

# The Function of Social Capital in Self-Help Groups as Developmental Platforms

**Jyoti and Dr. Ram Darshan**

Department of Political Science

Shri JTT University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India

**Abstract:** Governmental organizations and financial organizations are increasingly using women-led self-help groups (SHGs) as platforms for carrying out development initiatives. The effectiveness and equity of SHGs as platforms for providing livelihoods or health interventions, however, are presently little understood. Though the precise processes have not yet been investigated, social capital is thought to offer a competitive advantage when using SHGs as development platforms. via the analysis of 64 interviews and 6 focus group discussions gathered from an agricultural and behavior change intervention provided via SHGs in eastern India, this research explores the effectiveness and equity of SHGs as platforms for development initiatives. Although SHGs are a potentially effective medium for spreading health messages, we discover that this is mostly contingent on SHG attendance standards, which are strongly correlated with social capital and socioeconomic circumstances. Social capital is crucial between SHGs and the implementing organization, as well as within SHGs. Compared to locations with higher rates of poverty and younger SHGs, those with more established SHGs were able to participate more actively in the intervention due to their increased economic security. Additionally, the former locations accepted more interventions because they had higher norms of reciprocity and trust (social capital) with the implementing organization. It was challenging for SHG members to attend both SHG meetings and health sessions in the later locations due to conflicting demands on their time and a lack of confidence in the implementers. According to our materialist theory of social capital creation, new activities cannot be effectively added to a SHG's agenda until its members have already reaped significant benefits from participation. Furthermore, delivering nutrition messages via SHGs shouldn't take precedence over one-on-one interactions with the community's most vulnerable members.

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