

Empowerment of Women through Self Help Group: SHG participants' perception about enhancement of their capacity

DIPAK K. MIDYA, ANANYA HOTA AND ASHIM DAS

Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore-721102, West Bengal

Abstract: Women empowerment has been one of the significant strategies in the development process in India since the 9th Five Years Plan. Self help Group (SHG) approach has become the most sought after means for achieving that goal, particularly among the poor people. Studies undertaken so far have assessed the role of SHGs towards women empowerment in India, focusing on “increase in income” or “gender impact”. In this study we have tried to highlight the perception of SHG participants about their empowerment, with particular reference to a multiethnic village in the Junglemahal area of Paschim Medinipur district in West Bengal. The study dealt with five SHGs operating in the village, each having 10 members. Thus, the study group included 50 members (mostly from *adivasi* communities). Our results revealed that SHG approach provided for the self directed learning (SDL) to women in the context of their value system, belief and custom was of particular value. The members of the SHGs perceived to have been empowered after joining in this programme and achieved a relatively higher status by inculcating certain skills within themselves.

Key words : Women empowerment, self-help group approach, self-directed learning, Junglemahal, West Bengal.