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## Women Empowerment Thorough Self Help Groups- A Case Study of Nizamabad District of Andhra Pradesh

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### **Abstract**

*The present study is an attempt to analyse the role and performance of SHGs in promoting women's empowerment in Nizamabad of Andhra Pradesh. The broad objective of the study is to analyses the operating system of SHGs for mobilization of saving, delivery of credit to the needy, management of group funds, repayment of loans, in building up leadership, establishing linkage with banks and examine the social benefits derived by the members. In order to collect and gather primary data, field observation and structured questionnaire survey methods were employed. In addition, information was also collected through discussions and interviews with local NGOs and government's grass roots level workers. There are 281 SHGs working in Nizamabd district. Here the researcher has chosen 10 SHGs from each Mandle of the district. In total the study covers 50 SHGs with 800 members. The study reveals that SHGs had set a new agenda for financial intermediation by banks in the form of micro-credit. By the formation of SHGs, credits are demanded for various purposes (domestic, health, festivals, repayment of old debts, investment, etc.). Similarly different economic activities (collection, processing and marketing of minor*

*forest products, individual business, goatery, dairy etc.) are undertaken by the SHG members after joining the group. Habits of savings, economic independence, self confidence, social cohesion, asset ownership, freedom from debt, additional employment, etc. benefits are derived by the SHG members. Thus, SHGs have served the cause of women empowerment, social solidarity and socio-economic betterment of the poor for their consolidation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Kabeer, 2001). Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels – individual, household, community and societal – and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors (e.g. exposure to new activities, which can build capacities) and removing inhibiting factors (e.g. lack of resources and skills). In this connection Micro-finance with Self Help Groups play an effective role for promoting women empowerment. It is not only an efficient tool to fight against poverty, but also as a means of promoting the empowerment of the most marginalized sections of the population, especially women. According to Ellie Bosch it is just old wine in a new bottle (Bosch, 2002).

It consists of a group of people of three to eight persons on the condition that each of them would be assuming responsibility for the development of all. Micro Finance institution started in India in 1980s through Self Help Groups (SHGs) model. It is the Grameen replication model of Bangladesh. There is nearly 3,00,000 SHGs working whole over India. It is true that the concept of microfinance is yet to spread its wings all over India, but at the rate in which it is expanding its branches, very soon it would be reaching at the doorsteps of the poor houses. The most

successful region for microfinance is the Southern part of India; Andhra Pradesh has become the example for the other states in this case. The present study is an attempt in this direction to analyse the impact of micro-credit on poor women in Gajapati district of Orissa.

## **2. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT OF IN INDIA:**

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population. As per as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places, through in the western countries women are treated on par with men in most of the fields, their counterpart in the east suffers from many disabilities. The disabilities on the one hand and the inequalities between men and women on the other, have given rise to what is known "Gender problem". All one the world and particularly in South and East Asia and Africa the gender problem has assumed importance during the recent years the gender issue has become virtually a crucial point of argument. It is now widely believed that empowerment of women i.e., providing equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities to women, will go a long way in removing the existing gender discrimination. Women empowerment in contemporary Indian society in forms of their work, education, health and media images in the forms of their work, education, health and media images in the context of lineage, rule of residence and household chores, their context of lineage, rule of residence and household chores, their participation in social and political activities, their legal status in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance of property, seeking wealth care should be taken into consideration. Empowerment in terms of knowledge and awareness of ones own life and society including legal raise their status with regarded to the lives.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A number of studies have been undertaken on women empowerment at the global level and in India. Some studies dealt on methodological issues and some on empirical analysis. Moser (1993) focused on the interrelationship between gender and development, the formulation of gender policy and the implementation of gender planning and practices.

The work of Shields (1995) provided an exploratory framework to understand and develop the concept of empowerment both from a theoretical and practical perspective with a particular focus on women's perception of the meaning of empowerment in their lives. Anand and Sen (1995) tried to develop a measure of gender inequality. Pillarisetti and Gillivray (1998) mainly emphasized on the methodology of construction, composition and determinant of GEM. Bardhan and Klasen (1999) criticized GEM as an inadequate index of measuring women empowerment at the aggregate level. Malhotra et al (2002) in their paper prepared for the World Bank highlighted methodological issues of measurement and analysis of women empowerment.

Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) in their paper used a policy of political reservation for women adopted in India to study the impact of women's leadership on policy decision. They found that women were more likely to participate in policy making process if the leader of the village community was happened to be women.

Mahanta (2002) sought to explain the question of women's access to or deprivation of basic human rights as the right to health, education and work, legal rights, rights of working women's, besides issues like domestic violence, all the while keeping the peculiar socio-cultural situation

of the North East in mind. A workshop organized in 2003 by the Institute of Social Sciences and South Asia Partnership, Canada addressed the issues like “Proxy Women” who after being elected to *Panchayat* bodies were merely puppets in the hands of their husbands, relatives and other male *Panchayat* members; and emphasized on training programme for their capacity building. Assam Human Development Report (Govt. of Assam, 2003) threw some light on inequality in the achievement between men and women of Assam in different spheres of life. The report viewed that poverty, violence and lack of political participation were the main issues of concern for South Asian Women, and Assam was no exception.

Blumberg (2005) viewed that economic empowerment of women was the key to gender equality and well being of a nation. This would not only enhance women’s capacity of decision making but also lead to reduction in corruption, armed conflict and violence against females in the long run.

Karat (2005) in her works discussed the issues of violence against women, their survival, political participation and emancipation. Panda and Agarwal (2005) focused on the factor like women’s property status in the context of her risk of marital violence and opined that if development means expansion of human capabilities, then freedom from domestic violence should be an integral part of any exercise for evaluating developmental progress.

Deepa Narayan (2007) made an attempt to measure women empowerment for different countries and regions by using self assessed points on a ten steps ladder of power and rights, where at the bottom of the ladder stood people who were completely powerless and without rights and on the top stood those who had a lot of power and rights.

Figueras (2008) in her work studied the effect of female political representation in State legislature on public goods, policy and expenditure in the context of India and opined that politician's gender and social position matters for policy. Barkat (www.goodgovernance.org) while discussing the present status of women in Bangladesh opined that although women as mothers are held in high respect at the individual level, there was an unclear understanding of empowerment of women as a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in decision making and control over her own life.

Thus, from the above review of literature it is evident that quite a number of studies have already been undertaken on women empowerment and related issues. Entire scope of literature has centered mainly around conceptual and measurement issues and the constraints to women empowerment. The present study in this respect is an attempt to highlight the status and trend of women empowerment through SHG in Nizamabad district in Andhra Pradesh by taking into consideration various dimensions of it.

#### **4. SELF HELP GROUPS (SHG'S)**

Self-help group (SHG) represents a form of intervention of Inclusive growth that is a radical departure from most current programmes. SHGs is an effective strategy for poverty alleviation, human development and social empowerment. SHGs offer grassroots participatory implementation that is demand driven by 'beneficiaries' who, in other projects, often find themselves receiving goods or services in a manner that is opaque and impersonal. Most SHG-based programmes are implemented by the government in partnership with NGOs or by NGOs

and donor agencies. SHGs also have the potential to transform themselves into vibrant civil society organisations.

### Present scenario of SHG's in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is one of the pioneer states in encouraging Self-Help Groups. The World Bank has said that the model of SHGs in Andhra Pradesh is remarkable and could be replicated in other states in India. Studies commissioned by NABARD in 2002 indicate that the programme has emerged as the largest micro-finance network in the world. The statewide distribution of SHGs linked with banks shows a predominantly large share of over 42% of all linked SHGs in Andhra Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh government has made a pioneering effort in the organization and development of SHGs in which rural members are largely involved. The role of members in the organization and monitoring of SHG action plan has paved the way for the speedy development of economic and productive activities of the group. Another important factor which contributed to the development in Andhra Pradesh is the collective participation of various organizations and credit institutions.

**Table No 1: Progress of SHGs in Andhra Pradesh**

year	No of SHGs in AP	% Increase in Number of Groups	Loans disbursed (Rs in Crs)	% Increase in loans disbursed
2003-04	2,31,336	-	752.90	-
2004-05	2,61,254	112.93	1017.70	135.17
2005-06	2,88,711	110.51	2001.40	196.75
2006-07	3,66,489	126.94	3063.87	153.11



2007-08	4,31,515	117.74	5882.79	192.00
Average	3,15,861	117.03	2734.35	169.26

**Source: Saakshi Telugu daily news paper dated 24-10-08**

The table-1 shows the progress of SHGs in the state of Andhra Pradesh, We can observe a clear rise in the number of groups as well as the amount of loans disbursed from the year 2003-04 to 2007-08. Analysis of the table-1 reveal that though the increase in number of SHGs in A.P are 117.03% the increase in loans disbursed had increased by 169.26%, a 52.23% increase in the loan amount. In the state 25 commercial banks, 12 Regional Rural Banks and 12 District Central Banks with the help of 4,600 branches are delivering loans to women self help groups. The revolving funds of SHGs in Andhra Pradesh amount to an outstanding Rs 3,951 crores along with their own thrift money of 1,755 crores. The recovery is also ideal when compared with the recovery from other sector loans. At present, in Andhra Pradesh around 7,29,533 groups are working with 90,97,139 members.

Table-2 reveal the year wise amount of finance taken by the SHG groups in Nizamabad district. It is observed that the increase in the groups over the period was 176.32% whereas the increase in amount disbursed was 212.94%, there by showing 36.62% increase in the loan amounts to the groups in Nizamabad district. It is surprising to note that the average finance provided to the groups per year had decreased by 48.16% compared to the increase in number of groups. This could be attributed to the increase in bank finance to more proportionately more number of SHGs.

**Table No 2: SHGs in Nizamabad**

year	No of Groups	% Increase in groups	Amount (Rs in Crores)	% Increase in the amount	Per Group Finance in Rs	% increase in finance
Up to 1998-99	219	-	0.40	-	18,265	-
1999-2000	526	240.18	0.85	212.5	16,160	88.47
2000-2001	2538	482.50	4.84	569.41	19,070	118.00
2001-2002	6440	253.74	11.31	233.68	17,562	92.10
2002-2003	5778	89.72	16.21	143.32	28,055	159.75
2003-2004	4983	86.25	18.10	111.66	36,323	129.47
2004-2005	6511	130.66	30.57	168.89	46,951	129.25
2005-2006	10763	165.30	50.70	165.85	47,106	100.33
2006-2007	14472	134.46	140.12	276.37	96,821	205.54
2007-2008	20552	142.00	283.38	202.24	1,37,875	142.40
2008-09 (Up to Sep 08)	7892	38.40	126.50	44.50	1,60,289	116.26
Average		176.321		211.94		128.16

Source: [www.apmepma.gov.in](http://www.apmepma.gov.in)

## 5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study is to examine the role and performance of SHGs in promoting women's empowerment in the study area.

1. To analyse the economic gains derived by the members after joining the SHGs.
2. To examine the social benefits derived by the members.
3. To analyse the operating system of SHGs for the mobilization of saving, delivery of credit to the needy, management of group funds, repayment of loans, in building up leadership, and establishing linkage with banks
4. To suggest appropriate policy intervention for the effective performance of SHGs.

## **6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIE**

### **6.1 Primary Data**

The present study has covered 5 mandals in Nizamabad district that is Dichpally, Dharpally, Varni, Kamareddy and Banswada. Based on the size and activities undertaken, five groups are selected for this study The Nizamabad district in Andhra Pradesh is pioneer in starting SHGs and the chosen five SHG groups are having larger size and undertaken major activities compared to other SHGs in the district. Therefore these groups selected for the present study.

**Table No 3: Sampling Frame of the Study**

<b>Mandal Name</b>	<b>SHGs</b>	<b>SHG Members</b>
Dichpally	10	150
Dharpally	10	170
Varni	10	170
Kamareddy	10	160
Banswada	09	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>800</b>

**Source: Primary Data collected from the members**

## 6.2 Secondary Data

In order to collect and gather primary data, field observation and structured questionnaire survey methods were employed. In addition, information was also collected through discussions and interviews with local NGOs and government's grass roots level workers. Secondary data gathered from the records of SHGs and NGOs and government offices were supplemented by the primary data collected from the group. A wide range of information such as composition of membership, savings mobilised, loan disbursed, interest rates, recovery procedures, assets created, external assistance received etc. were ascertained from the SHGs and their members. Besides, different books, newspapers, articles, journals, magazines and web sites were also referred for the purpose. The data collected from each mandle regarding the structure and profile of SHG members, savings and loans of SHGs, economic and social benefits derived by SHG members, etc. has been processed separately and averages of each mandled are being taken. The analyses obtained from different

mandles are compiled and compared to draw the inferences about the performance of the SHGs in the study area.

## 7 DATA ANALYSIS

### Structure of SHGs

The structure and characteristics of Self-Help Groups in the study area is presented in Table No 4. It is noted that the average membership per SHG was 16.26. The study reveals that in the Varni Mandle, the average membership of the Self-Help Group is highest (17) and Dichpally Mandle had lowest membership (15). Most of the members agreed that their motives in joining SHGs were to save. Some said they joined the SHG to get credit to meet the unexpected cash demand for consumption and other purposes. Few opined that it led to social empowerment. The average savings per SHG was Rs. 10,693. It varied from Rs. 2097 in Banswada to Rs. 16125 in Dharpally Mandle. The per member savings was around Rs. 667.

The frequency of group meeting by SHG indicated that fortnightly meetings were the most common followed by monthly and weekly. Meetings are arranged regularly by NGO and Groups. It is held in the middle of the street. The absentee member has to pay a fine of Rs. 2. The average amount of loans per SHG was Rs. 12345. The highest being Rs.19752 in Dichpally Mandle and the lowest of Rs. 8758 in Banswada Mandle.

**Table No 4: Structure of SHGs in the Study Area**

Item	Dichpally	Dharpally	Varni	Kamareddy	Banswada	Overall
Membership average (No.)	15.00	16.78	17.00	15.86	16.66	16.26
Savings per SHG (in Rs.)	14517	16125	13633	7093	2097	10693
Loan (Avg.) (in Rs.)	19752	17177	16040	8758		12345
<b>Frequency of group meeting (percentage):</b>						
Weekly:	25	15	13	0	0	10.6
Fortnightly	65	68	72	35	28	53.6
Monthly	10	17	15	65	72	35.8

**Source: Primary data collected from the members**

### **Profile of SHG Members**

The average age of SHG members in the study area is presented in Table No 5 it is observed that the average age of SHG members was 34.2 years, lowest being 32 years in Dharpally Mandle and highest being 37 years in Banswada Mandle. Regarding the caste profile of SHG members, the table shows that majority of members belong to tribal community. In Kamareddy Mandle it is 97 per cent, followed by 90 per cent in Dichpally. Educational background of the SHG members shows that most of them are illiterate. Only 7 per cent of them have studied up to primary level. So far as the occupation of the members are concerned, majority of them are engaged in agricultural activities. As regards to average income per SHG, it was around Rs. 7918. It was highest in Varni

Mandle (Rs.10057) followed by Dharpally Mandle (Rs. 9223) and lowest in Banswada Mandle (Rs. 5861).

**Table 5 Profile of SHG Members**

Item	Dichpally	Dharpally	Varni	Kamareddy	Banswada	Overall
Age (years)	34	32	33	35	37	34.2
Percentage of STs	90	07	46	97	77	62.2
Percentage of SCs	10	39	03	03	17	14.4
Percentage of Other Castes	-	54	48	-	12	22.8
Literacy (%)	5.11	11.23	13.26	3.69	3.88	7.43
Occupation – Agriculture (percentage)	71.89	36.55	38.89	69.89	62.57	47.41
Others	28.11	63.45	61.11	30.11	37.43	53.59
Income (Average)	7867	9223	10057	6582	5861	7918

**Source: Primary data collected from the members**

### **Purpose of Credit Demanded and Utilised**

Generally, after six months operation of savings account, the saving is pooled and used for internal lending among the members. The amount of loan and number of loans are decided by the members themselves depending on their need and urgency.

**Table 6 Purpose-wise Credit Demanded by SHG Members**

Purpose	Dichpally (%)	Dharpally (%)	Varni (%)	Kamareddy (%)	Banswada (%)	Overall (%)
Domestic consumption	57.66	12.91	15.57	66.54	47.89	30.53
Health	3.22	6.87	9.50	--	2.27	4.37
Festivals	6.11	9.78	8.71	2.39	2.18	5.83
Repayment of old debts	15.67	10.66	11.52	5.68	10.59	10.82
Investment	10.89	12.57	11.66	14.05	8.67	11.56
Others	6.45	47.21	43.04	11.34	28.4	27.28

**Source: Primary data collected from the members**

The purpose-wise credit demanded by the SHG members from the SHGs is given in Table No 6. It is observed that most of the members have demanded credit for domestic consumption purposes. It is highest in Kamareddy Mandle (67%) followed by Dichpally (57.66%). Reasonable proportion of SHG members have demanded credit for other purposes. This percentage is highest in Varni (43.04%) and lowest in Dichpally Mandle (6.45%). About 11.56 percentage of credit is demanded for investment purposes. A proportion of credit was demanded by the SHG members for payment of old debts. A less proportion of loan is demanded for festival and health purposes. From the table it is clear that a larger share of credit demanded by SHG members is being utilised for domestic consumption purposes followed by repayment of debts and others.



### Economic Activities Covered by SHG Members

Table No 7 reveals that most of the SHG members are engaged in the collection and processing of minor forest products. These products include broom making, cashew, mahul, turmeric, tamarind, *khalli* (leaf plates), raw broom, amla, etc. Some of the members are engaged in individual businesses like preparing pickle, *bodi*, papad, haldi powder, wax, making bags, vegetable business, tailoring, pan shop, etc. They are also engaged in poultry, dairy and goatery business. Some are engaged in other activities. As there is a good demand for milk products, they are preparing sweets with milk, ghee, etc. and are getting good price. They earn about Rs. 600 to Rs. 1000 per month through these activities.

**Table 7 Economic Activities Covered by the SHG Members**

Item	Dichpally (%)	Dharpally (%)	Varni (%)	Kamareddy (%)	Banswada (%)	Overall (%)
Collection and marketing of Minor Forest Products	75	55	40	70	60	60.00
Individual business	5	10	25	10	5	11.00
Goatery	10	12	10	15	15	12.4
Dairy	10	18	10	5	15	12.6
Others	5	5	15	5	5	7.00

**Source: Primary data collected from the members**

### Loan Support to SHGs by Banks

There is a bank linkage programme established to SHGs. The SHG members opened their accounts in various nationalised banks such as State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, Andhra Bank, etc. and also some local banks like Rushikulya Gramya Bank and Cooperative Banks.

SHG members are getting both internal loans and external loans under the security of NGOs. They are paying Rs. 2 as interest per Rs. 100. They are also maintaining cashbook, membership register, loan register, individual passbook register, etc. They are taking loans for both production and consumption purposes. Rushikulya Gram Bank has advanced loans of Rs. 2,96,428 to Dichpally Mandle, followed by Rs. 2,66,611 to Dharpally Mandle (Table No 8).

So far as loan repayment is concerned, the SHG members of Dichpally Mandle have repaid 80 per cent of their loans followed by Kamareddy Mandle with 74 per cent. But in Dharpally and Varni Mandles, though they are urban based, the repayment position is not encouraging. In these two Mandles the members repaid only 50 per cent of their loans.

**Table 8 Loan Support to SHGs from Rushikulya Gramya Bank**

Name of the Mandle	Total SHGs	Loan availed	Loan Repayment
Dichpally	10	Rs. 2,96,428	79.80 %
Dharpally	10	Rs. 2,66,611	58.91%
Varni	10	Rs. 2,00,000	52.28%
Kamareddy	10	Rs. 1,30,000	73.50%

**Source: Annual Report of CCD, 2007-08.**

## Benefits Derived by SHG Members

Variety of benefits are derived by the members of SHGs as presented in Table No 9.

**Table 9 Benefits Derived by SHG Members (Multiple Responses)**

Benefits	Dichpally	Dharpally	Varni	Kamareddy	Banswada	Overall
Habit of Savings	75.44	79.11	68.22	76.66	80.66	76.00
Economic independence	70.00	70.00	65.00	66.80	65.00	67.36
Self-confidence	81.00	85.86	82.88	78.00	80.00	81.54
Social cohesion	70.00	80.88	71.11	68.88	85.00	75.17
Asset ownership	48.33	52.34	24.40	54.99	58.22	47.65
Freedom from debt	49.00	66.00	75.08	67.00	59.76	63.36
Additional employment	21.11	32.80	41.80	38.40	58.90	38.60

**Source: Primary data collected from the members**

One of the outstanding benefits reported by all the members is the development of self-confidence (81.54%) ranked first, followed by savings habit (76%), economic independence (67.36%), social cohesion (75.17%), freedom from debt (63.36%), asset ownership (47.65%), additional employment (38.60%).

## 8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Based on the interviews and discussions with the group members, field workers of the local NGO and group questionnaire survey results, the following findings emerged.

The social profile of SHG members indicates that majority of members are tribal, i.e., their overall average is 66.2 per cent. The overall literacy rate is only 7.43 per cent as against the district tribal female literacy rate of 15.88 per cent.

It is found that the operational efficiency and group dynamics of the SHG is not same in all Mandles. This could be attributed to several factors like background of SHG formation, internal problem, support provided by the promoters, effective leadership, etc.

It is observed that the average membership in SHG was around 16.26. Membership is highest in Varni Mandle and lowest in Dichpally Mandle. This may be due to the urban-base of Varni in contrast to Dichpally, where 90 per cent of members are tribals.

The members had joined the group in order to earn more income, promote savings habits and to develop collective economic and social activities.

So far as the frequency of group meetings are concerned, it is observed that fortnightly meetings were the most common. In Dichpally, Dharpally and Varni

Mandle the SHG members arrange their meetings twice in a month. But in Kamareddy and Banswada, the meetings are held once in a month.

The Groups maintain cashbooks, passbooks and attendance registers. The members in-charge of accounts are being given training in bookkeeping by the CCD. But the member who looks after all these secretarial work is not paid any financial incentive.

From the study, it is found that individual members contribute Rs. 10 to Rs. 50 per month. 70 per cent of SHG circulated thrift and their period of circulation was monthly. Accumulated savings by members to group funds per SHG were to the tune of Rs. 10,693, against this loan disbursed amounted to Rs. 12,345.

The SHG disbursed loans both for consumption and production purposes. Purpose-wise disbursement of credit by SHG indicates that, domestic consumption received maximum share of 30.33 per cent, followed by others (27.28%). It is found that credit demanded for investment purpose is very low.

As far as external loan is concerned, the Rushikulya Gramya Bank has advanced loans to the tune of Rs. 2.96 lakh to Dichpally Mandle followed by Rs. 2.66 lakh to Dharpally Mandle. The members have invested the loan in different economic activities like broom making, *khalli* stitching (leaf-plates), preparing eatables like *bodi*, *papad*, etc. They are also engaged in poultry, dairy and goatery business. In Dharpally Mandle, the members are preparing milk products like sweets, ghee, *khoa*, etc. and getting good price. They earn about Rs. 600 to Rs. 1000 per month

through these activities. The study reveals that the members are not skilled enough to run various units.

Members perceived several benefits through their membership in SHGs such as economic independence and self-confidence (81.54%), promotion of savings habits (76%), social cohesion (75.17%) and freedom from debt (63.36%).

The study also reveals that SHGs had set a new agenda for financial intermediation by banks in the form of micro-credit. It has infused dynamism among its members to climb up socio-economic ladder in the development process. Thus, SHGs have served the cause of women empowerment, social solidarity and socio-economic betterment of the poor for their consolidation.

## 9 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Literacy and numeric training is needed for the poor women to benefit from the micro-credit schemes.

Training in legal literacy, rights and gender awareness are important complements to micro-credit for the empowerment of women. The members should be given necessary training and guidance for the successful operation of the group.

The members of the SHG should be more active, enthusiastic and dynamic to mobilise their savings by group actions. In this process NGOs should act as a facilitator and motivator.

The office bearers managing the group should be given nominal financial benefits, which will enable them to be more involved in the activities of the Group.

The bank should advance adequate credit to the SHG according to their needs.

Uniformity should be maintained in formation and extension of financial assistance to them by banks in all Mandles.

The procedure of the banks in sanctioning credit to SHG should be simple and quick.

Marketing facilities for the sale of products of SHG may be created.

Periodical exhibitions at Mandle-level may be organised where the products of SHG can be displayed.

Meetings and Seminars may be organised where the members will get a chance to exchange their views and be able to develop their group strength by interactions.

Active intervention by district administration, professional bodies and voluntary organisations is precondition for the successful conception of micro enterprises in terms of skill training, designing products, providing new technology and access to market.

## 10 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In this twenty-first century, we must take along an active people-centred and growth-oriented poverty alleviation strategy – a strategy which seem to incorporate women’s aspirations, dynamism and involvement. It is envisaged that self-help groups will play a vital role in such strategy. But there is a need for structural orientation of the groups to suit the requirements of new business.

Micro credit movement has to be viewed from a long-term perspective under SHG framework, which underlines the need for deliberate policy implications in favour of assurance in terms of technology back-up, product market and human resource development. Hence, there is a need for the development of an innovative and diversified micro-finance sector, which will make a real contribution to women empowerment.

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