

## **Participation of Self Help Group Tribal Women in Economic and Social Developmental Activities**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A study was taken up among the tribal women in the Nilgiris district mainly to assess the extent of participation of tribal women SHG members in various developmental activities. Kotagiri and Gudalur blocks were selected based on the presence of NGOs specifically working for the tribes. Totally eight SHGs have been randomly selected for the study. This comprises four each from Todas and Kattunayakas. A sample of 10 members from each SHGs have been randomly selected. Thus the total sample size is 80. The results indicated that the overall analysis indicate that majority (55.00%) of the tribal women had medium level of participation followed by high and low levels.*

In the tribal society, the tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and followed 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 the NGOs, the tribal women have begun participating actively in the functioning of SHGs which in turn has led to their empowerment and their own community (Wilson et al.,2007). Thus this paper has revealed in depth the results of the extent of participation of SHG tribal women in the Nilgiris district.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu was purposively selected because it is one of the

districts where the percentage of tribal population is higher and the tribal SHGs are actively functioning. 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 because both the NGOs strive 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 have more number of women SHGs engaged in the entrepreneurial activities. Based on this, a sample of four SHGs from NAWA and four SHGs from CTRD were selected. A sample of ten members from each SHG was considered for the study. From these eight SHGs, a sample of 80 members

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was considered as respondents for the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Participation in economic developmental activities

The findings related to the participation in economic developmental activities is given in

Table 1. It reveals that all the respondents participated in running the commercial venture, participation in the SHG product exhibitions conducted by Government / DRDA, participated in deciding about loan lending to members, purchasing raw materials for their commercial venture/ entrepreneurial activity and for the toda women, helping to

**Table 1.**  
**Participation in Economic Developmental Activities (n=80)**

Sl. No.	Category	Todas (n=40)		Kattunayakars (n=40)		Total (n=80)*	
		Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores
1.	In deciding about loan lending to members	108	2.7	95	2.38	203	2.54
2.	In fixing interest percent for purpose oriented loans	72	1.8	65	1.63	137	1.71
3.	In running the commercial venture	108	2.7	125	3.13	233	2.91
4.	Helping to get resources from supporting institutions	109	2.73	80	2.00	189	2.36
5.	Purchasing raw materials for their commercial venture / entrepreneurial activity	107	2.66	88	2.20	195	2.44
6.	In marketing their produce	106	2.65	68	1.7	174	2.18
7.	Participation in the SHG product exhibitions conducted by Government / DRDA	106	2.65	108	2.7	214	2.68
	<b>Overall mean score</b>	<b>2.56</b>		<b>2.18</b>		<b>2.40</b>	

get resources from supporting institutions (2.73), deciding about loan lending to members (2.7), running the commercial venture (2.70) and purchasing raw materials for their commercial venture/ entrepreneurial activity (2.66) got more mean scores followed by in marketing their produce (2.65) and participation in the SHG product exhibitions conducted by Government / DRDA (2.65).

While in the case of kattunayaka women, activities like running the commercial venture (3.13), participation in the SHG product

exhibitions conducted by Government / DRDA (2.7), in deciding about loan lending to members (2.38) and purchasing raw materials from supporting institutions (2.20) got more mean scores compared to overall mean score of 2.18. It is quite interesting to see that participation in marketing activities through exhibitions organized in the district is relatively more among all the groups. This is an essential economic activity as the livelihood of the SHG tribal women depend on the marketing of their products.

## Participation in social developmental activities

The responses regarding participation pattern of SHG members in social developmental activities were collected and are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
**Participation in Social Developmental Activities (n=80)**

Sl. No.	Category	Todas (n=40)		Kattunayakars (n=40)		Total (n=80)	
		Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores	Total scores	Mean scores
1.	Participation in village developmental works	109	2.72	82	2.05	191	2.39
2.	Participation in social action programmes	106	2.65	71	1.78	177	2.21
	Overall mean score	<b>2.69</b>		<b>1.92</b>		<b>2.3</b>	

Based on total and mean scores, toda women exhibited more participation in both village development programmes (2.72) and participation in social action programmes (2.65). Similar is in the case with the kattunayaka women. Due to more inter-tribal communication nature, the toda and kattunayaka women would have participated more in social and village developmental activities compared to their counterparts.

The group facilitators of each self help group are observed to have motivated the members to involve themselves in social welfare activities. These factors might be the reason for their high level of participation in social developmental activities.

## CONCLUSION

The tribal women have become well secured in their livelihood status due to their participation in Self Help Groups. If every effort taken results in the expected positive ways, the tribal women could visualize and

Most of the tribal women participated in the village developmental works such as awareness campaign, road maintenance, rain water harvesting, tree planting and also maintaining cleanliness in the temple during festivals and functions.

experience the better side of their lives. This has been proved in the study. Once after the introduction of Self Help Groups, the tribal women have begun to actively participate in all spheres of social activities. The income generation before and after participation in SHG showed significant increase. This shows their empowerment status because of the stimulus SHG. This would be possible by organizing more entrepreneurial training programmes to the tribal women.

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