



Profile of

**Animation and Empowerment of Self Help Groups In
52 villages. in East Garo Hills District, Meghalaya**

By:

Mendipathar Multipurpose Co-Operative Society Ltd.

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Dist: - East Garo Hills, Meghalaya

Project Period: 1st September-2003 To 31st August 2006

I. Introduction:

Most of rural people in Meghalaya seem to be marginalized in all spheres, as they are not aware of the injustices and exploitation especially in trade. Poverty is a great concern in the world today. People in Garo-hills are poor not because they do not work hard but they are deprived of a fair and reasonable price for their farm produce. The farm produce is sold in advance to purchase the daily necessities of life or at the time of sickness and they get only ¼ of the actual price at the time of harvest.

The improvement in human living condition is possible through empowerment of the grassroots population and proper marketing system. The pure example is the Mendipathar Multipurpose Co-Operative Society. The work of the Society has ushered silent economic revolution in the Garo Hills. The Society has changed the lives of poverty stricken Garos who, despite working hard, had been always at the receiving end. The middlemen and moneylenders deprived them of a fair and reasonable price for their farm produce due to exploitation.

Development is possible only through empowerment and through a collective organization of people. This begets people's power, the power that comes from unity. Co-operatives and SHGs are the best tool for empowerment of people in grass roots.

In order to reach out to the grass root people in remote area, the Mendipathar Multipurpose Co Operative Society with the help of CRS (Catholic Relief Services) implemented the project of Animation and empowerment of Self Help group to upgrade the living condition of people **The primary goal was the upliftment of self-sustainable and reliant families and village communities through SHG, for integral development and for transformation of the society where every person has equal opportunities to live with dignity and self-respect.** The target was to form 100 groups but it has reached up to 109 groups.

II. Objectives:

1. To build 100 sustainable self help group, to become economically viable by averting moneylenders and middlemen and to encourage participatory mode of decision-making.

2. To build peace and Justice.
3. Eradication of illiteracy among the group members and build leadership among them.
4. To help them to prevent malaria and other health problems through health education and motivate the S.H.G s of environmental protection.
5. To open consumer shops in the village so as to provide market facilities for their farm produce through Mendipathar Multipurpose Co-Operative Society.
6. To provide self –Employment opportunities.

III. Location:

The Project area comprises of 52 villages, under two Development Blocks of Resubelpara and Songsak Blocks, Under District East Garo Hills, Meghalaya. The SHG location Map is attached

IV. Project duration:

The project Duration is for three years (from September 2003 to August 2006).

V. Achievements of objectives

Objective.1: To build 100 self sustainable SHGs.

We have formed 109 SHGs against the target group of 100. All the groups have improved their saving habit and started inter-loaning among the group members. Initially it was not easy to form groups and it took almost 1½ year to motivate the people the advantages of SHGs. Training in accounting and record keeping empowered them to keep the books. After six months inter-loaning was started among themselves. The matured groups have been introduced to Blocks, Banks, Horticulture, Rubber Board and other institutions. 40 SHGs have received bank loan varying from Rs. 25,000 up to 1.30,000. This money is used as revolving fund among the members for inter-loaning and income generating activates, as decided by each group.

10 women SHG have been introduced to horticulture department and they received subsidy of Rs.5000 each, (total of rupees 50,000) for development of horticulture and vegetable garden.

2 groups were introduced to irrigation department and they received Rs.3500 each.

10 groups have been introduced rubber board in view of raising rubber nursery as an initial step. They received 150-mother bud wood to produce bud wood for nursery.

The total corpus funds of the SHG are Rs 21,22,332/- as on 30th august 2006. These groups are liberated from the clutches of moneylenders and middlemen.

Objective2: Irradiation of illiteracy

Most of the members were illiterate especially in the interior villages. These groups had been motivated the importance of literacy. They decided to have literacy classes on every Saturday and Sunday. With the result 99 % of the group members (except very old people) are able to read and write. Now they are motivated to send their children to school.

Objective 3: Prevention of malaria.

Malaria is a great concern in Garohills. All the groups had been trained on prevention of malaria, nutrition, safe motherhood, health and hygiene. MMCS distributed *chirata* plant (herbal plant), which is used for prevention and treatment of malaria. Each family planted *chirata* in their houses. By using *chirata* and smoking the house during the evening hours, have reduced the malaria. From each group appointed a monitor to check the groups decisions. The importance of using the mosquito net was emphasized. Earlier 50 % were not using mosquito net due to financial problem. Now all the members are able to purchase mosquito net from their savings. The co-operative society has joined with East Garo Hills district's rural health mission, and it will be implemented through SHGs. In order to encourage proper treatment SHG have been introduced to mediclaim and accident insurance with Oriental insurance company. 22 SHG members have taken insurance policy.

Objective. 4: Peace Building

By and large Mendipathar do not have much communal violence or disturbance. Alcoholism is the main problem among the group members. Drinking, wife battering etc was prevalent in the groups. The groups decided to go such families and warn the man who drinks and disturbs the peace of the people and families. This challenge has reduced alcoholism of men. The groups took up two-rape case and the culprits were arrested and put in jail. The group also networked with the MOTHERS UNION (NGO) to take up major issues. Some of the SHGs are mixed groups of Rabhas and Garos tribes. This helped them to understand one another's culture, beliefs and customs. They work together harmoniously and the performances are better than the homogenous tribe as there is healthy completion among them.

Objective 5: Open consumer shops in the villages.

The main objective is to provide market facilities in the villages, as weekly market is the only means for them to purchase house hold things. For this the people have to walk many hours up and down the hills.13 SHG groups have started grocery shops in their villages. This saves time and money, as they are able to Purchase things at a cheaper rate.

Objective 6: Self employment

Formation of SHGs provided work opportunities for many of its members self-employment through weaving of clothes, grocery shops, chicken rearing mushroom cultivation, acreconut and banana business, pickle making etc. This has certainly provided additional income for the members.



VI. Project Activities:

The activities highlighted below had been planned and implemented within during the last three years.

1. Training of Animators:

The animators had been provided the following trainings prior to the formation of the groups as well as ongoing trainings in between on the following subjects:

On Awareness and motivation, concept, methods of formation of SHG, Record keeping and management, Leadership, Cluster Formation, Federation and marketing, Project Writing, Workshop on Ginger, Woman's empowerment programme, TOT (training on trainees), the Oriental Insurance company policy training, malaria prevention etc,

2. Training on various skills to SHG members:

Since animators were empowered with various training they could train the members on following subjects. Awareness and motivation, record keeping, capacity and leadership Training, credit management, mushrooms



cultivation, kuroiler chicken rearing, pickle making, ginger cultivation, Insurance policy business management of bamboo, arecunut, dry fish. Besides Experts from rubber Board, Veterinary, horticulture, insurance and co-operative departments and ICAR Shillong also gave trainings on various subjects.

3. Co-operative training:

SHGs are micro organization. It is powerless by it self. Hence it needs to be grouped together as co-operatives to be more effective for social change and transformation. However, the concept of Co-operative movement is not understood properly. So training on Co-Operatives was conducted with the help of Co-Operative department, Shillong.

2. Issue based training on health and environment:

Training on Malaria prevention, Health and Sanitation, Nutrition and balanced

diet, Home remedies and Herbal medicines are conducted for all the groups. Training on environment made the people to realize the need for the protection of environment



and some groups decided not allow to cut the trees from the villages unless it.



4. SHG rally and exhibition:

A rally and exhibition was conducted at the end of the Programme. This was an opportunity to get to know the other groups and to show their talents and abilities. The groups brought their own various products and sold during the exhibition.

4. Exposure programmes:

To places of interest for mutual learning and for new ideas Different groups were taken to RRTC Umran, ICAR Shillong, ANT Bongaigoan and MMCS Mendi.



5. Cluster formation:

Four cluster have formed according to the areas and interest of activities

1. Bakrima Cluster in Khaldang area has taken up social activities like improvement in roads bridges etc.
2. Chinaram Cluster in Kongkal village area has taken up the issue of quality education besides strengthening the government Garo medium School. The cluster has started English medium school (KG 1) in their village.
3. CERM Cluster in Soinang area started weaving. The members do the handloom weaving their own home. The Co-Operative Society provides yarn and takes back the clothes for sale. So the members do not have the problem of marketing.
4. Chekam Cluster in Gajing area. This cluster plans to take up the issue of drinking water, electricity and irrigation.

VII. Evaluation.

The programme Coordinator Sr.Rose with Animators carried out weekly Evaluation and planning. The purpose of the evaluation was to analyze progress of each group and to focus their needs. A mid term evaluation was done by CRS with programme Coordinator and suggestions and feedbacks were carried out.

4. Income Generation activities of SHG's.

- **Grocery shops:**13 Self help groups started consumer shops in their own villages that save the women from walking distant place to purchase their daily necessities.



- **Rubber nursery:** 10 Self Help Groups are doing Rubber nursery

- **Mushroom cultivation:** 14 Groups were cultivating mushroom

- **Kuroiler chicken rearing:** Kuroiler chicks are introduced to all the groups and it is reared as groups and individuals. It has increased the income as well as improved the nutrition among the members..



- **Fishery:** 2 Groups started fishery.

- **Banana Plantation:** 3 groups started banana plantation.

- **Areconut Business:** To avoid middle-man exploitation of farmers, SHGs started purchasing areconut from the farmers providing them better price. SHGs also made some profit out of it, thus improved their saving.

- **Ginger cultivation.** East Garo Hills is the 2nd highest producer of ginger in India. Many groups have taken up this project. But some times, it s not sustainable as the farmers do not get a fair and reasonable price.



- **Plantation of various seasonal vegetables.**

After forming Self Help Group have learned how to use the land properly and have started to cultivate seasonal vegetables for their consumption as well foe sale.

- **Dry Fish.** One of the most popular dishes in Garo Hills is Dry fish curry and no meal is served with out it. It is very costly when bought form the market and often it is not very clean. To avoid this situation 26 SHGs began to make dry fish and started to sell high at low cost. The villagers are very happy about.

- **Pickle Making.** Few groups also took up of pickle making business.

- **Sale of clothes.** The groups are also have taken up cloth business in their villages as well as taking to towns for sale.

VIII Achievements and Significant developments among the SHG members.

The Objectives of the project “to build Self- sustainable and self-reliant families and village communities through SHGs, for integral development and transformation of the society” is being realized. It is a vision and a long process. The main development is that people have waken up from the sleep and becoming aware of the socio-political and economic realities and began to think and act.

- A total of 1308 families through 109 Self Help Groups in 52 villages became aware of their own potential and talents.
- They have grown in discipline, self-confidence and self-esteem and are proud of their achievements
- They are economically, socially, and politically empowered and have started to challenge to challenge the unjust structures and became courageous to face any kind of problems.
- They have a wider vision and hope for the future, and their capacity to contribute to the welfare of the Society has been developed.
- They have been liberated from the clutches of moneylenders and middleman as the groups have sufficient money to lend within the group.
- Members have got the idea of save more rather than spend lavishly.
- Members have improved in quality of life and have better food shelter and clothing now.
- They are now interested to educate their children.
- The monthly meetings and various activities brought the groups together with love and concern for one another and took initiative in forming new groups.
- They have better environmental and health awareness
- Literacy has improved among the members.
- Men have reduced their drinking habit after their wives joint the SHGs.
- More self-employment opportunities are created.
- The success stories of the SHGs, motivated others to form groups

IX. Future plans:

- ❖ Strengthening of the weak groups
- ❖ Formation of more clusters to take more social issues
- ❖ Formation of new groups. It took three years to make the people understand the advantages of the formation of SHGs. Now more people are motivated and are requesting to help them to form groups.

X. Conclusion

The achievements of the groups are satisfactory considering the background people in rural area. Women are now taking decision regarding family economy as well as children's education. Women are taking part in the health programme and aware of the importance of health in a large scale and they proud of themselves.

Proper market is the key to economy, development and progress. Improvement in human living condition is possible only if there is a proper marketing system together with empowerment of grassroots population. It can be easily achieved through SHGs and Co-operative movement. SHGs are micro organizations, which need to be grouped together as co-operatives to be more effective for social change and transformation.

The greatest challenge is to go to the level of people's thinking, and makes them to think higher to understand the current reality such as globalization and its negative impact on the poor. Often the poor people's response is very slow and is difficult to change their mindset.

Prepared by

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