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## Study on Self Help Groups- An Overview

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### ABSTRACT

Women constitute about half of the population and comprise one third of the labor force in India. It is, therefore, important that when considering the economic development of this segment of the population, due attention is given to their socioeconomic empowerment. Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself, but is also the surest way to contribute to economic and overall development. Employment opportunities, support for self-employment and women's enterprises came to be recognized as essential for increasing women's economic potential. Women face both economic and social insecurity. Micro Finance as a tool of poverty alleviation and women empowerment has gained acceptance in development dialogue the world over. There is an acute need among the poor for credit, both for consumption and production, which often forms the declining line between survival and succumbing to poverty. For Women to become a successful entrepreneur, she needs access to capital, technical and managerial know-how and market. Women are critical for Development process.

Keywords : Women constitute, population, socioeconomic, empowerment, economic development

### INTRODUCTION

Women constitute about half of the population and comprise one third of the labor force in India. It is, therefore, important that when considering the economic development of this segment of the population, due attention is given to their socioeconomic empowerment. Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself, but is also the surest way to contribute to economic and overall development. Employment opportunities, support for self-employment and women's enterprises came to be recognized as essential for increasing women's economic potential. Women face both economic and social insecurity.

According to Amartya Sen, "Women are less likely to secure favorable outcomes for themselves in household decision-making processes. They feel that their long-term security lies in subordinating their well being to that of male authority He further observed that "there are no good reasons to abandon the understanding that the impact of women empowerment in enhancing the voice and influence of women does help to reduce gender inequality of many different kinds, and can also reduce the indirect penalty that men suffer from the subjugation of women". In the absence of stable wage employment, women often shoulder the burden of providing for and managing households. It is widely accepted fact that poverty has a gender bias, as 70 per cent of the people living in abject poverty are women. The reasons for women slipping into poverty and remaining in poverty are varied and include desertion, migration, death of husband, and in many instances, male unemployment. Their vulnerability increases with ill health, domestic violence and lack of access to support systems. It is reported that women perform 2/3rd of the world's work, receive only 10 per cent of world's income and own only one per cent of the total assets. Hence, there is an urgent need to increase the income of the women not only in India but at the global level, particularly in unorganized workers in the third world countries. In this context, various economists and policy makers felt that Micro-finance with Self-Help Groups plays an effective role for promoting women empowerment. It is not only an efficient tool to fight against poverty, but also as a means of promoting the empowerment of the most marginalized sections of the population, especially women. Many Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have also subsequently taken on the task of women's empowerment through micro-enterprises in recognition of the impact that can have on women, on their families and on poverty alleviation. In India, the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (NPEW) places micro-credit under the overall objectives of economic empowerment of women.

### CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is described as 'a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination'. The concept of empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The goal of the empowerment process is to address issues relating to women's subordination, inequality and inequity. Furthermore, women's empowerment is seen as entailing a shift from positions of powerlessness towards strategic social, economic and political participation. This implies taking on power



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