

## **SUMMARY**

Inflation, unemployment and poverty are the burning problems of India. They have become the hurdle to the economic prosperity of India. To overcome poverty, a series of anti-poverty programmes were introduced in the post-independence period. Yet the major chunk of India population is living below the poverty line.

The majority of poor are living in rural India and the women are its main component so poverty has taken the shape of 'feminization of poverty' in the country. With this awareness, the planning commission has focused on women empowerment issue in Ninth and Tenth Plans. To wage a direct war against poverty, the Government has introduced 'Self-Help Group' programme as an innovative and dynamic anti-poverty programme. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is the main initiator of 'Self-Help Group' (SHG) movement started from 1986-87 in India. Now the various Departments of both Central and State Governments, nationalized commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks, co-operative banks and societies and Non-Governmental Organizations have joined the SHG movement as promoters.

My research work mainly focused on eradication of rural poverty through women self-help groups. Hence my study has come out with certain concrete decisions and suggestions to the Government authorities. Banks and NGO's regarding the effective implementation of the SHG programme to enable it to achieve its targets. In Kerala the kudumbasree SHG system proved it as a great success and leading and guiding other state in India in this respect. The problem of poverty will be eradicated through women empowerment because earning women are the key stone of every family.

## **MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

1. 86.3% of the members of NHG have not been received any formal training for group activities There are very few members have got training in leadership administration, entrepreneurship, accounting, production, marketing, sales, legal, management and banking in the surveyed area.

2. 90.5% of NHG members in the surveyed area required further formal training for group activities especially for income generation.
3. 77.2% of members of NHG are in requirement entrepreneurship training means they lack training in petty trade and small scale business.
4. 97% of NHG members believe that non formal informal training they got from group activities are lifelong .
5. The members of NHG have got different types of literacy informally through group operations.

55% of legal literacy, 48% digital literacy, 84% financial literacy, 78% banking literacy, 65% e governance literacy, 92% of environment Literacy, 86% health literacy.

6. 76% of NHG members are proficient in RTI with legal literacy, 74% of members are proficient in consumer protection laws, 55% of them are proficient in domestic violence act, 85% of them are proficient in dowry act, 93% of them are aware of vanitha commission, 49% of them are well aware about sevana Avakasa Niyamam, 57% of them are well aware about reservation procedure, 47% of them are well aware about human rights and Fundamental rights.
7. 94.1% of members of NHG remarked that the training and education from group activities empowered them totally.
8. 68.8% of members surveyed opined that a want to continue their formal education along with group activities.
9. 82.2% of members are interested in social participation after joining NHG.
10. 98.8% of members of NHG are reading watching news regularly after joining NHG.
11. 86.1% of members of NHG are curious of about news related to corruption, 85.5% are interested in news related with finance and economy.
12. 100% of members of NHG in the surveyed area uses regularly TV channels and newspapers to collect information after joining group activities.

13. 59.7% of members are also the members of caste organization simultaneously, 48.8% of members are members of political parties and 68.8% of members are members of residential association in the surveyed area.
14. 80% of members of NHG believes that they are getting more social recognition and inclusion after joining group activities.
15. 80% of NHG members believes kudumbasree microfinance will bring social and political inclusion.
16. 94.4% of members in surveyed area believe that NHG members have a secular mind.
17. 88.8% of NHG Members in the surveyed area are engaged with social extension activities, useful for the common people.
18. After joining NHG 90.2% of members have active participation in social affairs.
19. After joining NHG the members are able to get redressed their grievances through different mechanism.
20. 81% of them are able to approach the police to redress their problem, 94% of them are bold enough to approach any court of law and 86% of them are ready to approach consumer protection forum, 96% of them were experienced with different types of adalaths.
21. 88% of the members of NHG are interested in political participation after joining SHG, 99% of them are casting their votes in all elections.
22. 98% of the members are regularly participating in gramsabha after joining NHG
23. After joining NHG nobody is influencing them in their political participation.
24. There was only 14.4% of members had contested in election after joining NHG.

25. 93.3% of NHG members of surveyed area, believes that no political ideologies are essential for the activities of Kudumbasree.
26. 72% of members of NHG in the surveyed area have income other than NHG activities.
27. There was significant change in the standard of living and consuming pattern of NHG members after joining NHG.
28. 55% of NHG members are opting public sector commercial banks for financial transactions.
29. 100% of the members of the surveyed area availing linkage loans
30. There are only a very few NHG generating income by utilizing the possibilities of NHG bank linkage programme.
31. 98% of members of energy believes that they have improved there bargaining power and capacity through kudumbasree NHG.
32. 91% of members of NHG the surveyed area believes the provision for economic spaces will strengthen our democracy by eradicating poverty and unemployment.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Our planners have designed self-help group programme as participatory approach for eradication of poverty by making the woman as an anchor. SHG programme has been used in rural area as a part of development with the sole objective of eradication of poverty through women empowerment in the fields like social, economic and political. They have achieved the objectives like rising of income, savings, investment and employment and also enable the SHG families to cross the poverty line. But, while implementing the SHG programme, promoters face multifarious problems. Hence I would like to make some suggestions to solve their problems as well as to make the SHG programme as a multi-pronged approach for eradication of rural poverty through women empowerment.

1. The promoters while forming self-help groups should necessarily select the members from different castes, religions, languages etc. who are really living below poverty line. Selecting of members from the single social status or caste for formation of self-help group may create disintegrate among the rural poor. It may be threat to the national integration.
2. The promoters of SHGs should motivate the upper caste poor women to join with lower caste poor women in the programme. It would help to remove untouchability in any form the rural society and it will become a common dwelling.
3. In rural areas, the majority of the poor come from the families of agriculture, agricultural labour, artisans etc. so they have no experience of new business like trading, dairy development, marketing, small entrepreneurship etc. Their old family businesses are either less market-friendly or less profitable so they cannot cross poverty line with the help of such family-business. The promoters like banks should identify the right business or economic activity and impart sufficient training to the beneficiary. The beneficiaries should be given full knowledge about the successful running of the new business.
4. In the era of globalization, every economic activity has to be time-conscious. Even if we use indigenous technology in production process that should be polished with redesign to reach the global competency level e.g. dairy products should be produced having the quality of international standard. Similarly the promoters should also identify and supply new technology to the groups so as to enable them to improve the competency level in different aspects like production functions, marketing functions resource management functions etc. Along with income and employment generation, the SHGs should be sustainable for long time.
5. The economic empowerment is meaningful only when there are no family and social barriers to the rural poor women. We may set woman free to gain economic resources but her family responsibilities, family barriers and social barriers cannot set her free to spend the economic resource on her own choice. Hence, we should develop a support system to the rural women

through educating the rural mass, developing support services like child care centre, village catering industries and developing pro-women emancipation social environment in rural areas. The gross motivation should be initiated in rural areas by the promoters.

6. The rural poor women may gain economic benefits through SHGs but it is at the cost of giving up her social role. To compensate the social loss, the cultural centres should be developed in villages so as to enable the SHG women to participate in their social ceremonies like marriage, festivals etc.
7. The education level of the beneficiaries should be improved through making learning and higher learning as the part of SHG programme. It is the age of distance education institutions. The promoters should open such distance education centers and motivate the members to get higher education. It improves the literacy rate as well as the quality of the beneficiaries.
8. The more number of multi-economic activity SHGs should be promoted to provide various income generating avenues to the beneficiaries so that they should be stick up with self-employment programmes. It may help the beneficiaries to get more assured income than wage employment.
9. The SHGs involved in production of traditional goods should be assisted technologically so as to enable them to upgrade their market skill competency level. They should be made competent to survive in quality and price war. The safety nets like insurance, market assurance etc. should be given for their investments.
10. The Reserve Bank of India and NABARD should formulate a SHG friendly interest rate policy. The rate of interest should be lower on productive loans. They should see that the SHGs should not become neo-money lenders by charging higher rate of interest on the borrowing members.
11. There is a need of giving guarantee for the repayment of SHG loans instead of making all the members jointly responsible for repayment. It would encourage the rural women to join the SHGs.

12. On the line of industrial estate development government should develop SHG estates so that the infrastructure like building, water, electricity, warehouse etc., should be made available to the SHGs. The government should directly develop a well-organized market for the products of SHGs.
13. There is a need of providing social security schemes like provident fund, medical benefits, pension etc., to the members of SHGs.
14. The Government should arrange well organized input markets so as to supply sufficient raw materials to the SHGs production units. The Government forest land should be given on lease basis to the SHGs to develop forest and grazing lands to meet the cattle feed requirements for their dairy, poultry etc.
15. The Apex administrative and bank bodies should act like the guide, the agent and the promoter of SHGs. They should not impose their interest on SHGs. The SHGs should be free to decide their own decisions based on their self-interest.
16. The government, bank and NGOs should support the functioning of the SHGs through follow-up. They should help the SHGs whenever they face hard-ships.
17. The interference by the members of Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat in sanctioning loan must be stopped. There should be the direct relation between the bank and the SHG. It avoids corruption and red-tapism.
18. The public finance corporations, Banks and SHGs should directly give loan to the SHGs. They should also take care that the male relative of the beneficiary should not misuse the loan fund. Legal actions should be initiated against such persons.
19. The banks should relax their terms and conditions while giving loans to the SHGs. Bank should not impose any minimum limit to the savings.

20. Banks should not insist the SHGs to purchase labour saving devices because such devices generate less employment opportunities which may defeat the basic purpose of SHG Programme.
21. Government and banks should lend adequate amount of loans. Dairy development, flourmill, poultry farming etc., production activities need investment amount about Rs.5 to 10 lakhs. Then only the development of women micro enterprises is possible.
22. Inviting foreign capital, foreign collaboration and foreign technology in SHG is the need of the hour. The government should establish link between multinational companies and SHGs. The government should also establish export units and export houses related to SHG products.
23. There is a need enacting separate act to provide legal frame work for the functioning of SHG in the country.
24. The big private companies should come forward to design economic activities to the SHGs. They should have memorandum of understanding with the federation of SHGs and they should give job works to the SHGs.
25. The seminar, conference and workshops should be conducted for the benefit of SHG. The beneficiaries should be included in these programmes. Communication skills should be taught to the SHG members so as to make them global competent.
26. Universities and colleges should introduce SHG as a course of study at undergraduate and post graduate level. University Grant Commission should make it compulsory to the universities and the colleges to introduce need based course on functioning of SHGs. Such courses should help to supply more skilled human resources required by the SHGs. Such courses should be taught to the female students. Universities, college and their National Service Scheme (NSS) units should adopt women SHGs.
27. The government, bank and educational institutions should regularly arrange training programmes to the SHG members for improvement of their managerial and behavioural competency.

28. Government should open family counselling and legal aid cells to help the SHG members to get their various problems solved.
29. The SHG should be kept away from the politicians. The formation of the SHG, selection of members, granting of revolving fund and incentives, sanction of loans, sanction of programmes etc. should be kept free from political interference.
30. The bank should have separate field officers to look into the matters of SHG financial affairs with the bank. The Regional Rural Banks and co-operative banks should open a separate cell for the transactions of SHGs. They should concentrate solely on financing to the various economic activities of SHGs. They should help the SHG in all respects.
31. The planners and policy makers should bring all the self-employment programmes under the single roof of SHG programme similarly a single national policy should be formulated for the nation-wide implementation of SHG programme. More accountability and transparency should be maintained in operation of the single fund created by the government for the implementation of SHG programme nation-wide. States should also share the responsibility equally.
32. The community action plans should be designed to help capacity building and awareness creation for improvement in the process of women empowerment.
33. The intensive training in group-consciousness, group integration and self-reliance should be imparted to group members for sustainability of SHGs.
34. Women should be considered active participants rather than mere beneficiaries.
35. Government should set-up a separate organization to record income generation, savings, investment, and employment generation etc. of the SHGs periodically and maintain up-to-date data. A central information centre should be established to generate and process the data related to SHGs.

## CONCLUSION

Poverty ever remained a burning problem of India. It has become hurdle to the development of national economy. It has adverse effects on social, economic and political life of the country. Economic distortions, social evils and political instability and demoralization are the main outcomes of the poverty. It has degraded individual as well national status.

British trade policy had dismantled the Indian economy particularly the agriculture and small scale industries which had created mass unemployment and poverty in India. After independence, the Government of Indian has implemented series of anti-poverty programmes under different approaches to development. Under the trickle-down theory, development programmes were implemented to eradicate poverty through raising national output, per capita income, national income etc. But these approaches utterly failed to root-out the poverty from the country. The new agricultural technologies and some other development strategies have still worsened the poverty problem.

The incidence of poverty is more in rural India and women are the centre of it. The woman empowerment issue has received more significance in rural development studies. The eradication of rural poverty through rural women empowerment is an innovative participatory approach. The experiment has been done through the SHG Programme. As an anti-poverty programme SHGs has three thrust areas namely women access to microfinance and bank, development of women micro-enterprise and women empowerment. The present study has also proved that there is directed relation between woman-empowerment and poverty-eradication and, further, it also endorsed the view that women SHGs are the right paradigm of development. So the poor women have been gaining an identifiable status in the family and in the community. The women are doing well as agents in the development process of the country. They have been availing the opportunities like having ownership over the economic resources and entrepreneurship, participating in decision-making and the finance.

However, it is said that policy makers are not completely free from the influence of public opinion voting behaviour of Congress men on roll call voters

correlates very closely with the characteristics of their constituencies. In modern liberal democracies, while framing the policies, the public opinion will be considered by decision makers.

Finally, NHG programme has brought about tremendous changes in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of their life. It can be examined in the below mention heads. As part of the decentralization process, which was the product of the failure of the macro-economic approach, the microfinance system was proposed. Unlike the macroeconomic approach, the microeconomic approach considered the life of each and every person in the society with social participation and community based activities. The microfinance system offered financial security, financial accessibility and financial support. The poor people, especially the women population at the grass root level, have been empowered to get credit, to make savings and to be insured. They have been given a clear picture of banking and its related affairs. Consequently, they have begun to feel the confidence of survival and subsistence. This has led to empowerment through group operations under CBOs, NGOs, GONGOs and MFIs.

The microeconomic approach itself has led the poor women in the surveyed area to economic development through microfinance system by Kudumbasree. The remarkable development in this respect that can be noted is economic inclusion wherein the poor non-benefit women have the economic space in the society. The programme has added additional advantage of socio-political economic inclusion. Further, the economic development by channelizing the human resources of poor women has given them more economic freedom, especially the freedom of work and freedom of choices in life. So, their bargaining power has improved as a sign of empowerment. Another additional benefit in the economic development is the tendency and skills in entrepreneurship by which the poor women generate income. As a result of income generation and employment, the poor women are equipped to fight the evil of poverty. Finally, the economic development has been converted as economic democracy and made desirable changes in the existing political democracy.

The microfinance system through Kudumbasree NHGs has ensured social participation. Social interaction has created new social values, enough social freedom and social commitment. Social inclusion also was very easy through this system. Besides, the opportunities of political participation and political inclusion have been offered. The members of NHGs have learnt the political processes, such as contesting elections and how to hold office of profit. The NHG operation has taught them opinion formation and political commitment. The members of SHG got so many political values, especially democratic values and political freedom. It has been understood that mere political reforms and representation in different levels do not constitute a genuine democracy but instead an economic system where the poor have accessibility, due share and freedom will exist. In short a democratic system needs a democratic economic structure. A centralised corporate economy will create only a “Corporatocray” instead of Democracy. After all no democracy will exist without equality of women.

The members of NHGs are engaged in different types of extension activities, such as movement against alcohol, ensuring schooling for their children and prevention of abuse of children. The NHG members have stood together to reach help for the differently abled, mentally retarded, the old age people and those who are under intensive treatment. They take initiative to settle the cases related with domestic violence and dowry system. Orientations against social evils were given to the society and they take genuine effort to reform the society where they are living.

As one of the most important objectives of the decentralisation process, NHG microfinance system has contributed a lot for sustainable development. The methodology of the work of NHGs is environmental protection and conservation. As they have been given environmental orientations and awareness, they are disseminating the idea throughout the society. Waste management is one of the Himalayan tasks of any society, but through their NHG operation it has been made easy. They are propagating ideas against the depletion and exploitation of natural resources. In addition to this, they hold some of the vital agendas like forestation, measures against soil erosion and organic farming. They are very much concerned with local decentralised administration, use of natural energy sources and local resources, local planning and capacity building.

NHG activities are going ahead with the programmes of education and literacy. Schooling and special schooling of children, adult education - informal and non-formal - and the group activities open a forum for discussions and peer learning. Transaction of knowledge and dissemination of different ideas are happening through discussions and debates. So normally the members are collecting data information and knowledge through different sources. They are getting different types of skills and values which are essential for social life, especially equality, freedom, rights and justice. They are well-informed of different types of literacy, laws and grievance redressal. Finally, there is a remarkable change in their interaction and communication skills. So, it can be easily assumed that they have been getting education and literacy from NHG activities.

The members are undertaking different issues and challenges that hinder the social development along with other civil society organizations, such as the issue of law and order, violation of rights (especially human rights), gender justice and mobilization of women. The activities of groups help to organize the poor women at the grass root level. The new trend of involvement in civil society organizations has given different dimensions to the Kudumbasree microfinance system.

The NHG system extols unity and integrity of the nation by making convergence in the complex and diversified social structure. The most important among them is religious tolerance. The groups themselves are heterogeneous by nature. This means that a group consists of people from different religion, caste, category, class, colour and race. It has developed a feeling of secularism with a feeling that religion and caste are an illusion. People have learnt to respect the great ideals of the constitution and reach amicable settlements of disputes. They have developed a sense of national commitment. They feel the economic inclusion and security have given them a significant place and space in their country. Hence a democracy must offer socio economic and financial space for its citizen. The responsibility of a democratic state is extended up to the survival and subsistence of its people. Otherwise a question is pending, why should people govern people.