

## The Impact of Women Empowerment on Poverty Reduction in Rural Area of Bangladesh: Focusing on Village Development Program

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### ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is one of the most discussing issues in the present world, especially in the developing country. Bangladesh is one of the developing countries with almost 50% women of it's total population. In labor force women participation is arround 57.30%, and facing many kinds of obstacles like they have family burden, social burden, religion burden mostly in rural area. Empowerment can be defined by giving power and authority to take decision in every part of life, including household, economic, social, political etc. Women empowerment can be considered as a weapon for alleviating poverty. Since achieving independence, poverty has been dominating in Bangladesh. For alleviating poverty, it is important to take apart by government and non-government organizations. In this regarding that women can play a vital role with those organization. The purpose of the research, to analyze the real effect of women empowerment on poverty reduction and make recommendation for developing the situation.

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, poverty, village development program

### INTRODUCTION

The topic of women's empowerment in poverty alleviation is one of the important studies, especially since the establishment of gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the main points of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Investments with gender equality result in the highest returns that involve almost all the development scope (OECD, 2008). Women usually invest a higher proportion than men, especially in matters relating to family and social life of the community.

There is still discrimination against women in Bangladesh, who are still considered only for domestic work at home, and this has impacted on the assumption that women are not allowed to work outside their homes. Not to mention many other cases of discrimination for women who limit them to develop their potential. Generally, women are more involved in informal work compared to men, Women receive lower payments, social threats and challenges, lack of a good working environment, and limitations in making opinions on decisions. In fact, in order to promote mutual prosperity, demanding that all good men and women, girls and boys have the opportunity to realize their potential and participate fully in all aspects of life (Klugman, et al., 2014). But the social and religious

cultures of Bangladesh consider women to be 'physically weaker' than men and hence women are limited to joining economic activities outside of their homes.

Previous research has shown that 24% of women experience restrictions from their families to go to school, 30.40% become victims in early marriage, 53.60% are illiterate, and 20% have no knowledge of empowerment (Hossain, 2011). In fact, in Bangladesh, the potential of women to participate, especially in helping economic growth is quite large, almost up to about 50% of the population and almost counterbalance the population of men in Bangladesh .

According to Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2005 (BBS, 2010), 25.1% of the total population lives below the extreme poverty line in Bangladesh. It has fallen to 17.6% in 2010 which indicates that the poverty situation is increasing day by day. But among this large population, it is estimated that 28 million people live in poverty (SHIREE, 2011). The majority of these populations are women. This needs to be confirmed adding them to the national labor force for the growth of the country's development.

The conception of women's empowerment is used to understand what is needed to change the condition of women who still experience discrimination and poor problems. In developing countries, there are many reasons for the helplessness of women. This control is exhibited by men over women, men over men, and by social, economic and political class dominant over those who are less powerful. The term "women empowerment" has become popular in land development since the 1980s. It is acknowledged that women's empowerment is needed in relation to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction (Chaudhary, 2009).

The general objective of this research is to analyze the potential effect of women's empowerment on poverty reduction in Bangladesh. As well as in particular this article aims to analyze present women's empowerment activities in rural Bangladesh and discover how this empowerment activity of women is making an impact on poverty reduction.

## LITERATURE PREVIEW

There are numerous definitions for empowerment and organizational change, some of which are described below, but in general the definition of empowerment leads to an attempt to maximize the potential of the individual. This is in line with the statement that the empowerment is a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over one's life, destiny, and environment. "The common theme between these definitions is that individuals get "mastery" or "control" over their environment (Sadan, 1997). The terminology of the process as expressed in the definition is not stand alone and focuses on the "individual," but the extent to which the ability to control is used for the social environment. Which then the definition of the word "Process" is more

directed to a construct that connects individuals and competencies, natural relief systems, and proactive behavior to social policy and social change (Rappaport, 1981).

In another definition, Rowland (1995, p 102) argues that empowerment goes beyond access to decision-making; it should also include a process that directs people to consider themselves capable and entitled to occupy the decision-making space. This opinion reinforces the assertion that empowerment can not only be seen on the basis of the process, but must also see the impact that occurs primarily in the utilization of these capabilities and potentials in the face of problems that occur in social life.

Empowerment means maximizing the individual's internal ability to achieve extraordinary results and this is an effort to increase productivity and increase one's commitment to his social environment. To address the complexity and speed of the challenges faced in today's environment, the success depends on how much power can be given to everyone participating in solving the problem (Parizi, 2002). Although in general, the definition of empowerment is increasingly emphasizing bringing people into decision-making procedures, which indirectly place them to have the right access to political structures and decision-making in economic and political zones.

Poverty alleviation is directly linked to economic empowerment, it is actually the type of individual associated with empowerment plus the first step towards empowering women. It is acknowledged that women's empowerment is needed in relation to economic growth and sustainable poverty reduction. The conception of women's empowerment is used to understand the conditions of impoverished and impoverished poor women. In developing countries, there are many reasons to weaken women. Controls are exhibited by men over women, men over men, and by dominant social, economic and political classes over the less powerful.

## **2.1 Women Empowerment**

The conception of women empowerment is used to understand what is needed to change the condition of poor permeable and powerless women. The situation of women in reality in the third world and the developing countries does not seem to be very encouraging. They have very small opportunities and few choices in making decisions for their lives. In developing countries, there are many reasons for disempowerment of women, poverty is the most one of them.

According to Zulfiqar (2017) states that women's empowerment can be gained by the number of factors like access to educational opportunities, participation in the political process and dispensation of economic opportunities and micro-credit programs. There can be several forms of empowerment required by women according to their needs and demands. Basically as revealed by Mayoux (2000) that empowerment can be grouped into three types: economic empowerment, increased well-being, as well as political

empowerment. The division of the type is motivated because in some research results, especially in the study of development economics, empowerment is one of the main driving factors to help the reduction of poverty.

### **2.1.1 Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women as well as men in order to participate in, contribute to help and benefit via growth processes with measures which know ones signal connected with their contributions, respect it is dignity as well as make this possible to negotiate the fairer distribution involving the benefits of growth (Eyben, et al, 2003). Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and also opportunities, including jobs, financial services, property along with productive assets, skills development and also market information. Women's economic participation and also empowerment are fundamental in order to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to get control in excess of the lives as well as exert influence within society (Swedish ministry pertaining to foreign affairs, 2006).

Women economic power furthermore enhances the current "wealth" as well "well-being" regarding nations. Negash (2006) women who control his or her cash tend for getting fewer children, as well as fertility rates have shown to end up being inversely related to national income growth. Women also are further able-and generally added willing as compared to male counterparts-to send daughters as well as sons to school, even when they earn less than men. The another host of studies indicates the item putting earnings inside women's hands may be the intelligent thing to be able to do speed up development along with the program of overcoming poverty. Women usually reinvest a much higher segment throughout the families and also communities as compared to men, spreading wealth beyond themselves.

The own economic empowerment regarding women is usually a prerequisite sustainable development, pro-poor growth plus the achievement associated with each of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality along with empowered women tend to be catalysts pertaining to multiplying development efforts. Investments with gender equality yield the highest returns involving just about all development investments (OECD, 2008). Women usually invest a higher proportion connected with it is income throughout it is families as well as communities than men. A previous study throughout Brazil showed how the likelihood of the child's survival increased coming from 20% as soon as own mother controlled household income.

Woman employment, via adding to the incomes of low income households, could possibly help play a great particularly keys to press role in this respect. The item is, therefore, not surprising. This raising female participation with the labor the stress is a declared policy goal with Bangladesh. Women's participation at the workplace, leadership role on

the political and social arenas and also admittance to credit is actually regarded Just as empowerment involving women. Women empowerment would be the reflection regarding gender equality that is to be the precursor for shipting own country forward, towards middle funds status, towards inclusive along with sustainable development.

### **2.1.2 Social Empowerment**

Social empowerment is the system of accessing possibilities, in addition to resources in order to make individual choices and have some control over our environment like education, health, nutrition, safe water, sanitation, housing, shelter and since and technology. It is actually all about carrying ways to help change society and so it one's own place inside that is respected and taken to the terms in that while the person as well as a group wants in order to live, not at terms dictated by others.

The sense regarding autonomy and also self-value can be a important and direct, contributory factor intended for enabling someone to participate inside politics and get optimum advantage involving services, including health along with education. Economic empowerment, towards the other hand, enables marginalized people to think beyond immediate daily survival in addition to assert greater control more than their resources and life choices, especially decisions with investments with health, housing and education. Women are also being desired from an ideal point of view in the decision making process which is very important in the context balanced development of the country (Islam, 2006).

Human capabilities, like decent health and also literacy, offer anyone ones freedom to engage throughout economic activities and participate inside political as well as social life (Sen, 1999). Capability pertaining to knowledge incorporates not single skills but also a significant self-awareness. Empowerments in addition to new knowledge are usually interactive processes in which people's growing awareness of the changes they want in their life stimulates them to seek the knowledge and information.

### **2.1.3 Political Empowerment**

Political empowerment of women becomes more important in a development context where power within can't be much helpful to women are not strong and empowered from a political point of view. Friedmann (1992) presumes power in three forms: social, political and psychological power. Individual power and psychological power results from developments in social and political power. Social power is intendant to include skill and knowledge that at household level enhance production as well as provides bases for political power.

Political power in turn is understood to be a mechanism for the influence policies that determine micro and macro structures as well as process. Following to Friedmann (1992) political power could be influenced from collective action. It is similar to Kabeer's (1999)

and Rowlands (1997) conception of “power within” and hence, it would include individual attributes of self-reliance and self-homage. Friedman raises the strategy of collective social power that can impact political power in the form of impacting social policies. Once the political system involving policy producing in addition to legal formation are influenced this would turn into personal empowerment as well as (Friedmann’s terminology) psychological power.

Young (1993) additionally gave strength at political power. From political power she means women taking “control involving their lives, in order to set the agendas, to be able to organize, to each some other as well make Prerequisites to the state intended for assist along with in society itself to help change”. The idea suggests how the way for the empowerment is during political change. Own justification this Young (1993) provides is actually the item there is usually a “need in order to transform women’s position throughout most of these a way which the advance will be sustained”. As soon as political change can be initiated from women, this would assistance them always be empowered individually inside their personal receptivity. Hence, political empowerment is seen as necessary for individual and personal empowerment.

Johnson (1992, cited in Rowlands, 1997) also argues that women’s empowerment in the form of bigger control over the issues in their daily lives is necessary, but more important is their control over political formation. She does not view empowerment of the individual and political levels to be related so that change at one level could influence and bring change at another level. Rather, she emphasizes to women’s involvement in political procedure and gaining control of these macro-structures to initiate an empowering change at the individual level.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study was conducted based quantitative method. Primary and secondary data were used to fulfill the objectives of the study. A structured questionnaire was followed to collect data from the study area. The sample size was 200. The researcher made a single question sheet for each respondent. Therefore, all question sheets were given among the respondents.

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on some variables like the mobility, economic security, ability to make purchases, involvement in major decisions, political awareness, income generating activities, poverty reducing activities, etc. All samples were asked randomly where all of them were women.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents are 46% of them belong to the age group of 30-35 and 20% belong to the age group of 36-41. 18% of respondents are under 24-29 age group where 13% are over 41 age group. 03% of respondents are belongs to 18-23 age group. Among respondents, 05% of them had no education, 29.5% of respondents could only sign, 30.5% had the education level of class I to V, 23% had VI to X (High school) level and 24% had above the class XI to XII level of education. The Majority of the respondents were housewife with 82% of total respondents, office worker and self employed business also seen. It is seen that 82% of respondents are housewife. 9% respondents has self employed business where as teacher 5%. Office worker also shown although its only 01% and some 03% respondents is doing (day labor, seasonal worker) what I included as others.

Moreover, according marital status all respondents are married. It also tried to know respondents family size by number of family members. 40% respondents have 5 members in family where 24% has 06 members. 14% respondents have 07 members, 12% has 04 members and only 08% has more than 07 members in a family. House ownership is also important regarding to empowerment. In survey it is seen that 65% respondents has own house , where 33% respondents house ownership belongs to the family. It is seen in the survey area there are also 02% lives in rented house. Income is the most important in terms of poverty reduction. Its tried to know respondents present monthly income by this survey. 52 % respondents income below 2000 Tk. monthly which present more hen half of respondents. 32% of respondents income is between 2001-5000Tk. More then 14000Tk income has only 02% respondents which is height income among those respondents.

### 4.2 Level of Women Empowerment

In this part it has tried to know about present women empowerment situation in the study area. Frequency analysis used as analysis methods to find the level of women empowerment. Moreover, some question had tried to measure respondents' satisfaction level on a related area. For this reason, 5-point Likert Scale used to measure their opinion.

#### 4.2.1 Knowledge about Women Empowerment

The respondents were asked they really know about women empowerment or not. It was seen that total 98% of the respondents heard about that, which means they already understand about women empowerment from the village meeting, which is 34%. 23.5% respondents got awareness through NGO. It shows that they attend in a village meeting and NGO. Those organizations play an active role to empower women. It can be seen in the table below.

**Table 1. The Source of Respondents Knowledge About Women Empowerment**

Name of the place	Number of Respondents	Frequencies (%)
School	07	03.5
Collage	05	02.5
Village meeting	68	34.0
NGO	47	23.5
Family	35	17.5
Training	20	10.0
Media(TV, Newspaper)	18	09.0

#### 4.2.2 The Impact of Empowerment

It is important to see after empowering what kind of improvement happened in the respondent's life. This open-ended question was asked to respondents to know what kind of improvement they got after empowerment. 38% of the respondents answered that economic status has changed after become they empowered. Social status has changed according to 31% respondents. 21% said role in the family has improved where 09% in the work place. In the other sector only 01% seen in term of improvement.

**Table 2. Empowerment and Daily Life**

Subjects	Number of Respondents	Frequencies (%)
Improve role in family	78	21
Improve Economic status	144	38
Improve Social status	116	31
Improve In the workplace	36	09
Others	04	01

\*Multiple answers recorded

#### 4.2.3 Income Generating Activities

Income generating activities are important to reduce poverty. In these regards, respondents were asked they have income generating activities or not. It is seen that 89% of respondents have income generating activities where 22% of respondents don't have any income generating activities. The respondents were asked what kind of income generating activities they do.

**Table 3. Kind of Income Generating Activities**

Activities	Number of Respondents	Frequencies (%)
Service	06	03
Entrepreneurship	24	14
Teaching	06	03
Others(IGA) (Cattle Fattening, Rearing, Poultry, etc.)	142	80

#### 4.2.4 Income Source

It is important to know respondents really had any income source before three years ago or not. By comparing three years ago income with present income we can see the actual effect of empowerment. It is seen that all respondents had income source.

As we can see before 3years ago most of the respondents had below 2000 TK monthly income with the 90 percentage of total respondent. Only 10 percentages of respondents had more than 2000.TK. income per month

**Table 4. Monthly Income (Three Years Ago and Present Time)**  
\*(1\$ = 79 TK.)

Income Group	Before 3 years		Present	
	Number of Respondents	Frequencies %	Number of Respondents	Frequencies %
Below 2,000Tk	180	90	105	52
2,001-5,000Tk	20	10	62	32
5,001-8,000TK	00	00	22	11
8,001-11,000Tk	00	00	06	03
11,001-14,000Tk	00	00	00	00
14,000Tk above	00	00	05	02

After three years, it's seen that respondent's monthly income has been increased. Most of the respondents with 52 present income about 2000TK, where three years ago, it was 90% of respondents. Before three years there were no respondents who earn above 14000tk, but at this time there are 2% of respondents. Through these comparisons we can see the improvement of respondent's income.

#### 4.2.5 Support from Family Male Members

In the survey time the respondents were asked do they have support from their husband or family others male member. It is seen that 94% respondents said yes and only 06% of respondents said it no, so in the society male can play a significant role to empower women.

Support can be given in various ways. Respondents were asked how the male members support them for their empowerment. In the table it is seen that 47% of respondent get motivation, support from their male family member. Financial support also gets 33% of the respondents. Moreover, 19% of the respondents said that their male family members help them by doing household work like, cooking, child caring, etc.

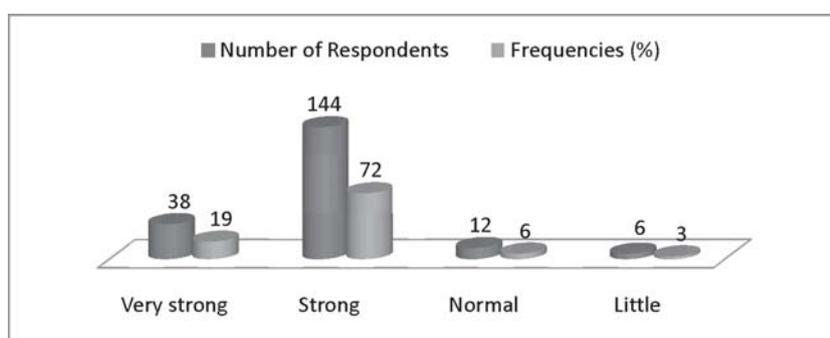
**Table 5. Getting Support from Male Member**

Support	Number of Respondents	Frequencies (%)
Motivating support	154	47
Financial support	106	33
Supporting by doing Household Activities	62	19
Others	04	01

\*Multiple answers collected

#### 4.2.6 Level of Decision Making Ability in the Household

Household decision making ability can be seen as a good indicator of women empowerment. The Family is considered as a primary level and most important institution of women empowerment. During the survey the respondents measure their level of decision making ability in their family. It is seen that 19% of total respondents has a very strong level of decision making ability and 72% have strong decision making ability in their family. 3% also found where they have little ability to take decision in their family.



**Figure 1. Level of Household Decision Making Ability**

#### 4.2.7 Women Empowerment Activities

In the village area, also urban area they had village meeting, they joined in women association, mothers club etc. In this regards the respondents were asked do they attained in some group activities for developing village like women association, village meeting, etc. It is seen that 89% of the respondents attend group activities where only 11% respondents not.

Regarding to regional development program, it has tried to know what kind of group activities they usually attend. It is seen that most of the respondents attend in NGOs activities with 42% of total respondents. 26% respondents usually attend in cooperative group activities. Here also we can see the women association group activities where 23% of respondents usually attend.

**Table 6. Women Empowerment Activities**

		Number of Respondents	Frequencies %
<b>Kind of Group Activities</b>	Cooperative	46	26
	Women Association	41	23
	NGO	76	42
	Village Meeting	15	09
<b>Level of Participation</b>	Very Actively Participate	55	31
	Actively Participate	91	51
	Neutral	32	18
<b>Level of Expression of Opinion</b>	Very Frequently	76	43
	Frequently	80	45
	Often	18	10
	Very Often	04	02

The respondents were asked how much they participate in the group activities. It is seen that 51% of the respondents participate actively in their group activities. 31% of respondents attend very actively where 18% of respondents neutral. We can see here women participate actively in the various organizations.

It has tried to know the respondents opinion value in their group activities. It has observed 45% respondents answered they can express their opinion frequently. 43% of respondents express their opinion very frequently where 10% of respondents express their opinion often. There are also 2% respondents who measured her opinion value as

very often. Here we can see most of the respondents have their opinion value in the organization meeting.

#### 4.2.8 Barriers of Mobility

The respondents were asked during survey they have any kind of barriers to go outside from home or not. Except only 10 of the respondents they don't have any barriers to go outside. It is seen that 95% respondents have the freedom to go outside from whom, which is most important for empowering women.

Among the total respondents only 10% of the respondents have barriers to go outside. They were asked what kind of barriers they have. It is seen that there are 2 barriers they have. One of the family barriers another one is religion.

**Table 7. Barriers**

Kind of barriers	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Family barriers	06	60
Social barriers	-	-
Religion barriers	04	40

#### 4.2.9 Political Affiliation

As earlier chapter it has been discussed that political empowerment is important to take a control over their daily lives. To investigate the respondents were asked do they have any political affiliation or not. It is seen that 77% of respondents have political affiliation and 23% respondents have no political affiliation.

**Table 8. Political Affiliation**

		Number of Respondents	Frequencies %
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	Yes	154	77
	No	46	23
<b>Attendance in Election</b>	Yes	186	93
	No	14	07

It is seen that in the study area women are aware about their voting power. When they were asked, did they attend in the last national election. 93% of them answered they attained last national election.

### 4.3 Level of Poverty Reduction

#### 4.3.1 Importance of the Empowerment

Women empowerment is considered as a special tool for reducing poverty, especially in developing countries.. The respondents were asked through self-assessment question which is “reducing poverty, women empowerment is important”, do they agree or not. It is seen that 63% of them were agreed with this. They think really women empowerment have an effect to minimize poverty. Moreover, 30% of respondents were strongly agreed with women empowerment is important for reducing poverty. It was also observed that 07% of the respondents were neutral.

**Table 9. Importance of the Empowerment for Reducing Poverty**

		Number of Respondents	Frequencies %
<b>Level of Importance</b>	Strongly agree	59	30
	Agree	127	63
	Neutral	14	07
<b>Effect of women empowerment on poverty reduction</b>	Excellent	32	16
	Good	88	44
	Fair	72	36
	Poor	08	04

It has observed in the field study women empowerment have good effect on poverty reduction. According to the respondents it has a good effect with 44% of total respondents of it. 36% of respondents said it has fair effect where 16% of respondents said it has excellent effect on poverty. Only 4% of respondents seen who mention Women empowerment have a poor effect on poverty.

**Table 10. Reasons of the Importance of Women Empowerment**

Reasons	Number of respondents	Frequencies %
Playing role on family development	62	31
To be financially self dependent	84	42
Social status can be improved	38	19
Work area can be expanded	24	12

Women rights can be ensured	46	23
Working with self initiation	40	20
To ensure equal distribution	32	16
To take any decision	24	12
Providing any advice	18	09
Playing role on social development	14	07

\*Multiple answers recorded.

The respondents were asked if they agree or strongly agree with this then mention the reason. The reason why they agree, come out through their comments. The findings are summarized below shortly-

- a. It is observed that 42% of total respondent's seems women empowerment is important for their self-dependence. According to them women empower increase self-dependent capacity, which is important for women to get a strong position in the society.
- b. 31% of the respondents were answered they can play an active role to develop their family situation.
- c. Women's right can be ensured by empowering women. According to 23% of respondents.
- d. 20% of respondent's emphasis on self-initiations. They can do work with their self-initiations.
- e. Women empowerment can make an equal distribution in the society. 16%of the respondents answered. Equal distribution can reduce poverty.
- f. It is seen that 7% of respondents answered women empowerment can play active role in social development.

#### **4.3.2 Role to Reduce Poverty**

The respondents were asked do they have really any role to reduce poverty or not. It is seen that 94% of the respondents has role to reduce poverty where 6% of the respondents have no role. The respondents were asked what kind of role they are playing to reduce poverty. Among them, 52% of respondents are playing their role by motivating others. They motivate others for involving with some income generating activities, go to school, start an entrepreneurship, etc. 42% of respondents they play their role by giving financial support to others. Another 06% of respondents involve with others activities which can also help to reduce poverty.

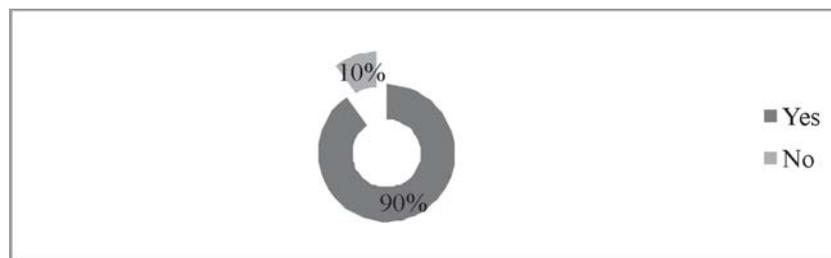
It has observed there are some obstacles to play role to reduce poverty. The respondents have lack of decision making problem, lack of supporting opportunity, lack of participating opportunity.

**Table 11. Kind of Role and Problem to Play a Role**

		Number of Respondents	Frequencies %
<b>Kind of Role</b>	By motivating others	164	52
	Giving Financial Support	130	42
	Others	18	06
<b>Problem to Play a Role</b>	Lack of Decision Making	05	33
	Lack of Supporting Opportunity	06	40
	Lack of Participating Opportunity	04	27

#### 4.3.3 NGO Interventions for Empowering Women

The non-government organization is working at the root level to empower women and reduce poverty especially in rural area. All over the Bangladesh there are almost 1300 NGOs which are working to reduce poverty and to improve rural living standards. It is seen that 90% of the total respondents have membership in the NGO or village organization. It observed that NGO have been playing an active role to empower women by giving some empowerment training and by providing some credit for improving their life.



**Figure 2. Membership in NGO/Village Organization**

Respondents were asked in what kind of organization they have membership. It was requested to mention the organization name. It is seen that all of them are involved with NGO. 52% of respondents have membership in *Sagorika Unnoyon Songstha* which is local NGO. *Dip Unnoyon Songstha* also another local NGO where 36% of respondents belongs to this. CDSP, BRAC and HID Bangladesh have 2%, 3% and 7% of respondents. It is seen that in the study area local NGOs playing role more effectively than others.

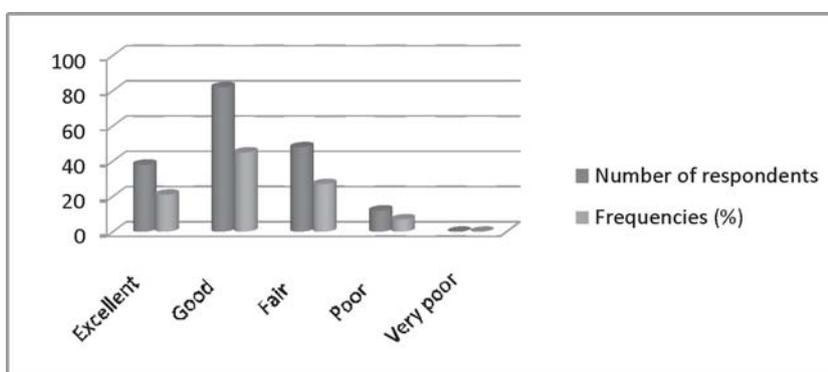
It has tried to know what kind of training provided by NGO for empowering women through agriculture and poultry training. 27% of respondents took agriculture training where 28% poultry training. Because of core rural area NGOs think it is the better way to minimize the poverty by these kind of training. Entrepreneurship and health & sanitation training also provided by NGO. Those trainings can improve the respondents living standards and income level.

**Table 12. Types of Training Courses of NGO**

Name of Training	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Agriculture	178	27
Poultry	180	28
Entrepreneurship	92	14
Health& sanitation	116	18
Others	86	13

\*Multiple answers recorded

#### 4.3.4 Micro Credit and Government Support



\*(% has been calculated based on 180)

**Figure 3. Level of Impact of Micro Credit/Government Support on Poverty Reduction**

It is seen that 90% of respondents took micro credit/government support where 10% not. The respondents were asked after taking these support what is the impact of this support on poverty situations. It is observed that most of the respondents said that it has a good and a fair impact with 45% and 27% of total respondents. 21% respondents said it has an excellent impact on poverty reduction. Only 7% of respondents said it has poor

impact on poverty reduction. We can see most of the respondents answered it has a good impact on poverty reduction.

#### 4.4 Correlation between Women Empowerment and Poverty Reduction

This part is trying to analysis the effect of women empowerment on poverty reduction. To find the real effect of women empowerment on poverty reduction, the correlation coefficient will used with **p** value. The **p** value used to find it statistically significant or not. As variable empowerment, education, training, group participation, political affiliation, credit, income and poverty were used.

In the study it was attempted to find a correlation between empowerment and income as well as poverty. Education used to find a correlation with empowerment, income and poverty. Thereafter, training used as independent variable where empowerment, income and poverty dependent variables. Group participation used as independent variables to find a correlation with empowerment, income and poverty. Political affiliation as independent variable where empowerment, income and poverty is dependent variable. Here credit is independent variable and empowerment, income as well poverty dependent variable.

**Table 13. Correlation Analysis Between Women Empowerment and Poverty Reduction**

		Empowerment	Income	Poverty
<b>Empowerment</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	0.421**	0.519**
	P-value	-	0.000	0.000
<b>Education</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.527**	0.298**	0.309**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>Training</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.268**	0.496**	0.463**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>Group Participation</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.318*	0.269**	0.256**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.292**	0.233**	0.229**
	P-value	0.000	0.001	0.001
<b>Credit</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.283**	0.316**	0.372**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Women empowerment can increase income. There is a positive correlation between empowerment and income. Whereas  $r = 0.421$  and  $p$  value  $.000$ . Empowerment and poverty also have a significant relationship which is  $r = 0.519$  and  $p$  value  $.000$ . It was tried to know how is the respondent's education have an impact on empowerment or not. We can see there is a positive correlation between education and empowerment, where  $r = 0.527$  and  $p$  value being  $.000$  its indicate there is a significant relation between two variables. It is seen that there is a significant relationship between education and income whereas  $r = 0.298$  and  $p$ - value  $.000$  It's indicate education and income have a significant relation. It's also important for empowerment as well as poverty. Between education and poverty Pearson correlation is being  $= 0.309$  where  $p$  value  $.000$  Training and empowerment have a significant relationship, here  $r = 0.268$  and  $p$  value being  $.000$ . There is also a significant relationship between training and income increase with  $r = 0.496$  and  $p$  value  $.000$ . It is seen, training and poverty has also significant relationship where  $r = 0.463$  and  $p$  value being  $.000$ . It was tried to know the group participation is important regarding empowerment and poverty reduction.

Group participation and empowerment has a significant relation with  $r = 0.318$  and  $p$  value  $.000$  Group participation also have the relationship between income and poverty. Participation and income shows  $r = 0.269$  and  $p$  value being  $.000$ . Participation and poverty indicate a significant relationship with  $r = 0.256$  and  $p$  value  $.000$ . Political affiliation has a significant relation with empowerment where  $r = 0.292$  and  $p$  blue being  $.000$ . It is seen, political affiliation has a relationship with an income increase with  $r = .233$  and  $p$  value  $.001$ . Political affiliation and poverty has a relationship where correlation  $r = 0.229$  and  $p$  value being  $.001$ . It is seen that micro credit has a significant relationship between empowerment, income and poverty. Between microcredit and empowerment  $r = 0.283$  and  $p$  value being  $.000$ . Microcredit and income indicate good relation where  $r = 0.316$  and  $p$  value  $.000$ . Microcredit and poverty also have a significant relationship with correlation  $r = 0.372$  and  $p$  value  $.000$  which indicates a good relationship between these two variables.

#### 4.5 Discussion

The research result findings shown that women empowerments have a positive effect on poverty reduction. Still women have some problem to be empowered which is little evident from the study findings. It is seen that in result analysis, 98% of respondents has awareness about women empowerment. When they asked where they knew about this, 57.5 percent of respondents mentioned about village meeting and NGO. 17.5% respondents knew from family. We can say, it is a good effort from those organizations who are playing role to make awareness among the women. Table 4.2 mentions about women empowerment impact on respondents daily life. 38% respondents told empowerment

changed their economic status where 31% told empowerment changed their social status. Its seen from this, women empowerment has good impact on respondents daily life.

Income generating activities are also important for poverty reduction. Among 200 respondents 178 respondents are involved with income generating activities. It is good to see, but we need to involve another respondents in the income generating flow for overall progress. Income source has a good effect on daily life and in term of poverty reduction as well. Training Its compared with three years ago income and present income for understanding what is the change after getting training or empowered. It is seen, their income increased.

Before getting training their income was mostly below 2,000.TK with 90% of total respondents and after their income increased. We found their income increased significantly. It is evident that training has an effect on income. In the study area there are some NGO and organization who are providing income generating training. Education is the most important part for empowerment. In this study, it is tried to find out respondents education level as well as its effect on empowerment. It is seen that most of the respondents have high school, primary level education. The respondents were asked about their family support. Family support is important for women empowerment. If the family gives some space to women, then it will be easy to be empowered. 94% respondents said they got their family support in terms of their empowerment. Another 06% of respondents has problem with this.

The result show the respondents participate in group activities for developing village and they participated actively in group activities. Group participation is important for developing own self. Women usually participate in women association, cooperative, NGO, and village meeting. NGO participation is higher than others, women association as well as cooperative. Respondents also attend at village meeting. By group participation women can share their ideas with others and they also can get another new idea from others. During Village Development Program for participating in the village meeting every family were asked to attend in meeting. Absence of men many women participate in meeting.

Usually in meeting as a leader one men as well as women selected. Which was very different with that period. Respondents were asked to measure their opinion, the expression value. According to respondents 51% participate actively in the group meeting. 31% of total respondents participate very actively where 18% respondents were neutral. Sharing is the important for overall development. In the survey area NGO has activities in term of empowering women. NGOs are providing Education, Agriculture, Poultry, Entrepreneurship, Fishculture, Forestration, Vocational, Health and sanitation etc.

However, there are significant relationship between women empowerment and income increase. Which indicates women empowerment can increase the income level here P value being less than .05 that's indicated significant evidence against the null hypothesis.

It is proved that empowerment has an effect on income increase. Education is much important regarding empowerment. There is a very strong relationship between education and empowerment. That's indicate the necessity of education for empowering women. Education also important to increase income where as between two variables shows a significant relationship. It was observed educated people can earn more than illiterate people. So, for income increasing education is important. If income increase poverty must be reduced. Training also has a good impact on empowerment. Actually, if women get training they will be know how to develop their skill. In terms of income increase training play a significant role. It is tried to know the training really can increase income or not In this study it proved there is a strong positive relationship between training and income. Training is important to reduce poverty by developing human skill.

If women participate in group activities they will empower and their income will increase or not? According this question it tried to know and found through correlation. It is seen in results part, there are good relationship between two variable where it can said group participation can empowered women. Group participation and income increase also show significant relationship, which give the positive evidence about group activities and income increase. Poverty and group participant has a relationship where it can be said group participation is important interms of reducing poverty. Political affiliation also has a relationship with empowerment. Sometimes it helps to empower women even though in study area increase income and helps to be empowered. These results show there is a positive significant relationship between two variables but not so strong relationship. By this evidence it can be said political affiliation has relationship with income increase even though its not strong.

Nowadays microcredit seems as a good tool for reducing poverty. In this regards it has tried to know, is there a relationship with empowerment, income and poverty. Credit and empowerment has a good relationship where it can be said credit can empower women. Moreover, income and poverty has a significant relationship with credit. It is evident after taking credit, income can be increased as a result poverty will be reduced. To full-fill the research title it is tried to know what is the effect of women empowerment on poverty reduction. It is seen there are a strong positive significant relationship between two variables. Women empowerment is related to social, economic as well as political. Women represent half of the population of the country. It can be a good technique to reduce poverty by empowering women. It is proved from this study, women empowerment can reduce poverty effectively.

## CONCLUSION

The major objective of the study was to identify the effect of empowerment in poverty reduction in the rural society of Bangladesh. There are 66 % people lives in a rural area in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2014). Rural area needs to be developed to make balance with the urban area. Moreover, rural area suffer lack of opportunity in terms of empowerment and poverty. Education found as a most important variable regarding to empowerment. It is seen the study area upper class X only 12% respondents where most of them only primary educated and only can sign. Lack of education is a barrier to empowerment in the study area.

However, in terms of increasing income training play a significant role. The study result shows that effectively. Some NGO were found in the survey who providing various training, including income generating training. Respondents strongly believe that if they get more training their income will be increased. It is also evident from the analysis where their income before three years and after three years was analyzed. Moreover, group participation develops women's capacity to be empowered. In the study area 89% respondents joined group activities and they found it positively in terms of their self development which helps them to express their opinion. Training can increase awareness about empowerment among the respondents.

Political affiliation is important in terms of leadership. It is shown that in the study area respondents have political affiliation, but this does not mean their active participation in political activities. However, most of the respondents believe that women empowerment is essential in terms of their entire development. Poverty can be reduced through the empowerment. The study found respondents have obstacles on the way of empowerment like, social, religion, economic as well as family barriers.

It is evident from the above discussions women empowerment have a positive impact on poverty reduction. As we saw in the early chapter if women can be empowered, then poverty will be reduced gradually. Most of the respondents seem women empowerment is one of the important tools to reduce poverty.

### 5.1 Recommendation

Keeping in mind the prevailing problems as discussed in the study findings the following recommendations are made according to Village Development Program for further consideration.

#### a. Involve in Executive Sector

In the study it was found that empowerment has an effective linkage with education, training, formation of groups and involvement, which economically and socially increase the capacity of women. As a result of that their economic situation has

improved. But proper utilization of resources and its distribution is not supporting the empowerment process more effectively. From policy and implementation level these issues should be addressed properly.

The study indemnify that Women's participation in executive sector/policy level is important to develop women's status. It should be ensured whether women are not outside the project. President Park (South Korea) spoke often how women's positive participation in Village Development Program would improve their status. The government should keep the present women empowerment trend for developing more in this sector.

b. Involve in Legislative Committee

When we are talking about women empowerment, we need to give more focus about women's right and involve them into policy making level specially related with empowering and poverty reducing activities. Women should be added at policy making level for ensuring their right. It is proved that more engagement of women in the poverty reducing activity increase more possibility interm of poverty alleviation and as well empowerment. So, the government should have to confirm women's participation in legislative committee in the women empowering and poverty redacting project.

c. Increase the Government Support

The government should support women's organization to improve women status in organization level. So, it is established that governmental support is very much important for any kind of development. Government should pay more attention in women empowerment as a strategy of poverty reduction.

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