UNIT 13: VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

UNIT STRUCTURES

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Meaning of voluntary organizations
13.3 Self Help Groups
13.3.1 Objectives
13.3.2 Need for formation of Women Self Help Groups(SHG's)
13.4 Role of Voluntary Organisations and Self Help Groups's in empowering women
13.4.1 Volunteering India Helping you helping others
13.4.2 Swadhina: Changing life and living:
13.4.3 SEWA: Self Employed Women's Association:
13.4.4 Rural Education and Action Development (READ)
13.4.5 Shri MahilaGriha Udyog LijjatPapad
13.5 Let us sum up
13.6 Further Readings
13.7 Answers to check your progress
13.8 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and signification of voluntary organisations
- Role of voluntary sectors in empowering women
- Strategies and services provided by different organizations

13.2 MEANING OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

The term 'voluntarism' is derived from the Latin word 'voluntas' which means will or freedom. It is that action or activity which is governed by its own members and not directed or controlled directly by any state.

Collins English Dictionary defines voluntary organization as an organization that is composed of or functions with the aid of volunteers and which provides aid or services to individuals, groups or countries.

Voluntary organizations are oriented towards the service of poor, needy, neglected etc. Its primary goal is to ameliorate the conditions of the deprived, and disadvantaged groups.

The term voluntary organization has been interchangeably used for the voluntary associations or agencies or Non governmental organizations (NGOs).

13.3 SELF HELP GROUPS

Self Help Group refers to the group of people with same socio-economic background. These people have a desire to fulfill some common purposes collectively. It usually consists of 15-20 members who are governed by themselves.

Here poor people voluntarily come together to save whatever amount they can save conveniently out of their earnings, to mutually agree to contribute to a common fund. They thus lend those savings in form of micro loans to other members of the SHG for meeting their productive and emergent needs. SHG's helps poor people generate wealth as well as increase their standard of living in society by providing income generating assets like bullocks, sheep, poultry, goats and sewing machines. Those who take the loan repay the money in monthly installments with interest, so that the money in the revolving fund can be used continuously. These groups have helped the poor sections to uplift their status.

SHG's adopt the participatory approach Its members meet regularly to discuss the issues of interest and to participate and find solutions to the common problems. These groups may or may not be promoted by government or non-government institutions. Members of these groups inculcate in themselves in development of their skills.

Objectives of SHGS

- To inculcate the habits of saving among the members.

- To secure them from financial, technical and moral strengths.
- To enable themselves to avail loan for productive purposes.
- To gain economic prosperity through loan/credit.
- To gain from collective wisdom through organising and managing their own finance and distributing the benefits among themselves.
- To sensitize women of target area for the need of SHG and its relevance in their empowerment.
- To create We feeling among women.
- To enhance the confidence and capabilities of women.
- To develop the skill of decision making among women.
- To motivate women to take up social responsibilities particularly related to women's development.
- It acts as the forum for members to provide space and support to each other.

Need for formation of Women Self Help Groups(SHGS)

Women in general and poor and deprived women in particular lack not only power and financial freedom but knowledge and opportunity as well. Since may women are illiterates or semi-illiterates, they do not go to bank for loans but contact money lenders who give loans at much higher rates. And out of poverty most of the times they are unable to pay the debt on time pushing them in vicious circle of poverty. These people are left not only behind but away from the main stream of society. Thus formation of SHG's which act as a bank for them helps these women a lot.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. The word voluntarism is derived from which word?

Q2. What is the meaning of the term voluntas?

Q3. How many members usually can form a Self Help Group?

Q4. Can a rich person become a member of SHG?

Q5. What is the main objective of SHG?

Q6. How does SHG help its poor members?

13.4 ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND SELF HELP GROUPS IN EMPOWERING WOMEN

13.4.1 Volunteering India Helping you helping others

It is a women empowerment program that work for the welfare and social development of women who are underprivileged and belong to from poor background's, within the capital city of Delhi. All these women come from deprived families and have low or no education level. These women are in utmost need of support, love and care.

Thus the volunteers who join this program are expected to share the warmth of love with these women. Volunteers working with these programs are highly determined and understanding. They find this project both challenging and rewarding. These volunteers adjust with the situations and try to share the knowledge they possess as learning new skills can help these women become independent which is the ultimate goal of this program.

Volunteering India, welcome people from any part of the world to join their programs as volunteers. Majority of their volunteers are from USA, UK, Europe and Australia apart from India.

Role played by the volunteers of Volunteering India

- Engage with girls in the age group of 16-20 years and conduct English classes for them so that they can improve their language skills. This would help them in this English oriented world.
- Volunteers having skills like beautician work, stitching and handicraft work give training to these women
- Provide guidance for nutritional and wholesome diet.
- Help and give computer training to these women in the organization.

Necessary requirements to participate in the Volunteering India projects:

- Volunteers must be 17 year or older at the time of joining the project. Medical Program volunteers must be at least 18 at the time of joining.

- 16 year old volunteers can participate in Childcare projects with a Letter of Consent from their parents.
- Need to have an open mind and flexible attitude for working in a new and different environment. India is a country of different cultures and traditions, though it is modernized, the cultural sensitivities need to be kept in mind. The volunteers should bring energy and enthusiasm to make a difference.
- Must be in good health.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7. Whom does the volunteering India program work for?

Q8. Where does the volunteering India program activated?

Q9. Can anyone from outside India join this project?

Q10. What kind of skills volunteers must possess?

Q11. What is the minimum age requirement for joining the medical program as volunteer?

13.4.2 Swadhina: Changing Life & Living

Swadhina, established in 1986, is primarily a civil society organization focused on Empowerment of women & Child Development based on Sustainable Development and Right Livelyhood.Swadhina means Self-esteemed women. It implies making women believe and have confidence in her own ability and value.

Slow and gradual Change in any society is necessary for its survival but positive social change has a direct effect on the lives of women and that change is possible only through an equal and spontaneous participation of Women. This organization is active in five states across the country in remote tribal districts of Singbhums in Jharkhand, Purulia and West Midnapur in West Bengal,Kanya Kumari in Tamil Nadu, Mayurbhanj in Orissa and East Champaran in Bihar. Over 3200 families, 80 villages, 5100 women and 2400 children belonging to economically backward classes are covered under Swadhina programmes.

Objectives:

- Promoting Grass-Root level Women's Organization
- Fostering Functional Literacy, Education & Social Awareness generation
- Augmenting Participation of Women in Local Governance
- Encouraging Women's Income Generation & economic capacity building
- Strengthening Women's Participation in Agriculture & Food Security support
- Upholding Non-Violence & Social Empowerment
- Improving Family Health & Nutrition

Some of the Significant Activities are:

- Providing Functional Literacy Classes to women so that they could learn things pertinent to their practical life like keeping an account of their grains, learning to count profit from vegetable sales, knowing the basics of health -care like reading a thermometer, knowing the nutrition needs of their family etc. Besides these, providing basic literacy know-how of simple reading and writing, knowing-how to sign their names.
- Providing alternative small-scale income generation schemes for women during the period when they do not have agricultural work. This would also help the women to be self-dependant.
- Providing supportive health care for women through health awareness camps, promoting healthy living & nutrition through nutrition demonstration camps and providing awareness on cheap, indigenous nutrition alternatives.
- Providing Skill-trainings through Capacity Building processes. This would give a scope to the women to have a better life and a better tomorrow. Also these trainings would have a social impact. Trainings on local, emergency health care for young women, making environment-friendly products, developing food products using locally available re-sources are some of the trainings imparted under this scheme.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q12. When was Swadhina established?

Q13. In how many states does Swadhina active?

Q14. Name few activities undertaken by Swadhina?

13.4.3 SEWA: Self Employed Women's Association

SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. It is an organisation of poor, self-employed women workers. These are women who earn a living through their own labour or small businesses. They do not obtain regular salaried employment with welfare benefits like workers in the organised sector. They are the unprotected labour force of our country. Constituting 93% of the labour force, these are workers of the unorganised sector. Of the female labour force in India, more than 94% are in the unorganised sector. However their work is not counted and hence remains invisible.

Main goals:

- Full employment: Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter). SEWA organises women to ensure that every family obtains full employment.
- Self Reliance: By self-reliance, it means that women should be autonomous and free, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability.

The goals of full employment and self reliance are achieved through the strategy of struggle and development. The struggle is against the constraints and limitations imposed on them by society and the economy, while development activities strengthen women's bargaining power and offer them new alternatives. Practically, the strategy is carried out through the joint action of union and cooperatives. Gandhian thinking is the guiding force for SEWA's poor, self-employed members in organising for social change. They

follow the principles of satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), sarvadharma (integrating all faiths, all people) and khadi (propagation of local employment and self reliance).

SEWA's Membership

SEWA members are the women workers who have no fixed employee-employer relationships implying no fixed salary threatening their survival when they are in dire straits and depend on their own labour for survival. They are poor, illiterate and vulnerable. They barely have any assets or working capital. But they are extremely economically active, contributing very significantly to the economy and society with their labour. In fact, 64% of GDP is accounted for by the self - employed of our country. There are Four types of self-employed women workers:

- Hawkers, vendors and small business women like vegetable, fruit, fish, egg and other vendors of food items, household goods and garment vendors.
- Home-based workers like weavers, potters, bidi and agarbatti workers, papad rollers, ready-made garment workers, women who process agricultural products and artisans etc.
- Manual labourers& service providers like agricultural labourers, construction workers, contract labourers, handcart pullers, head loaders, domestic workers and laundry workers.
- Producers who invest their labour and capital to carry out their businesses. This category includes Agriculture, cattle rearers, salt workers, gum collectors, cooking & vending etc.

SEWA Services

Supportive services like savings and credit, health care, child care, insurance, legal aid, capacity building and communication services are important needs of poor women. The goals of full employment and self reliance could only be achieved if these services are available to them.SEWA do not provide these services directly to the poor women but help them organize these supportive services for

themselves focusing on their overall development. Many important lessons have been learnt in the process of organising supportive services for and by poor women. They provide these services in a decentralised and affordable manner, at the doorsteps of workers. Further, supportive services can be and are themselves a source of self-employment. For example, midwives charge for their services and creche workers collect fees for taking care of young children.

SEWA Bank: SEWA Bank was established in 1974 with 4000 members each contributed Rs.10 as share capital. Today there are 93,000 active depositors.

Swashrayi Mahila Sewa Sahakari Bank is SEWA members' largest cooperative, the first of its kind in India. The bank is owned by the self-employed women as share holders; policies are formulated by their own elected Board of women workers. The Bank is professionally run by qualified managers accountable to the Board.

Health Care: SEWA has helped its members obtain health care which is run by women themselves. Their approach emphasizes health education as well as curative care. It also involves coordination and collaboration with government health services for immunization, micronutrient supplementation, family planning, tuberculosis control and referral care at public hospitals, dispensaries and primary health centers.

Legal Services: SEWA's experience in organising workers over the past twenty-six years has shown that they have to face the law and the police frequently at various times in their lives. Hence, since the very beginning, SEWA has been providing legal education and support in court cases to its members. In addition, they have been running a legal advisory centre at SEWA which accepts cases and complaints lodged by members.

These include:

- Vendors' cases with regard to harassment by Municipal Corporation, traffic police and resident and consumer associations. It also

includes their space-related complaints and those concerning confiscation of their goods by the authorities.

- Workmen's compensation cases for injured construction workers and those engaged in small factories for non-payment of wages by contractors.

Capacity Building of SEWA Members: SEWA Academy is their members' university. It is the focal point for workers' education and capacity-building. The Academy stresses the self-development of the worker in order that their talents may be encouraged and developed, and they develop self-confidence and leadership skills. It is also the means by which SEWA unites its large and diverse membership through common ideology, thus building their movement - the SEWA movement.

Educational process also developed with Academy's special input, 20,000 women participated in the workers' education which covered issues such as organising, our role in the economy, women's movement and values of the SEWA movement. In addition to these educational programmes, SEWA Academy activities are centered on aound the following activities.

- Training
- Literacy
- Research and Policy Action; and
- Communication through Print and Electronic Media



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q15. What is the full form of SEWA?

Q16. When was SEWA registered?

Q17. What are the main goals of SEWA?

Q18. Who are the SEWA members?

Q19. Name few SEWA services.

13.4.4 Rural Education and Action Development (READ)

It is an NGO, with the headquater in Andimadam (Ariyalur District, Tamil Nadu India) started by Mr. D. Selvam to help and empower the local

people in his area. It works to improve the social, educational and economic conditions of the underprivileged, disadvantaged and vulnerable people, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

READ came into existence during 1994. It started as a voluntary organization (registered under the Societies Registration Act 27 of 1975) with the contribution of a group of committed social workers who had been in the field of social work for a decade.

The history and formation of the self-help groups at READ:

- In 1997, READ was the first organization in its area to introduce the concept of women self-help groups, and 5 women self-help groups were formed in Andimadam Block of Ariyalur District (in the villages of Periyakrishnapuram, Thanjavooranchavai, Vilandai, Vilandai Colony and Keelnaduvai).
- Since then, the program has expanded a lot. With financial support from the MahalirThittam project of the Tamil Nadu Corporation for the Development of Women Ltd., (TNCDW), The Council for Advancement of People`s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) and Sahaya International, READ has currently organized more than 1300 groups, each with 10-15 members.

Functioning Women Self Help Group

Members of the SHG's are given training properly by the READ staff including Rules and regulations of SHG, they ase also provided Animators training, Accounts training, Leadership development Training, Capacity building training, Entrepreneurs Training,Self employment Training. After the training, the SHG members start micro-savings and credit activities, as each member are asked to contribute at least Rs. 50 per month which could then be used for internal micro-loans (i.e., to members within the same group). Loans are used for a variety of purposes including micro-income generating activities.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q20. What is the full form of READ?

Q21. When does READ form?

Q22. Who started READ?

Q23. What is READ?

Q24. How does women SHG"s help women?

Q25. What kind of training is given to SHG's members?

13.4.5 Shri Mahila Griha Udyog : Lijjat Papad

It is a unique organisation of the women, by the women, for the women which symbolizes women's strength. Formed on 15 march 1959 by 7 ladies at Girgaum in Mumbai with a borrowed sum of Rs 80 has a turnover of Rs 334cr today. Not only this, now there are 82 authorized branches all over India which in its initial stage was at the roof of their house. Membership has also expanded from an initial of 7 sisters to over 43,000 sisters throughout India. The institution is not limited to the production of Lijjat Papad but produce other products as well like traditional Masala, ready mix masala, Detergent powder, laundry soap, gehu atta, chapattis, appalam. They export their products to the countries like UK, USA, Middle East countries, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Holland, Japan, Australia and other countries.

Objective

The objective of the institution is to provide self-employment to the women to enable them to earn decent and dignified livelihood. The institution, over the years, has paved the way for women to become self-reliant and self-confident. Lijjat has provided them the right platform to improve their status in society. Any woman who agrees to abide by the objectives of the institution can become a member of the Institution without discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and colour etc.

The institution doesnot accept any kind of donation, charity, gift or grant from any quarter. On contrary the member sisters donate collectively from time to time for social causes as per their capacity.

Synthesis of three concepts Can be found in this institute

- The concept of Business
- The concept of family
- The concept of Devotion

All these three concepts are completely and uniformly followed in this institution.

From the very beginning the institution has adopted the concept of business i.e All its dealings are carried out on a sound and pragmatic footing-production of quality goods and at reasonable prices. Besides the concept of business, all affairs of the institution are dealt in a manner similar to that of a family carrying out its own daily household chores with affection, concern and trust. But the most important concept is that of devotion. The institution is never merely a place to earn one's livelihood but a place of worship to devote one's energy not for his or her own benefits but for the benefits of all.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q26. When was the Shri MahilaGriha Udyog LijjatPapad formed?

Q27. With how many women does the organisation formed?

Q28. Who can become a member of the organization?

Q29. What is the main reason for the formation of Lijjatpapad organization?

Q30. Name the three concepts on which the institution of Lijjat works?



13.5 LET US SUM UP

- The term 'voluntary' means will or freedom.
- Self Help Group refers to the group of people usually 15-20 members who have same socio-economic background and aims at helping other members in need by giving loan easy to return.

- SHG's inculcate the savings and banking habits among members.
- Members of SHG's develop management and decision making skills due to their regular meetings for common problems and solution findings.
- Volunteering India Helping you helping others is a women empowerment program that works for the welfare and social development of women who are underprivileged and belongs from poor backgrounds, within the capital city of Delhi.
- Volunteers of volunteering India have particular skills like beautician work, stitching and handicraft work, communication skills and hold on English language and thus give training to the deprived women.
- Swadhina: changing life and living, a civil society organization was established in 1986.
- Swadhina aims atpromoting Grass-Root level Women's Organization, augmenting participation of Women in local governance, encouraging women's income generation & economic capacity building, strengthening women's participation in agriculture & food security, improving family health & nutrition.
- SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. It is an organisation of poor, self-employed women workers. These are women who earn a living through their own labour or small businesses. SEWA provide various supportive services like legal advice, SEWA bank, health care services etc.
- Rural Education and Action Development (READ) is an NGO started by Mr. D. Selvam to help and empower the local people in his area.



13.6 FURTHER READINGS

1. Handy Charles(1988): Understanding Voluntary Organizations: Penguin
2. Clark John(1991): Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organisations:Lynne