

Article

Role of SHGs in socio-economic change of vulnerable poor

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Self help groups (SHGs) have emerged as popular method of working with people in recent years. This movement comes from the people's desires to meet their needs and determine their own destinies through the principle "by the people, for the people and of the people". Ordinarily 'self help' refers to the provision to aid self, but here self is also taken internally. Self – help emphasizes self-reliance, self production and self-employment by mobilizing internal resource of the persons, the group or the community. Society is a patterned system of interaction among individuals and groups. The self-help groups, changes the pattern of social interaction. When such patterns change, substantial number of society members assumes new status and play new roles in the community. SHGs in social change imply not only the change of outer form of a community or a society but also in the social institutions as well as ideas of the people living in that society. In other words, it also applies to the changes in the material aspects of life as well as in the ideas, values and attitudes of the people.

Key word: Self help groups, social change and socio-economic development.

Meaning and definition of self – help groups

Self – help groups are voluntary gatherings of persons who share needs or problems that are not being addressed by existing organizations, institutions, or other types of groups. The broad goals of a self – help group are to bring about personal and social – economic change for its members and society. All of those groups emphasis face to face interaction among members and stress a set of values or ideology that enhances a member's personal sense of identity.

According to Rajkumar self – help groups (SHG) is a group of rural poor who have volunteered to organize themselves into a group for eradication of poverty of the members. They agree to save money regularly and convert their savings into a common fund known as the group corpus. The members of the group agree to use this common fund and such other funds that they may receive as a group through a common management.

Characteristics of SHGs

- i.) The number of member to form SHGs is 5 to 20.
- ii.) All members have not met regularly.
- iii.) The SHGs will have office bearers like president and secretary, group members will elect them.
- iv.) SHGs itself with the help of NGO makes assessment of individual credit needs of its members and submits to the bank for sanction of collective loans in its name.
- v.) NGO helps the SHGs in procuring raw materials and also marketing of the product.
- vi.) SHGs collectively ensure repayment of bank loans.
- vii.) Entire loan amount disbursed to SHGs is refinanced by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to the financing bank.

Aims and objectives of SHGs

- i.) SHGs aim at improving the standard of living and value systems.
- ii.) They are for sustainable development of members.
- iii.) Giving loan at a low interest to develop themselves.

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- iv.) They develop savings habit among members.
- v.) NGOs organize the women.
- vi.) To achieve Self-reliance.

This scheme promotes thrift savings and confidence among the members of the group.

Working pattern of SHGs

SHGs collect the deposits from their members and lend to the needy members for production purpose and also for substance and consumption needs. They also borrow loans from the banks or voluntary agencies or self-help promoting institutions to meet the needs of the members.

Social change

Social change is the systematic study of variation in social and cultural "system". There are inherent methodological problems of identification and measurement of change, and rarely does one cause produce one effect. The entire society is involved in a process of social change; however, this change may be so incremental that the members of the society are hardly aware of it. People living in every traditional society would be in this category. Society is characterized by change; the rate of change, the process of change, and the directions of change.

Meaning and definition of social change

"Change" means variation or a difference in anything observed over some period of time. K. Davis defined this process as "an alteration in structure and contentment of a society".

According to H. T. Mazumdar, "Social change may be defined as a new fashion or mode, either modifying or replacing the old, in the life of a people, or in the operation of a society".

Factors of SHGs in social change

Society is in continuous flux. Various factors and forces, as well as external, determine the rate and directions of social change. The factors of self-help groups, which change the root in the physical environment, biological factors are the responsible factors for social changes. The following are the factors of SHGs in social change.

Biological factors: Human biological environment changes due to the SHG, it includes the factors that determine the number, composition and the hereditary quality for successive generations. The human element is always changing. It is like the size and composition of population produce and aware about family planning.

Cultural factors: The SHG affects the speed and direction of social change. Cultural factors consists changes of our values and beliefs, customs and traditional and various institutions. SHG changes the beliefs of witchcraft, supernatural power and also widow marriage. It also changes social structure and social relationships.

Technological factors: The society is changing every time. The SHG supports changes in the system of invention. It has influenced our environment, education, attitudes, politics, and sprite, due to the intervention of SHGs.

The present study

In the present context of SHGs are playing an important role in socio-economic change. The researchers personally came across with many SHGs, which are acting upon to improve the social conditions of villagers. The increasing membership of village people in SHG and the changes took places among the members motivated the researcher to take up this study. The researchers decided to study the SHGs in Belthangadi taluk of Dakshina Kannada District.

Objective of the study

- i.) To identify personal changes, if any in the group members.
- ii.) To analyse the changes, if any in the socio-economic, political, cultural, health and behavioral conditions of the members after participation in the SHGs.
- iii.) To identify the influencing factors for social change.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and sampling technique

10 villages of Belthangadi taluk and 5 SHGs of each village. The total sample constitutes 150, that is, 3 members from each SHGs, using purposive sampling method.

Research design

This study is essentially a descriptive one. It aims at describing and exploring the changes among the members after joining SHGs.

Method and tools of data collection

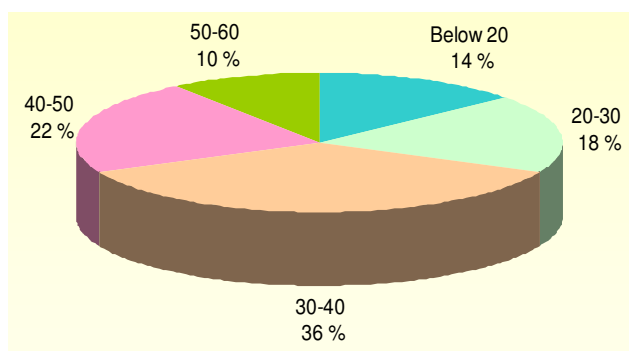
The study is based on primary data and it was collected through a structural interview schedule.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

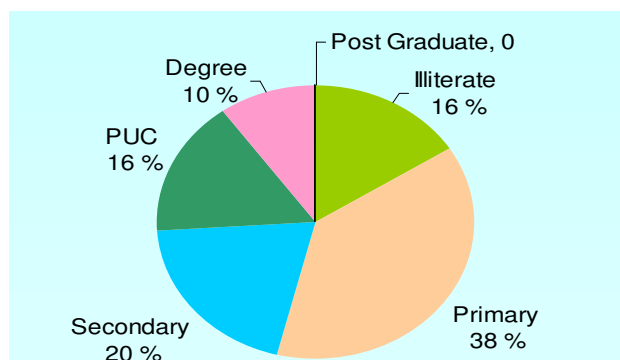
From the data presented in the Table 1 (appendix 1), it is clear that out of 150 respondents majority (36%) of them are from the age group of 30 - 40 years. Only few respondents (14%) are found below the age group of 20 and 18% of them are in the age group between 20 - 30 and only

Table 1. Distribution of respondents on the basis of age.

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 20	21	14
20-30	27	18
30-40	54	36
40-50	33	22
50-60	15	10
Total	150	100

**Appendix 1.** Distribution of respondents on the basis of age (Table 1).**Table 2.** Distribution of respondents on the basis of education.

Education Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	24	16
Primary	57	38
Secondary	30	20
PUC	24	16
Degree	15	10
Post Graduate	00	00
Any other	00	00
Total	150	100

**Appendix 2.** Distribution of respondents on the basis of education (Table 2).**Table 3.** Marital status of Respondents.

Marital status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Married	114	76
Unmarried	30	20
Widow	06	04
Total	150	100

only 10% of them are between 50 - 60 age group. 22% of the respondents are in the age group of 40 - 50.

The data clearly reveals that age group between 30 - 40 years is mainly engaged in SHGs and it shows that middle aged people are interested in joining the group. These age groups are very responsible people and socially settled and they are marginal farmers, landless poor and agricultural laborers.

The Table 2 (appendix 2), shows that the educational qualification of the respondents. Among the respondents 16% of them are illiterates, 38% of them have primary education, 20% of them have secondary education, another 16% have PUC, only 10% of them have degree and there are no post graduates and any other qualification among the members of SHGs in the study area.

It looks obvious that the women who have Primary level education are much more interested in joining SHGs.

The Table 3, shows the number of married and unmarried respondent and it is found that 76% of the respondents are married and 20% of the respondents are unmarried and only 4% of them are Widows. This can also be compared with age group as majority of the respondent are in the age group of 30 to 40 years. It is found from the study that, majority of the respondents who joined SHGs are married.

In the Table 4 (appendix 3) the occupations of the respondents are shown. It is very significant that majority (50%) of the respondents have taken self-employment and 22 of the respondents are coolie workers, 20% of them have Beedi rolling occupation and only 8% have some other occupation.

This shows the awareness about the self-employment among the respondents and their spirit to take up the same. But in the previous days people use to do their caste based occupation. But now the entire scenario has been changed due to the intervention of SHGs people are working on the basis of their knowledge and skills. The need of the hour is only skill based knowledge.

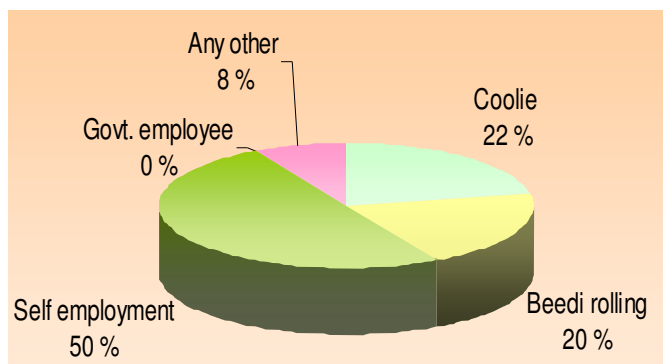
Socio-economic change

Table 5 (appendix 4) is an attempt to depict the inspiration for joining SHGs. It is good factor to note that many of the respondents had joined SHG on their own interest which represents 62 and 26% of them joined to the inspiration of their family members and very few, that is, 4% because of their friend's inspiration, joined SHGs.

This reveals that people are aware of use and importance of SHGs. The goals are met only through the support

Table 4. Occupational structure of the respondents.

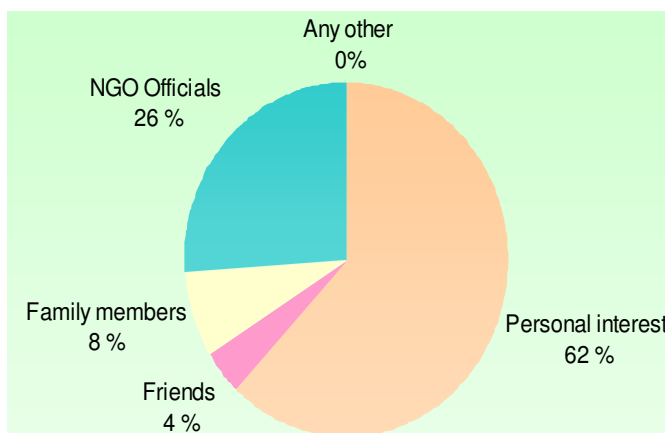
Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Coolie	33	22
Beedi rolling	30	20
Self employment	75	50
Govt. employee	00	00
Any other	12	08
Total	150	100



Appendix 3. Occupational structure of the respondents (Table 4).

Table 5. Inspiration for joining SHGs.

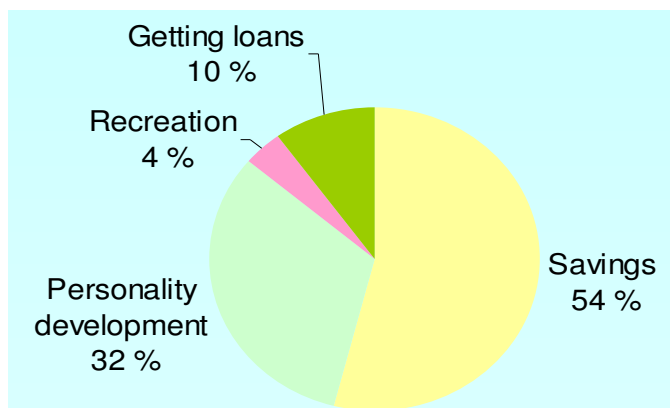
Inspiration	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Personal interest	93	62
Friends	06	04
Family members	12	08
NGO Officials	39	26
Any other	00	00
Total	150	100



Appendix 4. Inspiration for joining SHGs (Table 5).

Table 6. Purpose behind joining SHGs.

Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Savings	81	54
Personality development	48	32
Recreation	06	04
Getting loans	15	10
Total	150	100



Appendix 5. Purpose behind joining SHGs (Table 6).

support of the society and their own interest. The personal interest determines the way of acquiring knowledge about the self-help group.

The above Table 6 (appendix 5) explains the purpose of joining SHGs. Money is the major aspect in modern life. Majority of the respondents (54%) joined SHGs in order to save money and 32% of them joined for personality development. Only 10% of them joined for getting loan and very few 4% joined for recreation purpose. It is understood from the study that, majority of the respondents joined SHGs for savings purpose.

Almost all people had opined that their income is increased after joining SHG. This shows in Table 7 that SHGs are playing a significant role in improving economic status of the respondents.

Savings enhance the self-confidence of the individuals, as it is a sign of group encouragement in the time of taking loan. These activities are increasing their income. The Table 8 shows that SHGs are helping the respondents to know about the present political system. 78% of them have opined that their political knowledge is improved after joining SHGs. And 22% of them are not improved. It reveals that SHGs are playing a vital role in giving awareness about political system to its members.

The present SHGs give awareness about the present political system and its activities. It enhances the knowledge to decide which government is necessary, and which government ruled effectively in identifying problems,

Table 7. Representing the Increase of Income.

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	144	96
No	6	4
Total	150	100

Table 8. Distribution on the basis of Political knowledge.

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Improved	117	78
Not improved	33	22
Total	150	100

Table 9. Inspiration of the members in participating political activities.

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	117	78
No	33	22
Total	150	100

Table 10. Changes in the respondents after joining SHGs.

Changes	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Behaviour	141	94
Interpersonal relationship	44	6
Total	150	100

formulating alternatives and allocating resources.

The Table 9 highlights that 78% of the respondents opined that SHG has inspired them in participating political activities and 22% them opined that they are not inspired by SHG for political participation.

The above Table 10 shows that 94% of the respondents are influenced by SHGs in their day-to-day behaviour. 96% of them say that their interpersonal relationship has been change positively after joining SHGs and all 100% of them opined that their level of self-confidence has been significantly increased after joining SHGs.

Suggestions and policy implications

Since the socio-economic scenario has changed a lot, it is suggested that the SHGs should take up the new challenges such as socio-economic development, use of science and technology in the rural areas and human resources development in perfect manner.

Most of the members of the SHGs are self-employed. So the voluntary agencies should be encouraged to be self-supportive by way of creating their own sources of the finance.

SHGs members should be made aware about national and international politics. In this regard the local organizations, schools, college have to conduct workshop, awareness camp about the existing political conditions to the SHG members.

Existing SHGs must publish articles in newspaper, conduct radio programme on importance of SHGs.

Conclusion

The findings of the study clearly reveal that, the SHGs have the power to create a socio-economic revolution in the country. When observing the whole data the people have come out of their problems and traditional bound. Self help groups have paved the way to bring the rural people in the main stream of social and economic progress of the society.

The SHG can contribute to changes in economic conditions, social status, decision making and increases women in out door activities. These SHGs play a very important role in social change. SHG not only changes the outer form of a community or a society but also the social institutions as well as ideas of the people living in the society. In other words it also applies to change the material aspects of life as well as in the ideas, values and attitudes of the people.

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