

Role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Rural Development with Special Reference to Chare, Longkhim and Sangsangyu Block under Tuensang District, Nagaland

Therila Sangtam, Dr. Sangyu Yaden

(Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Nagaland University:Lumami, India)

(Professor, Department of Geography, Nagaland University:Lumami, India)

Abstract: Rural Development is a very dynamic process which involves in improving the socio-cultural, environmental, political and economic well-being of the rural poor living in relatively isolated areas. In a country like India where majority of the people are living in rural areas, the concept of rural development assume great significance. The Tuensang district is one of the most backward district in Nagaland where poverty, illiteracy, lack of skills and health care, basic infrastructure etc are prevalent in all the villages. After the inception of Self Help Groups (SHGs) approach by the North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP), the SHGs have been playing a vital role to eliminate these problems through the way of group efforts, especially the women folks. The self help group SHGs approach is a new instance into the field of rural development which aims at improving the living condition of the rural poor by creating sustainable community based institutions.

Keywords: North East Rural Livelihood Project, Rural development, Rural poor, Self Help Groups, Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated areas. The concept of rural development is very important for a country like India, where majority of population is under rural areas. For such a country, development in the true sense can be achieved only when the rural areas are developed.

In order to change the face of socio-economic scenario of the rural areas, Self Help Groups comprising of women, working under the aegis of North-East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) is playing a vital role in Tuensang district. The NERLP is a multi-state central sector World Bank funded rural poverty reduction project. The main objective of the NERLP for forming the SHGs in the rural areas is based on forming community institutions of the poor as opposed to institutions for the poor. The SHGs are informal groups in nature where members come together towards collective actions for the common cause. SHGs act as the building blocks of organizing poor and disadvantaged households in the community. The vision behind SHGs approach in a village is to promote self-reliant and a collective women force towards increase economic and livelihood opportunities in a sustainable manner.

The SHGs of these three blocks - Chare, Longkhim and Sangsangyu under Tuensang district is contributing a lot towards economic development and livelihood opportunities of the rural poor since its inception in 2013. The SHGs of these blocks have been able to organize and marginalize the rural poor to come together for the development of the rural areas through common efforts.

II. STUDY AREA

The study area for the present research work is confined to the SHGs of the three blocks - Chare, Longkhim and Sangsangyu under Tuensang District, Nagaland. These are the 3 blocks among 9 Rural Development Blocks of Tuensang District. The study area lies between 25°50' N to 26°30' N latitudes and 94°30' E to 95°10' E longitudes. Chare block has 12 villages with 2039 households. Longkhim block has 12 villages with 3272 households. Sangsangyu block has 24 villages with 4419 households. Chare and Longkhim block comprise of Sangtam Naga community while Sangsangyu block comprise of Chang Naga community.

III. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To find out the different income generating activities of SHGs.
- 3.2 To find out the pattern of income from each economic activities.
- 3.3 To examine the role of SHGs in rural development.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study has been based mainly on primary data. Out of the 3 (three) blocks – Chare, Longkhim and Sangsangyu, two villages from each block were selected as the sample villages and all the SHGs in these villages were taken into consideration. An extensive field survey was conducted through a prepared schedule and informal interview with each SHG groups in the sample villages as well as with the District Micro-Finance NERLP, Tuensang. Thereafter, an analysis has been done on the basis of simple statistical tools and technique.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of Self Help Group got a major impetus after the North-East Rural Livelihood Project, a multi-state central sector World Bank funded rural poverty reduction project aims at improving the rural livelihoods especially that of women, unemployed youth and the most disadvantaged, in four participating North Eastern States was launched. Nagaland is one of the participating State among the four North-Eastern States under this Project. At present only Tuensang and Peren are under NERLP since 2013.

The present study was conducted in 3 blocks-Chare, Longkhim and Sangsangyu under Tuensang district, selecting 2 villages from each block. All together there are 71 SHGs in the sample villages, each SHGs consisting of 10 members. Around 710 women were engaged in the SHGs in the 6 sample villages during the field survey in 2016-17.

Table 1. Showing the Number of SHGs in Each Sample Villages.

Block Name	Sample villages	No. of SHGs
Chare	Alisopur	31
	Longkhitpeh	11
Longkhim	Lirise	14
	New Mangakhi	5
Sangsangyu	Khudei	7
	Helipong	3

Source: Field Survey 2016-17

Since the year 2013 a large number of village people particularly women have been mobilized into self help group in the study area. The beneficiaries were selected on the basis of total population of the village, by selecting one member from each household in order to include the entire village households in the development process.

To understand the dynamics of self help groups, the following heads has been considered for the present study:

5.1. Income generating activities of SHGs

The self help group (SHG) approach is a new instance into the field of rural development which aims at improving the living condition of the rural poor by creating sustainable community based institutions. It would give a new platform for the women to actively participate in the process of development through diverse livelihood activities by managing the natural resources.

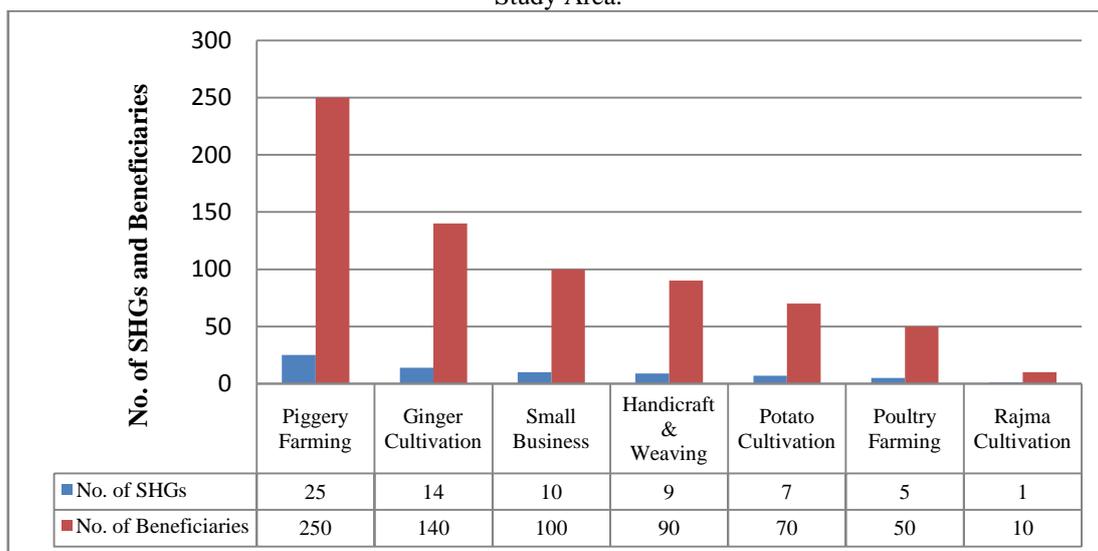
The self help groups in the present study area are engaged in various income generating activities. The activities of the SHGs are generally based upon traditional know-how and availability of local resource base. It was found that the beneficiaries of the SHGs consisted only of female members unlike other SHGs which consist of both male and female members. And most of the activities of the SHGs are primarily associated with agrarian economy.

Table 2. Showing the Total Number of SHGs and Beneficiaries in Each Income Generating Activities in the Study Area.

Income generating activities	No. of SHGs	No. of beneficiaries
Piggery farming	25	250
Ginger Cultivation	14	140
Small Business	10	100
Handicraft & Weaving	9	90
Potatoes Cultivation	7	70
Poultry Farming	5	50
Rajma Cultivation	1	10

Source: Field Survey 2016-17

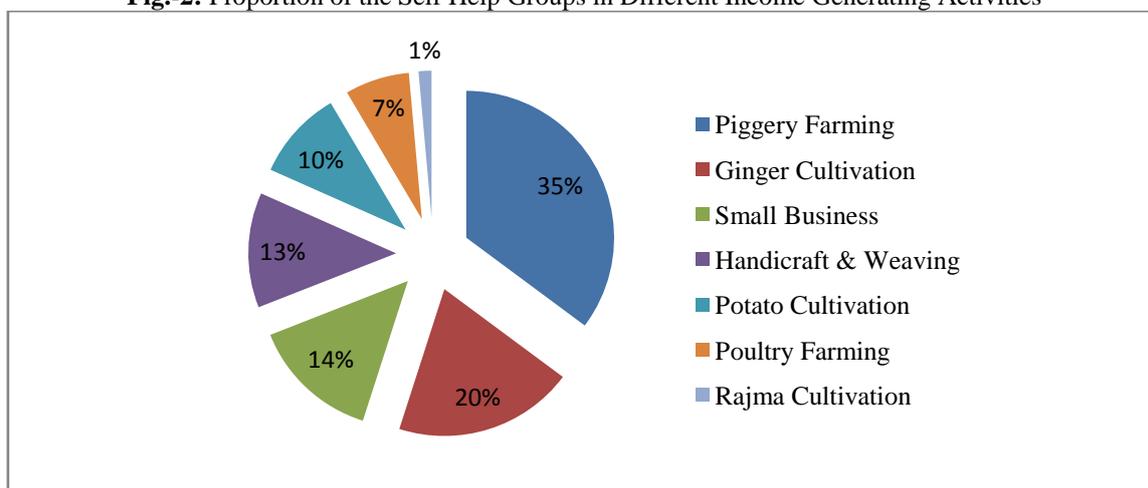
Fig.-1: Showing the Total Number of SHGs and Beneficiaries in Each Income Generating Activities in the Study Area.



Some differences have been observed in the practice of income generating activities in present study area. Out of 71 SHGs and 710 beneficiaries in the sample villages, 25 SHGs were engaged in piggery farming followed by ginger cultivation -14 SHGs, small business-10 SHGs, handicraft & weaving-9 SHGs, potatoes cultivation-7 SHGs, poultry farming-5 SHGs and rajma (red kidney beans) cultivation-1 SHGs respectively.

Thus, 7 different types of income generating activities were found in the present study area such as piggery farming, ginger cultivation, small business, handicraft and weaving, potato cultivation, poultry farming and rajma cultivation. The proportion of the self help groups in different income generating activities in the study area is shown below (Fig.-2). It can be observed that 35% of the SHGs were under piggery farming, 20% of SHGs under ginger cultivation, 14% of SHGs under small business, 13% of SHGs under handicraft & weaving, 10% of SHGs under potato cultivation, 7% of SHGs under poultry farming and 1% of SHGs under rajma cultivation.

Fig.-2: Proportion of the Self Help Groups in Different Income Generating Activities



Source: Field Survey 2016-17

5.2. Pattern of income from each economic activity

The self help groups in the study area are funded and supported by the North-East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP). In order to manage the self help group a sum of 20,000/- was given to each SHGs as one time grant. Thereafter, a sum of 120,000/- was given as inter-loaning amount to each SHGs. A total of 140,000/- has been given to each SHGs for a period of five years. The inter-loaning amount is regulating among the SHGs beneficiaries with an interest rate of 2% per month. This process helps women to carry out various income generating activities in the rural areas.

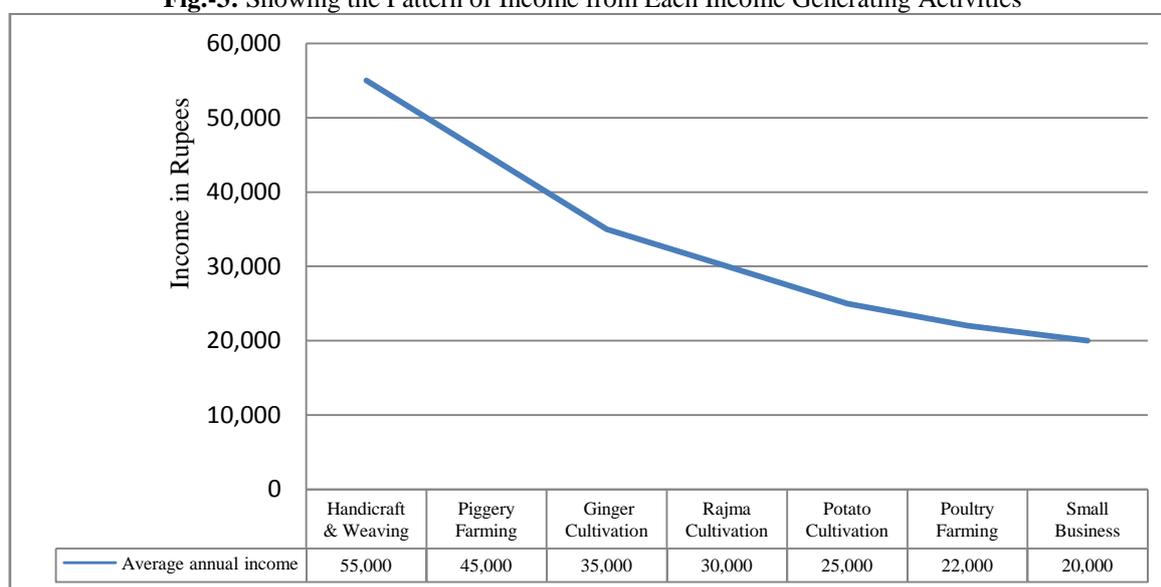
Table 3. Showing the Average Annual Income from each Income Generating Activities

Income generating activities	Average Annual Income (in rupees)
Piggery farming	45,000
Ginger Cultivation	35,000
Small Business	20,000
Handicraft & Weaving	55,000
Potato Cultivation	25,000
Poultry Farming	22,000
Rajma Cultivation	30,000

Source: Field Survey 2016-17

As there is a variation of income in each villages depending upon the number of SHGs and beneficiaries in each income generating activity, the average annual income has been recorded and tabulated from each income generating activities in terms of rupees as shown in the table-3, to understand the pattern of income from these activities.

Fig.-3: Showing the Pattern of Income from Each Income Generating Activities



The pattern of income of the study area shows that the highest income generating activity is handicraft & weaving, followed by piggery farming, ginger cultivation, rajma cultivation, potato cultivation, poultry farming and least income generating activity is small business. There is so much of variation in income generation in each income generating activities, because there is no proper market to sell their production. Therefore, except handicraft & weaving and piggery farming, the rest of the production is sold in whole sale price in the adjacent village areas.

5.3. Role of SHGs in rural development

The present study area is among the most under-developed areas in Nagaland. The people of these areas have been facing so many problems related to poverty, illiteracy, lack of skills and health care, basic infrastructure etc. After the inception of SHGs approach by the NERLP, the SHGs have been playing a vital role to eliminate these problems through the way of group efforts. It is difficult to handle things alone but becomes easy when united as a group. So SHGs of the study area are acting as the vehicle of change for the rural poor.

Self help group of the present study area are able to organized the poor and the marginalized to come together to work for the development of the rural areas. Following are some of the role played by the SHGs in the rural areas of the study area.

Firstly, SHGs provide self-employment to the rural poor to have sustained income to meet their urgent needs. As far as the educational level is concerned, 90% of the SHGs beneficiaries were below class X, 8% under secondary level and only 2% were under graduate level. Low level of literacy makes it difficult for the poor to find an employment but SHGs gives them an opportunity to employ themselves in order to earn a living. Secondly, 95% of the SHGs beneficiaries were found to be house-wives without any income before joining the SHGs. But SHGs provides them an opportunity to engage themselves in various occupations to improve their

earning capacity. Now these house wives are able to help their families financially at the time of need and they are also able to get prestige in the family as well as in the society.

Thirdly, SHGs have been able to improve the skills of women to do various things by managing the available natural resources. As a group they can help each other to learn so many things along with the money management because most of the women in the rural areas have a very little knowledge for the management of money.

Fourthly, SHGs helps the poor people in the village to save huge amount more quickly by pulling their saving in a common fund which can then be used by the group or member of the group for productive investment. As the poor can save only small amount individually, which are usually not enough for investment. Lastly, SHGs increases the level of social empowerment of the women through participation and decision making in the group level. All the members of the SHGs are made to take part in the meeting and income generating activities. It gives them confidence and understanding to actively participate at household level as well as external environment in the process of development.

VI. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

These are some of the suggestion for the betterment and further development of the SHGs in the study area:

- There should be good understanding among the group members of the SHGs.
- The president and secretaries of the SHGs should be an educated person who can take up the responsibilities.
- Marketing networks of the SHGs should be more widened so that the goods can be sold at a reasonable price.
- The activities of the SHGs should focus more on those activities which generate good return.
- Frequent training of management for the SHGs should be organized to achieve the desired goals.

The entire observation shows that the SHGs in the study area are functioning well in organizing the poor and the marginalized women into a self-serviced economic institution. Significant improvement has been found in the living condition of the rural areas especially the women folks. Seven different types of income generating activities were found in the study area and the highest percentage of SHGs groups were found to be practicing piggery farming which is the second highest income generating activities in the study area, in terms of income generation. But when it comes to income generation, handicraft & weaving generates the highest income. The study reveals that there is huge variation in income generation between the different economic activities of the SHGs due to the differences in the value of the product. Therefore, good transport and market networks could be of great help to the rural poor for the rural development. Despite so many hindrances in the rural areas especially in a district like Tuensang, creation of SHGs has been very helpful in increasing the opportunities of the livelihood activities of the rural poor. Therefore, it can be concluded that participation of women in the SHGs provides tremendous contribution towards the development of self-reliant, self-confident and social empowerment among the members of the SHGs contributing towards the process of rural development in the region.

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