

# Performance of Woman Self Help Groups

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**Abstract:** - 'Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana' was launched by the Government of India from April, 1999. It was a holistic programme covering all aspects of self-employment such as organization of the poor into Self Help Groups(SHG), training, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing.

**Keywords:** - WSHG, SGSY, Woman Empowerment, Economic Upliftment, Poverty.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Improvement in any form, of any aspect calls for a reality check of the existing ground reality. This is imperative to lend the right direction for the future course of concerted action. Microfinance" refers to provision of financial services—loans, savings, insurance, or transfer services—to low-income households. Its benefits are improving livelihoods, reducing vulnerability, and fostering social as well as economic empowerment. microfinance programs have generally targeted women as their clients. Women have been found to be more financially responsible with higher repayment rates than men. Also it has been shown that women are more likely than men to invest increased income from microenterprises in the household and family well-being. Most importantly, access to financial services can empower women to become more confident, more assertive, more likely to participate in family and community decisions, and better able to confront systemic gender inequities. However, empowerment is by no means automatic—gender-related issues are complex. Microfinance programs from different regions of the world report increasing decision-making roles of women clients. SGSY was launched in the state of Goa on 1.4.1999. There is a felt need to assess the status of its implementation and functioning. A proper detailed evaluation of whether the scheme guidelines were followed in constituting the SHGs, whether their day to day working adheres to stipulated dos and don'ts, to what extent have the women members benefitted economically, are they socially and politically empowered, have the panchayats ,DRDA and banks dispensed their roles judiciously and importantly, what are the problems ,if any, these SHGs and their members are facing ? Answering these questions is of paramount importance. This is precisely what this study intends to accomplish. The groups taken up for study were exclusively all- women groups.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following were the objectives with respect to implementation of SGSY in the state of Goa:

- To study the nature of economic activities undertaken by WSHGs/SHGs under SGSY.
- To evaluate the impact of economic activities undertaken on the social status of WSHG members.
- To assess the role of capacity building in the success of SGSY.
- To suggest measures for the effective implementation of SGSY.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### A. Primary Data Collection:

Primary data has been collected from WSHG members by using the survey method. Personal interviewing technique was used wherein field researchers administered structured questionnaire to the respondents.

### B. Hypothesis :

Monthly Earnings and the social uplift aspects are associated.

### C. Sampling Technique and Sample Size:

The researcher has adopted stratified random sampling. . At the time the research proposal was made , the state of Goa had 11 talukas ( now there are 12). So it was decided that from each taluka ,self help groups would be selected so as to get an all Goa representation. Thus at the first stage the researcher has used 'stratified sampling'. As on 31.3.2008, the total number of Women Self Help Groups(WSHGs) under Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana(SGSY) in the state of Goa were 645(six hundred and forty five) with a total membership of 5,409. Talukawise sample selected proportionately. During the course of the survey 500 members were selected.

### D. Secondary Data Collection:

Secondary data used comprises taluka wise SGSY records maintained by the Rural Development Agency(RDA), Government of Goa, annual reports of Ministry of Rural Development, various publications of state, central,

international agencies, microfinance sector reports, reputed academic journals, books and websites of public and private agencies.

#### E. Tools for Data Analysis:

In this study the secondary data has been analysed using simple percentages. The primary data was also analysed using simple percentages but in addition it was analyzed using the STATA and SPSS analysis package. Z- test and Chi-square test tests have been applied for testing the hypothesis.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### A. Nature of Economic Activities Undertaken by WSHG

In case of economic activities, SGSY laid stress on the cluster approach which means that instead of funding diverse activities, each block was to concentrate on a few select activities (key activities) and attend to all aspects of these activities, so that the swarozgaris could draw sustainable incomes from their investments. The success of SGSY thus depended on the choice of activities. Further, the choice of activity was expected to be based on the local resources, the aptitude as well as the skill of the people. It was also necessary that the products have a ready market.

Table I- SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE MEMBERS

Category	Members	
	Frequency	Percent
NR(no response)	8	1.6
SC	26	5.2
ST	145	29.00
OBC	191	38.2
General	130	26.00
Total	500	100.0

Source: Primary data

The figures pertaining to WSHG member respondents also convey that the vulnerable sections of the society, namely SCs, STs and OBCs are well represented in the sample. Here too, it is seen that as an individual category, the SCs are rather poorly represented in comparison to the STs and OBCs. Together, the SCs, STs and OBCs constitute 72.4 per cent of the total WSHG members interviewed

Table II – ABOVE POVERTY LINE VS BELOW POVERTY LINE

Category	Members	
	Frequency	Percent
APL	374	25.2
BPL	126	74.8
Total	500	100.0

Source: Primary data

The data pertaining to WSHG member respondents shows that

about 74.8 per cent of them belong to the BPL category. Thus, the total number of APL members in the sample is less than 30 per cent of the sample size. The SGSY guidelines had proposed that all members of the SHG should belong to families below the poverty line. However, if necessary, a maximum of 20 per cent and in exceptional cases, where essentially required, up to a maximum of 30 per cent of the members in a group may be taken from families marginally above the poverty line living contiguously with BPL families and if they are acceptable to the BPL members of the group<sup>2</sup>.

Table III- OCCUPATION BEFORE JOINING SHG

Occupation	Members	
	Frequency	Percent
Housewife	326	65.2
Agricultural labourer	45	9.0
Marginal Farmer	23	4.6
Rural artisan	7	1.4
Self-employed (Vendor)	28	5.6
Domestic worker	12	2.4
Casual labourer	46	9.2
Casual trade	5	1.0
Any other	31	6.2

Source: Primary data

The table also details the occupation of the members before joining the SHG. It is seen that 65 per cent of the members were housewives before joining the group, 9.2 per cent were casual labourers and 9 per cent of them were agricultural labourers. It is pertinent to note that a higher percentage of leaders were housewives before joining the WSHGs as compared to members. This means that these women who have taken up the leadership of their groups need to be doubly applauded for not just stepping out of their homes and joining WSHGs but also for taking up the leadership of their groups.

Table-IV-NATURE OF INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITY

Nature of IGA	Members	
	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	90	34.35
Horticulture	24	9.16
Poultry	1	0.38
Dairy	5	1.91
Vendor	1	0.38
Handicraft	64	24.43
Other	123	46.95

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the economic activity being pursued by the leaders and members. Of the leaders and members who started IGA, 34.35 per cent of members are pursuing agriculture activity. Agriculture is the major IGA which is

identified by the survey. The second major IGA is Handicraft. It is observed that 24.43 percent members are pursuing handicraft activities such as Agarbatti making, bamboo craft, masala making, tailoring, jute bag making etc

Table V-REASON/S FOR CHOOSING THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN WHICH CURRENTLY ENGAGED

Reasons	Members	
	Frequency	Percent
Lack of credit availability	53	10.6
Traditional skill	172	34.4
Locally available resources/inputs	69	13.8
Ready market available to sell	103	20.6
Lack of infrastructure support	1	0.2
Others were doing it	53	10.6
Was advised to do so	23	4.6
Had received specific training	29	5.8
Did not want to take a loan	7	1.4
Any other	0	0
	510	102

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that the most common reason (34.4 per cent) for the leader respondents to be engaged in any particular economic activity is the fact that they already possessed traditional skills required for that activity. The second dominant reason (20.6 per cent) was the availability of a ready market for the sale of their products/services. The next major reason which impacted the choice of economic activity was the lack of credit availability which means the members are forced to choose a particular economic activity because it is not possible to start any other business with the limited amount of money available to them. This suggests the need to bolster the training component for the swarozgaris.

V. HYPOTHESIS

A. Hypothesis-1  $H_0$ : The levels of social uplift and the monthly income are independent.

TABLE-VI- STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: CHI-SQUARE TEST

Statement	Chi-square	df	Critical value at 5 percent I.o.s	Decision
1. role in making decisions about your children's education has increased after	40.131	28	44.4608	Accept $H_0$

joining WSHG				
2role in making special purchases/consumer durable purchases has increased after joining WSHG	34.261	20	34.1696	Reject $H_0$
3role in mobilizing the community against social evil (e.g. dowry, smoking) has increased after joining WSHG	67.608	20	34.1696	Reject $H_0$
4confidence about visiting any govt. office for any work has increased after joining WSHG	46.416	20	59.3417	Accept $H_0$
5The village shopkeepers allow you to make purchases on credit after joining WSHG	87.205	40	34.1696	Reject $H_0$
6shop alone for your family's day to day purchases after joining WSHG	28.994	20	34.1696	Accept $H_0$
7attending PTA meetings/visiting children's school after joining SHG	25.885	24	39.3641	Accept $H_0$
8attending gram sabha meetings after joining SHG	37.263	29	45.7223	Accept $H_0$

Source: Z test results based on Primary data

From the above test results, the levels of income generated from IGA is having significant impact in the social up lift with reference to role in making special purchases/consumer durable purchases, role in mobilizing the community against social evil (e.g. dowry, smoking) and the village shopkeepers allow the WSHG members to make purchases on credit. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for these three statements.

B Hypothesis-2: Easy credit availability positively impacts the growth of WSHGS

Here the following statements are considered which relate to easy credit availability. The growth of the WSHGS is indicated by the statement that the members started IGA.

Hypothesis 2.1: The proportion of members who have taken up IGA agreed that the loan was made for the same amount as per the eligibility and the amount disbursed was same as the sanctioned amount.

$H_0$ :  $p=0.5$ , The growth of WSHGS is insignificant given easy credit availability.

$H_1$ :  $P>0.5$  The growth of WSHGS is significant given easy credit availability.

TABLE VII -STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: Z TEST

Statement	The total frequency of the responses strongly agree and agree	Proportion (out of 262)	Z value	Decision against Ho: p=0.5 and H1: P>0.5
The loan was made for the same amount as per eligibility	219	0.836	10.8733	Reject Ho
The amount disbursed was the amount sanctioned	210	0.802	9.7766	Reject Ho
Average		0.819	10.3269	Reject Ho

In the above table all the Z values obtained are greater than the Z critical value (1.645) at 5 percent level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, it is inferred that there is significant impact of easy credit availability on the growth of SHGs.

## VI. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

### A Demographic details:

It is observed that 46 per cent of the total SHGs of North Goa are in the Bardez taluka and the least SHGs are in Tiswadi taluka. The SHG formation under SGSY in the state of Goa is seen rather unevenly distributed between the two districts of Goa. The North district has twice the number of SHGs that the South district has and hence there is a need to even out this unequal distribution. The bright part is that almost all of the SHGs formed till date are functional and just about 1.44 per cent of the groups have been declared defunct. Around 78 per cent of the SHGs in North Goa are women's self help groups, also around 91 per cent of the swarozgaris are female and only about 9 per cent are males

### B Nature of economic activities undertaken by WSGs

The fact that SHG programme considerably motivates housewives to step beyond the four walls of their homes and participate in paid work is borne out by the present study wherein it is seen that more than 60 per cent of the leaders as well as members were housewives before joining the SHG, around 10 per cent of the leaders were either self-employed or casual labourers. In case of members 18 per cent were casual labourers and agricultural labourers

The study showed that around half of the leaders as well as members are engaged in productive activities. However, higher per cent of leaders are seen to be engaged in IGA as compared to members

### C Suggestions –

1. *Keeping up Spirit:* - It would be really unfortunate if the SHGs lose the spirit of 'self help' and end up getting reduced to mere savings organisations. This happens when inertia sets in and group meetings are reduced to mere occasions for collecting members' monthly contributions. In fact with passage of time meetings may be about few members attending and the rest sending their contributions through proxy members. In a worst scenario group meetings may get substituted by door to door monthly collections. The researcher has found that lethargy has already crept in a significant number of WSHGs in Goa.

2. *Identification of Operation Area:-* There is need to identify such areas of cooperation and joint action so that schemes of different line departments can be converged with NRLM and the benefit can be reaped by the WSGs. Thus it is suggested that the Rural Development Authority puts in place a 'Convergence Team' whose mandate is to study the schemes of various line departments, contact the concerned line departments and work out modalities on how well convergence can be affected and subsequently make the findings available in documented form to SHG mobilisers/TAs.

3. *Increasing the vibrancy of WSHGs:* It would be really unfortunate if the SHGs lose the spirit of 'self help' and end up getting reduced to mere savings organisations. This happens when inertia sets in and group meetings are reduced to mere occasions for collecting members' monthly contributions. In fact with passage of time meetings may be about few members attending and the rest sending their contributions through proxy members. In a worst scenario group meetings may get substituted by door to door monthly collections.

The researcher has found that lethargy has already

crept in a significant number of WSHGs in Goa. There are issues with the WSHGs which are not quite right but the structured questionnaires used by the researcher were unable to capture them.

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