

学 位 論 文 要 旨

Financing Empowerment of Women in Nepal ネパールにおける女性金融のエンパワメント

農林共生社会科学専攻 農林共生社会科学大講座
Shrestha Balaram

“Women in poverty” relates to those women who are deprived from the basic living necessities like food, clothing, housing and health. As poverty reduction is a priority agenda of Nepal, various poverty reducing programs have sprung up. Providing microcredit has been found to be working well in helping such poor people. For women empowerment, they need to have access to credit through finance, such as microcredit, which will eventually lift up their economic, cultural and social development. But most of the microfinance institutes are located in the city, whereas most of the country’s poor population is found in suburb areas.

As the society is deep rooted in Hinduism, which practices the patrimonial system embedded with discrimination, constraints and complications, are seen in the source of credit and the policies. Most of the times, land is needed as collateral to get a loan and, in the past, the paternal inheritance system to property law did not grant women to own any property. Daughters are only very rarely given a deed to own family land; and after marriage they are, in most cases, not considered to be eligible to have any ownership at all. However, from 2007, the laws stipulated equal rights for both daughters and sons to inherit family property from birth. But still, the inability to furnish collateral, due to cultural tradition, severely limits their capacity and thereby hinders in the empowerment of women. They start their own businesses being self-reliant. Women with claims to property have problems getting loans due to mistrust and lack of recognition of women entrepreneurs.

A case study was conducted on the Thankot Mahila Jagaran Saving and Credit Cooperative (TMJSCC), situated in the suburb area of Kathmandu. This research studies how the poor illiterate women empowered themselves by accessing the TMJSCC financial service, why the TMJSCC has recorded good performance even though its interest rate spread is narrower than the other microfinance institutions, and what the new challenges the TMJSCC is facing are in the competitive microfinance market. In 1999, some motivated poor women of the urban community in Kathmandu came forth to unite together and established the TMJSCC with 41 members. In

2015, the TMJSCC had 1,590 members linked in 56 groups. Over the periods, an increase of 25% has been noted in the membership of the cooperative along with the rise in the profits as well. Since 2011, the loan demand of the cooperative has been increasing annually. The cooperative performs nearly 360 loan transactions every year. The members, by taking the loans, engage themselves in some small businesses such as tailoring, grocery store, and animal husbandry. In 2014, the amount deposited in the cooperative by the members reached to US\$ 471,698 in the 2014 exchange rate basis. As the default loan is 2 percent, it has assisted the TMJSCC to have a special policy to recover the default loan and support the default business of the members.

From the study it was found that the TMJSCC was effective in empowering the economy of the women. The TMJSCC made financially sound development despite charging the lowest rate of interest that has been made possible due to several factors, and it is also cited that they adopted the peer group member support system as well due to the low interest rate. This was also made possible by the expanded financial resources inflow from the NGOs and the government which provided subsidized loans. Reflecting on the developments of the cooperative, the members diversifying operational scope has been expanding. Hence, empowerment of its own organizational structure, such as, enhancement of financial network and enlargement of handling capacity in the office, has emerged as the urgent target yet to be achieved.

As the issuance of loan through the microfinance cooperative has been expanding, the women are getting economic empowerment. The microfinance cooperative has been run with a social capital perspective basis. Every member is responsible and loyal to their group. Their regular meetings with their respective groups have boosted them to develop mutual trust, unity, and interdependency, and also assisted them to develop good leadership within their society.

The new findings of the research show that after receiving direct access of credit, poor women have become empowered and they have increased their self-esteem which, in turn, has encouraged them to be uplifted and to start their own businesses. This has initiated them to formulating their own entrepreneurship groups and peer groups. The meetings and exchanges of their move have created trustworthy network of the women's society which works as a bottom-up development tool and eradicates the severe poverty from the vulnerable society. The tiny support with trust among the people evolves the social, cultural, economic and political revolution to poor which makes the world sustainable without discrimination of the haves or the have-nots.

The new challenges seen are: to exempt taxes on women's businesses, to support larger amounts of loan for more profitable businesses; to support effective managements; and to create multiple innovative objectives for women, resources, programs and benefits should be open and there should be free access without gender discrimination and religious basis, the need to form national women development networks and link them with the international women societies, and the need to institutionalize private and national organizations instead of giving the sole authority to the individuals in power. Institutionalization evolves equality and be accessible to the national agenda making it fruitful to all, wherever they are, in the urban, rural, mountain or the Terai regions.