

## **Micro Finance: An Effective Tool for Rural Women Empowerment**

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Women empowerment has become a catchword today and has got a significant place in socio-economic development programs of the government. Microfinance is the provision of sustainable financial services to low-income people. The Micro-credit summit held in Washington D.C. in 1997 defined micro-credit programs as those that ‘extend small loans to poor for self employment projects that generate income, allowing them to care for themselves and their families’.

The objectives of this research paper were to take a brief review of the role of Micro-finance in the empowerment of rural women, to examine the perception and attitude of women towards Micro-finance through Self Help Groups, to examine the role and effectiveness of SHGs in improving socio-economic status of rural women and to identify the problems of SHGs in empowering rural women and to make suggestive measures for the future.

The present study is an empirical and analytical investigation based on primary data collected through well designed questionnaires and personal interviews of the respondents. It consist 150 sample beneficiaries of SHG members from 10 villages of Khultabad and Gangapur Taluka of Aurangabad District from Maharashtra, India. 15 respondents from each village were selected as samples, which forms the total sample size of the study. The data collected from them through various sources has been processed and analyzed by using percentage and common size statement.

The major findings includes– Micro-finance is playing vital role in empowering the rural women. Out of the 150 sample beneficiaries, 98 beneficiaries has started their own small business. 28 beneficiaries are working in a group to sell the Dairy products, like – Milk, Curd, Pure Ghee, etc. and remaining 24 beneficiaries, as an SHG member, has taken the micro finance for agricultural purpose to cultivate their own land. This all indicates an effective role of Micro-finance in empowering rural women.

***Key words:*** SHG, Micro-credit, Women Empowerment, Micro-fund