CHAPTER - IV

FORMATION, FUNCTIONS, OBJECTIVES, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF WSHGs

In this chapter an attempt has been made to describe the formation, functions, objectives, monitoring and evaluation of WSHGs to a possible extent.

4.1. WOMEN SELF HELP GROUPS

A Women Self Help Group is a voluntary organization in a village or town consisting of 12 to 20 women having mutual understanding forming WSHGs with the objectives of self-development and social development. The main objectives of these groups are to develop their families, villages, society and economy. There is no need for registering these voluntarily formed WSHGs.

4.1. a. WSHGs in Tamil Nadu – Mahalir Membattu Thittam¹

Tamil Nadu Women’s Development project [TNWDP – Mahalir Membattu Thittam]. The TamilNadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd., and International Fund for Agricultural and Development (IFAD) assisted the TamilNadu Women’s Development Projects. These projects were first introduced in Dharmapuri District in November 1989 and it was extended to Villupuram, Cuddalore and Salem Districts during 1991-92 and then to Madurai, Theni and Ramanathapuram districts during 1993-94.

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¹ Mahalir means women, Membattu means development, Thittam means plan.
The TamilNadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd is the implementing agency and Indian Bank was the modal bank for the project. The main objective of the project was the economic and social upliftment of women below poverty line, through formation of WSHGs of poor women with active assistance and supervision of NGOs. Under the scheme, Rs.48.16 crores were distributed as credit and Rs.32.33 crores as subsidy totalling Rs.80.49 crores to 87541 WSHGs members with an average payment of 85 per cent. About 5207 WSHGs with 120960 women members accumulated a total saving corpus of Rs.22.898 crores under the IFAD and this was to leave behind self-reliant and sustainable WSHGs through a process of careful and slow withdrawal by NGOs and TNCDW in a phased manner.

4.1 b. Tamilnadu Mahalir Thittam

The Mahalir Thittam is an unusual long-term partnership in development among 3 agencies—the State Government, Non-governmental institutions and financing institutions. The endeavour is to combine the wide research and resources available to the state, with the fines, commitment and quality work of the NGOs, together with necessary credit from commercial banks, GOI organizations, local area banks and other funding sources. The TamilNadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited with its Head Quarters at Chennai is the implementing agency.
4.2 FORMATION OF WSHGs

4.2. a. Eligible (or) Qualified Women as Member of WSHGs

Group formation will be preceded by a village level household survey which will provide the base line data. This should be conducted by the Non-Governmental Organizations for which techniques like participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) could be used wherever possible.

To facilitate sustainability, the size of the groups should be in the range of 12 to 20. In no case should the group size exceed 20. The age group for the membership will be 21 to 60. All the members should be married women. Preference will be given for widows, divorcees, deserted and handicapped women and women belonging to SC/ST community. In any case, all members must be below the poverty line.

By and large, the groups must be mixed groups, being composed of members from the different communities as far as possible. However, in the case of hamlets and colonies, populated exclusively by members of a particular community, such exclusive groups may also be formed. These will depend upon the local conditions. Group formation should be cleared by NGO and PIU, which would be after a maximum of 3 months from the commencement of group functioning.

4.2. b. Name of the Group

Name of the WSHGs is chosen by the members of WSHGs to their pleasure and will. No condition is imposed by the Government in naming a self-help Group.
4.2.c. Head Quarters Structure

As regards the Corporation’s Chennai office, there is a Project Management Unit (PMU) with the organizational structure as in the chart below.

**CHAIRPERSON & MANAGING DIRECTOR**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Joint coordinator Joint coordinator Joint coordinator
Financial (M&E) (Trg) (Commens)
Assistant Coordinator Assistant Coordinator
(Training) (Training)

Assistant Manager (System)
(Monitoring Evaluation)

Schemes Joint coordinator Joint coordinator
(Mktg) (Fin) Adviser &
company
Assistant coordinator Manager (A/C) Secretary
(Marketing)

Manager (Dev) Manager (Projects)
4.2.d. District Structure

The district level project Implementation Unit (PIU) is headed by a Project Officer, assisted by Assistant project Officers (APOs) in the various functional areas of training, communication, monitoring the schemes, marketing, administration and credit. The PIU structure is given below.
The District Project Co-ordination Committee would consist of

01. District Collector - Chairman
02. Project Officer - Member Secretary
03. District Heads of concerned Line Depts. - Members
04. Representation from Lead Bank - Members
05. Representatives from NGOs - Members
06. Representatives from District NABARD office- Members
07. Two elected representatives of beneficiaries –Members
08. Two women with proven comment to women's Issues -Members

4.2.e. Block Structure

The PIU has a minimal block level set up with a Block Project Co-ordinator. There is also a Block Level Coordinator Committee at every block which is headed by the Project Officer/ Asst. Project Officer.

The Block Level co-ordination committee is expected to sort out all day-to-day problems among the various partners and the women's groups. It has also to follow up the project's progress in a critical and detailed qualitative manner. The Block level structure has

Block Project Co-Ordinator

| Typist

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The Block level Co-ordination Committee would consist of
  Project Officer/Assist. Project Officer
  Bankers
  Animators/Representatives
  NGO Staff

4.2.f. NGOs Organization structure

The participation NGOs are important project partners providing quality and commitment to the project. They need to have the following minimum structure for effective implementation of the project:

  District Co-Ordinator (1 for the district)
  Block Coordinator (for every Block)
  Cluster coordinators (1 for every 5 village panchayats)

A cluster will consist of about 5 Panchayats. The NGO will also be required to post a Block co-ordinator at block level and have a District co-ordinator at district level. If the NGO is working only in one block, the block and district coordinator can be one and the same person. The NGO can also have additional staff as deemed necessary.

4.2.g. Banks

The WSHGs can have access to credit from any bank convenient to them. They can also have access to any government scheme or any other source of fund from the NGO's. They can also set up their own local area banks after getting necessary permissions.
4.2.h. Cluster level

There is no staff at cluster level from the Government. However, the NGOs are expected to have cluster coordinators. A cluster would consist of 5 village panchayats.

4.2.i. Cluster Level Federations

Federation of Women’s groups will be promoted at the cluster level. This process is to commence from 6 months to one year of group formation.

Cluster level Organizations are to be formed with the following guidelines.

(i). 15-25 groups to a cluster
(ii) 2 representatives
(iii). 2 years tenure for the representatives

4.2.j. Animators

The animator will be from the local village and must necessarily be a resident of the village. The animator should preferably be a literate and must possess certain leadership qualities. She must be in a position to take on the role of a trainer for the group members in certain aspects of their daily life and group functioning based on the training that would be given to her. In short, she must be a role model and a charge-agent for the groups and for the village as a whole.

The animator’s position must be rotated among the representatives once in every two years. She will facilitate a smooth switch over of responsibilities in the above process. She will also assist
the representatives to learn the role of the animator to facilitate the take over as and when required.

Most of the groups are likely to be consisting of literate women and otherwise the animator could take up due advantage of their position and misutilise the group funds. Hence, there is a need to redefine the role of the animator as that of facilitator to prevent her from dominating the groups and dictating their functions. Consequently, the responsibilities for book-keeping and accounting can be vested with the representatives or any other literate person identified by the group who can be a literate daughter/daughter-in-law of one of the members or any literate girl/woman in the village or any literate boy under 14 years of age related/ not related to any member and the animator can be literate also. Payment to the animator is at the discretion of the group.

4.2.k. Self—Management

Self—Management is the kernel of WSHGs and wherever a WSHGs exists it has to manage its various activities, be it financial management, savings/loan management, resource management of income generating activities, organizational management, conflict management, bank transaction etc. Usually, these groups have trained leadership/membership to manage their funds and record all other operations by themselves. They are really grass root level community-based institutions of the people constituted by the people themselves for the benefit of the people.
4.3 ROLE OF A FEW INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH WSHGs

4.3.a. Role of Project Implementation Unit

Project Officer, Assistant project Officers and Assistant Project Officer (Credit)

- Co-Ordination
- Monitoring and feedback-vertical & horizontal
- Conducting regular review meetings and taking follow up action
- Liaison with departments for role performance of that department
- Attending training sessions of animators, representatives, cluster co-ordinators, beneficiaries, and groups
- Visiting the women’s groups for both social and economic development aspects, including audit checks.
- Organizing cluster level and district level workshops jointly with NGO
- Act as information centre-regarding various Government programmes
- Organize training programmes for NGOs and bankers
- Facilitate exchange of ideas and improvement on the project through interaction with NGOs.
- Not fault finding alone, but also supportive.
Essentials

➢ Attitudinal change
➢ Team Work
➢ field work
➢ Equality
➢ Motivation
➢ Facilitation
➢ Support

4.3.b. Role of NGOs

➢ To participate in joint selection of potential area-block, clusters, villages along with TNCDW
➢ To conduct brief preliminary survey to identify and facilitate eligible beneficiaries to come together for the programme.
➢ Group formation
➢ To help selection of animators by the group and to inform PIU regarding animator selected by group with group resolution.
➢ To work continuously with the group to make them strong, cohesive and sustainable.
➢ To motivate members for regular savings and assist the members in preparation of guidelines for usage of thrift fund and monitor both savings and thrift fund usage.
➢ To assist in the formation and operation of Group Reserve Fund.
➢ To guide the animator, representatives and group in proper book-keeping and record maintenance.
To provide motivation and facilitation for achievement of social development aspects of the project.

To act as advisor and facilitator to the groups on various matters-social/ economic, problem solving, community action programmes, and so on.

For planning and conducting training programmes for animators, representatives, cluster co-ordinators, PIU staff and other NGOs.

To explain basic concepts of development and other identified topics to all group members.

To provide ongoing training and support to the animators, representatives,

To train groups and cluster co-ordinators for management of savings and loan funds.

4.3.c Assist in economic development aspects(including repayment)

To assisting group members in selecting suitable economic activities

To help in identification of new activities(innovative) and assist the group members for the preparation of project appraisal report.

To organize financial assistance for members/group as a whole

To participate in joint appraisal/selection along with PIU and bank for selection and early sanction of economic assistance to members proposed by the groups/SG loans.

To assist in asset creation
- To assist in the follow up for regular and timely repayment including organizing special collection drives jointly with banks and PIU
- To organize cluster level and district level meetings and workshops jointly with PIU
- To assist formation of federal structure of women’s groups at different levels.
- To participate in planning and review meetings at various levels (includes monitoring and feedback of progress and problems)
- To facilitate formation of similar groups in the village and achievement of objective of the project related to the village.
- To help in the transition state when TNCDW would be withdrawing its direct support for the groups.
- To facilitate development of women’s groups into self groups before withdrawal - sustainability
- To evaluate groups periodically and improve performance
- To helping WSHGs for auditing of accounts.

**Essentials**

- Commitment
- Courage of conviction
- Transparency
- Understanding the project
- Staff continuity and attention on project.
4.3.d. Role of Financial Institutions

The sources of finance for the groups are commercial banks, co-operative banks, rural banks, local area banks, funds mobilized through NGO, other sources and governmental schemes. These Financial institutions would be expected to provide credit access for micro enterprises, watch recoveries, provide guidance on projects and marketing and credit access to WSHGs for whatever purpose they want.

4.4. GROUP FUNDS

4.4.a. Group Maintenance Fund

To supplement the group-fund, an amount of Rs.15/- per member is to be collected initially on group formation which will be in addition to the group savings. This will cover the cost of stationery, rubber stamps, registers, postage and so on. After six months, another collection of Rs.10 is also made. The members of the group should also contribute a maximum of Rs.2 per month per member as group maintenance fund. The collected amount could be utilized for certain minor purposes like traveling allowance for bank visits, purchase of stationery items and so on.

4.4.b. Group Common Fund

The groups would receive funds in addition to savings and maintenance funds, such as fines imposed by them on members, contribution from the NGO, CDF, bonus for various programmes, service charges on external loans and so on which would be put in the group common fund. The service charges to be charged on external loans can be left to the discretion of the group. It may range from 2%
to 12% or more. Therefore, if an external loan is received by the group at 12%, the members would get it at minimum of 14% or such higher rate of interest as directed by the group.

4.4.c. Group Reserve Fund

The group reserve fund is essential for sustainability. This will be created from the inception of the group by keeping aside 50% of interest earned on Sangham loans. The primary use of the group reserve fund will be for meeting contingencies like genuine defaults on external loans by the group members. In order to prevent this from becoming a directive for repayment, the balance in the fund is to be distributed as dividend to the non-defaulting members from the third year onwards while retaining the amount required for contingencies.

4.4.d. Bonus for Repayment

The project may have a good repayment bonus for 100% loan-cum-interest repayment. This bonus may be from the TamilNadu Women’s Development Corporation in the form of subsidy amount as stated above or it may be in any other form from the TamilNadu Women’s Development Corporation, or it may be from the NGO or from the bankers.

4.4.e. Rotation of Group Funds

All savings and common fund would be rotated amongst the members at rates of interest to be decided by the group. It usually varies between 2% and 3% per month.
Internal loans should be given priority and differential rate of interest could be charged for emergency loans as distinct from loans for income generating activities and family functions.

Internal loans should not be given to more than 10 members at any given point of situation. Request of a second loan before clearing the first loan from the group should not be admitted. However, the group can decide regarding both these points based on the circumstances.

To whom the Sangham loan should be given is also a group decision. This Sangham loan would enable the members to meet their small consumption and productive needs without having to go to a money-lender or a bank or a Co-operative society.

4.4.f. Resource Mobilization

Resource Mobilization should be distinguished from resource provision. Resource Mobilization means the pooling of resources – natural, material and financial of the WSHGs members whereas resource means provision of resources from external sources. The idea of pooling the members own resource is based on the principle that everybody owns some resource (however limited) which if combined can constitute a substantial improvement to their individual situations. Little drops make the ocean. Complementary to these internal resources, the self-help promoting institutions[SHPIS] or other supporting institutions provide additional resources. No single external institution can carry the entire responsibility of promoting the WSHGs. Therefore, other supporting organizations like banks, research
institutions, extension agencies, religious groups and NGOs have to play a vital role in the crucial task of promoting WSHGS. The external support should lead to sustainable development and should not create dependency syndrome.

4.4.g. Scope to Borrow/Local area Banks / Additional Credit Delivery System

Group /Cluster/Block level local area banks are to be developed as an additional credit delivery system which could be supported by the NGOs through their own funding, or through the RMK or through the WSHGs loan of banks or any other schemes available. In addition to the existing commercial banks credit facilities this would be available for the groups.

4.5 FUNCTIONS OF WSHGs

4.5.a. Group Meetings

The group must meet every week for savings and repayment collections and every fortnight for discussing all other matters in addition to savings and repayment. In certain cases, the meetings can be held once in 10 days for both savings and repayment and other matters, instead of weekly and fortnightly. In no case group meetings shall be held less frequently than once in 10 days. Group meetings need to be conducted with a certain discipline in relation to regularity, time and items to be discussed. There needs to be a fixed day/date every week/10 days, on which day and time the meetings is to be conducted. Any member who without prior intimation to the group (animator/representative /treasurer/Secretary/ president/member) either
does not turn up or turns up late, has to pay a fine as imposed by the group on such member. The amount of this fine can be decided by the group. It may range from Re.1 to Rs.5 in different groups for coming late and Rs.5 to Rs.10 for missing a meeting. This fine would not only bring in discipline, but would also add to group common fund resources. Further, they need to have a specific agenda or set of items to be discussed in each meeting. Certain items such as savings, rotation of sangham fund, bank loans and repayments, social and community action programmes, must be discussed in every meeting without fail.

4.5. b. Group Savings

The group members must be encouraged to save as much as each can without it being a uniform amount for all. Hence, savings must be optional amounts as against fixed.

4.5. c. Opening of Accounts and accessing institutional credit

The WSHGs may open bank accounts in any bank of their choice depending upon their convenience and proximity. Since the service area norms are not applicable to the WSHGs the loans are being advanced by nationalized banks with NABARD's re-finance assistance.

4.5. d. Books and Registers to be maintained by the WSHGs

The following books and registers have to be maintained in every group.

- Attendance Register
- Minutes Book
- Savings Ledger
- Loan Ledger
General Ledger and Cash Book
Individual Pass Book
Subscription Register

The above books and registers will have to be maintained and updated on a regular basis for which the primary responsibility will rest with the animator. The first set of books and registers will be supplied free of cost by the project.

4.5.e. Subsidy Administrations

Any economic assistance scheme on the project which has a subsidy component has to be administered through the group. No individual subsidies are to be given to the group. It is for the group to decide how much to be given to the members. This subsidy is a good repayment bonus. Only after 100% repayment of loan-cum-interest, the subsidy which was kept as a fixed deposit would be given to the group. Hence, subsidy is not adjusted against the loan.

4.5.f. Annual Auditing

Group’s accounts should be audited annually by engaging a local qualified auditor at the village/cluster itself. The groups should meet the audit cost. Groups should follow up and rectify the deficiencies pointed out by the audit and ensure that lapses do not recur. NGO should facilitate this process.
4.5.g. Training

Since this project is basically a human resource development project, training is being given top priority. Certain topics of training will be imparted through the animators/representatives to the groups while some other topics will be imparted directly to the groups.

Apart from the animator, two representatives from each group will also be imparted specific training in the first year, along with the animator and thereafter 2 representatives would be trained by rotation for the next 3 years. In addition to regular training, refresher training will also be provided to the animators and representatives.

Specific performance teams would be formed for specific topics of group training where the audio-visual would be used and films shown, songs sung, dances, dramas and puppetry and so on performed.

Training of NGO staff, PIU staff, block level staff has also been provided for.

The training manual for use on the project details the training programmes and modules. There would be a Training of Trainers (TOT) programme conducted by resource persons for NGOs trainers with the help of the manual.

4.5.h. Communication

As an aid sustainability, there should be an effective communication component. As an essential part of it, there would be a periodical newsletter for sharing of experience. This newsletter would
be at the state level [this is being started at state level, covering all the project districts.]

In addition, other useful films would be shown and documentation of use on the project and of the project are done.

4.5.1. Economic Assistance

The groups can receive economic assistance if any, from the Tamilnadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd., They can also access any other economic assistance of the Government such as IRDP, TAHDCO loan and so on, after the group has a resolution for a certain member or members to be so assisted. The groups can also receive economic assistance from any other source. However, the following points have to be strictly followed.

i. No economic assistance is to be given till the group is cohesive enough to receive it. This would be assessable with a minimum period of 6 months after the group formation.

ii. Not more than one-third of the members should be covered with economic assistance in any one year thereafter by individual schemes.

iii. If it is a group activity the assistance will be given.

iv. All release of loan and repayments are to be done through the group account to individual account.

v. All subsidy should go as bonus to the group to be utilized as the group deems fit.
4.5j. Sustainability

Sustainability is the ultimate goal of WSHGs: Sustainability refers to the capabilities of WSHGs to continue in a sustained manner without depending on external agencies. Indications of sustainable WSHGs are as follows.

1. Regular contribution of savings and loan for income generating purposes.
2. High degree of cohesion. Participation and Harmony among members.
3. High degree of transparency and open conduct of WSHGs meetings and handling of finances.
4. Ability to meet its own expenditure by meeting WSHGs administrative costs through subscriptions and service charges.
5. Ability to manage its own affairs without dependence on NGO or any other agency.
6. Development to make clear the long-term organizational vision mission. Objectives and strategies for WSHGs by themselves.
7. Development of strong linkages with local institutions like Gram Sabha, Banks, Co-Operatives, Schools etc.,
8. Local public recognition of the WSHGs as a model institution with regard to local problems and development issues.
9. Participation and involvement in apex bodies like cluster level and block level federations and ability to make use of them for WSHGs benefit.
10. Ability to reach out to un-reached poor women around them, network them into WSHGs and provide them with support and guidance.

4.5.k. General

Group resolutions should be read out at the end of the meeting itself and again at the beginning of the next meeting. So that the members do not claim ignorance of certain decisions. The amounts of individual and group savings, sangham loan amounts given, repaid and due, external loan amounts received, disbursed, due for repayment and repaid are to be clearly stated in each meetings, so that all members are aware of it for themselves and the other members and group as a whole.

The bank account should be in the name of the WSHGs and should be operated jointly by the animators and two representatives.

The groups should encourage and assist in the formation of new groups in the village/adjoining villages.

The groups should consciously plan for a minimum of four social/community action programmes during every year. Mere writing of petitions is not enough. Concrete actions and results must be there.

The group members should attend all the training programmes without fail. Participation in cluster level workshops and programmes also needs emphasis.
The groups should also show enthusiasm for taking up activities like kitchen, backyard gardening, low cost sanitation, hand-pump maintenance and so on. They should also take up issues concerning environment.

The groups should learn to work in harmony with the village panchayat and other elected representatives for sustainable development and long-term benefits.

The group members should act as role models for the other women in the village and undertake activities to check social evils. The use of stage for plays folk theatre and so on will be very effective in spreading such messages.

All decisions should be taken in a democratic manner after sufficient discussion in the groups.

4.6 OBJECTIVES OF WSHGs

The ultimate objective of the project is the rural empowerment of women in rural Tamilnadu. This empowerment of women would lead to benefits at two levels—one, direct benefits to the individual women and women's group and two, development benefits for families and community as a whole. This objective would encompass for achieving the following.
4.6.a. Objectives for the Women and Groups (Individual and Group)

a. Development of strong, cohesive self-help women’s groups.

b. Improved access of WSHGs members of various governmental development schemes and bank credit schemes.

c. Development of leadership qualities

d. Self-confidence building

e. Increasing social awareness.

f. Improved status of the women in the family and society

g. Improvement in health and family and society.

h. Functional Literacy

i. Awareness of legal rights and access.

4.6.b. Objectives for the Village as a whole (Expected spin off benefits in the village)

a. Active participation and collective action for development

b. Improved health and family welfare.

c. Education and literacy

d. Information, awareness, demand and problem solving.

e. Knowledge of various welfare programmes of Government and banks in villages
f Settlement of local disputes in groups

g Voicing and acting against social injustice to women and children

h Women become vocal and gain confidence.

i Economic development

j Abolition of bonded labour.

k Eradication of Child labour.

l Protection of environment and natural resources

m Commercial harmony, caste harmony

n Eradication of evils of alcohol

o Eradication of dowry.

4.7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

4.7.a. Aims of Monitoring and Evaluation

The main objective of monitoring is to have ready information on the project’s progress and administrative matters to enable effective implementation on planned path and strategy, so that the objectives are achieved and not lost sight of in the long-run for targets and short-term gains.

Evaluation aims to assess the project’s impact on economic and social empowerment of women, sustainability of its institutions and other project objectives.
4.7.b. Monitoring

Monitoring will permit a 2-way flow of information

a) Feed back to the management on progress and process and

b) Communication from head office to the district offices and field.

It will assess the group progress towards sustainability, financial viability, outreach and institutional viability of the programme and the stated objectives.

It will be a mechanism to provide information for mid-course corrections whenever the need arises.

It will assess the performance against targets as also performance of various project functionaries, while also looking into constraints in implementation.

As effective MIS would be developed which would concentrate on process monitoring and not merely target performance oriented. All reports would be sent to the PMU on floppy disks from PIUs and NGOs would either give the information to the PIU/PMU in floppy in the same format used by PMU, or can directly key in the information into the computers at PIU.

4.7.c. Evaluation

Evaluation would encompass the activities like,

1. Baseline surveys of village and individual group members have to be taken up in the village under the project area at the time of taking up work in that village without fail. Baseline surveys...
be done using participatory Rural Appraisal Technique wherever possible.

2. Formats for baseline surveys that would be given are to be obtained from the PMU/PIU

3. The group grading exercises to be taken up regularly after year 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 would be not only an assessment of the level at which the groups are, on a gradation scale of A to D, but it would also be a self-evaluation exercise by the groups and NGOs for its performance contribution to the groups. This group grading from the side of TamilNadu Women’s Development Corporation would be done by a team of external evaluators to be decided by TamilNadu Women’s Development Corporation from time to time. A separate manual on group grading would be given. Mid term review would be taken up after 21/2 years by an external agency.

Special studies would also be taken up to focus on certain specific areas. These will be undertaken as a follow up on the reports, which indicate a specific problem or a shortcoming. These could be with special reference to certain income generating activities, impact of training programmes, group interaction or non-performance, default or degenerating groups and so on.

Participatory methods would be encouraged so that WSHGs members are assisted to assess their own progress in tracking the impact of their own actions in the family and community. Associated NGOs
would facilitate the WSHGs in these processes. Techniques like PRA would be adopted wherever possible.

4.8 CONCLUSION

WSHGs are voluntary organizations for the development of women. In TamilNadu the Mahaliar Thittam is a partnership of the State Government, NGOs and financing institutions. Age is the criterion for a women to join WSHGs i.e, above 21 years and below 60 years. There is a co-ordination committee at the district level to co-ordinate the activities of block level co-ordination committee and in turn to co-ordinate the WSHGs. A WSHG is under the leadership of an animator. A WSHG has to manage its activities of its own. There are also several Government organizations associated with WSHGs. A group fund is generated by a WSHG. The WSHGs would receive funds in addition to group fund. A group reserve fund is also created by keeping 50 per cent of the interest earned from the sangham loan. Internal loans are given to the members by the WSHGs on the basis of priority. The WSHGs shall meet every week. WSHGs can have bank accounts in the group’s name. In addition to financial assistance the WSHGs offer training to members, development of leadership qualities, self confidence, increasing social awareness, improving status of women in the family, improving the health of all, awareness of legal rights and functional literacy are the objectives of WSHGs. The WSHGs are monitored and evaluated.