

Relationship Between Small Farmer Cooperative Limited and Women's Rights in Household Assets

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ABSTRACT

Small Farmer Cooperative Limited (SFCL) is one financial institution worked for the welfare of poor and marginalized people. It mostly focuses on the women empowerment from the socio-economic perspective. The main objective of this study is to explore the relationship between SFCL and women's right in household assets. In Nepalese context, males are known as the head of family and led the every decision in household level activities. The study was conducted in the three Village Development Community of Illam district of Nepal during the time of 2016. In total 522 women participated for the study who was the member of SFCL. The study found the significant difference in women before and after involving in the SFCL. Women said that they felt the many changes in their life. They were able to mobilize the economic resources and aware in the right of women. They could actively participate in the decision of mobilization of household assets. SFCL build the level of confidence and sensitized in the right of information in any activities. Women could raise their voice in-front of any authority and could take leadership in community development activities. It was necessary to continue the SFCL to improve the socio-economic life of community.

KEYWORDS

Cooperative, Farmer, Household Asset, Relationship, Right, Small, Women

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, governmental and nongovernmental organizations in many low income countries have introduced micro credit programs targeted to the poor. Many of these programs specifically target women, based on the view that they are more likely than men to be credit constrained, have restricted access to the wage labor market, and have an inequitable share of power in household decision making (Cartwright, Pitt, & Khandker, 2006). A few studies in the recent past have attempted to establish the relationship between credit program participation and some notion of women's empowerment. But all of these studies suffer from possible bias due to endogeneity of decisions involved in program participation and the unobserved household, individual, and area

characteristics. The unobserved heterogeneity likely to bias the estimates includes the unobserved attitudes and characteristics of husbands, wives, and other family members, including pre-existing women's empowerment and autonomy (Cartwright, Pitt, & Khandker, 2006, p. 793). Advocates of microcredit programs argue that the empowerment of women as economic actors will benefit women by enhancing their economic and political power and, in doing so, will make the societies in which they live more equitable politically and more competitive economically (Christine Keating C. R., 2010), p. 153).

Gender is deeply woven into our ways of life. It affects the opportunity and constraints for each of us throughout our life. In Nepal gender relation is institutionalized and practiced in common life from each individual family to society. The gender issue mainly involves hierarchy and ranking men and women differently in terms of power, wealth prestige and other privileges.

The determinant of gender discrimination is most considerably the division of labor which can be viewed in different spheres of life. Men have been engaged in the productive sphere while women, have been confined to household work. Literatures show that women's roles in decision making are affected directly or indirectly by economic condition. A woman who has greater economic participation tends to have greater power of decision making (Acharya, 1995).

Household decision making is a process in which a member of a family actively takes part in the family matters which is mainly related to family overall development. It is mainly the role of a person in the family to decide any of the family matter in relation to family progress. In this regard, male are always seen in playing front and leading role in the Nepalese society. Roles of women in household decision making process in family almost seen not so much strong in the Nepalese society because they are not given any role to perform in the family as they are not sound economically which hinders them to participate in playing effective role. Male are the dominant character in the house controlling over the household decision making activities as Agrawal (2001) has opined that the eldest male member of a patriarchal joint family is the absolute head. The unitary model of family which 'treats the household as a single entity in relation to both consumption and production and assumes that all household resources and incomes are pooled and that resources are allocated by an altruistic household head that represents the household's tastes and preferences.

Women are not so much empowered in the Nepalese society and the role of household decision making is possible only after the women are empowered and economy plays vital role for the overall development of women because empowerment is a social action process that promotes participation of people, organization and communities in gaining control over their lives in their family as well as community. There is urgent need of empowering women especially in rural areas. The formation of small farmers co-operatives (SFCL) and Micro-credit in Nepal have been playing dominant role to enhance their socio- economic position in the society which is the

foundation stone of women's' role in household decision making process. According to Kaystha(2009) , the Small Farmer Cooperatives Ltd (SFCLs) are members managed community based microfinance institutions with three tiered organizational structure, which ensures the involvement of most of the members in the decision making process. The three-tiered includes (i) Small farmer groups form at the grass-roots level with 5-12 members (ii) Small farmer groups form inter-groups at the Ward level. (iii) All chairpersons of inter-groups form main committee - a Board of Directors- of SFCLs at the Village Development Committee (VDC) level. In 1975, ADB/Nepal started to form joint liability groups of small farmers through its subproject offices (SPOs). The over headed and low collection rates of the SPOS. However this led experts to question the sustainability of this approach. In 1987, the ADB/N introduced an action research Institutional Development Programme (IDP) with the support of GTZ. In 1993, as the result of the IDP, the first four SPOs were transformed into SFCLs. Since then, 143 SFCL have been established in 36 districts of the country. Currently SFCLs in Nepal comprise a total of 80,000 rural households. The SFCL is a multiservice cooperatives designed to deliver primarily financial, but also non-financial services to its members in rural areas.

In Nepalese context, SFCL are working for the development and change of socio-economic status of poor and marginalized community from grass root level. It provide the east loan facility as well as provides the skill based training also so in this connection, this study set the main objective to identify the relationship between the SFCL and women's right in household level decision in particular context of three VDC of Illam district of Nepal.

METHOD

The study was based on the quantitative research design because the study administered the structured questionnaires survey to collect the data. Census study was done in study area to cover the all women member of SFCL. In total 522 women participated in the study. The study consulted with the local office of SFCL to know the total number of member and took the list of member then did contact to all. Some of the members were not met in field because the increasing migration and urbanization. Written consent was taken from the all participants. The collected data was analyzed through the statistical software by using the frequency table, cross tabulation, mean difference from paired sample t-test.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There were 522 respondents in the study, among them they were from the minimum age of 18 year to 66 year maximum. The average age using mean calculation formula is 37.88 and the standard deviation is 8.508. The data shows that the respondent from indigenous (janajati) people were in high frequency, which leads almost 50.6%, as the same- Caste from Brahamin&Cheetri occupy the 39.7%. Regarding educational status from the respondents of the SFCL; 19.2% were illiterate,

37.7% primary, 18.8% lower secondary, 15.3% secondary, 7.5% higher secondary and 1.5% of them followed by bachelor's degree respectively.

As the objective of this study deals with the statements of influence of the SFCL in establishing women's rights in household assets:

1. Women's rights in household assets

Available data for women's rights in household assets before and after condition of women's comparative study on various sectors reveals the following findings calculated in given table.

Head of family (before & after) involvement on SFCL; 'yes' followed by 19% & 56.3% and 'no' followed by 81.0% & 43.7% with 16.574 paired sample test significance. Having any property in own name; option 'yes' for 24.5% & 69.2% and 'no' for 69.0% & 32.6% with 19.331 paired sample test and $p = .000$ significance. Having rights to sell property of your name; 'yes' followed by 31.0% & 67.4% and 'no' followed by 75.8% & 30.8% with 15.882 paired sample test and $p = .000$ signification. Having house in own name; 'yes' for 21.3% & 40.4% and 'no' for 78.7% & 59.6% paired Sample test and $p = .000$ significance. Having land in own name; 'yes' for 29.1% & 56.9% and 'no' for 70.9% & 43.1% with 9.886 paired sample test and $p = .000$ signification. Having bank account; 'yes' 23.9% & 74.7% and 'no' 76.1% & 25.3% with 22.498 paired sample test and $p = .000$ significance. Having share in any organization in own name; 'yes' for 22.8% & 69.9% and 'no' for 77.2% & 30.1% with 20.619 paired sample test and $p = .000$ signification.

Table 1: Women's rights in household assets

Statements		Before		After		Paired Samples Test	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Are you head of family?	Yes	99	19.0	294	56.3	16.574	.000
	No	423	81.0	228	43.7		
Do you have any property in your name?	Yes	128	24.5	361	69.2	19.331	.000
	No	394	75.5	161	30.8		
Do you have rights to sell property of your name?	Yes	162	31.0	352	67.4	15.882	.000
	No	360	69.0	170	32.6		
Do you have house in your own name?	Yes	111	21.3	211	40.4	7.194	.000
	No	411	78.7	311	59.6		
Do you have land in your own name?	Yes	152	29.1	297	56.9	9.886	.000
	No	370	70.9	225	43.1		
Do you have bank account?	Yes	125	23.9	390	74.7	22.498	.000

	No	397	76.1	132	25.3		
Do you have share in any organization your own name?	Yes	119	22.8	365	69.9	20.619	.000
	No	403	77.2	157	30.1		
Do you have rights of Purchasing jewelry/ornaments	Yes	302	57.9	473	90.6	15.405	.000
	No	220	42.1	49	9.4		
Do you have rights of Purchasing gifts for relatives?	Yes	331	63.4	468	89.7	12.988	.000
	No	191	36.6	54	10.3		
Do you have rights of Selling live stocks (goat, cow, buffalo, chicken ...etc) in house?	Yes	252	48.3	481	92.1	20.024	.000
	No	270	51.7	41	7.9		
Do you have rights to spent money to purchase medicine for your health care?	Yes	339	64.9	513	98.3	15.869	.000
	No	183	35.1	9	1.7		
Can you offer any goods for the marriage of your children?	Yes	325	62.3	507	97.1	15.793	.000
	No	197	37.7	15	2.9		

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Similarly, the data shows those having rights of purchasing jewelry/ornament; 'yes' for 57.9% & 90.6% and 'no' for 42.1% & 9.4% with 15.405 paired sample test signification. Having rights of purchasing gifts for relatives; 'yes' for 63.4% & 89.7% and 'no' for 36.6% & 10.3% with 12.988 paired sample test and $p = .000$ significance. Having rights of selling live stocks (cattle) in house; 'yes' for 48.3% & 92.1% and 'no' for 51.7% & 7.9% with 20.024 paired sample test and $p = .000$ significance. Having rights to spent money to purchase medicine for own health care; 'yes' for 64.9% & 98.3% and 'no' 35.1% & 1.7% with 15.869 paired sample test and $p = .000$ significance. Finally regarding to right of availability of offering any goods for the marriage of own children; 'yes' for 62.3% & 97.1% and 'no' for 37.7% & 2.9% with 15.793 paired sample test and $p = .000$ significance.

Involvement in a credit scheme had the potential to empower rural women; more specifically. Scoggins (1999) delivered the evidence that income-generating activities raise women's decision making power in the household and community. Participation in credit programmes is positively associated with a woman's level of empowerment defined as a function of her relative physical mobility, economic security, ability to make various purchases on her own, freedom from domination and violence within the family, political and legal awareness, and participation in public protests and political campaigning (Hashemi, Schuler, & Riley, 1996; ADB, 1997).

Here the available data shows the improved condition of women's right than before in every sector of house assets. The statistical analysis of Paired sample t-test between before and after involvement in SFCL showed that there was significant difference found in women's right in household assets after involving in the SFCL.

The study conducted in Bangladesh reveals that the rural women, after joining the microcredit programme, have been able to engage themselves in income generating activities and consequently improved significantly their livelihood status. The study concluded that microcredit programme plays a significant role in changing and improving livelihood status among the rural poor families (Ahmed, Siwar, Idris, & Begum, 2011, p. 973). According to the report of Micro credit Summit Campaign 2001 only 14.2 million of the world's poorest women now had access to financial services through specialized microfinance institutions (MFIs), banks, NGOs, and other non-bank financial institutions. These women account for nearly 74% of the 19.3 million of the world's poorest people now being served by microfinance institution. The reason given by women and men was that "women are more honest than men". It was also explained that women were more likely to repay loans because they are concerned about their other group members. Women seemed to take pride in ensuring that no member defaulted on their loans (IFAD, 2001). The study also found the similar types of findings from the discussion with women of Illam district of Nepal. Women of Srianu VDC of Illam shared that SFCL was established 20 years back when males were involved in the management team and members but SFCL could not function well because of the delay of repay loans and discontinuation of saving. Males were found not sincere to save the money and timely payment of loan so Nepal Government changed the strategy and encouraged women to involve in management and member. After active involvement of women, management, finance and program become strong and came in effective functional position. Women were become sincere to repay the loan, believe in team work and team building, conscious on community development and own personality development through the activity of SFCL.

2. People perception on role of SFCL to establish the women rights

Content of this table reveals the perception of people on role of SFCL to establish the women rights in various aspects among the total of 522 respondents: SFCL has role to aware women about their rights to speak about household assets frequency level; strongly agree is 20.7% (108), agree 45.0% (235), neutral 26.2% (137), disagree 7.1% (37) and strongly disagree 1.0% (5) with 2.23 mean agreement.

SFCL empower women to sell or purchase the house and land independently; strongly agree 19.2%, agree 46.2%, neutral 9.2%, disagree 25.7% and strongly disagree .8% with 2.42 mean agreements. SFCL empower women to sell and purchase livestock independently; strongly agree is followed by 23.6%, agree is followed by 40.6%, neutral is 27.6%, disagree followed by is 24.7% and strongly showed by .8% with 2.21 mean agreements.

Table 2: People perception on role of SFCL to establish the women rights

Statements	Response	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Total	Mean
	Frequency	108	235	137	37	5	522	2.23

SFCL has role to aware women about their rights to speak about household assets	Percent	20.7	45.0	26.2	7.1	1.0	100.0	
SFCL empower women to sell or purchase the house and land independently	Frequency	100	241	48	129	4	522	2.42
	Percent	19.2	46.2	9.2	24.7	.8	100.0	
SFCL empower women to sell and purchase livestock independently	Frequency	123	212	144	39	4	522	2.21
	Percent	23.6	40.6	27.6	7.5	.8	100.0	
SFCL empower women to take leadership in political parties.	Frequency	58	108	135	142	79	522	3.15
	Percent	11.1	20.7	25.9	27.2	15.1	100.0	
SFCL empower women to borrow money from any organization or friends	Frequency	214	191	16	97	4	522	2.02
	Percent	41.0	36.6	3.1	18.6	.8	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016

SFCL empower women to take leadership in political parties; strong agreement is followed by 11.1%, agree is followed by 20.7%, neutral is followed by 25.9%, disagree is followed by 27.2% and strong disagree is followed by 15.1% with 3.15 mean agreements. SFCL empower women to borrow money for any organization or friends; strongly agree followed by 41.0%, agree is followed by 36.6%, neutral is followed by 3.1%, disagree is followed by 18.6% and .8% is followed by strong disagree with 2.02 mean agreements.

Small loans can make good business sense among the women. It has been noticed that women in particular stand to gain a lot from micro-finance because it gives them an independent means of generating wealth and becoming self-reliant in a society that does not offer them much scope for entrepreneurship. And since it is women who run the household, a higher standard of living for women ensures better governance and a healthier and more prosperous future for the children and a better future for the nation. The success of micro credit initiatives has often been attributed to

their particular focus on empowering women and encouraging their self-reliance through developing their own means of income.

The changing pattern of agricultural market and agricultural commercialization made rural farmers to unite and started co-operatives as Torgerson (1977) has opined that the changing market structure of agriculture, a prime motivator in early organizing efforts associated with the emergence of commercial agriculture, remains today the underlying rationale for cooperative efforts by farm operators. According to Aryal (2008), SFCL is the example of target group- cum-gender specific programme in Nepal. Moreover, there are some of the highly successful financial institutions in poverty alleviation in Asia. Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, SEWA Bank in India, BAAC of Thailand and SFCL in Nepal are some of the brilliant examples.

CONCLUSION

The study found the significant changes in the life style of women after involving in the SFCL. Women have learned many skill of presentation; speaking among the larger group of people, human rights and women rights, active participation in decision making, mobilization of economic resources for the business or household activities, educational awareness, health conscious, social relationship, networking with different organization and maintaining the gender relation in family and community. Women were empowered to ask their right as well as became the capable to take the right decision in right time. The coordination skill of women was also increased so that they could manage the conflict in family. They had equal participation to mobilize the household level assets as well as its exchange also. SFCL had less contribution to aware the political right of women because of the internal policy of SFCL, they did not discuss on the issue of politics in organizational activities. There was need to encourage the women to take the active participation in political activities also so that they can lead the development plan of Government also to develop the community.

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