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**ROLE OF MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS FOR ACHIEVING FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Microfinance institutions are playing a significant role in achieving the objective of financial inclusion in India. Various steps have been taken by Reserve Bank of India for achieving the objective of financial inclusion and microfinance is one of the major tools that have been used. The present study purposes the performance of selected microfinance institutions and the overall progress of microfinance program from 2009-12. Sample size taken for the study is 20 institutions selected on the basis of their loan portfolio. The result of the study when analyzed with the help of t-test has shown a significant improvement in the performance of Microfinance Institutions in terms of gross loan portfolio as an indicator. It can be concluded that the objective of Financial Inclusion can be achieved somehow with the help of microfinance program and focused implementation of the guidelines of Reserve Bank of India.*

**KEYWORDS**

Financial Inclusion, , Gross loan portfolio, Microfinance, RBI.

**INTRODUCTION**

Financial inclusion has been defined as the "Provision of affordable financial services" (RBI, 2006a) to those who have been left unattended or under-attended by formal agencies of the financial system. These financial services include "payments and remittance facilities, savings, loan and insurance services" (ibid.). Micro finance has been looked upon as an important means of financial inclusion in India (RBI, 2006b). The Indian concept of micro finance encourages access of SHGs to banks both as means of savings and providers of loan services. However, going a step further, we can say that micro finance has to act proactively not just as a means of financial inclusion and also has to work towards reducing dependence of poor borrowers on various informal sources of credit that are often notorious for the onerous terms at which they offer credit. Given the definition of financial inclusion, any means for financial inclusion, to begin with, has to be not just easily accessible but also affordable to the borrowers, who do not have access to formal financial system. Secondly, it should ensure that over time the borrowers are able to reduce their dependence on informal sources of finance and a certain degree of loyalty towards SHGs, which can work towards permanent or effective inclusion of these borrowers into the formal banking network.

The importance of financial inclusion stems from various factors. First, an inability to access financial services could lead financially excluded entities to deal mostly in cash, with its attendant problems of safe-keeping. Second, the lack of access to safe and formal saving avenues could reduce their incentives to save. When saving occurs, safety and interest rate benefits may not be to the extent available in the formal system. Inadequate savings could lead households to depend on external sources of funds, in times of need. Often these sources are unregulated and carry high interest rates. High interest rates increase the risk of default by borrowers. Third, the lack of credit products means inability to make investments and significantly improve their livelihoods. As a result, small entrepreneurs often lack an enabling financial environment to grow. Fourth, the lack of remittance products leads to money transfers being cumbersome and high risk. Fifth, the lack of insurance products means lack of opportunities for risk management and wealth smoothening. According to C. Rangarajan there are six approaches in the system of Financial Inclusion, they are, as follows.1) Credit to the farmer households is one of the important elements of financial inclusion among them providing credit to the marginal and sub marginal farmers as well as other small borrowers is crucial to the need the hour. 2) Rural branches must go beyond providing credit and extend a helping hand in terms of advice on a wide variety of matters relating to agriculture. 3) In district where population per branch is much higher than the national average commercial banks may be encouraged to open the branches.4) There is need for the simplification of the procedures in relation to granting of loans to small borrowers. 5) The further strengthening the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme (BLP), as it has proved to be an effective way of providing credit to very small borrowers. 6)The business facilitator and correspondent model needs to be effectively implemented.

**PROGRESS OF MICROFINANCE IN INDIA**

The institutions which engage in microfinance services in India follow three types of approaches namely

- i. The Grameen Bank approach
- ii. The Cooperative Societies (which are members of a cooperative bank) approach
- iii. The SHG Programme approach.

In the four years between 2003 and 2007, small borrower bank accounts (credit) i.e. upto Rs 25,000,

Increased marginally from 36.9 million to 38.6 million, while SHGs borrowing members grew from 10 million to 40.5 million and MFIs borrowers grew from 1.1 million to 8 million. In 2007-08, MFIs have added 6 million clients increasing their outreach to 14 million as per data brought out by Sa Daan.

An innovative scheme in rural delivery system launched by NABARD is the linking of SHGs of the poor with banks and bulk lending through NGOs. NABARD considers SHGs a pre-microenterprise stage for majority of the rural population. The linkage project envisages active involvement of NGOs who play a crucial role in formation, nurturing, stabilizing and guiding the SHGs into cohesive and dynamic groups inculcating the habits of thrifts and credit management and ultimately establishing linkage with the banks. Under the SHG-bank linkage programme, three linkage models have broadly emerged. Under the first model, banks directly link SHGs without the intervention of the NGOs. In the second model, banks provide credit to SHGs and NGOs act as Self Help Promoting Institutions (SHPIs). Under the third model, NGOs act both as SHPIs and financial intermediaries for channelizing credit from banks to SHGs.

The SHG-Bank Linkage Programme implemented by commercial banks, RRBs and cooperative banks has emerged as the major micro- finance programme in the country. Under the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme, as on March 31, 2009, 61,21,147 SHGs held savings bank accounts with total savings of Rs 5,545.62 crore as against 50,09,794 SHGs with savings of Rs 3,785.39 crore as on March 31, 2008. Thus more than 8.06 crore poor households were associated with banking agencies under the SHG- Bank Linkage Programme.

TABLE 1: THE PROGRESS UNDER SHG BANK LINKAGE PROGRAMME IN INDIA

Year	New SHGs financed by banks Bank loan					Bank loan
	During the year		Cumulative during the year			Cumulative amount
	No.	Growth (%)	No.	Amount	Growth (%)	
2002-03	2,55,882	29	7,17,360	1,022.34	87	2,048.68
2003-04	3,61,731	41	10,79,091	1,855.53	81	3,904.21
2004-05	5,39,365	49	16,18,456	2,994.25	62	6,898.46
2005-06	6,20,109	15	22,38,565	4,499.09	50	11,397.55
2006-07	11,05,749*	-	28,94,505	6,570.39	-	12,366.49
2007-08	12,27,770*	11	36,25,941	8,849.26	35	16,999.90
2008-09	16,09,586*	31.1	42,24,338	12,256.51	38.5	22,679.85

Source: Govt. of India, 2009

\* from 2006-07 onwards, data in respect of number of SHGs financed by banks and bank loans are inclusive of SHGs financed under the Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and the existing groups receiving repeat loans. Owing to this change, NABARD discontinued compilation of data on cumulative basis from 2006-07. As such data from 2006-07 onwards are not comparable with the data of the previous years.

As on March 31, 2009, commercial banks had the maximum share of SHG savings with savings of 35,49,509 SHGs (58 per cent) amounting to Rs 2,772.99 crore (50 per cent); this was followed by RRBs with savings bank accounts of 16,28,588 SHGs (26.6 per cent) and savings amount of Rs1,989.75 crore (35.9 per cent) and cooperative banks with savings bank accounts of 9,43,050 SHGs (15.4 per cent) and savings amount of Rs 782.88 crore (14.1 per cent).

The share of the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in SHG savings accounts was 15,05,581 SHGs, forming 25 per cent of the total SHGs having savings accounts in banks. During 2008-09, the average savings per SHG with all banks increased from Rs 7,556 as on March 31, 2008 to Rs 9,060 as on March 31, 2009, varying between a high of Rs 12,218 per SHG with RRBs and a low of Rs 7,812 per SHG with commercial banks. As on March 31, 2009, the share of women SHGs in total SHGs with savings bank accounts was 48,63,921, accounting for 79.46 per cent as compared to the previous years share of 79.56 per cent. During 2008-09, banks financed 16,09,586 SHGs, including repeat loans to existing SHGs, as against 12,27,770 SHGs during 2007-08—a growth of 31.1 per cent (number of SHGs).

As on March 31, 2009, 42,24,338 SHGs had outstanding (cumulative) bank loans of Rs 22,679.85 crore as against 36,25,941 SHGs with outstanding bank loans of Rs16,999.90 crore as on March 31, 2008. This included 9,76,887 SHGs (6.5 percent) with outstanding bank loans of Rs 5,861.72 crore (21.7 per cent) under the SGSY as against 9,16,978 SHGs with outstanding bank loans of Rs 4,816.87 crore as on March 31, 2008. Commercial banks had the maximum share of around 70 percent of outstanding bank loans to SHGs followed by RRBs with a share of 23 per cent and cooperative banks with the balance. As on March 31, 2009, the average bank loan outstanding per SHG was Rs53,689 as against Rs 46,884 as on March 31, 2008. It varied from a high of Rs 57,037 per SHG in the case of commercial banks to a low of Rs 31,460 per SHG in the case of cooperative banks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2011, Priyadarshini and Ghalib describe a process whereby the MFIs not only offered multiple loans to the same borrower household without following due diligence, but also collaborated with consumer goods companies to supply consumer goods such as televisions as part of their credit programmes. These purely consumption loans exacerbated the already worsening indebtedness of poor households and some of them started defaulting in repayment. Several MFIs then resorted to openly coercive methods for loan recovery. Extreme repayment pressure forced borrowers to approach moneylenders to borrow at exorbitant rates of interest simply to repay the MFIs. When the situation became impossible, and no fresh loans were accessible, some of these borrowers committed suicide and the issue attracted widespread media coverage. Viada and Gaul (2011) point to the growing links between MFIs and the rest of the financial sector. The business success of microfinance attracted new and relatively large sources of both local and international funding, including private equity funds and other financial investors. As a result, MFIs were encouraged to increase loan portfolios to meet ambitious outreach goals or shareholder demands for increasing revenue growth. In 2012 Dr. Christabell. P.J. Vimal Raj A. defined the overall strategy for financial inclusion, especially amongst the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population. It comprises ways and means to effect improvements within the existing formal credit delivery mechanism, as well as an evolution of new models for extending outreach, and a leverage on technology solutions to facilitate large scale inclusion. Only two to five percent of the 500 million poorest households in the world have access to institutional credit. Of which, women receive a disproportionately small share of credit from formal banking institutions. The Women's Self Help Group movement is bringing about a profound transformation in rural areas of India. In 2013 Porkod examine the role of micro finance in the empowerment of people and the realisation of financial inclusion in India. While there are reservations about the efficacy of MFIs in handling public money, their growth and achievements demand attention and appreciation. Shankar Savita (2013), found that while MFIs do break down many barriers to financial inclusion, there are limitations in the extent of their outreach to those excluded. First, MFI penetration in the country is skewed and excludes some areas neglected by the banking sector, suggesting a need for policy incentives to encourage expansion to those areas. Second, even in areas in which MFIs operate they are unable to provide services to some financially excluded individuals on account of their methods of operation. To provide greater and more long lasting access to more individuals there is a need for MFIs to consider adopting more flexible operating models and to offer portability of accounts. There is also a case for skill based training to enable greater access to MFI membership.

## OBJECTIVES

To study the performance of selected microfinance institutions on the basis of gross loan portfolio and the progress of overall microfinance program for achieving financial inclusion.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive type of study has been done. The sample size include 20 microfinance institutions (NGOs and NBFCs) which provides their data on MIX (mix market) database. The period taken for the study is of 3 years i.e from 2009-12. The statistical tool t-test has been applied to draw the results.

## DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE 2

ONE-SAMPLE TEST						
Test Value = .05						
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Gross loan portfolio	19.742	2	.003	6.29011E9	4.9192E9	7.6610E9

The results of the table (No.1) depicts that there is significant difference between the loan portfolio of the selected Microfinance Institutions from the year 2009-12. When calculated at 95% confidence level, the t-value comes out to be 19.742 that is more than the tabulated value(19.742>2.92), showing the performance has increased significantly which in turns helps in achieving Financial Inclusion in India.



TABLE 3

Items	Microfinance institutions Number (in millions)		
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Loans disbursed by banks	691	469	465
Loans outstanding by banks	1513	2176	1960

Source: Basic Statistical Returns of Commercial Banks, RBI

FIGURE 1

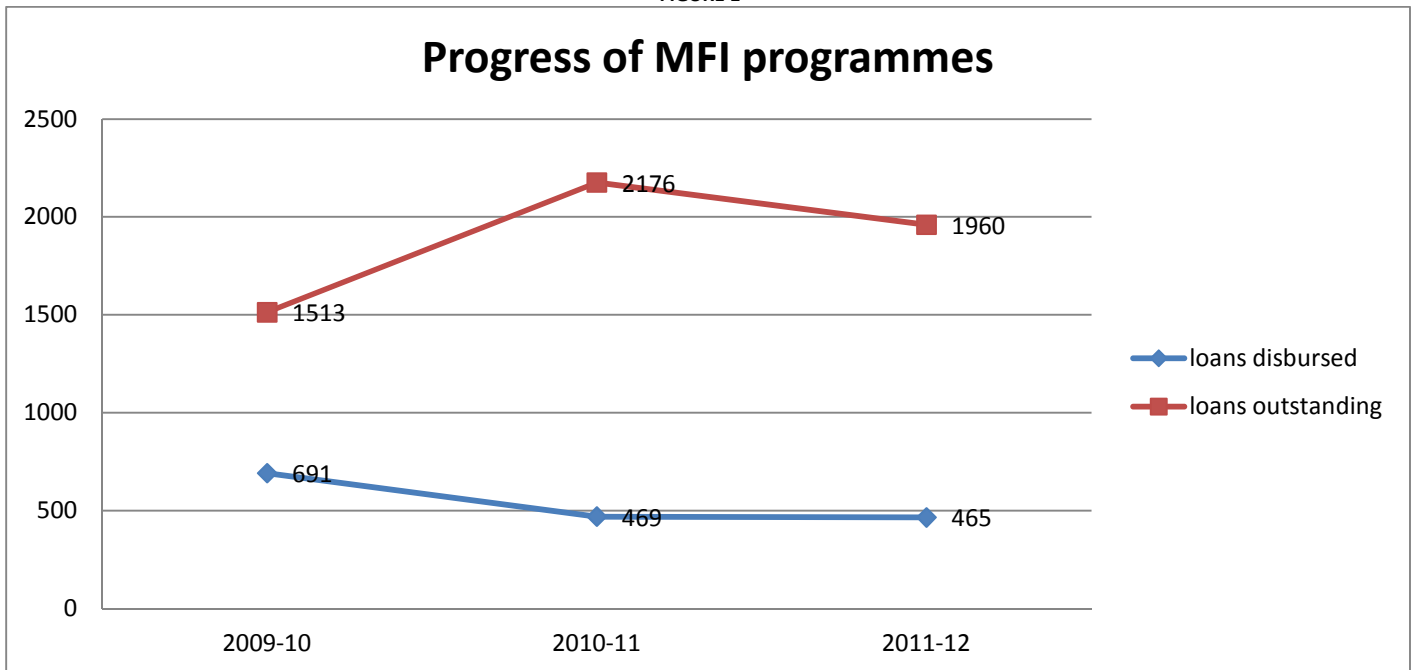


Chart shows the progress of overall Micro-finance program from the year 2009-12. It has been found that the no. of loans disbursed by banks has decreased in 2010-11 from the previous year due to Andhra Pradesh crises in 2008. After 2011 the performance has been improved in case of loan outstanding but loan disbursement rate has been decreased.

**CONCLUSION**

The Micro Finance Institutions are an integral part of financial inclusion and instrumental in providing “last mile connectivity” but there need to be a balance. They should be kept viable but within certain boundaries. At present, these MFI across the country is under stress. The Reserve Bank of India has set up a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Y. H. Malegam to examine the issues confronting the microfinance industry, including their interest rate structure and suggest recommendation. For achieving complete financial inclusion and for inclusive growth microfinance institutions are playing their role significantly. Access to financial services could be made more easily and effectively by means of SHGs and MFIs. Financial inclusion is a big road which India needs to travel to make it completely successful. Financial inclusion will be real and successful only when the small and marginal farmers and landless labourers have unhindered access to the financial services like Savings, Credit, Micro insurance and remittance facilities.

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