

# Chapter - 1

## Introduction

---

### Statement of the Problem

The empowerment of women is crucial to the process of development of any community. Though women constitute almost half of our population and play a vital role in every sphere of life, their importance is not properly recognized by the society. They are generally suppressed and enjoy limited access to different fields of life, such as, education, society, culture, politics, business and so on. But a nation cannot achieve all round development if women are not given equal opportunity of development with their male counterparts. A society moves when women move. Thus, the social status of women is a reliable indicator to assess the development of the society. It reflects the level of empowerment of a society. Empowerment implies an overall positive change in the quality of life which encompasses economic as well as social aspects. It is the process which helps people to gain control over their lives through raising skills, awareness and participation in the decision making process. As the bulk of the women in our society are marginalized, the question of empowerment is more crucial for them. According to Partha Sarathi De empowerment is all about social transformation of women. It emphasizes on making women socially and economically independent. In this context, supply of credit on easy terms, modernization in farming techniques, capacity building through craft training and many other initiatives are considered to be important<sup>1</sup>. Susy Cheston and Lisa Kuhn discuss about the role of small resources in women empowerment. According to them, women should not only have easy access to material, human and social resources but they must also have the ability to use resources to empower themselves. In this way empowerment may provide social justice to women. There

---

<sup>1</sup> Jaya,S. Anand (2002), “*Self-Help Group in the Empowerment of Women:Case study of selected SHGs and NHG*” Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram

are various factors that determine empowerment, such as (i) increase in self-esteem (ii) increase in individual and collective confidence (iii) visible decrease in violence on women (iv) increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home and at community level (v) awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household and (vi) visible changes in women's participation level in politics.<sup>2</sup> From the feminist point of view, empowerment is a process that starts from within but strengthens with access to new ideas and information that come from external agents. With new consciousness and the strength of solidarity, women can assert their rights to control resources and to participate equally in the society. Once this happens, the existing power relations in the society will be changed. Thus, empowerment is a process of both internal and external change. The internal change is the person's sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems. The external change is the ability to act and to implement the practical knowledge, the information, the skills, the capabilities and the other new resources acquired in the course of the process.

Women empowerment is a global issue which has gained momentum in recent decades. The origin of the concept of empowerment goes back to the civil rights movement in the USA in 1960. One of the important agenda of the movement was to establish equal rights of women in the society. In 1961, President Kennedy established Commission on the 'Status of Women' to examine issues related to women and make policies on employment, social security, education and tax laws. In 1963, the Federal Government amended the Equal Rights Act. This was done to prohibit sex based wage discrimination between men and women in the same work establishment. The following year, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect women from being discriminated in the work environment. In 1965, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commissioners (EEOC) was appointed to enforce the Civil Rights Act. Since then the issue of women empowerment has

---

<sup>2</sup> Susy Cheston and Lisa Kuhn (1997), "*Empowering Women through Micro-finance*", published by UNIFEM, USA ( [http:// w.w.w.microcreditsummit.org/papers/empowerintro.htm](http://w.w.w.microcreditsummit.org/papers/empowerintro.htm))

remained a matter of constant concern. At the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1993 and international conference on 'Population and Development' in Cairo in 1994, participating countries committed themselves to empower women. This commitment was operationalised and formulated into a clear action plan at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in the year 1995. In this conference, the rights of women in every walk of life, such as social, economic and political were considered. The tenth anniversary of Beijing World Conference (2005) brings renewed focus to empower women. It suggests five important dimensions of women empowerment. These are (i) economic participation (ii) economic opportunity (iii) political empowerment (iv) educational attainment and (v) health and well being. Economic participation includes education, culture and generating employment opportunities. Economic opportunity includes agriculture, business, industry etc. Political empowerment covers taking part in policy decisions. Educational attainment includes acquiring skills, progressive thinking and enhancement of will power and confidence in all spheres. Proper nutrition, sanitation, community health, prevention of water and air pollution is under health and well-being. Besides, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), International Women's Conference (1985) and Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women (2003), International Conference on Women's Rights, Sharia Law and Secularism (2011) and many other efforts have been made to ensure justice to women.

In India, various laws and development programmes have been initiated since independence for the development of women. When India adopted planned development strategy, it was clearly understood that upliftment of women was an equally important factor for overall development of the country. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) provided various welfare schemes for women. It planned for the development of maternal and child health and family planning services. For the first time, the Community Development Programmes (1952) emphasized the need for mobilization of women through Mahila Mandals or Women's Club. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in the year 1953 to monitor different welfare programmes of women development. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61)

emphasized on the protection of women against various types of atrocities. It also stressed on equal pay for equal work and provision was set up for training of women in higher level jobs.

At the end of this plan the Maternity Benefits Act (1961) was enacted. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) stressed on female education. The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) continued the emphasis on women's education. It gave high priority to the immunization of pre-school children and provision of supplementary feeding for children, expectant and nursing mothers. In the year 1972, the Central Government introduced the scheme of Assistance for Construction of Hostel Buildings for Working Women. In addition to the scheme, in the year 1980 provision for Day Care Centres for children was included in the scheme. There was a shift in the strategy related to women. Previous plans were emphasized on women's welfare but since the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) development of women have been giving more stress by the Government. The Central Social Welfare Board started the scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Organization for Creches for Working Women's Children and the Scheme for Vocational Training of Adult Women in the year 1975. The scheme of Functional Literacy was set up by the Ministry of Social Welfare for distress women. In the same year equal Remuneration Act was set up. Apart from this, various development plans were introduced during the Fifth Five Year Plan. These are Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training Rural Unemployed Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). But all these programmes helped women marginally. The National Plan of Action (NPA) was formulated to overcome this problem. NPA identified the areas of health, family planning, nutrition, education, employment, legislation and social welfare for the formulation and implementation of action programme for women and called for planned intervention to improve the conditions of women. For the first time a chapter on 'Women and Development' was included in the Sixth Five Year Plan. Further Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was introduced in 1982. In the year 1985, the Department of Women and Child Development was set up by the Ministry of Human Resources Department of India

and its functions as a funding agency for Central Social Welfare Board which sponsors welfare and developmental schemes for women. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) put emphasis on raising confidence among women and generating awareness about their rights and privileges and providing them training in various economic activities and employment. The National Policy on Education (1986) was also made. Further the Eight Five Year Plan (1992-1997) introduced a variety of programmes, specifically for women. Under this, provision was made to maximize the participation of women in Integrated Rural Development Programmes which provided self employment opportunities. In 1990, National Commission for Women Act was enacted. Further, the draft of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was finalized. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) put the concept of empowerment, which would create an environment where women can experience freedom in actual sense. It also directed both centre and states to adopt a special strategy of 'Women Component Plan' to ensure that benefits from other developmental sectors do not bypass women. Further, to achieve the goal of empowerment National Policy for Empowerment of Women was accepted by the government of India in 2001. Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) also put stress on women empowerment. Its strategy for women empowerment is based on the perception on the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001). They include social empowerment, economic empowerment and gender justice. Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) acknowledges women's agencies and tries to ensure that their needs, rights and contributions are reflected in every section of the plan document. In the history of Indian planning for the first time there is an attempt to move beyond empowerment and recognize women as agents of sustained, rapid and more inclusive socio-economic growth and change.

In addition to the efforts made in various five year plans for women empowerment, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) introduced a pilot project 'Self-Help Group-Bank Linkage Programme in 1992'. Thus, NABARD is the pioneer in conceptualizing and implementing the concept of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). In 1993, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also allowed SHGs to open saving accounts in Banks. Since then the members of SHG started depositing their money in

group account in Banks and the group can also take loans from the Bank at a low interest rate. This banking system has already reached to 40 million poor through SHGs. Today nearly 560 Banks like NABARD, Bank of Maharashtra, State Bank of India, Co-operative Banks, Regional Rural Banks, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Municipal Corporations and more than 3,024 NGOs are actively involved in the promotion of SHG movement. SHGs are small informal groups created for the purpose of enabling members to reap economic benefits out of mutual help, solidarity and responsibility. Self-Help Group, generally, refers to a voluntary group of women. The number of members of the group does not exceed 20<sup>3</sup>. The members of SHG meet regularly and save small sums of money in a joint account of the group which can be used and pooled as a revolving fund to provide credit for the consumption and production purposes. Loan requirements of the members are considered by the groups in periodic meetings and competing claims on limited resources are also settled by consensus in the same meetings. According to the World Bank Report, 2002, powerlessness is embedded in the nature of institutional relations<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the expansion of assets and capacities of the poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence and control institutions that affect their lives, is imperative to achieve all round development. By extending micro-credit to rural poor women, SHGs play a crucial role in reducing the power gap in our institutional set up. SHGs also contribute to create social and economic awareness among women. The social awareness inspires the members to endeavour for a better living. Members become capable to take decisions about the education of their children, investment of the family, managing the economic assets of the family and bringing up cohesion in the family. On economic side, SHGs provide women the scope to work shoulder to shoulder to men.

Thus, in a country like India where there is large-scale poverty, SHGs are considered as important means of empowering the poor, particularly women. There are examples which suggest that participation in SHGs may contribute to the

---

<sup>3</sup> SHG Guidelines published by District Rural Development Agency, Cachar

<sup>4</sup> Aruna Sharma(2002) "*Women Empowerment in India:Processess and Inter-Linkage*", Om Publications, New Delhi

empowerment, at least in limited sense, by making women economically self sufficient. In this context, the present study “Role of Self-Help Groups in the Empowerment of Women: A Study of Barak Valley” is significant. It is also important to note that although there are more than 3000 SHGs in Barak Valley, the studies conducted relating to them are limited. This justifies the importance of the present study further.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The status of women is intimately connected with their economic position, which in turn depends on opportunities to participate in economic activities. SHGs provide women an avenue to participate in economic activities. It gives women an easy access to credit. The members of SHG meet regularly and save an amount of money in a joint account of the group which can be used as a revolving fund to provide credit for the consumption and production purposes. Sometimes Bank also gives loans with minimum interest to these groups and as a result the SHG members can take money from that Bank loan at very low interest rate which in turn helps women to establish micro-enterprises and meet the crisis situations. Besides, these groups serve as platform for women to participate in community works and local politics. The members of SHG discuss among themselves about various developmental programmes of government and they try to get benefit out of it. This contributes to their awareness and understanding. Thus, SHGs not only contribute to the economic self-reliance of women but also help them to participate in socio-political life by enabling them to play a greater role in the decision making process of the family and the society per se.

Since the present study mainly deals with Self-Help Groups and women empowerment, some relevant terms like ‘Self-Help Group’, ‘Empowerment’, ‘Micro-finance’ and ‘SHG-Bank Linkage Programme’ are explained in this segment.

### **Self-Help Groups**

Self-Help Groups are small informal groups created for the purpose to reap economic benefits out of mutual help, solidarity and responsibility. These groups can be

comprised of only males or females and can also be of mixed type comprising both males and females. But several studies reveal that the number of women SHGs is more in comparison to two other types. As the source of earning is limited for women, they generally show more interest to form these groups. Besides, Government, Banks and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also extend their helping hand for the promotion of women in SHG. Self-Help Group generally refers to a voluntary group of women preferably from same socio-economic background. The number of member of the group does not exceed 20. Each and every member is responsible for the performance of the group. Loan requirements of the members are considered by the groups in periodic meetings and competing claims on limited resources are also settled by consensus in the same meetings. SHGs are formed to promote the habit of savings among the rural poor women so that they can take loans from the bank on the basis of their collective savings. SHGs organize various training programmes to inculcate entrepreneurial skill and capacity among women. The purpose of such programme is to enable women to become self-reliant by establishing micro-enterprises of their own. These groups motivate the women entrepreneurs and make them capable of establishing small and cottage industries. As a result, women can improve their condition by achieving economic self-reliance. Besides, participation in SHGs also motivates women to take more interest in children's education, health and public life. Therefore, it can be said that the collective approach of the SHGs not only enables the poor women to accumulate capital by way of small savings but also help them to have access to formal credit facilities. As a result, women get an opportunity of overall development. In general, SHGs are created to reach the poor effectively, especially women and help them to obtain easy access to savings and credit facilities and make them empower.

There are different dimensions of functioning of Self-Help Groups. The motives of these groups are anti-poverty and welfare oriented. Therefore, the basic aims and salient features of SHG can be summed up under different heads.

- To improve the economic status of members and reduction of poverty.
- To build self-confidence and self-esteem of the members.



- To offer opportunities for education and self-improvement
- To offer community development activities which are planned, implemented and maintained by the participants.
- To improve the living standards of the members.
- To encourage mutual support and unity.
- To increase the knowledge of technologies, resources and skills.
- To establish links and networks with other institutions.
- To empower women socially, economically and culturally.
- To help women to gain independence and security.
- To increase awareness of various local institutions and schemes.

Thus, it may be said that SHGs are seen as instruments for a variety of goals including empowering women and developing leadership abilities among rural people. The members of the group also learn the management of their own money in the process of money transaction in the group. In addition to these various objectives, there are some functions performed by these groups. Financial inclusion is the most important function of SHGs. By forming SHGs poor people can make a link with mainstream financial institutions like Banks. It also reduces the transaction costs of banks while dealing with poor and makes the loan recovery process easier. Savings and thrift are the two major activities of SHGs. By this method group members learn how to handle large amount of cash through savings. These savings can be used for internal lending of the members. The SHG organize regular meetings and the members discuss their problems and they try to find solutions to the problems faced by the members of the group.

In addition to the nature and functions of SHGs, it is also imperative to mention here that increase in the number of SHGs led to the formation of SHG Federation. There are more than 1,00,000 SHG federations working in India. Among all the states in India, Andhra Pradesh has maximum number of SHG Federations. NABARD extends its support to the federations by providing them grant for training, capacity

building and exposure visits of SHG members. About 10-15 SHGs make a cluster or village organization (VO) with either one or two representatives from each SHG. SHG Federations are registered as societies, mutual benefit trusts and mutually aided co-operative societies. At the federation level, there are inter-group borrowings, exchange of ideas, sharing of costs and discussion of common interests. SHG federations are also resulted in several benefits such as access to greater capital and sharing of knowledge and experiences. Therefore, the services provided by the federations can be summarized under different heads. These are as follows:

- It acts as a facilitating agency for the SHGs.
- It raises the awareness level of the SHG members.
- It makes the SHG members technologically sound.
- It builds marketing linkages through aggregation of products.
- It facilitates dialogues with different external agencies.

Thus, it may be said that SHG Federation is another forum for SHGs to develop women members by taking advantage of collective effort of SHGs<sup>5</sup>.

### **Empowerment**

The term 'empowerment' literally means 'becoming powerful'. The empowerment approach was first clearly articulated in 1985 by Development Alternative with Women for a New Era (DAWN). It is a multi dimensional concept which includes economic, social and political aspects. It is something which cannot be bestowed upon an individual. An individual must acquire it on his/her own. There are various factors that contribute to empowerment. Achieving economic self-reliance is one of the means to acquire self-dependence which eventually contributes to empowerment. It can also be said that women empowerment takes place in three different levels, namely, empowerment at personal level; empowerment at relational level and empowerment in changing hierarchical relations. Women empowerment at personal level means developing a sense, confidence and capacity to resist oppression. When

---

<sup>5</sup> Debabrata Dutta and Reshma Kumari Tiwari (2012), "*Fundamentals of Micro-finance*", Global Publishing House, (India) Visakhapatnam.

women collectively come together to achieve certain goals for the betterment of their lives, then only empowerment at relational level is become possible. The goal of women empowerment is not just to change hierarchical gender relations but to change all hierarchical relations in society-class, caste, race and ethnic relations. Although variedly defined, empowerment is a comprehensive term which represents the overall development of an individual. Of various definitions of empowerment, some important are discussed. For example, according to Amartya Sen, empowerment is the expansion of choice and action. It implies enhancing one's capabilities that affect one's life<sup>6</sup>. Rawlands defines empowerment both at personal and collective levels including a sense of self-confidence and capacity; relational, implying ability to negotiate and influence relationship and decisions<sup>7</sup>. World Bank defines empowerment as the process of increasing capacity of individual or group to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions which build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional set up which govern the use of these assets<sup>8</sup>. Thus, there are various factors of empowerment. According to Stromquist, there are four components, namely, cognitive, psychological, economic and political<sup>9</sup>. The cognitive component refers to women's understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of such conditions. The psychological component includes the development of feelings that will help women at the personal and societal levels to improve their condition. The economic component of empowerment requires that women be able to engage in productive activities that will allow them some degree of financial autonomy. The political component of empowerment entails the ability to analyze the surrounding environment in political and social terms. According to Srilata Batliwala, women's empowerment is the process, and the outcome of the process, by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and

---

<sup>6</sup> Aruna Sharma(2002) "*Women Empowerment in India:Processess and Inter-Linkage*", Om Publications, New Delhi

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> V Rengarajan ( 2010)eds. "*Micro-finance and Women's Empowerment*", Micro-finance Syndrome: Is it for Empowerment or Disempowerment of Women, Serials Publications, New Delhi

<sup>9</sup>M.P Borain (2008) "*Empowerment of Rural Women- The Deterrents and Determinants*", Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

gender based discrimination against women in all the institutions and structures of society<sup>10</sup>. She has identified three approaches to women empowerment: (i) the integrated development approach (ii) the economic development approach and (iii) the consciousness approach. The integrated development approach views women's development as key to the development of family and community. Therefore, it provides a package of interventions to alleviate poverty, meet basic survival, basic needs, reduce gender discrimination and help women to gain self-esteem. This approach precedes either by forming women's collectives that engage in development activities and tackle social problems. The economic empowerment approach focuses on the reasons of women's subordinations, which is the result of lack of economic power. It stresses on improving women's control over material resources and strengthening women's economic security. It advocated the group formation model (like Grameen Bank). This group may work in a range of areas, including savings and credit, skill development and marketing. The consciousness raising approach asserts that women empowerment require awareness of the complex factors causing women's subordination. This approach organizes women into collectives that address the sources of oppression<sup>11</sup>. Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development (APCWD) define empowerment as a process that aims at creating the conditions for the self-determination of a particular individual or group. It is also described as a change within which cannot be bestowed by a third party.<sup>12</sup> United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force defines the contents of women empowerment. Accordingly women empowerment consists of five components, namely, (i) Women's sense of confidence; (ii) Women's right to have alternatives and to determine choices; (iii) Women's right to have easy access to opportunities and resources available; (iv) Women's right to have the power to control their own lives, both within family and outside the home and (v) Their ability to influence the

---

<sup>10</sup> Aruna Sharma(2002) "*Women Empowerment in India:Processess and Inter-Linkage*", Om Publications, New Delhi.

<sup>11</sup> Geeta Chaudhary (2014) "*Empowerment of Women-A Sociological Enquiry*", Doctoral Thesis, Chaudhary Charan Singh University. <http://www.shodhganga.inflibnet.in> retrieved on 23.11.2013.

<sup>12</sup> M.P Borain (2008) "*Empowerment of Rural Women- The Deterrents and Determinants*", Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

direction of social change to create a just environment around them.<sup>13</sup> Thus, development agencies cannot empower women, the most they can do is to facilitate women to empower themselves. They may create favourable conditions but they cannot make it happen.

Therefore, it may be said that empowerment is an ongoing process rather than a product. There is no final goal. One does not arrive at a stage of being empowered in some absolute sense. However, for the sake of the present study, empowerment is understood as an overall positive change in the lives of women comprising both economic and socio-political aspects.

### **Micro-finance**

The concept of micro-finance is of recent origin and is used in addressing the issues related to poverty alleviation programmes and sometimes used as a financial support to micro-entrepreneurs. The term ‘micro-finance’ is also used interchangeably with the term ‘micro-credit’. But there is some technical difference between the two. Micro-credit is an economic programme under which credit is extended to the economically downtrodden people. On the other hand, micro-finance has broader meaning which covers financial services like savings. Thus, micro-finance refers to small scale financial services for both credits and deposits and these are provided to people who operate small or micro-enterprises where goods are produced, recycled, repaired or traded. It refers to a variety of financial services that target low income clients, particularly women.

Different scholars have defined micro-finance in various ways. Prof. Md. Yunus defines micro-finance as “availability of loans to rural people without obtaining collaterals for income generating purposes in order to reduce the poverty levels”<sup>14</sup>. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines micro-finance as “provision of financial services- savings, credit, insurance and remittances to the

---

<sup>13</sup> Das Debabrata and Reshma Kumari Tiwari (2012) “*Fundamentals of Micro-finance*”, Global Publishing House(India), Visakhapatnam.

<sup>14</sup>Debabrata Das and Reshma Kumari Tiwari (2012) “*Fundamentals of Micro-finance*”, Global Publishing House (India), Visakhapatnam.

poor through an institutional model on a sustainable basis”<sup>15</sup>. According to European Commission, micro-finance as “originally associated with innovations, such as Grameen, the term has acquired a broader definition which covers any financial services reaching those excluded from the banking sector and involving small transactions (usually less than US\$1.000)”<sup>16</sup>. Thus, any financial facility provided to the poor who are outside the purview of banking system is known as micro-finance. Robinson defines “micro-finance refers to small-scale financial services for both credits and deposits that are provided to people who farm or fish or herd; operate small or micro enterprises where goods are produced, recycled, repair or traded; provide services; work for wages or commissions; gain income from renting out small amounts of land, vehicles, draft animals, machinery and tools; and to other individuals and local groups in developing countries, in both rural and urban areas”<sup>17</sup>. This definition emphasizes on providing of financial services to micro enterprises. International Labour Organization (ILO) defined it as “an economic development approach that evolves providing financial services through institutions to low income clients”. Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines micro-finance as “the provision of a broad range of financial services such as deposits, loans, payment services, money transfers and insurance to poor and low income households and heir micro enterprises”<sup>18</sup>. In India, the Task Force on Supportive and Regulatory Framework for Microfinance defines micro-finance as “provision of thrift, credit and other financial services and products of very small amounts to the poor in rural, semi-urban or urban areas enabling them to raise their income levels and improve living standards”<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, from the above definitions it may be said that provision of micro-finance services is meant to help the poor to develop their micro enterprises and sustainable livelihoods.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

For clear understanding of the concept of micro-finance programme, it is necessary to discuss about the various features of this programme. Following are some of the features of micro-finance:

- Under Micro-finance (MF) programme credit is provided only to the poor people.
- Micro-finance Institutions (MFIs) provide small size loans to the poor people.
- The rate of interest associated with the programme is higher than formal banks. This is due to the fact that micro-finance institutions need to serve many small accounts where transaction costs are very high.
- Generally loans are given to a group called Self-Help Group (SHG) or Joint Liability Group (JLG).
- MFI does not insist on collateral securities from the borrowers. It uses trust and group liability as the base for micro-finance.
- Procedural formalities for granting micro-credit are very simple and fast in this programme.
- There is greater flexibility in micro-finance operations. The people can borrow on daily, weekly and monthly basis as per their ability and requirements.
- Borrowers face pressure to repay loans in case of micro-finance as they are jointly liable to repay the loans.
- Loans are normally given for income generating activities.
- The rate of amount of repayment is very small making it very easier for the borrowers.
- Micro-finance is not only about micro-credit. It also covers micro-savings, micro-insurance, transfer facilities, payment services, education and other basic necessity.

It motivates the members to save in small amounts. The members of SHG also save in a joint account for the repayment of loan.

Thus, micro-finance has emerged as most suited source of finance for the poor people. They require the finance which is easy to access, simple in procedure and flexible in terms, which the MFIs provide. In addition to this, it is based on the philosophy of co-operation and it revolves around the values of equality, equity and mutual self-help. The nature of micro-finance may be understood from the following points:

- For the development of the poor different types of financial services such as savings, insurance, cash transfer and payment services are required. Housing finance for the poor has become an important part of micro-finance programme.
- Micro-finance is based on the notion that poor are bankable. This is evident from the instance of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh where poor borrowers can run profitable micro enterprises and repaid the loan on time.
- This programme serves the financial needs of the poor which are not satisfied by the traditional banking system.
- It is a business programme whose main focus is on social good with a reasonable amount of profit for the financial sustainability of the business. It aims at earning a reasonable amount of profit to cover its cost of operation.
- Micro-finance is delivered through local micro-finance institutions. Because they have better understanding about the needs and requirements of the local people.
- The programme starts with a very small amount of credit and gradually provides training on different vocational skills so that people can start micro enterprises.



- As the poor and marginalized section of society does not have easy access to financial services, micro-finance provides them an opportunity to avail the facilities on a sustainable basis.
- Donors are the main source of finance for the micro-finance programme. These donors may be international development organization, trusts, voluntary organizations and banks. It may be in the form of subsidies for infrastructure development or capacity building of the poor people to take up the entrepreneurial activities<sup>20</sup>.

From the above mentioned nature of micro-finance, it has become clear that micro-finance is poor friendly group approach with specific features which is suitable to them who are not bankable. Moreover, micro-finance helps in improving health and spreading education which ultimately led to poverty reduction and social upliftment.

### **SHG-Bank Linkage Programme**

SHG-Bank Linkage Programme is a strategy for delivering financial services to the poor in a sustainable manner. It came into effect as a result of the Action Research Project of NABARD in 1992. Several studies have revealed that the number of SHGs linked with the banks have been increasing day by day. NABARD's provisional data for 2008-2009 has indicated that 1.71 million groups had been financed including those which had availed repeat finance. The disbursement made to SHGs in the year 2009 reached to Rs. 127.06 billion. This project was designed as a partnership model between three agencies, namely, the SHGs, Banks and NGOs. This programme enables the SHG members to access frequently and to comparatively larger amount loans. So far, there are three models of SHG-Bank Linkage Programme. These are (i) a bank lending directly to SHGs, (ii) a bank lending directly to SHGs with NGO or Government as facilitator and (iii) a bank lending directly to SHGs through NGOs or any Micro-finance institution. These three models are also present in Barak Valley where we find that SHGs were able to scale up their operations with more financing and they had access to more credit products. As a result, it had reduced the incidence of poverty through increase in income and also enabled the poor to build assets and

---

<sup>20</sup> Debabrata Das and Reshma Kumari Tiwari (2012) "*Fundamentals of Micro-finance*", Global Publishing House (India), Visakhapatnam.

thereby reduce their vulnerability. Along with this, there are many advantages of this linkage programme<sup>21</sup>. These are as follows:

- Timely repayment of loan made possible by the linkage programme.
- Both the SHG members and the banks have to bear transaction costs.
- The programme provides the scope to save as well as credit to the poor.
- It explores the business potential in rural India.

Apart from these positive results, the 'linkage' model is suffering from the problem of poor repayment of loan and this factor is considered as the main reason for the slow progress of the model in this part of the country. Therefore, it can be said that positive attitude of the SHG members towards the repayment of loan is necessary for the success of this programme. In this context, it is important to mention here that there are certain criteria for the selection of SHGs for the linkage with the banks. These criteria can be summarized under following heads:

- The selected group should be in active condition at least a period of six months.
- There should be proper savings and credit facilities available in the group.
- The group should follow the democratic means where every member has an equal say.
- There should be proper maintenance of records and accounts.
- There must have assurance on the part of the group that it has not come into existence for the sake of availing benefits. There must have genuine need to work together and help each other.
- The SHG members should preferably have homogeneous background<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> Debabrata Das and Reshma Kumari Tiwari (2012) "*Fundamentals of Micro-finance*", Global Publishing House (India), Visakhapatnam

Therefore, several studies have revealed that the linkage of SHGs with the financial sector is good for both sides. The banks are able to cover the large market, namely the low income households. On the other hand, SHGs are also able to scale up their operations with more financing and also they have access to more credit products.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since women empowerment is an issue of concern to all, there is literature dealing with the matter.

*“Communicating Rural Development Strategies and Alternatives”*<sup>23</sup> discusses the role of Antodaya Programme in evolving SHGs in Rajasthan. Bhairon Shing Shekhawat, the erstwhile Chief Minister of Rajasthan, announced “Antodaya” (1977) project, the goal of which was to develop the last man in the state. Other States of India such as Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar also adopted this project and it was a great success. Taking inspiration from this project, the Government of India started Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). But it was discontinued since April, 1999 and a new project, namely, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna” (SGSY) was introduced and it organized the poor into Self-Help Groups through the process of mobilization, training and capacity building. SGSY is implemented by District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) through Panchayat Samitis and achieve involvement of other Panchayati Raj Institutions, Banks and NGOs to help the smooth functioning of SHGs. Under the scheme, the SGSY is entitled to monitor the performance of Swarajgaris and the repayment of loans by them which are provided by the bank at a minimum rate of interest. The loan allocation to SHGs is financed both by the central government and the state government. The ratio of finance between the central and the state government is 75:25 respectively. But mere allocation of loans in the form of financial assistance is

---

<sup>22</sup>Debabrata Das and Reshma Kumari Tiwari (2012) *“Fundamentals of Micro-finance”*, Global Publishing House (India), Visakhapatnam.

<sup>23</sup>Rashmi Jain, (2003), *“Communicating Rural Development Strategies and Alternatives”*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi.

not enough. Proper motivation, awareness, connectivity to market and communication facility are also required for the success of SHGs in our country.

***“Micro-credit, Self-Help Groups and Empowerment of Women”***<sup>24</sup> is an analytical study on the role and performance of Self-Help Groups in providing micro-finance to poor women in Orissa. It was carried out as a six month certificate programme (Certificate of Empowering through Self-Help Groups) organized by IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) study centre at N.C (Autonomous) College, Jajpur, Orissa. Primary data were collected from 75 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) functioning in Jajpur Block, Orissa. For the collection of secondary data different books, journals and various Government Reports were taken into consideration.

The findings of the study suggest that though SHGs contribute to women empowerment in general, there is wide variation in terms of growth and performance of SHGs among the States in India. The performance of southern region, especially Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh has been the best in promotion of Self-Help Groups in India. Andhra Pradesh has 53 percent of total SHGs dominated by. This is due to higher level of literacy and strong co-operative institutions. Along with this, the southern region has the best performance where Rs. 5242.42 million are distributed among different Self-Help Groups by the Banks. The Eastern region has the second best performance where Rs. 1232.56 million are distributed up to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2005. In this region, although Orissa is one of the poorest states, the performance of SHGs is remarkable in the state. SHGs in Orissa are promoted by Integrated Child Development Project (ICDS) functionaries. In Jajpur Block, there are 131 Anganwadi centers where the female Anganwadi workers have formed Self-Help Groups comprising 15 poor women. The Anganwadi workers acting as the Secretaries of Self-Help Groups were interviewed regarding the performance, difficulties and achievements of their groups. It was found that the rate of interest charged on micro-credit to the member is 36 per cent per year. 70 percent of loans

---

<sup>24</sup> S. Patra (2008), “Micro-credit, Self-Help Groups and Empowerment of Women” in S.K Das, B.P Nanda and J. Rath (ed) *Micro-finance and Rural Development in India*, New Century Publications, New Delhi.

advanced to the members are utilized for consumption purpose and 30 percent are utilized in micro-enterprises. The loans advanced to the members are for the maximum period of one year and the rate of repayment of loan is very high in these SHGs. It was also observed that SHG-Bank linkage in Jajpur Block is not successful due to lack of sufficient bank credit to these SHGs and the intervention of male members into the credit availed by women. It is further found that training on micro-enterprises like pickle making, jam preparation and dry food making etc may prove to be extremely beneficial. In addition to this, NGOs and bank officials as well as primary teachers should be engaged in formation and development of SHGs in rural India.

***“Role of Women in Rural Development”***<sup>25</sup> is a study on gender inequality and the role of SHGs in this regard. It is a study on secondary data. It suggests that though women constitute half of the population and play a vital role in Indian economy, they are continued to be in disadvantageous condition in matters of health, nutrition, literacy and productivity. Women in India are far behind in almost all key indicators of gender development. According to Gender Development Report 2005, India has occupied 103<sup>rd</sup> rank while her neighboring countries have performed well and occupied better ranks namely, Japan (12), China (71), Malaysia (52) and Indonesia (90). Women need empowerment oriented programme so that they become competent to bring changes in their lives. In this context, the initiative of various co-operatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups and SHGs is important. Among the various programmes of women’s development, SHGs have emerged as one of the most important programmes which has the capacity of empowering women socio-economically through increased awareness of their rights and duties as well as access to resources. SHGs are important as they brings economic self-reliance to poor women. It also plays an important role in differentiating consumption credit and production credit and encourages members of the groups to take part in entrepreneurial activities. By developing saving habits,

---

<sup>25</sup> R.R Prusthy, (2008), “Role of Women in Rural Development” in S.K Das, B.P Nanda and J.Rath (ed.) ***“Micro-finance and Rural Development in India”***, New Century Publications, New Delhi.

SHGs can enable women to meet the emerging credit needs of the families. But these groups are suffering from middleman interference between the SHGs and the banks. However, tackling the interference of middle men is imperative to make SHGs successful. Participation of private banks is also important. Along with this, rural women also need targeted employment programmes. They need vocational training. Under the government run Community Polytechnic Schemes implemented by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), successful trainings are provided to rural women so that they can develop their entrepreneurial skill and capacity. Thus it can be said that extent of awareness and access to credit, higher level of education and training are prime determinants of status of women and their role in the process of development.

***“Empowerment of Women Through Self-Help Groups: The Case Study in Andhra Pradesh”***<sup>26</sup> defines the meaning of empowerment and focuses on the role of Self-Help Groups in the task of empowerment. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process which helps to gain control over lives through raising skills, involvement, awareness and participation in decision making process. It also enables people to take their responsibility for their own choices, decisions and actions. For better understanding, the concept of empowerment has been divided into three parts, namely, ‘Power to’, ‘Power with’, and ‘Power within’. ‘Power to’ connotes to empower individuals to survive and control their labour, resources, body and participate in the decision making process within the household and in the broader society. ‘Power with’ means the power that is derived from people organizing together with a common purpose to achieve certain collective goals. ‘Power within’ includes self awareness, confidence and assertiveness. According to this approach, three different models of SHGs are formed in the State, namely, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), South Asian Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) and Co-operative Development Federation (CDF). The DWCRA is the main model with a large number of groups formed under it.

---

<sup>26</sup>Somasekhar and Bapuji (2002), “Empowerment of Women Through Self-Help Groups- The case of DWCRA in Andhra Pradesh”, in C. Narasimha Rao (ed) ***Rural Development in India: A Multi Disciplinary Analysis***, Serial Publications, New Delhi.

According to official statistics, there are about 4.75 lakh SHGs working in Andhra Pradesh by the end of December, 2003. These groups consist of 60 lakh women members mainly belonging to the weaker sections like STs, SCs and OBCs. These groups are taking up number of activities for income generation like production of cloths, bags, pickles and kitchenware. To evaluate the impact of those activities on the rural women, various universities, NGOs and NABARD had conducted several surveys and found that such activities have helped the SHG members to gain awareness about the society and their own problems. It also helped them to become self-sufficient. It is also found in the study that the 80 percent of those SHGs have got access to the banks for meeting their credit needs.

***“The SHG-Bank Linkage Programme: An Assessment and Future Strategies”***<sup>27</sup> assesses the Self-Help Groups-Bank Linkage Programme focusing on its approach, strategy and possible ways to take it forward. The main aim of the programme since its implementation in 1992 is to bring services to the door steps of the poor. Through the bank linkage programme, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) would like to realize the vision of empowering the rural poor by improving their access to the formal credit system in a cost effective and sustainable manner. NABARD has set for itself a goal of creating economic self sufficiency for 100 million people through 1 million SHGs by 2008. Till March 2002 6.36 lakh SHGs have been formed out of which 4.61 lakhs are linked to the banks. The actual achievement of 4.61 lakh SHGs linked by March 2002 far exceeds NABARD’s target of 2.0 lakh SHGs to be linked at the end of 2002. SHGs have been linked to formal financial institutions in the country covering about 16 million poor households. The results achieved so far appear to be the outcome of the effort made by NABARD in mobilizing large number of Non-Government organization (NGOs) and financial institutions through cheaper refinance and capacity building support. On the whole 444 financial institutions like Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Co-operatives and 155 NGOs and other development agencies have been involved in the programme. In the process, NGOs have emerged as prominent

---

<sup>27</sup> H.S .Shyalendra (2004), ***“The SHG- Bank Linkage Programme: An Assessment and Future Strategies”***, Journal of Rural Development , Vol.23.No.4, NIRD, Hyderabad.

players in the programme. For overall success of SHGs, NGOs should co-ordinate among themselves and they should also encourage income generating activities. It is observed that the future success lies in retaining the basic character and strength of SHG along with integrating them with financial institutions and banks appropriately. This calls for coordinated efforts among the stakeholders at different levels.

***“SHG for Poverty Alleviation in Pondicherry”***<sup>28</sup> examines the determinants of earnings of rural women under SHG scheme in Pondicherry. It also surveys the benefits and problems experienced by them under the scheme. Interview schedules were used to collect data from a randomly selected 134 SHG members residing in rural Pondicherry during March 2002. The mean age of the respondents was 34 years and the average education was less than middle school during the survey. About 55 percent of the respondents were found engaged in non-farm activities, while the rest were involved in agricultural activities. Around 72 percent of them had received vocational training organized by SHGs from time to time. Such training programmes have not only given an access to computer but also raised the monthly income of the members. The mean of monthly income of the respondents during the survey was Rs.806. 64 percent of the members of the groups were found to have been selling their products directly to the consumers or through their own shops, while the rest chose other market channels. Though SHGs are working actively, there are problems also. Remoteness of market, poor communication facility and lack of proper advertisement are the difficulties identified by the respondents. However, the overall picture is positive. Availability of institutional support like marketing, information and training, apart from micro-finance, have helped women to organize, get better access to credit facilities and handle micro-finance.

***“Micro-finance and Empowerment of Women”***<sup>29</sup> analyses about the poverty alleviation programme of ‘International Fund for Agricultural Development’ (IFAD)

---

<sup>28</sup> Nirmala,V,K Sham and P Buvaneswari (2004) ***“SHG for Poverty Alleviation in Pondicherry”***, Journal of Rural Development, Vol.23(2), NIRD, Hyderabad.

<sup>29</sup> A.K Pati, and B.F Lyngdoh(2008), “ Micro-finance and Empowerment of Women”, in S.K Das, B.P Nanda and J. Rath (ed) ***Micro-finance and Rural Development in India*** , New Century Publications, New Delhi.



in collaboration with the Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (Government of India) and North Eastern Council (NEC) in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya and how far this programme could be able to bring development, particularly to women. Before discussing about the IFAD programme, the meaning of “micro-credit” and “micro-finance” was defined. Micro-credit gives emphasis on loans while micro-finance includes support services where channels for thrift, market assistance, technical assistance, capacity building insurance, social and cultural programmes are opened. As a micro-finance programme IFAD has been encouraging and providing facilities for formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) covering 7,070 families in 192 villages. Under this project there are 852 SHGs, 257 Natural Resource Management Groups (NaRMGs), 29 village cluster Associations and 25 SHGs Federations. In this context, it is important to mention that the micro-finance as credit measure of overall economic development has gained momentum only after the year 2000 in the North-Eastern region, particularly in Meghalaya in the year 1998 with the formation of the first SHG in Mawryngkneng village in East Khasi Hills District. SHGs have changed the outlook of womenfolk by providing them the facility of economic activity. It enabled the womenfolk to take important decisions in the society and it also led to other developmental outcomes like prevention of liquor sale on market days, improving the functioning of the schools by ensuring that the teachers attend the schools regularly. As a result of IFAD’s initiative, a total of 5,162 families out of 7,070 families have been lifted economically, the remaining 1,908 families would be lifted out of poverty line during the year 2007-2008 with the help of Central Government Sponsored Schemes (CGSS) like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojna (RSVY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojna (SGRY), and Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna (SGSY). Under the IFAD project all the women’s SHGs have formed one Apex SHG Federation called the NIM-BILCHAM in West Garo Hills District. NIM-BILCHAM provides the facility of easy accessibility to loans to the SHGs, NaRMGs and different Cluster Associations. In spite of proper loan facility, these groups are facing several difficulties. The member of different SHGs reported that presently market mapping is one of the major challenges facing by the groups. At present, the

Government of Meghalaya has been working for the improvement of marketing facility for the finished products of the SHGs. However, the overall study indicates that IFAD's initiative has emerged as an important step which ultimately led to the empowerment of women at the grass root level in West Garo Hills District.

***“Impact of Micro-finance on Women’s Empowerment and Poverty Reduction- A Study in Union Territory of Pondicherry”***<sup>30</sup> is an attempt to measure the impact of micro-finance on economic and social benefits of poor people in two blocks namely Ariyankuppam and Villiankur of Pondicherry District of Union Territory (UT) of Pondicherry. These two blocks have been taken for the study because 58 percent of total populations in the block live below the poverty line in Pondicherry District.

The performance of two micro-finance programme namely, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna (SGSY) and Self-Help Group (SHG) have taken into consideration for the study. In the mentioned two blocks, a total of 1440 micro-finance (MF) groups were working both under SGSY and SHG. Out of these groups 400 beneficiaries were selected randomly for interview. All 400 beneficiaries were the members of various SHGs working in two identified blocks. It was decided to introduce a sample of non beneficiaries of micro-finance programme from a similar socio-economic group and non borrower and non-member of SHG. 100 non beneficiaries were selected which formed 25 percent of the beneficiary sample. For the selection of banks and NGOs in the identified blocks, performances of all the branches of Central Commercial Bank (CCB) were considered. Non Government Organizations (NGOs) like Hand in Hand, Saman, Dhan Foundation and Dr. Swaminathan Pesearch Foundation were analyzed for the purpose of the study.

It was observed that the micro-finance programme had direct impact on income, savings, employment and consumption. The average annual income, before and after attaining micro-finance was calculated. It was increased from Rs. 21.11 to Rs. 35.73

---

<sup>30</sup>S.Santhanam, (2010), “Impact of Micro-finance on Women’s Empowerment and Poverty Reduction-A study in Union Territory of Pondicherry”, in Surendra K.Kaushik and V. Rengarajan (ed) ***Micro-finance and Women Empowerment***, Serial Publications, New Delhi.

.However, the average annual income of the non beneficiary household increased from Rs.15.5 to Rs. 20.85. MF programme had also increased the level of literacy from illiterate to higher education (85.2 percent). Out of 400 beneficiaries, 368 forming 92 percent were having the annual income below Rs. 21,112 before availing support under MF programme. After receiving micro-finance, 342 beneficiaries forming 85.5 percent of the sample respondents had crossed the poverty line and 9.5 percent (38 beneficiaries) were having the annual income in the range of Rs. 14,000 to Rs. 21,112. In case of non beneficiary respondents, only 14 per cent (14 respondents) of the total non beneficiary households had crossed the poverty line.

As far as social impact of micro finance was concerned, it was analyzed under three broad categories namely, groups and networks, trust and solidarity and collective action and co-operation. It was observed that 77 percent of the beneficiary respondents had attended 80 percent of the Panchayat meetings whereas non beneficiaries did not increase their level of participation in the Panchayats. About 82 percent of them were protesting against abuse of women in public, about 94 percent of the beneficiaries registered strong protest against domestic violence. This shows positive impact of micro-finance in resisting social evils. In the area of infrastructure such as sanitation, water supply, school, market etc, the beneficiaries had better access to these facilities after joining SHGs. Medical facilities was also found to have improved for beneficiaries.

***“Institutional Credit to Schedule Tribe SHG members: A Process Evaluation of SHG-Bank Linkage in Three Districts of A.P”<sup>31</sup>*** focuses into the quality of the SHG- Bank Linkage process in the tribal populated three districts of Andhra Pradesh namely, Adilabad, Khammam and Srikulam. For the purpose of the study one Mandal which is equivalent to a block from each of the district namely Jainoor (Adilabad), VR Puram (Khammam) and Bhamini (Srikakulam) were selected. Seven villages in Jainoor, nine in Khammam and six in Bhamini were chosen randomly. In

---

<sup>31</sup>P. Purushotham, S.Laxminarayana and T,G Ramaiah, (2010), ***“Institutional Credit to Schedule Tribe SHG Members: A Process Evaluation of SHG-Bank Linkage in Three Districts of A.P”***, Indian Journal of Rural development, Vol-29.

Jainoor Mandal 23 SHGs and 53 SHG members, in VR Puram 19 SHGs and 55 SHG members and in Bhamini, 21 SHGs and 35 SHG members were selected randomly for detailed investigation.

It was observed that all the SHGs covered in the sample were formed, trained and supported by Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP). In spite of that support, SHG members were pursuing traditional and low productive activities. They were depending on agriculture, NREGP (National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme), collection of minor forest produce, sale of livestock etc, which contributed 90 percent of their income. All these activities did not require investment credit. In the entire sample of 143 SHG members in all the three Mandals, only 3 SHG members had borrowed an average amount of Rs. 7,050 for non farm activities. In this context, it is important to mention here that, except a public sector bank, no private bank or micro- finance institution was found to be operating in the region. 141 out of 143 tribal households studied under the sample had no individual bank accounts. Out of 19 Schedule Tribe (ST) SHGs functioning in VR Puram, between 2003-04 and 2007-08, only 2 have availed bank loan every year. In Jainoor, out of 23 sample SHGs, only 1 has availed bank loan every year. The principal reason for not availing the bank credit was traced to the practice of utilizing land holdings towards subsistence food crops such as jowar or leasing out the land to non-tribals, mostly for cultivation of cash crops such as cotton. Apart from this problem, repayment of internal loan was too poor among the respondents studied.

The study team also observed some potentialities of that region. They suggested that in Jainoor, there is a scope of cultivating bamboo and brick industry (the raw materials of which are available), which are always high in demand. In Bhamini, the availability of local resources such as clay ( for brick making), ground water (irrigation ), siali leaves (leaf plate making), hill grass (brooms), dairy, pineapple, cashew, stone chips and bamboo products have high potential to enhance the economic condition of the poor people. Apart from these solutions, there should be proper training facility to the SHG members. The Government of Andhra Pradesh-SBI's Smart Card Project and similar technology based innovative initiatives should

be considered more seriously. Thus all these measures should become important components in the Government's strategy for evolving an inclusive financial system to provide credit access to the disadvantaged sections like the tribal poor. However, the overall study indicates that the SHG members could not avail institutional credit due to inadequate capacity building and lack of credit plans for economic activities.

***“Women’s Self-Help Groups: Findings from a Study in Four Indian States”***<sup>32</sup> is an empirical survey conducted by Indian Social Science Institute on the performance of Self-Help Groups in four Indian States of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The total size of the sample from all the four States was 3065. The total numbers of SHGs studied were 613 and from each SHG 5 members were interviewed. 1501.85 i.e. 49 percent of the respondents were engaged in creating awareness about health care. In all the states this was the most common activity. 405 members were involved in family planning campaign. 50 percent of the respondents were active in fostering the education of girls by encouraging the parents to send their daughters to school. 31.2 percent played a role in monitoring the attendance and work of the teachers in the schools. Besides, the ‘Grameen Mahila Bal Utthan Samiti’ of Jagapur in Benaras worked for the banning of alcohol. Another SHG of Raipur in Madhya Pradesh called ‘Ninva’ organized several awareness campaigns to provide information related to health and cleanliness. Although the SHGs have been working extensively to deal with various problems of the rural areas, but change is not quite perceptible. This is because that the SHGs selected for the study are of recent origin. 12 percent of them were less than one year old. 35 Percent were almost one year old. Only a few SHGs were found to be eight or more than eight years old.

***“Role of Self-Help Groups in Women Development”***<sup>33</sup> is an empirical study on Self-Help Groups (SHGs) operating in Tamil Nadu promoted by two prominent NGOs namely ‘Society for Education, Village Action and Improvement’ (SEVAI) and ‘League for Education and Development’ (LEAD). This project covers rural

---

<sup>32</sup>Alka Srivastava (2005), *“Women’s Self-Help Groups: Findings from a Study in Four Indian States”*, Social Change, Vol.23(2), NIRD, Hyderabad.

<sup>33</sup> L. Manivannan (2005), “Role of Self-Help Groups in Women Development” in Narasimha Rao (ed) *Rural Development in India: A Multi Disciplinary Analysis*, Serials Publications, New Delhi.

areas of all 28 districts of Tamil Nadu excepting the district of Chennai. SHGs in Tamil Nadu are performing the role of financial intermediaries between bank and poor women to meet their credit requirements. Along with this function, the members consider that nurturing of saving habits has been one of the prime motives for joining SHGs. 81 percent of the total respondents were able to meet unexpected cash demand and 55 percent of the members received money to meet domestic needs. But at the same time, 80 percent of SHG members are indebted to their own SHGs. The remaining gaps in credit needs were met through co-operatives, Banks, money lenders and relatives. However, there are problems relating to leadership, proper book keeping, lack of sustainability and difficulty in group formation which have created hurdle in the smooth functioning of the group. But despite these difficulties 99 percent of the respondents have expressed opinion in favour of participation in SHG as it helps in inducing self-confidence among the participants.

***“Entrepreneurship Qualities of Members of Self-Help Groups in Dharwad District of Karnataka State”<sup>34</sup>*** is an empirical work based on primary data. The present study was carried out with an objective of understanding the socio-economic background of the members of SHGs and to identify the entrepreneurship qualities of its members. It was carried out in four villages of Dharwad Taluka of Karnataka State and fifteen SHGs were selected purposively for the study.

It was found that out of fifteen SHGs only three were formed under the DWCRA scheme and registered under the Societies Registration Act and received the financial assistance of Rs.15, 000 from the Government. These three SHGs had fortnightly meetings, whereas other held weekly meetings. Along with this, it was found that half of the women were middle age group of 31-45 years. 91.46 per cent of women were illiterates and their husband was the head of the family (78.65 per cent), followed by women headed family with 20 per cent. Agriculture was the main occupation which was reported by 68.79 per cent of total respondents. Here,

---

<sup>34</sup> Suma Hasalkar, Suhasini Rao and Chhaya Badiger (2005), ***“Entrepreneurship Qualities of Members of Self-Help Groups in Dharwad District of Karnataka State”***, Journal of Social Sciences, Vol-11, November.

maximum percentage (42.64 per cent) of families was belonged to low income family (less than Rs.14, 529). As far as information related to the enterprises were concerned, it was found that highest number of SHGs did whole sale purchasing and retail sale of consumer goods like edible oil, soaps, tooth paste, jiggery and sugar. The profit earned was shared among the members of SHGs. Five SHGs had the leaf plate production and sales through the Group and four of the groups had taken up other enterprises like whole sale purchase of paddy during harvesting season, raising of forest nursery, production of pots for gardening and production of bamboo goods and sales. In addition to this, there were some findings related to entrepreneurial qualities of the SHG members. Co-operation was the quality identified in maximum percentage of members in almost all SHGs (40.3 per cent). The entrepreneurial qualities identified in maximum percentage of member were contributed ideas in meetings (17.95 per cent) and purchasing ability (17.56 per cent). Innovative ideas and self-confidence were the qualities identified in least number of women (15.39 per cent and 15.24 per cent respectively). Therefore, it may be said that enhancement of entrepreneurial qualities among the members of SHGs is an important step in the social and economic empowerment of women.

***“Micro Enterprises: Development and Women’s Empowerment”***<sup>35</sup> is an analytical work based on secondary data. This article highlights the need for women empowerment and also suggests various indicators for measuring empowerment. Women empowerment is necessary because it brings economic independence, self-reliance, political, social and legal awareness, self confidence and positive attitude among women. In this context, the role of Self-Help Group is very important in bringing empowerment by providing the scope of micro-enterprises to women. There are different parameters of measuring empowerment such as economic empowerment, individual empowerment, family empowerment and social empowerment. Economic empowerment can be measured through increase in the monthly income of the family; use of micro-credit for income generation activities;

---

<sup>35</sup>Dilip Popara and Sharwan Kumar Verma (2010),“Micro Enterprises: Development and Women’s Empowerment” in Surendra K. Kaushik and V. Rengarajan (ed) *Microfinance and Women’s Empowerment*, Serial Publications, New Delhi.

possession of various assets and equipments such as T.V, Radio, Tap Recorder, fridge, sewing machine etc. The arena of social empowerment is very vast. It includes the ability to speak in public; the courage to raise voice against social injustice; knowledge about the laws to protect and defend women; participation in election campaign and many others. Family empowerment covers the extent of power of decision making in the family; freedom to avail loans; run micro-enterprises and spend earnings; freedom to operate bank accounts; freedom to attend social functions; freedom to take decisions relating to education of children and decisions relating to the purchase of costly assets. Individual empowerment means achieving self-confidence; better self-awareness; leadership quality; exercising decision making power; confidence to start own enterprises; better self awareness and ability to face problems. In short, it can be said that empowerment of women is the most important factor for overall development of the country. In this context, the role of micro enterprises should give proper importance as it brings socio-economic development of women.

*“Status of Indian Tribal Women: An Analysis”*<sup>36</sup> depicts the condition of tribal women in India in terms of health, education and employment. Again health status is discussed in terms of sex-ratio, life-expectancy and family welfare programme. Data for the present study was collected from the secondary sources namely, Primary Census Abstract for General Population and Schedule Tribes and Working Papers, NCW.

India has the largest tribal population (67.6 million, 1991 Census) in the world. The tribal women constitute half of the tribal population like any other communities in India. They occupy an important place in the socio economic structure of their society. The study has revealed that the literacy rate of tribal women is lower than that of general female. Again the enrolment ratio for tribal girls is much lower than that for non-tribals. The dropout rates for tribals are higher than those for the non-tribals. In terms of health status of tribal women, sex ratio plays an important part

---

<sup>36</sup> Maniklal Adhikari and Sharbani Maiti (2008), “Status of Indian Tribal Women” in Anil Bhumali and Bipul Malakar (ed) *Women, Globalisation and Development*, Serial Publications, New Delhi.



where there is imbalance in the sex ratio. The ratio varied widely with in the country. According to 1991 census, among the states Orissa had the highest sex-ratio (1002) and Uttar Pradesh had the lowest sex-ratio (914). In case of union territories, it was highest in Dadra Nagar Haveli (1022) and lowest in (931). In India, tribal males experiencing highest mortality than tribal females. It was observed that tribal women gave more attention to child welfare and child development programmes rather than mother care or family planning programmes. As far as employment status of tribal women is concerned, almost 90 percent of the tribal are engaged in agriculture. The other major economic activities of the tribal are food gathering, which includes hunting, and fishing, pastoral, handicrafts, trade, and commerce and industrial labour.

Therefore, in order to improve the status of tribal women the study has suggested some measures. These are: formulation of realistic plans for the development of health, education and employment; nutritional needs should be solved by the tribal women themselves through better utilization of their locally available cheap but nutritional food; development of poultry and fisheries are to be encouraged for enhancing employment programmes; conducting state wise and district wise surveys of causes of non-enrolment of girl child in tribal communities in order to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education; improvement in social and economic status of tribal women; environmental conservation and many others. So it can be rightly observed that the development of tribal women is the urgent need of the day for the overall growth of the country.

***“Women Empowerment in Assam: A Study”***<sup>37</sup> is an analytical work based on secondary data. The whole writings of this article are divided into two segments. The first segment discusses about the meaning of women empowerment and the second segment deals with the status of women in Assam.

---

<sup>37</sup> Chakraborty Manas, (2012), ***“Women Empowerment in Assam: A study”***, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Volume LXXVIII, No-1, January-March.

The issue of women empowerment is a new term. The Cairo Conference in 1994 organized by UN on Population and Development called attention to women empowerment. Since women constitute the half of the total population, their importance cannot be neglected in the development of the country. The term 'women empowerment' denotes to render the fulcrum of power to the women. It provides the scope to realize their full identity, power, position, dominance and capability in all aspects of life in the society. Again, it provides a scope for a greater access towards the attainment of knowledge and resources. Real empowerment can be judged from the arena of decision making. Along with this, if women are empowered socially and economically, then they will have greater awareness of their rights and duties. Therefore, it can be said that real empowerment can be achieved only if they are given scope to participate in every spheres of life.

Apart from all the above facts related to women empowerment, the condition of women in Assam is not as satisfactory as expected. There are many cases related to dowry domestic violence. As per the records available with the Crime Against Women Cell of the Assam Police, total 5,189 cases of atrocities on women by their in-laws were registered in the state during 2010 compared to the 2,206 such cases registered with police in 2005. Again, 1,217 cases of rape were registered with Assam police in 2005 and the figure increased to 1, 721 in 2010. Assam also has witnessed a sharp rise in cases of abduction of girls and women during 2005-2010. The number of registered cases was 2,456 in 2005 and 2,486 in 2010. The study has revealed the fact that in case of domestic violence and atrocities, Muslim community in Assam occupy first position. The situation becomes worst in the Char areas. In that particular area there is the existence of polygamy and bondage labour. The study also makes it clear that the root cause of all these problems are lack of consciousness and lack of knowledge on human rights and importance of women in the society.

To eradicate all these women related problems, the government has adopted various women empowerment schemes. Women's self employment schemes are also encouraged in the form of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). In the field of politics in Assam, The Assam Gaon Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, have provided for 33 percent

reservation for women. But the fact is that 90 percent of the women representatives perform their functions under the direct control of male (generally husband) of their family. It is clear from the discussion that improving the status of women is the urgent need of the day. The government cannot alone upgrade the position. It is the responsibility of all in the society to extend our helping hands and should co operate with the ongoing empowerment policy and organize awareness camps, workshops and street dramas to make people conscious about the essence of women empowerment. Further, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) has a major role in the women empowerment process.

***“Impact of Micro-finance on Poverty: A Study of Twenty Self-Help Groups in Nalbari District, Assam”<sup>38</sup>*** is an empirical work carried out in Nalbari District of Assam. It examines the savings utilization of loans by twenty Self-Help Group members and find out the causes of early closure of these groups. Data for the present study were mainly collected from two sources, namely, primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected by conducting a field survey in Borigog-Banbhag Development Block of Nalbari District, Assam. Twenty SHGs were selected with the help of stratified random sampling. Secondary data were collected from different books, journals and various government records.

The study reveals that the monthly savings mobilized by the members of the SHGs ranges between Rs.20 to Rs.100. Among the twenty SHGs, highest nine groups save Rs.30 per month and only one group is saving Rs.100 per month. The cumulative funds with the group also range between Rs.1, 650 and 50,000. Out of total twenty SHGs, four SHGs had stopped their savings. Of these four groups, three male SHGs and another is a female SHG. Out of total Fourteen SHGs, thirteen are continuing saving; only one has stopped savings. But in case of the male SHGs, only three out of six SHGs are continuing saving. Thus it seems that among SHGs, female is a better saver than the male. Out of the twenty SHGs, nine undertook group investment activities. But most of the groups were unable to make profit from their investment

---

<sup>38</sup>Prasanjit Bujar Baruah, (2012), ***Impact of Micro-finance on Poverty: A study of twenty Self-Help Groups in Nalbari District, Assam***, Journal of Rural Development, vol-31, No-2.

activities. Only a few groups were making some amount of profit. During the study it was seen that many members of the SHGs took loans from outside the SHG. The members went to the SHGs when they needed smaller amount of loans, but for higher amount of loans, still they go either to the money lenders or to the banks. The utilization of loans can classify into three parts: capital expenditure, working capital expenditure and consumption expenditure. 55 loans from SHGs were taken for current consumption purposes, i.e., 35.7 percent of total loans were meant for this purpose. Out of total number of loans, 42 were taken for the expenditure on consumer durables. During the field survey it was found that 70 percent of SHGs were closed down. But officially these are considered working. In this regard, the main problem is that the SHG members were not aware of the concept of Self Help. They did not start the group to help themselves, rather they considered SHG as an instrument to have some benefit from the government sponsored subsidized credit programme. Most of the male SHGs were started with this motive and almost all of them are closed down. The cases of female SHGs are the same with that of male SHGs.

It is clear from the above discussion that to enable the members to fight against poverty, SHGs are to play a vital role. But at the same time it is also important that the members of SHGs must be made aware of the concept of 'self-help'. In this regard, different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and various governmental agencies should organize awareness campaigns, especially in the villages.

***“Social Exclusion and Inclusion Growth-A Tool of Women Empowerment, Policy and Issues”***<sup>39</sup> provides a brief overview of the concept of social exclusion and inclusion, its origins and manifestation, its continual persistence and effects on the social and economic outcomes. It is descriptive in nature and use secondary data. The term 'social exclusion' was originated in the European debate on poverty since the

---

<sup>39</sup> Ramappa, B.T and B.R, Kum Deepthi (2010), ***“Social Exclusion and Inclusion Growth- A Tool of Women Empowerment, Policy and Issues”***, Indian Journal of Social Development, Vol-10, November-December.

famous Rene Lenoir's study (1974). In this regard, the publication of *Les exclus* by Rene Lenoir was a milestone in the emergence of social exclusion as a concept. He employed it to raise alarm at the inability of an expanding economy to include certain physically, mentally and socially disabled groups. Social exclusion means unable access to the things in life that most of society takes for granted. Thus, socially excluded people are more economically and socially vulnerable. On the other hand, social inclusion incorporates multiple dimensions of wellbeing. It is achieved when all people have the opportunity and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural activities. It is also about reducing inequalities between least advantaged groups and communities by closing the opportunity gap and ensuring that support reaches those who need it most.

This paper also includes women entrepreneurship as a tool of women empowerment, policy and issues. Women entrepreneurship has been largely neglected both in society in general especially in development economics. According to the office of Small Scale Industry (2002, Report) the number of enterprises managed by women was 9, 95,141 (9.46 per cent). The share of the units managed by women in terms of employment was 7.14 per cent. These statistics shows a very negative picture of women entrepreneurship. To eradicate this problem the government of India adopted various plans and programmes. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was setup in 1993 to meet the credit needs of the poor. Economic Empowerment and National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) was adopted for poverty eradication, micro-credit and empowerment of women. The Government also launched the Swashakti (2005) programme for development of rural women. About 17,647 Self-Help Groups have been formed under the project so far enabling about 2, 43,962 women to enhance their confidence by involving them in skill development and income generating activities. In that year 'Swayamsidha' programme was launched. It is an integrated programme for the empowerment of women through the network of SHGs of women by ensuring their direct access to and control over resources. Above all, it can be said that the importance of full inclusive policy cannot be neglected. It has also the relevance in the field of bridging the gap between men and women. Hence,

in the socially exclusive society all people feel valued, their differences are respected and their basic needs are met.

***“Development of Entrepreneurship among Rural Women”***<sup>40</sup> wants to develop entrepreneurial empowerment strategies based on the participation of rural women in farm and home system. Data for the present study were collected through case studies representing the five agro-climate zones of Punjab. The participatory approach was used to study each case. Ten cases of five distinct landholding categories namely, landless, marginal, small, medium and large from each zone were studied. Thus qualitative data were collected from 250 rural families represented by the female decision maker of the family.

Rural women play a vital role in farm and home system. She contributes substantially in the physical aspect of farming, livestock management, post harvest and allied activities. There are variations in performance of women within the state depending on number of factors ranging from landholdings, subsidiary occupation, agro-climate conditions and socio-personal characteristics. The study suggested different areas of micro-enterprise development on the basis of the case studies. The first area is ‘micro-enterprise development related to agriculture and allied agricultural activities’. Women have been performing agricultural operations and actively participating in seed selection, seed treatment and vegetable growing. They can be trained and motivated to adopt micro-enterprises in which her skill can be exploited. These areas are sorting, grading, cutting, seeding, shelling and packaging; growing of organic vegetables, flowers, oilseeds and seed production; dehydration of fruits and vegetables; canning or bottling of pickles, chutneys, jams, squashes, dairy and other products which are ready to eat. The second area of micro-enterprise development is ‘micro-enterprise development related to livestock management activities’. The major share of work is being handled by women in performance of livestock management operations. Hence this area needs to be exploited for micro-enterprise development. Empowerment of women through formation of Self-Help

---

<sup>40</sup>Kiranjot Sidhu and Sukhjeet Kaur (2006), ***“Development of Entrepreneurship among Rural Women”***, Journal of Social Sciences, Volume- 13, September.

Groups and women dairy and poultry cooperatives can help women to control the decision making and financial aspect of livestock management. Production of vermi-compost using the animal waste can be an important area in which women can utilize both her technical skills and raw materials from the farm. The third area is the ‘micro-enterprise development related to household based operations’. Women perform many household tasks besides looking after the needs of the family. Knitting, stitching, weaving, embroidery, bakery flour milling are some examples of the enterprises that can be taken up by women.

There are certain prerequisites for entrepreneurial development. These are creating awareness, motivating entrepreneurs, expertise development and continuous follow-up. These should be ensured for the sustainability of micro-enterprises. Micro-enterprise can not only help in improving the condition of women but also enhance national productivity and enhance economic independence.

***“Women Empowerment through Micro-finance: A Study of Slums in Bangalore City”***<sup>41</sup> seeks to assess the role of micro-finance-Self-Help Groups, as an alternative means for improving urban household’s economic condition and the role of SHGs on women empowerment with special reference to child care. It is based on the primary data collected through a structured schedule from the 120 SHG members in three slums of Bangalore city. These slums are Madiwala Slum, Rajendra Nagar Slum, and Vasanthapura Slum. Savings and income are taken as indicators for the impact assessment.

Self-Help Group (SHG) is a small voluntary association of poor people, with the purpose of solving their common problems through self-help and mutual help. The study indicates that the low income and needy people will participate in SHGs to overcome their short-term financial problems by saving small portion of their income. About 55 percent of the respondents have income above Rs. 24,000 in

---

<sup>41</sup> Vilas Mohan Karolkar and Gerand Rassendran (2008), ***“Women Empowerment through Micro-finance: A Study of Slums in Bangalore City”***, Artha, Journal of Social Sciences, Vol-7, No-1, January-June.

Madiwala. The proportion of high income category respondents is more in Madiwala (85 percent) and 68 percent of the members are daily workers with supplementary source of income, namely petty business. In Rajendra Nagar, 52.5 percent households have the income more than Rs. 24,000 and in Vasanthapura, majority of the respondents are having income of less than Rs. 24,000 per annum. Many women in the three slums independently involve in the economic activities after joining the SHGs. Therefore, they are now economically independent and contribute to the household income. Along with this, majority of the members (42.5 percent) have saved the amount of Rs.2, 501-5,000, followed with 26.7 percent in 5001-10,000 category and around 26 percent of them have saved less than Rs.2500. Only 5 percent of them have saved amount more than 10,000. Thus, the evidences are supporting that the saving has the positive relation with occupation and income of the member.

Women's role with regard to the children's education has shown remarkable improvement. Around 43 percent of the members themselves take decision regarding the children's education. Husband's role in decision making is 30 percent and other family members are contributing for 27 percent. Slum wise comparison indicates that in Rajendra Nagar 65 percent and 42 percent in Madiwala have taken the decision with regard to child's education. This improvement has relation with the education of the members, as there is more literacy in these slums forced them to send their children to school. Thus, it may be concluded that has helped women to improve the socio-economic status, recognition in community, which is a clear indication of empowerment of women.

***“Rural Women Entrepreneurs: Problems and Prospects”***<sup>42</sup> is an analytical work based on secondary data. There are two segments in this article. The first segment deals with different constraints of women entrepreneurs and the second segment deals with different schemes related to women entrepreneurship.

---

<sup>42</sup>R. Bernardshaw (1999), “Rural Women Entrepreneurs: Problems and Prospects” in M. Soundarapadian (ed) *Women Entrepreneurship: Issues and Strategies*, Kaniska Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi.



Discussing about the problems of women entrepreneur, the author has pointed out the first and the foremost factor is the competition from male counterparts. Women are always considered to be weaker in sex. But the reality is that sex is biologically determined while gender is socially constructed. So the first step for realizing women's development is to create gender awareness. The second constraint of women entrepreneurs is the scarcity of finance which means limited access to finance. It ultimately deters the growth of women entrepreneurship. Lack of mobility is the third factor faced by women entrepreneurs. Women are less mobile by their nature and they are deprived of the benefits of low cost and high efficiency. Along with this, the socio-cultural background binds them to remain in their native places. Lack of mobility also compels women to depend on middlemen. Family responsibility is another factor that deters the growth of women entrepreneurs. Sometime, it is also found that there are lack of independence of thought and action. They are also unable to compete with the well established firms. Women are generally conservative and so do not dare to undertake risk. Fear of loss and inferiority complex also deter them from taking risks. Women normally prefer traditional areas which are less risky such as tailoring, Knitting, embroidery, food preservation and interior decoration. They are also the victims of social taboos. The up rise of women is not tolerated not only by male members but also by the elder women members.

In the second segment, the author has cited the example of Seventh Five Year Plan which treats women as special target groups in all development programmes. It provides vocational training facilities for women to suit their varied needs and skills and also provide marketing assistance at the state level. Along with this, the New Industrial Policy (1991) stressed the need for conducting special entrepreneurship programme for women. Rural women entrepreneurs are assisted under various schemes like Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Self Employment for Educated Unemployed Youths (SEEUY) and Science Education for Public Understanding Programme (SEPUP). In addition to this, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Self-Employed Women's Association

(SEWA), National Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs (NAYE) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) are the major agencies through which women entrepreneurship can be accelerated. Therefore, for overall economic development of the country it is necessary that all the section of the society should participate in the process.

***“Regional Disparities in Micro-finance-Analyzing the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme in North East India”***<sup>43</sup> provides a clear picture about the growth and spread of microfinance (SHG-Bank Linkage Programme) in India and to see whether the growth and spread of micro-finance is uniform across the country or not. It also discusses about the different factors of regional disparities of the growth of micro-finance in North-East India. Data for the present study has been collected through secondary sources.

The study indicates that the growth of micro-finance is not uniform in India. Even the growth of bank linked SHG in North East India is very slow. In 2000-01 only 0.2 percent of the bank linked SHGs are from NE India which increased slightly to 2.8 percent in 2005-2006. But the Southern region occupies the top position. Along with this, it was also found that there is a huge disparity in the spread of micro-finance across the country. The Southern States are much ahead than the other states and they are reaping the benefits of micro-finance. It is evident from the fact that from the total number of SHG linked to banks, 0.013 percent is from Aurnachal Pradesh. Assam accounts for 3.005 percent of bank linked SHGs of the nation with only 1.4 percent of loan disbursed to these SHGs. Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura accounts for 0.054 percent, 0.031 percent, 0.052 percent, 0.018 percent and 0.108 percent respectively. If we compare it with Southern States, Andhra Pradesh accounts for 23.73 percent of bank linked SHGs of the country. Similar type of situation is prevalent in other Southern States like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu etc.

---

<sup>43</sup>Deepak Bhagat (2010) “Regional Disparities in Micro-finance- Analyzing the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme in North East India” in J.U Ahmed, D. Bhagat and G. Singaiah (ed) ***Micro-Finance in India: Issues and Challenges***, D.V.S Publishers, Guwahati.

Discussing about the reasons behind the regional disparities, the writer has provided some of the reasons, such as, in NER, almost 70 percent of the area is hilly. With the exception of Assam, population is sparsely distributed. Rail and road network is not developed. Banks are also thinly spread in the region and are to be found mainly in urban clusters in the valleys. Banks are not only few, they are understaffed. Another important reason for regional disparity is the lack of NGOs both in quantity and quality. One of the key ingredients for the success of micro finance in other parts of India, especially southern part is the model II of the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme. And the key to this model is the role played by NGOs. NER lacks the services of NGOs. So, there is a need to redefine the present microfinance models in India to suit the requirement of North East India.

*“Women Empowerment-Issues and Concerns”*<sup>44</sup> is an analytical work based on secondary data. The present study has been divided into two segments. In the first segment, the author has elaborately discussed about various obstacles on the way to achieve empowerment. On the other hand, the second segment deals with some of the recommendations for actual development of women in our society.

It is observed that women are deprived of basic amenities such as food. Though women are expected to render all kinds of comforts to men are still treated as secondary to men. Often it may so happen that she only ends up eating the leftover food, which is less nutritious. Moreover, the poor socio-economic status may further add on to the problem. Even inadequate health care facility also hinders the growth of women. They also lack the knowledge about the health policies and programmes available for them. Above all mental health care facilities to women are very crucial. Due to negative societal attitude, most of the women denied access to mental health care benefits. Another obstacle on the way to achieve empowerment is the poor educational facility. It is often assumed that she only needs to know the means for proper maintenance of the family for which education is not very essential. Unfortunately, most parents concentrate on the expenses than on the girl child’s

---

<sup>44</sup> Ramanaiah, T.B.B.S.V (2007), “Women Empowerment-Issues and Concerns” in M. Lakshmi pathi Raju (ed) *Women Empowerment: Strategies and Concerns*, Regal Publications, New Delhi.

growth. Even most of the women are denied the opportunity to protect their own rights. They not only bear the atrocities committed on them but also indirectly encourage men to dominate them. Along with this, work place harassments are found to be more common among women. They are not given due importance that they deserve. Above all women are the greatest victims of various forms of domestic violence. All these factors are stood on the way to achieve empowerment of women.

To mitigate above mentioned problems, the author has suggested some of the measures. There should not be any discrimination within the family. Women too have the right to take nutritious food. Health care facility must be there for women. Awareness programme must be conducted to sensitize the people about the need for health and mental care for women. Along with this, girl child should also be provided with better education facility. Only education can bring awareness. Hence, to fight against domestic violence and work place harassment women must be aware about her rights. Thus, it may be concluded it is the demand of the hour to implement all these suggestions in to real practice. For overall development of a country women must be given equal status in every respect of a society.

***“Empowering Women by Safeguarding Their Human Rights- International Standards and Indian Law”<sup>45</sup>*** is a study on empowerment and its relationship with human rights. Empowerment means to create an environment in which women can live their lives according to their wishes without being dictated by the terms of patriarchy. An appropriate environment in the family, society, political, legal and cultural sphere can thus ensure freedom which may lead to the empowerment of women. Empowerment envisages capacity building and skill development, especially to make decision, organize, manage and to deal with people and institutions. To empower women in general and to prevent human rights violation against them, efforts have been made both at the national and the international levels. The UN General Assembly has established International Research and Training

---

<sup>45</sup> Amrita Agarwal (2006), “ Empowering Women by Safeguarding their Human Rights-International Standards and Indian Law” in M.R Biju (ed) ***Human Rights in a Developing Society***, Mittal Publications, New Delhi.

Institute for Advancement of Women to carry out research, training and international activities to promote women as key agents of development. Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Convention on Political Rights of Women (1952) and many other conventions have been adopted for the improvement of the condition of women. In case of India, The National Commission for Women and the National Human Rights Commission are working in this direction. The overall study implies that safeguarding of human rights is the most essential attribute to the empowerment of women.

***“SGSY: Developing Banking Habits Among Rural Poor”***<sup>46</sup> provides an analysis of implementation of Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojna (SGSY) in four states of India viz. Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Rajasthan. Under SGSY rural poor below Poverty Line are organized into Self-Help Groups which are given assistance in the form of subsidy by the Government and loan by the banks to undertake income generating activities. In case of Uttar Pradesh, the study indicates a high performance of loan repayment by the Self-Help Group members who are earning profit by undertaking income generating activities. Jharkhand also shows a remarkable improvement in the economic condition of Self-Help Group members who are engaged in agricultural as well as animal husbandry activities. In case of West Bengal, the loan repayment performance along with profit earning is also very high. The Self-Help Group members of Rajasthan have reported a remarkable increase in the annual income of the family after their long term involvement with the group. Though the disbursement of credit to Self-Help Groups under SGSY is very low in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh in comparison to Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, positive impact of Self-Help Groups on the lives of its members is observed in all the four states under study.

---

<sup>46</sup> D.S. Chatterjee (2009), ***“SGSY: Developing Banking Habits Among Rural Poor”***, Kurukshetra, vol.57.

***“On Women’s Empowerment: Promise and Performance”***<sup>47</sup> is an analytical study to conceptualize the meaning of women empowerment. Empowerment is both a process and a result of the process. It enables women to gain access to and control of material resources. ‘Power’ is the key word of the term ‘empowerment’ which in other words means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. Empowerment is also related to attitudes, values and behaviors. Empowered women have autonomy because they claim their freedom from existing hierarchies, whether they be traditional, modern or industrial societies. They define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves. Thus it can be said that empowerment of women is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. In India, the sixth five year plan can be taken as a landmark for the cause of women because a chapter on women and development was incorporated in that plan. Along with this, in the year 1993 The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was set up to facilitate credit support and micro-finance to poor women. Further, the ninth plan put forth the concept of empowerment, which would create an environment where women can experience freedom in actual sense. To achieve this goal two prominent schemes were launched during 2001, namely, Swayamsidha and Swadhar. Swayamsidha is an integrated programme to support the empowerment of women through the network of Self-Help Groups of women, whereas Swadhar was launched to provide rehabilitation to women in difficult circumstances such as destitute widows, women prisoners from the jail and victims of sexual crime. Apart from these programmes, the Government of India made the provision of 33 percent reservation of women in the Panchayats. There is also reference of collective empowerment of women in the study. The examples of such collective empowerment are (i) Rubber block Plantation in Tripura, (ii) Tamil Nadu Women’s Development Project, (iii) Mahila Samakhya, (iii) Women’s Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood Development in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. SHGs are also considered to be an effective means of collective empowerment of women.

---

<sup>47</sup>Sachchidananda and Niraj Kumar (2006), ***“On Women’s Empowerment: Promise and Performance”***, Eastern Anthropologists, Vol-59, Number-1.

*“Micro-finance Through Self-Help Group”*<sup>48</sup> is an attempt to analyze the performance of microfinance based on secondary data. Here, focus has been put on to the performance of Self-Help Groups. Along with this, overall findings of the study has been divided in to three broad segments, namely, savings of Self-Help Groups with banks, bank loan disbursed to SHGs and recovery performance.

It is a well known fact that the habit of savings is fundamental to the SHGs and helps in building up a strong common fund. According to NABARD Report, 2006-07, it was found that the Commercial Banks had maximum share of savings of Rs. 1892.42 crore, followed by Regional Rural Banks with 1158.29 crore and Co-operative Banks with 462 crore. It was also observed that private sector commercial banks had very less share of savings from SHGs compare to other banks. As far as bank loans disbursed to SHGs were concerned, it was found that during 2006-07, the bank financed 11, 05,749 SHGs with bank loan of Rs.6, 570.39 crore. It was also observed that Commercial Banks lead in disbursement of bank loans to SHG with 59.6 per cent share followed by Regional Rural Banks with a share of 31.2 per cent and Co-operative Bank with a share of 9.1 per cent. In addition to this, repayment performance of SHGs was also taken into consideration in the present work. Repayment of loan is a matter of great concern to the formal financial institutions. It was observed that out of 290 banks, 73 per cent had more than 80 per cent of loan recovery, which is an indicator for the sustainability of the SHG programme.

To sum up, it may be said that various departments, nationalized Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Co-operative Banks and Non-Governmental Organizations have joined the movement as promoter. Though there are variations in the performance of SHGs, in spite of that no one can deny the fact that SHGs are the facilitator income generation and empowerment of rural women.

---

<sup>48</sup> U.D Patil, T.B Deokati and H.R Shinde (2010), “Micro-finance Through Self-Help Group” in J.U Ahmed, D. Bhagat and G. Singaiah (ed), *Micro-finance in India: Issues and Challenges*, DVS Publishers, Guwahati.

*“Women Empowerment Policies in India-An Overview”*<sup>49</sup> is an analytical study to understand various policies of women empowerment by Government of India. Data for the present study has been collected through secondary sources. Here, all the findings were divided in to four broad segments, namely, (i) Health and Nutrition of Women (ii) Training and Employment of Women (iii) Legal Safeguards and (iv) Gender Budgeting.

Under segment (i), it was found that the Government of India introduced Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) which include health check up for pregnant women and new mothers, immunization, pre-and post-natal care and supplementary nutrition. Under the ‘Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls’ (NPAG) special attention have been given to nutrition requirements of the potential mothers of the future. It is imperative to mention that DWCD has been operating NPAG as a pilot project in 51 districts throughout India with the ultimate objective of universalizing the scheme. As far as segment (ii) is concerned, stress was put on to number of self-employment schemes in India such as Swayamsiddha, Swavlamban and Support to Training-cum- Employment Programme (STEP). STEP is in progress where women were mobilized as workable SHGs are utilizing with the help of agencies like the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh for income generating activities. Along with this, to facilitate the employment of women away from their homes, several schemes such as working women hostels with day care centres and crèches were also created. As regards legal safeguards (section iii), it was found that National Commission for Women (NCW) safeguards the interest of women. There are about 42 Central Acts concerning women, of which 32 have been reviewed by the NCW for their efficiency and removing gender discriminatory provisions. In addition, the importance of Domestic Violence Act, 2005 cannot be neglected. It seeks to provide immediate and emergent relief to women who face situations of violence in their homes. Under segment (iv), it was found that the ten plan reinforced the commitment to gender budgeting to establish its gender differential impact and to translate gender commitments. The

---

<sup>49</sup> Kiron Mor and Rajender Kumar (2008), “Women Empowerment Policies in India-An Overview” in Anil Kumar Thakur and Dilip Kumar (ed), *Gender Empowerment and Development*, Deep and Deep Publishers Pvt.Ltd, New Delhi.



Union Expenditure Budget, 2005-06, largely meant for welfare of women and children, is Rs. 14,378.68 crore. At present, Gender Budget Cells have been set up in 35 Departments of the Government of India.

From the above findings, it may be concluded that the Government of India is constantly trying to provide opportunities and facilities to women. As women constitute the half of the total population, the overall development of our country can become possible without making women developed or in broader sense empowered.

***“Traditional Skill and Knowledge of Mongoloid Women in North East India as a Source of their Socio-Economic Development”<sup>50</sup>*** is a descriptive type of article based on secondary data. Here, an attempt has been made to understand how the knowledge of tradition of Mongoloid women could be a potential resource for socio-economic development of women in North East India. It is the home of many Mongoloid people. They may be broadly divided in to two categories-the Mongoloid of the hills and the plains. All the indigenous hill people such as the Naga, the Khasi, the Meitei, the Arunachali are Mongoloid and a great majority of the aboriginal groups of the plains such as the Ahom and other Tai groups such as Chutia, Maran, Mattak, Deori, the Singphos, the Mising, the Bodo, the Kachari, the Rabha, the Tiwa and the Koch etc are of Mongoloid origin. In all the mentioned Mongoloid groups there is one common aspect which is women occupies a distinctive position in Mongoloid society. The main occupation of the Mongoloid people is agriculture and the involvement of women in this field is crucial. Along with this, they are expert weavers. It was also found that most of the Mongoloid women are adapt in making thread from Muga and Endi worms. Apart from this, in each and every household of the Mongoloid family, women contribute to the family income through activities like animal husbandry, live-stock poultry farming, fishing, handloom, handicrafts, bamboo and wooden works and by adopting other entrepreneurial professions.

---

<sup>50</sup> Girin Phukan (2008), “Traditional Skill and Knowledge of Mongoloid Women in North East India as a source of their Socio-Economic Development” in L.S Gassah (ed) ***Women Empowerment Movement in North East India***, Omsons Publications, New Delhi.

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that traditional knowledge possessed by the women of North East India can be considered as potential resource for their socio-economic development. If this traditional knowledge could be developed and commercialized, it will definitely contribute towards the economic development of women of this region.

***“Rural Credit Delivery System: Issues and Challenges”<sup>51</sup>*** is an attempt to discuss the credit delivery system in rural India. In this article, two programmes of credit delivery are discussed in detail. These programmes are Kisan Credit Cards and Micro-finance.

It was found that rural credit system in India has been evolved from the year 1904, when the first Primary Agricultural Credit Society was organized and thereafter expanding it through nationalization of 27 Commercial Banks including State Bank and its seven subsidiaries and in the year 1996 Regional Rural Bank was established to meet the emerging needs of increasing farm output in the light of Green Revolution and poverty alleviation through implementation of Government sponsored programmes. Hence, for quickening the pace and improving the quality of institutional credit delivery of agricultural purposes and refining the crop loan system, Kisan Credit Card scheme has been introduced from the year 1998-99. The scheme envisages improvement in the loan disbursement procedure and making it simpler and easier. Farmers eligible for production credit of Rs.5000 and above are provided with a kisan credit card and a pass book. The KCC is also linked with Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojna to safeguard the interest of farmers. As regards micro-finance, it was found that NABARD was the pioneer in this respect. Its SHG-Bank Linkage Programme has improved the economic and social conditions of members through positive impact on the level of asset building, access to credit, savings and self confidence. The programme has brought down the transaction cost for the banks as well as borrowers with extremely high rate of recovery (95 per cent) as the

---

<sup>51</sup>A.R Patil (2004), “Rural Credit Delivery System: Issues and Challenges” in Sawalia Bihari Verma (ed) *Role of Self-Help Groups, NGOs and Panchayati Raj Institutions in Promoting Rural India*, Indus Valley Publications, Jaipur.

members themselves provide constant watch on the day to day activity of the borrowers. In addition to this, there are some of the challenges of rural credit delivery system such as complex procedure of credit giving system and weak regulatory system. Therefore, it is the urgent need to easy credit facility with simple procedure. Besides, rural credit system should play a development bankers role rather than traditional and conservative role of a money lender.

***“Micro-finance and Empowerment of Women: A Study of Warangal District”***<sup>52</sup> is an empirical work carried out in Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh. The primary objective of this study is to assess the impact of micro-finance on rural women. It was based on primary and secondary data. 300 women SHG members were chosen with the help of random sampling method.

It was found that majority of the respondents (76 per cent) joined in SHG after 2005. The main reason for forming and joining in SHG is to achieve economic freedom and to achieve decision making capacity regarding family matters. In addition to this, it was also found that institutional credit facilities are improved with the formation of SHGs. Along with this, with the formation of SHGs, employment opportunities were significantly increased. Hence, it may be said that respondents were benefitted by participating in to the SHG programme. In addition to this, the present study also provided some suggestions. These are: SHG members should be helped thoroughly to have knowledge of establishing micro-enterprise, management of group activity and marketing. In this context, it may be said that provision of providing micro-finance is not sufficient. Additional services like training, awareness raising programmes, and workshop are also equally significant for the success of SHG programme in general and women empowerment in particular.

---

<sup>52</sup> T. Narasimhulu and M.Ashok Kumar (2011), ***“Micro-finance and Empowerment of Women: A Study of Warangal District”***, Orient Journal of Law and Social Sciences, Vol-V, Issue-6.

***“Self-Help Groups: A Vehicle to Empower Rural Women”***<sup>53</sup> is an analytical study based on secondary data. In this paper there is a detailed discussion about the meaning of empowerment and the relationship between Self-Help Groups and women empowerment. The word ‘empowerment’ is widely used in relation to women. The dictionary meaning of the term ‘empowerment’ is to give power, to give them capacity to perform some physical or mental activity, to delegate authority, to give legal rights, to enable, to entitle and to endow. The process of empowerment deals with how to empower women and what they need to become empowered. In this context, women must be provided with certain essential needs such as equal access to resources like educational opportunities, credit and property. Awareness among women about the existing gender discrimination and gender inequality is most important in empowering them. Along with this, equal participation of women in the decision making leads to empowerment.

In our society women’s empowerment is taken as a synonym with equality in the society. Self-Help Groups are playing an active role in achieving empowerment. These groups are mostly informal groups whose members pool savings and re-lend within the group on rotational basis. SHGs are organized in the selected villages for economic and social development and to get community participation in all rural development programmes. SHGs encourage women to take active part in the socio-economic progress of our nation.

In short, Self- Help Groups (SHGs) empowers women and trains them to take active part in the socio-economic progress of the nation. The SHGs motivate women to empower themselves and lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women groups but also for the family and community as whole through collective action for development.

---

<sup>53</sup>V. Hari Babu (2011), “Self-Help Groups: A Vehicle to Empower Rural Women” in D. Pulla Rao (ed) *Women of Disadvantaged Groups: Status and Empowerment*, Serial Publications, New Delhi.

On the basis of the above review, it may be said that Self-Help Groups are playing an important role in the empowerment of women. It has become an agent of change that has brought about remarkable changes in the lives of the rural poor women. It is thus obvious that a further study of the role of SHGs will help to understand the correlation between SHG and the empowerment in a better way, thereby paving the path for a real change in the status of women.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To understand the socio-economic impact of the SHGs on the lives of women.
2. To understand the impact of SHGs in developing entrepreneurial skill and capacity of women.
3. To understand the impact of SHGs in increasing the decision-making ability of women.
4. To examine the factors, if any, that deters women from joining SHGs.
5. To suggest appropriate measures for the better functioning of the SHGs.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

- I. Does the Self-Help Group play a role in empowering women?
- II. Does participation in SHG change the pattern of participation of women in the decision making process within the family and the society?
- III. Does the SHG help in developing entrepreneurial ability and leadership capacity among women?
- IV. Does there exist any difference in the level of empowerment of women working in two different types of SHGs?
- V. Is there any relationship between women's participation in SHGs and children's education in the family?

## METHODOLOGY

### a) Sample:

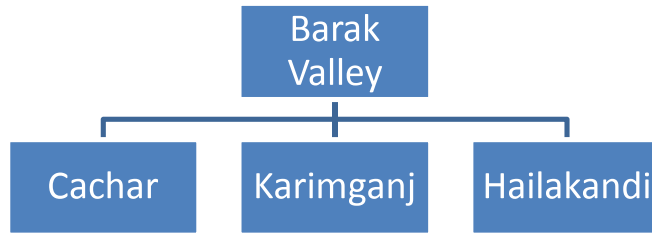
Present study was conducted in Barak Valley. In Barak Valley, there are 27 Development Blocks (Cachar-15, Karimganj-7 and Hailakandi-5). Out of these 27 Development Blocks, 10 Blocks (Cachar-5, Karimganj-3 and Hailakandi-2) were selected by purposive sampling in terms of development, demographic feature and literacy rate from the 3 districts of Barak Valley. As the number of SHGs was more in the district of Cachar, the larger numbers of blocks were selected from Cachar district. From Cachar District 5 Developmental Blocks were selected. 3 Blocks were selected from Karimganj District and from Hailakandi District 2 Blocks have been selected for the purpose of the study.

After the selection of the Blocks, 5 SHGs were selected from each Development Block by purposive sampling technique from the list of SHGs available in the District Rural Development Agency of each District. In each block along with 4 female dominated SHGs, 1 mixed type of SHG was selected. As the number of members in SHGs generally remains between 10-15, the selection of 50 percent of respondents has made from SHGs constituted by females only, while from the mixed types, all the women members of the group were selected. This was done as the number of female members generally remains within 5-7 in mixed type of SHGs. The selection of respondents in this process led to a sample of 282.

**Table: 1.01 Number of Respondents Classified in Terms of Type of Groups**

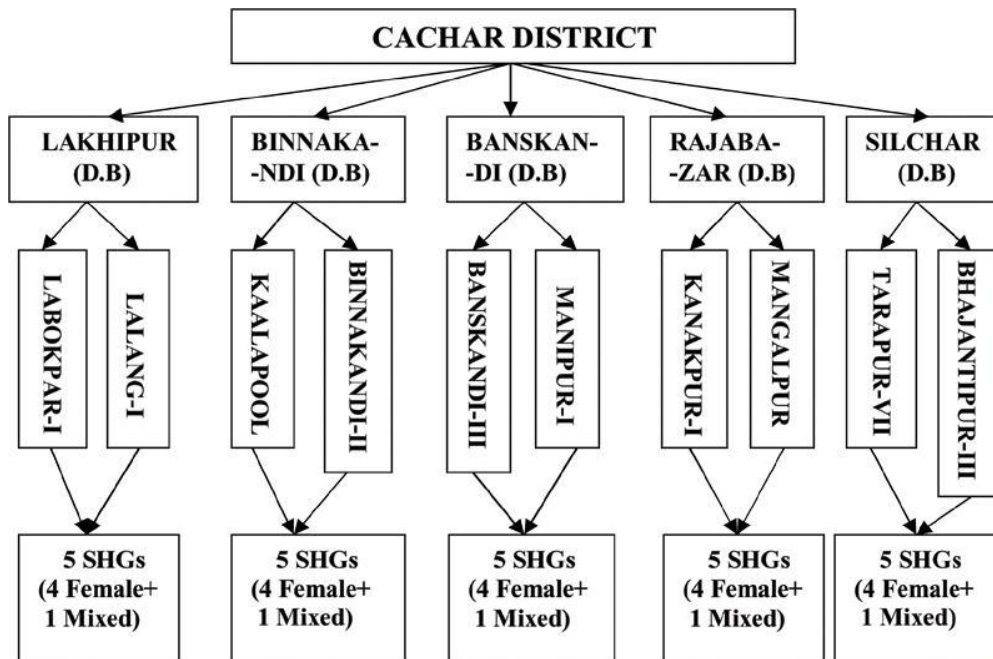
DISTRICT	DEVELOPMENT BLOCK	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		TOTAL
		FEMALE SHGs	MIXED SHGs	
Cachar	5	113	30	143
Karimganj	3	63	20	83
Hailakandi	2	44	12	56
Total	10	220	62	282

**b) Sampling Design:**



In Barak Valley, there are 3 Districts namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. In the following 3 diagrams an attempt has been made to provide the selection procedure of Development Blocks (D.B), villages and Self-Help Groups.

**Diagram:1**

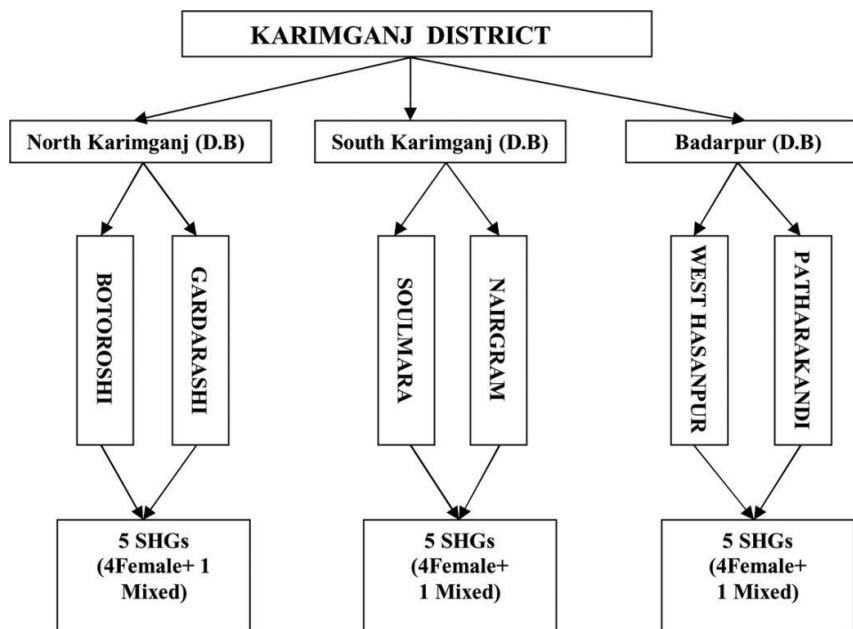


In the first diagram, sampling design from Cachar District has been given. As it is mentioned earlier that 5 Development Blocks have been selected for the purpose of the study with the help of purposive sampling. These Development Blocks were Lakhipur, Binnakandi, Banskandi, Rajabazar and Silchar. From each Development

Block 5 Self-Help Groups (1 mixed Group and 4 female groups) were elected purposively (only functional SHGs). In this context, it is important to mention here that as the number of Mixed SHG is very limited in all the 3 districts and also absent in some of the villages of selected Development Blocks of Barak Valley, 2 villages were selected for the purpose of selection of SHGs. Labokpar-I and Lalang-I was the selected villages under Lakhipur Development Block. Similarly, Kalapool and Binnakandi-II was under Binnakandi Development Block. Under Banskandi and Rajabazar Development Block the selected villages were Banskandi-III, Manipur-I, Kanakpur-I and Mangalpur respectively. Tarapur-VII and Bhajantipur-III was the selected villages under Silchar Development Block.

Similarly, under Karimganj District 3 Development Blocks have been selected purposively, namely, North Karimganj, South Karimganj and Badarpur Development Block. Under North Karimganj Development Block, Botoroshi and Gardarashi were the names of the villages from where SHGs (both female and mixed group) were selected. Soulmara and Nairgram were the selected villages of South Karimganj Development Block and under Badarpur Development Block West Hasanpur and Patharakandi village were selected for the selection of SHGs.

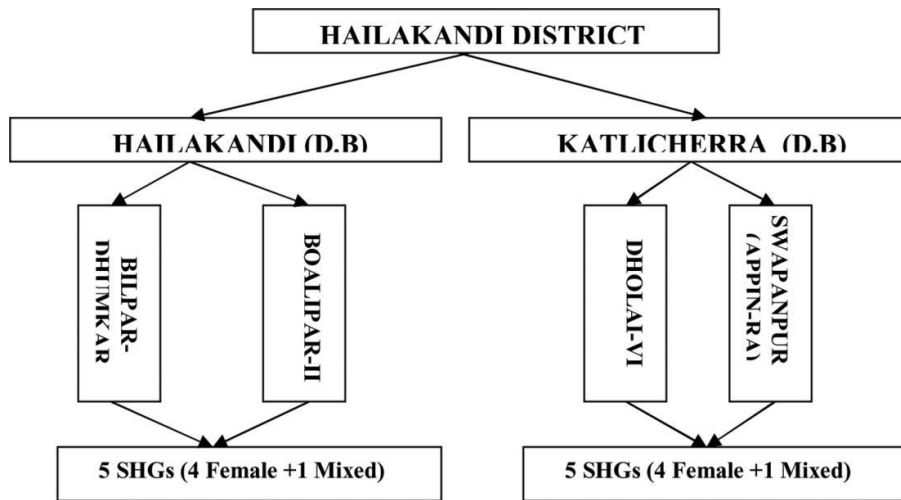
**Diagram:2**





In case of Hailakandi District 2 Development Blocks have been selected for the purpose of the study. These were Hailakandi and Katlicherra. 5 SHGs (1 mixed and 4 female) were selected from each Development Block of Hailakandi District. Under Hailakandi Development Block SHGs were selected from Bilpar-Dhumkar and Boalipar-II village. Similarly, Dholai-VI and Swapanpur (Appin-RA) were the selected villages under Katlicherra Development Block.

**Diagram:3**



**c) Estimation Procedure:**

To estimate the socio-economic impact of SHGs, certain parameters like increase in monthly income of the respondents, increase in food security, share of the respondent to the household income, changes in decision making, changes in socio-political consciousness and participation has been considered. Such information as regards women's participation in the SHGs has been collected with the help of interview schedule.

#### **d) Techniques of Data Collection:**

Data for the present study was collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through two structured interview schedules, namely, Interview Schedule (Schedule-I) and Village Schedule (Schedule-II). Schedule-(I) was used to collect data relating to the general information of the respondents, information regarding respective Self-Help Groups and empowerment related information. Schedule-(II) was used to collect information related to the particular village from where SHGs were selected. This includes information related to the demographic profile, literacy rate, facilities available in the village and Self-Help Group related information. Schedule-(I) was directly administer to the respondents, on the other hand, information under Schedule-(II) was gathered from Block Development Office and Gaon Panchayat Office. Besides, books, journals, periodicals and internet sources have been used for the purpose of gathering secondary data.

### **CHAPTERIZATION**

For an elaborate presentation of the findings, the thesis has been divided in to six chapters.

#### **Chapter-1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the present study under the following heads:

- Statement of the Problem
- Conceptual Framework of the Study
- Review of Literature
- Objective of the Study
- Research Questions
- Methodology
- Chapterization

## **Chapter-2 Self-Help Groups and Micro-finance- Achievements and Failures**

This Chapter provides a brief outline of the evolution of the micro-finance programme in India, its credit delivery model and short description about different Micro-finance programme operating in the country. Here, special focus has been made on SHG-Bank Linkage Programme. Along with this, some important points related to the achievements and failures of the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme were also discussed.

## **Chapter-3 Micro-finance and Women Empowerment: A Comparative Study of India and Abroad**

It presents a global scenario of micro finance programme based on secondary data. Over the past few decades, micro-finance has been experienced in many developing countries. Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI) in Indonesia, Bancosol in Bolivia, Bank for Agricultural and Agricultural Co-operatives (BAAC) in Thailand, Grameen Bank and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) of Bangladesh, NABARD in India, Amannah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) of Malaysia, Agriculture Development Bank of Nepal (ADBN), K-Rep in Kenya and Milbano in Peru have gained encouraging results in alleviation of poverty and women empowerment through micro-finance. Here, an attempt has been made to make an elaborate comparative study of micro-finance and women empowerment in India with some other countries of the world like Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Uganda and Ghana.

## **Chapter-4 Setting and Sample**

It gives a short profile of the Barak Valley. As it comprises three districts namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, it is imperative to mention separately the demography of all the districts of Barak Valley.

Besides, a brief description of the villages from where SHGs were selected for the study has been given in terms of demography, literacy, SHG related informations (such as, number of both the types of group, total number of SHG members, number of non-functional SHG and so on) and other facilities available in the villages.

#### **Chapter-5 Analysis of Data and Interpretation**

It provides an empirical analysis of the selected Self-Help Group members from female and mixed type of SHGs. Here, an attempt has been made to assess the impact of the SHGs on the lives of women in two different types of SHGs (female and mixed). This chapter also provides suggestions for the better functioning of the SHGs.

#### **Chapter-6 Findings and Conclusions**

This chapter presents the summary of the study with its major findings. Besides, the limitations of the study and scope for further research are also discussed in this chapter.