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CONTRIBUTION ON EMPOWERMENT BY WOMEN COOPERATIVES IN SUDURPASCHIM PROVINCE

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Abstract— **This article takes a close look at how women's cooperatives may empower women. The paper examines the prospects and barriers to women's empowerment in environments lacking an enabling macro-institutional framework and societal structure by drawing evidence from a variety of women's cooperatives in the province. We investigate the ways and degrees to which members sense empowerment in their lives after joining the cooperatives by listening to the real-life accounts of women from various socioeconomic and political backgrounds. We discover that women nonetheless feel economic, psychological, social, and organizational empowerment despite societal and governmental restrictions, while the degree of this empowerment differs among cases.**

Keywords— **Cooperative, Women empowerment, Economic, Rural areas, power, lifestyle.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is a necessary precondition for reducing global poverty and safeguarding human rights, particularly at the individual and household levels; it contributes to the development of a foundation for social transformation. Women's empowerment is critical for their liberation and meaningful participation in decision making at all levels. As a result, women's social and economic empowerment is critical to bringing about this shift. Women's empowerment is not a sufficient prerequisite for growth, but it is a required requirement. As a result, women's empowerment has three dimensions. The social component denotes a reputable and non-discriminatory social standing. The political dimension denotes participation in organizational governance and administrative posts, whereas economic empowerment enables women members to be equal in employment, expenditure, ownership of production means, and benefit sharing.

Women in Nepal's Sudurpaschim area are frequently forced to work in the household. Women have traditionally had second place in the home and in the community. Every village in this province has fewer women in positions of leadership in development and politics, as well as as house owners and heads of households. Women are usually preoccupied with caring for their children, cattle, and elderly.

Empowerment has always been central to the cooperative concept, in which the weaker sections of society band together to pursue goals that they could not attain on their own. The members select the goals, and because cooperatives are based on the premise of one person - one vote, the cooperative form of enterprise allows women to participate on equal terms with males. Cooperative companies can take various forms: they can be established by a group of businesses or by individual entrepreneurs who want to benefit from shared services, cheaper goods, easier market access, or higher prices for their products.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order for men and women to experience gender equality, they must be afforded the same opportunities, rights, and treatment in all areas of life. It maintains that a person's access to resources, social status, and rights are not contingent on whether they are born a man or a woman. Women continue to experience oppression, discrimination, and abuses of their human rights all across the world despite the principle of gender equality having been formally endorsed by numerous international conventions and treaties. These come in a variety of shapes, from violence against women to limiting access for women to healthcare and educational opportunities. There are disparities in the number of job options and the standard of employment for men and women. Men continue to hold the majority of positions because, on average, they earn more than women doing similar work. In general, males make more money than women doing equal labour, and they continue to hold positions of leadership and management. In the workplace, gender equality refers to fairness for both men and women in terms of opportunity and treatment, compensation and access to safe and healthy workplaces, rights to organize and engage in collective bargaining, career advancement opportunities, maternity leave, and a work-life balance (ILO,2014).

The idea of cooperation, in which the weaker members of society band together to accomplish goals they would not be able to accomplish on their own, has always been based on empowerment. The objectives are set by the members

themselves, and as cooperatives are governed by the idea of one person, one vote, they give women the same opportunity to participate as men. Cooperative businesses can take on a variety of shapes. They can be founded by a group of businesses or by lone entrepreneurs looking to gain access to markets, cheaper goods, and shared services. The ability of the members of each group to establish economies is what unites them all, though. The fact that they can all achieve economies of scale in order to boost their influence and bargaining power is what unites them all. Women commonly work alone and in isolation in the informal sector of the economy in many developing nations, where they engage in low-skilled labour and earn meagre wages. They can get the economic and social leverage they require by cooperating in small-scale organizations (Sebhatu, 2015 p 18).

The cooperative concept, in which individuals band together to accomplish goals they would not be able to accomplish on their own, has always been based on empowerment. The co-operative type of business gives women the chance to participate on equal terms with males because the goals are chosen by the members themselves and co-operatives are structured on the premise of one person - one vote. Cooperative businesses can take on a variety of shapes. They can be established by a group of businesses or by a single entrepreneur who wants to take advantage of shared services, lower pricing on goods, better access to markets, or higher prices for their commodities. But what they all have is the capacity for economies of scale, which helps members of the group gain influence and leverage in negotiations. By cooperating in small-scale cooperatives, they can gain the necessary economic, social, and political clout. The Asia and Pacific region has a number of excellent examples of how cooperatives may empower women. The empowerment of women in leadership in cooperatives is crucial for the realization of the benefits that accrue from cooperatives. The inclusion of women is, thus, key to creating well-targeted policies that will help farmers and the cooperatives increase not only their relevance but also their productivity for greater benefits (Singh, 2016).

After participating in cooperative, the consciousness and economic, socio-cultural, and political dimensions of women's empowerment have been considerably altered. As a result, markers of women's empowerment, such as awareness, economic, socio-cultural, and political situation of women, can alter and improve through active and continual participation in cooperative. Women should receive more entrepreneurship and business skills, as well as vocational and skill upgrading training, through cooperative organizations (Sharma & Shahi, 2022).

Cooperatives have a good effect on women's economic empowerment and, as a result, socio cultural elements. Cooperatives are a tool for transforming political and economic life. In terms of material resources and women's control over them, it has placed a strong emphasis on microcredit initiatives (Poudel & Pokharel, 2017). Cooperative societies help rural women become more aware of the advantages of cooperative societies as a means of advancing their economic empowerment (Uche, Chineze & Gabriel, 2021)

Women make up a very small percentage of management positions. In addition, they only attend meetings rather than actively participating in the business of their cooperative organization. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that women members have strengthened their autonomy in decision-making since joining their cooperatives. However, there are limits to how frequently social and economic decisions are made. Women have stressed that as their income and cattle ownership has grown, so too have their expenses for food, clothing, transportation, education, health care, and holiday celebrations (Tesfay & Tadele, 2013).

Women collaborate after establishing the cooperative society, helping them to understand the significance of making wise life decisions. The cause of social changes is empowering, despite the fact that there is less structural change in society. So, the women's cooperative gives women a place to talk about their difficulties and become empowered by them (Kakati & Kakoty, 2022).

Different types of cooperatives make empowering women their main objective. Through their contribution to women's ability to earn a living, they have the potential to make a very significant contribution to their empowerment. These cooperative societies start a chain reaction of social and economic empowerment that improves the quality of life for women and their families (Ramanathan & Rajkumar, 2013).

The co-operative societies are the finest approach to connect with rural women since they gave them a platform for unrestricted interaction. According to co-operative societies in the local government region, rural women receive financial aid. It was also discovered that the cooperative helped the women secure loans from agricultural and cooperative banks in addition to providing them with direct loans (Okonkwo, Onyeze & Ochiaka, 2019).

Cooperatives are formed without regard for societal differences. It helps to eliminate unemployment, to evaluate the assistance of women at every age and in any location, home-based working women provide vital benefits, such as activating within cooperatives, initiating women of the community is the best sustainable form with economic and socially desired direction (Dalkıran, 2017).

The word empowerment is related with power. The four dimensions, as follows:

Power over

The most common definition of power is power over. It is a form of power that relies heavily on fear and is based on compulsion, dominance, and control. It is based on the tenet that certain people possess power while others do not, that power is a limited resource that can be possessed by individuals. Power is a movement, a relationship, a balance,

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fluid and changeable; it is not something we can hold or store. As a result, power is never stagnant.

Power within
The ability to aspiration, self-efficacy, self-worth, self-esteem, dignity, autonomy, and resolve are all factors that have to do with personal agency and self-belief. A person's "feeling of self-worth and self-knowledge; it involves a capacity to understand individual distinctions while appreciating others" is tied to this kind of power. People who have a sense of their own potential and value have power within.

Power To
Power to refer to the "creative or generating capacity of power, as well as the new possibilities or acts that may be developed without the need of dominance relationships." It is based on the "unique capacity of each individual to influence his or her life and world." It is the ability to make a difference, to create something new, or to fulfill one's objectives.

Power with
(Group Power) is a group's collective agency to achieve meaningful goals. It encompasses things like solidarity, group action, and mutual assistance. Power with is collective power that emerges from collaboration and partnerships. Respect, mutual support, shared power, solidarity, influence, empowerment, and collaborative decision making underpin it. Power is associated with "social power, the influence exercised among equals." Power may be used to help bridge gaps within groups or across divisions (e.g., gender, culture, class).
The cooperative run by women can only explain these matters and empower women as in the related sectors.
The ability of cooperatives to expand ownership makes them a proven force for social and economic inclusion, embracing the notion of unity in diversity and having the capacity to lower inequality. All of the members are joined by a common bond. The members pick what binds them together; this may be their shared interests, such as farming, religion, employment, or place of residence, or in the case of because of their shared sisterhood, women. In these situations, membership restrictions in larger cooperatives are a direct response to the widespread gender discrimination and disadvantage women encounter in society. Women only cooperatives give women the exposure, skills, and experience needed to participate in these larger cooperatives. Women-only membership restrictions do not violate the first Principle. Cooperatives will be agents for community collaboration, advocates of associative intelligence and ambassadors of peace as long as they adhere to the principles of open membership and member involvement and uphold the values the movement espouses (Lodiaga, 2020).
Cooperatives managed by and for women might provide unique possibilities for women to govern their own economic activities, particularly in settings where women suffer societal and cultural barriers that limit their capacity to engage in the labour force. Cooperatives that consider and handle gender division of labour at home and at work among its members, users, and workers via their services are likely to become considerably more relevant in the communities in which they operate. Women-only cooperatives can assist overcome social and cultural barriers that could otherwise limit women's labor-force involvement, and they might be especially useful in gender-segregated settings.

Research Questions

i. Are women of sudurpaschim province are really empowered?
ii. Is there any contribution of cooperatives in women empowerment of Sudurpaschim province?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to find the contribution of cooperatives in women empowerment of sudurpachim province. Then the objectives are to:

i. Find the women empowerment in sudurpaschim province,
ii. Analyze the contribution of cooperatives for empowerment of women.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is designed to examine the contribution of cooperative in women empowerment of Sudurpashchim Province. The study has used exploratory and descriptive research designs, qualitative and a small portion of quantitative techniques have been used based on nature and source of data. Focus group discussion was conducted within the 20 members of four women cooperatives of kailali districts are as sample. The study covers the Sudurpashmanchal Province of Nepal. This study mainly used primary data. Primary data were collected from the respondent of women cooperatives. Purposive sampling was used for answer different type’s empowerment related cooperative in this province.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Women's empowerment can be defined to promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

Empowerment

The concept of empowerment The World Bank's definition of empowerment is the process of empowering individuals or groups to make decisions and transform those options into actions and desired outcomes. Empowered people have the freedom to choose and act. This enables them to have a better impact on their lives and the decisions that affect them. Empowering jobs are expected to increase development

opportunities, improve development outcomes and improve people's quality of life. Empowerment is a process that challenges our basic thinking about power, support, accomplishment and success. It is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as we work through it. It is a multidimensional social process.

Women have been empowered to maintain a social relationship, reduce gender disparity, involve in social program, and participate in political program through cooperative activities. Women have expanded their network of relationship through saving and credit program. The involvement of women in income-generating activity helps to create a healthy family environment. Increasing the earnings of women has a positive effect on their family's health and education; moreover, it improves their living standard. Co-operatives have been identified as one of the main mechanisms for developing economically weak community members. Apart from the existence of co-operatives, it seems that the vast majority of rural women are unaware of the existence of such co-operative societies or do not have the basic socio-economic factors that make it necessary to participate in such activities.

Co-operatives can promote economic and social development because they are commercial organizations that follow a broader set of values than those associated with profit motives alone. Co-operatives play an important role in job creation through direct provision of services to members and the provision of services to non-members. Co-operatives can continue to develop policies that support women internally. In the time of research, the focus group discussion was designed in working procedure of cooperative ruled and working by women. 19 women from four women cooperatives were presented there for discussion. All the women are from the same type cooperative i.e. established by Mahila Bikash Karyalaya Dhangadhi and the economic and social level of women is similar.

Impact in women empowerment:

When the researcher asked them about the changes in women life after the registration period. They answered female has economic access and economic participation in home and society. Cooperative organizes women and make a strong force for work. It makes the habit of saving and make entrepreneur for the amount of compulsory saving. Finally, it empowered the women in leadership; encourage them for studying and habit of saving. Cooperative starts its transaction manually and builds the home of cooperative for its strength. In the initial period, we have to visit door to door to create and increase member but now all the female of its criterion themselves visit the cooperative for membership. Now all the females are the depositor of the cooperative benefit of the membership is habit formation of saving and deposit. After taking the membership in cooperative all of them are business oriented or service holder. Creation and build of rules and regulations of organization. Response of the house owner of a cooperative member is valuable than before member. One of the woman presidents of the Jeevanjoti women cooperative said that when they were increasing membership of their criterion male react to them that these female are not for Mahila Bikash they are for Mahila binash. Not only the economic strength of women it helps to female access of citizenship, marriage certificate etc. Before the members of the cooperative, they haven't knowledge of these legal procedures and policies.

Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of all families and communities and to the development of the next generation. Therefore, it is very critical to empower and capacitate women in general and poor women from the discriminated castes and ethnicities in particular, address issues of human rights violation of women, and also ensure women's effective participation and presence in all phases of reconciliation, reintegration and recovery process.

Change of Lifestyle of Women

Due to the paternal society male and female are not treated equally in cooperative in the case of where participants or members are male and female. Female are dependent on male due to lack of knowledge and busy with household work. Female hasn't decision power according to their tradition and culture and have not sufficient time for study. There is not the trend of women education after marriage also.

In the early period of cooperative registration, they can't make the decision themselves. Mahila Bikash office dhangadhi's staffs and cooperative division office's staffs frequently visit them and advise on what to do first. At that time they have to work hard for the growth of membership but now most of the women in the related area came into the office for membership. It is not to need to visit anybody for membership.

When the women were not a member of related cooperative most of them were engaged in agriculture, a little of them were the only housewife. They have not permission to go outside and haven't knowledge of the business. They haven't idea and resource for small of business.

But now 80% of them are involved in politics of local or provenience level. All the members have to save in the cooperative monthly so, 95% are engaged in entrepreneur and currently 5% in agriculture.

Help in leading power

The cooperative is a medium for awareness and leads. We have much proof of the women who can't speak or can't give the information about themselves they are empowered now. Now they raise the voice about their right and duty. One participant from Pragati Mahila Bikash bahuudesiya Sakari Sanstha named Kalsa said that now we can help the male hen he is in trouble. Because in our society many of the males are involved in playing cards and drinking alcohol. So, we female are the decision-maker or income generation person for the family and society. Not only the earner but also the manager

of irrigation and go to different offices for aids\supports. The other thing after the training and participating in the different program following changes can be seen easily:

i. Increase in decision power
ii. Increase in literacy
iii. Access to paternal property.
iv. Female are identified and valuable in society.
v. They have access to health and education.

Empowerment by training

The other improvement of a member after joining the cooperative they are trained about the cooperative terms and have access to saving and credit. They can do the business. The cooperative is also helpful for decrease domestic violence. If any women are suffering from domestic violence a team present there for counseling, so all the men of cooperative member feel ashamed when the team comes into their home. The result is positive because it decreases domestic violence. Now they give attention to the law and duties about local government, female related work plan and can watch the working procedure of government. They can fight for their right and duties with these organizations.

V. CONCLUSION

To empower women and bring them into the mainstream, an enabling environment with necessary policies and programs, training at all levels, and enough financial resources has been tried and produced an awareness among women's perspectives on empowerment. A cooperative is one type of societal organization that works to improve the lives of rural people, particularly women. It generates a lot of work. There is a link between rural women cooperative members' social and economic backgrounds and their level of awareness.

Cooperatives can be utilized to empower women by increasing their unique knowledge and capacities. Cooperatives offer its members numerous chances to engage in various income-generating activities such as petty trading, irrigation scheme establishment, agricultural production and processing, and so on.

In these cooperative only women are the members, so the women are more energize than the cooperative in male and female. The practice of only 33 percent in the leading role is being practicing in these mixed cooperatives. But all the members feel ownership; sisterhood and friendly environment to put their words and feeling of a positive kind of competition like study, business etc are seen in the women cooperatives. Researcher feels grateful while questioning them about the literacy status, entrepreneur, politics and other household works. They have managed all the works with excited looks and all the persons are self motivated for the protection of cooperative as well as their own vision. Though the cooperative is the best tool for empowerment of rural woman. Only it can give the holistic factors of empowerment i.e. education and information, power, politics, skills etc.

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