

Self Help Groups in Forest Fringe Villages

The object of formation of 'Self Help Groups' (SHG) in Forest Fringe Villages, taken up in different districts involving the eligible and willing JFMC and EDC members, was to open alternative sources of assured income on sustainable basis. In order to restore ecological balance and environmental stability simultaneously efforts were made to curtail the degree of dependency on forest of the forest fringe dwellers who are mostly poor and tribal people.

The target groups were mostly uneducated or sparsely educated people dependent on neighboring forests having practically no knowledge about SHG formation, management of funds, identification of alternative income generating activities, credit requirement and marketing strategy of their products etc. To overcome this problem and to change the mindset of the members of the JFMCs and EDCs as well as that of departmental staff, arrangements were made for training and orientation of the target groups and departmental staff of the identified areas. NABARD, DRDC and some NGOs alongwith the officers of some line departments e.g. Rural Development, Health, Animal Resources Development Department, Sericulture, Agriculture, Fishery etc. and local bank authorities were actively involved in the process.

The following areas were identified as sources of alternative income to the SHGs and accordingly training-cum-orientation camps and workshops on following topics were held at pre-determined venues:

1. Training on Sal leaf plate making and supply of plate making machine.
2. Collection of medicinal plant products and their processing.
3. Training in tailoring including supply of sewing machines.
4. Apiary and mushroom cultivation.
5. Training on health care of domestic animals and table birds etc. in rural areas.
6. Training of 'bidi' making and supply of inputs.
7. Training on repairing of pump machine, cycle and motor cycle, electric wiring (where electricity is available) etc.
8. Training on vermicomposting, biogas plants, homestead gardening, pisciculture, lac culture, apiculture etc.
9. Training on establishment of piggeries, duckeries, poultry farm on small scale.
10. Tassar cultivation and supply of high yielding cocoons.
11. Rice husking and allied works.
12. Soft toy making, handicraft products of different forest produces e.g. bamboo, sabai grass, and jute.

Now many of the SHGs have been working successfully and their performance is encouraging. However, for sustainability of SHGs it is felt that comprehensive training programmes including refresher courses for both target groups and staff have to be undertaken at regular intervals to assess the actual state of affairs including identification of the actual problems faced by the SHGs and to ensure the suitable market linkages for their products.

Table – 10.5 : Status of forest fringe SHG as on 31.03.2015

District	Division	No. of SHG	Members			No. of JFMC/ EDC in SHG	No. of exclusively women SHG	No. of women members in women SHG
			Male	Female	Total			
24 Parganas (S)	24 Parganas (S)	234	0	2808	2808	6	234	2808
24 Parganas (S)	STR	110	0	800	800	25	110	800
Alipurduar	BTR (E)	252	0	2299	2299	31	252	2299
Alipurduar	BTR (W)	187	1445	245	1690	32	151	245
Bankura	Bankura (N)	63	20	610	630	43	61	610
Bankura	Bankura (S)	40	0	320	320	20	40	320
Birbhum	Birbhum	91	574	510	1084	49	45	510
Coochbehar	Jaldapara WL	116	0	1308	1308	10	116	1308
Darjeeling	Darjeeling	9	86	104	190	62	4	50
Darjeeling	Darjeeling WL	17	93	103	196	15	9	90
Darjeeling	Kurseong	12	0	36	36	7	12	36
Jalpaiguri	Baikunthapur	63	79	604	683	14	49	604
Jalpaiguri	Gorumara WL	13	0	150	150	8	13	150
Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri	23	0	271	271	6	23	271
Nadia-Murshidabad	Nadia-Murshidabad	4	36	0	36	4	0	0
Paschim Medinipur	Jhargram	172	1637	204	1841	64	20	87
Paschim Medinipur	Kharagpur	160	70	1585	1655	37	51	1550
Paschim Medinipur	Medinipur	197	1741	291	2032	41	28	291
Paschim Medinipur	Rupnarayan	245	632	1925	2557	78	50	778
Purbo Medinipur	Purbo Medinipur	34	0	340	340	9	34	340
Purulia	Kangsabati S	223	0	5082	5082	223	223	5082
Purulia	Purulia	119	413	1085	1498	108	80	1085
TOTAL		2384	6826	20680	27506	892	1605	19314