

Microfinance and Women Empowerment: Measuring the Access and Control over Loan Use and Resources (A Case Study on WAVE Foundation)



Microfinance is widely pronounced in development discourse of poor people in Bangladesh. It has been praised and criticized at the same time as a tool for development. Microfinance is a popular method of development in the country. It is often claimed that microfinance brought significant improvements in women's socio-economic empowerment. Measuring 'empowerment' has been always challenging. Among many indicators of measuring empowerment, independent right to make choices, access and control over loan use and resources are prominent ones. This study aims to assess the access and control over loan use and resources of women who is involved in microfinance. The study included a total number of 260 participants as respondents in 2015.



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Research questions: The research includes following key research questions:

1. What % of women is directly using microfinance for income generating activities?
2. What % of women has access and control over loan use?
3. What % of women can spend money by their own decision?
4. What % of women buying assets with their own income in the name of herself?

Access and Control Spectrum: To make findings comprehensive a qualitative scale (Fig-1) is drawn to capture the idea how much access and control the women (micro finance participants of WAVE) have over loan use and resources. So, participants are placed in the spectrum according to their access and control over income generating activities (IGA) and resources.

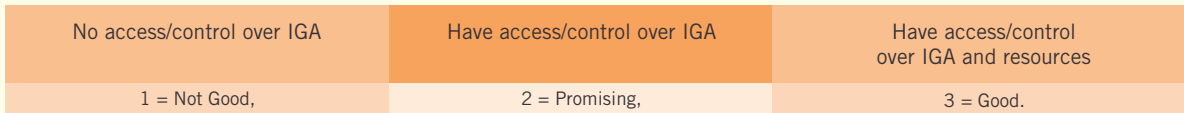


Fig-1: Access & Control spectrum

Major Findings

1. 29% members answered as they have no access or control over the IGA (Fig-3). 23 participants manage the IGAs by herself and rest manages their

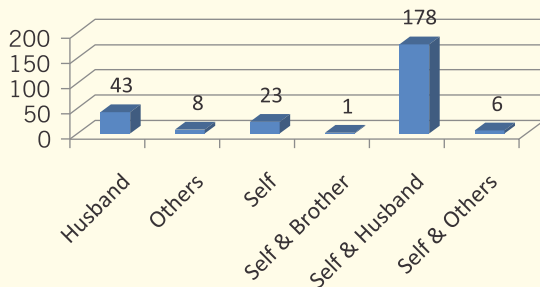


Fig-2: Access and control over IGA

IGAs with husband, brother or others (Fig-2). Women participation in loan use overall is 80%. In 20% cases they have no access and control over loan use.

2. 70% of the participants responded that they purchase things on their own while rest 30% does not (fig-4). Their husband or son or others does the purchasing for them. Among those 70% who responded they purchase on their own, range of their purchasing in monetary value also been considered (Fig-5). As we can see that purchases of the 53% are within the daily household accessories and things. Rest 17% purchased bigger like gold, land etc. in last six months.
3. Around 50% of the respondents mentioned they have generated resources through the IGAs they are running taking microfinance loans. 86% cases

have control involved no control

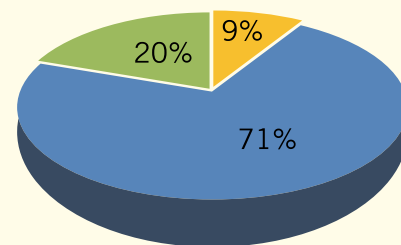


Fig-3: Women % of access and control

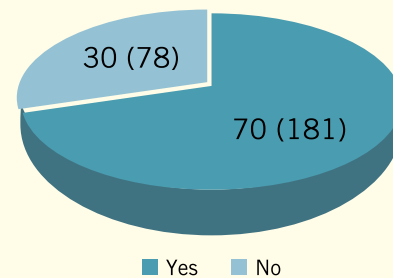


Fig-4: Purchasing status

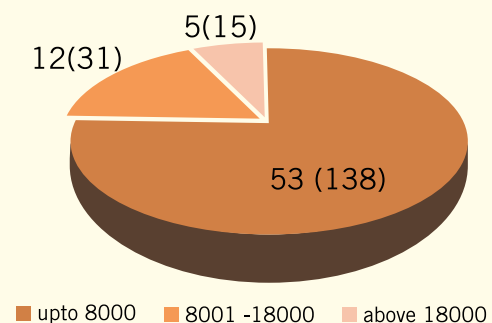


Fig-5: Purchase amount

women were directly involved or controlling in operating those IGAs which resulted as three resource generation (Fig-6). In case of two resource generation the involvement and control was 79% (Fig-8).

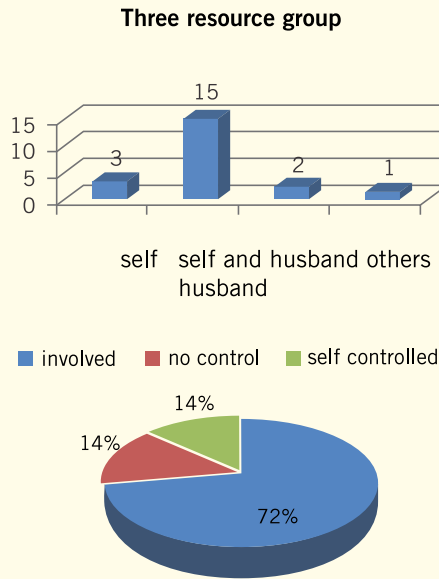


Fig-6: Control over IGA among three resource generating group

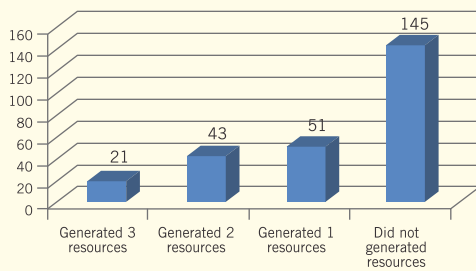


Fig-7: Resource generation status

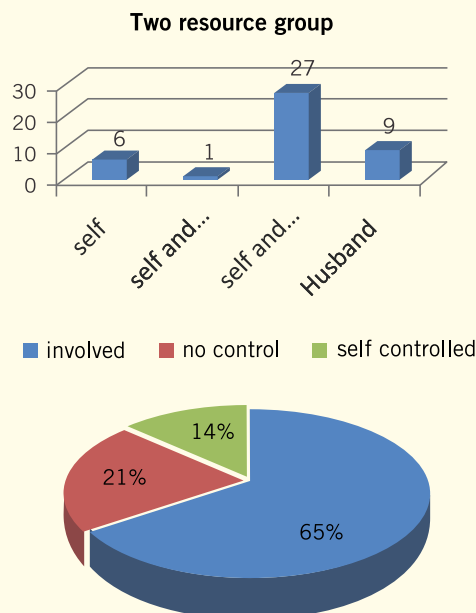


Fig-8: Control over IGA among two resource generating group

4. Total 200 assets/resources were generated by the respondents. 60% of those resources were directly owned by the women while 40% were named after their husbands, son and grandson (Fig-9).

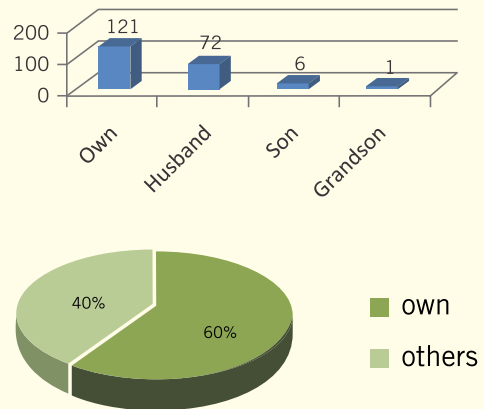


Fig-9: Resource ownership status

5. In case of specific resources like land ownership this ratio is 53% (women) and 47% (husband) (fig-10). In terms of monetary value husbands tend to be own more valuable resources (fig-11). If we notice the resource variation among the women and man ownership (fig-12 & 13) it is clear that in case of women land, gold, furniture and household products were prioritized. In case of husband's ownership resources land, machineries, vehicles etc, were prioritized. If we consider the value of these resources in terms of monetary value it is clear that husband owned resources are much contains more value.

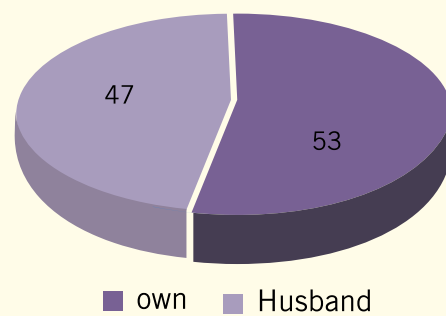


Fig-10: Land resource ownership status

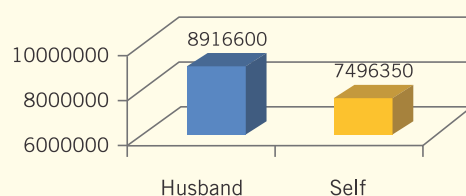


Fig-11: Monetary value of the resources

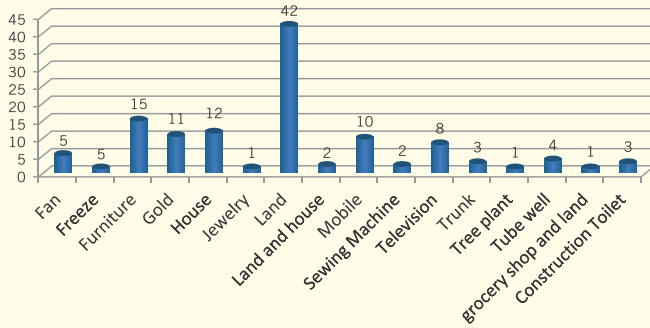


Fig12: Interpretation of the 60% ownership of the women

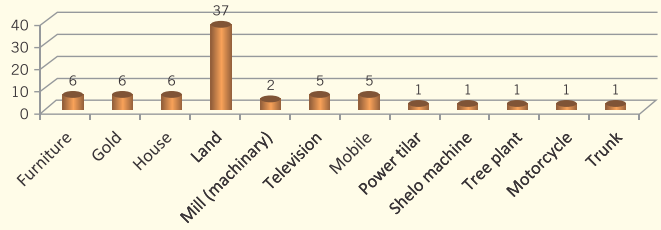


Fig-13: Interpretation of the 36% ownership of the husband

6. 26% of the members have no access or control over loan use or resources. 54% cases showing promising notion. These are mainly who has access and control over loan use but did not generated any resource. Rest 20% women are in good category in the spectrum which denotes they have access or control over the loan use and resources (fig-14).

■ Not good ■ promising ■ Good

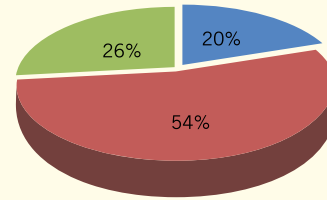


Fig-14: Women empowerment status on the basis of acces or (control over loan use and resources

Conclusion: This was a generalized analysis of relation between microfinance and women empowerment focusing on specific indicators- 'access and control over loan use and resources'. A more in-depth study is needed including other indicators of empowerment so that we get a picture with more details of the women empowerment scenario in the country.



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