

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF MISSION SHAKTI IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN KBK DISTRICTS IN ODISHA

(A Research Study Sponsored by National Commission for Women,
Government of India)

Final Study Report

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Executive Summary

National Commission for Women (NCW) has entrusted the task to conduct a study on ‘Evaluation of the Impact of Mission Shakti in Women Empowerment in KBK Districts of Odisha’ to Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. Mission Shakti is a flagship programme of Government of Odisha, launched on the occasion of International Women’s Day on March 8, 2001 with an objective to empower women through Self Help Groups (SHGs) . In two decades, Mission Shakti has grown from 41,475 WSHGs during 2001-02 to 14 folds increase to 6,02,013 WSHGs during 2020-21. The revolutionary stride of Mission Shakti has supported over 6 lakh self-help groups covering 70 lakh women of Odisha. The study is a pioneering endeavour to review the organizational structure and pattern of Mission Shakti SHGs in Odisha.

The primary objectives of the study were to: (i) analyse the socio-economic profile of Mission Shakti assisted tribal and rural WSHGs; (ii) examine the effectivity of Mission Shakti WSHGs with regard to employment generation, indebtedness reduction, financial inclusion and level of autonomy through generating awareness; (iii) examine the Mission Shakti initiatives in livelihood generation and women empowerment; (iv) examine the sustainability of income generating activities and group dynamics within SHGs; (v) analyse the entrepreneurial skills developed among WSHGs; (vi) document success stories and role models emerging from field inspections; (vii) examine the convergence of activities of Mission Shakti SHGs with line departments and finally, (viii) provide policy suggestions for effective implementation of the scheme.

The report is based on field survey conducted in four KBK districts of Odisha, namely: Kalahandi, Koraput, Balangir and Subaranapur. The study sample includes 201 household heads of SHG members and 196 SHG beneficiaries drawn from 96 SHGs villages from 8 blocks across the selected districts. The study is judicious mix of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is based upon exploratory research design. The respondents (SHG beneficiaries and households) of the study were drawn through purposive sampling method. The criteria for identifying the study area and the beneficiaries were mainly based upon geographical diversity, social composition of SHGs (SC, ST, OBC, General), maturity level of the SHGs and availability of SHGs formed by Self-Help Promoting Agencies (SHPAs).

The four set of questionnaires, namely: household questionnaire, SHG beneficiary questionnaire, village questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) have been designed and administered to capture the impact of Mission Shakti SHGs on women empowerment in the study area. The study has been carried out through the ‘Survey CTO – real time data generation software’. An empowerment index based on four dimensions (economic, social, political and psychological) has been empirically constructed to evaluate the impact of Mission Shakti SHGs on women empowerment in the selected districts. Five years before and after approach has been employed to

assess the housing and living characteristics. The similar approach has been followed to assess the change in level of empowerment among members after joining the SHG. The 5-point Likert Scale has been used to measure psychological empowerment.

The introductory chapter provides contextual background, performance of Odisha in the Sustainable Development Goals; objective-wise indicators, methodology, scope of the study, research setting, method of data collection and construction of the women empowerment index (WEI) of self-help group members in the KBK districts. Further, Chapter 2 outlines the existing literature on concepts and approaches to women empowerment with reference to self-help groups and status of women empowerment at international, national and regional level. Chapter 3 provides an overview of organizational structure, functioning of Mission Shakti-led WSHGs and achievement of Mission Shakti Women Self-help Groups in terms of convergence with government schemes, infrastructure development, market linkage, seed money and digital empowerment in the state. Chapter 4 provides a district-wise comparative perspective of the impact of Mission Shakti initiatives towards women empowerment both at the household and SHG level. The chapter also focuses on empirical results of the socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed households and SHG members in the select districts. Data on status of women in the household pre and post-WSHG in the selected indicators are also captured from the study area. Finally, women empowerment index has been constructed based on available data on social, economic, political and psychological indicators. The impact of skill development training and initiatives undertaken by Mission Shakti SHGs during COVID-19 are also covered in this chapter. Chapter 5 documents the best practices of Mission Shakti-led SHGs initiatives and the role of implementation support agencies (ISAs) in poverty alleviation and women empowerment across the four districts. The members of Mission Shakti-led SHGs are involved in distinct entrepreneurial activities in convergence with various line departments in the state. Chapter 6 concludes the major observations and policy recommendations by reviewing the objectives, methodology, theoretical framework and the research questions are substantiated in the conclusion.

I. Socio-Economic Profile of the Heads of the Household

The distribution of the household heads of SHG members across four districts constitutes over two-fifth (42.79%) other backward class, over one-third (35.82%) tribal households and 18.41 per cent scheduled caste households. Remaining 3 per cent household members belonging to general category are mainly concentrated in Balangir and Subarnapur district.

Data on monthly household income across four districts reveals that more than two-fifth (44.78%) households have a monthly income between Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000, followed by 27.36 per cent households having monthly income upto Rs. 5000 and 25.37% households having monthly income between Rs. 10000-Rs. 25000. However, a small proportion of 2.48 per cent respondents from Balangir and Subarnapur have monthly income above Rs. 25000.

The expenditure incurred by household members per month depicts that 78.61 per cent respondents spend up to Rs. 5000 to meet their household expenses, followed by 18.41 per cent household members spending between Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000. However, 2.98 per cent respondent from Balangir and Subarnapur spend Rs. 10000 to Rs. 25000 per month. It can be interpreted from the above discussion that the household members belonging to general category from Balangir and Subarnapur have relatively better standard of living. Among total household members from four districts, over three-fourth (75.62%) households have ownership of land as against about one-fourth (24.38%) landless households.

With regard to possession of livestock, all the households in Koraput own livestock, followed by 90 per cent households in Subarnapur, 76 per cent in Balangir and 62 per cent in Kalahandi. Most of the households have cow, goat, bullocks, buffalo and sheep. Since Koraput is a densely forested area, sheep is distinctively found in the area. The household data regarding consumer durables and asset across districts reveal that over 85 per cent household members possess mobile phone and cycle, followed by over 40 per cent households having television and two wheeler. Cycle and mobile are the common assets owned by one-fourth household members across all the districts.

II. Mission Shakti SHGs in KBK Region, Odisha: Intervention and Impact

Age-wise distribution of Mission Shakti self-help groups indicates that a majority of one-third (33%) self-help group members belong to the younger age group between 18 to 30. The level of education among the members of Mission Shakti self-help groups across four districts shows that a majority of 70.41 per cent members are educated and well-informed about various government schemes including Mission Shakti related activities.

Economic status of the Mission Shakti-assisted self-help group members across four districts shows that more than three-fourth (80.1%) self-help group members belong to below poverty line and very poor (*Antyodaya*) background. However, one-fifth (19.90%) self-help group members are above the poverty line. Thus, the available data indicates that one-fifth group members have moved out of poverty through self-help group intervention across four districts in KBK region.

Analysis of monthly income of the Mission Shakti-led self-help groups across four districts shows that over half (51.53%) SHG members have monthly income up to Rs. 5000; whereas, nearly two-fifth (37.76%) group members have income between Rs. 5000-10000 per month. Over one-tenth (10.71%) SHG members have monthly income above Rs. 10000 across four districts. Thus, the level of income among the self-help group members have increased considerably after joining the self-help groups in the KBK region of Odisha.

Under Mission Shakti initiatives, women self-help groups are provided with interest subvention for bank loan up to Rs. 3 lakh to undertake micro-entrepreneurial activities. This is applicable to those SHGs who have availed bank loans and making timely repayment as per the bank repayment schedule. Access to Mission Shakti interest free loan by the self-help groups suggest that more than

two-fifth (42.86%) SHG members reported that their group has availed loan ranging from Rs. 50000 to Rs. 3 lakh. Further, analysis of the amount of loan taken by the SHGs shows that one-third (28.06%) members reported of availing loan between Rs. 50000 to Rs. 1 lakh. Whereas, more than one-fourth (22.96%) members informed that their group has availed loan between Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 1.5 lakh, followed by 19.90 per cent availing loan up to Rs. 50000. As informed by 7.65 members, the group has availed loan more than Rs. 1.5 lakh.

Anganwadi workers play a vital role in motivating the rural women to become member of Mission Shakti assisted self-help groups in the state. Available data indicates that nearly four-fifth (79.08%) self-help group members are encouraged by the Anganwadi Workers to form and join self-help groups, followed by 38.27 per cent members being encouraged by existing self-help group members and one-tenth members are motivated by their friends and neighbours. Yet, another 3.7 per cent self-help group members are mobilized by the non-governmental organizations. The subject matter discussed among group members across the four districts includes: regular saving, timely repayment of loan, functioning of the group, Mission Shakti specific livelihood convergence programmes, strengthening of the group and health and nutrition aspects. Marketing of the produce, skill upgradation, capacity building and training are major matters often discussed by the members in the group meetings.

Out of 196 respondents under the study, 23.97 per cent respondents have post office account. Further, district wise analysis suggests that in Kalahandi, 15 members (31.91%), followed by equal number of 11 members (23.40%) in Balangir and Subarnapur and 10 members (21.27%) in Koraput have post office account. On the other hand, 87.75 per cent respondents have their own bank savings account across all the four districts. Among savings account holder, nearly 30 per cent SHG members belong to Balangir and Koraput. However, one-fourth (25%) respondents from Kalahandi and 17.44 per cent from Subarnapur have their own savings account.

The dependency of rural women on moneylenders for loan has significantly reduced from 36.73 per cent to 9.18 per cent in the study area. Further, the district level analysis depicts that dependency on moneylenders after joining the SHG has declined from 38 to 16 per cent in Kalahandi, 43.3 to 1.67 per cent in Balangir, 31.3 to 7.8 per cent in Koraput and 31.4 to 14.2 per cent in Subarnapur. Thus, access to rural credit from banks through SHG has minimized the role of moneylenders in the KBK region.

The whole group including the office bearers decide the beneficiary for internal and external loan as well as the rate of interest. However, the SHPI and NGOs also take decision in some cases to identify the beneficiary and the rate of interest to be charged on loan.

As per the data available from Kalahandi, Balangir, and Koraput, almost 90 per cent of the sample self-help group members during the survey informed that withdrawal of funds is not permitted in their group. On the other hand, more than a quarter of the members from Subarnapur (28.57 percent) said that withdrawal of savings is permitted in their group in exceptional cases. In terms

of the fine levied for loan default, over 50 per cent members from Balangir, Koraput, and Subarnapur stated that decision is taken by all group members, and on an average, two-fifths of the members stated that no fee is charged for loan default. According to one-third (66%) of members in Kalahandi, there is no fee imposed on loan default, and the remaining 34% stated that the fine is decided by whole group.

The major obstacles faced by SHG members in all four districts includes lack of education, lack of access to capacity building programmes and market linkage. In addition, SHG members in Kalahandi appear to be more concerned with the challenge of identifying economic activity and new business idea.

III.SHG as a Unit of Analysis

Mission Shakti-assisted self-help groups are small, homogeneous and informal groups comprising of 10 to 15 members, drawn from below poverty line. Further analysis of the social composition of the Mission Shakti self-help groups in the study area suggests that each group consist of members belonging to various caste and tribal groups. Out of the entire study sample, more than two-fifth (45%) self-help group members interviewed belong to the tribal communities namely Bhattoda, Kondh, and Mirdha. Whereas, nearly two-fifth (38.27%) women self-help group members belong to other backward classes, over one-tenth (11.22%) members belong to scheduled castes and less than one-tenth (5.61%) members are from general category. Thus, the membership base of Mission Shakti-assisted self-help group is mix and heterogeneous in nature.

According to available data on SHG membership across sample districts, almost three-fourth (77.08 %) of self-help groups have up to ten members, while around one-fifth (19.79 %) have 11 to 15 members. Out of the four districts surveyed, 3.13 percent of the self-help groups in Balangir and Subarnapur have 15 to 20 members.

Functioning of the Mission Shakti women self-help groups depends on regular saving, regular repayment of loans and active participation in the group meetings and participation in the training. Out of 96 Mission Shakti self-help groups drawn from four districts, a majority of 78.13 per cent women self-help groups are reported to be well-functioning. So far as undertaking income generating activities and regular repayments among the women self-help group is concerned, the performance of 21.88 per cent women self-help groups are observed to be on an average.

Mission Shakti self-help groups across four districts in KBK region conducts group meeting regularly in every month. Out of the entire study sample of 96 self-help groups spread across four districts, over half (55.21%) self-help groups conducts meeting more than four times in a month; whereas nearly one-third (28.13%) groups have reported of conducting group meeting thrice in a month. On the other hand, more than one-tenth (11.46%) self-help groups conduct meeting more than four times in a month, followed by nearly 5.21 per cent Mission Shakti groups conduct meeting twice in a month.

Generally, Mission Shakti self-help group members maintain the record of their own group, however, in recent years Community Resource Persons (CRPs) have been trained and engaged under Mission Shakti initiative by the State government in maintaining the SHG record. The study results shows that a majority of 67.71 per cent members have reported the CRP who is also a member of the group maintains the SHG record and the remaining groups maintain the record on their own. More than two-fifth (43.75%) SHGs under study informed that the group leader is often nominated by the SHG promoting agency; whereas about one-third (29.17%) self-help groups reported that the leader of the group is democratically elected by all the members.

The Department of Mission Shakti conducts 'Mission Shakti mela' or exhibition at the state capital where the self-help groups from different parts of the state take part in selling various products including handlooms, handicrafts, non-timber forest produce (NTFP), food items, spices and non-farm products. This also helps the self-help groups to share the best practices across districts and to promote their products in the Mission Shakti mela. Level of awareness among the Mission Shakti self-help groups across four districts reflects that a majority of nearly four-fifth (78.13%) women self-help members are fully aware and another one-fifth (20.83%) members are partly aware about the bye-laws of the Mission Shakti self-help groups. District-wise analysis of the level of awareness among the Mission Shakti members about Bye-Laws shows that it is comparatively higher in Kalahandi (28.13%) and Balangir (26.04%) and considerably low in Koraput (15.63%) and Subarnapur (8.33%).

Furthermore, findings of the study suggests that among Mission Shakti assisted women self-help group in the four selected KBK districts in Odisha reveals that the participation of women in SHG has brought significant high change in the indicators like regular savings (97.96%), increase in income level (87.24%), improvement in living standard (85.71%) and participation in group meeting (81.63%). The Mission Shakti SHGs have brought moderate impact on the members in terms of improvement in the interest towards education among the group members (76.53%), followed by improvement in health condition (75.51%), regular repayments (68.88%) and increase in asset (61.73%). However, it is observed that the level of participation of group members in skill development training seems to be low across four KBK districts. Though the level of income of the group members have remarkably increased after joining SHGs, it has not brought significant change in the asset creation even after joining SHGs. The incidence of dropouts is low in self-help groups promoted by Mission Shakti. Leadership is a recent phenomenon; the incidence of leadership rotations is high in older SHGs.

Finally, the income generating and entrepreneurial activities undertaken by Mission Shakti self-help groups have been identified in each district. The members of Mission Shakti-led SHGs are involved in distinct entrepreneurial activities in convergence with various line departments in the state. The members have started multi-crops production (cotton, oil seeds), Mo Upakari Bagicha (kitchen garden), LED bulb manufacturing unit, electricity meter reading, pisciculture, petty

business including paneer business and mixture production unit. Balangir is predominantly an agriculture-based district. The members of Mission Shakti SHGs in Balangir are engaged in organic farming, vegetable cultivation, wheat, turmeric, mandia and weaving sambalpuri saree. Koraput, a tribal dominant district of Odisha, the tribal SHG members have initiated income generating activities including setting up Mission Shakti Café, nursery, pisciculture, plate stitching, layer farm in deep litter system, sugarcane and jaggery production. Subarnapur is relatively progressive in terms of implementing the livelihood generating activities through mission Shakti SHGs. The SHG members are engaged in paddy procurement, floriculture, lemon grass cultivation and oil production unit, broomstick and leaf plate making.

Individual and Group Women Empowerment Index: Empirical Results

The study has developed an individual empowerment index and group women empowerment indices to capture the impact of Mission Shakti-led SHGs on the rural and tribal women beneficiaries in the four domains of empowerment: social, economic, political and psychological. The index has been applied on 196 Mission Shakti assisted SHG members drawn from 96 SHGs in the study area. The available data depicts that participation of women members in the Mission Shakti assisted SHGs have adequately empowered 21.94 percent of rural and tribal women in the study area. The individual empowerment index reveals that out of four KBK districts under study, Kalahandi has attained highest 34 per cent of adequate empowerment, followed by Subarnapur (25.7%) and Balangir (16.7%). On the other hand, Koraput scored the lowest, that is, 13.7 per cent in the overall individual empowerment index among the surveyed districts. Aggregate data reveals that participation of Mission Shakti-led SHGs have significant impact on political (47.2%) and social (41%) domain. However, the level of empowerment in the psychological (13.9%) and economic (10.3%) indicators seem to be lower.

The score of group women empowerment indices computed for the entire study districts stands at 0.292, which is not adequate enough to be labelled as 'empowered'. The empirical results of group women empowerment indices constructed for four KBK districts suggests that Kalahandi has performed relatively better (0.384) in the four empowerment indicators, followed by Subarnapur (0.299), Balangir (0.258) and Koraput (0.255). The relatively high performance of SHG members in Kalahandi district is attributed to the active role of Mission Shakti in promoting SHG entrepreneurship in Madanpur Rampur block, a Centre of Excellence (CoE) declared by Odisha Livelihood Mission. It is evident from above analysis that Mission Shakti assisted SHG members are politically and socially more empowered than in the economic and psychological empowerment indicators.

Achievements

- Evidence from ground suggests that the intervention of Mission Shakti SHGs has empowered the rural and tribal women and inculcated the leadership skill among them. Consequently, highly empowered rural women actively participate in gram sabha and elections.

- Formation of Mission Shakti SHGs has a multiplier effect in improving women's status in the family as well as at community level, leading to improvement in their socio-economic condition and enhances their self-esteem.
- Participation in the SHG has enabled the women and rural households to invest on education, health and hygiene.
- The financial inclusion attained through Mission Shakti SHGs has reduced child and maternal mortality and enhanced the capability of the rural women to combat diseases through better nutrition, housing and health.
- Involvement in the Mission Shakti SHG encourages saving among group members and access to financial institutions.

Key Bottlenecks and Challenges

- Lack of knowledge and proper orientation among SHG members to initiate suitable and profitable livelihood/income generating activities.
- Sustainability and the quality of operation of SHGs in terms of regular saving and repayment is a major concern.
- Only a few self-help groups are able to raise themselves from a level of a micro-credit to micro-entrepreneurship.
- Mission Shakti assisted women self-help groups are largely dependent on their implementation support agencies (ISAs). The self-help groups undertake income generating activities in consultation with the anganwadi workers, community resource persons, block and district coordinators of Mission Shakti. Withdrawal of support to the self-help groups many lead to the disintegration of the group.

Policy Suggestions

The study has provided suggestive measures at Gram Panchayat Level Federation, Block Level Federation and District Level Federation.

- The SHPIs and Mission Shakti personnels should encourage the rural community to strengthen their traditional skills.
- There is a dire need to develop market linkage between potential buyers and SHGs to create economies of scale.
- The nutrition project called '*Mo Upakari Bagicha*' under the joint initiative of Mission Shakti and Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) has been a great initiative to improve nutrition knowledge and practices and promote dietary diversity among women in the rural areas.
- One Block or Gram Panchayat, One Commodity Model could be adopted by the Mission Shakti women self-help groups with the motive to identify, promote and brand a specific product.

- It is also suggested that the financial institutions should disburse credit to the active self-help groups based upon the income generating activities undertaken, rather than the amount of saving reflected in their passbook.
- Mission Shakti women self-help groups in the study districts have received foundation training in the early stage of formation of the groups. However, the task of book-keeping and record maintenance should also be incorporated in the foundation training module covering all the SHG members.
- Training of Trainers (ToT) should be organized frequently for Anganwadi workers, Community Resource Persons, Block and District Project Coordinator in order to disseminate knowledge and skills to the SHG in the dynamic contexts.
- There is a need to improve access of Mission Shakti members to digital financial services by demonstrating and testing new products, services and business models.
- The performance of the SHGs could be improved further by imparting training to enhance the entrepreneurial and basic skill of the group members.
- Skill development training towards nurturing different skills (trade specific skills, entrepreneurial skills, managerial skills and supervisory skills) could possibly increase the scope for employability of the tribal and rural women self-help group members in the surveyed districts.

In a nutshell, Mission Shakti has played an instrumental role in the last two decades towards holistic development and empowerment of women through self-help groups in Odisha. The Mission Shakti has transformed lives of women members through skilling, promoting entrepreneurial activities and inculcating leadership skills. Mission Shakti as a movement has brought profound changes among the rural and tribal women in social, economic, political and psychological spheres. The successful implementation of Mission Shakti SHG based entrepreneurship could be replicated at a wider scale elsewhere in the country.