



# "Exploring Women's Empowerment Through Microfinance: An Investigation into the Life Circumstances of Women in Kathmandu"

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the women empowerment process through the practice of microfinance in Kathmandu. Microfinance is the place, where women make decisions themselves for their life. Microfinance has played a vital role for empowerment of women and social development. Women empowerment program especially focuses on women issues, opportunities, responsibility, authority, value and equity in the social formation. This article examines the women empowerment programs of the microfinance and impact of microfinance in the life of women in Kathmandu. Moreover, it analyzes how women are affected by the program and practice of microfinance. This comprehensive study used unstructured in-depth interviews and key informant interviews methods to collect data. Microfinance Kathmandu had launched programs such as literacy advocacy, organizational skill enhancement training, vocational training, tailoring, leadership training, beautician training etc. focusing on women inner as well as their organizational capability enhancement, productivity, efficiency, social awareness and economic up-liftment, which plays the vital role in their empowerment. There is found various changes on women's status and attitude after involvement in microfinance, microfinance programs change the women's various aspect like decision making, skill development, economic independence, increase in mobility, and change in social, political and psychological situation. After getting involved in microfinance, women were able to defend social evils and male domination against women. It was a great change in their perspective, attitude, authority, prestige, knowledge, ability and social relationship and training program had helped

in building self-confidence among the members. Microfinance have played vital role for women empowerment and developing social awareness of women. Microfinance have provided a safe platform for women to exercise power relationship within organization, enhance their communicational skills, share personal feelings and experience there by learn something new, that helps them change the traditional concepts prevailing in the society on their role and responsibilities, to increase their confidence level because of their access to new information, knowledge and skill, which in turn enhance their capability to increase their participation in local institution.

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, social development, program, progress, change

## I. Introduction

In Nepal, the status of women in various sectors is miserable in comparison to man. The status of women in rural areas is rather upsetting. Women are still victimized by the discrimination, violence, prejudice and inferiority complex because of male domination in different sectors and levels. It has been clear that women's empowerment in society is still nominal. They are not given opportunity in different decisions making activities that makes women's participation in different sectors less important (Acharya, 1997). In the subsistence-based economy of Nepal women contribute in the area of agriculture but their work is invisible to their families, communities and country. Most of the women are self-employed but their experience and expertise are not recognized by society whether in villages or cities. The life of most women is a struggle against the odds. Women



lack self-confidence in their own inherent skills because they are deprived of opportunities in all area of life. If given the chance women will be able to lead with confidence (Paudel, 2015).

The idea of microfinance arose on the mid 1970s when Mohammad Yunus started a pilot scheme lending small amounts of money to the villagers on Bangladesh who had to access to the conventional loans due to lack of collateral. In recent days, microfinance has been growing into various models in different countries. In Nepal, the first credit cooperative society was formed in Chitwan district (B.K, 2008). Institutional microfinance is defined to include microfinance services provided by both formal and semiformal institutions. Microfinance institutions are defined as institutions whose major business is the provision of microfinance services. In Nepal there are wide ranges of institutions active in this sector but four major types of microfinance institutions in Nepal are: Saving and credit cooperatives, NGOs, INGOs and micro-finance development banks. Each has its own way of going about the task of making financial services accessible to the poor (Shrestha, 2009).

Women development is one of the raising issues in the present context. More and more emphasis is laid on the need for development of women and their active participation main stream of development process. In recent years' microfinance institute has become one of the most important instruments in development policy. Dr Muhammad Yunus is known throughout the world as a pioneer of the micro finance credit concept that uses small loans made at affordable interests to transform the lives of impoverished people mostly women. The founders of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh Yunus and Grameen were jointly awarded the Noble Peace Prize 2006.

The most common use of the term "empowerment" refers to increasing the power of the low-power group, so that it more nearly equals the power of the high power group. From the perspective of intermediaries, this is often done because negotiation tends to be more successful when the parties negotiating have relatively equal levels of power. When they do not, the lower power party tends to get co-opted, or otherwise treated unfairly in the negotiation or mediation process. To prevent this from happening, the mediator can take a number of steps to "empower" the lower power group. The mediator can provide access to outside resources, give advice, give negotiation or communication skills training, or structure the process in a way that somewhat favors

the low-power group, thus in a sense balancing out the power differences. This approach calls into question the notion of impartiality, as do many of the other methods of empowering one group more than another, however. Empowerment is a process of unleashing the human potential and enhancing the human ability to effect and maintain societal growth. It has gained emphasis in these times of unprecedented change and crises encountered in the face of limited resources. Major transitions in society have produced an upheaval and a feeling of uncertainty. People need to define their jobs, businesses and even the directions they are taking in life. This transition incurs overwhelming change, accompanied by a sense of loss and uncertainty. This is particularly true to those who have not found their place in which to grow and fulfill their perceived role (Poudel, 2011).

Empowerment of women is a holistic concept of economic, social, cultural and political strengthening. It is a multi-dimensional approach and involves a basic retaliation and awareness of women powers, potentialities capabilities and competences right and opportunities of all round development in all spheres of life women empowerment. Therefore, it is a process which enables women to have access and control over various factors necessary for their economic independence, political participation and social development but such political participation and social up liftmen would be meaningless and almost impossible, if their economic independence is not achieved. The process of empowerment is challenging, which has to be properly addressed at different levels both individual as well as collective through entrepreneurship. The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world (Sharma, 2007).

Microfinance programs have generally targeted poor women. By providing access to financial services only through women-making women responsible for loans, ensuring repayment through women, maintaining savings accounts for women, providing insurance coverage through women-microfinance programs send a strong message to households as well as to communities. These process make involve the women socio-economic process in the community which causes of the empowerment.

The very patriarchal culture has restricted women and bounded them inside the four walls of the house. The man is the head of the family and its breadwinner, while the woman is the procreator and housekeeper. Women are assigned to perform



household activities like cooking, washing, cattle rearing and looking after the children. As mentioned earlier, it is men in particular kind of society who ensure, construct reinforce and perpetuate the social structure due to the underlying patriarchy and by virtue of this power and control over women, feminists particularly those who held a radical position in feminism and affirmed that "personal is political" argued strongly that "violence against women is necessarily neither a women's issue, nor a feminist one (Mishra, 2009).

Nepali women are not often seen in public life. Their voices are not heard, their work is not valued and their future depends upon the decision made by the male of family, government and communities. They perform food production tasks, house-hold and child caring tasks and carry fuel and water for the family (Mishra, 2009). Women's participation in income generating tasks from house is very low in Nepal. Comparatively urban area women are working household care and outside work than village women. They have more responsibilities. The work done by women in household care and their contribution in agriculture are not considered as economic activity and thus, remain unreported. Women therefore, find themselves as powerless citizens; women's living standards are very low. Many women cannot carry out a decision on their own. Male family members continue to guide women even the energetic and educated women cannot do their work without assistance and guidance of their male guardians (Majorano, 2007). It is the perception that must be changed in Nepal to empower in the work force.

So, this study intends to explore the changes of women status and women empowerment through the activities carried out by the microfinance institution. The study looks at different empowerment factors such ability to make choice, awareness (health, social, economic), political participation, self-reliance, women assets etc. A huge number of micro credit programs are expending micro loans to support economic activities of the poor and disenfranchised people particularly focusing on women empowerment as their explicit goal. The basis theory of empowerment is that putting capital in women's hands can generate income and contribute financially to their households and communities, when they can socially be mobilized in community based non-government organizations. Thus they can be empowered both economically and socially, and this empowerment is expected to generate increased self-esteem, respect and other forms of

empowerment for women beneficiaries (Bashyal, 2008).

## II. Objectives and Methodology

The primary aim is to examine the life situations of women engaged in microfinance programs in Kathmandu. This likely includes understanding their socioeconomic status, empowerment levels, and how participation in microfinance programs influences their lives. This involves investigating how access to microfinance affects women's financial stability, independence, and opportunities for entrepreneurship or business ventures. And the specific objectives of this study investigate women's capacity development in the community which likely explores how participation in microfinance programs impacts women's skills, leadership roles, and involvement in community development activities and investigate women's capacity development in the community which likely explores how participation in microfinance programs impacts women's skills, leadership roles, and involvement in community development activities.

The research was conducted in the Chandragiri municipality in Kathmandu, Nepal. This specificity helps contextualize the findings within a particular geographical area and its social dynamics. The research design of study is descriptive research design. This design focuses on describing the characteristics of a phenomenon or population without altering it. It's likely used here to observe and describe the situation of women involved in microfinance without manipulating variables. The nature of the study is qualitative. This indicates that the study aimed to understand subjective experiences, attitudes, and behaviors rather than quantifying data. It involved exploring narratives, opinions, and insights from the participants.

In this study, I used in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, observation, unstructured interviews, and narrative case study methods to collect information. Reviewing secondary literature suggests the integration of existing knowledge, theories, and research findings to contextualize the study, validate findings, or identify gaps in current knowledge. Overall, this paper seems to offer a comprehensive exploration of how microfinance programs influence the lives of women in Kathmandu, using a mix of qualitative methods to delve into their experiences and circumstances.



### Micro Finance and Women Empowerment

Microfinance initiated for women as a self-help organization in the past, has become popular women organization all over the country for women development. Microfinance is recognized as non-political groups which have played a significant role for the empowerment and mobilization of women at grassroots. Microfinance is established under the company registers act in office of the company register, after registration they get legal authority to operating their activities in the society. They submit annual report and audit report to chief of the company register office ever year. They follow law and rules and other government policy. They do not go without their rules and policy. Empowerment of women refers to the attempts made by microfinance to organize local mothers into company.

### Women Empowerment Program

Women empowerment program especially focuses on women issues. Women empowerment means increase their power, access and opportunity. Women empowerment programs are skill development vocational training, rural women development program, banking program, income generating program, literacy program etc.

In the research area training is a part of women empowerment. Training has made them empowered in various aspects. Microfinance provide different kind of training and women development program income generating and skill development training made them economic freedom, after involvement in that type of trainings, they are able to banking activities and solve household economic problem. In the study area, most of the trainings related to tailoring, agriculture and economic related activities, these trainings promote the women for their economic growth and change their lifestyle and other types of training related to community development, literacy, environment, leadership development, health, hygiene etc. All these trainings help to increase knowledge awareness skill, self-esteem, confidence of the beneficiaries. Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd. (HBSCC) has provided such types of training and development program. The following table shows the training conducted by Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd.

There finds the different type of programs, conducted year, total participants and source of program and fund. Most of the trainings are based on Tailoring and literacy program. During the training programs different groups interact with

each other and find out the ways of prospering their activities. They innovate the different methods of marketing their activities. Thus, training to the group members and exposure visits to other successfully functioning groups are useful to achieve this end. Through training program involving credible resource persons, the salient concepts and other program detail can be explained to the participants. During the field work a participant shared her story such as:

*Radhika Kapali (Name changed) was born in 2033 B.S. I was born in an extremely poor family in Kritipur. I had studied up to class 8 in a government school in Kapali but couldn't continue my study due to the lack of economic support. I got married with Mr. Kapali of Balambu in 2048 B.S. I have four children, one son 15 years and three doughtier of 16 years, 13 years and 10 years. My husband was a drunkard and tortured me a lot. But by thinking about the future of children he went aboard for earning money. When he went I had given birth to a child and it was quite small. After going there my husband did not any work and he also did not send the money, due to which it was quite difficult for me to manage the house. But when I entered in microfinance in 2069, I got support from it. By taking 10000 as loan I opened a small shop and I was quite confident after getting the training that helped me in my business. Furthermore, by the help of Microfinance I got a job. By these all, I have become able to provide the education to my children.*

### Saving and Credit Groups

Since establishment, Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd. has been launching it program actively in Balambu; Moreover, it has been launching various programs for financial, social and political empowerment of women of Balambu. In addition, various saving and credit group has been established and launching various saving and credit program by saving and credit group for the fact that availability of capital has been considered to be a fundamental pre-requisite for meeting resources required for promoting investment in income generating activities. The role of this activity is no just to initiate a monetary exercise but through this strategy, help women evolve as collective act with a distinct identity and acquire skills. Microfinance went through several learning stages in addressing their economic problems. They learnt how to start savings through training received from direct exchanges with other women's groups. First, they were exposed to the concept and practice of savings





and loans through a series of visits, training and workshops. Secondly, they initiated savings. Thirdly, they started borrowing larger amounts for collective economic activities.

Women went through a succession of personal changes where attitudes within the group were transformed with empowerment both economic, social saving and more profitable than individual attempts. Confidence in handling cash, opening bank accounts, and the loan repayment capacity of women, informal mechanisms by which maintaining accounts helped to create bonds among women that empowered them both individually and collectively. This was facilitated by the changing social and economic relations that the freedom from new source of credit afforded poor women along with not having to resort to traditional source of credit, such as money lenders. For complement the argument another participant shared her experience such as:

*Sita Giri (Name changed) was born in 2036. I was born in the middle class family in the remote area of Lalitpur. I completed SLC from a government school. I was married to Mr. Giri of Balambu in 2060 B.S. who is in police service. Due to his service he is often out of home and family. Thus, I manage the household myself. I have one son and a daughter. When I entered in microfinance with the help of friends, I got opportunity to utilize the desires and skills that I had since my childhood. I got the training of three-months tailoring and by which I have become able to open a tailor shop. I have bought a machine and kept other three machines provided to me by the microfinance and providing the training of tailoring to 5 women. After getting involved in microfinance, my abilities have increased and I have participated in various social activities. Despite the absence of my husband I have been able to manage the household and provide the education to children. I consider myself to be a successful woman and this credit goes to the microfinance.*

#### **Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd.**

For the economic empowerment of women, women from Balambu have established micro-finance called Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd. and conducting it successfully since 2069 B.S. for women empowerment is one of the most successful activities of government and development agencies, According to the state of micro credit summit campaign 2001 Report, 14.2 million

world's poorest women now have access to financial services through specialized microfinance institutions (MFIS) banks, NGOs and other non-bank financial institutions. The Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd. has 721 general members out of which an executive committee is formed consisting of ten members. The Hasana Bhastipur Saving & Credit Cooperative Ltd. has its own organizational laws, rules and policy to run the organization effectively. Following objectives are hoped to be achieved for the socio-economic welfare of the members:

- To develop the habit of saving by increasing the co-operation and thriftiness among the members included in the organization.
- To make income source and employable increase for economic and social position progress by unifying the members.
- To increase the income and job oriented opportunities by uniting the members to improve the socio-economic situation.
- To bring the positive change in socio-economic and educational status of the members.

#### **Activities Related to Social Development**

Social Development may be seen as a process of ushering in a new order of existence. The quality of life and the quality of social relations which exist would indicate the level of the order of existence. The activities of microfinance are implemented for community development. Microfinance of Balambu has contributed as much in social development, literatures have shown that microfinance have completed large projects like constructing roads, temples, resting places, plantation of trees in public place and managing literacy classes for needy children and education for aged people, microfinances also tried to change male behavior of drinking alcohol, playing card and eradication of domestic violence and cleaning roads etc. For the impact of microfinance in social development a participant shared me her experience such as:

*When Binita Maharjan house situated in Balambu caught fire, microfinance helped them Rs.1,550 and consoled the disaster-ridden family. Microfinance provided some clothes and Rs. 1550 to bereaved families when their 2 houses had caught fire. Sita Nakarmi, single women of Balambu was severely beaten and injured by her own brother. Microfinance had helped her in treatment and given the justice to her. Parbati Karki was economically poor and thus, she was not*



able to do the treatment of her disease. microfinance had helped her financially for her treatment.

Microfinance of Balambu has been launching programs against gambling, drinking alcohol, road construction, sanitation, public awareness, physical and financial help in construction of temple and public school, programs for forestations and controlling deforestation, established of child development center, celebration of programs like. "Red clothes for widow" As a result of this program, 60 percent widow, wearing red color clothes and ending of caste discrimination microfinance celebration of "Vai Tika" on Tihar, 100 brothers were involved from different caste. Program of respecting old people and program for developing technical skill for women, lunching different program for the development of self-independence of women. Similarly, mothers group had initiated door-to-door campaign on making local people (especially Dalit community) aware of good sanitation around home and building toilet; as a result, nearly 90 percent of the toilet less family built temporary toilets supporting the good sanitation program initiated by microfinance. The community has also realized and highly regarded their contribution on those areas and awareness rising on women on above mentioned themes. Due to the lack of microfinance creative thought, proper guidance from the social leaders, internal disputes among microfinance members, lack of organizational skills, management skills, support from other organizations, group consensus among members and limited sources of fund etc.

have been found as the main constraints to microfinance for their social activities. However, besides social awareness raising, microfinance has carried out social activities like cleaning trails, plantation of tree in public area, financial support to local school and local temple for constructing new building, helping poor and helpless people, maintaining peace and harmony in the community.

#### **Attitude of Males towards Microfinance**

Altogether seven fathers and three male social leaders were interviewed to find out their attitude towards mothers group operating in their community. Microfinance was guided by the social leaders of the society though their guidance was not regular and sufficient. In response to how they regarded the mothers' effort to empower themselves through microfinance, they said that it was positive change in the attitude of mothers, the microfinance was self-initiated. Fathers were found to have seen some noticeable changes in their

wives after being members of microfinance. Those changes as follows:

- They have been able to express their feelings and ideas in groups, and have developed their capacity, to make logical decisions on household level.
- They have developed social feeling and fully involved in social activities.
- They have gained the knowledge and skills learnt from training and regular meeting.
- They have improved sanitation around home and whole society.
- They have participated in social activities like constructing road, school management, community forest etc.

The social leaders said that the representations of women in social institution have been raised since the emergence of microfinance. Women were representing social organization like school management committee, community forestry committee, temple construction committee, drinking water supply committee after their involvement in microfinance; they have started presenting themselves consciously in the programs like parents' day in schools, annual anniversary programs and open discussion programs on public issues etc. All of the social leaders who were working together with women representatives opined that they have developed self-confidence while making decisions on public matters. The social leaders of the society admitted the fact that the representations of women in social institution have been raised since the emergence of microfinance. However, they said that the increment of female representative in such institutions in recent years was not the result of emergence of microfinance alone, but microfinance was the platform from where women developed their capabilities to hold social responsibilities because of their constant work through organization in microfinance. For instance, here is mentioned a case of the male attitude as a voice of Microfinance treasure Babita Sharma (Name changed)"

*"I had realized much more differences in my wife's behavior after her involvement in microfinance. Before getting involved in microfinance, she was also limited within household activities although she had some probability of doing something if she got an opportunity. Later, her desires were fulfilled through microfinance. She fostered her inner capability to speak out clearly and with confidence in front of mass. She developed social feelings. She*



*makes decision on sole household activities that are not only reasonable but also rigid. Now she has also represented 'many social institutions like community forest user's group, and school management committee etc. She has established her own prestigious position in the society as a result of her involvement in microfinance.*

The entire male respondent opined that female also should be given the right of equality as both male and female are two parts of the same coin. More than 30 percent of total male interviewee argued that the women lagged behind men mainly because they gave the first priority to household activities than participated in social activities if they could manage their time. 50 percent male regarded illiteracy of the mothers and discriminatory social structure against them as the main causes behind their backwardness in the society and 20 percent male said that mothers were more enthusiastic to participate in social activities and social organization but the lack of their interest in attending knowledgeable programs. More than out of interviewed 70 percent of the male satisfied with microfinance social activities and social reform regarding drinking and gambling and social evils.

#### **Attitude of Non-member Women towards Microfinance**

Altogether non-member women were interviewed to find out their attitude toward microfinance operating in their community. It was found that percent mothers were involved in Government Job, so they were busy their situation was good, because they have already educated and have no restriction in doing some extra activity outside their household. few women were involved in various small women related organization, such as women empowerment program, income generating program and saving and credit program, which initiated by different organization. They also had some training on livestock (goat keeping, pig keeping) accountancy, institutional development, gender equality, sanitation, nutrition, human right etc. As a result, they seemed to have been more enthusiastic to get involved in such groups rather than microfinance. And few women were involved in only their household activities like collecting and cooking meals, cleaning house, washing clothes, caring children, so they were not involved in microfinance because of maximum busy in household activities, lack of family support, lack conveying message regarding benefit by participation in microfinance and lack of education. This problem was found mainly in Joint family.

This is a main defect of our social structure and its foundation of religious culture and tradition.

In response to the question how they perceived the activities carried out by the microfinance operating in their community. Few non-members women were found dissatisfied with the existing microfinance in their community and most of the non-member women were satisfied with the social activities carried out by microfinance in their community.

In case of Jobholder, non-member women were found to know about microfinance and some of them had keen interest to get involved in microfinance. According to them, microfinance in their village had been gaining existence as a women's force for change. They emphasized microfinance influencing role in developing self-confidence of its member social awareness rising, participation in social activities and focused on women empowerment program etc. it was playing significant role in maintaining neat and clean. Environment in their village, microfinance had been successful in uniting women for social work and keeping peace and harmony in the community.

Out of interviewed non-member few women gave more priority to other women related organizations rather than microfinance. According to them, social services provided by the microfinance were not specific they informed that they had been involved in other groups which were more effective and helpful from both economic betterment and empowerment of women. And microfinance size was very big so they cannot manage it and the response of interviewed non-member few women gave priority to their household work like cooking meals, washing clothes caring to their children, and spend their other time for agriculture. But their perception about microfinance was positive.

#### **Changes in Social Status of Women**

As the information gathered from women, before the formation of the microfinance, women were untouched and unaware with the outer world. They were found to be aware of their position and role in the society after its establishment. They are full of enthusiasm and always willing to do something for their families and society. They were preparing themselves to fight against obstacles. They got knowledge and skill development. According to them, they have been successful, to greater extent, to change the traditional concept prevailing in the society that women can't do anything in social development. But that concept has been changed when mothers started performing



social activities. Women have also cultivated social feeling. Before involving in the microfinance, their social relationship and contacts were limited within household. But After getting involved in the microfinance, their social relationship, level of contact has extended. Microfinance activities and training were able to fight against the traditional value, and they felt proud, confident and prestigious in the society. Women have increased social status and power, a source of empowerment.

### **Involvement in Social Activities**

After getting involved in the microfinance, they were interested to join other social institution and program. In response to the question whether they got involved in social activities or not, most of women responded that they had been involved in social activities representing social institutions like, forest user's group, school management committee, temple management committee, road construction committee and drinking water supply management committee, Nagarik Samaj committee etc. Microfinance has relationship with various agencies and institutions. The figure below shows the relationship between microfinance and others local institutions. There seem the relations between microfinance and local social institutions. Representing social institutions like forest user group, school management committee, temple management committee, road construction committee, drinking water supply committee, and other local institution like, local government, polices, NGO/INGO and health related organization etc.

### **Decision-Making Capabilities**

Decision-making capabilities of members were found to be highly depended upon the family background of the members. The women from nuclear family were found to have much more opportunities to make decisions than the members from joint family, of the members were from nuclear family. Among them, most of the members made decisions jointly with their husbands except in kitchen maintenance like making decision on schooling of their children, buying clothes, etc. But the members from joint family, they were found to be hardly involved in decision-making process. Among very few members, few members said that they are also consulted making decisions on major issues like buying, selling house, land etc.

After getting involved in microfinance, they had felt significant changes in their decision-making. Most of the women said that there has been change in the pattern to decision making.

They said that before joining the groups, they used to limit their decision only in the kitchen maintenance but, after getting involved in microfinance, they analyzed the issue logically and sometimes they disagreed the decisions made by others and gave their own decision. They also said that there is change in their self-confidence, behavior, knowledge, communicating skill etc. after getting involved in microfinance. By getting the training and link with different people women got more knowledge and increased the power of leadership, that helped them to make decision on their risk either that were on household or on public issues.

### **Changes in Attitude of Family Members and Neighbors**

Involvement in microfinance and in income generating activities and social activities had changed their attitude of family members and their neighbor. Their occupation, public life, saving, mobility knowledge and confidence had changed their family members and neighbor's concepts towards them. It was found that most of the members have felt change in the attitude of family members towards them. They said that due to the organizational practice in microfinance, training, access to new knowledge and skill they have become more confident to talk on any issues. They started getting themselves involved in household decision making. This has made the family members (especially husband) to realize their role in the family. Among them few have felt change in the attitude of their neighbor because of the increment in their confidence level and involvement in social activities. But some members did not feel any changes of their family members and neighbors towards them because of their low access to the opportunities like training, social activities etc.

### **III. Conclusions**

Empowerment of women and social development go together. Women of rural areas are getting organized and making efforts to empower themselves by the name microfinance. Microfinance have played vital role for women empowerment and developing social awareness of women. Microfinance have provided a safe platform for women to exercise power relationship within organization, enhance their communicational skills, share personal feelings and experience there by learn something new, that helps them change the traditional concepts prevailing in the society on their role and





responsibilities, to increase their confidence level because of their access to new information, knowledge and skill, which in turn enhance their capability to increase their participation in local institution.

Microfinance members are actively involved in antiliquor campaign and fight against atrocities on women etc. Microfinance members are interviewed about their company activities and changes in the living standards of the members. The various factors like income generated from group activity income from other sources, family assets, family size, savings and repayment of the loans are taken into consideration to find out the changes in the living standards of the microfinance members. These factors are treated for the purpose of the study as indicators of economic empowerment. The social aspect of the group activities was taken for study. The social aspects of the microfinance activities like, training, management of group, functioning social activities and financial support etc. are studied by deriving the data about the number of group meeting attended and about the formation of the group etc. for the purpose of the study as indicators of social empowerment.

After getting involved in microfinance, women were able to defend social evils and male domination against women. It was a great change in their perspective, attitude, authority, prestige, knowledge, ability and social relationship and training program had helped in building self-confidence among the members. The caste and ethnic group have equal participation in executive committee members and general members of microfinance of Balambu. However, all the women had not progressed at same level women from nuclear family were much empowered than the women from joint families. One of the important conclusions of the study was that the microfinance activities have been helping the poor women in economic and social development. The capacity of women leaders to communicate with other women was seen as an important factor in helping the development of women. Conclusively, through the different activities of microfinance the involved members have gained confidence and this had led them to the path of empowerment.

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