, suggestions and conclusion including Bibliography and Appendix.