

THE ROLE OF SHGs IN ACHIEVING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Women are 48% in the population. But in every sphere, they are backward. If they are properly engaged in public life, Miracles will happen in the world. Women empowerment can be defined as “ women’s sense of self worth , their ability to determine their own choices and right to influence social change for themselves and others”. In ordinary sense, It means, the decision making capacity of women in every field is known as WOMEN EMPOWERMENT. It is necessary for creation of wealth, eradication of poverty, achieving liberty, equality and justice. If once women are empowered, social evils will be eradicated and gender bias will be vanished. Literacy, women movements, Economic freedom, self-help groups[SHGs], political participation etc.. are necessary for women empowerment. Particularly Learning, Labor & Leadership [3 Ls] are necessary for women empowerment. In all these aspects, SHGs play more important role in achieving women empowerment. The following things will happen because of SHGs.

Membership in SHGs lead to increase in self confidence and economic independence of women. Their leadership qualities will be promoted. The organizational skills, communication skills, Decision making, problem solving and negotiation skills will be sharpened. Their social status and respect at home will be increased. There will be a change in their slandered of living. Social evils and superstitions will be eradicated. They participate in politics actively. They will become pressure groups and ready to do lobbying to achieve their demands. Their health conditions will be improved. In a single sentence, there will be a Revolution in the life of women and society because of SHGs. All these ultimately lead to Women empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

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1. **SELF CONFIDENCE:** We know that 15 to 20 women will come together and form a self-help group. Some groups will come together and make a cluster. If women will be organized into a group and discuss certain things, their self-confidence will be improved. This increase in self-confidence is the first step in women empowerment.
2. **ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE:** In every SHG, women will save money and start a small enterprise or a cottage industry with that saved money as investment. They earn profits and well equipped with business techniques. Within few days, they get economic independence and stand on their own legs. Generally, women will show interest in individual business like starting a shop or a tea stall etc.. This individual enterprise will make them economically independent.
3. **LEADERSHIP QUALITIES:** Communication skills, clarity in thinking, discipline, command, control, public relations will make women leaders at grass root level.
4. **ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS:** The women in SHGs should conduct periodical meetings & discussions. They have to organize different events depending on situations. For that organizational skills like preparation of agenda, doing prayer, presiding over the meetings, addressing the gathering, Controlling the members and singing national anthem etc.. are necessary. These skills slowly equipped by women.
5. **COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** communication plays an important role in empowerment. Public speaking is an art. The women of SHGs slowly get the boldness&courage to face the audience. In public speaking, they learn maintenance of time and using correct language. This public speaking make women as Empowered leaders.
6. **DECISION MAKING & PROBLEM SOLVING SKILL:** The women of SHGs will take decisions in the meetings. They identify the problem, search for the alternative solutions and take a rational decision collectively. They solve many problems of their own like domestic violence, sexual harassment etc.. These decision making and problem solving skills are essential in women empowerment.
7. **NEGOTIATION SKILL:** Convincing others on a particular subject is very important to get their support. For this, Negotiation skill is very important. . Credibility & rationality are the two pillars of negotiation skill. These two will be developed in the meetings of SHGs.
8. **SOCIAL STATUS:** Generally, women are treated as second-rate citizens in the society. There is gender discrimination from womb to tomb. Their social status will be improved

by SHGs. They will take part in every important subject. Social status and identity are very necessary in empowerment.

9. **HONOR & RESPECT AT HOME:**The honor& respect of women at family level is low because of their illiteracy, lack of awareness & lack of social life. Once, they join in SHGs , their social status will be increased and they get proper recognition in the society. That promotes honor & respect at home. The husband, children & elders will treat her with dignity.
10. **INCREASE IN STANDARD OF LIVING:** Standard of living will be increased when income will be more. SHGs will provide income and income sources. As a result, the standard of living of that entire family will be increased. E.g.- so many women constructed houses and provided higher education to their children with the assistance of SHGs and the available loans in SHGs. This clearly shows their improvement in standard of living.
11. **SOCIAL REFORMS:**There are many social evils like- Dowry, No scope for Widow re-marriage, child marriages etc.. Which are against to the women's Dignity. If once women will discuss about these issues in SHGs , they will be awared and start agitations. These agitations will eradicate the above social evils.
12. **END TO SUPERSTITIONS:** There are so many superstitions like- animal sacrifice and other things, which has no scientific reason. The women of SHGs acquire scientific temperament and put an end to these superstitions.
13. **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:** The leadership which the women aquaired in SHGs will lead to political participation. They not only confine to voting, but also contest in elections, take active role in political campaign and movements. They fight for their share in political parties and positions. This high degree of political participation lead to women empowerment.
14. **LOBBYING:**The SHGs will become lobbies and improve their bargaining power in government to achieve their demands. They will become pressure group in democracy.
15. **IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTH CONDITIONS:**Nearly 80% of women are suffering from anemia. Their immunity is comparatively low. In SHGs every month, there will be a health talk & they discuss about food and nutrition frequently. All these will improve their health conditions. Particularly, they discuss about Reproductive health without any hesitation. That plays an important role in empowerment of women.

Thus, SHGs play an important role in women empowerment. Bangladesh & India proved this fact. Hence, Let us strengthen SHGs to make our women empowered.
