
The SWOT Analysis of SHGs in Odisha: A Case Study of the Maa Kalijai SHG, Baripada

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1.0 Introduction

The paper focuses on the growth and success of a SHG named Maa Kalijai, in Baripada, of Mayurbhanj District of Odisha. In the year 2005 many SHGs were started in Baripada. Maa Kalijai SHG is one of them, it started on 6.10.2005. The group works with the help of 10 women members. Mrs Mandakini Deo, the president of the group along with 9 other women began their business with a meager amount of Rs. 4,000 under the guidance of the then lady of Anganwadi. The business yielded positive return and thus the team was encouraged to expand their scale and scope of production. Apart from Mrs Deo, the group has Sandhya Rani Das as the Secretary, Sukanti Sahu as Cashier and Bhanumati Das as the Supervisor. The other team members are Pankajini, Laxmi priya, Sasmita, Rebat, Kumudini and Sabita. The paper shall be covering their work culture, demography, their unique financial management tactics and their future aim. All the information were collected through interview. The members were interviewed on different occasions for three days. Their statements were recorded in smartphone and later on documented in electronic word format.

The SHG deals in puffed rice and milk. They purchase the unpuffed rice from the wholesaler, prepare them and sell them to their target customers. The group owns 10 cows. These two are their major products. Along with that they use the cow dung to make fuel. They also sell gupchup, dahibara, aluchop, and other evening snacks. They have a tailoring shop too where they make petticoats for ladies.

All the members of the SHG range between 28 to 45 years of age the average age being 40. Their average educational qualification is Graduation in Arts, except for Mandakini and Bhanumati who are matriculates. The members with graduation and without were of same efficiency. All the members are married and have two children each; except for one member having three children. Their husbands do their own business or are in private companies. The income earned by them are not the primary source of income for the family, but all of them added that their additional income was used for future saving and purchase of household appliances.

The SHG is having its own set of rules for the members. The rules are very different from the usual labour laws. There are two shifts every day. One in the morning hours, and the other in the evening. Each shift runs for three hours. That is 6 hours of labour per day, for seven days a week. The group had no idea about the recent changes in maternity leave. The reason they gave was that the houses of the members were nearby, and no one ever asked for it. They also said that this was the first time someone questioned them about maternity leave. The SHG does not even have any casual or earned leave system. All the days are treated as working days. There is no facility for sick leave. If a member falls sick, she can stay back from work, but have to undertake extra hours after returning to work, to make up for the lost hours.

The SHG has no written recruitment policy. The group had only one change in their team from the date of their establishment. Initially Rebat's mother-in-law was a team member, but after her demise, the vacant post was taken up by Rebat. On being asked about if Rebat was actually qualified for the job, their remark was "her mother-in-law taught us how to fry mudhi, and Rebat knew it too". Adding outsider is more bothersome compared to a family member, so they prefer to do it.

The SHG purchases the raw materials from the wholesaler and sells the finished products in the neighboring households. For some products they sell their goods to the local wholesaler. Their prices are equivalent to the prevailing market price. Because of the purity and high quality, they never have had any kind of problem in sales. Since all their produce receives an immediate market, they do not even need to spend in warehousing. Only the transport cost of the raw materials is borne by them. The cost of transporting is negligible. The produce are bought by the families staying next to theirs, or are home delivered by the nearest member.

The SHG has an innovative mechanism of generating profit. Initially it is complicated to comprehend, but later on it gets a bit simplified. The group deposited Rs. 200 each month from October 2005 till March 2006 to

accumulate a total of Rs. 4000. This amount they deposited in Bank of India and received a loan of Rs. 16000. They have set a target of 30-35 months as loan repayment period. After this they reinvest the profit for higher amount of loan. Till now they have received six such loans, worth of Rs. 50,000, then 1.5 lakh, followed by 2.5 lakh. The latest amount they received is on 5th of July amounting to Rs. 6 lakh.

The group does not invest the entire amount in one business. Instead it has a much diversified business strategy. Half of the loan amount is invested in mudhi and milk business, which is under the group. The remaining amount is equally divided among the members, to be invested in their own personal business. The profit from the first half is easy to calculate and is deposited in the bank.

The group is well satisfied with their overall performance. They have ideas to go for mushroom cultivation and to open a chicken farm on a larger scale. For this they are collecting data from nearby dealers and other farms. This time they are planning to do it as a group business. But they are confused as to continue with the existing two businesses or to stop them, if they were to start their dream project.

The group is no doubt working in a successful manner, yet some additional steps could have been taken for the welfare of the group.

1. While purchasing raw materials, instead of the wholesalers, other nearby SHGs could have been used as the source
2. Developing a long term relationship with other SHGs can be handy during scarcity of raw materials
3. Taking part in local fairs arranged
4. Maintaining customer database
5. Adopting computerized mechanism, to smoothen supply chain management

6. Advertising using various social networking modes.

In the age of women empowerment, ten women entrepreneurs running business worth lakh investment, all by themselves in a remote block of Baripada is a remarkable job. The group had trust in their skills and excellent bonding. The work environment was peaceful, hygienic and well located. The members were more like family to each other. During any kind of financial emergency they would pool together their funds. With slight encouragement and guidance in the field of digital marketing they can increase their scope of business.

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