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R.K. Verma**

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IMPACT OF COOPERATIVES ON EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE: OBSERVATIONS FROM MICRO LEVEL IN WEST BENGAL

Sidhartha Sankar Laha*

Abstract

The major objective of the present study is to assess the role of co-operatives in accruing empowerment benefits in rural and urban localities. In this context, it was attempted to ascertain the impact of cooperatives on the employment generation, food production, women empowerment, social cohesion and quality of life among rural and urban communities. As such, a survey was conducted among sampled respondents by using multiple tools of primary data collection like observation, interview and discussion with focus groups from three selected districts of West Bengal. With a view to enrich our study, a sizeable of non-cooperative members were also surveyed. Our survey results reveal that cooperatives have been much beneficial in improving quality of life, poverty reduction and women empowerment.

Keywords: Co-operatives, Empowerment Benefits, Livelihood, Rural Poor, West Bengal

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment includes both controls over resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology i.e. beliefs, values and attitudes (Batliwala, 1994). It refers to achieving greater extrinsic control, capacity building and greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources or changing traditional ideology (Ambrose Pinto, 2001). Further, it involves a participatory approach and transforms

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