

Level of participation of tribal women members in self-help groups: a study of Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu

TN SUJEETHA, V RAVICHANDRAN and MV KARUNA JEBAMARY*

**Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology
Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore 641003 Tamil Nadu, India
Email for correspondence: jenithawalking087@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted on the tribal women of the Nilgiris district to assess the extent of participation of tribal women SHG members in self-help group (SHG) activities. Kotagiri and Gudalur blocks were selected based on the presence of NGOs specifically working for the tribes. In total eight SHGs four each from Todas and Kattunayakas were randomly selected for the study. A sample of 10 members from each SHG was randomly selected thus making the total sample size of 80. The results indicated that majority of the respondents had regular participation in group meetings, exposure visits, sharing the experiences of trainings undergone and in creating cohesion between group members.

Keywords: Tribal women; SHG; empowerment, non-governmental organizations

INTRODUCTION

In the tribal society the women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional lifestyle in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources (Arangamallika 2004). But they face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders (Yamuna 2007). Due to the steps taken by some NGOs the tribal women have begun participating actively in the functioning of SHGs which in turn has led to their empowerment. Thus the paper

reveals the results of the extent of participation of tribal women members in SHGs in the Nilgiris district.

METHODOLOGY

Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu was purposively selected as the percentage of tribal population was higher and the tribal SHGs had been actively functioning here. Kotagiri and Gudalur blocks were selected based on the presence of NGOs specifically working for the tribes. Among these NGOs, NAWA (Nilgiris Adivasi Welfare Association) of Kotagiri block and

CTRD (Centre for Tribal and Rural Development Trust) of Gudalur block were purposively selected as both the NGOs strived for the upliftment of the tribal communities viz Paniyas, Kattunayakars, Todas, Irulas, Kotas and Kurumbas. Among these tribal communities, Todas and Kattunayakars were selected since these communities had more number of women SHGs engaged in the entrepreneurial activities. As such a sample of four SHGs each from CTRD and NAWA was selected. A sample of ten members from each SHG was considered for the study. Hence a sample of 80 members was considered as respondents for the study.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The extent of participation in this study has been operationalised as the degree to which tribal women participate in various activities of SHGs.

The findings relevant to the participation in SHG activities are given in Table 1. Data reveal that majority of the respondents had regular participation in group meetings, exposure visits, sharing the experiences of trainings undergone and in creating cohesion between group members. For the remaining SHG activities animators and representatives played major roles and occasional to no participation was found with other SHG

members. This might be the reason for such outcome.

The total and mean scores for the Toda women show that participation in sharing the experiences of trainings undergone (2.60), imparting skills to other members (2.60), organizing trainings (2.56), giving technical advice to other members (2.56), running SHG according to rules and regulations (2.55), group meetings (2.55), exposure visits (2.55), training programmes organized for the SHG members (2.50), creating cohesion between group members (2.50) and reviewing the progress made (2.53) were the activities that got higher mean scores.

In case of Kattunayaka participation in creating cohesion between the group members (2.73), sharing the experiences of trainings undergone (2.72), attending group meetings (2.52), giving technical advice to other members (2.33), reviewing the progress made (2.30) and training programmes organized for the SHG members (2.17) were the activities that got higher mean scores than the overall mean score of 2.03.

Group coordinators regularly motivated the SHG members to actively participate in the SHG activities. Hence more participation was observed among the respondents in SHG activities.

Participation of tribal women in self-help groups

Table 1. Participation level of tribal SHG women members in SHG activities of two tribal communities

Activity	Participation in SHG activities					
	Todas (n= 40)		Kattunayakars (n= 40)		Total (n= 80)	
	Total score	Mean score	Total score	Mean score	Total score	Mean score
Group meetings	102	2.55	101	2.52	203	2.54
Selection of office bearers	80	2.00	50	1.25	130	1.63
Record and account maintenance	55	1.38	54	1.35	109	1.36
Formulation of rules and regulations	51	1.28	62	1.55	113	1.41
Running the SHG according to rules and regulations	102	2.55	59	1.48	161	2.01
Formulation of plans for the development of the SHG	90	2.25	55	1.38	145	1.81
Training programmes organized for SHG members	100	2.50	87	2.17	187	2.34
Organizing trainings	102	2.56	81	2.03	183	2.29
Sharing the experiences of trainings undergone	104	2.60	109	2.72	213	2.66
Giving technical advice to fellow members	102	2.56	93	2.33	195	2.44
Imparting skills to fellow members	104	2.6	82	2.05	186	2.33
Exposure visits	102	2.55	74	1.85	176	2.2
Creating cohesion between group members	100	2.5	109	2.73	209	2.61
Reviewing the progress made	101	2.53	92	2.3	193	2.41
Overall mean score	2.32		2.03		2.15	

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