

Microfinance in Eastern India : The Role Played by Regional Rural Banks

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Abstract

The present paper studied the microfinance status of the regional rural banks of Eastern India, which included the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal for 3 years. The study was based on secondary data. To study made a comparative analysis with respect to the number of self-help groups, savings amount of the SHGs, total loan disbursed by SHGs, outstanding loan and NPAs of the SHGs for SHG scheme, SHG under SGSY scheme, and WSHG scheme. Lastly, the study also made an attempt to analyze and interpret the reasons for the differences.

Keywords: microfinance, outstanding loan, non-performing assets

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Microfinance is the newest silver bullet for poverty alleviation. Wealthy philanthropists like financier George Soros assured millions of dollars in the microcredit movement, banks and MFIs came forward to make the movement successful by lending microfinance funds to the poor. Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus declared microcredit as an important instrument to fight against poverty, and the United Nations designated 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit. Microcredit has attracted billions of dollars; the “Grameen” banks alone disbursed a huge amount in microloans over the past years. As per the Microcredit Summit Campaign Report 2006, there were 1000 MFIs and 300 commercial banks in India that lent an amount of \$1.3 billion to 17.5 million people (Karnani, 2007).

Microfinance is the way of providing small loans to poor families who lack access to traditional financial institutions and help them in growing their small businesses. The need for creating a legal institution that would provide microfinance has been of great importance. The fervour suggests that microfinance should help the poor and achieve the target of poverty eradication through evaluation (Satish, 2005). Poverty is multi-dimensional and microfinance plays a significant role in providing access to financial services and fighting against the impacts of poverty.

Self help groups (SHGs) in India represent a distinctive approach towards financial intermediation that combines access to the low-cost financial services along with the development of women SHG members through a self-management process. SHGs have been given the power to address social issues like abuse of women, dowry system, and providing schools for children (CARE, CRS, USAID, & GTZ, 2006). A self- help group is a registered or unregistered small group of 15 to 20 micro entrepreneurs, who have a homogeneous background and a specific purpose where the group members come together to save a small amount regularly to meet up their

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emergency needs and contribute towards a common fund (on a mutual help basis) that acts as a tool of empowerment and social involvement (Wells for India, n.d.).

For facilitating quick and smooth banking services for the poor, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) launched a pilot project in the year 1991-92 which provides microcredit by linking self-help groups with banks (Wells for India, n.d.).

Review of Literature

In recent literature, Lohana and Musale (2011) discussed about the role of SHGs in the microfinance sector, analyzed the status of microfinance in India with special reference to SHGs, analyzed the different states of India, and forecasted the opportunities available to the SHGs for boosting up the microfinance sector for a period from 2003 to 2005. Nasir (2013) tried to analyze the prevailing condition of microfinance in India from its beginning till 2013. The main aim of the study was to discover the gap in functioning of the MFIs and provide practical solutions to overcome issues and render financial services by using cost effective techniques.

Vij (2013) attempted to find out the measures for transferring the self help groups into strategic business enterprises, and promote income & quality of living. Singh (2009) focused on all aspects of microfinance in India, especially the institutions that faced the challenges and were involved in promotion, and modes of delivery and rapid developments. Porkodi and Aravazhi (2013) examined the role of microfinance in financial inclusion and the empowerment of people of India. Das and Boruah (2013) studied the role of microfinance and self-help groups for the socioeconomic development of the poor people in Assam.

Behera (2010) focused on the SHGs of Odisha that impacted poverty by adopting different approaches and programmes. Ratan, Chakraborty, Chitnis, Toyama, Ooi, Phiong, and Koenig (2012) studied about the efficiency and quality gains of the financial record management application built on a low-cost digital slate prototype. Nair (2005) used a case study approach to explore the merits and demerits of federating, and suggested some solutions to the problems. Pokhriyal and Ghildiyal (2011) analyzed the development of microfinance in terms of contribution, achievements, and disappointments of the SHG-bank linkage program. Lahkar, Pingali, and Sadhu (2012) analyzed the hypothesis of the presence of a growing number of MFIs to over-borrowing, with a primary dataset that was generated through surveys conducted in eight districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Mishra, Mall, and Mishra (2013) focused on the development of microfinance in India as a powerful instrument for poverty alleviation. Sriram (2010) studied about the standardized model of lending in commercial microfinance. Shil and Deb Nath (2013) studied the role of rural credit cooperative and SHG model in lending credit, and problems faced by them. Roy (2013) dealt with the microfinance programme in North-East India, the volume of savings, loan disbursement, and loans outstanding. Das (2012) found an urgent need for improved governance to manage microfinance effectively for future growth.

Roy (2011) studied progress of microfinance in the North Eastern region in terms of savings mobilization, loans disbursed, loans outstanding, and non-performing assets. Ghosh (2012) analyzed the progress of the SHG-bank linkage programme regionally and nationally. Mahanta, Panda, and Sreekumar (2012) discussed three distinct aspects of microfinance : The growth of microfinance, the role played by NABARD in growth of SHGs and Grameen Bank, and the role played by the government for protecting the micro-borrowers. Kamath and Srinivasan (2009) built a microfinance sector model and explained the reasons behind small loan sizes of high quality for multiple borrowings.

Devaraja (2011) discussed the factors associated with the development of microfinance based on a win-win scheme for both MFIs and their clients. Kusugal (2014) studied microfinance as a powerful instrument for poverty alleviation in the new economy. Singh (2011) attempted to study the challenges faced by the microfinance sector in Bihar. Das (2014) discussed about the conceptual framework, development process, and services rendered by

the SHG linked microfinance programme, and challenges faced by the Indian microfinance sector. Pramanik and Halder (2013), with the help of consolidated data, analyzed the various trends and progress of the microfinance sector for the SHG - bank linkage model and MFI - bank linkage model.

Objectives of the Study

To make a comparative study of the regional rural banks of Eastern India, which includes the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal with respect to the number of self-help groups, savings amount of the SHGs, total loan disbursed by SHGs, outstanding loan and NPAs of the SHGs for SHG scheme, SHG under SGSY scheme, and WSHG scheme. Lastly, the study also makes an attempt to analyze and interpret the reasons for the differences.

Research Methodology

In the present study, the regional rural banks (RRBs) of the Eastern region have been taken into account. The study is purely based on secondary data. The Eastern region of India consists of the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal, and the RRBs of these states have been considered for the present study.

In case of Bihar, the study was performed by considering Bihar Khsetriya Gramin Bank, Madhya Bihar Gramin Bank, Uttar Bihar Gramin Bank, and Samastipur KGB for the time period from 2009-10 to 2011-12 ; Bihar Gramin Bank, Madhya Bihar Gramin Bank, and Uttar Bihar Gramin Bank were considered for the time period from 2012-13. Bihar Gramin Bank is the new name given to Bihar Khsetriya Gramin Bank and Samastipur Khsetriya Gramin Bank after the merger.

Two banks considered for the study from Jharkhand are Jharkhand Gramin Bank and Vananchal Gramin Bank, and the data for these banks were considered for the time period from 2009-10 to 2012-2013.

Baitarani Gramya Bank, Kalinga Gramya Bank, Neelachal Gramya Bank, Rushikulya Gramya Bank, and Utkal Gramya Bank are the five banks from Odisha which have been studied for the time period from 2009-10 and 2011-12 ; data from Odisha Gramya Bank and Utkal Gramya Bank were considered for the time period from 2012-13. Odisha Gramya Bank is the new name given to the merger of Baitarani Gramya Bank, Kalinga Gramya Bank, and Neelachal Gramya Bank ; Utkal GB is the new name for the merger of Utkal Gramya Bank and Rushikula Gramya Bank.

Three RRBs from West Bengal are considered, and these are : Bangiya Gramin Vikash Bank, Paschim Banga Gramin Bank, and Uttarbanga Kshetriya Gramin Bank. The data from these banks has been analyzed for the time period from 2009-10 to 2012-13. The Table 1 and Table 2 present the raw data collected from published trend reports of the said years.

The analysis was conducted on the basis of comparison. With 2009-2010 as the base year, an effort has been made to analyze the percentage changes in the other years; a rank has been given to the states accordingly and on the basis of the four factors : (a) progress under microfinance – savings of SHGs with regional rural banks ; (b) bank loans disbursed by RRBs to SHGs ; (c) bank loans outstanding against SHGs ; and (d) NPAs against bank loans to SHGs. A percentage is calculated by considering 2009-2010 as the base year for all the factors. The formula used is :

$$\text{Current Year/Base Year} * 100$$

$$\text{Or } 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 / 2009-2010 * 100$$

An individual study has been conducted on the four Eastern states of India : Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal by considering the percentage of growth for normal scheme, SGSY scheme, and the WSHG scheme.

Table 1. Progress Under Microfinance - Savings of SHGs with Regional Rural Banks

State / Year	Details of SHGs Saving linked with Banks			Out of Total SHGs - Under SGSY Scheme			Out of Total SHGs - Exclusive Women SHGs		
	No. of SHGs	No. of Members	Savings Amount	No. of SHGs	No. of Members	Savings Amount	No. of SHGs	No. of Members	Savings Amount
Bihar									
2009-2010	48208	449343	2392.25	30452	308982	1575.10	35667	366932	1989.68
2010-2011	138357	1561881	3902.76	78094	909612	2789.50	127447	1404291	3419.84
2011-2012	154668	1755997	4300.44	83932	953592	2434.28	131979	1458160	3593.61
2012-2013	132253	1469190	4242.81	73480	812574	2178.34	107451	1100089	3500.37
Jharkhand									
2009-2010	24172	319215	1262.49	13497	156708	771.24	16257	240557	872.33
2010-2011	28874	246854	1495.81	15297	113507	822.66	18606	246854	970.97
2011-2012	30734	401746	1588.48	19762	241442	885.61	24907	363918	1068.19
2012-2013	27484	301751	1977.67	15985	180727	773.34	17109	211134	322.82
Odisha									
2009-2010	185309	-	18906.09	20049	-	4008.19	173549	1959669	16671
2010-2011	199679	2408137	19794.78	23391	259973	4583.57	184284	2165859	18359.43
2011-2012	226745	2296822	17948.26	14988	160331	3868.34	172277	1749127	13836.01
2012-2013	242789	2953542	19431.46	116382	1510822	9134.03	234286	2788314	18037.62
West Bengal									
2009-2010	171226	1901848	29358.99	71358	793932	4642.97	147373	1642867	25029.49
2010-2011	190403	2058642	30581.48	77445	843734	5193.07	171052	1839833	22570.50
2011-2012	199733	2204984	6505.83	127051	1427998	3248.26	174898	1938874	4576.46
2012-2013	196558	2136373	34885.93	129795	1411431	28788.74	181399	1970166	31864.84

(1) Bihar : The Bihar state government has played a vital role in the microfinance sector. Different projects like Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Mukhyamantri Nari Shakti Yojana (MMNSY), Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (Jeevika), and National Rural Employment Generation Act (NREGA) have contributed to the development of the microfinance sector and financial inclusion in the state. The banks and the MFIs were assigned the task of achieving 100% financial inclusion for the population of the 19 districts by March 2009 and by 2012, the aim was of opening one bank account for each household in the state (ACCESS, n.d.).

The microfinance related study on Bihar in the year 2010-2011 for the SHG saving links with banks stated that there was a growth of SHGs by 287% and a growth in the savings amount by 163%. For the SHGs - under SGSY scheme, there was a growth of SHGs by 156%, and a growth in the savings amount by 177%. It was noticed that the Women SHGs recorded the maximum growth in the SHGs by 357.3%, and growth in savings amount was 171.87%. In the year 2011-12, it was noticed that there was an increase in the savings amount by 179.6% as well as there was an increase in the number of SHGs by 320% for the normal scheme ; for the SGSY scheme, there was an increase in the SHGs by 275.6%, and there was an increase in the savings amount by 154.5%. The WSHGs again witnessed an increasing trend (370%), and the savings amount also grew by 180.6%. In the year 2012-13, there was an increase in the number of SHGs and the savings (respectively) amount by 274% and 177.3%, respectively for the SHG scheme ; 241.29% and 138.2%, respectively for the SGSY scheme ; and 301% and 175.9% for the WSHG scheme, respectively as compared to the 2009-2010 figures (refer Table 3).

Table 2. Progress under Microfinance - Loans Disbursed and Outstanding Loan Amounts of SHGs with Regional Rural Banks

State / Year	Details of SHGs Loans Disbursed and Loans Outstanding, linked with Banks				Out of Total SHGs - Under SGSY Scheme, Loans Disbursed, Loans Outstanding				Out of Total SHGs - Exclusive Women SHGs Loans Disbursed, Loans Outstanding			
	No. of SHGs	Total Loans Disbursed	No. of SHGs	Outstanding Loans	No. of SHGs	Total Loans Disbursed	No. of SHGs	Outstanding Loans	No. of SHGs	Total Loans Disbursed	No. of SHGs	Outstanding Loans
Bihar												
2009-2010	10361	11178.60	25585	18135.20	5460	7910.45	12572	13625.22	5298	7891.87	18447	2928.58
2010-2011	15065	17116.99	125153	38265.12	7024	11206.6	102041	27194.38	12476	13866.59	104660	30617.30
2011-2012	17716	19439.67	142703	47107.04	7059	11625.31	118001	38113.90	13026	12818.21	118985	36586.39
2012-2013	11880	9148.85	91082	31754.88	1259	2881.13	64629	21887.85	9262	4966.82	74682	23561.95
Jharkhand												
2009-2010	3503	2435.78	18228	4520.77	1988	1841.60	10689	3941.32	2471	1609.54	10781	3012.91
2010-2011	2243	2473.55	19874	6743.85	1447	1762.63	11311	4692.94	1907	2038.35	14908	5394.88
2011-2012	4201	5179.54	22412	8233.48	3464	4191.25	14414	6204.43	3598	4360.18	16987	6248.95
2012-2013	1039	1092.17	17768	9105.96	822	984.90	14554	4012.97	280	194.31	10667	2260.01
Odisha												
2009-2010	30987	18904.84	135055	40675.26	3187	6651.47	19677	27599.86	29144	18177.61	116149	24346.24
2010-2011	31284	21270.04	152875	50899.56	4971	9426.83	23484	31675.02	28968	19295.24	140149	48275.79
2011-2012	20068	17832.41	139064	45160.33	1686	4465.41	14185	27889.80	1655	13162.11	95142	35055.45
2012-2013	26483	21179.93	119409	65507.38	10669	11354.27	53041	40239.73	24703	19817.02	113501	60423.73
West Bengal												
2009-2010	32722	21443.03	134250	45314.40	14731	6547.79	51200	12543.86	27588	17068.45	124190	42015.22
2010-2011	38762	25029.54	160559	49034.27	16742	15264.89	57591	23266.37	32067	23975.26	145088	44638.51
2011-2012	20667	22277.88	123557	57356.35	10432	8911.86	95270	41502.13	18772	21046.06	113408	50735.92
2012-2013	17394	14731.23	177223	117470.81	13693	9113.42	114051	75361.73	15463	13270.36	164469	109007.40

When a bank has more savings amount, it is given the authority to sanction loans. As can be inferred from the Table 4, there was a considerable increase in the growth of SHGs by 145% and an increase in amount of loan disbursed by 153.1% for the normal scheme in 2010-11 ; for the SGSY scheme, there was an increase of 128.6% and 141.6%, respectively ; for the Women SHGs or WSHGs, it was noticed that the growth levels attained were 135.4% and 175.7%, respectively. The loans disbursed in the year 2011-12 increased, the number of SHGs increased by 170.9%, and the total loan amount disbursed increased by 173.9% for the normal scheme, and an increase of 129.2% and 146.9% were observed for the SGSY scheme. The maximum increase was noticed for the WSHG scheme, which was 245.8% and 162.4%, respectively. The year 2012-13 observed a decreasing curve in comparison to the previous years for the SGSY scheme. For the normal scheme, the SHGs increased by 114.6% and the loan disbursed was only 81.8% ; for the SGSY scheme, the percentage went down to 23.6% and 36.4% ; and for the WSHG scheme, an increasing curve was noticed for the SHG percentage by 174.8%, but a fall occurred in the total loan disbursed percentage by 62.9% over the base year of 2009-2010 (refer Table 4).

In case of outstanding loans (the loans which are yet to be sanctioned), in the year 2010-11, there was an increase in the growth of SHGs by 489% and percentage of outstanding loans increased by 210.9% for the normal scheme ; the figures were 811.6% and 199.5% for SHGs - under SGSY scheme ; and 567.3% and 1045.4% for the WSHG scheme. The increasing curve for the WSHGs in three cases speaks about women empowerment. In the year 2009, Poorest Areas Civil Society formed 4500 women based SHGs with over 62000 members. These types

Table 3. Common Size Statement of Change in SHGs' Savings Amount

State / Year	Details of SHGs Saving linked with Banks			Out of Total SHGs - Under SGSY Scheme			Out of Total SHGs - Exclusive Women SHGs		
	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of Savings Amount	Rank According to Savings	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of Savings Amount	Rank According to Savings	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of Savings Amount	Rank According to Savings
Bihar									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	287	163	3	256.4	177	1	357.3	171.87	3
2011-2012	320	179.76	1	275.6	154.5	2	370	180.6	1
2012-2013	274	177.3	2	241.29	138.2	3	301	175.9	2
Jharkhand									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	119.4	118.48	3	113.3	106.6	2	114.4	111.3	2
2011-2012	127.14	125.8	2	146.4	114.8	1	153.2	122.4	1
2012-2013	113.7	156.64	1	118.4	100.2	3	105.2	37	3
Odisha									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	107.7	104.7	1	116.6	114.35	2	106.1	110.1	1
2011-2012	122.36	94.93	3	74.75	96.51	3	99.26	82.99	3
2012-2013	131	102.77	2	5.8	227.8	1	134.99	108.19	2
West Bengal									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	111.19	104.16	2	108.53	111.8	2	116	90.17	2
2011-2012	116.6	22.15	3	178.04	69.96	3	118.67	18.28	3
2012-2013	114.7	118.8	1	181.89	620.05	1	123.08	127.30	1

of SHGs had total savings of over ₹ 1 crore that formed a strong base for implementation of any poverty alleviation program in Bihar (Singh, 2011). In the year 2011-12, an increasing trend was observed for outstanding loans by 557.7% and 259.7% for the SHG scheme ; 938.6% and 279.9% for the SGSY scheme ; and 645% and 1249.2% for the WSHG scheme. In 2012-13, a same rising trend was observed (similar to 2011-12). It was noticed that there was an increase by 355.9% of SHGs and 175.1% of outstanding loans for the SHG scheme ; 514.07% and 160.6% for the SGSY scheme ; and 404.8% and 804.5%, respectively for the WSHG scheme (refer Table 5).

The RRBs of Bihar had the capacity of sanctioning loans, but it was noticed that there was an increase in the outstanding loan percentage, which depicts the inefficiency of the banks in rendering loans. The NPA amount also increased by 204.6% for the normal scheme and 150.9% for the SGSY scheme; the figures were 337.2% for the SHG scheme, 287% for SGSY scheme in 2011-12, and 185.9% for SHG scheme and 162.5% for the SGSY scheme (refer Table 6).

We can infer from the analysis that though the RRBs have their network in the rural areas, they could not serve a large section of the rural poor in Bihar as they lagged behind the banks of other states in their financial and operational performance, but despite their poor performance, these banks remained the largest source of formal credit in rural Bihar. Bihar's microfinance sector requires new approaches and methods to face the challenges. Though the State government, banks, and MFIs are trying to cope with the issues, more cohesive and consistent efforts are required to overcome the constraints (ACCESS, n.d.).

Table 4. Common Size Statement of Change in Total Loan Disbursed Amount

State / Year	Details of Total Loan Disbursed during the year			Out of Total Loan Disbursed - Under SGSY Scheme			Out of Total Loan Disbursed - Exclusive Women SHGs		
	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of Loan Disbursed	Rank According to Loan Disbursed	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of Loan Disbursed	Rank According to Loan Disbursed	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of Loan Disbursed	Rank According to Loan Disbursed
Bihar									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	145.4	153.1	2	128.6	141.6	2	235.4	175.7	1
2011-2012	170.9	173.9	1	129.2	146.9	1	245.8	162.4	2
2012-2013	114.6	81.8	3	23.6	36.4	3	174.8	62.9	3
Jharkhand									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	64	101.5	2	72.7	95.7	2	77.1	126.6	2
2011-2012	119.9	212.6	1	174.2	227.5	1	145.6	270.8	1
2012-2013	29.6	44.8	2	41.3	53.4	3	11.3	12.07	3
Odisha									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	100.9	112.5	1	155.9	141.7	2	99.4	106.1	2
2011-2012	64.7	94.3	3	52.9	67.1	3	56.8	72.4	3
2012-2013	85.4	112	2	334.7	170.7	1	84.7	109	1
West Bengal									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	118.4	116.7	1	113.6	233.1	1	116.2	140.4	1
2011-2012	63.1	103.8	2	70.8	136.1	3	68	123.3	2
2012-2013	53.5	68.7	3	92.9	139.1	2	56	77.7	3

(2) Jharkhand : In 1998, Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD) introduced its microfinance support and encouragement campaign for the poor tribal women in the backward districts of Jharkhand. ICPRD's involvement in Jharkhand is a trailblazer due to the challenges faced by them in terms of systematic exclusion, social disintegration, and structural poverty amongst the poor and the women tribes in an outdated economy. Though building financial systems was extremely challenging, the ICPRD project has succeeded by a large degree by initiating self-help groups of poor women and building their capacities through trainings and exposure visits and by establishing a microfinance network (ICPRD, n.d.).

The microfinance status of Jharkhand for the 3 previous years has been studied for the SHGs saving links with banks, SHGs for the SGSY scheme, and WSHGs scheme. In the year 2010-2011, the growth of SHGs was 119.4%, and increase in the percentage of savings was 118.48% ; in 2011-2012, it was 127.14% and 125.8%, respectively ; and in 2012-13, it was 113.7% and 156.64% over the base year for the SHGs savings link with banks. With respect to SHGs and savings amount for the SGSY scheme, in 2010-11, an increase was seen in both the percentages of SHGs and savings amount - it was 113.3% and 106.6% ; in 2011-12, it was 146.4% and 114.8%, respectively ; and in 2012-13, it was 118.4% and 100.2%, respectively over 2009-10. For the WSHG scheme, the first 2 years were observed to see an increase in both the percentages, however, the savings amount percentage fell in 2012-13. There was an increase in SHGs and savings amount by 114.4% and 111.3% in 2010-11, an increase of 53.2% and

Table 5. Common Size Statement of Change in Outstanding Loan Amount

State / Year	Total Loans Outstanding Against SHGs			Out of Total - under SGSY					
				Out of Total - Exclusive Women SHGs					
	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of O/standing Loan	Rank According to Loan Disbursed	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of O/standing Loan	Rank Disbursed According to Loan Disbursed	+/- % of SHG	+/- % of O/standing Loan	Rank According to O/S loan
Bihar									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	489.1	210.9	2	811.6	199.5	2	567.3	1045.4	2
2011-2012	557.7	259.7	1	938.6	279.7	1	645	1249.2	1
2012-2013	355.9	175.1	3	514.07	160.6	3	404.8	804.5	3
Jharkhand									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	109	149.1	3	105.8	119	2	138.2	179	2
2011-2012	122.9	182.1	2	134.8	157.4	1	157.5	207.4	1
2012-2013	97.4	201.4	1	136.1	101.8	3	98.9	75	3
Odisha									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	113.1	125.1	2	119.3	114.7	2	120.6	198.2	2
2011-2012	102.9	111	3	72	101	3	81.9	143.9	3
2012-2013	88.4	161	1	269.5	145.7	1	97.7	248.1	1
West Bengal									
2009-2010	Base Year, the percentage here is 100								
2010-2011	119.5	108.2	3	112.4	185.4	3	116.8	106.2	3
2011-2012	92	126.5	2	186	330.8	2	91.3	120.7	2
2012-2013	132	259.2	1	222.7	600.7	1	132.4	259.4	1

22.4% , respectively occurred in 2011-12 ; an increase in SHGs by 105.2% was noticed ; whereas, the savings amount was only 37% in the year 2012-13 (refer Table 3).

The ICPRD project introduced social entrepreneurship with women; about 3400 tribal women got access to credit and started their own income generation, and they were imparted training by 110 self-help group members (ICPRD, n.d.).

The year 2010-11 saw an increase of 64% for the SHGs and 101.5% of the total loan disbursed. In 2011-12, both the percentages saw an increasing trend in comparison to the base year, and it was 119.9% and 212.6%, respectively ; in 2012-13, these percentages came down to 29.6% and 44.8%, respectively for the normal scheme. For the SGSY scheme, it was only 72.7% and 95.7% in 2010-11 ; 174.2% and 227.5%, respectively in 2011-12 ; and in 2012-13, the percentage was only 41.3% and 53.4%, respectively in comparison to the base year. The WSHG scheme observed an increasing trend in the loan disbursed percentage by 126.6% ; whereas, the SHGs percentage was only 77.1% in 2010-11 ; in 2011-12, both the percentages increased by 145.6% and 270.8%, respectively, but a fall was observed in both the percentages in the next year. In 2012-13, the percentages were only 11.3% and 12.07%, respectively in comparison to the base year (refer Table 4).

The percentage of outstanding loan and the number of SHGs for the normal scheme were observed to have an increasing curve for the first two years - these were 109% and 149.1% in 2010-11 ; 122.9% and 182.1% in 2011-

Table 6. Common Size Statement of Change in NPA Amount

	Details of SHGs NPA linked with Banks			Out of Total SHGs - Under SGSY Scheme		
	NPA	+/- % change in NPA	Rank	NPA	+/- % change in NPA	Rank
Bihar						
2009-2010	918.29	Base Year		788.72	Base Year	
2010-2011	1879.11	204.6	2	1190.64	150.9	3
2011-2012	3097.23	337.2	1	2264.38	287	1
2012-2013	1707.42	185.9	3	1282.33	162.5	2
Jharkhand						
2009-2010	192.08	Base Year		183.65	Base Year	
2010-2011	482.37	251.1	2	405.48	220.7	2
2011-2012	686.35	357.3	1	579.05	315.3	1
2012-2013	-			-		
Odisha						
2009-2010	1317.48	Base Year		1165.59	Base Year	
2010-2011	2645.91	200.8	2	2211.43	189.7	2
2011-2012	1344.27	102	3	183.07	15.7	3
2012-2013	6532.67	495.8	1	4466.09	383.1	1
West Bengal						
2009-2010	1107.16	Base Year		348.64	Base Year	
2010-2011	1031	93.1	3	804.89	230.8	2
2011-2012	1147.34	103.6	2	878.55	251.9	1
2012-2013	4796.40	433.2	1	3618.54	103.7	3

2012 ; but in 2012-13, the SHGs percentage went down to 97.4%, and outstanding loan percentage went up by 201.4%. For the SGSY scheme, the percentage of SHGs and the percentage of outstanding loan were found to be increasing ; in 2010-11, it was 105.8% and 119%, respectively ; in 2011-12, it was observed to be 134.8% and 157.4% ; and in 2012-13, the percentage was 136.1% and 101.8%, respectively as compared to 2009-10. For the WSHG scheme, both the percentages saw an increasing trend in 2010-11 and 2011-12, but it went down in 2012-13. The SHGs percentage went upto 138.2% and outstanding loan percentage was 179% in 2010-11 ; it was 157.5% and 207.4%, respectively in 2011-12 ; however, in 2012-13, the percentage fell to 98.9% and 75%, respectively (refer Table 5).

The NPAs saw an increasing trend in 2010-11 and 2011-12 ; the figure was 251.1% in 2010-11 for the normal scheme and 220.7% for the SGSY scheme ; the figures were 357.3% in 2011-12 for the normal scheme and 315.3% for the SGSY scheme as compared to 2009-10 (refer Table 6).

The role and performance of the regional rural banks in delivering rural credit have been revised by the RBI. The RRBs were suggested measures to strengthen their resource and fund requirements as well as were asked to improve their activities and performance by adopting good corporate governance practices (RBI, 2008).

(3) Odisha: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has been extending credit supply to the Odisha State Government by way of refinancing through banks and Odisha State Financial

Corporation for developing social and economic infrastructure of Odisha from the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) (Government of Odisha, 2013). Though Odisha started late in the SHG movement, substantial progress has been noticed over the years in the SHG-bank linkage programme. According to a report, in 2004, Orissa stood first in performance criteria for the Eastern region in linking the SHGs and credit linkage, which exceeded the milestone of the ₹ 1 lakh mark by November 2004 (Women & Child Development Department, Govt. of Orissa, 2005).

As for the other two states, the microfinance status of Odisha has been studied for three years : 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13 in comparison to 2009-10 for the three schemes, normal, SGSY, and WSHG. It was observed that in the year 2010-11, both the number of SHGs and the total savings saw an increasing trend ; the first increased by 107.7% and second one increased by 104.7% for the normal scheme ; 116.6% and 114.35% for the SGSY scheme ; and 106.1% and 110.1% for the WSHG scheme. In 2011-12, the figures were 122.36% and 94.93% , respectively for the normal scheme ; 74.75% and 96.51% for the SGSY scheme ; and 99.26% and 82.99% for the WSHG scheme ; lastly, in the year 2012-13, the percentages were 131% and 102.77% for the normal scheme, 5.8% and 227.8% for the SGSY scheme ; and 134.99% and 108.19% for the WSHG scheme (refer Table 3).

The number of SHGs and total loan disbursed also had an uneven curve ; sometimes, it was observed to have raised by a small extent, and at times, it fell below the minimum level. In 2010-11, for the normal scheme, the figures were 100.9% and 112.5%, respectively ; the figures were 155.9% and 141.7% for the SGSY scheme ; and the statistics were 99.4% and 106.1% for the WSHG scheme. In 2011-12, it was noticed that all the values had a diminishing curve, these were only 64.7% and 94.3% for the normal scheme ; 52.9% and 67.1% for the SGSY scheme ; and finally, the values were 56.8% and 72.4% for the WSHG scheme in comparison to the base year (refer Table 4).

However, it was observed that the percentages for the outstanding loan saw an increasing trend in comparison to the 2009-10 figures. The percentage of SHGs and outstanding loan was 113.1% and 125.1% for the normal scheme ; 119.3% and 114.7% for the SGSY scheme ; 120.6% and 198.2%, respectively for the WSHG scheme in the first year, that is, 2010-11. In 2011-12, the percentages were 102.9% and 111% for the normal scheme, 72% and 101% for the SGSY scheme ; and 81.9% and 143.9% for the WSHG scheme. In 2012-13, the figures were 88.4% and 161% for the normal scheme ; 269.5% and 145.7% for the SGSY scheme ; and finally, 97.7% and 248.1% for the WSHG scheme (refer Table 5).

It was found that the NPAs also increased accordingly for the following years. The statistics were 200.8% for the normal scheme and 189.7% for the SGSY scheme in the year 2010-11 ; the statistics were 102% for the normal scheme and 15.7% for the SGSY scheme in 2011-12 ; NPAs for the SGSY scheme reduced significantly as noticed. In 2012-13, the NPA percentage was found to be the maximum (495.8%) for the normal scheme and 383.1% for the SGSY scheme over the 2009-10 figures (refer Table 6).

The functions carried out by the MFIs and banks in Odisha were in a budding stage, and had lots of opportunities for expansion. The rise in NPAs was due to lack of experience and assessment mechanism in wholesale funding among bankers. SBI tried to appraise and approve bulk lending of ₹ 75 lakhs to “Swayamshree Micro- Credit Services” and agreed to support Biswa and Gram Utthan Banks.

(4) West Bengal : West Bengal got affected by the microfinance crisis as the MFIs in West Bengal failed to disburse new loans due to lack of significant exposure to the microfinance sector. The SHG movement in West Bengal was ranked second after Andhra Pradesh, and the crisis occurred as the microfinance sector was at an emerging stage with inadequate institutional development (Roy, Srivastava, Chakraborty, & Mehta, 2012).

The microfinance status of West Bengal for 3 years has been studied, and an increasing trend was noticed in the growth of SHGs for the normal scheme, but the percentage of total savings was seen to be uneven. In 2010-11, for the normal scheme, the percentage of SHGs was 111.19%, and the total savings were 104.16%, 108.53%, and 111.8%, respectively for the SGSY scheme ; for the WSHG scheme, the figures were 116% and 90.17%. In the

year 2011-12, the figures were 116.6% and 22.15% for the normal scheme ; 178.04% and 69.96% for the SGSY scheme ; and 118.67% and 18.28% , respectively for the WSHG scheme. Finally, in 2012-13, the percentage of SHGs was 114.7% and total savings were 118.8% for the normal scheme ; 181.89% and 620.05% for the SGSY scheme ; and for the WSHG scheme, the figures were 123.08% and 127.30%, respectively over the 2009-2010 figures (refer Table 3).

The percentage of SHGs to percentage of total loan disbursed for 2010-11 was 118.4% and 116.7% for the normal scheme ; 113.6% and 233.1% for the SGSY scheme ; and 116.2% and 140.4% for the WSHG scheme. In 2011-12, the figures were 63.1% and 103.8% for the normal scheme ; 70.8% and 136.1% for the SGSY scheme ; and for WSHG scheme, the statistics were 68% and 123.3% over the 2009-10 figures. In 2012-13, the SHG percentage was 53.5% and loan disbursed was 68.7% for the normal scheme ; the figures were 92.9% and 139.1% for the SGSY scheme ; and finally, the figures were 56% and 77.7% for the WSHG scheme (refer Table 4).

In the year 2010-11, the percentage of SHGs and percentage of outstanding loan was 119.5% and 108.2% for the normal scheme ; the statistics were 112.4% and 185.4% for the SGSY scheme ; and the figures were 116.8% and 106.2% for the WSHG scheme. In 2011-12, the values were 92% and 126.5% for the normal scheme ; 186% and 330.8% for the SGSY scheme ; and for WSHGs, these were 91.3% and 120.7%, respectively. In 2012-13, the percentages were 132% and 259.2%, respectively for the normal scheme ; 222.7% and 600.7% for the SGSY scheme ; and for the WSHG scheme, the figures were 132.4% and 259.45% over the 2009-10 figures (refer Table 5).

The NPAs for the year 2010-11 were 93.1% for the normal scheme and 230.8% for the SGSY scheme. In 2011-12, the figures were 103.6% for the normal scheme and 251.9% for the SGSY scheme ; and finally, in the year 2012-13, the NPA percentage was 433.2% for the normal scheme and 103.7% for the SGSY scheme over 2009-10 figures (refer Table 6).

In the year 2012-13, the MFI association of West Bengal focused on issues and challenges related to the microfinance governance to improve the overall credibility of the microfinance sector. This initiative of the association was effective in all respects. According to the 2012-13 report, they provided funds amounting to ₹ 45 lakhs to a workforce of around 13,000 who hailed from lower economic and financial backgrounds (Association of Micro Finance Institutions - West Bengal, 2013).

Discussion

After analyzing the microfinance status of the four states in Eastern India, namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal by the merged regional rural banks, it was found that there is an urgent need for increasing microfinance facilities and microcredit in the rural and interior areas, where people need to start earning their own livelihood by doing something on their own and save for their future contingencies. The SHGs, as observed, have tried their best to improve their services in the last three years, but a lot more needs to be done.

(1) The SHGs of Bihar can easily avail credit support by the banks through multiple loan cycles for initiating and funding any project, and bankers have the authority to decide on the loan amount on the basis of consumption and productive credit needs of the members. This would decrease the percentage of outstanding loan amount, and would increase the loan disbursed amount. Such steps would help the state to achieve its aim of promoting livelihood and renew the bankers' interest towards serving the poor as a profit-generating clientele and bring 80% of the poor within the reach of microfinance.

(2) As per the analysis, Jharkhand had limited scope of microfinance, but it was expected to have a greater clarity if banks made a contribution towards the public in terms of the credit-deposit ratio in relation to SHGs, loan disbursement, and loan outstanding figures. The microfinance sector has a good scope in Jharkhand, and there is a

huge percentage of poor in the interior areas. Around half of the SHG members are below the poverty line, and with the help of the RRBs and other MFIs, credit facilities can be extended to these poor so that they can earn their living, and can successfully break the cycle of poverty.

(3) The condition of poverty in Odisha and existing outreach of the SHG movement demand extension of quality microfinance services. As per the data analysis, leading credit institutions and banks have been encouraged to extend credit and financial services to the rural masses for their economic empowerment and self-reliance. In Odisha, strengthening of SHGs should be given priority with special focus on quality lending. The government should promote and provide quality microfinance services to the poor.

(4) Though microfinance is relatively new in West Bengal, the state did not suffer from over indebtedness as many microfinance institutions and banks rendered a helping hand. The problem is with awareness in handling microfinance and microcredit. The formation and growth of SHGs were fine with the growing percentage of savings and loan disbursed amounts. Though the banks and the MFIs have helped with microfinance, the percentage of outstanding loans also saw an increasing trend. The need of the moment is to increase microfinance coverage, and focus on successful SHG programmes, increased incomes, and livelihoods opportunities for the poor of West Bengal. Moreover, there is a need to analyze and interpret the problems faced by bankers while opening a new branch in the rural areas as well as shed light on the problems faced by rural customers in obtaining credit from the banks (Srivastava, 2012).

Key Findings

- ★ The savings amount of the SHGs for the three schemes was satisfactory, as the amount had an increasing percentage for all the states.
- ★ The total loan disbursed in comparison to the growth of SHGs for the three schemes had a satisfactory outcome, but as observed, the WSHGs enjoyed a preference, as in many cases, these were found to have the maximum percentage as compared to the other two schemes. This trend was more or less applicable to all the states of Eastern India.
- ★ The outstanding loan amount percentage was not satisfactory, as it had an increasing trend. Further expansion of this sector and more credit lending and financing facilities should be available to the poor, and it is expected that more banks and MFIs would come forward with an aim of helping the poor as well as generating business for themselves.

Research Implications and Conclusion

The present study contributes to the area of microfinance by considering the Eastern Indian states, namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. It aids in understanding the growth aspect of the self-help groups with the RRBs. The four aspects that have been taken into consideration are : Savings, total loan disbursed, outstanding loan amount, and non-performing assets (NPAs) of the three types of self-help groups. It gives a clear picture of the present status as well as ranks in the four states, and suggests increasing the disbursement of the amount of loans so that more people get the privilege of starting their own business and are able to survive independently. This study can help in predicting the future demand for microfinance and microcredit in the concerned four states.

A ray of hope was found when it was observed that the comparison between the growth of SHGs, savings amount, and total loan disbursed amount saw an increasing percentage every year over the base year, as it meant

that the poor were getting finances through banks and MFIs for their personal small businesses. However, it was also disappointing to observe an increasing trend in the outstanding loan percentage amounts with the growth of SHGs, as it proved that all the poor masses did not get credit help from these institutions. Hence, more of these institutes should come forward so that every person is covered by the umbrella of microfinance and gets the opportunity of availing loans, and in this way, more people and more rural areas will be able to get microfinance coverage.

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

The study is based on Eastern India that includes only four states namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal for a period of 4 years : 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. The remaining states of the country or other regions were not taken into consideration. The study has a limitation as the results obtained cannot be generalized for the entire country. Moreover, the number of years (data) considered for the study is a limitation, as the results may come out to be more accurate if more extensive data was taken into consideration, and the results may have shed light on a new dimension of the study. The limitations of the present paper can be used by researchers to act as directions for future research in this area.

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