

## RESEARCH NOTE

## Social Empowerment of Women Self Help Group Members Engaged in Livestock Rearing

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study was conducted in Ranchi district of Jharkhand to assess the social empowerment of Women Self Help Group members engaged in livestock rearing. Data were collected from 140 members of twelve randomly selected groups through structured interview schedule. The study revealed that majority of the members were middle aged, illiterate, belonging to Scheduled Tribe category, having small sized family, low level of extension contact and mass media exposure and possessing marginal land holding with agriculture as primary occupation. Half of the groups had taken pig rearing, one-third had taken goat rearing and rest (16.67%) had taken cattle rearing as their income generating activities with involvement of only some of the members in all. The study also revealed a leap of change in the social empowerment of the members after joining the groups. There was a positive and significant change in self confidence level, participation in decision making within family and social participation of the members. On the other hand there was a positive but non-significant change in economic independency, control over their income and participation of the members in decision making at group or community level.*

**Key words:** Income generating activity; Livestock rearing; Social empowerment, Women Self Help Group;

Micro-finance has, in recent times, come to be recognized and accepted as one of the new development paradigms for alleviating poverty through social and economic empowerment of the poor (*Puhazhendi and Badatya, 2002*). Indian micro-finance sector dominated by Self Help Groups (SHGs) addresses issues like actualizing equitable gains from the development and fighting poverty. It enables poor people especially women to grow their savings and access the credit which banks are increasingly willing to lend. It enhances equality of status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. Hence, the present study was undertaken to assess the social empowerment of Women Self Help Group (WSHG) members who have taken livestock rearing as Income Generating Activity (IGA).

### METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in purposively selected three blocks viz. Angara, Kanke and Ormanjhi of Ranchi district of Jharkhand owing to the presence of large number of WSHGs involved in livestock rearing.

Two government promoted and two NGOs promoted WSHGs engaged in livestock rearing were randomly selected from each block. Thus, a total of twelve WSHGs were selected for the study. Data were collected by personal interview techniques through a pre-designed interview schedule. Social empowerment includes variables such as economic independency, control over income, self confidence, decision making skills and social participation. The change in the social empowerment status of the respondents was assessed by measuring the variables at pre and post-SHG situations. Statistical analysis was done by paired *t*-test (*Snedecor and Cochran, 1994*) to draw the inferences.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Socio-economic characteristics of WSHG members:* The results in Table 1 revealed that majority of the members were from middle age group (53.6%), about 61.4 per cent were belonging to Scheduled Tribe category, while 75.7 per cent members were illiterate and about 51.4 per cent members were having small families. Majority of the members (67.9%) were

marginal farmers and majority (57.1%) were having agriculture as primary occupation. About 51.4 per cent members had 6-10 years experience in animal husbandry while majority (62.1%) of the members had annual household income upto Rs. 25,000. Table 1 also revealed that significantly higher percentage of the members had low level of extension contact (80.7%) and mass media exposure (89.3%).

*Income Generating Activities of WSHGs:* A perusal of Table 2 indicates that half of the WSHGs had taken pig rearing, one-third had taken goat rearing and rest (16.67%) had taken cattle rearing as their IGAs. The possible reason for taking pig and goat rearing by majority of the groups could be due to the fact that small animal farming is more popular as compared to large animal farming in the study area and also for starting these, it requires small amount of investment. IGAs provide substantial employment and income to the members of SHGs which is very essential for their economic empowerment.

**Table 2. Income Generating Activities (IGAs) of the WSHGs**

Income Generating Activity (IGA)	No.	%
Cattle rearing	2	16.7
Goat rearing	4	33.3
Pig rearing	6	50.0
Total	12	100.0

*Change in social empowerment status:*

*Economic independency:* The level of sufficiency of income to meet their own needs is an important indicator to measure the social empowerment which might be reflected by the economic independency of WSHG members. A perusal of Table 3 reveals that few members who had insufficient economic independency earlier moved to partially sufficient level after joining the groups. This might be due to their ability to generate income from the economic activities taken up by them after joining the groups. However, there was a positive but non-significant change in the economic independency of the members after joining the groups. The reason attributed by the members for this was that the income earned by them was not sufficient for their livelihood. Also, a large number of the members were not involved in any IGAs.

*Control over income:* It refers to the freedom of the respondent in spending the money earned through SHG activities i.e. how much to spend on what purpose. It is evident from Table 3 that few members who had no

**Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

Variables	No.	Mean	SD
<i>Age</i>		36.99	±9.33
Young (<31 years)	43 (30.7)		
Middle (31-50 years)	75 (53.6)		
Old (>50 years)	22 (15.7)		
<i>Category</i>		-	-
ST	86 (61.4)		
SC	10 (7.2)		
OBC	44 (31.4)		
General	0 (0.00)		
<i>Education</i>		1.42	±0.85
Illiterate	106 (75.7)		
Primary	16 (11.4)		
Middle School	12 (8.6)		
High School	5 (3.6)		
Intermediate	1 (0.7)		
Graduate & above	0 (0.0)		
<i>Size of family</i>		6.06	±2.65
Small (<6 members)	72 (51.4)		
Medium (6-9 members)	50 (35.7)		
Large (>9 members)	18 (12.9)		
<i>Occupation</i>		-	-
Agriculture	80 (57.1)		
Agricultural labour	10 (7.2)		
Non-agricultural labour	44 (31.4)		
Trade and commerce	6 (4.3)		
<i>Land holding</i>		1.17	±1.07
Landless (No land)	38 (27.1)		
Marginal (0.1-2.5 acres)	95 (67.9)		
Small (2.6-5.0 acres)	7 (5.0)		
Medium (5.1-10.0 acres)	0 (0.0)		
Large (>10.0 acres)	0 (0.0)		
<i>Annual income (Rs.)</i>		24,142.86	±4214.69
Upto 25,000	87 (62.1)		
25,001-30,000	40 (28.6)		
30,001-35,000	13 (9.3)		
Above 35,000	0 (0.0)		
<i>Experience in AH practices</i>		11.00	±6.28
1-5 years	24 (17.2)		
6-10 years	72 (51.4)		
Above 10 years	44 (31.4)		
<i>Extension contact</i>		4.28	±2.56
Low (<7 scores)	113 (80.7)		
Medium (7-12 scores)	27 (19.3)		
High (>12 scores)	0 (0.0)		
<i>Mass media exposure</i>		3.46	±2.82
Low (<9 scores)	125 (89.3)		
Medium (9-16 scores)	15 (10.7)		
High (>16 scores)	0 (0.0)		

Figures given in parentheses indicate percentages

**Table 3. Change in social empowerment status of WSHG members**

Variables	Pre-SHG		Post-SHG		Differ. of MS
	No.	MS	No.	MS	
Eco. independency		1.49		1.55	0.06
Insufficient	81 (57.9)		73 (52.2)		
Partially sufficient	49 (35.0)		57 (40.7)		
Sufficient	10 (7.1)		10 (7.1)		
Control over income		1.82		1.88	0.06
No control	55 (39.3)		48 (34.3)		
Moderate control	55 (39.3)		62 (44.3)		
Full control	30 (21.4)		30 (21.4)		
Self confidence		1.51		1.87	0.36**
Not confident	89 (63.6)		43 (30.7)		
Moderately confident	30 (21.4)		71 (50.7)		
Highly confident	21 (15.0)		26 (18.6)		
Decision making		1.92		2.19	0.27**
Within family					
No participation	33 (23.6)		21 (15.0)		
Partial participation	84 (60.0)		71 (50.7)		
Full participation	23 (16.4)		48 (34.3)		
At group or community		1.11		1.21	0.10
No participation	124 (88.6)		111 (79.3)		
Partial participation	16 (11.4)		29 (20.7)		
Full participation	00 (0.0)		00 (0.0)		
Social participation		1.18		1.45	0.27**
No participation	114 (81.4)		76 (54.3)		
Participation in meetings	26 (18.6)		64 (45.7)		

Figures given in parentheses indicate percentages

\*\*Significant at ( $P < 0.01$ )

control over their income earlier moved to moderate control over their income after joining the groups. However, there was a positive but non-significant change in the level of control over income of the respondents even after joining the groups. Non-significant change in the control of the members over their income revealed that still there was male domination on the expenditure of incomes. The findings of this study are in conformity with the findings of *Rajasekhar (2002)* who reported that the member group was not significantly different from the comparison group in terms of control over income.

**Self confidence:** Table 3 reveals that majority of the members' belonged to moderately confident category, considerable number of members belonged to not confident category even after joining the groups. Overall, there was a positive and significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) increase in the self confidence level of the respondents after joining the groups. This increase could be due to the

fact that they got an opportunity to improve their hidden talents after involvement in the entrepreneurial and other activities of the groups. *Murugan and Dharmalingam (2000)* found that the members gained confidence from an increase in their relative financial independence and security. Similarly, *Sharma and Varma (2008)* reported that there was an increase in self confidence, self reliance and independence of rural women due to the involvement in the entrepreneurial and other activities of SHGs. Moreover, the awareness created by the SHG promoting agencies via trainings, workshops and informal interaction about the political, social and economic situation of women increased their self confidence. Similar findings were reported by *Puhazhendi and Badatya (2002)* who observed that only 21 per cent of the households exuded confidence during pre-SHG situation, which was improved to 78 per cent during post-SHG situation.

**Decision making:** Decision making ability is another important indicator of social empowerment. The decision making ability was looked into from two angles, namely within the family and in the group. Table 3

shows that there was a visible change that had occurred in the level of participation of members in the decision making process within the family. The members who had not participated earlier in any decisions pertaining to their family matters started participating after joining the groups. Overall, there was a positive and significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) increase in the participation of members in the decision making process within the family after joining the groups. This might be due to the recognition of their abilities after participating in IGAs by other family members. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of *Pandian and Eswaren (2002)* who reported increased participation of the respondents in the decision making process within their families after joining SHGs.

It is evident from Table 3 that only few members who had not participated earlier in any decision making process at group or community level started participating partially after joining the groups. However, there was

no significant improvement in the decision making ability of majority of the members at group or community level. Non-significant change in participation of the WSHG members in decision making at group or community level could be due to the reasons that in every SHG, there were only two or three active members, who were reported to perform all outside activities of the SHG, such as banking transactions, marketing and attending training etc. at Block Development Officer (BDO) and District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) office. All other group members being only the passive members performed their tasks at village level only.

*Social participation:* Participation of members in public meetings other than SHG meetings is another notable indicator that reflects the members' ability in establishing outside contact. The findings clearly indicate that there was a significant increase in the number of respondents participating in few public meetings after joining the groups. However, there was no improvement in the number of respondents participating in all public meetings. Overall, there was a positive and significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) increase in the social participation of members after joining the groups. SHGs brought these members out of box to the public spheres where they were given lot of opportunities to understand the situations of outside

world and increased their social participation. Similar findings were reported by Vashisht *et al.* (2008).

## CONCLUSION

Today thousands of rural women are rewriting the definition of empowerment entirely on their own terms, giving a new face to initiatives that benefit the community by tightly holding to the concept of SHGs. The study also revealed a leap of change in the social empowerment of the members after joining the SHGs. There was a positive and significant change in self confidence level, participation in decision making within family and social participation of the WSHG members. On the other hand there was a positive but non-significant change in economic independency, control over their income and participation of the members in decision making at group or community level. Hence, it can be concluded that SHGs as a tool for social development, if managed and implemented properly, can undoubtedly play significant roles in empowering the poor and in transforming the social status of the marginalized poor.

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