PREFACE

The developing countries like India have some common characteristics like wide spread illiteracy, unequal distribution of wealth, rural poverty, unemployment, agriculture based economy. In the wake of political independence there has been pressing demands upon the state to provide speedy socio-economic and cultural transformation and people’s welfare. But with increasing volumes of functions of the state no effective and comprehensive development plan and programmes can be carried out by the government alone. Bureaucracy the main instrument of Government has failed to implement effectively the development programmes due to their traditional characteristics. Again, with the advent of market economy specially in 1990s the role of the state in social sector has been reduced. But market cannot solve the social problems and rectify social handicaps.

In this context the growth and the role of voluntary organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are crucial in the process of social development. The NGOs are very dynamic and flexible in bringing about socio-economic transformation in rural India. Realising the potential and effective role of the NGOs in soliciting people’s participation in the process of development, the government is inviting the NGOs in executing its programmes and projects. The process of development becomes incomplete and inequitable if women are excluded from the benefit of this process. Empowerment of women must be an integral part of sustainable human development. Non- governmental organizations are successfully working on women empowerment. In the process of women empowerment women’s health and women’s economic empowerment is most important. In West Bengal the development in these two sectors is less satisfactory from the part of government. Therefore, the proposed study is a modest attempt to
empirically explore the role of the NGOs on women's empowerment in West Bengal.

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