

Role of Women's Cooperative in Empowering Women: A Study in Jharkhand

Bhaskar Kumar Kakati¹, Sanjeeb Kakoty²

¹Independent Researcher, Hatibat Gaon, Nagabandha, Morigaon, Assam, India

²Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Shillong, Meghalaya, India

Abstract

The question of women empowerment consists of numerous nuances. Though the primary perspective continues to be the empowerment of the self, yet the process of self-actualization is largely dependent on a number of other factors including the complex interplay of societal forces and factors. The study of tribal women in the state of Jharkhand, India, provides incisive and rare insights to the process of women empowerment. Studied from the perspective of a women led cooperative society that sought to provide increased income to its members through poultry farming, the study provides a fascinating glimpse to the subsequent changes in the inter personal relationship and self-esteem among the women members.

Keywords: Empowerment, Cooperative, Tribal Society, SDGs, Customary laws

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to empirically examine the impact of cooperative on women's empowerment, both within and outside the household. For this, we have critically examined the Gumla Grameen Poultry Self-Supporting Co-operative Society Ltd (GGPSSCSL) based at Gumla, Jharkhand, India. If one goes by the argument that a women's collective is paradigmatic of women empowerment, then the GGWSSPCL would certainly qualify as a very good example.

“The cooperative sector in India is the largest in the world” (Ashtankar, 2015, p. 557), having 854355 number of registered cooperative until March 2017 (Satyanarayana, Hasan, & Singh, 2018). Cooperatives in India play a significant role in the rural economy, particularly in those areas where private business are either absent or play a marginal role. It is also a vital initiative for creating employment and income generation in rural areas. Several studies (Singh & Pundir, 2000; Singh & Singh, 1998) show that cooperatives positively impact members' income and employment

Corresponding Author: Bhaskar Kumar Kakati, Independent Researcher, Hatibat Gaon, Nagabandha, Morigaon, Assam, India

Email: bhaskarkumarkakati@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Kakati, B.K.; Kakoty, S. (2022). Role of Women's Cooperative in Empowering Women: A Study in Jharkhand. *Purushartha*, 15(1), 118-132.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

generation. “Cooperatives have often come into existence because small-scale producers seek protection from more powerful players in the market-place” (Gertler, 2001, p. 5).

As is well known, the cooperative is a voluntary network of individuals formed for certain pre-determined objectives including business activities. The ownership, profit and loss of the business are equally distributed among the members. In other words, it is a joint action of groups of individuals who worked to achieve some specific common goal. International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines cooperative as “autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise” (Smith, 2011, p. 36).

In the case of India, the genesis of the cooperative society can be traced to the ancient cultural and religious traditions of the country. The reference to cooperatives can be found in some of the earliest texts such as in the *Rig Veda*, the *Arthashastra* of *Kautilya*, Buddhist literature, etc., In addition, there are also instances of the tradition of cooperatives among different communities of India. For instance, one may refer to the tradition of the *Madaït* among the *Adivasis* of Jharkhand, *Hedari Khel* among *Tiwas* of Assam, and the *Sangram* which prevailed in many states of South India etc., In the the traditional cooperative system in India, members voluntarily formed groups to provide socio-economic services. Therefore, the traditional concept of cooperation in India was based on cultural, religious and social values. However, the modern concept of the cooperative movement is different from the traditional views of cooperatives. Even though its scope includes concern about society, yet its main focus is on business.

The genesis of the modern cooperative in India can be traced back to the Cooperative Society Act of 1904 introduced by the British Government based on the Raiffersen model of German agricultural credit Cooperatives. However, we find reference to the establishment of cooperative society much before 1904 in India. "The first cooperative society was established at Baroda in Gujarat in 1889 (*Anyona Sahayak Sahakari Mandali Limited*)" (Kumar S. M., 2003, p. 46) based on the recommendation of Sir Fredrick Nicholson. However, within a few years, the Cooperative Societies Act 1912 replaced the earlier act. The new cooperative act of 1912 permitted the promotion of the non-credit cooperative society. The Government of India Act 1919 made cooperation as a provincial subject under provincial government administration. Another act, known as the Multi-Unit Cooperative Societies Act was introduced in 1942. Then it was replaced by the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act 1984.

Hereafter, the Government of India introduced the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act 2002. Further, many states also introduced their own state acts, such as the Bihar Self-Supporting Co-operative Societies Act 1996 etc.

"The cooperative movement in India was basically organised against exploitative moneylenders to rescue farmers from the clutches of poverty and indebtedness" (Pramod, 2010, p. 114). Thus, initially, the Government's objective was to provide ready cash to the farmers to carry out their agricultural operations freely. Thus, initiated with the task of providing credit, the cooperative movements in India progressed to marketing, processing, housing, consumer goods sell and purchasing etc. Arguably, the importance of cooperative has also changed over time. Competition in the international market calls for the rejuvenation of policies, regularisation of processes in terms of credit availability, crop insurance, stabilisation of farming output, ease of transactions, advantageous deposits etc., (Chowdary, 2019). Significant problems of failure of cooperative in India have been surmised as ranging from Government interference, management and manipulation, lack of awareness, restricted coverage, functional weakness, administrative shortcoming (Ashtankar, 2015; Lallawmawma, 2013 ; Das, Palai, & Das, 2006; Mugambwa, 2005) and financial viability (Singh & Pundir, 2000).

Conceptualising Women Empowerment

The term empowerment has its genesis in the Afro-American movement in the 1960s and Paulo Freire's theory of conscientisation based on critical conscience¹ (Charlier, Caubergs, Malpas, & Kakiba, 2007; Luttrell, Quiroz, Scrutton, & Bird, 2009). The major defining terms of empowerment are challenges to inequality and oppression, exercising options and choices, participation, control over lives etc., (Batliwala, 1994; Rowlands, 1996; Sen G. , 1997; Oxaal & Baden, 1997; Kabeer,

1999; Lindberg, Athreya, Vidyasagar, Djurfekdt, & Rajagopal, 2011). Accordingly, empowerment is a neural process, “precisely because it implies a change in power relations in favour of the powerless, it can generate significant social upheavals even if it starts out with a relatively neutral focus. Such upheavals are not necessarily harmful, and may indeed further catalyse the empowerment process” (Sen G. , 1997, p. 3).

Although theorists put forward various theories on empowerment, most of them agreed that empowerment is the process of exercising power by those who were denied to do so. Therefore, the process of empowerment implies the “expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. The ability to exercise choice can be thought of in terms of three interrelated dimensions such as resource (pre-condition), agency (process) and achievement (outcomes)” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). Thus, according to Kabeer (1999), it is the process through which people can exercise strategic life choices that include the choices of livelihood, mobility, decision making etc. People exercise these choices based on certain resources (conditions), including conventional economic resources, social, human and natural resources. Moreover, according to Kabeer (1999), another pre-condition of the empowerment process is the agency which refers to various actions of collective or individual (Ibid). Therefore, empowerment of process that expands the “capability of people that enables them to make decisions or make choices with far-reaching consequences which was earlier denied to them” (Kumar & Sreedhara, 2006, p. 147).

In short, empowerment can be defined as “a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over one's life, destiny, and environment. This transition can manifest itself in an improvement in the perceived ability to control, as well as in an improvement in the actual ability to

control” (Sadan, 2004, p. 144). Therefore, major attributes of empowerment are the concept of power. In fact, “power is a key concept for an understanding of the processes of empowerment” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 33). “Power may be defined as the capacity of an individual, or of group of individuals, to modify the conduct of other individuals or groups in a manner in which he desires, and to prevent his conduct being modified in the manner in which he does not” (Tawney, 1931, p. 299). So, the concept of power relies on various actions of an individual (Foucault, 1982).

“Power must be understood as working at different levels, including the institutional, the household, and the individual” (Oxaal & Baden, 1997, p. 1). Accordingly, the concept of power has two central aspects viz control over resources which includes physical, human, intellectual, financial and self; and control over the ideology that includes beliefs, values and attitudes (Gita Sen (1997) as cited by Srilatha Batliwala (Batliwala, 1993).

Although women empowerment is the product of post-1975 women's movement (Banerjee, 1994; Sen A. , 2000/2012), yet, theorist has not agreed on one straight forward definition of women empowerment and its various dimensions (Batliwala, 1993; Batliwala, 1994; Snijders, 2009; Das S. K., 2011) because the term women empowerment is highly contextual to the society and varies from place to place, society to society which makes difficult for the theorist to come into consensus (Snijders, 2009). However, theorists do not agree with a single definition of women empowerment. However, they agreed to one thing that women empowerment is a transformative process that focuses on structural changes in patriarchal structure (Batliwala, 1994; Beck & Stelcner, 1997; Kabeer, 1999) through “increased control over their own lives, bodies and environment” (Gupta & Kishor, 2004, p. 695) among the women.

According to feminist theorists, women empowerment has three dimensions such as personal, close relationship and collectives. They developed these dimensions based on Michel Foucault understanding of internalised oppression, which hinders women from exercising power. Thus, the feminist theorist incorporated the idea of 'personal as political' to define women empowerment and considered that women empowerment is a process through which women influence decision-making by participating in formal or informal decision-making (Rowlands, 1996; 1997). Further, it should also be remembered that empowerment is not always a personal process. It is also collective. As it is also a collective outcome thus, it leads to redistribution of power and changing mindset (Batliwala, 1993). Moreover, the term 'empowerment' also includes "the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions" (Rowlands, 1997, p. 14).

Earlier literature has identified various determinants which affect the empowerment of women, such as education (Mitra, 2008; Chakraborty & Mondal, 2014), health, employment status (Heggade & Heggade, 2012), technology and information, knowledge, credit facilities, traditional values, training (Reddy, Krishna, Gopal, Radha, & Rao, 2020; Heggade & Heggade, 2012), exposure (Mitra, 2008), infrastructural facilities, control over resources, ownership (Chatterjee, 2014) etc. Moreover, the earlier studies broke down the empowerment process into three dimensions: economic, which includes women's control over tangible and intangible resources; social, which includes ideology and culture and political, which includes representation and presence of women in political institutions (Acharya & Ghimire, 2005). The above discussion shows that women empowerment is highly contextual and it is space and time-specific. Accordingly, based on the existing concept of women empowerment, this study considered

women empowerment a process through which a woman gains the power to exercise her choices within the household or outside the household level. This study further studies this process at three levels: woman vis-à-vis herself, woman vis-à-vis her family and woman vis-à-vis society.

Methodology

This study's objective is to understand the role of women managed cooperative society in facilitating women members to gain power at various levels, which was earlier denied. Accordingly, the methodology of this study developed to fulfil the objective of this study. We collected both primary and secondary data to fulfil the objectives of this study. The field study was done among the members of the GGPSSCSL. Accordingly, 50 women members were interviewed from four blocks of Gumla, such as Raidih, Gumla, Palkot and Ghagra. The field study was conducted during 2021, but due to the pandemic, the researcher took the route of telephonic interviews. Moreover, the researchers also interviewed the various officials of the cooperative, including supervisors. Secondary data were collected from various reports such as annual reports of the Jharkhand Women Self-Supporting Poultry Cooperative Federation Ltd (JWSSPCFL),² newspaper reports, social media posts such as Facebook. A set of questionnaires also developed for the cooperative officials to understand the operation strategies of the society.

As women's empowerment could be measured at three levels, the researcher developed various questions to measure these. Questions that were asked to understand the empowerment of woman vis-à-vis herself include age, category, personal development such as knowledge towards various rights and entitlement of women, literacy, change in attitude towards the daughters. Women vis-vis her family include decision-making capacity within the household, the attitude of elders, domestic violence, the domestic division of work, and woman vis-à-vis

society, includes questions on participation in local self-governance, decision-making at society level, and change of attitude towards women mobility. The quantitative data was codified for statistical purpose and analysed accordingly. The paper organised into six sections. In the first section, we have stated the problem. Then we conceptualised women empowerment based on the secondary literature review in the second section. Third section deals with the methodology of the research. We have discussed the study area and studied cooperative in the fourth section, while the fifth section is dedicated to discussing the field data. The sixth or last section is the conclusion part of this paper.

The study was conducted at the Gumla district of Jharkhand. Although Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)³ and JWSSPCL have promoted ten cooperatives⁴ registered under the Jharkhand Self-Supporting Cooperative Act, we decided to study the GGPSSCSL for various reasons. The foremost reason for this selection is demographic composition. Gumla is a tribal-dominated district, and around 69.94 per cent of this district's total population belongs to Scheduled Tribes (ST). Accordingly, the total ST lives in the district to total ST population of the state is 16.32 per cent (Directorate of Census Operations). The major tribes of this district are Oraon, Kharia, Munda, Chick-Baraik, Lohra. Further, a few inhabitants of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), such as Asur and Birhor, also live here. The second reason is the nature of the economy. 'More than 86% of the total workers are engaged in Primary sector' (Ibid: 14), and 93.66 per cent of the district's population lives in rural areas (Ibid). We also selected this cooperative for our study because it has the highest number of members among the entire cooperatives promoted by PRADAN and JWSSPCL.

Genesis of GGPSSCSL

As mentioned, Gumla is tribal-dominated district of Jharkhand. Further, it also comes under the aspirational district of India. It is one of the poorest district of India. This prompted PRADAN to initiate their intervention in the district to uplift the livelihoods of the poor. As per the initial activities of livelihood promotion, the PRADAN's professional mobilised the women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and then introduced improved paddy varieties. Soon, it was realised that the introduction of improved paddy, basically *lalat* and other improved vegetables, could not assure year round food availability to the district's entire population, as most of them do not have a huge plot of land. Accordingly, to earn a livelihood, people continuously migrated to various place in the country. So, the PRADAN's professional decided to introduce poultry as livelihoods because this activity was socially and culturally accepted among them. They had the tradition of rearing poultry through traditional methods. (Kakati, Sarmah, & Kakoty, 2021).

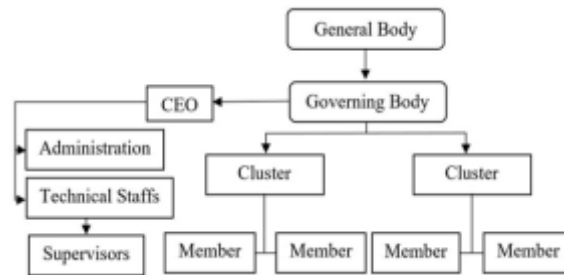
Then the interested and selected women were taken to Lohardoga, another district of Jharkhand, on an exposure trip. This visit to the district and exposure to other successful ventures impressed upon them that it represented a profitable livelihood. A few of them, upon return, decided to emulate this and start their own venture. They took loans from their SHGs to construct the requisite infrastructure. However, soon it was realised that PRADAN could not provide continuous support to them in backward and forward linkages, so it decided to promote cooperative society to become self-sustained.

The model that was adopted was that within the SHG group, they formed a producer group. Six to five producer groups formed one cluster, while all the entire district clusters formed the district level cooperative society. Finally, they registered the cooperative under the Jharkhand Self-Supporting

Cooperative Act with the support of the Department of Cooperative, Government of Jharkhand in 2002. It started with a Rs 12.53 lakh project capital outlay. The Department of Cooperative, Government of Jharkhand, provided the initial funding. Further, after establishing the cooperative, the Jharkhand Grameen Bank mobilised loan to the members for the construction of individual sheds. Further, in 2018, the cooperative introduced digital banking services for women poultry farmer members (Intellectap, 2018). At present, it has 999 members from 20 revenue villages. It presently covers four blocks of Gumla such as Raidih, Palkot, Ghaghara and Chainpur development block. The majority of the members belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST), which accounts

731. One hundred sixty-eight members belong to Scheduled Caste (SC), while rest 100 belong to Other Backward Caste (OBC). It is a good example of a cooperative society managed by its governing body. All the members of the governing body are directly elected by the member of the general body. To be a member of the governing body, she must be a member of the general body. The tenure of this governing body is for three years, and every year, one-third governing body get re-elected to the governing body in the annual general meeting to the cooperative. Further, the operation of the cooperative is looked after by a group of professional under Chief Executive Officer appointed by the Governing Body. He/she is the ex-officio secretary to the board.

Figure1: Operational Structural model of GGPSSCSL



The primary function of the cooperative is to manage the operations and the business of the cooperative. It also ensures both backward and

forward linkage to the members. This cooperative also runs a feed mill situated at Silam village, which is about 10 km far from the headquarter.

Table1: Last five years progress of the GGPSSCSL

Components	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Membership (Nos)	786	857	880	901	971
Annual Sales (Metric Tones)	3006	2949	2768	2978	2898
Annual Turnover (Rs in Lakh)	2228	2401	2346	2373	2365
Members profit (Rs Lakh)	293.34	281.12	256.05	208.7	204.6

Source: Office Records

Supervisors are the backbone of the daily operational activities of the cooperative business. Under the supervision of the technical staff of the cooperative, they provide all the basic support to the members, including procurement of inputs, routine check-up of chicks and birds, training to

new members, and supply of feed. Moreover, although the cooperative arranges the marketing of the final products, supervisors have to monitor the activity at the village level. At present the cooperative society has 27 supervisors, out of which two are women.

Discussion

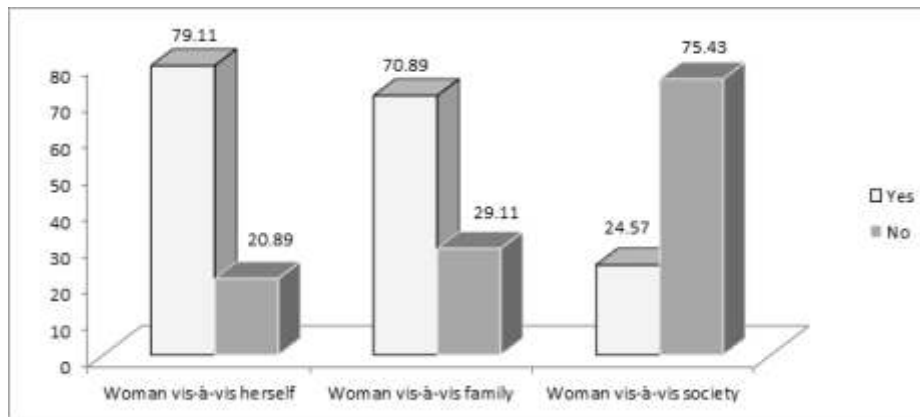
“Gender equality is a fundamental human right and is a prerequisite for sustainable development” (NITI Aayog, 2018, p. 63). Accordingly, one of the major objectives of various policies of the Government of India is to enhance women's position and bring women equal to men's position. At the international level, the fifth goal⁵ of the Sustainable Development Programme is the 'Gender quality' objective calls for an end to all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices against women. Despite various policies, the performance of goal-5 in India is not satisfactory. The SDG index score ranges between 24 and 58 among various states and union territories. Except Kerala, Sikkim and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. None of the other states and union territories achieved an index score above 50 in the SDG index score (Ibid).

However, contrary to various programmes and policies, this study found that GGPSSCSL plays a major role in empowering its members. However, initially, the cooperative was promoted to promote livelihoods by providing backward and forward linkages to its members. However, with time, it become one of the primary agents for women empowerment because of its role in promoting awareness about various aspects of empowerment among the women members.

The foremost reason which enabled the cooperative to become the agent of empowerment lies in the management of the cooperative. As discussed above, the GGPSSCSL is managed and owned by women only. Except for the regular employees of the cooperative and supervisor, the entire internal stakeholders of the cooperative,

from members to board members, are women, thus provides a space to discuss the other issues. As stated above, training (Reddy, Krishna, Gopal, Radha, & Rao, 2020; Heggade & Heggade, 2012), is one of the major determinants of empowerment of tribal women. Similarly, the studied cooperative regularly pertains training to members which enable the members to attain the empowerment. The cooperative society along with technical training such basic management training on poultry also regularly organises leadership training for women.

This study was conducted to understand the impact of cooperative society on women's empowerment at three levels. The field data shows that most of the sample respondents felt that cooperative society's impact was highest at the level of the self-followed by empowerment within household and at society level (See figure-2). Various factors are found to be responsible for this. These factors which acts as hindrances to women empowerment at household and society are traditional norms, patriarchy and kinship. They played a major role in distributing power and resources at household and societal level. For example, among them, it was the men exercised exclusive control over inheritance rights. Therefore, at household and societal level, we observed various stakeholders such as men members, traditional chief etc. However, we have also observed some changes in household and societal level too because of legal changes. For example, the 73rd constitutional amendment act enabled a huge number of women to represent themselves in local self-governing institutions. Thus, this study shows that empowerment is not a linear but multi-dimensional and depends upon various enabling factors.

Figure 2: Degree of empowerment at various level

Source: Field survey

We developed various dimensions to access the cooperative role in empowering women at various levels. Further, each dimension has various indicators (see table-2). Accordingly, to assess the role of cooperative society in empowering women at the first level, i.e. woman vis-à-vis herself, we developed four dimensions. Among these, most respondents said that because of various training imparted by the cooperative, they developed good attitude towards their daughters. Thus the primary agent of socialisation now started to give equal importance to both the sexes at the household level. Moreover, the field data shows that more than 75 per cent respondent said that they had a positive impact over self because of the cooperative.

Five dimensions were undertaken to understand the

role of cooperative society in empowering women at the household level. Except for the two dimensions, the impact of the cooperative is almost satisfactory. The cooperative could not empower women members to claim inheritance right over immovable property, basically land. In fact, the land ownership remained with the men, and it goes passes on from father to son. Further, it did not result in any significant change in the domestic division of labour based on sex, but few respondents said that with the increase of their status in society, or because of their involvement with various activities, their men counterpart started to assist them in domestic work basically in cooking and taking care of children and elders.

Table 2: Impact of cooperative over members

Women vis-à-vis self			
Particular	Increased	No change	Decreased
Level of confidence	80.00	20.00	0
Particular	Changed	No change	No Comment
Attitude towards daughter	97.00	3.00	0
Particular	Yes	No	No Comment
Financial Inclusion	79.20	20.80	0
Knowledge about women's rights	82.00	18.00	0
Women vis-à-vis family			
Particular	Yes	No	No Comment
Elders' attitude change towards women	92.00	8.00	0
Particular	No change	Decreased	Increased
Degree of domestic violence	12.00	88.00	0
Particular	Yes	No	No Comment
participation at household decision making increasing	88.00	12.00	0
Inheritance of property increasing	0.00	100.00	0
Change in division of work	18.00	82.00	0
Women vis-à-vis society			
Particular	Yes	No	No Comment
Change of elders' attitude	50.00	50.00	0
Represented in various institutions	14.40	85.60	0

Source: Authors' calculation based on field data

Only two indicators were developed to assess the role of cooperative society in empowering women members at the society level. These include the change in elders' attitude towards women members and representation in various institutions. As discussed above, the performance of various dimensions of this level is not up to the mark. These are discussed in detail below:

Woman vis-à-vis herself

Major indicators of confidence include whether a woman considers 'self' as 'identity' or not; can participate in anti-liquor movement, and fight

against corruption in Government. However, most women members believed that they could participate in the anti-liquor movement. However, the performance of other indicators is not equal to this indicator. It because the anti-liquor movement is group activity whether the other two indicators is related to an individual. The anti-liquor movement further considers various factors such as 'critical mass'. A similar result is also visible for the case of attitude towards girls' child. As girls' education is a family decision, a significant proportion of women still do not have access to family decisions. One of the pre-condition to access the income of poultry from the cooperative is bank transfer, so the entire

members have bank accounts. Further, *Atal Pension Yojana* is age-specific. Women beyond 40 years cannot enrol for this, so most women

members do not have this account. The field data also shows that women discuss various women's issues. Accordingly, they have ideas of domestic violence act also.

Table 3: Various indicators and performance under woman vis-à-vis herself

Particular	Indicators	Response (in %)	
		Yes	No
Confidence	Considered self as identity	76.00	24.00
	Can participate in anti-liquor movement	94.00	6.00
	Can fight against corruption in government	70.00	30.00
Attitude towards daughter	Importance to daughter education	94.00	6.00
	Equal food and nutrition to daughter	100.00	0.00
Financial Inclusion	PMSBY enrolled	80.00	20.00
	PMJJBY enrolled	76.00	24.00
	APY enrolled	40.00	60.00
	Have saving Bank Account	100.00	0.00
Knowledge about women's rights	Know Domestic Violence Act	82.00	18.00

Source: Authors' calculation based on field data

Woman vis-à-vis family

One of the major indicators of empowerment of women is participation in decision making (Kumar & Sreedhara, 2006; (Rowlands, 1996; 1997). As decision making in the context of empowerment cannot be at the individual level as it influences others, this dimension we kept in woman vis-à-vis family. This can also be assessed for woman vis-à-vis society level. However, we decided not to measure these factors at the society level. It will be

too early to assess at the society level now because of various other structural factors such as tradition. We asked five questions related to income, farming, mobility, and girl's education and marriage to access the decision making. Among these indicators, performance is lowest for decision making on farming. Therefore, this research found that farming is still the exclusive activity of men. Further cultural notions like "seeds and farm" (Dube, 2001) and women are not allowed to plough the land.

Table 4: Various indicators and performance under woman vis-à-vis family

Particular	Indicators	Response (in %)	
		Yes	No
Attitude of Elder	Encouraging	92.00	8.00
Participation in decision making	Whether have decision over own income	88.00	12.00
	Whether have decision over family faming	76.00	24.00
	Whether have decision over own mobility	88.00	12.00
	whether have decision over girls education	94.00	6.00
	Whether have decision over girls marriage	94.00	6.00
Property Right	Whether have inheritance right	0.00	100.00
Division of work	Whether men undertaking domestic works	18.00	82.00
Level of domestic violence	Decreasing	88.00	12.00

Source: Authors' calculation based on field data

Under the attitude of elders, we tried to understand the attitude of men members towards women within the household. Several questions were asked, such as how they see the involvement of women with cooperative, other institutions and how they are assisting them in family income etc. The majority of the respondents said that their men member's view changes after their involvement in economic activities. They started to recognise the economic activities of women. Further, few of them also supported them in domestic activity. Thus earning from individual initiative led to change of perception of others towards them. Despite changing attitude of elders towards women and the increasing involvement of women in decision making, women are still denied inheritance to property.

Another major dimension of women empowerment vis-à-vis family is domestic violence. However, it should be remembered that domestic violence is the outcome of women's knowledge of domestic violence. However, it is the outcome of group pressure or peereffect.

Woman vis-à-vis society

Empowerment does not relate to the individual alone but has a social dimension. However, the impact of empowerment measures at the individual level without understanding the role of the society, the study of empowerment cannot be completed. As stated above, empowerment is a process through which those sections get power who earlier denied to exercise their power (Kabeer, 1999; Rowlands, 1996). Accordingly, this study gave importance to the empowerment of women in the study of their society.

Being a tribal society, many of the social norms are based on tribal culture. If these customary laws are not obeyed, then the offender may be of excommunicated or expelled. Accordingly, many taboos and customary laws exist in a society that prevents a woman from achieving empowerment. For example, as discussed above, inheritance of property, ploughing of land etc are taboo. Thus without considering the social implication discussion about the empowerment of women could be misleading

Customary laws are major attributes of any tribal

society. However, our focus was to understand legal measure beyond the customary laws. Thus, to access empowerment of women vis-à-vis society we took two dimensions of empowerment: attitude of elders and peer to women and representation in various institutions. The attitude of elders further comprises two different indicators: the attitude of men members to women and the attitude of women towards women. A series of questions were asked to assess these indicators, such as how men see the role of women in various social development activities such as the anti-liquor movement, girls' education, cleanliness of the villages etc. The majority of women respondent said that the attitude of men elders to these activities was encouraging. In fact, in society, men started to give due importance to advice and feedback of women. Here cooperative played a major role in encouraging women to involve in various activity. In the group meeting of women rearers, irrespective of producer group, cluster, governing body or general body meeting, only women were allowed to participate. No men family members are allowed to attend these meeting. This provides a place to women

discuss various issues of women and encourage them to take up various activities.

The second indicator of this dimension of elder attitude was how the peer women measure their works. Interestingly, only 24 per cent of respondent said that their position enhanced among the women, and the rest said that there were no changes. The score is less in this indicator as simultaneously the entire women are enhancing their position equality.

Though the tribal society comes under the ambit of the constitutional laws but they also have to follow various traditional laws. A certain number of taboos are also imposed among them. For example, Santal women cannot take bundle bow and arrows (Sinha, 2005; Nathan & Kelkar, 1991). However, recent studies show that these kinds of taboo have gone out of practice. Interestingly, the young generation are not even aware that any such prohibitions existed (Kumari, 2020). Similarly, we have also observed some changes in traditional activities that are followed in daily life

Table 5: Various indicators and performance under woman vis-à-vis society

Particular	Indicators	Response (in %)	
		Yes	No
Attitude of Elder	Encouraging	76.00	24.00
Attitude among women	Encouraging	24.00	76.00
Representation and having leadership in various institutions	PRIs	10.00	90.00
	SHGs	36.00	64.00
	Clusters	20.00	80.00
	Governing Board of the Cooperative	4.00	96.00
	Governing Board of the Federation	2.00	98.00

Source: Field Data

The third most important indicator of women empowerment vis-à-vis society represent women in various institutions such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Cluster, Governing Body of Cooperative and

Governing Body of Federation. PRIs is a three-tier local self-governing intuition the legality of which is recognised by the Indian constitution. It is the lowest level of governance of Indian democracy. Although only 10 per cent of sample members

represented these institutions, the number is extremely significant as only a few years ago these women feared to speak in public meeting. Today it is common to see a few of them are presidents, or member of various institutions of PRIs. Moreover, if we consider the number of women who contested in these elections, the trend of empowerment is certainly notable.

It is reported that after becoming a member of the cooperative, many women are encouraged by the group members to hold the various leadership positions of SHGs, such as president, secretary or treasurer. Since the Cluster is an internal part of the cooperative, quite a few respondents are seen holding leadership in these clusters. The number of sample women in the governing body of cooperative and federation is less because the tenure of these positions is three years, and the board comprises of only seven members.

Conclusion

As shown by this study, empowerment is not

generated at 'self'; rather, it is the outcome of external forces. However, the impact of empowerment is more at the individual level rather than the external environment. After forming the cooperative society, this study shows that women work collectively, assisting them in realising the importance of strategic life choices. Further, both women space and critical mass also play a major role in empowering women. Although here, the empowerment process is not dealing with 'power over'; rather, it is 'power within'. Although there is less change in structure in society, the agent of social changes is empowering. Thus, the women cooperative provides a base for women space to discuss their issues and thus empowered by them.

Although the cooperative has enhanced the status of women both within and outside the household, it also increased the work pressure on women because of lack of change in structural work division based on sex. Thus, this study found that empowerment is not only a redistribution of resources; alternatively, it depends on structural changes.

End Notes:

¹Critical conscience advocates that consciousness assists individuals to take collective action to transform social reality. Therefore, the notion of conscientisation assists an individual to change his /her attitude and perception towards critical action. For further details, see Freire, Paulo. 1974/2005. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. London: Continuum.

²It is the top layer of cooperatives promoted by PRADAN in Jharkhand. It was registered under Jharkhand Self-Supporting Cooperative Act in 2002, and headquarter is situated at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

³PRADAN or Professional Assistant for Development Action is a not for profit organisation based in Delhi. It was registered under Society Registration Act 1860 in 1983.

⁴The member cooperatives are- Gumla Grameen Poultry Cooperative Society Ltd, Lohardaga Grameen Poultry Cooperative Society Ltd, Petarbar Grameen Poultry Cooperative Society Ltd, Potka Grameen Poultry Cooperative Society Ltd, Godda Grameen Poultry Cooperative Society Ltd, Ekta Mahila Kukut palak Swalambi Sahkari Samiti Ltd, Patamda Grameen Poultry Cooperative Society Ltd, Torpa Grameen Poultry Co-operative Society Ltd, Panchakot Mahila Poultry Producer Company Ltd, and Baitarni Women SHG Member Poultry Co-operative Ltd.

⁵The goal of Gender equality includes ends of all forms of discrimination against women; all forms of violence; harmful practices; recognised and value the unpaid reproductive and domestic work; ensure participation of women in decision making in various spheres of life; provide access to sexual and reproductive health; equal rights to economic resources; access to technology; and adopting policies to ensure gender equality. For details, see NITI Aayog. (2018). *SDG India Index: Baseline Report, 2018*. New Delhi: Government of India.

References

- Acharya, M., & Ghimire, P. (2005). Gender Indicators of Equality, Inclusion and Poverty Reduction: Measuring Programme/Project Effectiveness. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(44-45), 4719-28.
- Ashtankar, O. (2015). Importance of cooperative movement for Indian agriculture sector. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 1(11), 557-561.
- Banerjee, N. (1994). Grassroot Empowerment (1975-1990): A Discussion Paper. *New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies*.
- Batliwala, S. (1993). Empowerment of Women in South Asia: Concepts and Practices. *New Delhi: FAO-FFHC/AD*.
- Batliwala, S. (1994). The meaning of Women's Empowerment : New Concepts from Action. In L. C. Chen, G. Sen, & A. Germain(Eds), *Population Policies Reconsidered : Health, Empowerment, and Right* (pp. 127-38). Boston MA: Havard School of Public Health.
- Beck, T., & Stelcner, M. (1997). The why and how of Gender-Sensitive Indicators : A Project level handbook. *Quebec, Canada: Canadian International Development Agency*.
- Chakraborty, D., & Mondal, D. (2014). 'Role of Education in Women Empowerment: A Case Study on the Social Development of the 'Santal' of Birbhum District, West Bengal. *New Men International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(12), 315-22.
- Charlier, S., Caubergs, L., Malpas, N., & Kakiba, M. (2007). *The Women empowerment approach- A methodological guide*. Belgium: Commission on Women and Development.
- Chatterjee, P. (2014). Social and Economic status of tribal women in India – The challenges and the Road Ahead. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(2), 55-60.
- Chowdary, A. K. (2019). Role of Co-oprative Societies in Rural Marketing: A Study of Perishable Products in selected district of Andhra Pradesh. *Bengaluru: An unpublised PhD thesis submitted to Department of Management, GITAM (Deemed to be) University*.
- Das, B., Palai, N. K., & Das, K. (2006). Problems and Prospects of the Cooperative Movement in India under the Globalization Regime. *XIV International Economic History Congress, Session 72*. Helsinki.
- Das, S. K. (2011). Women Empowerment and Self-Help Group : An Analytical study of Constraints in Karbi Anglong District of Assam. *Journal of North East Studies*, 1(1), 1-22.
- Directorate of Census Operations. (n.d.). Census 2011- District Census Handbook: Gumla . *Ranchi: Directorate of Census Operations, Jharkhand*.
- Dube, L. (2001). Anthropological Explorations in Gender: Intersecting Fields . *New Delhi: SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd*.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. In H. L. Dreyfus, & P. Rabinow(Eds), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (pp. 208-26). Brighton: Harvester.
- Freire, P. (1974/2005). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. London: Continuum.
- Gertler, M. (2001). Rural Co-operatives and Sustainable Development. *Saskatoon SK: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan*.
- Gupta, K., & Kishor, S. (2004). Women's Empowerment in India and Its States : Evidence from NFHS. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(7), 694-712.
- Heggade, P., & Heggade, O. D. (2012). Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women in Karnataka: A Case Study in Mysore and Chamarajanagara Districts. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, 10(2), 173-181.
- Intelcap. (2018). Intelcap Enables Digital Banking Services for Tribal Women Poultry Farmers in Jharkhand. Retrieved from Intelcap: <https://www.intelcap.com/announcements/intelcap-enables-digital-banking-services-for-tribal-women-poultry-farmers-in-jharkhand/>
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources Agency and Achievements: Reflections on Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435-64.
- Kakati, B. K., Sarmah, A. K., & Kakoty, S. (2021). Cooperative is an economically viable social enterprise in the study of JWSSPCFL. *Local Development & Society*. Retrieved April 28, 2021, from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26883597.2021.1907214?src=>
- Kumar, M. A., & Sreedhara, T. N. (2006). Measuring Empowerment of Women in Socio-Economic Development. In J. Arunachalam, & U. Kalpagam(Eds), *Development and Empowerment : Rural Women in India* (pp. 145-67). Jaipur: Rawat Publishers.
- Kumar, S. M. (2003). Consumer's Cooperatives in Karnataka-A case study of Mysore district . *Department Of Studies In Economics & Cooperation : An unpublished PhD thesis submitted to Department of Studies in Economics & Cooperation, University of Mysore*.
- Kumari, A. (2020). The Gender Politics of Plough: Asymmetrical Taboos and Santal Women. *Sociological Bulletin*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038022920970302>
- Lallawmawma, J. C. (2013). Cooprative Societies in Mizoram: Problems and Prospects. *Aizawl: An unpublished PhD thesis submitted to Department of Public Administration, Mizoram University*.
- Lindberg, S., Athreya, V. B., Vidyasagar, R., Djurfekdt, G., & Rajagopal, A. (2011). 'A Silent 'Revolution' ? Women's Empowerment in Rural Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(13), 111-20.

- Luttrell, C., Quiroz, S., Scrutton, C., & Bird, K. (2009). *Understanding and Operationising Empowerment*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Mitra, A. (2008). The status of women among the scheduled tribes in India. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 37(3), 1202-1217.
- Mugambwa, J. (2005). The Saga of the Co-operative Movement in Papua New Guinea. *Journal of South Pacific Law*, 9(1). Retrieved August 8, 2020, from <http://www.paclii.org/journals/fJSPL/vol09no1/1.shtml>
- Nathan, D., & Kelkar, G. (1991). *Gender and tribe: Women, land and forests*. Delhi: Kali for Women.
- NITI Aayog. (2018). *SDG India Index: Baseline Report, 2018*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- Oxaal, Z., & Baden, S. (1997). *Gender and empowerment : definitions, approaches and implications for policy*. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- Pramod, K. P. (2010). Role of Cooprative movement in sustaining rural economy in the context of economic reforms: A case study of Ahmednagar district . *Pune: An unpublished PhD thesis submitted to Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth* .
- Reddy, I., Krishna, T. G., Gopal, P. S., Radha, Y., & Rao, V. S. (2020). A Profile of Agricultural Labourer in Andhra Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Pure & Applied Bioscience*, 8(6), 205-212.
- Rowlands, J. (1996). Empowerment examined. In D. Eade(Ed), *Development and Social Diversity* . (pp. 86-92). UK: Oxfam.
- Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*. UK: Oxfam.
- Sadan, E. (2004). *Empowerment and Community Planning*. Retrieved June 01, 2021, from http://www.mpow.org/elisheva_sadan_empowerment.pdf
- Satyanarayana, N., Hasan, B., & Singh, T. (2018). *Indian Cooperative Movement: A Statistical Profile 2018*. New Delhi: National Cooperative Union of India.
- Sen, A. (2000/2012). *Development as Freedom*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, G. (1997). Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty. *Working Paper Series*, No-97.07. Cambridge: Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.
- Singh, K., & Pundir , R. S. (2000). *Co-operatives and Rural Development in India*. Anand: Institute of Rural Management.
- Singh, K., & Singh, V. P. (1998). *Dairy Development in India: Retrospect and Prospect: Research Paper 15*. Anand: Institute of Rural Management.
- Sinha, S. S. (2005). *Restless Mothers and Turbulent Daughters: Situating Tribes in Gender Studies*. Kolkata: Stree.
- Smith, S. (2011). *Promoting co operatives, a guide to ILO recommendation 193*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- Snijders, A. L. (2009). Microcredit and women's empowerment in South India. *Rotterdam: A paper presented in Second European Research Conference on Microfinance*, Erasmus University, 16-18 June.
- Tawney, R. H. (1931). *Equality*. London : Allen and Unwin.
- Wilkinson, G. (1998). Theories of Power. In G. Wilkinson, & M. Miers(Eds), *Power and Nursing Practice* (pp. 33-71). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.