

Climate Change and Their Impact on Self Help Groups

¹Ramani Rajasekhar, ²Dr. Ranjeet Chitale

¹Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor, ^{1,2}Department of Management Sciences, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

¹ramanirajasekhar@gmail.com, ²rhchitale@yahoo.com

Abstract - Climate Change is a phenomenon that refers to seasonal changes over a long period with respect to the growing accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and it is considered one of the biggest challenges of present day agrarian communities in India. Rural women are more susceptible to this change as more than 60% of agricultural labor force consists of women. Women bear the burden of the impact of natural disasters induced by Climate Change in many ways and more importantly financially. They are mostly dependent on natural resources for their income which is hugely impacted by Climate Change. This paper looks into how Self Help Groups contribute to help these women who are affected directly or indirectly by the Climate Change by assuring financial and social security. This study examines how rural Self Help Group members can become enterprising change agents in resilience building towards climate change issues.

Keywords: *Self Help Groups, Climate Change, Environment, Rural Women, Resilience, natural resources.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Self Help Group (SHG) is a process by which a large group of women (10-20) with common objectives, are facilitated to come together voluntarily to participate in the development activities, such as Saving, credit and Income Generation, thereby ensuring economic independence. (Dr. Uma Narang 2012).[1] Self Help Group is an effective instrument to empower women socially and economically which leads to the overall development of the country. The SHGs bring out the capacity of women in moulding the community in right perspective and explore the initiative of building great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in their day-to-day life. [2]

The climate change phenomenon refers to seasonal changes over a long period with respect to the growing accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Tackling this phenomenon is of utmost importance given the pivotal role that climate plays in the formation of natural eco systems and the human economies and civilizations on which they are based [3] The increase in mean annual temperature has brought forth unprecedented spells of hot weather across the world and is affecting countries with warm climate [4] As it is evident in India, in the last few years monsoons have become very unpredictable. This leads to floods in some areas and drought in the other areas. Climate change affects health through a multitude of mechanisms, including heat, poor air quality, and extreme weather events, as well as through

meteorological changes that alter vector-borne diseases, reduce water quality, and decrease food security [5].

Women play an important role in handling natural resources at family and community levels and are severely affected by their deprivation. It is found that Indian women are adept at management of water and plant sources for fuel and food, and are caretakers of domesticated animals and birds such as cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, chicken etc. In the villages it is widely seen that the women spend a major portion of their time in collecting and storing water, collecting fuel and fodder and managing agricultural land.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study how Self Help groups have enabled rural women to become important agents of change.
2. To study the role of Self Help Groups in building resilience in addressing Climate Change issues.

II. METHODOLOGY

In this Study insights were drawn from various domains while working with the rural Self Help group members This was an Exploratory study. Related literature was reviewed from journals, articles and reports.

Climate Change and Rural Society:

The concept of thrift is an integral part of SHG. Similarly, the natural environment is limited by a finite matter. In the context of rampant consumerism pervading all over, to which rural community is not an exception, a deeper study is needed to understand the environmental, social and

biological factors of Climate Change. It is not inappropriate to quote Mahatma Gandhi that *'Nature provides for everyone's need but not every one's greed'*. [6]

Environmental Factor: When it comes to environment, 'globe' is a closed system. In physics it is called 'entropy'. The meaning of entropy summarizes as 'the cumulative thermal usage in a given closed system'. To give a simple example, when heat is constantly provided to the pressure cooker you get a whistle. This is to alert us of the increased pressure when it attains maximum and some steam also escapes with whistle. This safety valve cum indicator is provided to protect the cooker as well as the user. Supposing there is no safety provision, if cooker is sealed without whistle the chance are that the cooker will burst due to increased pressure in the cooker. This analogy can go well with the present day energy consumption patterns that are leading to alarming levels of carbon emissions resulting in global warming. It is already telling on people's lives as a result of changing seasons, flash floods, cloud burst, cyclones, droughts and so on. This change in temperature by 1 or 2 degrees can have a devastating effect on sensitive biological processes such as plant pollination. This can affect food security and nutritional security. That is why we should use natural resources sparingly, more particularly such natural resources which cannot be replenished. According to some studies we are not very far from 'peak oil' syndrome. We have to move to practices of low carbon footprint technologies and create a culture of responsible citizenry. The mantra is frugality that is to 'live with minimum' and with an obligation of leaving least carbon footprint.

The Self Help Group women are in sync with all these principles, and their actions are defusing the heat and promoting carbon sequestration, by actively engaging in agriculture related enterprises. When these rural women of Self Help Groups come together and pool their resources, new opportunities crop up.

Aruna Teke of Renuka Mata Mahila Bachat Gat of Manchar in Pune district says that their SHG gives training on sustainable agricultural practices that conserve soil and improve yield. They understand the benefits of crop diversification for better nutrition in their homes.

SHG members are playing an important role in tackling the issues of changing global climate by adopting local production and local consumption. SHGs empower women to undertake land planning, agro forestry and soil conservation practices and use energy saving devices. This enables the rural women to become important agents of change and innovators.

Social factor: Though human beings are belonging to the animal kingdom by virtue of certain abilities they are the most dominant species on earth. They live in societies/communities with certain expectations from fellow human beings, which later resulted in certain rules,

regulations, laws and so on. To live in absolute freedom looks almost impossible in a civilized society. However, restricted liberty can be enjoyed in any and every society, albeit at varying degrees. As primates, human beings formative period is very vulnerable. The first year after birth without parenting is unthinkable. The role of mother, if not a family, seems almost an absolute precondition for the physical protection and nurturing of the child. Role of women thus become very important in pooling up resources physical, mental and otherwise to handle this need. Thus thrift appears to be an inbuilt mechanism in augmenting resources. The orientation of women particularly of the Self Help Group members is for the welfare of the family. All her earnings and savings are extended for her family welfare. It could be spending on education, marriage, medical or house construction or investment in business or repayment of farm loan and so on. A rural women per se is not a spending person but a saving person, because she is always worried about tomorrow. A systematic network of thrift such as Self Help Groups have come handy in strengthening rural women by offering a scope for future, which was otherwise lacking. This networking while financially providing stability, it also nurtures social bonding. We have to wait and see whether this social bonding will culminate in empowering women politically.

Sunita Sunil Chapte from a SHG of Ambegaon Taluka in Pune district says that although Climate Change is a global issue, each community should tackle their own climate problems. Their Group is involved in various issues like tree plantation, crop diversification etc. According to them every individual, household, community should take up the challenge and be part of a process that provides real solutions to our environmental challenges. Sunita adds that falling water level has affected agriculture and that is when they have shifted to millet cultivation and goat rearing. Millet is important because of its uniquely high content of nutrients, including impressive starch levels, vitamin B, calcium, iron potassium, zinc, magnesium, and fats compared from other grains. [7]

Biological factors: Shantbai Varve from Tikona village of Pune district says that they do not use fertilizers in their fields, they add organic manure and avoid harmful use of pesticides in their fields. She emphasizes the need of utilizing locally grown berries, green vegetables, rare herbs etc., in helping the family meet their nutritional and day-to-day health needs. By such practices they contribute a lot in conserving nature and preserving sustainable living practices. The same shared knowledge is passed on to generations while they are actively involved in SHG meetings.

Women spend a lot of their time in collecting and storing water, securing sources of fuel, food and fodder, and managing their land. As women are primary caregivers to children, the elderly and the sick, whole communities rely

on them. Climate Change can adversely affect their lives. [8]

This takes us to the concept of biological factor, which is embedded in Climate Change.

Human species have undergone severe food shortages and learnt to live with whatever was available. The ability to sustain comes from the energy sources within. This energy storage mechanism is directly proportionate to the environment around. Human beings have learnt to use energy efficiently from this frugal resource management. The women of the SHGs are an example of the above scenario sticking to their genes using natural resources efficiently. Women's participation is essential for sustainable development and climate change adaptation. [9] Governments and organisations working on Climate change are gradually moving to include women's voices in policy and planning. [10]

III. CONCLUSION

Rural women are more vulnerable to loss of livelihood and variations in natural resources due to Climate Change. SHG networking is a powerful tool in executing a social development program. Their cultural practices related to nature and resources can be incorporated effectively while weaving an adaptation/mitigation strategy. Such an action will be very effective as they are both the end and means. Through Self Help Groups the rural women share the impact of weather related disasters on their livelihoods and discuss various proposals which are beneficial to all the members of the Group. The Self Help Groups in the study area are taking the lead and becoming important agents of change and playing a pivotal role in social transformation and welfare activities.

REFERENCES

- [1] Self Help Group: AN Effective Approach to Women Empowerment In India. Dr.Uma Narang . International Journal of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Research. Vol,1 Issue 8, August 2012, ISSN 2277 3630
- [2] Rural Women Empowerment: Entrepreneurship Development Through SHG. Jasdeep Maggu Abhinav International Monthly Refereed Journal of Research in Management & Technology. Vol.5, Issue 6 (June 2016). Online ISSN-2320-0073.
- [3] Definition of Climate Change <https://bee.atna.ae/en/definition-of-climate-change>
- [4] Climate Change: How it is affecting India>Vikram Solar <https://www.vikramsolar.com/blog-climate-change-how-it-is-affecting-india/>
- [5] Crimmins A, Balbus J, Gamble J, Beard C B, Bell J, Dodges D, et al. The impacts of climate change on Human health in the United States: a scientific

assessment. Global Research Program: Washington, DC, USA, 2016.

- [6] Mahatma Gandhi and the Environment. T N Kkoshoo, John S Moolakkattu.
- [7] Sustainable Living and Role of Naturopathy. Published by National Institute of Naturopathy. Editor-in-chief : Prof.(Dr) K.Satya Lakshmi, Director, NIN.
- [8] Women and the Environment – Global Issues <https://opentextbc.ca/womenintheworld/.../chapter-11-women-and-the-environment/>
- [9] Women's Empowerment for Resilient and Adaptation against Climate. <https://unfccc.int/climate...change/women.../womens-empowerment-for-resillience-and...>
- [10] Climate change 'impacts women more than men' – BBC News -BBC.com <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43294221>