

Self Help Groups among the Ao Nagas : A Case Study of Alongkima of Nagaland, NorthEast India

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Abstract : Self Help Groups (SGHs) are socio-commercial instruments in addressing urban poverty and strengthening livelihoods. Being a member of Self Help Group helped in mutual exchanges of ideas, develop risk taking behaviour, learns flexibility in planning of a programme, and interpersonal communication within the group. In the present study, an attempt has been made to examine the functions, characteristics and practices of Self Help Groups and its impact on sustainable development among the Ao Nagas of Alongkima, Nagaland, NorthEast India. They are a tribal group and racially belong to the Mongoloid stock and linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman group. They follow endogamous, patriarchal, and patrilineal system. Major characteristics of Self Help groups in this study are found to be team spirit and group cohesiveness. Such groups are found to be geared towards a number of self-sufficiency based business ventures. The problems faced in normal functioning of the groups are unpunctuality and the inability to attend a meeting by all the members. Participation in such groups has increased women's influence over the economic resources and decision making in the household, improved self-confidence and living standard, capacity building, self-dependent and self-reliant with no educational and entrepreneurial background, generate savings and hone their skills as motivators and leaders. All these has enhanced her status in every sphere of life in par with the opposite gender. In a nutshell, we can say that what she cannot achieve as an individual, she can achieve as a member of a Self Help Group. Hence, we should try to develop mechanisms to guarantee the sustainability of Self Help Groups which depends on the way they can deal with both internal and external conflicts like globalization and competition from new markets.

Keywords : Ao nagas, microfinance, self help group, women empowerment

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