

## Microfinance Schemes for Socio-Economic Development of SC/ST Impoverished Peoples in Himachal Pradesh

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### **Abstract**

*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the importance of poverty reduction, and call for policy implementation that leads to the socio-economic development of impoverished people. However, there is a lack of knowledge about assessing individual-level socio-economic development, and how financial inclusion through microfinance can contribute to it. Therefore, the role of welfare organizations providing Microfinance is also considered to be controversial in the literature. This study assesses the overall socio-economic development by considering different sustainable livelihoods, multidimensional poverty, living standards, and social development measures of the Himachal Pradesh Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Thus, the impact of Microfinance schemes of Himachal Pradesh Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation is studied in the context of the socio-economic development of the beneficiaries. This paper substantiates that the microfinance obtained from HPSC/STDC contributes positively towards sustainable livelihoods, multidimensional poverty reduction, and living standards. However, microfinance does not contribute to social development. Overall, financial inclusion shall be a gateway to achieve the long run sustainable upliftment through the socio-economic development of an impoverished segment of the society.*

### **Keywords**

*Sustainable, Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribes, Schemes, Microfinance, Improver shed, Beneficiaries, socio-economics etc.*

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## **Introduction**

Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society. Its purpose is to maintain the social and material well-being of the nation and its people to achieve the highest possible level of human development. Socioeconomic Factors Moreover socio-economic developments that have been happening in many societies around the world are moving traditionally collectivistic or interdependence-oriented cultures toward “increased emphasis on individual freedom-focused values.

India has had social welfare programs, social service organizations, social reformers and social workers in the cause of social welfare since early times. Right through the centuries, this has been observed in the reign of King Ashoka or going back even to the days of Buddha, there have been many rulers and common people of India who trod the path of service to their fellow beings and adopted it as a life mission. Mahatma Gandhi’s work in this sphere constitutes a continuance in the present century of the national tradition. The ideal of social welfare is thus not new to us; it is an integral part of our national history and culture. (\*Beena Antony \*Dr. Beena Antony, Delhi University, Delhi)

Our country has a long tradition of social service. Our sovereign and democratic republic stands committed to ensuring social, economic and political justice for the people and ushering in a welfare state. After independence, the concept of social justice became part and parcel of our Constitution and is reflected not only in the preamble, but also in the Directive principles of state policy. Social welfare is defined as those services that are designed for those weaker and vulnerable sections of the community who due to some hardship – social, economic, political, mental – are unable to make use of, or are traditionally denied, the use of these services. The scope of social welfare encompasses services relating to women, children, youth, the aged, the handicapped, scheduled Social Welfare Administration castes and scheduled tribes, community welfare services, social defense, social welfare measures and social welfare services for other weaker sections of society..

Development is earmarked through the improvement in the social and economic status and hence, it is paid concentration worldwide. Indian Government has also made provisions in its Constitution for the development of the society particularly the backward sections of the society including SCs and STs. The direction has also been issued to the state governments to make the policies and programs for the development of the weaker section. The most important challenge facing the developing countries like India is to bring about a reduction in the existing level of

poverty, unemployment and inequalities of income and wealth. In India, the majority of the population lives in villages and the population in the country has certain distinguishing features. There exists a large number of illiterate and uneducated masses, a low rate of urbanization, and dominance of SCs, STs & OBCs, who need a special attention for their upliftment and gain social status in the society. For this purpose, the central government and the State Governments are providing funds for the upliftment of these classes of society. One step in this direction has been made by the HP Government by establishing a special Corporation for the development of this section of the people of the state and the Corporation is known as Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. The Corporation is purely a welfare organization without any profit motive. This study attempts to focus on the impact of Schemes of HPSC& STDC on the socio-economic development of SCs and STs in the State.

#### **Population of SCs & STs**

According to the census 2011, the population of Scheduled Castes was 20.13, 24.38% lakhs and scheduled Tribes was 10.45 12.65% lakhs out of the total population of India i.e 121.09 crores which comprises only 37.03% of the total population of India within its area of 3287263 sq km. Accordingly, in Himachal which is a hilly state and its overall population in 2011 was 68.60 lakhs within its area of 55673 sqkm, 17.29 lakhs are SCs and 3.92 lakhs are STs who comprise 30.93% of the total population of the State. The population percentage of the SCs & STs in HP is marginally less than the overall SCs and STs population of India. For the social and economic development of the State, it is pertinent to develop the SCs & STs in a justified and more judicious manner.

#### **Review of Literature**

Large numbers of studies have been made on the social and economic development as well as on the microfinance. Some of them are depicted below:

(Samat . 2018)., According to the United Nations (UN), poverty is one of the biggest tribulations that have plagued the society. Impoverished people's lack of economic resources, and their inability to generate external financing, further augment their vulnerability to poverty Irrespective of the utilization of funds (building a house, establishing or strengthening the business, debt servicing, or fighting against their economic recession), external financing typically reduces these individuals' vulnerability to poverty.

(Umar. 2021)., However, the poor have been neglected by the formal financial institutions. Therefore, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) have been designed and

supported by development agencies worldwide, to provide financial services to these un-bankable. Moreover, MFIs played a significant role in building a non-dependent financial system for the poor.

(Samat. 2018)., Microfinance also enables the poor to attain economic self-sufficiency and sustainability, which helps to alleviate their ailing conditions, improves living standards, prioritizes the education of children

(M. S. Awan. 2011)., Eventually, microfinance contributes positively towards the overall well-being of the poor. It does so by improving the rate of literacy, aiding to gain better earnings, helping in getting better access to healthcare services, helping access healthier food and safe drinking water, improving the infrastructure of the accommodations, gaining valuable assets, and improving the net worth of individuals.

(Montgomery & Weiss, 2011)., have thus far only considered one-dimensional measures of poverty, and described that microfinance has a positive impact on the livelihood, poverty, and housing arrangements of people. However, the methodology of estimating the betterment of livelihood, housing, and poverty reduction has its own limitations. There is mixed evidence about the impact of microfinance in the literature, primarily due to the difference in poverty measures and assessment tools that are used by the researchers.

(Rajbanshi. 2015)., which makes those inferences even more controversial. They have taken improvement in income as a proxy of poverty reduction and quality of life. Nevertheless, multidimensional poverty measures are appropriate, and must be preferred over other measures.

(Collins. 2021)., This study therefore incorporates the multidimensional poverty index (MPI), and proposes a living standard index (LSI) as a more dynamic proxy of poverty reduction, and growth in living standards, respectively. In Pakistan specifically, the evidence related to the impact of microfinance on multidimensional poverty and living standards is limited.

(Cristea 2021). Poverty adversely affects the social status and recognition of individuals and families on the whole. Because of the lack of resources and a relatively difficult life, these people often seek financial help from individuals around them. Due to this, their self-respect and self-esteem are often compromised, which ultimately results in a wretched social status and a lack of self-worth. Improvement in social status is a critical agenda, as this could potentially be a driving force for economic progression. Soft factors such as self-esteem and self-respect compel individuals to work harder, and smarter and abandon the listless approach and attitude towards their socio-economic conditions.

(Samat. 2018). The tendency of the state to adopt these development goals and implement relevant policies is another contributing factor toward significantly alleviating poverty. Only inclusive growth shall result in real, sustainable development, and for this, financial inclusion plays a pivotal role.

### **Schemes of the Centre Government for the Development of SCs & STs**

The development of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes has become a national interest in India. Keeping in view the deteriorating position of the SCs and STs, the special provisions have been made in the Indian Constitution for their smooth and justified Development. The development provisions for both the SCs & STs have been laid down in the Directive Principles of State Policy to promote their economic interests and social changes in the articles 46, 275 and 39. Article 46 gives the direction to the state for the promotion of special care for the social and economic interests of these groups. Article 275 discusses the grants to be provided by the Centre Government to the State Governments for the welfare of SCs and raising the level of Scheduled area and Article 39 A provides for equal justice to SCs and STs. Keeping in view the above provisions of the Constitution of India, the Government of India had established two separate Ministries viz. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for SCs and Ministry of Tribal Development for STs. A number of schemes have been formed by these ministries and implementation of the schemes is directed to the states/union territories. The most pertinent schemes relating to them are the SCA to SCP, SCA to TSR, self-employment schemes and establishment of Corporations for the development of SCs and STs at center and state levels and with this purpose, in Himachal Pradesh, H.P State SCs & STs Development Corporation was established in HP in 1979 for the benefit of SCs and STS.

### **HP Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation**

The Government of Himachal Pradesh adopted the directions of the Central Government and established the Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation with its head office at Solan. The objective of the Corporation is to identify the eligible beneficiaries and to provide them with financial help in terms of loans and trainings. The Corporation is headed by the Board of Directors, which is constituted by the Government of HP. The Board of Directors constitutes the official and non-official members. The executive head of the Corporation is the Managing Director. The Corporation has its branches in all the twelve districts of the State and the head of the district office has been designated as District Manager. In addition to it, the Corporation has its five sub offices at tehsil

levels. The Corporation is assisting the target group in terms of microfinance loans and training schemes. The Corporation has formulated ten schemes for the development of the SCS & STs in the state. These schemes are loan schemes and training schemes. These schemes of the Corporation are family oriented income generating schemes which inter alia, include the agriculture sector, horticulture sector, sericulture sector, transport sector, small industries, small business and any other legal activity that generates the income to the beneficiaries besides imparting training in tradition, non-tradition and modern trades. In the training schemes, the stipend is paid to the trainees and an honorarium is disbursed to the trainers. The Corporation has designed a set of criteria for the identification and selection of the beneficiaries in its every scheme. In addition to it, the Corporation is also providing a capital subsidy at the time of financing the loans and an interest subsidy to the non defaulter loanees.

#### **Schemes of HPS C & S T Development Corporation**

The schemes of the corporation for the social and economic development of the beneficiaries are as below:

1. Swarojgar Yojna Scheme (self-employment scheme) up to Rs 50000 ,
2. Himswalamban RinYojna (NSFDC&NSKFDC) , for more than Rs 50000 ,
3. Study Loan Scheme : up to 150000 in collaboration and with NSKFDC / NDTFDC 10.00 lakh for full course
4. Dalit Varg Vayavsaik Prahikshan Yojna Scheme, for training in ITIs, other recognized training institutions
5. Laghu Vikray Yojna for Construction of shop/ sheds etc.
6. Small business Scheme: In collaboration with NSKFDC and NSTFDC
7. National Scheme for Liberation & Rehabilitation of Scavengers: Rehabilitation of Scavengers.
8. Loans in Collaboration with the National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation( NSKFDC) Scheme
9. Micro Credit Loan Scheme: Small Loan schemes.

#### **Scope of the Study**

The present research paper analyzes the impact of the schemes of HPSC&ST Development Corporation on the beneficiaries in Himachal Pradesh. The period of study is ten years from the financial year 2011-12 to 2020-21.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study has been conceived to assess the impact of various measures adopted by the Corporation for the upliftment of Scheduled groups

and the extent of the change in their upliftment and for this purpose, the study concentrates:

- i) To examine the socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries.
- ii) To examine the impact of schemes on the socio-economic level of beneficiaries.

### Sample Selection

The information has been collected with the help of a questionnaire from the beneficiaries through a field survey. The total sample of from all the twelve districts of the state has been taken for the study period 2011- 2012 to 2020- 2021. The sample size varies almost from 5% to 20% of the total beneficiaries in each scheme as shown in Table.

**Table 1: Sample Size of Beneficiaries of the Corporation.**

Sr. No.	Name of Scheme	Total Beneficiaries	Sample Size	% of Sample Size
1	Swarojgar Yojna Scheme	1420	168	8.45%
2	Himswalamban Yojna Scheme	1190	119	10%
3	Study Loan Scheme	750	73	9.73%
4.	Dalit Varg Vayavsaik Prahikshan Yojna Scheme	5340	112	2.09%
5.	Laghu Vikray Kendra Yojna	280	56	20%
6.	National Scheme for Liberation & Rehabilitation of Scavengers	190	54	28.42%
7.	Small Business Loan Schemes (NSCFDC & NSTFDC)	790	77	9.74%
8.	National Safai karamchari Fiancée and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)	270	54	20%
9.	Micro Credit Loan Scheme	460	43	9.35%
	Total Sample Size	10690	1069	10%

### Methods for Analysis of Data

The information collected in the questionnaire has been tabulated as per the requirements of the study The economic performance and the scheme-wise performance of respondents have been studied and the different statistical methods applied to study the performance of beneficiaries include; percentage, average, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, coefficient of correlation, mean variation(t) and chi-square test. With the help of analysis drawn through the methods of analysis, conclusions have been summarized and measures have been suggested at the end.

### **Impact of Schemes on the Development of Beneficiaries**

The impact of assistance provided by the Corporation through different schemes for the advancements in education, saving patterns, overall development and demographic shifting of the beneficiaries has been studied in the table below. This has been studied with two variables i.e., (i) Improvement of the Beneficiaries and (ii) no effect in the Improvement of the Beneficiaries.

**Table 2: Impact of Schemes for the Development of Beneficiaries**

Variable	Improvement	Percentage	No- effect	Percentage	X <sup>2</sup>
Education	716	66.9	353	33.1	200.64*
Saving Pattern	604	56.5	465	43.5	18.06*
Overall Development	814	76.1	255	23.98	292.30*
Demographic	87	8.13	982	91.87	749.34*

It has been analyzed that there has been improvement in education (66.9%), saving pattern (56.5%) and in overall development (social and economic development) (76.1%), but the improvement in demographic shifting has been seen as very marginal. It shows that the beneficiaries, in the majority, (91.87%) are happy in the present working atmosphere and they do not want to shift from present place as it is providing them with social reputation and economic benefits.

Similarly the chi-square values are significant at a 1% level of significance for all the variables under study. This shows a significant difference in the opinion of the beneficiaries.

### **Impact of Schemes on Growth in Income, Assets and Standard of Living**

The growth in the income, assets and standard of living expenses of the beneficiaries has been studied with the income, assets and standard of living expenses of the beneficiaries at the time of availing the financial assistance and at survey time in Table: 3 below. These variables can be considered as a major factor for the development of the beneficiaries

**Table 3: Impact of Schemes on Growth in Income, Assets and Standard of Living**

Impact on Beneficiaries	Mean value Assistance time in Rs.	Mean value at Survey Time in Rs.	% Growth in Mean value	r-value	t-value	Sign (%)
Income	19962.92	33378.61	67.20	.461	7.364*	0.01*
Assets	67087.55	77452.60	15.45	.979*	3.885**	0.05**
Standard of living	29015.17	31253.10	7.7	.827*	3.250**	0.05**

As Table 3 depicts, the percentage growth in mean annual income has been recorded as highest in the income factor (67.20%) and lowest in standard of living expenses factor (7.70%). The coefficient of correlation shows a positive correlation in three variables which indicates a significant positive relationship in the variables at survey time and loan time. The parametric t-test analysis revealed that the t-values are significant at 1% & 5% levels of significance which also shows a significant growth in the variables under study at survey time.

#### Economic Impact on Beneficiaries

The economic impact has been analyzed by classifying the beneficiaries according to category-wise, sex-wise, qualification-wise, demography-wise, loan sanction period-wise, loan amount-wise, activity-wise, scheme rating-wise, awareness-wise wise and satisfaction level-wise. All these variables have been discussed in Table: 4

**Table 4: Economic Impact on Beneficiaries**

S. No.	Particulars	Mean Income at assistance time	Mean income at Survey time	% Growth in income	r-Value	t-Value
1	SCs	21953.76	40071.30	82.51	.476*	17.384*
2	STs	21131.90	37858.06	79.15	.574*	12.280*
3	Male	21551.55	38719.79	79.66	.517*	18.871*
4	Female	21288.40	36820	72.96	.527*	15.343*
5	<graduate	21444.45	37657.01	75.60	.554*	18.222*
6	>graduate	21834.91	40451	85.28	.524*	13.907*
7	Rural	21676.76	38692.58	78.50	.480*	16.382*
8	Urban	21246.93	37287.23	75.50	.571*	18.837*
9	Loan	21053.38	27617.91	31.18	.706*	9.830*
10	Training	20965.69	27503.46	30.99	.712*	9.876*
11	Trg & Loan	20416.88	36669.27	79.60	.620	13.180
12	Complete Awareness	20288.87	38037.26	87.47	.569*	20.762*
13	Slightly Awareness	23314.82	39937.72	71.29	.424*	10.651*
14	Highly Satisfied	21241.40	45740.27	115.34	.473*	19.508*
15	Moderate satisfied	21509.35	37328.87	72.79	.623*	16.534*
16	Less Satisfied	21533.09	23611.11	9.65	.510*	2.116*
17	+3	21537.61	46856.68	117.55	.640*	19.495*
18	+2	22708.71	43099.88	89.79	.572*	10.058*
19	+1	21457.31	40106.08	86.91	.392*	9.953*
20	0	20132.70	29182.58	44.96	.538*	4.296*

Note: \* significant at 1% level of confidence.

The analysis of the above information related to the economic impact of schemes showed that the percentage growth in the mean income of the beneficiaries is more than 50% in majority of particulars of the table and it has been recorded highest (117.55%) where the beneficiaries rated the schemes of the Corporation as highly positive (+3) followed by the beneficiaries (115.34%) who are highly satisfied with the activities of the Corporation.

The Coefficient of Correlation analyses a positive and significant correlation at a 1% level of significance in all the particulars of the beneficiaries. This also shows a positive growth in the income of the beneficiaries under study at survey time. The parametric t-test analyses significant t- t-values at 1% of significance almost in all the particulars. It is analyzed that there is a significant growth in the income of the majority of the beneficiaries.

### **Conclusion**

Development is earmarked through the improvement in the socio-economic status. India is a country of diversity. The country dominates the rural population and a class of dominant castes upon other castes like SCS, STs and other backward classes, who are lagging behind in getting a socio-economic status. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are forming 37.03 percent of the population of India and in Himachal which is a hilly state, they are 30.93 percent of the total population as per the 2011 census. For the development of these categories, the Constitution of India has made provisions laid down in the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. Accordingly, in Himachal Pradesh, for the socio-economic development of these categories, the Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation was established in 1979. The Corporation is extending schemes of financial assistance and imparting training to these categories for their overall development. After getting the assistance from these schemes, it is analyzed that people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories improved their educational status. Not only their saving pattern and overall development status have improved in their native residential place where they have got the recognition now. The schemes proved instrumental in improving the income status of these categories. There has also been a slight increase in establishing assets and living standard expenses of these categories. The growth in all socio-economic indicators has been analyzed as positively correlated with the extension of schemes by the Corporation and is statistically significant. It has been analyzed that all economic impacts on people of SCs and STs are positively correlated with the schemes extended though the majority of the indicators are moderately and positively related. Thus, it is summarized that the Corporation is playing a key role

in boosting the SCs and STs in Himachal Pradesh. However, it needs to take more daring and judicious steps to improve the socio-economic status of these categories in the state.

### **Suggestions**

The identification of the beneficiaries should be carefully done. A beneficiary must be persuaded to come out with his own options and preference for the schemes, genuinely interested beneficiaries will preserve and promote the activities, otherwise they would only be interested in taking the assets for converting them at a later stage into cash. For this, there is a need for accessibility and direct interaction between the Corporation and the beneficiaries.

The network of the branches of the Corporation should be up to tehsil levels with well-equipped staff. This will ensure better service at a more economical cost to its beneficiaries and proper supervision of various schemes. This would also help to develop accessibility and more interaction with the beneficiaries.

The amount of loan sanctioned is very small almost in every scheme of the Corporation. The loan amount is not sufficient for their economic and social development. Therefore, there is a need to increase loan amounts as well as assistance for imparting training.

The repayment schedule is almost five years in all the schemes. The higher project cost beneficiaries find it difficult to repay the loan in this stipulated period and they have to repay it with penal interest due to which, there are chances of lapse in repayments. It is therefore suggested that the recovery period needs to be increased.

There is a need to develop a mechanism through which the assistance of experts is extended to evaluate and check time and again, the purposes and uses of funds provided to the beneficiaries by the Corporation. This can be done throughout sourcing.

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