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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Micro-finance and women empowerment are intertwined, strategic tools of policy makers in rural and urban poverty alleviation world over, which have drawn considerable attention of academic and action researchers. Socially and economically marginalized women are target group in inclusive growth strategy. They are formed into self-help groups at the initiatives of the public authorities, MFIs and NGOs, and are linked to formal financial institutions to access credit. An earnest attempt is made here under Section-A to review the broad spectrum of studies on microfinance in general and woman empowerment in particular. Section-B details research methodology.
SECTION - A : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2 CONTINENTAL STUDIES: MFIS IN AFRICA, ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA

Susy Cheston, Lisa Kuhn(2002)\(^1\), from the studies and experiences of microfinance institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America, holds that properly designed microfinance programs can contribute to women’s empowerment, based on several evidences of changes relevant and important for empowerment across a range of cultures and regions.

2.3 OTHER COUNTRY SPECIFIC STUDIES

2.3.1 Ghana Study: Economic and Non-Economic Benefits of Microfinance, and Need for Women-Focused Microfinance Products

An in-depth study of the impact on women achieved by Sinapi Aba Trust (SAT), Opportunity International’s partner in Ghana was made, which identified several strategies and programmatic factors that make a positive contribution to women’s empowerment and their holistic transformation. The study affirmed that strengthening women’s financial base and economic contribution to their families and communities ensure their empowerment. The study reported that women valued much non-economic benefits like expansion of business and social networks, improved self-esteem, enhanced household decision-making power, and increased respect and prestige. In order to mitigate the negative impact of microfinance, it is suggested that while designing microfinance product and programme due attention should be given to the needs of women and their assets, besides building awareness of the potential positive impacts of the microfinance programmes.

2.3.2 Bangladesh Experience: Microcredit as Antidote to poverty

Muhammad Yunus (2003)\(^2\) presented a paper at the international seminar on “Attacking Poverty with Microcredit”. Exhorting the imperative
need for expanded outreach of microfinance with due support from information technology in attaining the MDG of reducing the global number of poor to half by 2015.

2.3.3 Micro-credit Schemes as New Paradigms: Need for Method for Tracking Changes in Levels of Empowerment

Clara Fayorsey³ discussed the various microcredit schemes as 'new paradigm' thinking about socio-economic development, debating on explicit ability of microcredit in empowering rural Ghanaian women was made and concluded that the data to support the view that micro-credit leads to women's empowerment at grassroots level was scanty. The reason identified was that organizations dealing with micro-credit had not developed a method for closely tracking changes in levels of empowerment. Most of these schemes assumed that micro-credit automatically leads to women's empowerment.

2.3.4 Tunisia: Perils and Pitfalls of Micro-Credit Programs

Essma Ben Hamida⁴ reported mixed results of micro-credit, observing that micro-enterprise definitely paved path to empower many women but was full of pitfalls in a study made on small micro-credit programme run by NGO, ENDA Inter-Arab in 1990 in a suburb of Tunis, Tunisia.

2.3.5 Bangladesh: Targeting Poor Beneficiaries by NGOs in Micro-Credit Programmes

Mokbul Morshed Ahmed(2000)⁵ in his paper Microcredit finance and views of the NGO field workers in Bangladesh presented the experiences of implementing microcredit finance programme among the poor in Bangladesh through NGOs, and concluded that a vast majority of the poorer among the poor were left uncovered by NGOs. They preferred to 'not so poor and better educated clients,' to poor on promotion of microfinance, which militated against the profussed objectives of the NGOs. Provision of microcredit to poor to take up income generating activities is exigent. He pleaded that efforts were
to be made for the sustainability of microenterprises, credit should not be overemphasized, and groups should be made self reliant.

2.3.6 Bangladesh: Big Pluses of Microfinance and Its Emergence as an Alternate Rural Financial Credit Market

T.N. Jha’s presentation in a paper on microfinance models in Bangladesh made an analysis to identify the core areas of strength and weakness based on the perceptive understanding, and concluded that the microfinance models in Bangladesh, despite a few weaknesses, was strongly built in certain aspects like operational simplicity, better accessibilities, wider outreaches, emphasis on women empowerment and availability of credit and noncredit services. It is supposed that after crossing infancy stage, microfinance emerges into alternate rural financial credit market of Bangladesh.

2.3.7 Bangladesh: Women’s Voice in Household Decision Making

Govind Kelkar, Dev Nathan, Rownok Jahan (2004) made an assessment study of the impact of activities on women’s say in household decision making and their own well-being in the paper titled ‘Redefining Women’s ‘Samman’ Microcredit and Gender Relations in Rural Bangladesh’, and found that there had been a definite enhancement of women’s status giving them greater voice in deciding household affairs. Though other traditional aspects stood in the way to true realization of the capabilities of women in family and society, it was strongly emphasized by participants that they would definitely break through the existing hurdles in years to come.

2.3.8 France: Construct of Women Empowerment as Something, Beyond Financial Paradigm

Camille Sutton-Brown(2011) in his ‘photo voice’, study on ‘Women’s Empowerment in the Context of Microfinance made an exploration of how 6 women in Mali(France) perceived and experienced empowerment in relation to
their participation in microfinance program using photo voice. It was found through the photographic collection that women-generated, women empowerment is a complex constructs something beyond the financial paradigm. The women’s perceived empowerment indicated that microfinance has positively and negatively impacted the various dimensions of empowerment. The women also initiated policy changes at the microfinance institution with which they were affiliated.

2.3.9 Pakistan: Provision of Education and Family Protections as a Supplement to Microfinance in Women Empowerment

Sara Noreen (2011) study on the Role of Microfinance in Empowerment of Female Population of Bahawalpur district of Pakistan concluded that microfinance, though able to empower women, could not empower to women as much expected. Provision of education and family protection in a proper way could bring about the expected level of empowerment. The government policies must be directed to combat the immediate need of rural women but also focus on the root cause of women’s powerlessness.

2.3.10 Peru: Microfinance as a Way to Reach Impoverished Women

Jenna Mulhall-Brereto (2009) in her study on the ‘Empowerment through Microfinance in Peru’ USA concluded that microfinance is a powerful way to reach impoverished women in developing countries.

2.3.11 Egypt: Islamic Microfinance as a Big Benefactor

V.Costa, H. Makhlouf and P. Mazaud (2010) made a study of ‘Women’s Empowerment through Islamic Microfinance in Egypt’ opined that the situation of women in Egypt had improved over the last years in terms of economic participation, education, health care and legal rights. However, due to the new approach in applying Islamic microfinance, deeper understanding and application had to be made.
2.3.12 Thailand: Broad Indicators of Success of Micro-Credit Schemes

Thelma Kay (2002)\textsuperscript{12} viewed in his paper 'Empowering Women through Self-Help-Micro-Credit Programmes' that the success of microcredit schemes should be measured with broad indicators like meeting basic needs for household subsistence, reducing vulnerability to risks and enhancing social capital and empowering women. The Narathiwat, a Muslim province in southern Thailand, was studied and identified that with suitable support, self-help groups could move on to collective action of the community level. But much more need to be done for sustained poverty alleviation.

2.3.13 Creation of Sustainable Local MFIs

Lotto Nycander\textsuperscript{13} in his paper on 'Empowerment of Women through Microcredit' expressed that access to microcredit is one of the ingredients in empowering income poor women, and also required focus on creating sustainable, local lending, micro credit institutions.

2.3.14 Need for Integration of Microfinance with Women Empowerment Interventions

Lynda Mayoux (2000)\textsuperscript{14} reviewed the key issues pertaining to microfinance and empowerment of women. Women empowerment should be an integral part of policies and it could not be assumed to be an automatic outcome of microfinance planning, whether designed for financial sustainability or poverty reduction. There was a lacking of cost effective ways of integrating microfinance with empowerment interventions including group development and complementary services. Unless empowerment is made integral part of planning process the rapid expansion of microfinance is unlikely to make anything more than a limited contribution to empowerment.

2.4 INDIA FOCUSED STUDIES

(1) Emphasis on Training, Education and Creating Awareness on SHG-Bank Linkages

Sarita Chaudhary\textsuperscript{15} in her paper delineated the status of women, and the impact of SHG bank linkage programme on women empowerment in India.
She concluded SHGs programme could have minimum impact on the empowerment of women. To pursue women empowerment through microfinance greater emphasis was to be placed on training, education and creating awareness among rural women.

(2) Government Financial Commitment as a Key Determinant of Success of Microfinance Sector

Anirudh Gopalakrishnan (2003)\textsuperscript{16} in his study on ‘Trends in the Microfinance sector in India’ found that the financial commitment from the government and the ability of the microfinance institutions to function autonomously are the key factors of success in global microfinance sectors. International organizations fund countries, where the government commitment is towards financial support and insist on autonomous functioning.

(3) Financial Intermediation of Public Sector Banks in Their Finance Services

Tara S Nair (2000)\textsuperscript{17} reviewed trends in the rural financial intermediation in India by public sector commercial banks in the post-nationalization period, examined their role in the newly emerging institutional forms with a thrust on microfinance services, and concluded that a healthy rural financial sector was to be developed to meet the needs of agriculture by provisioning infrastructure facilities to ensure sustainability of microfinance to rural poor.

(4) Potential of Microfinance in Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment of Women

Indira Misra\textsuperscript{18} focused on potentials of micro financing in poverty alleviation and empowerment of women, giving a detailed view of microfinance credit programmes in several countries. She also provided relevant analytical information on Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and its prospects.
She concluded that credit raises dignity and self-confidence in the recipient. Credit is a helping hand to the poor who never fail those who trust them.

(5) Impact of Microfinance through SHG-Bank Linkage Programme under NABARD

V. Puhazhendi, K.C. Badatya (2002)¹⁹ made a study on the impact of microfinance through SHG-bank linkage programme implemented by NABARD since 1992 in the eastern regions of the country. The observations made in this study are that there is a need for strengthening village infrastructure, rotation of leadership that can provide the required sustainability to groups, changing attitudes of bankers in promoting and strengthening of SHGs. The support extended by NGOs need to be withdrawn after the group attains the required maturity to conduct on its own. SHGs newly formed need to be nurtured and strengthened in documentation, management information system (MIS) and formulation of data bases at district levels. The services of the SHGs could be well utilized in development activities of the government. There is an utmost need to develop knowledge and skills of SHG members through training and orientation programmes. It is strongly felt that bank linkages be provided to these groups with specific focus on income generating activities to reduce unemployment and poverty among members.

(6) SHGs as Change Agents of Wider Systems of Society

Thomas Fisher and M.S. Sri Ram(2002)²⁰ with contributions from Malcom Harper Ajit Kanitkar, Frances Sinha, Sanjay Sinha, Mathew titus made a vivid analysis of Indian microfinance in his book, “Beyond Micro Credit Putting Development Back into Microfinance”. Often the development goals are lost behind the technical and managerial solutions to ensure financial sustainability or simply focusing on the poorest. The author made a presentation of how microfinance could be designed so that practice of microfinance promotes social and economic security, building democratic

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people’s organization, empowering women and changing wider systems within the society.

It also deals with diverse microfinance practices in India and outreach to the poor. A focus on organization challenges and dilemmas that confront micro-finance practitioners is made with suggestions to manage in practice. In this book a detailed analysis of the fast expanding movement of savings and credit SHGs in India is made vis-a-vis groups promoted by Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

(7) Need for Self-Empowerment of Women

Ashis Bose (2000)\(^{21}\) gave a lucid explanation of how celebrations and orientation programmes are important for empowering women. There is need to create awareness among women at grass root level. The concept of equality though forms basis of our democracy, is totally alien to our society. There is a long-drawn battle where women have to fight. Neither legislations nor the government can empower women, unless women both individually and collectively empower themselves.

(8) Impact Studies on SHGs: Loan Recoveries, Savings, Sustainability and Equality

G. Ramesh and D. Priya Lakshmi (2004)\(^{22}\) viewed the concept of women empowerment as those activities aimed at enhancing women’s social functioning by both quantitative and qualitative change in fields of education, health and employment to bring about the desired level of change. The SHGs, the Government, Banks and NGOs are striving to provide for various schemes of income generating schemes of government to raise the economic status of women. Microfinance programmes have enabled the formal banking system to reach the door-steps of poor. In India a silent revolution is made by SHGs to uplift the economic empowerment of women.

K. Revathy (2004)\(^{23}\) says that there is need for full participation of women in all spheres to achieve equality, development and peace.
Purna Chandra Parida and Anu Shree Sinha (2008) concluded after making a study on the performance and sustainability of SHGs in six Indian States, that the performance of female SHGs is best in terms of loan recovery, per capita savings and also in sustainability.

(9) Need for Reform Policies to Shift from Formal Financial Sector to Microfinance

Raja Ram Das Gupta (2005) made study on Empirical Evidence: Alternative Models and Policy imperatives of Microfinance in India. The observations made in the study include that per capita credit to the poor by formal financial institutions is too small; high NPA, is due to information gap and inadequate monitoring which leads to high transaction cost. The remedy for this is group lending and linking with informal systems through reform policies shifting them from formal financial sector to microfinance reforms.

(10) Solidarity-based Economic Framework for Analysis and Action of Microfinance and Empowerment

Isabelle Guerin and Jane Palier (2004) in their book Microfinance Challenges: Empowerment or Disempowerment of the Poor made an attempt to nourish the debate by combining theoretical reflections and case studies on one hand and by engaging practitioners and researchers from various backgrounds. The book is organized into three parts. The first part considers the definitions of empowerment and concludes that there is no one universally accepted concept of empowerment. The second part insists on the role of environment. The relation between microfinance and empowerment is understood to be more subtle and unforeseeable in a complex environment of economic, socio-cultural and political context and are to be understood and analyzed as endogenous process. The third part relates to evaluation. The results are sometimes positive while elsewhere the same are considered mixed and worrisome. Finally it is concluded that the French concept of “solidarity-based economy which is theoretical and normative, consists a framework for analysis and action.
(11) Sustainable Economic Development through Micro-Enterprises and Micro-Loans

K.G.Karmakar (2005)\textsuperscript{27} in Microfinance Revisited held that SHGs over 10-year old could ensure sustainability if they opt on micro-entrepreneurship. Group entrepreneurship among subgroups within individual SHGs or different members of various SHGs is suggested. Bankers need to be trained to meet the needs of entrepreneurs. An appraisal mechanism to sanction microloans is also to be created without insisting on collateral or documentation.

(12) Motivation in Microfinance Sector

K.G. Karmakar (2008)\textsuperscript{28} provides an overview on microfinance institutions and suggests measures that help in promoting them. Inter alia it reflects upon the challenges faced by the dominant credit delivery model, i.e., SHG-Bank Linkage Programme and issues related to the emerging microfinance institutions (MFI). The new innovation in the microfinance sector and the efforts being made to evolve new models such as SHG Federations is also made by experts from diverse backgrounds. It provides informative and holistic status of microfinance in the country. Microfinance operates on an incremental approach and cannot be expected to generate instant results. Several cycles of lending in SHGs may result in reversing the conditions of abject poverty and ensure that besides meeting the consumption needs of the family, the production or investment credit are also met.

Priya Basu (2005)\textsuperscript{29} observed in her paper titled a 'Financial System for India's poor' that the strategies that were designed to increase access to finance for the poor have not delivered their intended outcomes and there is a need for institutions and markets along with policies to be transformed to improve the efficiency.
(13) **SHG-based Microfinance as Post Reform Phenomenon**

Vikas Batra and Sumanjeet (2011) explored the issues like outreach, impact, efficiency, sustainability and financial inclusions and observed that because of the loss-making rural banks shifting their portfolio away from the rural poor in the post-reform period, SHG-based microfinance, nurtured and aided by NGOs, became an important alternative to traditional lending in terms of reaching poor without incurring heavy operating costs. Government involvement though a welcome development is not free from political favoritism and corruption. The banks, Regional Rural Banks, co-operatives and SHGs linked with Non-Governmental Organisations have to play a role. For inclusive financial services the emphasis is on scaling up quality financial services to serve large number of people, reaching increasingly poorer and more remote people, and lowering costs to both clients and financial service providers.

(14) **Microfinanciarization as an Umbrella Concept**

Cyril Fouillet and Britta Augsburg (2007) made a geo-economics analysis of microfinance and more specifically of microfinanciarization which means a process of structural change that involves financial inclusion, bankarization, the regulation of informal financial practices and the utilization of voluntary sector and third sector capabilities in the provision of financial services to people who are excluded from financial and banking institutions.

(15) **Multiple Perspective Evaluation of SHG-Bank Linkage Programme**

Malcom Harper (2002) provide multi-perspective evaluation of the SHG-bank linkage programme by academics, consultants and practitioners of microfinance from India and abroad. The author is of the view that the banks, particularly cooperatives should support SHG members initiatives, the SHPI
roles and that of Federations be examined. The SHG member, NGOs involved, other schemes under operation should be monitored. There is a need to bring about a change in the attitude of bankers towards business with poor, training need to be given on book keeping.

(16) NGO-Bank Networking in Provision of Microfinance

N. Lalitha (1998) in her paper on ‘Micro Finance: Rural NGOs and Banks Networking’ viewed that outreach of microcredit is an indispensable tool. Success of the rural micro-credit programmes for women depends on the awareness, motivation, entrepreneurial aptitude and skill of the beneficiaries. While reaching the unreached credit plus approach with supporting facilities will go a long way in realizing objectives of women’s development.

(17) Prior Stipulations of Amounts to be Saved and Paid Backs as Deterrents of Poor Inclusion on Microfinance

Neera Burra (1997) basing on field experience of over 15 years working with NGOs and women’s groups in several parts of the country, namely Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa and Tamil Nadu examined that prior stipulations of amounts to be saved, amounts to be paid back exclude the poorest of the poor. To overcome the limitations of microfinance training and capacity building on a continuous basis. The use of loan for consumption purpose food, education and health should not be narrowly seen. When household responsibilities are shared the goal of poverty reduction is achieved to a great extent.

(18) Partnership between Government, National Banks and NGOs Needed

Hema Bansal in a study made in Vododara district in the State of Gujarat in India observed that the efforts of government and the National banks at macro level have not percolated to the micro level. Bank officials at the village level are still not willing to establish linkage with the NGOs. Successful
partnership between Government, national banks and NGOs needs to be established for the achievement of objectives of microfinance programmes.

(19) Role of SHG Federations and SHG Financial and Organisational Sustainability

Jael Van Der Heijden in his research aimed to address the question 'Do SHG federations in rural East Uttar Pradesh, India contribute to the sustainability and empowerment of SHGs and their participants? It is found that financial and organisational sustainability are strongly and highly dependent on the structure and range of services provided by SHG federations. Financial services combined with group based strategies will ensure organizational capacity of the poor. More knowledge about banking procedures, rotation of leadership, and active participation in federation meeting could ensure empowerment. In this research it is recommended to develop indicators to measure the economic, political and social empowerment of SHG members and keep track of regular data to improve learning and accountability.

(20) Case Studies on Prerequisites in Gender Mainstreaming

Benjamin F.Lyngdoh provided evidences of women empowerment through microfinance from case studies made in Meghalaya made suggestions for making microfinance stronger. Expansion of savings pool, better borrowing-lending policies and guidelines, participative decision making and management, regular meetings and reporting, awareness among beneficiaries are key factors in gender mainstreaming to ensure equality, contribute to poverty alleviation and family well being.

(21) Norms to Govern Microfinance Initiatives

R.K. Mishra made efforts to measure the success of micro-credit interventions in India as well as Orissa and suggested that the attitudes of banks regarding microfinance programmes ought to be changed. the NGOs
should be supported by Government and banks for success of microfinance interventions. In order to protect the poor from any possible crisis that may occur due to microfinance, norms to govern and streamline microfinance initiatives in the country are needed.

(22) **Flexible Microcredit Instruments Needed to Meet Diverse Credit Needs**

M. Anbalagan, R. Amudha and V. Selvam\(^{19}\) claimed that micro-credit to SHGs enables the rural poor women to convert their entrepreneurial dream into reality and attain economic sustenance. Incidents of women SHGs in Tamil Nadu are highlighted to prove the positive and synergetic role of SHG in empowering women. The need for flexible credit instruments that match poor women's multiple credit requirements is also highlighted in this paper.

(23) **Microcredit through SHG Contributes to Occupational Diversification**

S. Galab and N. Chandrasekhara Rao (2003)\(^{40}\) in their study concluded that SHGs improved the access of women to credit which has contributed to occupational diversification at the household level. There is shift from wage employment to self-employment and intensity of poverty has come down. But failure to invest in economic activities resulted in declining the living conditions of some poor women. For this microcredit linked with other programmes is suggested. Activation of agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and provision of infrastructural facilities are suggested to widen the scope of self employment among SHG women.

Shaik. N. Meera and D.U. M. Rao (2003)\(^{41}\) opined that the initiation of a socially acceptable, economically viable and practically feasible information technology projects will help in realizing the social, political and economic empowerment of women.
(24) Poverty Eradication and Women Empowerment as Extended Horizon of Microcredit

Usha Narayanan (1997) in a meeting of the first ladies of Regional Steering Committee- Asia-Pacific held at Kuala Lampur in October 1997 took part in the discussions on the condition of the poor rural women in their own region expressed that poverty eradication and women empowerment go beyond microcredit. Education plays a key role in women’s welfare, health, economic empowerment and status in the society.

(25) Enabling Systems and Procedures for Women Participation Saving and Credit Operations

D. Rajasekhar (2000) identified several problems that NGOs face in the pursuit of poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment through microfinance programmes on the basis of data on micro-finance programmes of two NGOs in Kerala. Though the NGOs operate in the same district and employ similar strategies, their results in terms of poverty alleviation and women empowerment are different owing to the systems and procedures adopted in enabling the women to participate in the programmes. Thus, it is found that better participation of women in saving and credit operations will result in poverty alleviation and empowerment of women.

(26) Tailor-made Credit Delivery System to the Poor

Soundarjiya Borbora and Ratul Mahanta (2001) made an evaluation of the Rashtriya Gramin Viakas Nidhi-Credit and Saving Programme (CSP) in Assam and found CSP successful as it focused exclusively on the rural poor and adopted credit delivery system specially designed for them with the support of trained staff and supportive policy without political intervention at any stage in the implementation of the programme.
(27) **Women Savings as Absorber of External Shocks and Reducer of Money-Lenders Dependency**

T.C. Chandrashekar and S.C. Shivashankar (2010) through his survey viewed that microfinance as an instrument to initiate growth and development by providing rural poor access to financial services. Through cultivating the habit of savings women could strengthen their resistance to external shocks and also reduce dependency on money lenders.

(28) **Integrated Approach to Microfinance, SHGs and Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment**

V.P. Sriraman linked microfinance, SHGs, Women empowerment and Women entrepreneurship. After considering some interesting cases, that demonstrated the fact that women could pro-create themselves, given a conducive climate. The climate required improving their status and economic role is that they ought to be integrated into economic development programs. Nutrition, child health and related matters depend on women's action and decisions. Promotion of enterprise and income generating activities among women would transform their lives with dignity.

(29) **Amartyasen's concept of Women Empowerment Analysed**

Manju Dhall (2002) while analyzing on the concept of women's empowerment as concerned by noble Laureate Amartya Sen concluded in Economics, that knowledge and information empower individuals and give them a control over the environment. Capability with information to make informed choices is referred to by Amartya Sen as capabilities to accord girls their rightful share in the milieu to ensure their empowerment.

(30) **Self-assertion as a Fore-runner of Women Empowerment**

Debal K Singha Roy (1995) in his study viewed collective mobilization, ideology and orientation towards change as the basic elements of
social movement. Such a change will begin from women's self-assertion. It is up to women to define for themselves the form and extent of their empowerment.

(31) Beneficial Impact of SHGs on Women Empowerment

P.S. Rangi, M.S. Sidhu and Harjit Singh(2002) undertook an impact study on economic empowerment of rural women through SHGs in Fatehgarh Sahib district Punjab and observed that the IMY programme launched by Government of India in August 1995 to empower women have benefitted the women from social and economical exploitation by moneylenders, landlords and others. Income generated through SHGs provided them moral support and will power to bring about new changes in the rural economy of the state in future.

(32) Women Empowerment much more than Economic Well-Being

Naila Kabeer examined empirical evidence on the impact of microfinance with respect to poverty reduction and empowerment of poor women and concluded that access to financial services contributed to the economic productivity and social well-being of the poor women and their households. This does not automatically empower women. Along with other interventions microfinance needs a lot of commitment and capacity to become a reality.

Sanjay Kanti Das (2012) explored the role of SHG as a financial intermediary for enhancing women empowerment by undertaking a study in Nagaon districts of Assam. The findings of this study revealed that SHG-Bank Linkage programme exhibited profound influence on the economic status, decision making power, knowledge and self-worthiness of women participants of SHG-Bank Linkage programme in Assam.
(33) **Weak Form of Empowerment through Microfinance; Need for Appropriate Inclusion Strategy**

Jyotish Prakash Basu (2006)\(^{52}\) conducted an empirical study on microfinance and women empowerment in Hooghly district, West Bengal. His findings reveal that empowerment of women is taking place in a weak form. Empowerment depends on the choice of safe investment projects. It was also found that of the income-generating activities undertaken by women, about 38% under the control of husbands, making it necessary to adopt an appropriate strategy for financial inclusion.

(34) **Social Impact of SHG-Bank Linkage Programmes**

Myrada (2002)\(^{53}\) made a study on the social impact of SHG-Bank Linkage Program on the request of NABARD, covering four NGOs in four states i.e. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The observation made was that the process of empowerment seemed to be started in old SHGs. To improve the performance of SHG movement the following changes are recommended; literacy levels, be increased, permanent source of income be created rather than confining savings mobilization, and provision of credit, and majority participation of members.

(35) **Education, Training and Awareness creation Focused**

Ranjula Bali Swain (2006)\(^{54}\) in his paper, ‘Can Microfinance Empower Women?’ argues that women empowerment can ensure only when women challenge the existing norms and culture for their well-being. This paper was an outcome of evaluative study on the impact of SHG- Bank Linkage conducted in five states namely Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The study revealed that women are in the process of empowering themselves. If women empowerment through microfinance is to be pursued as a serious objective by SHG programmes in particular and
microfinance community in general, laying greater emphasis on training, education and creating awareness is required.

(36) Impact of Joint Operation of Microfinance and Micro Enterprises on Women Empowerment

K. Manoharan Nair and B. Girija (2005) concluded in ‘Microfinance; The New Development Paradigm for Poverty Eradication and Women Empowerment’ that each and every activity of microfinance is meant to enhance the confidence and capacity of the poor women. Thrift and credit operations under microfinance and micro enterprises enhance their economic status in the family and society and ultimately help in eradicating poverty at the grass root level itself.

(37) Syntheses of Formal and Informal Financial Sectors

A. Abdul Raheem (2011) in his book ‘Women Empowerment through SHGs’ gave a vivid account of the various measures taken by the government of India for the economic, social and political empowerment of women. It examines the role of SHGs in women’s development and brings about a synthesis of formal and informal financial sectors. A case study of Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu is also included in the book.

(38) Subsidized Loan Diffusing the Spirit of SHG Members

S.M. Feroze and A.K. Chauhan (2011) in his book titled ‘Microfinance in India’ explains the concepts associated with microfinance, traces its progress and performance, and examines the role of government agencies in its promotion. The role of microfinance in the economic empowerment of women and ‘financial inclusion’ is also highlighted. A case study of microfinance in Haryana is also included in the book. From the study it is concluded that one gram sevak/sevika to monitor all SHGs is not sufficient and more number of staff need to be recruited to improve efficiency of the group. Moreover, it is observed that the element of subsidy in SGSY scheme diffused the true spirit of
SHG members. Along with impartation of skill, marketing of the produce of SHGs is suggested to induce investment in income generating activities.

(39) Long-term Credit Targeting Women as the surest way for Family Welfare Maximisation

R. Sunil (2002)\textsuperscript{58} argues that in backward economies the credit demand and usage patterns differ from general theoretical/programmatic assumptions. Under such circumstances the link between credit empowerment of women and the wider empowerment of the poor become weak and unpredictable. But on the contrary, in the long-run targeting women would end up in the financial prosperity, for women spend more amounts for the welfare of the family.

(40) Economic Inclusion plus Capabilities Development for Women Empowerment and Well-being

V. Nirmala (2006)\textsuperscript{59} examined the role of SHG micro-credit as a tool of capability development and women’s empowerment in rural areas of Pondicherry region, India. It is observed that after procuring credit the employment opportunity and annual family income improved, and the human capabilities developed. The major problems faced are credit not received in time, low profits, competition from mechanized products, besides marketing and work place problems. The combination of economic inclusion with capabilities development would go a long way in empowering and improving the well-being of the rural women.

(41) Women DWCRA Members Supplementing Their Family Income

Dr. Padala (2011)\textsuperscript{60} made an evaluation study on the nature of business and its performance carried out by women through SHGs in Andhra Pradesh, drawing a sample of 400 DWCRA members from six districts of Andhra Pradesh. In the study it is found that women opted SHG membership mainly to become eligible to government schemes and also to avail loan. They found
strict loan discipline and savings were regularly observed. Women supplemented their family income by undertaking income-generating activity. Thus, it is evident from the study that women empowerment is possible through SHGs.

(42) Multi-agency Collaboration as Underlying Factor of SHG Movement in A.P

Sankar Datta and Vijay Mahajan, Basix (2000)\(^1\) gave an analysis of SHG movement in Andhra Pradesh and identified noteworthy factors that made the SHG movement possible while the same has been found difficult in most other states of India. Multiple-agency collaboration is identified as the cause of strength in AP. Emphasis on development of human resources and intensive inputs in areas till reactions saturation is achieved are other dimensions in this direction. Lack of blue-print directive enabled the adoption of design variation in different parts of the state facilitating multiple agencies in the task.

(43) Women Needs as a Critical Input in Choice Combination of Empowerment and Sustainability

Chowdari Prasad (2009)\(^2\) in his paper, ‘Microfinance and Women Empowerment: Problems And Prospects’ brought to light inter alia that very few women stand to be empowered of the policies, the reason being the very small size of the loan and untimely provision. The role of NGOs and SHGs in the light of their success in upliftment of the economic status of women is discussed. The needs of women are to be studied in deciding the best way of combining empowerment and sustainability objective.

(44) Dark Areas in Implementation of SHG Schemes

PV Narasaiah\(^3\) in his study on women empowerment through SHGs – A Special Focus on Kadapa District undertook to evaluate the implementation of SHGs scheme in Kadapa District in Andhra Pradesh. It is concluded that the
rural women's awareness levels are low; marketing of their produce is another limiting factor; and restrictive loan policies of SHG-linking banks pose major difficulties for women entrepreneurs which need to be addressed to in policy formulation of the Government.

(45) **Collaboration of NGOs, MFIs and Formal Sector Banks for Provision of Micro Finance for Gender Equality and Development**

G. Venkatachalam and Dr. P. Mohan Reddy in their paper on, 'women Empowerment through Microfinance: Challenges and Opportunities' identified that the focus of the microfinance sector should be on the development of different types of organizations- NGO, MFIs and formal sector banks- and fine tune policies to the needs of the specific target groups and institutional roles enabling to build capacities and collaborate to work together in making significant contribution to gender equality and development.

(46) **Instant Microfinance to Members for Meeting their Basic Requirements**

K. Prabhakar, K. Lavanya Latha and A. Papa Rao (2010) concluded that women have greater accessibility to the financial resources through Viswa Santhi Balananda Kendram (VSBK) whose headquarters are in Guntur. Its members are given credit as and when needed for meeting their basic requirements.

(47) **Microfinance A Breaker of Poverty Vicious Cycle**

Mohammad Abdul Gaffar (2008) concluded that by giving the world’s poor a hand up, not a handout, microfinance can help break the vicious cycle of poverty and empower them.
(48) **Going Beyond Microcredit to Vest the Poor with Endowment and Increase their Exchange Outcomes**

Wale V.S. and Deshmukh A.M (2011)\(^67\) observed that the scheme of microfinance through Self Help Group (SHG) has brought about real economic power to women and considerably reduced their dependence on men. Empowerment of women depends on their level of education, hard work, social custom family planning, small family, health, medical services, cleanliness, Environment, tree growing, kitchen gardening. There is a need to go beyond micro-credit to increase the endowments of the poor and enhance their exchange outcomes.

(49) **Triple Role of Government as Protector, Overseer and Developer**

T.S. Devaraja (2011)\(^68\) identifies three distinct aspects where Government needs to play a role. First, it is to protect the rights of micro borrowers, the consumer of micro-financial services. Second, it is to oversee a prudential risk-taking MFIs and third, it is the developmental role by scaling up of the microfinance industry where the key issues are access to multiple sources of funds, and innovations in microfinance products and distributing with the use of new technologies.

(50) **Women-Centered Rajasthan State Policy**

Shobhita Rajagopal and Kanchan Mathur (2000)\(^69\) appraised the Rajasthan State Policy on Women announced by the government of Rajasthan (GOR) on March 8\(^{th}\) 2000. The policy underlies the need to improve the quality of women's lives, viewing them women as productive members of society. It is observed that the policies could bring about limited social change, unless the policy framers give due weightage to gender concerns and ensure that both needs and interests of women are reached.
(51) Financial Services to Meet Consumption and Investment Needs of the Poor

Debabrata Maji\textsuperscript{70} made an attempt to highlight the success stories of microfinance programmes in Arunachal Pradesh and held that the all the financial institutions and micro-financial institutions need to play an increasingly important and predominant role in nourishing and developing micro-finance sector as social obligation. To make development sustainable the poor need to have access to financial services to meet their consumption and investment needs.

(52) Money Management Education and Training to SHGs

J. Sucharitha, S. Suresh Babu and N. Ramesh (2009)\textsuperscript{71} held training to be an important aspect for any organization. Also financial education and savings teaches valuable lessons about savings, loans and responsible money management. Also leadership skills, decision making teamwork and self-confidence are to be instilled among members.

(53) Poverty Alleviation Intervention for Empowerment of Women: Experiment-Control Groups Design

Ranjani. K. Murthy, K. Raju and Amita Kamath\textsuperscript{72} studied the impact of UNDP-assisted South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) interventions in Mahabubnagar, Kurnool and Ananthapur Districts for women empowerment and poverty reduction and found that the access of members to each and every basic need is higher than that of non-members of similar socio-economic background. Caste barriers within the group and outside are destroyed. Poverty levels are higher among dalit households.

(54) Holistic Positive Impact of Microcredit on Women SHG Members

K. Pavani Reddy and K. Vijayalakshmi (2008)\textsuperscript{73} in their study on the Impact of Micro-credit on Employment and Income Generation and Asset Creation of Rural Women Members of SHGs in Indukurpet Mandal, Nellore
district, A.P. It is found that SHGs improved confidence among participants and had a bearing on the life style, living standards of the women economically, socially and educationally. Improvement of SHG-Bank linkage is suggested for further development of poor.

(55) Government-Subsidized SHG-Bank Loan Scheme: Pavala Vaddi


(56) Positive Impact of SHG Movement: Before and After Design

C.S. Ramalakshmi in a study on the impact of SHG Movement on Women Empowerment concluded that there was an increase in the levels of awareness about the society, participation in community activities increased, decline in crime against women and girls to a great extent, and an increase in campaign against eradication of social evils after joining SHGs.

(57) Turmoil in Microfinance sector in A.P: Undermining SHGs with Over Supplied Credit by Private Sector MFIs

Anurag Priyadarshee and Asad K. Ghalib (2011) explored the causal factors that led to the turmoil within the microfinance sector in Andhra Pradesh. The strong base developed by the SHG because of certain state sponsored programmes attracted private sector MFIs. In an attempt to make more profits they oversupplied credit. The poor became the victims of aspiration paradox were unable to assess their repayment capabilities. This situation compounded as credit was given on consumable items which led to defaulting by the poor and implementation of coercive methods by MFIs. The
regulatory measures adopted to appear to focus on the symptoms and not on the root cause of the malaise. It is identified as an inefficiency of the government in regulating the environment for the unequal distribution of private sector institutions and maximizing profits by them. Such circumstances may lead to more private MFIs in the future creating similar situations in different Indian states.

(58) Multi-pronged Attack on Poverty with the Mix of Methods

Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive (2004) in a study on women’s SHGs in AP found that there is a need of mix of complex methods to address the complicated problem of poverty. The usage of the existing structures along with new edifices is suggested.

(59) Comparative Analysis of SHG-Bank Linkage Models and MFIs

George Paul and Sara John P (2010) in a comparative analysis of MFI and SHG-Banking Models suggest that more credit needs to be fostered within the SHG system through a diverse array of financial services in an efficient and flexible manner to address the supply constraints of SHGs which conduce MFIs to capitalize on. Also there is a need to bring MFIs under the ambit of government regulations to protect the rights and interest of their clients.

(60) ‘Financial Inclusion’ for production and Equitable Distribution of Wealth in Globalizing World Economy

K. Ramakrishnan (2007) in the article on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy: Andhra Bank Initiatives in Srikakulam District conclude that the levels of globalization increase, more economic wealth is created and distributed. To ensure equal distribution of this wealth financial inclusion assumes importance. Bottom of the economic and social pyramid is the strategy
to be adopted by banks. The banks need to treat it both as a business opportunity as well as social responsibility.

(61) **Education and Savings Are Positively Related**

Sanjeev B.U.K. Thankavel (2011)\textsuperscript{86} study undertaken in 9 districts of Kerala addressed the issues of Indian microfinance sector. This study found that that the government agencies charged interest on the loans given to SHGs averaging between 12% and 15%. About 56% of SHGs had taken loans from banks. Saving levels more with the highly educated SHG members.

**SECTION B: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

2.5 **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The net result of strategies of economic development followed since the onset of economic planning in India is ever-increasing income disparities and concentration of wealth. Thus, islands of prosperity in the ocean of poverty, exists presently in India. To counteract this phenomenon, the need of the hour is inclusive growth strategy. Rural poor women, particularly those belonging to SC, ST and BC strata are most neglected groups of the Indian society. The households of women are caught up in a vicious circle of poverty: low productivity, low incomes, low savings, low investment. Interventions should aim at breaking this vicious circle. In addition to their traditional role of homemakers, there is utmost need for them to take up active role by participating in traditional and modern economic activities. For this to happen, they need to be empowered. The mechanism of empowerment is organizing them into SHGs and effecting SHG-Bank linkages to ensure microfinance facility to these women SHG members. With the assured access to finance, they increasingly participate in economic activities augmenting their employment, incomes, expenditures, savings and investments. Thus, a virtuous cycle of empowerment sets in, bringing all round development of women, and making them independent in socio-politico-economic domains.
2.6 NEED FOR THE STUDY

The government of A.P has been implementing the community-driven rural poverty alleviation programme under IKP for the last thirteen years to enable the poor to improve their livelihood and quality of life. Empowerment of women through the conduit of SHGs is the principal component of strategy for poverty eradication by both Central and State Governments. SBLP has been taken up vigorously in A.P by 25-commercial banks, and 16 RRBs with active participation of their 4700 branches. Financial sector is, thus, made willing partners along with State Government in bringing rural development in general and women development in rural areas in particular. To facilitate loan borrowings by rural women

2.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives set for the study are:

- to study the progress of SHGs and SHG-Bank Linkage Programme;
- to assess socio-political empowerment of SHG women;
- to evaluate economic empowerment of SHG members; and
- to study the perceptions and problems of bank officials

2.8 HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses postulated for testing in the study are:

- there are no significant differences in socio-political empowerment amongst caste groups of women members;
- there are no significant differences in economic empowerment of women SHG members across caste categories;
- there are no significant differences in economic impact of microfinance on SHG member households across caste categories; and
• there are no significant differences in bankers' perceptions towards SHG-Bank loans.

2.9 SAMPLE DESIGN

Sample units for the present study are SHGs, SHG members and officials of banks involved in SBLP. Since the study is confined to East Godavari district, the samples are drawn to ensure fair representation across the revenue mandals of the district. The Table-2.1 presents the research design of the study.

Multi-staged random sampling method is adopted in the present study. In the first stage, 3 out of 5 revenue divisions are taken. In the second stage, 9 out of 60 mandals are selected at the rate of 3 from each revenue division. In the third stage, out of 5000 SHGs financed by 8 SBI and 9 Andhra Bank branches operating currently in 9 sample mandals 150 SHGs (3 per cent of 5000 SHGs) are chosen as sample, In the fourth stage, 315 SHG members at the rate of 2 members from each sample are drawn as sample for a detailed study. In the fifth stage 17 bank officers from the 9 mandals and 25 bank officers of other linking banks in the district have been selected to obtain their perceptions. Therefore, the sample constitutes 3 revenue divisions, 9 mandals, 150 SHGs, 315 SHG members and 42 branch managers/field officers.

2.10 DATA SOURCES

The present study is based in both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from three sets of samples: sample SHGs, sample SHG members and sample officials of banks involved in SHG-bank linkage programme.
### Table 2.1

**SAMPLE FRAME OF THE STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Revenue Division</th>
<th>Mandal</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Linking Bank Branch</th>
<th>Number of samples from</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
<td>Amalapuram</td>
<td>Razole</td>
<td>Podalada</td>
<td>Andhra Bank</td>
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<td>Sompalli</td>
<td>State Bank of India</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>P. Gannavaram</td>
<td>Munganda</td>
<td>Andhra Bank</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Komarajulanka</td>
<td>Komarajulanka</td>
<td>State Bank of India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Peddapuram</td>
<td>Peddapuram</td>
<td>Andhra Bank</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State Bank of India</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Andhra Bank</td>
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<td>State Bank of India</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
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<td>Jambupatnam</td>
<td>Andhra Bank</td>
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<td>Andhra Bank</td>
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<td>Chakradwarabhandam</td>
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<td>State Bank Of India</td>
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<td>Rajamundry</td>
<td>Dowaleswaram</td>
<td>Andhra Bank</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State Bank of India</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other linking banks</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data.
Secondary data are culled out from the district credit plan, handbook of statistics pertaining to the district and A.P state, RBI reports, records of concerned bank branches in the district, etc.

2.11 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The present study is based on three units of analysis, that is, SHGs. SHG members and bank officials. Three sets of questionnaires are therefore administered to generate primary data from each of the sample units of analysis.

Period of Data Collection

The study was conducted in 6 month period from November 2011 to April, 2012 canvassing specially designed questionnaires to each of the three sets of samples.

2.12 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is focused on three units of analysis. In studying SHGs as a unit, the focus is on profile of the group, its activities, loan aspects, subsidies and grants received, dropouts, meetings, book-keeping and income generating activities.

In the study of SHG members as a unit of study, the aspects covered are general information, socio-political and economic empowerment. With focus on bankers as a unit of study, the perceptions of bankers on a wide gamut of issues regarding linkage are obtained. Likerts’ 5 point scale is used to score the perceptual responses of sample bankers. 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 points are assigned to strongly agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.
2.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Responses of the SHG members to the questionnaire items are mostly memory-based. Hence, the respondents' memory lapses may cause non-verility of data. Perceptions of bank officials are subjective, which vary from person to person. Thus, the perception are not completely reliable. Due to constraints of time and resources, the researcher confined the sample of the study to 9 mandals, 150 SHGs, 315 members and 42 bank officials. The sample though not broad based is representative.

2.14 STATISTICAL TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

Simple statistical tools like percentages, ratios, means, and dispersions are used in the analysis of primary and secondary data. Graphs and charts are used sparingly. Advanced statistical tools like t-test, chi-square test and anova are used for testing hypotheses posited in the study.

2.15 ORGANISATION OF THESEIS

The thesis is organized into eight well-delineated chapters as listed below.

Chapter - 1 Microfinance and Women Empowerment: A Conceptual Framework.

Chapter - 2 Review of Literature and Research Methodology.

Chapter - 3 Profile of East Godavari District, Sample SHGs and SHG members.

Chapter - 4 SHGs and SHG-Bank Linkage Programme.

Chapter - 5 SHGs and Economic Empowerment.

Chapter - 6 SHGs and Socio-Political Empowerment.

Chapter - 7 Bankers' Perceptions and Problems.

Chapter - 8 Summary of findings, Conclusion and Suggestions.
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