

Microfinance and Social Empowerment: A study of women SHGs in Aizawl District, Mizoram

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Abstract: Microfinance intervention through Self Help Groups (SHGs) has been seen as an effective instrument for women empowerment and poverty alleviation. According to Mizoram Economic Survey, 2014-15, female working population constitutes about 40.25% of total workers. Women in Mizoram are resourceful and hardworking; they have proved to be very enterprising. When mobilized and empowered, women can play an important role in the society. In Mizoram, the participation of women in the society is quite visible but a lot of poor women still are silenced by their lack of confidence. "Before Intervention" vs. "After Intervention" Approach was employed to analyse the impact of microfinance on the women SHG members. Only the social impact of microfinance is considered for this study. The parameters used for studying the social impact of microfinance programme on sample SHG members were self confidence level, decision making ability, social awareness and participation

A multistage sample design was adopted for selecting the sample SHGs and the primary data was collected through structured interview schedule. The study is conducted among women SHGs functioning in five Rural Development Blocks in Aizawl District. The study reveals microfinance through SHGs has led to social empowerment of the women SHG members in Aizawl district.

Key words: Social Empowerment, Microfinance, Self-Help Groups, Women Empowerment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Microfinance simply means providing small-scale financial products and services to the poor. Based on the demand for microfinance, NABARD launched a pilot project of Self Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage programme in 1992. Since then, delivery of microfinance through the SHG Model has become a successful livelihood intervention programme for the poor. Self-Help Group consist of a group of homogenous people who come together to address their common problems.

Several studies reveal that access to Microfinance product and services through SHG have an empowering impact on its members. Delivery of basic credit, skill development, trainings etc for capacity building through SHG model have gained relevance in recent years. This approach is especially effective for the women members because the SHGs serve as a platform where the women members could develop their skills and personality. When in groups, they are required to take up certain responsibility, visit bank, talk to government officials, and participate in certain trainings which they otherwise would not have done. The women SHG members gain confidence and their decision making power in the household and society increases. They could take more control of their choices as their skill increases. They became more involved in social issues and are empowered to fight social evils.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Mizoram Economic Survey, 2014-15, female working population constitutes about 40.25% of total workers. As per the census 2011, 55.76% of the total workers were engaged in agricultural activities. Women in Mizoram are resourceful and hardworking; they have proved to be very enterprising. The participation of unskilled women in the work force is relatively higher in Mizoram when compared to other states. Mizoram also have a large network of women association. They could be mobilized to undertake the SHG programme for capacity building and skill development of poor women. When mobilized and empowered, women can play an important role in the society. In Mizoram the participation of women in the society is quite visible but a lot of poor women still are silenced by their lack of confidence. Therefore, there is a need to study the impact of microfinance in promoting social empowerment especially among the women SHG members.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the social impact of microfinance through SHG among the women SHG members in Aizawl District.

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of the study is:

“Microfinance through SHG lead to Social Empowerment of Women SHG members”

Sample Size:

The total number of savings linked Self Help Groups as on 31.03.2011 in Aizawl District was 2,854 as recorded by State Focus Paper (2011-12). The average members in Self Help Group were found to be 10 members; therefore, the population of the study was taken at 28,540 individual SHG members. With the help of Sample Size determination software, the calculated sample size was found to be 380 SHG members at 95% confidence level and confidence interval of 5.

Sampling method:

Selection of the sample SHGs was done through multistage sampling method. The primary data was collected through structured interview schedule among the sample SHGs. The process of multi-stage random sampling adopted is as follows:

First Stage: Identifying the area of SHGs operating in all the 5 Rural Development Block in Aizawl District viz. Tlangnuam block, Thingsul block, Phullen block, Darlawn block and Aibawk block. List of SHGs were obtained from NGOs facilitating the groups.

Second stage: 38 SHGs were selected from each of the 5 Rural Development blocks of Aizawl District by using simple random sampling with replacement under probability sampling method. Thus, in all 190 SHGs were selected.

Third stage: From the selected 190 SHGs, 2 individual members were again selected by using simple random sampling. Thus, 380 SHG members were covered under the study.

Sources of Data and Data Collection Method:

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data were collected through interview schedule from SHG members. The secondary data were collected from various Government departments, NGOs and Banks. Relevant data were collected through pre-structured questionnaire schedule, covering both qualitative and quantitative aspects of SHGs and their members before and after participation in microfinance programme.

Scope of the Study

The impact of microfinance in the lives of the poor can be economic, socio-cultural and psychological. The study is concentrated only on the social impact of microfinance. The parameters used for studying the social impact of microfinance programme on sample SHG members were self confidence level, decision making ability, social awareness and participation. For the purpose of impact assessment, the social status of women before joining SHG was compared with that of after joining the group. The study tries to identify whether there was an increase in the social status of the women SHG members after joining SHGs.

The study is confined only to the women SHGs functioning in Aizawl District. The study covers the 5 Rural Development Block in Aizawl District viz. Tlangnuam block, Thingsul block, Phullen block, Darlawn block and Aibawk block. List of SHGs were obtained from NGOs facilitating the groups.

Data Analysis

Excel and SPSS, a standard statistical software tool were used for analyzing the data collected. Correlation Analysis and z-test for 2 sample means were employed for analyzing the data.

Empirical findings of the study:

Social Impact of Microfinance on Social Empowerment of Women SHG members:

The parameters used for studying the social impact of microfinance programme on sample SHG members were self confidence level, decision making ability, social awareness and participation. To establish the social impact using the mentioned parameters, z- test was employed for analyzing the pre and post situation of the SHG members.

I. Self Confidence Level of SHG Members

To ascertain if participation in microfinance programme have an impact on the self confidence level of SHG members, pre and post participation situation was taken on parameters like confidence in meeting officials, dealing with financial or health problems, physical mobility, respect and authority in the family etc.

(a) Confidence in Meeting Officials / Office Visits

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the confidence level of the SHG members in meeting officials or visiting offices for business purpose after microfinance intervention. This was largely because many of the members had no need to visit offices before their participation in SHG. The number of members who had no confidence in meeting officials or visiting offices decreased from 30.5% of members to 23.9% of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some amount of confidence in meeting officials increased from 52.4% of members to 55.3% of members after joining SHG; and the members who had great deal of confidence in meeting officials/ making office visits increased from 17.1% of members to 20.8% of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of confidence in meeting officials by SHG members

Confidence level	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	116	30.5	91	23.9
Somewhat	199	52.4	210	55.3
To a great extent	65	17.1	79	20.8
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the confidence level of members in meeting officials and visiting offices after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in the confidence level of members in meeting officials / office visits after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in the confidence level of members in meeting officials /office visits after joining SHG.

Table 2: z- test on confidence in meeting officials by SHG members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	1.865789474	1.968421053
Known Variance	0.459512568	0.447548952
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-2.100653573	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.035671388	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 2.10 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at 0.035 < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in confidence in meeting officials /office visits of SHG members post microfinance intervention

(b): Confidence in Dealing with Health and Financial Problems by SHG Members

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the confidence level of the SHG members in dealing with health and financial problems after microfinance intervention. This is largely because many of the members had group support and also acquire knowledge and awareness through their participation in SHG. The number of members who had no confidence in dealing with health and financial problems decreased from 21.8% of members 13.2 % of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who had some amount of confidence in dealing with health and financial problems increased from 52.4% of members to 60.8 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who had great deal of confidence in dealing with health

and financial problems increased from 20.8 % of members to 26.1 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of confidence in dealing with health and financial problems by members

Confidence level	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in %	Number of members	No. of members in %
Not at all	83	21.8	50	13.2
Somewhat	218	57.4	231	60.8
To a great extent	79	20.8	99	26.1
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the confidence level of members in dealing with health and financial problems after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in the confidence level of members in dealing with health and financial problems after joining SHG

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in the confidence level of members in dealing with health and financial problems after joining SHG

Table 4: z- test on confidence in dealing with health and financial problems

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	1.989473684	2.128947368
Known Variance	0.427329538	0.376468546
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.03256828	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.002424822	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 3.03 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at 0.0024 < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in confidence of SHG members in dealing with health and financial problems post microfinance intervention.

(c): Confidence in Voicing Opinion

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the confidence level of the SHG members in voicing their opinion after microfinance intervention. This is largely because the members were given turns to speak up in group meetings and were also required to conduct group meetings. The number of members who had no confidence in voicing their opinion decreased from 15.3 % of members to 8.2% of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who had some amount of confidence in voicing opinion decreased from 51.6% of members to 48.4% of members after joining SHG; and the members who had great deal of confidence in meeting officials/ making office visits increased from 33.2 % of members to 43.4 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 5: Frequency distribution of confidence in voicing opinion by members

Confidence level	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in %	Number of members	No. of members in %
Not at all	58	15.3	31	8.2
Somewhat	196	51.6	184	48.4
To a great extent	126	33.2	165	43.4
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the confidence level of members in voicing their opinion after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in the confidence level of members in voicing their opinion after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in the confidence level of members in voicing their opinion after joining SHG.

Table 6: z – test on confidence in voicing opinion by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.178947368	2.352631579
Known Variance	0.453381475	0.392473268
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.681325701	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.000232024	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 3.68 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at 0.0002 < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in confidence of SHG members in voicing their opinion post microfinance intervention.

(d) Confidence in Facing New Challenges

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the confidence level of the SHG members in facing new challenges after microfinance intervention. The members were more confident in taking risk since group fund was seen as a safety net in times of emergency. The number of members who had no confidence in facing new challenges decreased from 20.3 % of members to 9.2 % of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some amount of confidence in facing new challenges increased from 53.2 % of members to 57.4 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who had great deal of confidence in facing new challenges increased from 26.6% of members to 33.4 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 7: Frequency distribution of confidence in facing new challenges by members

Confidence level	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in %	Number of members	No. of members in %
Not at all	77	20.3	35	9.2
Somewhat	202	53.2	218	57.4
To a great extent	101	26.6	127	33.4
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the confidence level of members in facing new challenges after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in the confidence level of members in facing new challenges after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in the confidence level of members in facing new challenges after joining SHG.

Table 8: z- test on confidence in facing new challenges by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.063157895	2.242105263
Known Variance	0.465657548	0.368671018
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.818990321	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.000133999	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 3.81 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at $0.0001 < 0.05$ therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in confidence level of SHG members in facing new challenges post microfinance intervention.

(e) Physical Mobility of Members

The study revealed that there was an improvement in physical mobility of the SHG members after microfinance intervention. This was largely because many of the members had no need to visit offices before their participation in SHG and also expanding their business area and operation lead to increased physical mobility.

The number of members who had limited physical mobility decreased from 15.3 % of members to 5 % of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who had some amount of physical mobility increased from 52.1% of members to 52.6 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who had great deal of physical mobility increased from 32.6% of members to 42.4 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 9 : Frequency distribution of physical mobility of members

Confidence level	<i>Before joining SHG</i>		<i>After joining SHG</i>	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	58	15.3	19	5.0
Somewhat	198	52.1	200	52.6
To a great extent	124	32.6	161	42.4
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the physical mobility of members after microfinance intervention, z- test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (H₀): There was no significant improvement in the physical mobility of members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There was significant improvement in the physical mobility of members after joining SHG.

Table 10: z- test on physical mobility of SHG members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.173684211	2.373684211
Known Variance	0.449965283	0.334925705
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-4.400652977	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	1.07926E-05	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 4.40 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value ($=1.07926E-05$) < 0.05 therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in the physical mobility of SHG members post microfinance intervention.

(f) Respect and Authority in the Household

The study revealed that the members gained more respect in their household after microfinance intervention. This can be attributed to the fact that many of the members earned more income, had social recognition and can better articulate their needs and status in their household after their participation in SHG.

The number of members who gained no respect and authority in their household decreased from 11.1% of members to 2.9% of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who gained some amount of respect and authority in their household decreased from 49.7 % of members to 44.5% of members after joining SHG; and the members who gained great deal of respect and authority in their household increased from 39.2 % of members to 52.6 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 11: Frequency distribution of respect and authority in the household

Confidence level	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	42	11.1	11	2.9
Somewhat	189	49.7	169	44.5
To a great extent	149	39.2	200	52.6
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in gaining respect and authority of members in their household after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (H_0): There was no significant improvement in gaining respect and authority in the family by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There was significant improvement in gaining respect and authority in the family by members after joining SHG.

Table 12: z – test on respect and authority in the family

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.281578947	2.497368421
Known Variance	0.424461882	0.308700181
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-4.912720567	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	8.98213E-07	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 4.91 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value ($=8.98213E-07$) < 0.05 therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in gaining respect and authority of SHG members post microfinance intervention.

II. Decision Taking Ability of SHG Members

To ascertain if participation in microfinance programme have an impact on the ability to make decision by SHG members, pre and post participation situation was taken on parameters like decision on household expenditure and savings, decision on taking loan, children’s education etc.

(a) Ability to Take Decision on Household Expenditure

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the ability to take decision on household expenditure by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no decision taking ability

on household expenditure decreased from 22.1% of members to 13.2 % of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some ability to take decision on household expenditure increased from 54.7 % of members to 52.6 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who can take decision on household expenditure to a great extent increased from 23.2 % of members to 34.2 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 13: Frequency distribution on ability to take decision on household expenditure by members

Decision taking ability	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	84	22.1	50	13.2
Somewhat	208	54.7	200	52.6
To a great extent	88	23.2	130	34.2
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the decision taking ability of members on household expenditure after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in ability to take decision on household expenditure by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in ability to take decision on household expenditure by members after joining SHG.

Table 14 : z – test for ability to take decision on household expenditure

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	2.010526316	2.210526316
Known Variance	0.453714762	0.430495764
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-4.146139915	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	3.38127E-05	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool use: Excel

The z value at 4.14 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value (=3.38127E-05) < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in decision taking ability of SHG members on household expenditure post microfinance intervention.

(b)Ability to Take Decision on Household Savings

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the ability to take decision on household savings by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no decision taking ability on household savings decreased from 20.8 % of members to 10 % of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who had some ability to take decision on household savings increased from 57.6 % of members to 58.2 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who can take decision on household savings to a great extent increased from 21.6 % of members to 31.8 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 15: Frequency distribution on decision taking ability on household savings

Decision taking ability	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	79	20.8	38	10.0

Somewhat	219	57.6	221	58.2
To a great extent	82	21.6	121	31.8
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the decision taking ability of members on household savings after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in ability to take decision on household saving by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in ability to take decision on household saving by members after joining SHG.

Table 16: z – test on ability to take decision on household savings by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.007894737	2.218421053
Known Variance	0.424739619	0.371691432
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-4.598583712	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	4.25373E-06	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 4.59 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value (=4.25373E-06) < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in decision making ability of SHG members on household savings post microfinance intervention.

(c) Ability to Take Decision on Availing Loan

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the ability to take decision on availing loan by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no decision taking ability on availing loan decreased from 35 % of members’ to 22.6 % of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some ability to take decision on availing loan increased from 47.1 % of members to 51.1 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who can take decision on availing loan to a great extend increased from 17.9 % of members to 26.3 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 17 : Frequency distribution on ability to take decision on availing loan by members

Decision taking ability	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	133	35.0	86	22.6
Somewhat	179	47.1	194	51.1
To a great extent	68	17.9	100	26.3
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the decision taking ability of members on availing loan after microfinance intervention, z - test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in ability to take decision on availing loan by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in ability to take decision on availing loan by members after joining SHG.

Table 18: z – test on ability to take decision on availing loan by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	1.828947368	2.036842105
Known Variance	0.501006805	0.489404249
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-4.072185504	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	4.65741E-05	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 4.07 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value (=4.65741E-05) < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in decision making ability of SHG members on availing loan post microfinance intervention.

(d) Ability to Take Decision on Use of Loan by Members

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the ability to take decision on use of loan by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no decision taking ability on use of loan decreased from 31.3 % of members to 21.1 % of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some ability to take decision on use of loan increased from 46.1 % of members to 46.8 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who can take decision on use of loan to a great extent increased from 22.6 % of members to 32.1 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 19: Frequency distribution on ability to take decision on use of loan by members

Decision taking ability	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	119	31.3	80	21.1
Somewhat	175	46.1	178	46.8
To a great extent	86	22.6	122	32.1
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the decision taking ability of members on use of loan by members after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in ability to take decision on use of loan by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in ability to take decision on use of loan by members after joining SHG.

Table 20: z-test on ability to take decision on use of loan by members

	Before joining SHG	After joining SHG
Mean	1.913157895	2.110526316
Known Variance	0.533335648	0.520733231
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.747442428	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.000178647	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 3.74 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at $0.0001 < 0.05$ therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in decision making ability of SHG members on use of loan post microfinance intervention.

(e) Ability to Take Decision on Education of Children

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the ability to take decision on education of children by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no decision taking ability on education of children decreased from 17.9 % of members to 11.6 % of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some ability to take decision on education of children decreased from 52.4 % of members to 49.2 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who can take decision on education of children to a great extent increased from 29.7 % of members to 39.2 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 21: Frequency distribution of ability to take decision on education of children by members

Decision taking ability	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	68	17.9	44	11.6
Somewhat	199	52.4	187	49.2
To a great extent	113	29.7	149	39.2
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the decision taking ability of members on education of children after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (H₀): There was no significant improvement in ability to take decision on education of children by members after joining SHG

Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There was significant improvement in ability to take decision on education of children by members after joining SHG

Table 22 : z – test for ability to take decision on education of children by members

	Before joining SHG	After joining SHG
Mean	2.118421053	2.276315789
Known Variance	0.463512012	0.432682961
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.251308656	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.001148751	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 3.25 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at $0.001 < 0.05$ therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in decision making ability of SHG members on education of children post microfinance intervention.

(f) Ability to Take Decision on Solving Family Problems

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the ability to take decision on solving family problems by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no decision taking ability on solving family problems decreased from 25 % of members to 17.9 % of members after participation in microfinance programme.

The members who had some ability to take decision on solving family problems decreased from 51.6 % of members to 47.9 % of members after joining SHG; and the members who can take decision on solving family problems to a great extent increased from 23.4 % of members to 34.2 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 23: Frequency distribution on ability to take decision on solving family problems by members

Decision taking ability	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	95	25.0	68	17.9
Somewhat	196	51.6	182	47.9
To a great extent	89	23.4	130	34.2
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the decision taking ability of members on solving family problems after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (H_0): There was no significant improvement in ability to take decision on solving family problems by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There was significant improvement in ability to take decision on solving family problems by members after joining SHG.

Table 24 : z-test on ability to take decision on solving family problems by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	1.986842	2.281579
Known Variance	1	1
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-4.06267	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	4.85E-05	
z Critical two-tail	1.959964	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 4.06 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value ($=4.85E-05$) < 0.05 therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in ability to take decision of SHG members on solving family problems post microfinance intervention.

III. SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY

To ascertain if participation in microfinance programme have an impact on social awareness and responsibility of SHG members, pre and post participation situation was taken on parameters like attending social/village meetings, social awareness (family planning, government schemes etc.), recognition in society, participation in eradication of social evils etc.

(a) Awareness of Social Issues

The study revealed that there was an improvement in the awareness of social issues by the SHG members after microfinance intervention. The number of members who had no awareness of social issues decreased from 7.4% of members to 1.8% of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who had very little awareness of social issues increased from 51.8% of members to 39.2% of members after joining SHG; the members who had some awareness of social issues increased from 37.4% of members to 48.7% of members and the members who had awareness of social issues to a great extent increased 3.4 % of members to 10.3 % of members after microfinance intervention.

Table 25: Frequency distribution of awareness of social issues by members

Awareness of social issues	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	28	7.4	7	1.8
Very little	197	51.8	149	39.2
Somewhat	142	37.4	185	48.7
To a great extent	13	3.4	39	10.3
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in awareness of social issues of members after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

.Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in social awareness by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in social awareness by members after joining SHG.

Table 26: z- test on awareness of social issues by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.368421053	2.673684211
Known Variance	0.449659769	0.463157895
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-6.228366687	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	4.71323E-10	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 6.22 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value (=4.71323E-10) < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in social awareness of SHG members post microfinance intervention.

(b)Participation in Social/Village Meetings

The number of members who did not participate in social/village meetings decreased from 26.6% of members to 18.9% of members after participation in microfinance programme. The members who sometimes participated in social/village meetings decreased from 53.2% of members to 51.1% of members after joining SHG; the members who often participated in social/village meetings increased from 18.2% members to 25.8% of members and the members who always participated in social /village meetings increased from 2.1% of members to 4.2% of members after microfinance intervention.

The participation in village/social meetings increased after microfinance intervention due to increased awareness of social issues and the recognition that collective effort increased their power to fight social evils.

Table 27: Frequency distribution of Participation in social/village meetings by members

Participation in	Before joining SHG	After joining SHG
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public meetings				
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Never	101	26.6	72	18.9
Sometimes	202	53.2	194	51.1
Often	69	18.2	98	25.8
Always	8	2.1	16	4.2
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the participation of SHG members in village/social meetings after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in participation of SHG members in social/village meetings after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in participation of SHG members in social/village meetings after joining SHG.

Table 28: z-test on participation in village/social meetings by members

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	1.957894737	2.152631579
Known Variance	0.531203999	0.594056381
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-3.578602059	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.000345437	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 3.57 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at 0.0003 < 0.05 therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in the participation of SHG members in social/village meetings post microfinance intervention.

(c)Membership in Social Organization

Majority of the SHG members (79.5%) already have a membership in social organization before joining SHG. This is because the women’s organization, MHIP is very strong in the State. There was an increased from 79.5% to 82.6% after participation in SHG by members.

Table 29: Frequency distribution of enrollment of members in social organization

Membership in social organization	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Yes	302	79.5	314	82.6
No	78	20.5	66	17.4
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the enrollment of members in social organisation after microfinance intervention, z- test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in enrollment in social organisation by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in enrollment in social organisation by members after joining SHG.

Table 30: z-test on membership in social organization

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	1.205263158	1.173684211
Known Variance	0.163560617	0.143896681
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	1.110189319	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.266917454	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 1.11 is lesser than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value $0.266 > 0.05$ therefore, Ho cannot be rejected and Ha is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there was no significant improvement enrollment of SHG members in social organization post microfinance intervention.

However, given the fact that membership rate in social organization was already very high before joining SHG, the positive impact of microfinance intervention is less obvious in this case.

(d)Position Held in Local Bodies

The number of SHG members who held position in local bodies increased from 20.8% of members to 24.7% of members post microfinance intervention. This shows that there has been an increased in the ability to take up leadership and challenges by the SHG members after joining SHG.

Table 31: Frequency distribution of position held in local bodies by members

Position held in local bodies	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Yes	79	20.8	94	24.7
No	301	79.2	286	75.3
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the number of SHG members who held position in local bodies after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in position held in local bodies by members after joining SHG.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in position held in local bodies by members after joining SHG.

Table 32: z -test on position held in local bodies by members

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	1.792105263	1.752631579
Known Variance	0.165109013	0.186668518
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	1.297374664	
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.194502306	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 1.29 is lesser than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value at 0.1945 > 0.05 therefore, Ho cannot be rejected and Ha is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that there was no significant improvement in the position held in local bodies by SHG members post microfinance intervention.

(e) Involvement of Members in Fighting Social Evils

The study revealed that the involvement of SHG members in fighting social evils increased post microfinance intervention. The number of those members who never participated in such activities decreased from 19.2% of members to 13.7% of members post microfinance intervention. Again, the number of members who participated very little in such activities decreased from 47.1% of members to 44.2% of members post microfinance intervention. On the other hand, the number of members who are somewhat involved in such activities increased from 23.9% to 30% of members post microfinance intervention and the number of members who are involved to a great extent in such activities increased from 9.7% of members to 12.1% of members post microfinance intervention.

Table 33: Frequency distribution of Involvement in fighting social evils

Participation in fighting social evils	Before joining SHG		After joining SHG	
	Number of members	No. of members in percentage	Number of members	No. of members in percentage
Not at all	73	19.2	52	13.7
Very little	179	47.1	168	44.2
Somewhat	91	23.9	114	30.0
To a great extent	37	9.7	46	12.1
Total	380	100.0	380	100.0

Source: Primary data

To test the research hypothesis and validate the research finding that there was indeed a significant improvement in the involvement of members in fighting social evils after microfinance intervention, z-test was employed at 95% level of significance.

Hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis (Ho): There was no significant improvement in the participation of members in fighting social evils.

Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There was significant improvement in the participation of members in fighting social evils.

Table 34: z- test on participation of members in fighting social evils

	<i>Before joining SHG</i>	<i>After joining SHG</i>
Mean	2.242105263	2.405263158
Known Variance	0.764449382	0.758811276
Observations	380	380
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Z	-2.576990268	

P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.009966476	
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985	

Statistical tool used: Excel

The z value at 2.57 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 and the p value $0.009 < 0.05$ therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in the participation of SHG members in fighting social evils post microfinance intervention.

Relationship between Duration of SHG and the Overall Social Empowerment of the Members

It is generally believed that the duration of SHG does impact the social empowerment of members. A hypothesis was formulated to test the relationship between the duration of SHG and the overall social empowerment of the members.

Hypothesis testing

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There was no significant relationship between the duration of SHG and the overall social empowerment of the members.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There was significant relationship between the duration of SHG and the overall social empowerment of the members.

Table 35: Correlation between the duration of SHG and the overall social empowerment of members

			Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Interval	by	Pearson's R	.173	.050	3.412	.001(c)
Interval						
Ordinal	by	Spearman Correlation	.167	.051	3.303	.001(c)
Ordinal						
<i>N of Valid Cases</i>			380			

Statistical tool used: SPSS

It is observed that Pearson's coefficient of correlation is positive at 0.173 and is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ level since p value ($=0.01$) < 0.05 . Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there was significant positive relationship between duration of SHG and the overall social empowerment of members.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study shows that the overall social empowerment of the SHG members increased due to their participation in SHGs. It needs to be realized that the success of SHG-BLP lies with the assessment of the programme not only on the basis of savings linked or credit linked, but on the basis of the improvement in the quality of lives of its members through programme intervention.

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