

# EVALUATION OF SELF- HELP GROUPS OF RURAL WOMEN UNDER 'SWARNAJANTI GRAM SWAROJGAR YOJANA' TOWARDS RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION: A CASE STUDY ON PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

**Bimal Duari**

PhD Research Scholar Dept. of Geography Seacom Skills University

Received: February 24, 2019

Accepted: March 26, 2019

**ABSTRACT:** Rural women are expected to take the most vital role in rural development with economic growth and stability through poverty alleviation. Rural development largely depends on women empowerment. In real term rural development is a comprehensive programme of activities which include agricultural growth, development of social and economic infrastructure, fair wages, housing, public health, education, village planning, nutrition and communication. It aims at taking an scientific view of the resources available and using them optimally for an overall development of the rural areas in our country. This study is an attempt to analyze the role and performances of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under Swarnajanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) in promoting women empowerment in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. The main objectives of this study are to analyze the operating system of SHGs for mobilization of savings, arrange loans for the needy persons, settle the loans and in building up of opinion of SHG members regarding increase in the power of decision making. The study, based mainly on primary data, focuses on the role of SHGs in women empowerment, social cohesion and socio-economic development of the poor for their consolidation. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, with systematic survey strategy, has been adopted in the study.

**Key Words:** Women empowerment, poverty alleviation, Self-Help Groups, Swarnajanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, socio-economic development.

## Introduction :

**“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.”**  
- Swami vivekananda

In India unless the rural sector is empowered, it is rather difficult to achieve balanced, sustainable development with stability, it may be economic or non-economic. Since woman is the equal partner in development process, the rural women always remain the main component of the development process of Indian economy. India has 6.40 lack villages and its 68.84% (2011-Census) of the population is living in rural areas. Since female population is 48.25% of the total population, the major chunk of it is living in rural areas. The majority of rural women are from the category of living below the poverty line. So rural poverty means rural poor woman hence there is feminization of poverty. This rural segment is the biggest segment and the backbone of Indian Economy. The rural woman always remains the centre of rural development in terms of alleviation of rural poverty and rural empowerment. Among the Government initiated rural development programs women self-help group programme is a best participatory approach to rural empowerment via the rural development as a policy-measure of eradication of rural poverty. Really it is a new experiment on rural empowerment.

## Review of Literatures:

M. Saravanan(2016) studied about the participation of women in self-help group (SHGs) made a significant impact on their empowerment both in social and economic aspects this study addresses women empowerment through self-help groups in TamilNadu. Sumista Rani(2017 ) highlights on the Socio-economic condition of Self-Help Groups' Beneficiaries in the Sirsa block of Sirsa district of Haryana. Subhadip Pal(2016) discussed about social and economic empowerment of rural women through self help groups (shgs) in west bengal, india. Shobhna Goyal. And Dr. Ashok Kumar Gupta(2016) explained about Self Help Groups as a Channel of Distribution and Paradigm in Rural Marketing. Umakanta Tripathy(2015) studied about three different SHGs of Sambalpur districts of Odisha. R. L. Vinodhini1 and P. Vaijayanthi(2016) focused on confirming the financial and social empowerment status of women belonging

to various self-help groups in the country. Self-Help Group (SHG) is a village-based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10–20 local women or men. In India, many SHGs are linked to banks for the delivery of micro-credit. Ajit Borah (2014) points out about Women empowerment through Self Help Groups of Barhampur Development Block in Nagaon District of Assam. Chandralekha Ghosh and Tanmoyee Banerjee (2010) investigated the factors influencing the employment status of a selected group of self help group members. The same set of self help group members has been surveyed twice, once during 2005 and again during 2009 to collect information. During 2005 survey all the members were employed but during 2009 it was observed that about 55 percent of the self help group members have turned into housewives. Sreemoyee Das and A. Mitra (2015) studied on the Impact of Women Self-help Groups (SHGs) on Rural Entrepreneurship Development in Selected Areas of West Bengal.

### Location of the Study Area:

Purba Medinipur District came into existence after bifurcation of erstwhile Midnapur on and from January 1, 2002. This district is situated on the southern side of the State of West Bengal. The total area of the district is 4151.64 square kilometers. The district Purba-Medinipur is located in between 21°38'N to 22°31'N latitude and 87°27'E to 88° 12' E longitude. The district is surrounded by Ghatal Sub-division of Paschim Medinipur district in the north, Bay of Bengal in the south. Paschim Medinipur district in the west and Hoogly-Rupnarayan River in the East. On the north. Purba-Medinipur district is bounded by the River of Rupnarayan, which separates it from the Howrah district. On the East. River Hoogly separates it from the South 24 Parganas district (Fig1). The south east boundary of the district is the coastline of Bay of Bengal while a part of its southern boundary is the Jaleswar district of Orissa.

### Methodology:

This study was conducted in four subdivision namely Contai, Egra, Tamluk, Haldia. A sample of 400 rural women (200 SHGs and 200 non-SHG members) of Small Farm households from four subdivision was selected randomly. Survey was mainly done on a pretested and modified format by open ended interviews about the participation of both SHG and non-SHG members in different farm activities. The data on women contribution in decision making along with participation in SHGs were obtained for the year 2016-17. Women of marginal farmers were excluded in this study. In measuring the empowerment concepts of rural women in 18 selected aspects, a three point rating scale was developed and designed with 3 kinds of opinions ranged from disagree (DA), somewhat agree (SWA) and agree (A). I conducted all statistical analyses using the software Arc GIS.

### Importance of The Study:

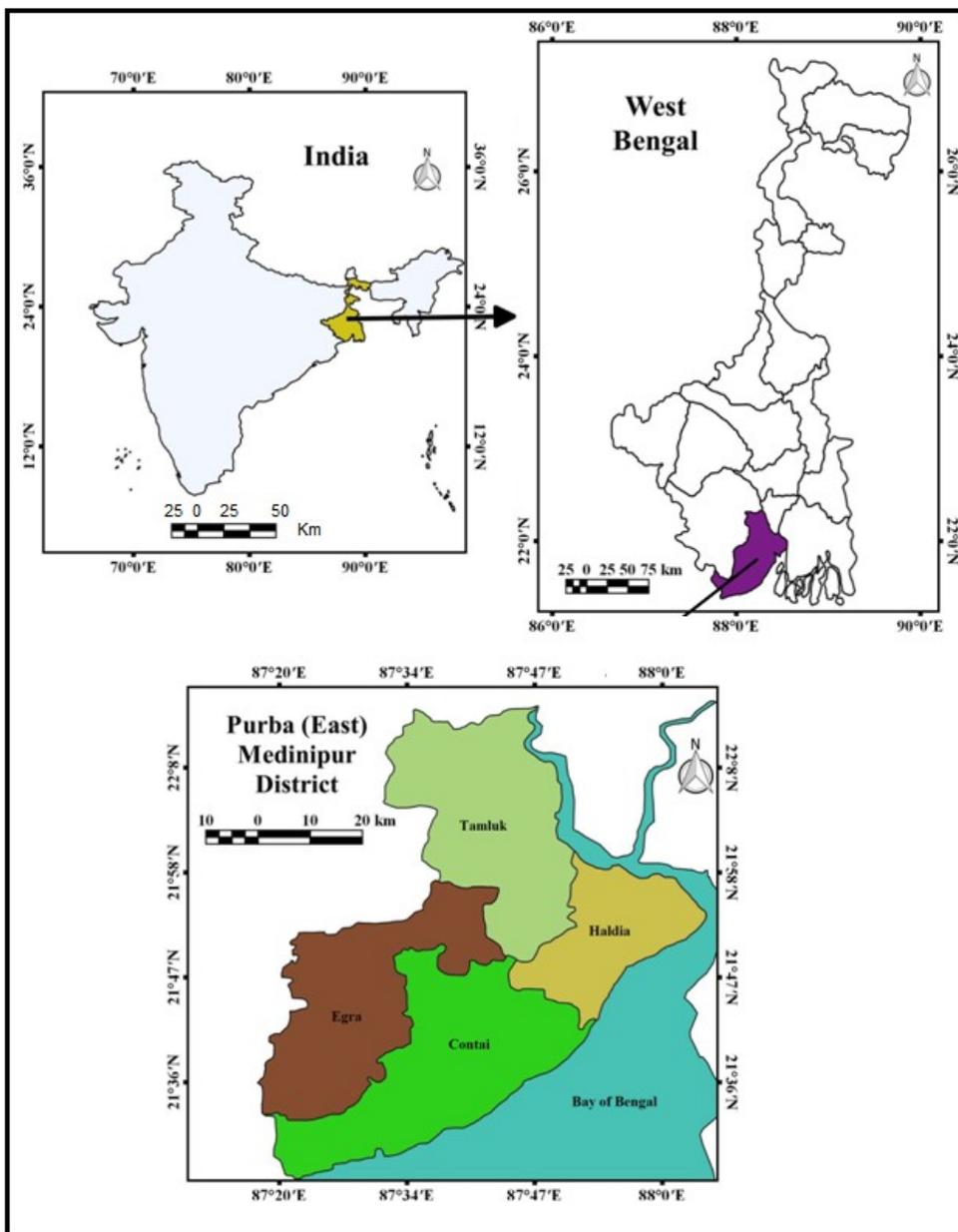
This study helps to affirm that rural woman is main component of the rural empowerment: the woman empowerment, socially, politically, economically and educationally, could lead to rural empowerment

### Statement Of The Problem:

Rural development activities are paralyzed without the due attention on women empowerment in various fields like social, economical, political, educational, etc key fields. The woman-orientation programs, particularly Self-Help Groups (SHGs), have attained this goal

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- to discuss about the nature and objectives of SHGs under 'swarnajanti gram swarojgar yojana.
- to outline the concept of women empowerment.
- to analyze the woman empowerment and poverty alleviation through SHGs in the study area



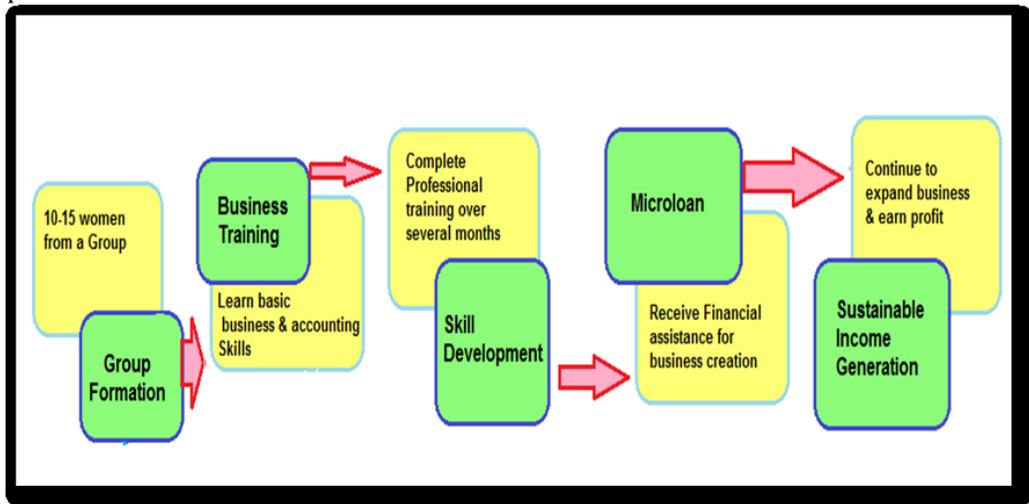
**Fig1: Location Map of the study Area**

**Nature and structure of SHGs:**

NABARD defines SHGs as “small, economically homogenous affinity groups of rural poor, voluntarily formed to save and mutually contribute to a common fund to be lent to its members as per the group members’ decision”. A self-help group is a village-based financial intermediary usually composed of 10–20 local women. Members make small regular savings aid over a few months until there is enough capital in the group to begin lending. Funds may then be lent back to the members or to others in the village for any reason.

The Self Help Groups (SHGs) have become extensive, successful component of both rural and urban development in India. Women band together in to groups and motivate each other to build new opportunities for income generation. Most of the SHGs start without any outside financial capital by saving regular charity by the members. These offerings can be very small (e.g. 10 Rs per week). After a period of regular savings (6 months to one year) the SHGs start to give loans from savings in the form of small in-house loans for micro enterprise activities and spending. Only those SHGs that have utilized their own funds well are assisted with external funds through linkages with banks and other financial mediators.

A Self-help group consists of 10 to 15 women from the same village which may be registered or unregistered. It naturally comprises a group of women having homogenous social and economic conditions; all willingly coming together to save regular small sums of money, mutually in accord to contribute to a common fund and to meet their crisis needs on the basis of communal help. The NGO's and Government agencies provide business



**Fig2: Nature of SHG**

training to learn basic business and accounting skills. They pool their wealth to become financially stable, captivating loans from the money collected by that group and by making everybody in that group freelance. The group members use collective insight and peer pressure to ensure proper end-use of credit and timely settlement. This system eliminates the need for collateral and is closely associated to that of concord lending, broadly used by microfinance institutions. The Self Help Group (SHG) in India has come extensive way, since its origin in 1992. The spread of SHGs in India has been extraordinary. It has made exciting progress from 225 groups in 1992 to some 16, 18,456 groups that have taken loans from banks. About 69.53 lakhs SHGs have gained access to proper banking system through SHG-bank linkage programme and 90% of these groups are only women groups. Self-Help Groups helps to empower the rural women with savings and credit services, have taken off thoroughly in India, where an expected 25 million women are members. They are benefited socially and economically, SHGs women to become active in village affairs; or take action against domestic violence, the dowry system, or the lack of schools, etc.

**Concept of Women Empowerment:**

Empowerment is a process that gives a person freedom in decision making. Empowerment provides a greater access to knowledge and resources, more autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan lives, more control over the circumstances which influence lives, and freedom from customs, belief and practices. Empowerment demands a drastic and basic change in the system of marriage and family, husband and wife relationship and attitude towards socialization and remarriage. Women all over the world have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginnings of history.

**Demographic Profile of respondents**

The impact of any Developmental Programmes depend upon the demographic profile of the respondents. The main reason behind this is to find out their present socio-economic condition. The information on demographic characteristics of respondents like age, marital status, family size, caste, educational qualifications, occupation and income are presented the table 1:

**Table-1: Demographic Profile of respondents according to their characteristics (Percentage)**

Characteristics	Category	Respondents	
		SHG members	non-SHG members
Age (Years)	Young (20 - 35 yrs.)	130(65)	110(55)
	Middle (36 – 50 yrs.)	60(30)	72(36)
	Old (above 50 yrs.)	10(5)	18(9)
Family size	Nuclear family	164(82)	140(70)
	Joint family	36(18)	60(30)
Castes	General	120(60)	114(57)

	SC	40(20)	40(20)
	ST	10(5)	12(6)
	OBC	30(15)	36(18)
Education	Illiterate	28(14)	42(21)
	Primary	104(52)	96(48)
	Madhyamik	56(28)	52(26)
	Higher Secondary	10(5)	8(4)
	Graduation	2(1)	0
Occupation	Agriculture	36(18)	14(7)
	Agriculture labour	40(20)	70(35)
	Agriculture and Agril. Labour	46(23)	54(27)
	Agriculture and others	78(39)	62(36)

Therefore, most respondents were young women in the age group between 20 to 35 years .The classification of sample households based on family type shows that 82% (SHG),70%(Non SHG)belonged to nuclear families and 18% (SHG),30%(Non SHG)belonged to joint families [Table-1]; and therefore, the sample was collected predominantly on nuclear families type . Perhaps due to inability to maintain, large families with meager income may not be sufficient to fulfill needs and joint families are only an added burden. From the [Table-1] it was understood that among the woman respondents, 60% (SHG),57%(Non SHG)General, 20% (SHG),20%(Non SHG) belonged to Scheduled caste and 5% (SHG),6%(Non SHG) Scheduled tribe,15% (SHG),18%(Non SHG)to OBC. [Table-1] indicates that only 14% (SHG),21%(Non SHG),52% (SHG),48%(Non SHG),28% (SHG),26 %(Non SHG), 5% (SHG),4%(Non SHG), 1% (SHG),women respondents were illiterate,Primary,Madhyamik,Higher Secondary, Graduation, and therefore, mostly literate women sampled in this study participated in farm activities . Although, most woman participants were literate(Primary Educated). The women respondents sampled in this study were engaged in various activities such as 18% (SHG),7%(NonSHG)agriculture,20% (SHG),35%(Non SHG)agriculture labour, 23% (SHG),27%(Non SHG)agriculture and agriculture labour, 39 % (SHG),31%(Non SHG)agriculture and others [Table-1].

**The Woman Empowerment And Poverly Alleviation Through SHG In The Study Area.**

Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty. Economic empowerment is thought to allow poor people to think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices. For example, it enables households to make their own decisions around making investments in health and education, and taking risks in order to increase their income.

**Table-2 : Response estimate of empowerment of women through participation in SHGs (Percentage)**

Concepts	Opinion					
	SHG women			Non-SHG women		
	A	SWA	DA	A	SWA	DA
<b>Social empowerment:</b>						
Mobility	150(75)	40(20)	10(5)	40(20)	60(30)	100(50)
Leads to equal status to participate and power of decision making in farm household	134(67)	46(23)	20(10)	30(15)	50(25)	120(60)
Greater participation and power of decision making in community and village	140(70)	48(24)	12(6)	40(20)	70(35)	90(45)
Increased social status	150(75)	30(15)	20(10)	30(15)	60(30)	110(55)
Greater Participates in meetings regularly	170(85)	30(15)		50(25)	70(35)	80(40)
Freedom from violence	160(80)	30(15)	10(5)	50(25)	60(30)	90(45)
Mean	154.86 (77.43)	37.71 (18.86)	11.73 (5.86)	40(20)	62.86 (31.43)	97.14 (48.57)
<b>Economic Empowerment</b>						
Purchase and sale of fixed assets	150(75)	40(20)	10(5)	40(20)	60(30)	100(50)
Purchase and sale of current assets	130(65)	50(25)	20(10)	30(15)	50(25)	120(60)

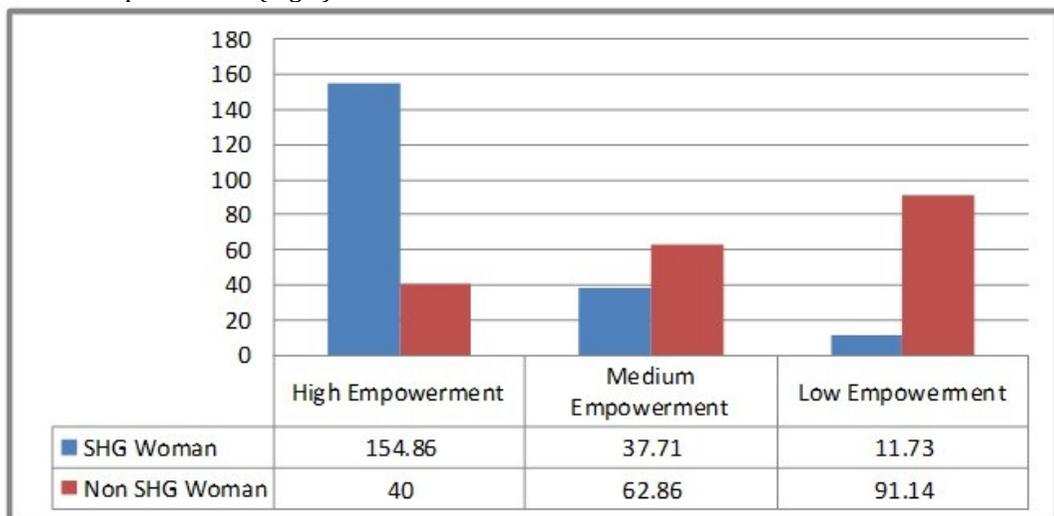
Purchase and sale of domestic animals	140(70)	50(25)	10(5)	40(20)	70(35)	90(45)
Purchase and sale of ornaments	120(60)	50(25)	30(15)	30(15)	60(30)	110(55)
Purchase of home appliances	180(90)	20(10)	-	50(25)	70(35)	80(40)
Purchase of clothes	170(85)	30(15)	-	40(20)	70(35)	90(45)
Construction and improvement of housing facility	160(80)	30(15)	10(5)	50(25)	60(30)	90(45)
Raising of loan	140(70)	40(20)	20(10)	30(15)	50(25)	120(60)
Repayment of loan	150(75)	50(25)	-	20(10)	30(30)	150(75)
Savings and their investment	160(80)	40(20)	-	30(15)	70(35)	100(50)
Education of children	170(85)	20(10)	10(5)	20()	40(20)	140(70)
Mean	152(76)	38(19)	10(5)	34.54 (17.27)	57.27 (28.63)	108(54)

Social empowerment: [Table-2] reveals the opinion of the respondents regarding the women empowerment through SHGs. Majority of the SHG women agreed for social empowerment concepts such as increased social status (75%) and greater participation and power of decision making in community and village (70.0%). 20% of the SHG women somewhat agreed for social empowerment concept such as mobility. The SHG women disagreed for almost (5-10%) all the concepts of social empowerment.

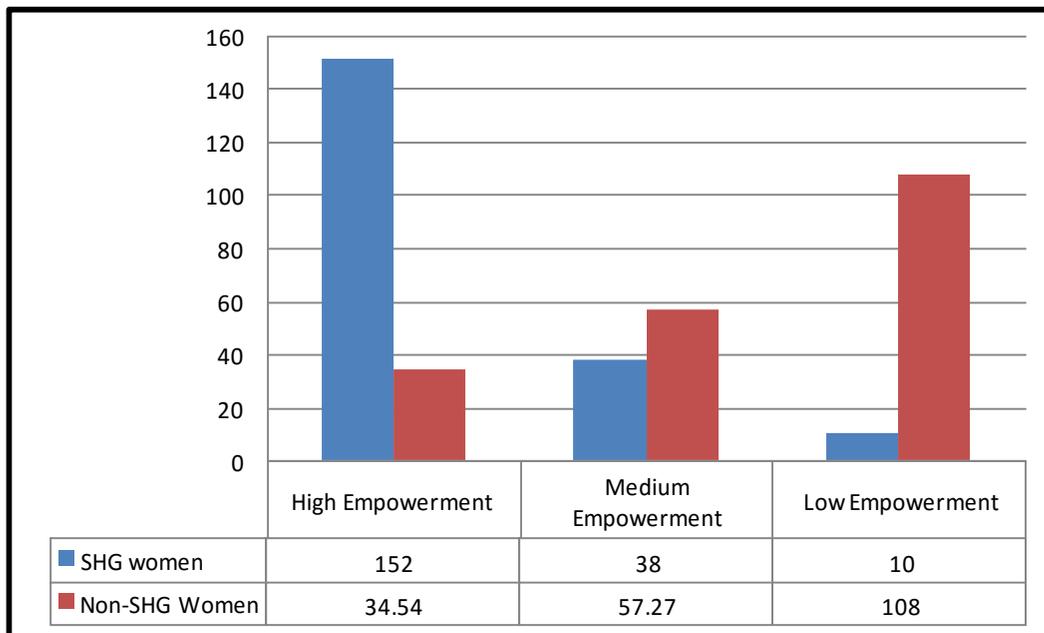
Contrarily, majority of the non-SHG women disagreed for almost all the concepts of social empowerment [Table-2] . [Fig3] shows that 77.43% and 20% respectively of SHG and non-SHG women fell into the high social empowerment category. Social empowerment suggests that participating in an SHG is strongly supportive in this respect. For the SHG members, social empowerment was manifest in such factors as increased social status, greater participation in democratic institution, greater participation and power of decision making in community and village etc.

**Economic empowerment:**

Majority of the SHG women agreed for the economic empowerment concepts such as purchase of home appliances (90%), purchase of clothes (85%) and education of children (85%) [Table-2]. Twenty five percent of the SHG women somewhat agreed for economic empowerment concepts such as access / control of household budget, Spends money under desire will and decision making autonomy. The SHG women disagreed for almost all the concepts of economic empowerment(5-10%).Contrarily, majority of the non-SHG women disagreed(50-60%) for almost all the concepts of economic empowerment [Table-2]. 76% of SHG members exhibited high economic empowerment. In contrast, 17.27 % of non-SHG members registered high economic empowerment(Fig 4).



**Fig 3 : Social Empowerment**



**Fig 4: Economic Empowerment**

Majority of the SHG women became engaged in income generating activities like labor and sale in agricultural production, household purchases, sale and purchase of assets etc. As non-SHG members did not engage in income generating activities, there was no stabilization of income, no improvement in family income and no increase in annual savings. Consequently, there was no improvement in their standard of living indicators (expenditure on education, healthcare and welfare).

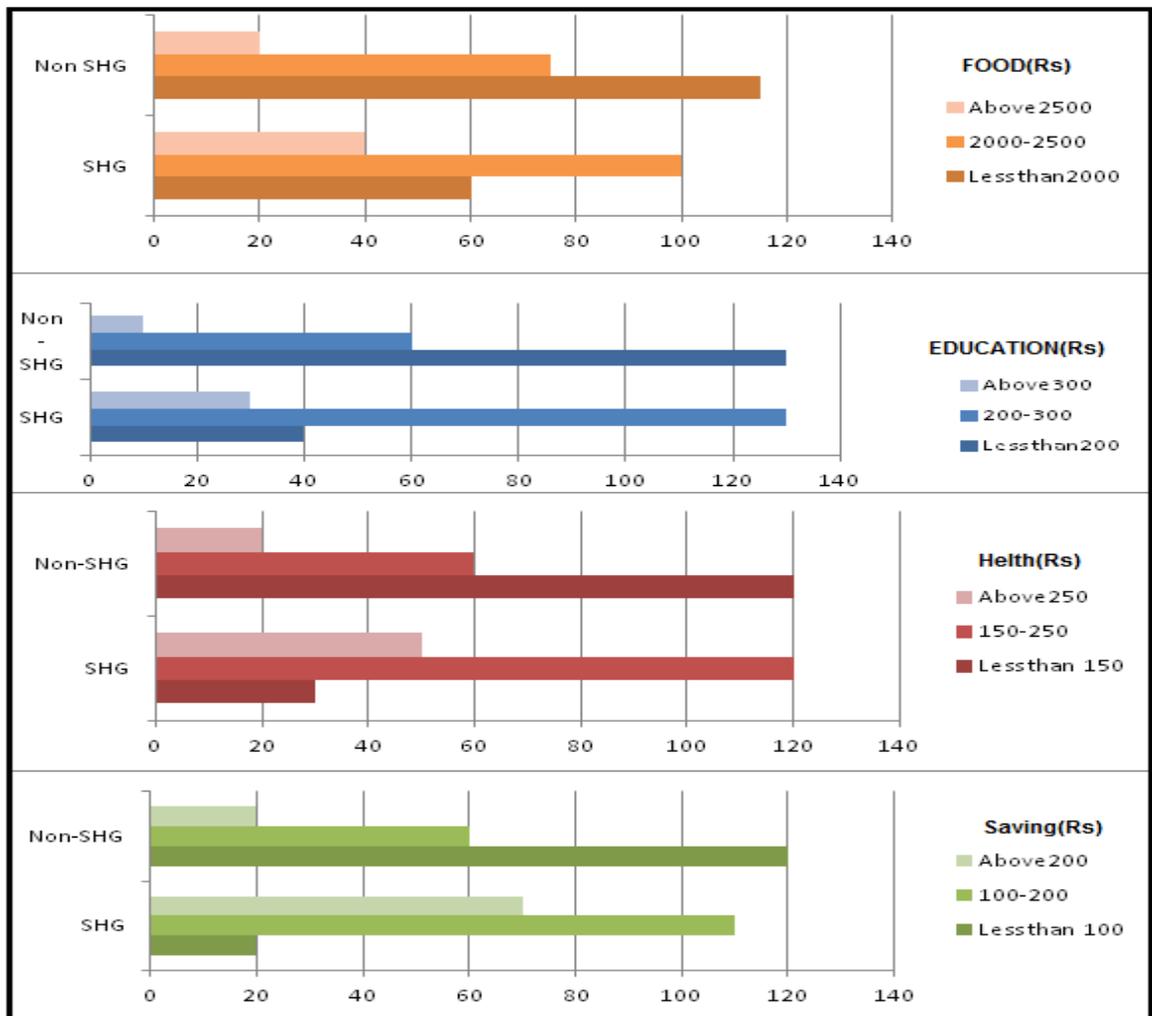
I have also evaluated the level of indebtedness, type of dwelling of the households, ownership of several purchased items including TV, radio, bicycle, mobile phone and animals like cow, goat and others also Income.

**Table-4: For Livestock And Assets Of The Respondents**

Items		SHG Beneficiaries	Non-SHG Beneficiaries
Level of Indebtedness	Money Lender	26(13)	100(50)
	Bank	140(70)	60(30)
	Others	34(17)	40(20)
Nature of Houses	Kancha	60(30)	130(65)
	Paka	20(10)	12(6)
	Mixed	120(60)	58(29)
Live stock and Assets	Cow	30(15)	22(11)
	Goat	40(20)	36(18)
	Others	32(16)	30(15)
	Tv	22(11)	12(6)
	Radio	30(15)	54(27)
	Mobile	22(11)	14(7)
	Cycle	32(16)	16(8)
Income	Less than2000	20(10)	110(55)
	2000-2500	120(60)	60(30)
	2500-3000	40(20)	20(10)
	Above3000	20(10)	10(5)

**Source: Field Survey**

The result indicates (Refer to Table-4) that 13 percent of SHG and 50% of Non SHG households depend on money lender also 17 percent of SHG and 20% of Non SHG on others like neighbours, relatives and especially on local shop owners. Local banks can access 70 percent of SHG and 30% of Non SHG .



**Fig5: Major expenditures (Per Month) of participation in SHG's. (Percentage)**

Surveyed households (30 percent of SHG and 65% of Non SHG percent) have kancha house made by mud hut Also 70 percent of SHG and 30% of Non SHG percent have mixed house. The results show (Refer to Table-3a) that out of 400 households surveyed; only 11 percent of SHG and 6% of Non SHG surveyed households owned TV, only 15 percent of SHG and 27% of Non SHG households owned radio, 16 percent of SHG and 8% of Non SHG owned bicycle, 11 percent of SHG and 7% of Non SHG owned mobile phones. 15 percent of SHG and 11% of Non SHG have cow and goat (20 percent of SHG and 18% of Non SHG).

Three major expenditures- on food, on education and on health, Saving (Fig) were included. The Maximum expenditure of SHG Beneficiaries (70%) on food per month was Rs. 2000-2500, and above 2500. The Maximum expenditure of Non SHG Beneficiaries (70%) on food per month was Less than Rs. 2000. 60% of SHG Beneficiaries expends Rs 150 to 250 per month in Health But 60% of Non SHG Beneficiaries expends Rs Less than 150 per month in Health. Saving pattern of SHG Beneficiaries are higher than Non SHG Beneficiaries. Similarly, expenditure of SHG Beneficiaries on the Education are more than Non SHG Beneficiaries per month (Fig5).

**Conclusion:**

This paper considered the role of self-help groups (SHGs) in promoting the livelihoods development of rural women in India. In India, in early period, women were confined within the four walls of their houses and were dominated by males. Of late, there has been tremendous progress in the social and cultural environment in India. With the concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs) the women are now participating in all productive activities and are at par with men. The monthly income of the women is in the rising trend properly matching with their monthly expenditure. Women, through this SHG movement have asserted a

dignified position in the family as well as in the society. Their decision making power has immensely enhanced not only in their family but also in the society. This study confirmed that NGOs can play a significant role in bringing empowerment to rural women. Organizing women through SHGs provides opportunities to improve their self-confidence, taking leadership positions during public meetings, decision-making capacities, purchase of home appliances, savings and their investment, education of children, performing bank transaction, going and talking to Government office / police stations. Women who were members of an SHG were better empowered in social and economic respects than those who were not. Furthermore, the ultimate objective of microfinance, which occurs through SHGs, is to address food security by enhancing purchasing power. It is concluded that SHGs are able to empower members, particularly rural women socially and economically and personally, which help improve their livelihoods. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the government of India as well as their development partners should integrate formation of SHGs in their poverty alleviation and gender empowerment interventions. Such interventions must be socially acceptable, economically viable, politically neutral, culturally agreeable, environmentally sustainable and generationally stable for the people.

**Reference:**

1. Borah, A. (2014). Women empowerment through Self Help Groups-A case study of Barhampur Development Block in Nagaon District of Assam. *IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance (IOSR-JEF)* , 56-62.
2. Das, S., & Mitra, A. (2015). A Study on the Impact of Women Self-help Groups (SHGs) on Rural Entrepreneurship Development-A CaseStudy in Selected Areas of West Bengal. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* , 1-25.
3. Ghosh, C., & Banerjee ( Chaterje), T. (2010). Self Help Group Participation and Employment of the Women: Myths and the Reality. *Obuda University Keleti Faculty of Business and Management* , 55-68.
4. Kaurr, P., & Kau, R. (2014). Empowering Rural Women through Self- Help Groups in India. *GIAN JYOTI E-JOURNAL*, Volume , 39-54.
5. Pal, S. (2016). Social And Economic Empowerment Of Rural Women Through Self Help Groups (Shgs): A case Study In West Bengal, India. *International Journal of Agriculture Sciences* , 1673-1676.
6. Parwez, S. (2013). Impact Assessment of Self Help Group towards Rural Development: A Case Study of Jharkhand, India. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive* , 70-88.
7. Rani, S. (2017). Socio-economic condition of self-help groups' beneficiaries: A case study of block Sirsa. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Development* , 334-338.
8. Saravanan, M. (2016). The Impact Of Self-Help Groups On The Socio-Economic Development Of Rural Household Women In Tamil Nadu A Study. *International journal of Research* , 21-32.
9. Shobhna, G., & Gupta, D. A. (2016). Self Help Groups as a Channel of Distribution: Paradigm in Rural Marketing. *Pacific Business Review International* , 119-130.
10. Tripathy, U. (2015). Socio-Economic Profile of SHGS on Women Empowerment: Case Study of three SHGS in Sambalpur District of Odisha, India. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* , 99-108.
11. Vinodhini, R. L., & Vaijyanthi, P. (2016). Self-Help Group and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural India. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* , 1-20.