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**KEYWORDS :****INTRODUCTION:**

Self-help groups are generally facilitated by NGOs, and increasingly advise and train members in a variety of on- and off-farm income-generating activities. Indeed, in a number of recent projects, NGOs were substituted by trained facilitators and animators drawn from self-help groups. Poverty and unemployment are the major problems of any under developed countries, to which India is no exception.

Generally, a 'Self Help Group' (SHG) is formed when members of a community, who have the same or similar problem, come together, meet, share experiences, have discussions, and thereby arrive at solutions. The origin of SHGs is from the brainchild of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which was founded by Mohammed Yunus. SHGs were started and formed in 1975. In India NABARD is initiated in 1986-87. But the real effort was taken after 1991-92 from the linkage of SHGs with the banks.

SHG is a small group of rural poor, who have voluntarily come forward to form a group for improvement of the or social and economic status of the members. It can be formal (registered) or informal (unregistered). The concept underlines the principle of Thrift, Credit and Self Help. Members of SHG agree to save regularly and contribute to a common fund. The members agree to use this common fund and such other funds (like grants and loans from banks), which they may receive as a group, to give small loans to needy members as per the decision of the group.

A SHG is a small economically homogeneous affinity group of the rural poor voluntarily coming together to save small amount regularly, which are deposited in a common fund to meet members emergency needs and to provide collateral free loans decided by the group. (Abhaskumar Jha 2000).

They have been recognized as useful tool to help the poor and as an alternative mechanism to meet the urgent credit needs of poor through thrift (V. M. Rao 2002).

SHG is a media for the development of saving habit among the women (S. Rajamohan 2003).

SHGs enhance the equality of status of women as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. (Ritu Jain 2003).

The basic principles of the SHGs are group approach, mutual trust, organization of small and manageable groups, group cohesiveness, spirit of thrift, demand based lending, collateral free, women friendly loan, peer group pressure in repayment, skill training capacity building and empowerment (N.Lalitha).

From the previous studies related to SHGs, it is clearly understood that the SHGs are tool to promote rural savings and gainful employment. Through this the rural poverty is reduced considerably. Therefore women members are economically independent and their contribution to household income is also increased. The present study is also focusing the economic improvement of women after them joining SHGs.

**OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective of the present study is to analysis the economic empowerment of women through SHGs in Ramdurg Taluka of Belgaum district. However more specifically:

1. The study aims at understanding the income, expenditure and

savings of the members after joining SHGs.

2. The study aims to know the role of SHGs in providing rural credit.

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study has covered the three villages from Ramdurg Taluka of Belgaum district of Karnataka Viz., Huligoppa, Sureban, and Gonnagar. These three villages were selected for this study, because of the SHGs in these villages are functioning very successful manner. Therefore these villages were selected for the present study.

This study is compiled with the help of the primary data, which covered only one month of i. e., January 2023. For the study the primary data was collected with the help of interview schedule prepared by me. The schedule included the questions pertaining to the general information about the SHGs members, income, expenditure, savings and loan schemes available to SHGs' members. Totally 134 respondents were selected from 11 SHGs of three villages. Simple random sapling method was used to collect information. The sample size was 1/3 of the total members in the SHGs. This is purely a descriptive study. Therefore no special models and tools were used; only percentage and average were used for the analysis.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

The present study is related to the economic empowerment of women in Ramdurg taluka. For this study three villages were selected.

This section deals the economic advancement of women with the active participation in SHGs. In the study area totally 11 major SHGs are functioning with 403 members (Table-1). From the 403 members 134 respondents were selected for the study.

**Table 1 – Membership In SHGs**

Sl.No.	Name of the Village	No. of SHGs	Total Members
1.	Huligoppa	3	126
2.	Sureban	4	142
3.	Gonnagar	4	135
	Total	11	403

**Age Group of Members of SHGs**

There is interrelation between age and socio-economic activities of the people. The young and middle age group people can actively participate in the socio-economic activities, which is true in the activities of SHGs in the study area. In the present study, the respondents of 20-30 years, 30-40 years and 40-50 years age groups are actively participated in the SHGs activities (Table –2). The aged people (40-50) are also in the SHGs, their part is also significant for SHGs. They can control and solve the problems arise in the groups.

**Table-2 Age Group Of Members Of SHGs**

Sl.No.	Age Group	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 20	6	4.46
2.	20-30	30	22.39
3.	30-40	32	23.88
4.	40-50	36	26.87
5.	50-60	18	13.43
6.	Above 60	12	8.96
	Total	134	100.00

**Reasons for Joining SHGs**

The important role of the SHGs is to promote savings and to sanction credit for the productive and consumption purposes to the needy women, which helps for their economic advancement. This is true because many people in the study area joins the SHGs for getting loans and promote their personal savings, in addition to get social status

Table – 3. In the study area many people (43.28%) joins the SHGs for getting financial assistance, 32.84% of the respondents joins the SHGs for the social status, because SHGs give the identify to the members. 14.92% of the respondents join for improving their savings. For social, cultural and political improvement (other reasons 8.96%) some members join in the SHGs.

**Table – 3 Reasons for Joining SHGs**

Sl. No.	Reasons	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	For getting loan	58	43.28
2.	For promoting savings	20	14.92
3.	For social status	44	32.84
4.	For other reasons	12	8.96
	Total	134	100.00

#### Income Level of the Members

Income is the major determinant of the standard of living of the people. The SHGs member income has been increased after joining the SHGs. Hence women members of the groups are independent to meet their personal expenditure and they contribute more to their household income. Many housewives (22.39%) did not earn anything before joining SHGs, but after a member of the SHGs, they are also earning reasonably. This increases the willingness to participate in the SHGs' activities (Table – 4). Many women members independently involve in the economic activities individually and with other group members after joining SHGs. Therefore they are now economically independent and contribute to increase their household income.

**Table 4 Monthly Income Of The Members Before And After Joining SHGs**

Sl. No.	Before Joining SHGs		After Joining SHGs		
	Monthly Income Rs.	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 1000	16	11.95	5	3.73
2.	1000-2000	25	18.66	26	19.40
3.	2000-3000	42	31.34	45	33.58
4.	3000-4000	4	2.96	14	10.45
5.	4000-5000	10	7.46	33	24.63
6.	5000-6000	5	3.75	6	4.48
7.	Above 6000	2	1.49	3	2.23
8.	Non-earning members	30	22.39	2	1.49
	Total	134	100.00	134	100.00

#### Expenditure Of The SHG Members Family

The family expenditure has been increased as a result of positive change in the SHGs members' income. The income not only enhanced the expenditure of the family but also promoted the savings of the family after their joining in the SHGs. Here the objective of the SHGs is fulfilled. This is a achievement of the women SHGs in the study area (Table – 5). Usually working women are being respected by the household members and the society. Now-a-days the women in the SHGs are also respected by the others, because they are independent in earning the income and they are contributing to household income, expenditure and savings. Therefore the above discussion clearly stated that after joining in the SHGs, the members' well-being has been increased.

**Table – 5 Monthly Family Expenditure Of The Members Before And After Joining SHGs**

Sl. No.	Monthly Income Rs.	Before Joining SHGs		After Joining SHGs	
		No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 1000	45	33.58	21	15.67
2.	1000-2000	56	41.79	35	26.12
3.	2000-3000	25	18.66	44	32.84
4.	3000-4000	5	3.73	25	18.65
5.	Above 4000	3	2.24	9	6.72
	Total	134	100.00	134	100.00

#### Rural Credit and SHGs

One of the reasons for joining SHGs is to avails credit (V.M. Rao 2002), which is true in the present study area. The second objective of the present is to know the rural credit by SHGs. This part is discussed the rural credit and SHGs in study area. The credit organizations like nationalized banks, Co-operative Societies and so on, follow many formalities to provide credit to the rural people. At the same time village money lenders change very high rate of interest. In this

situation SHGs are the boon to the rural people, because instead of approaching banks individual, SHGs can easily approach the banks and other institutions to get loan. The SHGs get loan from credit institutions then, they refinance to the members in the SHGs. The SHGs charge reasonable interest. In the study the prevailing interest rate is 2% to 6%. All the members are responsible to repay the loan to the banks. Therefore members are repaid the loan in time. (Table – 8). Moreover banks instruct the members to save minimum Rs. 500 per month. So re-payment is very easy to SHGs. The loans can be used by individual group members for their personal needs, sometime the group may invest on any economic activities. Nowadays many SHGs are starting small business, cottage industries, food processing units etc. The SHGs in the study area grant the loan to their member for various purposes. The maximum loan amount per members is decided by the general body meeting (Table – 6). Almost all the members in the study area are availing the loan facilities in their SHGs (Table – 7).

**Table – 6 Types Of Loans In The SHGs**

Sl.No.	Types of the Loan	Maximum amount Rs.
1.	Business Loan	20,000 to 25,000
2.	Marriage Loan	Upto 20,000
3.	Repay the old Loan	10,000 to 15,000
4.	Medical Loan	10,000 to 15,000
5.	House repairing Loan	Upto 5,000
6.	Cattle Loan	5,000 to 7,500

Note: The rate of interest is 2% to 6%. It varies from group to group.

**Table – 7 Amount Of Loan Availed By The Members Through SHGs**

Sl.No.	Availed Loan Amount Rs.	No. of	Percentage
1.	Less than 5,000	23	17.16
2.	5,000 to 10,000	28	20.90
3.	10,000 to 15,000	29	21.64
4.	15,000 to 20,000	35	26.12
5.	Above 20,000	19	14.18
	Total	134	100.00

**Table – 8 Repayment Of Loan By SHGs' Members**

Sl.No.	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Repayment in time	86	64.18
2.	Repayment in advance	25	18.66
3.	Repayment not in time	23	17.16
	Total	134	100.00

#### CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken the women empowerment through SHGs. It is found that the income of the women has been increased after joining the SHGs, so that the monthly household expenditure also has been raised to a considerable level. But the savings is increasing at slow rate, because the incremental expenditure is higher. Mostly they are spending for present consumption. The members should change it. The good practice of the women SHGs in the study area is repayment of the loan in time. Nearly 64% of the debtor paid their monthly due with in the time, even some members 19% paid their due in advance. A few members do not pay in time but this is not affecting the further credit of SHGs. Since the repayment of loan is regular and within the time, it may be concluded that the economic activities of SHGs are quite successful. In this way SHGs in Ramdurg Taluka of Belgaum district are very successful to develop women empowerment and rural areas.

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