

CHAPTER – 5

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Recognising that charity, donations and dependence do not solve poverty and social problems, the microfinance initiatives encourages the poor to connect their under or unutilised skills, abilities and potential by allowing them access to small collateral-free loans from financial institutions. The group-based microfinance banking system sustains itself instead on the basis of mutual trust, accountability, responsibility, participation and creativity. In the process of enabling previously disadvantaged borrowers to launch their own enterprises, the Bank also prioritises concern for the environment, strengthening education, encouraging saving, and the provision of technology as necessary factors in the development of human capital.

Extending banking facilities with credit plus services to poor men and women helps poor in

- Eliminate the exploitation of the poor by money lenders
- Provide self-employment opportunities for the unemployed
- Enable the disadvantaged, mostly women from the poorest households, to participate in a banking system they can understand and manage themselves
- Replace the cycle of ‘low income, low saving and low investment’ with a proactive cycle of curbing low income with ‘injection of credit, investment, more income, more savings, more investment, more income’.

The question of whether microfinance empowers women has attracted attention in both academic and policy circles. Empowerment through microfinance is identified and measured in various dimensions: impact on providing better standard of living and education to children, better decision-making power, building self-confidence of women, on their status at home, on family relationships and the incidence of domestic violence, on their involvement in the community and also on their overall social, economic and political empowerment and rights.

Poor women in the rural and tribal areas of Gujarat have an unmet need for the financial services for upliftment and also for improving their standard of living through income generating activities. There is great potential for such microfinance initiatives in both the districts namely Kheda and Narmada to alleviate regional poverty. Therefore, based on the

positive example of the Indian Bank’s microcredit banking system in Kheda exhibited throughout the state, it seems timely that more projects of its sort should be replicated in the state of Gujarat by other public sector banks too. Microcredit has proven to be a successful development strategy and weapon against fighting the poverty in strengthening the developmental sector, civil society and minimising the role of government in economic productivity. However, support from the Government, Non-Government Organizations, Banks and donors is vital for the viability and sustainability of future microcredit operations. This chapter discusses implications of the study findings for Social Work Practice, Suggestions and Future Directions. In this chapter there are total eight sections.

Section	Particular
Section I	Background characteristics of respondents
Section II	Background characteristics of self-help groups
Section III	Changes in socio-economic and political conditions
Section IV	Problems and constraints faced by SHG members
Section V	Association and correlation between variables.
Section VI	Findings from focus group discussion
Section VII	Highlights on researcher’s experience and overall observations
Section VIII	Discussion on the major findings of the study

MAJOR FINDINGS FROM QUANTITATIVE DATA

Two districts namely Kheda and Narmada are selected for the study, talukas there under four namely Kathlal, Garudeshwar, Nandod and Tilakwada are selected for this study purpose. 250 respondents from Kheda and 250 respondents from Narmada are selected for this study purpose. The Self Help Groups are financed by the Indian Bank, Bank of Baroda, Baroda Grameen Bank, Dena Bank, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India and Syndicate Bank. All Self Help Groups consist only female members.

SECTION I: BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS:

- **Age of Respondents:** Out of 500 respondents, 204 (41%) respondents belong to the age group of 31-40 years and 148 (30%) respondents belong to the age group of 18-30 years.

- **Marital Status:** It is observed that majority of the respondents 439 (88%) are married, 49 (10%) respondents are widow and very few i.e.7 (1%) are unmarried.
- **Number of Children:** It is found that out of total 500 respondents interviewed majority i.e. 471 (94%) have children while 29 (6%) respondents do not have children.
- **Type of Family:** It is observed that out of total number of respondents interviewed majority i.e. 375 (75%) belong to joint family while 125 (25%) belong to nuclear family.
- **Head of the Family:** Majority of the families of the respondents i.e. 433 (87%) are headed by male family members while 67 (13%) are headed by female family members.
- **Religion:** Majority of the respondents, i.e. 488 (98%) of the respondents belong to Hindu families and only 12 (2%) respondents belong to Muslim families.
- **Type of Community:** From the data collected it is revealed that 250 (50%) respondents stated that they are from Rural Community and 250 respondents (50%) stated that they are from Tribal Community. It is found that majority of respondents 222 (44%) belong to Schedule Tribe while 28 respondents (6%) belong to Schedule Caste, 132 respondents (26%) stated that they belong to Socially and Economically Backward Class while 118 respondents (24%) belong to General category.
- **Educational Background:** The educational status among respondents depicts that, 202 (40%) respondents studied up to Primary level, while 214 (43%) respondents studied up to Secondary Level, 74 respondents (15%) have studied up to Higher Secondary Level and only 10 (2%) respondents completed their Graduation.
- **Occupation:** Majority of the respondents i.e., 96 (18%) respondents are Home Makers, while 213 (43%) respondents assisting their husband in agriculture activities. 59 respondents (12%) have a Government jobs while 9 respondents (2%) have a private job.
- **Type of Panchayat:** Majority of the respondents 468 (94%) are staying in the locality where there is an existence of Gram Panchayat whereas only few of them 32 (6%) respondents reported that they have their area of residence nearby Taluka Panchayat.
- **Monthly Income:** Majority of the respondents i.e., 235 (47%) respondents have a monthly income below 5000 Rs., 201 (40%) respondents have a monthly income between 5001-10,000 Rs. while 64 respondents (13%) have a monthly income above Rs. 10,000.

- **Type of Houses:** Majority of the respondents i.e., 320 (64%) of the respondents reside in Pakka houses while 180 (36%) respondents reside in kachha houses.
- **Ownership of House:** Majority of the respondents i.e., 442 (88%) respondent's houses are owned by Male family members while 58 (12%) houses are owned by female family members.

SECTION II: BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF HELP GROUPS

- Respondents in totality are taken exclusively from women self-help groups.
- All respondents from Kheda district are linked with special Microsat branch of Indian Bank whereas in Narmada district Bank of Baroda is playing a pivotal role in SHGs-Bank linkages
- All Self-Help Groups are promoted by Government functionaries under the National Rural Livelihood Programme and supported by Nationalized banks.
- **Group Size:** Majority of the respondents i.e., 461 (92%) responded that size of their group is 10-15 members, while 25(5%) respondents responded that the size of their groups less that of 10 members and very few 14 (3%) says that the size of their group is 15-20 members
- **Types of Groups:** Most of the respondents 486 (97%) respondents responded that their groups are homogeneous while only 14 (3%) responded that their groups are heterogeneous.
- **Membership in Self-Help Groups:** Few of the members i.e., 102 (20%) respondents have an experience of 4-6 years, while 199 (40%) respondents stated that they have a membership experience between 2-4 years and only 69 respondents (14%) says that they have more than 6 years of membership experience.
- **Reasons for joining SHGs:** Many respondents 218 (44%) responded that the reason for joining self-help group is for saving and credit purpose, 163 (33%) responded that they have joined self-help groups to improve their standard of living, 102 (20%) responded that they have joined self-help group for the saving purpose and only 17 (3%) have responded that the reason for joining SHG is availing credit facility from the financial institutions.
- **Frequency of meetings:** Most of the respondents 398 (80%) stated that group members meet once in a month, few of them 73 (15%) responded that they meet twice a month, few of them i.e. 24 (5%) responded that they meet once a week while only i.e. 5 (1%) responded that they meet once in an every quarter.

- **Attendance of group members:** Many respondents 260 (52%) responded that the attendance record of their group is 60-80%, 138 (28%) respondents stated that their group has more than 80% of attendance record, 89 (18%) respondents stated that the attendance record of the group is 50-60% and only 13 (3%) stated that their group members have less than 50% of attendance record.
- **Conflict within group:** Most of the respondents 402 (80%) respondents stated that there is hardly any conflict in a group while 98 (20%) responded that there are sometimes conflict in the group.
- **Documentation:** All SHGs maintain proper documents. All respondents stated that their groups maintain attendance register, minutes of the meeting register, resolution register and bank passbook.
- Most of the respondents 488 (97%) responded that group leaders keep all the documents of SHGs, 12 (3%) responded that group members keep all the documents of self-help groups. Most of the respondents 488 (97%) answered that group leaders deal with bank functionaries while 12 (2%) stated that group members deal with bank functionaries.
- Few respondents 166 (33%) responded that the corpus of their group ranges between 5000-10000, 164 (33%) respondents responded that their groups have more than Rs15000 of corpus, 134 (27%) respondents responded that the corpus of their group is Rs 5000-10000 and only 37 (7%) respondents stated that the corpus of their group is less than Rs5000.
- Many respondents 342 (68%) responded that the average saving of their group is Rs 5200, 120 (24%) respondents stated that the average savings of their groups are Rs 100-150 while only 35 (7%) respondents stated that monthly saving of their groups is less than 50 Rs and very few 3 (1%) stated that the average saving of their group is more than 150 Rs.
- Majority of the respondents 289 (58%) stated that they do purpose of saving is consumption purpose, 206 (41%) stated that the purpose of saving is for economic purpose and only 5 (1%) stated that the purpose of saving is other than consumption and economic purpose.
- Almost 486 (97%) respondents stated that the instalment period to repay the loan is monthly and only 14 (3%) responded that they have weekly instalment period to repay the loan. 362 (72%) respondents stated that the status of repayment is being repaid by the group members and 138 (28%) stated that their loan is fully repaid.

Majority of the respondents 483 (97%) stated that the group had received revolving fund by the government whereas 17 (3%) responded that they do not get any revolving fund from any agency. 238 (48%) respondents stated that the source of revolving fund is from government functionaries, 247 (49%) stated that bank gives revolving fund and 15 (3%) do not know the source of revolving fund.

- Half of the respondents 250(50%) stated that they pay 6.5% rate of interest on availing loan from bank. Whereas 182(36%) respondents stated that they pay 7% interest on availing loan from bank.55(11%) respondents stated that they pay 11% rate of interest on loan,8(2%) stated that stated that they pay 11.49% interest on availing loan.
- Many of them 189 (38%) stated that they came to know about microfinance program from government functionaries and only 9 (2%) stated that they knew about micro finance program from NGOs and bank functionaries.
- Most of the respondents 344(69%) stated that they availed the credit facility for their consumption purpose, 307(61%) stated that they availed the credit facility for social events, 275(55%) stated that they availed credit facility for acquiring assets in family, 272(54%) answered that they availed credit facility for medical expenses, 242 (48%) responded that they availed credit facility for educating their children, 132 (26%) responded that they availed credit facility for purchasing vehicles and 132 (26%) stated that that they availed credit facility for starting micro enterprise, 73 (15%) stated that the purpose for credit facility is availed is for sanitation and electrification. 42 (84%) stated that the purpose for credit facility availed is from retiring debt.
- Many respondents 214 (43%) revealed that they were borrowing money from friends and relatives before joining SHGs, 216 (44%) stated that they were borrowing money from moneylender,44 (8%) stated that they were borrowing money from Nationalised banks and cooperative banks and 26 (5%) stated that they were borrowing money from other sources.
- Out of total respondents interviewed 304 (61%) shared that they have not taken any training for income generating activities whereas 196(39%) stated that they have taken training for how to start income generating activity. Few of them 189 (37%) stated that the training on microfinance activity they have been oriented by government functionaries and 9 (3%) stated that this training was given by functionaries from bank with the support from non-government organization.

103(20%) respondents stated that the type of training was residential whereas 93(19%) respondents stated that it was a non-residential training.

- Majority of the respondents 354 (71%) answered that they can spend the money as per their wish while 146 (29%) respondents responded that they cannot spend income as per their wish. 344(69%) stated that they need to concern their husband for spending money and only 30(6%) stated that they need to concern their In-laws for spending money. Majority of the respondents 298(60%) stated that they spent money for consumption purpose whereas 202(40%) respondents responded that they spend money for productive and economic purpose.

SECTION III CHANGES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF RESPONDENTS

- It is revealed that majority of the respondents 432(86%) experienced increase in mobility. Most of them 452(90%) experienced increase of their recognition in the family and 340(68%) experienced increase of their recognition in the community after joining Self Help Groups. It is found from the study analysis that majority of the respondents 404 (81%) experienced that interaction with outsiders like NGOs/Banks/Government officials are increased due to their association with SHGs .
- Many of them 343(68%) respondents stated that literacy/ Education level has improved in family. Moreover, 309(62%) respondents stated that excess to health care services has increased. Many respondents 273(55%) shared that excess to immunization and child care practices increased after joining SHGs. 228(46%) revealed that excess to sanitation facility has increased after joining SHG. 248(50%) respondents stated that they can voice their concern after joining SHG. 237(47%) respondents viewed that nutrition awareness among members has increased after joining SHGs.
- Many respondents 244(49%) stated that family planning awareness has increased after joining SHG. 277(55%) respondents shared that awareness has increased on girl child development and gender equality. 238(48%) respondents said that health awareness on various schemes and policies has increased after joining SHG. 323(65%) respondents shared that they do decision making with child centeredness. 319(64%) respondents do decision making with money centeredness. 236(47%) respondents feel that participation in development programs has increased. 208(42%) respondents feel that learning of new entrepreneurship skills have increased. Majority of the

respondents 382(76%) says that self-confidence increase after joining self-help groups.

- Most of the respondents 381(76%) narrated that social relationship with others increased after joining self-help group. Majority of the respondents 387(77%) stated that joining self-help groups results into better decision making power. Majority of the respondents 395(79%) shared that awareness increased about the banking procedure after joining self-help groups. 382(76%) respondents revealed that mutual help and support have increased after joining self-help group. 223(45%) respondents feel that negotiating power has increased after joining self-help group. Majority of the respondents 353(71%) respondents says that participation in cultural activities and festivals have increased after becoming member of self-help groups.
- It is revealed that majority of the respondents 296 (59%) experienced increase in access to credit sources. 211 (42%) experienced improvement in their financial resources. Majority of the respondents 300 (60 %) stated that monthly income has increased and due to increase of monthly income 351 (70%) respondents stated that monthly expenditure has also increased as they become more financially capable. 304 (61%) respondents stated there is improvement of credit facilities from nationalised banks. 308 (62%) respondents stated that decision making power in financial matter has increased.
- Many respondents 240 (48 %) feel that there is poverty alleviation through better economic conditions. Most of them i.e. 383 (77%) respondents stated that self-reliance through income generating activities has increased after joining SHG. 248(50%) respondents stated that they can voice their concern after joining SHG.
- Respondents narrated positive changes in participation in political aspects of rural and tribal areas. Amongst total respondents, 210 (42%) women shared that participation in discussion with local leaders and others have increased by joining Self Help Groups. Few of them 140 (28%) respondents stated that awareness in participation in political activity has increased whereas only 62 (12%) answered that membership in local bodies has increased by joining Self Help Groups. Out of total number of respondents interviewed 192 (38%) respondents shared that awareness regarding position of power and authority in Gramsabha has increased after joining Self Help Groups.

IMPROVEMENTS IN FAMILY CONDITION OF RESPONDENTS:

In our country, though the earnings of the women are spent on improving the nutritional standards of the family, she is still the last priority. Generally, women are socialized in a way to take care of other family members. And most of them do not wanted to violate this social rule in order. This is for the sake of retaining their moral position at the cost of them. For all this sacrifice, they have a sense of self-satisfaction which can be again said to be conditioned by the society. And these result in malnourishment of the womenfolk and in the long-term also leads to still births or low weight babies. The following results are found from the study:

- Majority of the respondents 391 (78%) responded that support from their spouse is increased due to financial independence and out of total respondents interviewed 411 (82%) answered that there is improvement in their family relationship. Most of the respondents 378 (76%) gave their view that they can provide better education to their children after becoming a member of Self Help Groups. 296 (59%) respondents stated that they are now able to provide better medical care to their family members. 267 (53%) respondents shared that the level of providing better nutrition has improved after joining Self Help Groups.
- Majority of the respondents 359 (72%) shared that there is an improvement in basic facilities and amenities. Out of total number of respondents interviewed 387 (77%) respondents shared that their standard of living has improved after joining Self Help Groups. Majority of the respondents i.e. 441 (88%) stated that social conditions have improved; 347 (69%) narrated that there is improvement in their economic aspect; 433 (86%) shared that family condition improved; Majority of the respondents 362 (71%) revealed that the satisfaction level of groups members towards SHGs is very good.

RESPONDENT'S VIEWS ON BENEFITS OF SELF HELP GROUPS:

- Majority of respondents 300 (60%) stated that there is increase in capacity to spend money; 264(53%) respondents stated that there is increase in their total annual income and purchasing power; 306 (61%) respondents stated that there is increase in the income of household; 417 (83%) respondents shared that there is increases in savings due to membership in SHGs; 203 (41%) respondents stated that SHGs provides employment opportunities to the group members; 323 (65%) respondents feel that

there is increases in the power of decision making whereas 338 (68%) respondents say that membership in SHGs creates better awareness about health and hygiene

- From the data analysis it can be revealed that majority of respondents i.e.305 (61%) stated due to increase in the membership in SHGs induces social responsibility; 393 (79%) respondents narrated that due to lack of proper orientation and guidance members are unable to take initiatives in financial transactions with Banks; 405 (81%) respondents answered that membership in SHGs creates awareness about self-reliance; 293 (59%) respondents say that membership in SHGs gives better social status while 266 (53%) respondents stated that membership in SHGs improved their literacy level. Most of the respondents i.e. 405(81%) respondents answered that membership in SHGs improved their communication skills with others whereas few of them i.e. 232 (46%) respondents shared that membership in SHGs improved their leadership skill.

SECTION IV PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS FACED BY SHG MEMBERS

- Majority of the respondents 285 (57%) shared that they are facing problem of lack of proper guidance and orientation whereas 161 (32%) respondents stated that they feel stress, strain and lack of family support as a constraint; 152 (30%) respondents stated that they have some family issues as a challenge for SHGs membership and only 111 (22%) respondents stated that they have lack of freedom in decision making in their family.
- Few of the respondents 85 (17%) stated that male dominance in the family becomes sometimes problem to SHGs membership; 308 (62%) respondents stated that lack of income in the family becomes hurdles to membership in the Self Help Groups; 221 (44%) respondents stated that lack of finance in the family is also a constraint for SHG members and only 97 (19%) respondents answered that loans not received on time and lack of support from financial functionaries are also problems and constraints for group members. Moreover 68 (14%) respondents narrated that overdue debts are a problem for SHG members.

SECTION V: ASSOCIATION AND CORRELATION BETWEEN VARIABLES.

Extending banking facilities with credit plus services to poor men and women helps poor in eliminate the exploitation of the poor by money lenders, provide self-employment opportunities for the unemployed and enable the disadvantaged, mostly women from the

poorest households to participate in a banking system. From the cross tables and chi-square tables following results are found:

- Satisfaction level of respondents has association with place i.e. Kheda and Narmada districts. In other words, it can be interpreted that the place, Kheda and Narmada districts, have influence on the satisfaction level of respondents.
(Chi-Square value: 23.984, df: 3, p-value: < 0.001)
- There is association between socio economic aspect of respondents and place. In other words, it can be interpreted that the place, Kheda and Narmada districts, have influence on the socio economic aspect of respondents.
(Chi-Square value: 26.308, df: 1, p-value: 0.005)
- Economic aspect of respondents has influence on place. In other words, it can be interpreted that the place, Kheda and Narmada districts, have influence on the economic aspect of respondents.
(Chi-Square value: 7.920, df: 1, p-value: < 0.001)
- There is association between political aspect of respondents and place. In other words, it can be interpreted that the place, Kheda and Narmada districts, have influence on the political aspect of respondents. To check association between political aspect of respondents and place, Pearson's Chi-square test was applied and its p-value was obtained.
(Chi-Square value: 28.680, df: 1, p-value: < 0.001)
- There is association between family condition of respondents and place. In other words, it can be interpreted that the place, Kheda and Narmada districts, have influence on the family condition of respondents.
(Chi-Square value: 28.680, df: 1, p-value: < 0.001)
- There is association between perception of respondents towards socio-economic condition and training. In other words, it can be interpreted that training has influence on the perception level of respondents.
(Chi-Square value: 14.505, df: 2, p-value: 0.001)
- Family condition of respondents has association with training. In other words, it can be interpreted that training has influence on the family conditions of respondents.
(Chi-Square value: 1.342, df: 1, p-value: 0.247)

- There is association between political aspect of respondents and training. In other words, it can be interpreted that training has influence on the political aspect level of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 11.785, df: 1, p-value: 0.001)
- There is association between economic aspect of respondents and training. In other words, it can be interpreted that training has influence on the economic aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 11.196, df: 1, p-value: 0.001)
- There is association between socio economic aspect of respondents and training. In other words, it can be interpreted that training has influence on the socio economic aspect level of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 3.508, df: 1, p-value: 0.061)
- There is association between satisfaction level of respondents and training. In other words, it can be interpreted that training has influence on the satisfaction level of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 25.287, df: 3, p-value: 0.001)
- There is no association between improvement in socio-economic aspect and attendance of Gram Sabha meeting. In other words, it can be interpreted that Gram Sabha meeting has no influence on improvement of socio economic aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 0.275, df: 1, p-value: 0.600)
- There is no association between improvement in socio economic aspect and roles and responsibilities performed during meeting. In other words, it can be interpreted that roles and responsibilities has no influence on improvement of socio economic aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: .159, df: 1, p-value: 0.690)
- There is association between improvement in economic aspect and attendance of Gram Sabha meeting. In other words, it can be interpreted that Gram Sabha meeting has influence on improvement of economic aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: .159, df: 1, p-value: 0.690)
- There is association between improvement in economic aspect and having roles and responsibilities. In other words, it can be interpreted that roles and responsibilities has influence on improvement of economic aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 4.094, df: 1, p-value: 0.043)

- There is association between improvement in political aspect and attendance of group meeting. In other words, it can be interpreted that group meeting has influence on improvement of political aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 7.849, df: 1, p-value: 0.005)

- There is no association between improvement in political aspect and having roles and responsibilities. In other words, it can be interpreted that roles and responsibilities has no influence on improvement of political aspect of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: .783, df: 1, p-value: 0.376)

- There is no association between improvement in family condition and attendance of Gram Sabha meeting. In other words, it can be interpreted that Gram Sabha meeting has no influence on improvement of family condition of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 3.561, df: 1, p-value: 0.059)

- There is association between improvement in family condition and performance of roles and responsibilities. In other words, it can be interpreted that roles and responsibilities have influence on improvement in family condition of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 9.405, df: 1, p-value: 0.002)

- There is no association between improvement in perception of respondents and attendance of Gram Sabha meeting. In other words, it can be interpreted that Gram Sabha meeting has no influence on improvement of perception of respondents of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 4.790, df: 2, p-value: 0.091)

- There is no association between improvement in perception of respondents and performance of roles and responsibilities. In other words, it can be interpreted that roles and responsibilities has no influence on improvement of perception of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: 5.173, df: 2, p-value: 0.075)

- There is no association between satisfaction level of respondents and performance of roles and responsibilities. In other words, it can be interpreted that roles and responsibilities is not influence on satisfaction level of respondents of respondents.

(Chi-Square value: .926, df: 3, p-value: 0.819)

SECTION VI: FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Number of FGDs conducted: 8		
District: Narmada Block: Garudeshwar		
Sr.No.	Village	Name of Self Help Group
1	Indravana	Jay Sarswati Mission Managalam SHG
2	Mota Amba	Jay Ambe Mission Managalam SHG
3	Samariya	Shankar Parvati Sakhi Mandal
4	Zarwani	Jay Shree Krishna Mission Mangalam SHG
District: Kheda Block: Kathlal		
5	Ladvel	Shivshakti SHG
6	Pipariya	Jay Khodiyar SHG
7	Ratanpur	Jay Chehrma SHG
8	Laxmipura	Shakti Krupa SHG

- CRP (Community Representative Personnel) plays an important role in promotion, formation and credit linkages of SHGs both in rural and tribal areas of Gujarat State. SHG members depend on their leader/CRP for the smooth functioning and operation.
- Women once considered "non-productive, underprivileged and non-asset worthy" are now considered as "agent of change for economic development" after participating in SHGs and microfinance programme.
- Many SHGs collapse just because of reasons like leader is going out of station for more than a month and then the question of who will deposit the savings in bank would arise and nobody volunteers. At this moment TLM (Taluka Livelihood

Manager) and APM (Assistant Project Manager) needs to sensitize, orient, educate and motivate the other members of the same group.

- During the discussion with members of SHGs it was found that the problems arises mainly during the time of repayment of loan because if few members don't pay on time other members won't get the loan. During this time other members pressurize those few members to repay the loan amount as quickly as possible. Mostly groups collapse due to irregularity and delay in the loan payment.
- The training to the SHGs on regular interval was being provided to make them aware about income generating activities, to become more self-reliant and self-sufficient. Some members even started their own business and small income generating activities after getting trainings from Government and NABARD. Various training programs for SHGs were carried out by Rudshet Institute, Pijroad plants, Nadiad. Many a time few successful Mandals/groups of same village or different village influences the other women of rural and tribal community to join and form new SHGs.
- Availing credit facilities through internal lending as well as through banks are the most attractive part of forming SHGs. Word of mouth plays an important role in making new SHGs in a rural and tribal community as maximum number of women share their positive experiences with other women after being a part of the group.
- Support from the bank functionaries play an important role in successful journey of SHG-Bank linkages. In rural areas of Nadiad there is an existence of other private and public sector banks also that promotes SHGs-Bank linkages but still members of SHGs prefer to join Indian bank due to good staff services, proper guidance and regularity in opening Saving Bank accounts and availing credit facilities.
- TLM (Taluka Livelihood Manager) and APM (Assistant Project Manager) regularly visit villages where SHGs are formed and linked to Banks for collecting saving deposits and repayment amounts of credit facilities in order to avoid the NPA's (Non Performing Accounts). SHG members are provided training for book keeping on regular basis by TLM and APM.
- Lack of awareness among the sample respondents about the various bank schemes pertaining to microfinance was found during the field study. The training facilities given to the members of SHGs in the specific areas of product selection, quality of products, production techniques, managerial ability, packing, other providing technical knowledge were not found adequate to compete with SHGs of southern part of the country. Normally each SHG procures raw materials individually from the

suppliers. They purchase raw materials in smaller quantities and hence they may not be able to enjoy the benefits of large scale purchase like discount, credit facilities etc. Moreover, there is no systematic arrangement to collect raw materials in bulk quantities and preserve them properly. There is no linkage with major suppliers of raw materials. Most of the SHGs were ignoring raw material suppliers and their terms as well as conditions. All these causes high cost of raw materials.

- Marketing is an important area of functioning of the SHGs. However, most of the SHGs were facing issues and problems in the marketing of their products. Following are the major problems relating to marketing.
 - ✓ Lack of sufficient orders.
 - ✓ Lack of linkage with the marketing agencies.
 - ✓ Lack of adequate sales promotion measures.
 - ✓ Lack of permanent market for the products of SHGs.
 - ✓ Absence of proper brand name.
 - ✓ Poor/unattractive packing system.
 - ✓ Poor quality of products due to the application of traditional technology resulting into poor market.
 - ✓ Tough competition from other major suppliers.
 - ✓ Lack of a well-defined and well-knit channel of distribution for marketing.
- During FGDs it is also found that in certain villages the return from the income generating activities was not properly invested further in the business, and the funds diverted for other personal and domestic purposes like marriage, construction of house etc. During the field study it is found that in most of the SHGs, the financial assistance provided to them by the agencies was not adequate to meet their actual requirements. The NABARD and Government are not giving adequate subsidy to meet even the labour cost requirements.
- The attitude of the staff of the government authorities was not encouraging. They are not well trained and sensitized to accept the challenges and requirements of SHGs. There is also a need to spread financial literacy among SHG members.
- Across several branches women have opened or are in process to open the individual account under the Prime Minister's Jan-Dhan Yojana. Women are putting away some amount of money each month. Due to better financial planning, many women managed to buy televisions, gas stoves, washing machines etc. Women are less

dependent on moneylenders, as they are aware of other more viable sources of obtaining loans to meet their needs.

- Members also recalled the importance of getting insurance for themselves and/or other families. The respondents share the view that the sometimes Government and Bank functionaries at grassroots level are pathetic towards them. They reported delay in sanctioning and disbursement of revolving fund and loan to SHGs. Lack of coordination between government agencies, banks and SHGs was reported as major problem. This might have resulted in the decline of the perception of benefits by the respondents. The administrators and bankers need to infuse confidence in the minds of the members of SHGs. Efforts should be made to avoid delay in sanctioning revolving fund and loan.

SECTION VII: RESEARCHER'S EXPERIENCE AND OVERALL OBSERVATIONS:

In the field, the helplessness and vulnerability of women was seen when they were not only disowned from the parental property but also from their marital family. Credit facilities were also not easily availed by women because of absence of land rights by them. In such instances, they were made joint owners of the land along with their husbands or other male members. But in this case they just remained as passive partners for acquiring loans, which were mainly used by their husbands or male members of the family.

As said by one of the members of Adhya shakti Sakhi Mandal at Kathlal taluka of Kheda district *“women gave their savings and income for the purchase of properties, lands or building and renovation of houses. But the lands rights and property rights were always with men. Sometimes the names of both husband and wife are mentioned in the documents but the overall authority in sale of lands and properties were only taken by men.”*

Rao (2005) supports the argument with the saying that as land is one of the major assets in rural communities, disowning women from its productive value would act as a setback. Agarwal (2008: 180) also argues that fragmentation of land does not only take place during division of property between daughters and sons but also separation between many sons. However, giving land rights can bring about economic empowerment and help in ending the political as well as social inequities. Ownership of landed property will ensure a woman security in case of break-up of marital alliance or during death of the husband and not to be a

burden over the relatives. It can also lead to financial empowerment of women with the sense of being economically independent.

Decision-making in regard to Girl Child

The sample respondents denied any discrimination between a male and a female child. At the same time, they considered that the daughters after marriage have to leave their parental home and go to someone else's home but sons would be there to carry on the name of the family. Therefore, sons are more favoured and preferred than daughters in both the districts namely Kheda and Narmada.

As said by one of the sample respondent of Kumkum Sakhi Mandal *though villagers do not differentiate between a son and daughter in matters of nutrition, education, health care but at the same time they also prefer to have a male child to carry on the name of the family. People are of the view that one day their daughters would get married and would go away. It is only the sons, who would help to further carry on their generation'*.

During the discussion with female respondents in the field, it was found that women got disinfected after two children if one of them was a male child. Starting from birth to nurturing and rearing, male children received the lion's share of care, protection, love and attention in the family. Though provision of education was considered to be important for a male and female child, higher studies and technical education was mostly ignored by the respondents. Education for girls was not considered to be a means to get employed but only for the sake of gaining knowledge. It was a pride for the parents to settle their daughters soon after attaining puberty and give all the basic requisites to establish a household after marriage.

A member of Jai khodiyar Mahila Sangha said that *she had four daughters and two sons. Two of her daughters after completing matriculation are married off and the third one is in intermediate. One of her sons is in graduation and other one is doing a computer course.*

As per the law of patriarchy if the bride who has to leave her parents and goes to her groom's place of residence, it is considered that the decisions relating to a woman are to be taken by her in-laws after marriage. At times, the employment of woman after marriage is given least priority in comparison to bearing children and managing household. However, some of them make efforts to strike a balance between the two tasks, only when they possess an understanding spouse.

A girl of Swaminarayan Mahila Mandala of Bajakpura village was of the view that after involvement in the SHG, she took care of her elder sister and her child and also got her younger sister married. She revealed that she did not have any interest to get married because of the reason of foregoing the fulfilment of her dream of development of the village in the midway. But her family members were insisting on her marriage and to celebrate it nicely. As marriage is considered to be universal, she said that if she gets married then it would be someone residing nearby to her village so that she can render her services efficiently.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Self Help Groups can help in improving the status of women in the society. Generally, PRIs are thought in terms of decentralization or representation of the local people and on the other hand SHGs are equated with participation of the masses. More or less the focus of both of them is the general public. Therefore, these may be considered as two important pillars for building the development of the country. The interlinkage between SHGs and PRIs was analyzed during the data collection and open discussion with SHGs members. Fortunately, the panchayat elections were being held in Kathlal block in that period. Some of the women members were nominated and also won the elections at the panchayat level. It was Daulakhuntai of Ladvel panchayat who won while Nayani Swain of Ratanpur lost the panchayat elections. The members also campaigned for the women nominees. They were of the view that in the campaign of male members, more money and manpower was invested. However, women members just campaigned from home to home within their own villages or within their acquainted persons. Some were also of the view that though women contested elections they were not that much influential as that of men. From this, it can be interpreted that political and economic independence would help in making women more accessible to various social services. But providing reservation of seats in the political sphere for women or encouraging income-generating avenues without challenging the patriarchal structure per se is not going to make any significant change in the lives of women. Care has to be taken in making both men and women aware about the prevailing gender discrimination. This in a way can lead to reformation and increase the social status of women.

Participation in the Meetings of the SHG

Generally, all the members of the SHG participated in the monthly meetings held in the respective village wherein the SHG was established. But in the meetings conducted in the

office of CDPO, it was the president or secretary who participated. They participated as the representative of the SHG to provide information about the functioning and discuss various problems incurred. But during training workshops all the members of particular SHG assembled in either in their villages or outside their village or in the office of CDPO.

Involvement in Organizing Health Camps and Spreading Awareness

The SHG members also get involved in various health programmes like HIV/AIDS programme, National Tuberculosis Programme, National Malaria Eradication Programme, Polio Eradication Programme, Celebration of Mamta Day, Participation in Janani Suraksha Yojana etc.

SECTION VIII: DISCUSSION ON THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Recognising that charity, donations and dependence do not solve poverty and social problems, the microfinance initiatives encourages the poor to connect their unutilised skills, abilities and potential by allowing them access to small collateral-free loans from financial institutions. The group-based microfinance banking system sustains itself instead on the basis of mutual trust, accountability, responsibility, participation and creativity. In the process of enabling previously disadvantaged borrowers to launch their own enterprises, the Bank also prioritises concern for the environment, strengthening education, encouraging saving, and the provision of technology as necessary factors in the development of human capital.

Poor women in the rural and tribal areas of Gujarat have an unmet need for the financial services for upliftment and also for improving their standard of living through income generating activities. There is great potential for such microfinance initiatives in both the districts namely Kheda and Narmada to alleviate regional poverty. Therefore, based on the positive example of the Indian Bank's microcredit banking system in Kheda exhibited throughout the state, it seems timely that more projects of its sort should be replicated in the state of Gujarat by other public sector banks too. Microcredit has proven to be a successful development strategy and weapon against fighting the poverty in strengthening the developmental sector, civil society and minimising the role of government in economic productivity. However, support from the Government, Non-Government Organizations, Banks and donors are vital for the viability and sustainability of future microcredit operations.

The question of whether microfinance empowers women has attracted attention in both academic and policy circles. Empowerment through microfinance is identified and measured in various dimensions: impact on providing better standard of living and education to children, better decision-making power, building self-confidence of women, on their status at home, on family relationships and the incidence of domestic violence, on their involvement in the community and also on their overall social, economic and political empowerment and rights.

The policies and programmes of the Government of India to asset women's identity in social, economic and political scenario are not equally distributed in various parts of the country. There is a notable rural-urban disparity in the status of women. The educational, health and economic status of urban women in India is considerably better than that of their rural and tribal counterpart. Political participation also varies in modes and degrees between the rural, urban and the tribal women. Rural women look enviously at urban women. It may not be distributed even in all the rural areas equally. There is a need to conduct a study to examine whether the impact of women empowerment is equally distributed in all the rural areas as there have been no studies specifically in this context so far. Thus, there is a gap in the earlier studies in this context. Therefore, the present study is taken up with the objective of filling that gap by assessing the impact of Self-help groups and microfinance initiatives among different rural and tribal villages.

Improved awareness level, adequate training, raised self-employment opportunities, increased savings and increased self-confidence to borrow from various sources are the major contributions to the better performance of the sample SHGs. However, there are various drawbacks such as inadequate amount of loan, negative attitude of banks, delay in sanctioning of loan, lack of knowledge to manage financial affairs of the group due to lower levels of education and lack of knowledge on the rules and regulations for the functioning of the SHGs. Gender equality, women empowerment and microfinance have been identified as critical developmental tools, especially in developing countries, to fight against poverty and vulnerability among women. Women are an integral part of society, and as such society cannot develop without their equal participation and contribution. Empowering women would increase their involvement in the labor force and in the decision-making processes, and would significantly enhance their contribution to national income and the development of the country as a whole.

Poor women from rural and tribal communities do not approach regular Banks for many fears of regulations which are not designed to take into consideration their constraints. As they never are in a position to be accredited as credit worthy clients they are thrown outside the support net of banking services. Grameen Bank has shown that poor communities have to begin through a micro-credit arrangements and not loans through regular banks. Secondly, the terms and conditions have to take cognizance of the handicaps of income and irregular flow of money to their homes. Once this is recognized the poor are more participatory in their planning with the bank. Moreover, mutual trust and peer pressures generates recovery of loans. If the poor are made to believe that the bank understands them, the services become cost effective and sustainable. Lastly, Small banking projects are not overwhelming to the poor and they also generate an understanding for the system.

Conclusion:

Microfinance interventions are well recognized tool for poverty alleviation and improving socio-economic status of rural poor. In India too, microfinance is making a significant difference in empowering rural and tribal women. Microfinance through the network of cooperative, commercial banks, regional rural banks, NABARD and NGOs has been largely a supply driven recent approach. Women empowerment is critical to the process of development of the economy. It plays a crucial role in the alleviation of poverty. Among the various measures targeted towards women empowerment, the provision of microfinance assumes great importance. Findings from study testify that microfinance has helped to improve the status of women and has enabled the poor to expand and diversify their enterprises and also to increase their income. Organisation of women into Self Help Groups is an effective way for the provision of microfinance and women empowerment. The SHGs offer the most powerful, cost effective and yet democratic, transparent model for micro financing and women empowerment.