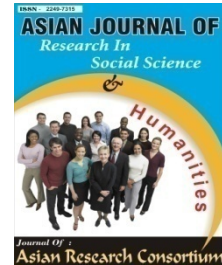




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**SELF-HELP GROUPS BANK LINKAGE  
PROGRAMME: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Microfinance is the provision of financial services to low-income clients or solidarity lending groups including consumers and the self-employed, who traditionally lack access to banking and related services. More broadly, it is a movement whose object is “a world in which as many poor and near-poor households as possible have permanent access to an appropriate range of high quality financial services, including not just credit but also savings, insurance, and fund transfers”. Those who promote microfinance generally believe that such access will help poor people out of poverty. Since 2006-07, NABARD has been compiling and analyzing the data on progress made in microfinance sector, based on the returns furnished by Commercial Banks (CBs), Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Cooperative Banks operating in the country. The bank operating, presently, in the formal financial system comprises Public Sector CBs (27), Private Sector CBs (22), RRBs (82), State Cooperative Banks (31) and District Central Cooperative Banks (370). Most of the banks participating in the process of microfinance have reported the progress made under the programme. The present study is an attempt to analyze the role and performance of SHGs in promoting women's empowerment in India. The broad objective of the study is to analyse the operating system of SHGs for mobilization of saving, delivery of credit to the needy, management of group funds, repayment of loans, in building up leadership, establishing linkage with banks and examines the social benefits derived by the members.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Microfinance, self-help groups, financial services, banking, leadership.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Microfinance sector has traversed a long journey from micro savings to micro credit and then to micro enterprises and now entered the field of micro insurance, micro remittance and micro pension. This gradual and evolutionary growth process has given a great opportunity to the rural poor in India to attain reasonable economic, social and cultural empowerment, leading to better living standard and quality of life for participating households. Financial institutions in the country continued to play a leading role in the microfinance programme for nearly two decades now. They have joined hands proactively with informal delivery channels to give microfinance sector the necessary momentum. During the current year too, microfinance has registered an impressive expansion at the grass root level.

NABARD has been instrumental in facilitating various activities under microfinance sector, involving all possible partners at the ground level in the field. NABARD has been encouraging voluntary agencies, bankers, socially spirited individuals, other formal and informal entities and also government functionaries to promote and nurture SHGs. The focus in this direction has been on training and capacity building of partners, promotional grant assistance to Self Help Promoting Institutions (SHPIs), Revolving Fund Assistance (RFA) to MFIs, equity/ capital support to MFIs to supplement their financial resources and provision of 100 per cent refinance against bank loans provided by various banks for microfinance activities. Financial support and promotional efforts of NABARD towards development of the microfinance sector have also been outlined in this booklet.

SHGs, in many ways, have gone beyond the means of delivering the financial services as a channel and turned out to be focal point for purveying various services to the poor. The programme, over a period, has become the common vehicle in the development process, converging important development programmes. With the small beginning as Pilot Programme launched by NABARD by linking 255 SHGs with banks in 1992, the programme has reached to linking of 69.5 lakh saving-linked SHGs and 48.5 lakh credit-linked SHGs and thus about 9.7 crore households are covered under the programme, envisaging synthesis of formal financial system and informal sector. The data presented in this study covers information relating to savings of Self Help Groups (SHGs) with banks during the year 2010, loans disbursed by banks to SHGs during the year 2009-10, loans outstanding of the banking system against the SHGs and the details of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and recovery percentage in respect of bank loans provided to SHGs during the year 2010.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Few studies are available on the role and performance of SHGs and micro-finance. The researcher has tried to review the following:

Harper (1996) in his study “Self-help groups – some issues from India” indicated that in India, as in other parts of the developing world, the banking community is extending its services to the poor by lending to self-help groups. By providing single larger loans, relying on the group, on NGOs, to monitor the on lending of micro-loans, the banks transaction charges are reduced,

making the operation potential profitable. Ramalakshmi (1998) pointed out that, inadequate working capital, is the most serious problem restricting the performance of many DWCRA groups and also the group members need training for skill enhancement especially for items such as soft made garments, foot wear, woolen blankets etc. Suriakanthi (2000) reported that bank transactions are essential activities of SHG's. Credit and subsidy under the (SGSY) Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana Scheme can be availed only through banks. Dadhich (2001) stated that effective implementation of micro-finance can be a means not only to alleviate poverty and empower woman but also be a viable economic and financial proportion. Raghavendra (2003) reported that the average participation level of SHG members has been quite good. Officials of Commercial Banks and RRB's together account for 50 per cent of total participation followed by Co-operative banks at 45 per cent and the balance 5 per cent by NGO's. Southern region accounts for over 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of total participation. Thorat (2005) stated that micro-financial services provided to the poor in sustainable manner is consistent with high repayment rates. Which meant that if the services to the poor were provided in a sustainable manner than the beneficiaries would go in for repayments that are quite high in consideration to a staggered manner of provision of services. Kala (2004) reported that the linking of the self help groups (SHGs) with formal rural banking started after the launching of the pilot scheme by NABARD in February 1992 and that linkage of SHGs is possible only if the SHGs have successfully collected savings, made loans and recovered them for six months. Namboodiri and Shiyani (2001) reported that the SHGs that are promoted by the NGOs had a better saving performance compared to that of SHIP. However, the repayment performance of the SHGs promoted by the SHIP was superior to that of NGOs. SavitaShankar (2006) conducted Studies on efficient credit models in micro finance, in Tamil Nadu; the most popular model for the dispensation of micro credit in India is the group-lending model. As per Sa-dhan (Industry Association of Community Development Finance Institutions in India) data, group loans account for 93% of the microfinance in India. Shylendra et al., (2007) report the overall performance of the self-help group (SHG) intervention of the Sadguru Water and Development Foundation (SWDF) in India and identifies possible ways to take it forward for promoting savings and credit activities. The study was stated that Self-help groups have become an important instrument in the delivery of microfinance services like savings and credit for the poor.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study is to examine the role and performance of SHGs in promoting women's empowerment with bank linkage programme. However, the study has some specific objectives. They are:

- To analyze the operating system of SHGs for the mobilization of saving, credit linked and loans linkage with banks.
- To study the role of NABARD on maintaining and improving the quality of SHGs to ensure their sustainability and enabling their graduation to micro enterprises.

#### 4. COVERAGE OF WOMEN SHGS

The details of total number of women SHGs saving linked, credit linked and loans outstanding for the last two years are given in table 01:

(In Crore)

Particulars	Year	Total SHGs		Exclusive Women SHGs		Percentage of Women SHGs to	
		No.	Amt	No.	Amt	No	Amt.
Saving linked SHGs	2009	6121147	5545.62	4863921	4434.03	79.5	80.0
	2010	6953250	6198.71	5310436	4498.66	76.4	72.6
Loans disbursed	2009	1609586	12253.51	1374579	10527.38	85.4	85.9
	2010	1586822	14453.30	1294476	12429.37	81.6	86.0
Loans Outstanding	2009	4224338	22679.84	3277355	18583.54	77.6	81.9
	2010	4851356	28038.28	3897797	23030.36	80.3	82.1

Source: NABARD

From the above table it may be seen that the total number of saving linked and credit linked SHGs, exclusive women SHGs with banks were 76.4 per cent and 81.6 per cent, respectively. Further, the percentage of loans outstanding of exclusive women SHGs to loans outstanding of total SHGs which was 81.9 per cent as on 31 March 2009 has increased to 82.1 per cent as on 31 March 2010.

#### 5. SAVINGS OF SHGS WITH BANKS

The agency-wise savings of SHGs with banks as on 31 March 2009 and 31 March 2010 are given in Table - 2:

**TABLE: 2 – SAVINGS OF SHGS WITH BANKS – AGENCY-WISE POSITION**

Agency	Year	Total SHGs' savings with the banks as on 31 March 2009 / 2010				Per SHG savings (Rupees)	Out of total : SHGs' savings with banks under sGsY	
		No. of SHGs	% share	Amount	% share		No. of SHGs	Amount
Commercial Banks	2009	3549509	58.0	2772.99	50.0	7812	931422	681.60
	2010	4052915	58.3	3673.89	59.3	9065	1088160	831.48
	Growth%	14.2	-	32.5	-	16.0	16.8	21.9
(Public & Private Sector)	2009	1628588	26.6	1989.75	35.9	12218	433912	774.55
	2010	1820870	26.2	1299.37	21.0	7136	462370	268.50
	Growth%	11.8	-	(34.7)	-	(41.6)	6.5	(65.3)
Cooperative Banks	2009	943050	15.4	782.88	14.1	8302	140247	107.24
	2010	1079465	15.5	1225.44	19.8	11352	143380	192.64
	Growth%	14.5	-	56.5	-	36.7	2.2	79.6
Total	2009	6121147	100.0	5545.62	100.0	9060	1505581	1,563.39
	2010	6953250	100.0	6198.71	100.0	8915	1693910	1292.62
	Growth%	(13.6)	-	(11.8)	-	(1.6)	12.5	(17.3)

Source: NABARD

Table-02 shows that during the year 2010, a total of 69.53 lakh SHGs were having saving bank accounts with the banking sector with outstanding savings of ` 6198.71 crore as against 61.21 lakh SHGs with savings of ` 5545.62 crore as on 31 March 2009, thereby showing a growth rate of 13.6 per cent and 11.8 per cent, respectively. Thus, more than 97 million poor households were associated with banking agencies under SHG-Bank Linkage Programme. As on 31 March 2010, the CBs lead with savings accounts of 40.53 lakh SHGs (58.3%) with savings amount of ` 3673.89 crore (59.3 %) followed by RRBs having savings bank accounts of 18.21 lakh SHGs (26.2% ) with savings amount of ` 1299.37 crore (21.0%) and Cooperative Banks having savings bank accounts of 10.79 lakh SHGs (15.5 %) with savings amount of ` 1225.44 crore (19.8%).The share under SGSY was 16.94

lakh SHGs with savings of ` 1,292.62 crore forming 24.4 per cent of the total SHGs having savings accounts with the banks and 20.8 per cent of their total savings amount.

During the year under review, the average savings per SHG with all banks had marginally decreased from ` 9,060 as on 31 March 2009 to ` 8,915 as on 31 March 2010. The decrease may be due to proper utilization of saving amount by SHGs for internal lending. It varied from ` 11,352 per SHG with co-operative banks to ` 7,136 per SHG with RRBs.

## 6. BANK LOANS DISBURSED TO SHGS

The agency-wise details of loans disbursed by banks to SHGs during the years 2008- 09 and 2009-10 are given in Table-3

**TABLE 3: BANK LOANS DISBURSED TO SHGS – AGENCY-WISE POSITION**

Agency	Year	Total loans disbursed by Banks to SHGs during the year				Per SHG savings (Rupees)	Out of total : SHGs' savings with banks under sGsY	
		No. of SHGs	% share	Amount	% share		No. of SHGs	Amount
Commercial Banks	2009	1004587	62.4	8060.53	65.8	80237	133117	1102.38
	2010	977521	61.6	9780.18	67.7	100050	157560	1215.50
	Growth%	(2.7)	-	21.3	-	24.7	18.4	10.3
(Public & Private Sector)	2009	405569	25.2	3193.49	26.1	78741	81662	655.27
	2010	376797	23.7	3333.20	23.1	88461	67531	682.41
	Growth%	(7.1)	-	4.4	-	12.3	(17.3)	4.1
Cooperative Banks	2009	199430	12.4	999.49	8.2	50117	49874	257.57
	2010	232504	14.7	1339.92	9.3	57629	42312	300.09
	Growth%	16.6	-	34.1	-	15.0	(15.2)	16.5
Total	2009	1609586	100.0	12253.51	100.0	76128	264653	2015.22
	2010	1586822	100.0	14453.30	100.0	91083	267403	2198.00
	Growth%	(1.4)	-	17.9	-	19.6	1.0	9.1

Source: NABARD

Table-3 explains that during year 2009-10, banks have financed 15.87 lakh SHGs, including repeat loan to the existing SHGs, with bank loans of ` 14,453.30 crore as against

16.10 SHGs with bank loans of ` 12,253.51 crore during 2008-09, registering a decline of 1.4 per cent of SHGs but a growth of 17.9 per cent in bank loans disbursed. Out of the total loans disbursed during 2009-10, SHGs financed under SGSY accounted for 2.67 lakh (16.9%) with bank loan of ` 2198.00 crore (15.2%) as against 2.65 lakh SHGs (16.4%) with bank loan of ` 2015.22 crore (16.4%) during 2008-09.

It may be observed from the above table that as always, CBs led in disbursement of loans to SHGs during 2009-10 with 61.6 per cent share followed by RRBs with a share of 23.7 per cent and Cooperative Banks with a share of 14.7 per cent. During 2009-10, average bank loan disbursed per SHG was ` 91,083 as against ` 76,128 during 2008-09. The average loan per SHG ranged from of ` 1,00,050 per SHG by CBs to ` 57,629 per SHG by Cooperative Banks.

## 7. BANK LOANS OUTSTANDING AGAINST SHGS

The agency-wise position of outstanding bank loans to SHGs for the years 2008-09 and 2009-10 are given in Table-4

**TABLE-4: BANK LOAN OUTSTANDING AGAINST SHGS – AGENCY-WISE POSITION**

Agency	Year	Total loans disbursed by Banks to SHGs during the year				Per SHG savings (Rupees)	Out of total : SHGs' savings with banks under sGsY	
		No. of SHGs	% share	Amount	% share		No. of SHGs	Amount
Commercial Banks	2009	2831374	67.1	16149.43	71.2	57,037	645145	3961.53
	2010	3237263	66.7	20164.71	71.9	62,289	798304	4072.03
	Growth%	14.3		24.9		9.2	23.7	2.7
(Public & Private Sector)	2009	977834	23.1	5224.42	23.0	53,428	258890	1508.10
	2010	1103980	22.8	6144.58	21.9	55,658	368795	1725.94
	Growth%	14.3		17.6		4.2	42.4	14.4
Cooperative Banks	2009	415130	9.8	1306.00	5.8	31,460	72852	392.09
	2010	510113	10.5	1728.99	6.2	33,894	78295	453.11
	Growth%	22.9		32.4		7.7	7.5	15.6
Total	2009	4224338	100.0	22679.85	100.0	53,689	976887	5861.72
	2010	4851356	100.0	28038.28	100.0	57,795	1245394	6251.07
	Growth%	14.8		23.6		7.6	27.5	6.6

Source: NABARD

It can be observed from the table-4 that in the year 2010, total number of 48.51 lakh SHGs were having outstanding bank loans of ` 28,038.28 crore as against 42.24 lakh SHGs with bank loans of ` 22,679.85 crore in the year 2009, representing a growth of 14.8 per cent in number of SHGs and 23.6 per cent in bank loans outstanding against SHGs. The share of SHGs under SGSY was 12.45 lakh SHGs (25.7%) with outstanding bank loans of ` 6,251.07 crore (22.3%) as against 9.77 lakh SHGs (23.1%) with outstanding bank loans of ` 5,861.72 crore (25.8%) in the year 2009.

It may be observed from the table- 4 that following the highest disbursements, CBs also had the maximum share of 66.7 per cent in outstanding bank loans to SHGs followed by RRBs with a share of 22.8 per cent and Cooperative Banks with a share of 10.5 per cent. The average bank loan outstanding per SHG had increased from ` 53,689 in the year 2009 to ` 57,795 in 2010. It varied between ` 62,289 per SHG in case of CBs and ` 33,894 per SHG in case of Co-operative Banks as on 31 March 2010.

### 8. NON-PERFORMING ASSETS OF BANK LOANS TO SHGS

The agency- wise position of NPAs to total bank loans outstanding against SHGs as on 31 March 2010 is given in Table 5:

**TABLE: 5 – AGENCY-WISE NPAS OF BANK LOANS TO SHGS**

Agency	NPAs as on 31 March 2010		
	Outstanding loans against SHGs	Amount of NPAs	% of NPAs to outstanding bank loans
CBs (Public Sector )	19724.42	513.53	2.60
CBs (Private Sector)	440.29	23.93	5.44
RRBs	6144.58	218.53	3.56
Cooperative Banks	1728.99	67.04	3.88
Total	28038.28	823.04	2.94

Source: NABARD

From the above table it can be discuss that in 2010, total 221 banks had reported data on Non Performing Assets (NPAs). Based on these data, NPAs to total bank loans outstanding against SHGs as on 31 March 2010 stood at 2.94 per cent, amounted to ` 823.04 crore, which showed an increase from 2.90 per cent and ` 625.87 crore during 2008-09. In case of



SHGs under SGSY, NPAs to total bank loans outstanding against SHGs were five per cent, amounting to ` 319.47 crore, as on 31 March 2010.

## 9. ROLE OF NABARD

NABARD's role in the SHG movement had been hailed in the past for the vision, strategies and an innovative spirit. NABARD had embarked upon this journey of mobilizing poor people into groups and harnessing their power in groups to set up a financial architecture that reached the hinterland in the rural areas. For the current year, according to U.C. Sarangi, Chairman, NABARD will concentrate 'on maintaining and improving the quality of SHGs to ensure their sustainability and enabling their graduation to micro enterprises.' Apart from capacity building support, NABARD has provided long term liquidity to banks (refinance) to incentivize their lending to SHGs. During the last year, the Microfinance Development and Equity Fund (MFDEF) available with NABARD has been utilized to the extent of ` 809.1 million during 2010 which also included ` 600 million given as loans to MFIs. Last year's sanctions were mostly to NGOs and banks for the Individual Rural Volunteers (IRVs) to fund formation and maintenance of SHGs.

### 9.1 NABARD REFINANCE SUPPORT TO BANKS

NABARD provides refinance support to banks to the extent of 100 per cent of the bank loans disbursed to SHGs. The total refinance disbursed to banks against banks' loans to SHGs during 2009-10 was ` 3173.56 crore, registered a growth of 21.1 per cent from ` 2620.03 crore in 2008-09. Further, the cumulative refinance disbursed under SHG bank linkage programme by NABARD to Banks upto 31 March 2010 stood at ` 12861.65 crore.

### 9.2 MICRO FINANCE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUITY FUND

To strengthen the efforts of NABARD towards promotional support for micro finance, the Government of India in the Union Budget for 2010-11 had further increased the corpus of Micro Finance Development and Equity Fund (MFDEF) to ` 400 crore. Recognising the need for upscaling the micro-Finance interventions in the country, the Hon'ble Union Finance Minister, while presenting the budget for the year 2000-01, had created Micro Finance Development Fund (MFDF) with an initial contribution of ` 100 crore, to be funded by Reserve Bank of India, NABARD and commercial Banks in the ratio of 40:40:20. In the Union Budget for 2005-06, the Government of India had decided to re-designate the MFDF into MFDF and raised its corpus from ` 100 crore to ` 200 crore. The MFDF is managed and administered by NABARD under the guidance of an MFDF Advisory Board. The objective of MFDF is to facilitate and support the orderly growth of the microfinance sector through diverse modalities for enlarging the flow of financial services to the poor, particularly for women and vulnerable sections of society consistent with sustainability.

### 9.3 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

NABARD continued to organize / sponsor training programmes and exposure visits for the benefit of officials of banks, NGOs, SHGs and government agencies to enhance their effectiveness in the field of microfinance. Training supplements and materials were

supplied to banks and other agencies. Best practices and innovations of partner agencies were widely circulated among government agencies, banks and NGOs. During the year 2009-10, fund support of ` 9.93 crore was provided for capacity building, exposure visits and awareness-building as against ` 6.10 crore during 2008-09. The cumulative fund support for the purpose as on 31 March 2010 stood at ` 45.02 crore. During 2009-10, 6,804 training/ capacity building programmes were conducted covering 2, 53,868 participants. The progress under training and capacity building during the year 2009-10 is given in Table -10.

#### **9.4 JOINT LIABILITY GROUPS**

Based on the studies conducted by NABARD, it was found that financing of Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) is a good business proposition. It needs simplified documentation, group dynamics, timely repayment culture and prospects of credit enhancement to quality clients. Keeping in view the need and findings of the studies, NABARD has issued comprehensive guidelines on JLGs to Banks focusing on small and marginal farmers, oral lessees, tenant farmers engaged in farm sector and other clients under non-farm activities. NABARD supports banks for nurturing and financing of JLGs for the initial three years. Banks may use the services of JLG-promoting agencies. In addition, NABARD would also extend support for training, exposure visits, experience-sharing, etc., for banks' staff. The details of the scheme are given in Exhibit.

#### **9.5 MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

The Micro Enterprise Development Programme (MEDP) was launched by NABARD in March 2006 with the basic objective to enhance the capacities of the members of matured SHGs to take up micro enterprises through appropriate skill upgradation / development in the existing or new livelihood activities both in farm and non-farm sectors by way of enriching knowledge of participants on enterprise management, business dynamics and rural markets. It is tailor-made and focused on skill building training programme. The duration of training programme ranged

Between 3 and 13 days, depending upon the objective and nature of training. The training budget has been revised to ` 39,000/- per programme for imparting training to 30 participants upto 13 days. In 2009-10, a total of 1530 MEDPs, both under Farm and Non-farm activities, were conducted across the country covering 38313 members of the matured SHGs. Cumulatively, total 2837 MEDPs have been conducted so far covering 93777 participants. The dominant activities in agriculture and allied sector covered under MEDPs were animal husbandry, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation, vermi- compost/ organic manure, horticulture, floriculture, etc. whereas predominant non-farm activities taken up under MEDPs were readymade garments, Agarbatti- making, embroidery, bamboo-craft, beauty parlours, etc.

#### **9.6 GRANT SUPPORT TO PARTNER AGENCIES FOR PROMOTION AND NURTURE OF SHGS**

NABARD continued its efforts in the formation and nurturing of quality SHGs by means of promotional grant support to NGOs, RRBs, DCCBs, Farmers' Clubs and Individual Rural Volunteers (IRVs) and by facilitating capacity building of various partners, which has brought impressive results in the promotion and credit linkage of SHGs. Further, the number of partner institutions/individuals functioning as Self-Help Promoting Institutions (SHPIs) over the years has increased to 2911 which has resulted in the expansion of the programme throughout the country.

## 10. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The Self Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage Programme, in the past eighteen years, has become a well known tool for bankers, developmental agencies and even for corporate houses. SHGs, in many ways, have gone beyond the means of delivering the financial services as a channel and turned out to be focal point for purveying various services to the poor. The programme, over a period, has become the common vehicle in the development process, converging important development programmes. The average savings per SHG with all banks had marginally decreased from 2009 to 2010. The decrease may be due to proper utilization of saving amount by SHGs for internal lending. Whereas the average bank loan outstanding per SHG had increased from 2009 to 2010. But it varied between Commercial banks and in case of Co-operative Banks. In case of SHGs under SGSY, NPAs to total bank loans outstanding against SHGs were five per cent, amounting to ` 319.47 crore, as on 31 March 2010.

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