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A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT

Farsana Shirin K¹, Dr Annie Ninan²

¹PG Student, Department of Home Science, Karambayil Ahamed Haji Memorial Unity Women's College, Manjeri, Malappuram, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Home Science, Karambayil Ahamed Haji Memorial Unity Women's College, Manjeri, Malappuram, India

farsanashirin1995@gmail.com¹, anniesaji@gmail.com²

Abstract: The individual identity of women in today's world has changed significantly. Women empowerment help them to build an identity of their own. Women empowerment includes different activities undertaken helping in improving their social, economic and political status in the world. It also equips them to improve their wellbeing. It gets reflected both in external and internal qualities. Self-help Groups (SHG) are novel and innovative organizational setup in India for the women upliftment and welfare. Self-help groups are informal groups of individuals who come together and find ways to improve their living conditions. The study is designed to assess the women empowerment through self-help groups in Malappuram district. Methodology adopted for the study is survey method and sample consists of 200 self-help group women. The study was conducted with specially formulated interview schedule. The study reveals that the life style of the subjects showed improvement by joining the SHG's. The respondents attained decision making skills and better status in the family and society. Majority of respondents showed better and greater awareness of nutrition and food hygiene practices. In short, the empowerment of women enhanced their social and economic independence.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Self-Help Group (SHG), Awareness, Nutrition and Food Hygiene Practices

1. INTRODUCTION

Women are an important element of our Society. The modern society has started recognizing the individual identity of women. She is believed to have her aspiration, abilities and qualities as a man does have and it is also agreed that she should have the opportunities to develop her capabilities and to express them according to her own choice. The woman is now an important instrument of social change. The extent of women's participation in the corporate life is thus the measure of social change in India.

Women empowerment is also defined as a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz. health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities (viz. self-awareness and self-confidence).

A self-help group is a "self-governed, information group of people with similar socio-economic background and

having a desire to collectively perform common purpose."

Self-help groups are empowerment resource centers for the women and has a multiple effect in improving the status of women in society as well as in the family. It helps them to save an amount out of their earnings and thus help to recycle the resources generated for meeting the emergent needs of members of the group.

SHGs are innovative organizational setup in India used as an effective strategy for human development and social empowerment. SHGs help women from economically weaker sections and improve their existing sources of livelihood. It also help them to emerge as a prospective entrepreneur and a skilled worker. As a social movement with government support, SHGs have become more or less a part and parcel of the society uplifting the social and economic status of the rural and poor population.

SHGs group in Kerala work as channels for ensuring micro finance assistance to the poorer groups of the state for the rural development and at the same time it acts as stimulants