



## EMPOWERMENT OF SHG WOMEN MEMBERS IN CUDDALORE DISTRICT THROUGH AAJEEVIKA-NRLM SCHEME BY MAHALIR THITTAM

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### **Abstract**

*While there is a shared understanding and general consensus on the functions of National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) Scheme, their potential for the empowerment of women has been much debated. This paper focuses on the nature of this debate. Participation of women in NRLM made a significant impact on their empowerment both in social and economic aspects. Microfinance sector has helped women to gain economic empowerment and improve quality of their life. Empowerment also systematizes their lives and resources. In this context, various factors – economic, organizational, political and cultural – have been emphasized. The present study, while acknowledging all these factors, makes a case for a more-sophisticated and nuanced analysis of culture for a deeper understanding of the linkages between NRLM and women's empowerment and suggests areas of enquiry for informed policymaking.*

*The Data required for the study has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The results of the study revealed that NRLM have had greater impact on both economic and social aspects of the beneficiaries. This paper, thus, forwards sustainable approaches to strengthen the creativity of grassroots inventors and innovators engaged in developing NRLM solutions to local problems. In all what can NRLM do for the rural poor and rural women are addressed here.*

**Keywords:** *Women empowerment, Rural Youth Development, Microfinance, Poverty alleviation, Employment Initiatives.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in minute details of the activities of man and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he; she is entitled to a supreme place in her own place, in her own sphere of activity as man is in his.”*

**~ Mahatma Gandhi**

Today, the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. The need for empowerment of women thus arises from this harsh social scenario. Nor they could become self- dependent in any of the walks of life. In his lifetime Gandhi inspired Indians to take concrete and practical initiatives regarding women education which will bring them out of these centuries' old conservative customs and rules, which were responsible for their mental and social slavery. Women play an important role in the family and society, but in all essential areas of life women are generally at a significant disadvantage as compared with men, whether in terms of education, income, partner choice, inheritance laws, property rights, decision-making processes, community organization or access to leadership positions in education, business or politics. The self-help groups can empower Women but they are not the magic bullet to solve the livelihood problems of the poor. They can be a good tool to mobilize the poor but not as an exclusive source of livelihood. The over-dependence of the current anti-poverty scheme on self-help groups needs National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). NRLM is playing a significant role in the empowerment of disadvantaged women, helping them stand on their own, through such Schemes as socio-economic Schemes, vocational training and other similar Schemes.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NRLM**

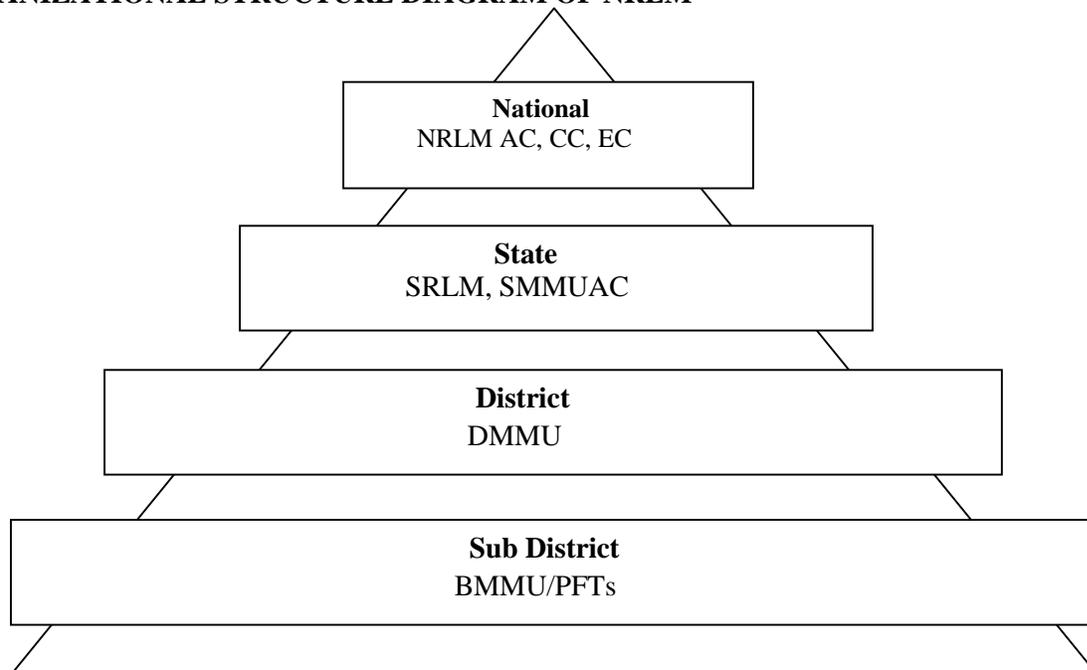
Pursuant to the recommendations of Hashim Committee, this Ministry restructured all the Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation programmes such as IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA, GKY and MWS with a view to

improving the efficacy of programmes. All these Schemes were merged into a single self-employment programme known as Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). It was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in its meeting held on 16th March 1999 and was launched on 1st April 1999. The SGSY has a definite objective of improving the family incomes of the rural poor and at the same time, providing for a flexibility of design at the grassroots level to suit the local needs and resources. The objective of the restructuring is to provide a sustainable income generation through micro-enterprise development, both land-based and otherwise. In doing so, effective linkages have been established between the various components such as capacity building of the poor, credit, technology, marketing and infrastructure.

The Swarnjayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), a centrally sponsored programme of the Ministry Of Rural Development (MORD), Government of India (GOI) has been restructured and implemented as National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) since FY 2010-11. The central objective of the NRLM is to eliminate rural poverty through innovative implementation strategies involving mobilization and organization of the rural poor and their financial and economic – inclusion. The NRLM is implemented on a cost sharing basis between the Centre and the States.

Based on Ministry Of Rural Development's extensive consultations with various stakeholders including the State Governments Civil Society Organizations, Bankers and Academicians, NRLM Framework for Implementation has been developed. NRLM is a learning mission and learns from all the best practices of poverty eradication and failures in the country. Like NRLM, its Framework for Implementation is a learning live and dynamic framework. This NRLM framework offers space for local plans base on local context and offers space for learning from the experiences in the field as the implementation progresses. This scheme was launched in 12 states that account for 85% of the rural poor in India. The scheme has been partly funded by the World Bank which has contributed \$1 billion and the central government has invested \$5.1 billion. This program targets around 70 million below poverty line (BPL) within the end of the 12th Five Year Plan.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE DIAGRAM OF NRLM



**AC:** Advisory Committee, **CC:** Coordination Committee, **EC:** Empowered Committee  
**NMMU:** National Mission Management Unit, **SRLM:** State Rural Livelihood Mission  
**SMMU:** State Mission Management Unit, **DMMU:** District Mission Management Unit  
**BMMU:** Block Mission Management Unit, **PFT:** Project Facilitation Team

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lalit Kumar Sharma (2011) through the article “Self Help Group as an Effective Strategy and Feasible Approach to Empower Women in India” has highlighted the benefits of psychological, social and economical factors accrued by women participating in SHG and to explore the merits of SHG as strategy and approach to empower women in India. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision making power and control and transformative action. The study concludes that women participation in NGO have created tremendous impact upon the life pattern and style of poor women especially in rural areas and empower them at various level not only as individual but also as member of family, community and society as whole.

S. Subramanian (2010) in the article “Empowerment of Women through SHG in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu - A SWOT Analysis” has identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by conducting SWOT analysis of SHG. Field observation methods were used to identify observable physical data. Moreover, group discussion with women who were involved in activities and group functions were conducted to elicit the information in detail. The study reveals that capacity buildings exercise taken up by the promoting agencies are not adequate to meet the need of SHG members. They lack proficiency in soft skills, technical skills and managerial skills. The article suggested that the promoting agencies like government and non-government agencies can contribute effectively for the success and sustainability of SHG.

Neelaiah. R. (2010) in his paper entitled “A Study on Self Help Groups at Work in Andhra Pradesh”. He concluded that all the group members are divided into two categories i.e., poor and poorest of the poor (POP). And also found out in his paper that number of SHGs established in each year has increased till 2005 and then decreased thereafter and it can be taken as decreased interest on the part of the Government after 2004-05. According to a study conducted by APMAS (2010) titled ‘The Study of SHG movement in Adilabad, Cuddapah and Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh’, the flow of micro credit has not triggered substantial growth of micro enterprises. The movement is at the phase where the SHGs require effective bank linkages and training on developing micro enterprises and business development services. 22% of the SHGs covered expressed specific support in micro enterprise development, apart from SHG concept building.

Anjugam (2007) in the article “Determinants of Women’s participation in Self-Help Group led micro finance programme in Tamil Nadu” said that socially backward, landless and marginal farm house holds participate more in the self-help group programme. Possession of livestock and consumer goods by the member households has been found to deter the joining of group.

Malathi Ramanathan (2004) - The author through the article “Women and Empowerment, Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad” has made an attempt to study the rise and growth of an organization, resulting from a group of women’s practical step to get supplementary earning. It is about empowerment at an organized cooperative level. The article concludes that the organization was positive in its approach in promoting economic empowerment of women and was well recognized. The article has made an attempt to answer the questions like, what are the reasons for success and spread of Lijjat papad as a women oriented organization? And In what way have the women of Lijjat papad contributed to bringing about a constructive change in their own lives and that of the people in and around their orbit of work?

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To overview the profile and general performance of NRLM in Six Villages in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu.
- To evaluate the impact of demographic, social and economic factors on joining the NRLM.
- To critically analyze the impact of NRLM on the income level of the women after joining in NRLM.

## HYPOTHESES

From the above objectives the following hypotheses are framed and empirically tested.

H1: There is no significant increase in income pattern of women members before and after joining the NRLM.  
H2: There is no significant increase in expenditure pattern of women members before and after joining the NRLM.

## METHODOLOGY

The Data required for the study has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources.

- **Primary Data:** Schedules and questionnaires were used by the investigator in six villages in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu. Name of the villages are Old Neyveli, Arasakuzhi, Seerangkuppam, Melpathi, Keezpathi, Veenankeni.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data for this study was collected from Project Officer, Magalirhittam, Cuddalore, BDO, Kammapuram, various economic and statistics books, journals, newspapers and magazines.

## SAMPLE SIZE

- 120 individual members of NRLM were interviewed through convenience sampling method.

## TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

The Statistical tools namely Percentage, Average, Mean, Standard Deviation, ANOVA – test have been employed to have perfect inferences from the analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Table No – 1, Socio-economic Profile of the respondents**

Variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	20-29	40	33.33
	30-39	54	45.00
	40-49	18	15.00
	50-59	8	6.67
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	88	73.33
	Unmarried	24	20.00
	Widow	8	6.67
<b>Type of Family</b>	Nuclear	95	79.17
	Joint	25	20.83
<b>Educational Level</b>	Illiterate	17	14.17
	Primary	45	37.50
	Secondary Education	33	27.50
	Higher Secondary	21	17.50
	Degree	4	3.33
<b>Community</b>	BC	15	12.50
	MBC	57	47.50
	SC	48	40.00
<b>Occupation</b>	Agriculture	29	24.17
	Dairy	15	12.50
	Coolie/Labour	40	33.33
	Self employment	36	30.00
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Below 2500	72	60.00
	2501-5000	38	31.67
	Above 5000	10	8.33

Source: Primary data from the field survey.

### Inferences

- Of the total, less than half of the respondents (45 percent) belonged to the age group between 30 to 39 years. About one third of the respondents (33.33 percent) under the age group of between 20 years to 29 years and less than one fifth of the respondents (15percent) belonged to the age group of 40 to 49 years.
- About Three fourth of the respondents (73.33percent) were married, one fifth of the respondents (20 percent) were unmarried and only few 6.67 percent of them was widow.
- Of the total, more than Three fourth of the respondents (79.17 percent) were nuclear and one fifth of the respondents (20.83percent) were joint family.
- With regard to the educational qualification, more than one third of the respondents (37.50 percent) possessed primary education, more than one fourth of the respondents (27.50 percent) possessed secondary education, and less than one fifth of the respondents (17.50 percent) possessed higher secondary, 14.17 percent of the respondents were Illiterate and only few 3.33 percent of them was degree holders.
- Of the total sample, less than half of the respondents (47.50percent) belong to Most Backward community, while more than one third of the respondents (40 percent) were Scheduled caste and 12.50 percent belongs to backward community.
- Of the total, one third of the respondents (33.33 percent) were collie, more than one fourth of the respondents (30 percent) were self-employed, more than one fifth of the respondents (24.17 percent) were Agriculturists and 12.50 percent were dairy farmers.
- Of the total sample, more than half of the respondents (60 percent) were earning below Rs. 2500, more than one fourth of the respondents (31.67 percent) were earning between Rs.2501 to 5000 and only 8.33 percent of the respondents were earning above Rs.5000.

**Table No – 2, Average Annual income of the selected self-help Group Members**

classification	Before joining NRLM	After joining NRLM
7500-15000	8	10
1501-22500	12	17
22501-30000	40	42
30001-37500	23	12
Above37500	37	39
Total	120	120

Source: Primary data from the field survey.

ANOVA	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Source of Variation						
Between Groups	1685	4	421.25	26.66139	0.001438	5.192168
Within Groups	79	5	15.8			
Total	1764	9				

Source: Computed.

### Inference

Now the impact of NRLM on income generation of members is statistically tested by one way analysis of variance. From the above result, it is obvious that the calculated value of “F” is greater than the critical “F” value, (26.66 > 5.19), Based on the ANOVA test, the hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> is rejected. It is concluded that there is significant difference between income earned by the members before and after joining NRLM.

**Table No – 3, Average annual Expenditure of the selected self-help Group members**

Classification	Before Joining NRLM	After Joining NRLM
10000	40	35
10001-15000	38	31
15001-20000	29	20
20001-25000	5	18
Above 25000	8	16
Total	120	120

Source: Primary data from the field survey.

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1186	4	296.5	7.641753	0.02333	5.192168
Within Groups	194	5	38.8			
Total	1380	9				

Source: Computed.

### Inference

It can be stated that the members have increased the level of expenditure in the post membership period due to high level of income. Therefore it may be concluded that the NRLM has really brought about a significant changes in the expenditure pattern of the members.

To test the significance in the level of increase in expenditure of members, one way analysis of variance has been employed to test. From the above result, it is obvious that the calculated value of “F” is greater than the critical “F” value, (7.64 > 5.19), Based on the calculated values, the hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant change in the level of expenditure by the members before and after joining NRLM.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

A concerted effort has been made in this paper to present the socio-economic conditions of Cuddalore district and socio-economic background of the selected NRLM members. Women development activities must be given importance in combating poverty and to increase the economic growth and for better standard of living. To reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong and sustainable grassroots institutions of the poor. NRLM is credit cooperatives, usually all women join together in a group of 12 to 20 members of women who come forward voluntarily to work together for their socio-economic upliftment. Net result was a significant rise in income, expenditure, savings and investment.

This paper concluded that, today NRLM is a vibrant movement spread across all districts of the state. The training by NRLM had increased their confidence and restored self-worth. Even though the members have joined the NRLM for various reasons, most of the members have developed their own small businesses with the credit linkage and



standing on their own legs. A bank linkage program has emerged an effective program and which is extending credit to rural women to enhance economic empowerment of women. The outcome of the study strongly reveals that women have become confident about their future and have attained a considerable level of self-reliance and thereby increase in the economic conditions after joining the member of organization. These NRLM facilitate the members a healthier position in the society.

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