

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON FARMERS GROUP MOBILIZATION AND LEADERSHIP PROCESS



[**Abstract:** Group approach is one of the development practices in Nepal. We assess the processes and outcomes of the farmer groups and the perceptions of the farmers regarding the opportunities and constraints with focus on leadership qualities, decision making process, conflict in groups and communication & interactions.]

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1. Background:

Extension approaches in developing countries have been heavily influenced by donor agencies. In the late 1950s and 1960, the United States agency for International development (USAID) was the major external supporter of extension, pursuing broad based educational approaches. During the 1970s, most donor supported integrated approaches to agricultural extension and rural development. Agricultural extension in the 1980s was dominated by the T & V approach to extension that was heavily supported by the World Bank. Farmers groups including farmers associations, commodity groups, cooperatives, credit societies, young farmers' club and so forth are effective institutional devices in the creation of a demand driven agricultural research and extension system. Extension can play an important role in helping to organize those farmers groups which then become important mechanisms in accelerating technology dissemination and in imparting technical and managerial skills and knowledge to farmers who participate in these organizations (FAO 1990).

The group approach practices in Nepal first implemented in 1988/89 in Chitwan district. The eighth five years plan (1992-97), which emphasized the involvement of farmer group in agricultural planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation and efficient delivery of extension services to the large number of farmers at grass root level (DOA 1998 cited by Dangol 2004). The set objectives of group approach were: to increase farmer's participation in efficient extension service, to increase the income of the farmer by dividing them into market economy through commercialization and diversification of the production system, to articulate their needs and problems and solve them. In the eighth plan, in order to increase the women involvement in the agriculture development the set target was to involve 35% women in training program and to include 30% women members in farmers' group (NPC 2049).

The government has given more emphasized on group approach practices for planning, implementation and monitoring of the agriculture programs in the village level since 1992. Similarly, the 20-year agriculture development program known as APP, has also given more priority on the group approach for the implementation of agriculture programs in village level. Since, the introduction of farmers' group approach for agriculture development, several farmers group are formed from various organizations. However, some problems are still prevalent in effective mobilization of farmers group at grass root level. In this matter, various studies have been completed so far from different organizations and personals and discovered the different reasons behind the inactiveness of the farmer groups. In this context, the study of group mobilization will be more appropriate and useful. Similarly, by keeping the view of getting further additional support for the sustainability of farmers group, this group mobilization study thought to be carried out in Latikoili VDC, in Surkhet district.

2. Situation of group mobilization

Group in a community itself is a kind of social group where various social activities are performed. The group has been maintains the norms and values fixed by the society. There are practices of democratic exercises in the local level, gender and social equality, social empowerment and transformation, institutional development of the community, maintenance of the social structure in the society, concept of social inclusion for livelihood. Some groups are found more active and they in turn sustain even after the withdrawal of the support from the support agencies and on the other hand some of them become inactive and or get collapsed after the withdrawal of the support from the project(s). Group are generally formed without following the rules and regulations of group and group formation process. Information gap on government policy fixed for group formation, activities performed against the set objectives in the introduction, unable to provide the agriculture and other inputs in time as committed in the beginning, lack of monitoring of group activities are some of the major deficiencies felt and identified in the process of group mobilization.

5. General Information of Study Area

5.1 Physical Location

Surkhet district is situated in the Mid-western Development region of Nepal. It is one of the five districts of Bheri zone, out of three zones in the region. Bordering on the east by Salyan district, on the west by Doti and Achham, on the north by Achham, Dailekh and Jaajarkot and on the south by Kailali and Bardia districts. It is located in between the latitude of 28° 20' North to 28°58' North and longitude 80° 59' East to 82° 2' East and

elevation ranges from 198 meters to 2367 meters. The total area of the district is 2,451 Square Kilometers. Urban area is 34 square kilometers and rural area is 2417 square kilometers.

5.2 Ethnic Composition

The total population of the Latikoili VDC is 12,380 having male 6,118 and female 6,262. In this VDC, there are Hindus-11573, Muslims-448, Buddhists-254, Christians-102, Sikh-1 and Not stated-2 (CBS, 2002). Muslim population of Latikoili VDC is 519 in 2004(Latikoili VDC, 2004). This is the highest Muslim population out of 50 VDCs and 1 Municipality in the district. Muslims are the largest minority in the Latikoili VDC (CBS, 2002 & Latikoili VDC, 2004).

5.3 Social and Physical infrastructure in the Study Area

The study area is very adjoining VDC of the Birendranagar Municipality of Surkhet and has got some important infrastructures of Developments. In the field of Education it has one 10+2. Infrastructures made on the Famous Bulbule park, link road joining Airport Chowk to southern part of Latikoili, the Ratna Highway is , Different Brick Industries,

5.4 Climate

The climate of the study area is neither scorch hot nor very cool, rather a normal one. The average maximum temperature was 37.3 Degree Celsius in June, the average minimum temperature was 5.7 Degree Celsius in January and the maximum rainfall was 604.3 millimeters in July, 2005(KWRBOS, 2005).

5.5 Demographic Composition

There are 50 VDCs and 1 municipality in the district. According to the Population Census of 2001, Surkhet has the total population of 2, 88,527(1, 42,817 male and 1, 45,710 female) which is growing at the rate of 2.45 percent per annum. Literacy rate for the year 2001 is 62.7 percent (male-73.9 and female-51.7 percent). In this district, 88.37 percent of people live in the rural areas and 11.63 percent of people live in urban areas. Christians (CBS, 2005).

5.6 Religion and Culture

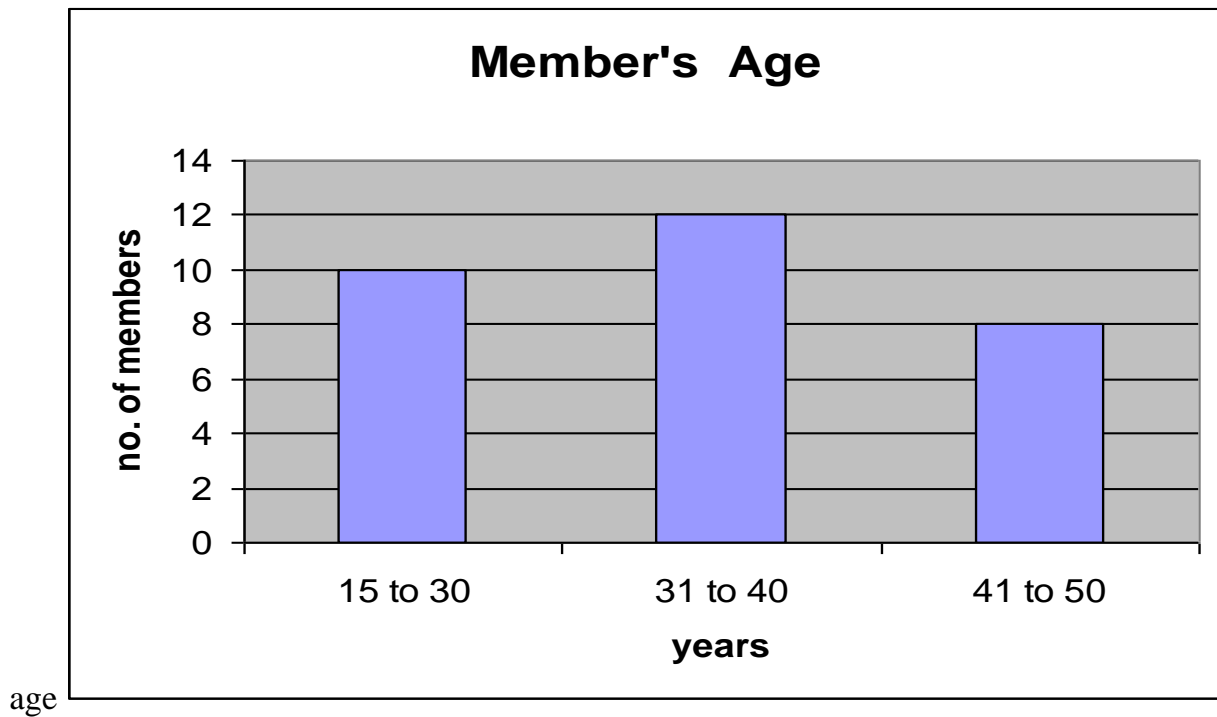
In Surkhet district, 91.2 percent population is followers of Hindu religion, 7.53, 0.75 and 0.43 percent are followers of Buddha, Christian and Islam religion respectively. There are 1157 Muslims in Surkhet district and here, Muslims are the third largest minority after Buddhists. Different Infrastructures and places of the religious and cultural importance are existed in the study area. Famous Bulbule Tal, Deutibajai Temple, Shiva Temple, Narayan Mandir, Baudha bihar, Church and Masjid. Kankrebihar one of the most famous geological and historical places is located in this VDC and is after the seed of the cucumber which is the shape of the place and also is famous for the ancient Bihar.

6. Main Findings of the study

6.1 Age Structure

The distribution of age group of respondents is presented in figure-1 below.

Fig-1: Member's



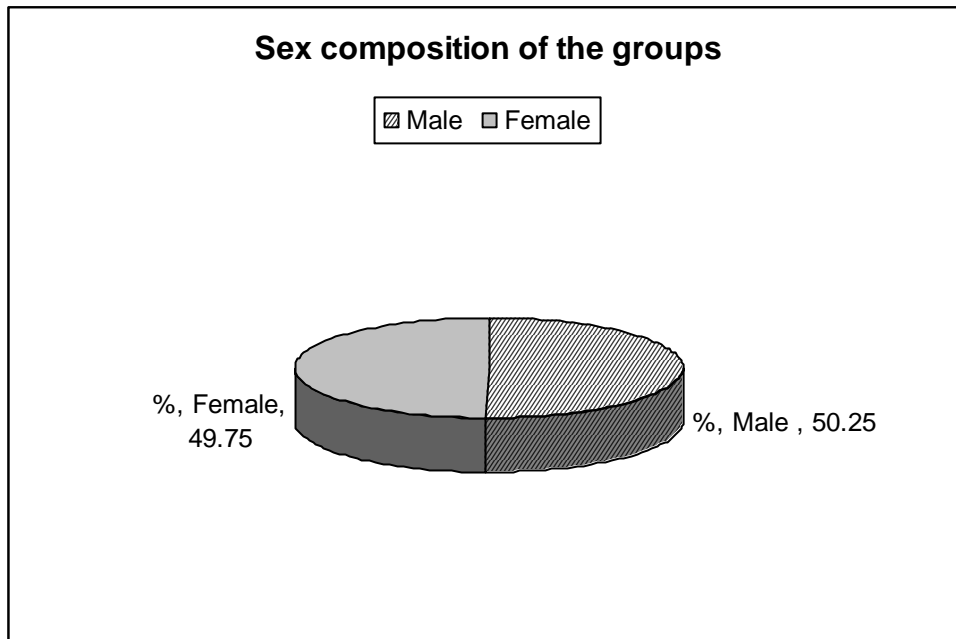
Source: Field Survey, 2009.

The average ages of respondents were found as 34.70. The group members were divided in to three category by age, these were 30 and below, 31- 40, 41- 50 and 51 and above years. Majority members were in between 31- 40 years of age with largest percentage 40, this shows that majority of them represent economically active population. There is no any respondent beyond the 50 yrs of age. The least percentage (26.67 %) of members lies in between 41 to 50 years. In this group, the members were from 18 years to up to 50 years old

6.2 Sex Composition

The number of male and female participation in the group may influence the decision making process in the group. The data was collected to reflect the sex composition status in the group.

Fig-2: Sex composition of the group



The farmer's groups were of mixed type. Majority of the members (50.25%) were male and 49.75 % were female. The national policy of female participation in the groups was met the groups. At least 30% female should include during the group formation according to policy of government.

6.3 Family Structure

The data was collected to know the trend of separation from the joint family in this group. Majority of the family were nuclear ones i.e. (57%) family were under nucleus family structure, they were separated from the family but remaining 43% family were living as a joint family. The preference to live as a nuclear family can further study about this matter.

6.4. Family size

The size of the family was divided into three categories. These are : small (up to 4), medium (5 to 7), and large (8 & above) during the study. There is direct effect of family

size on the child education and child health of a family. Similarly, it also plays a great role on the economic standard of the family. The data was collected to find out the number the status of the family in the group.

Table -1 Status of family size .

Family size	No. of respondents	Percentage
Small (up to 4)	6	20
Medium (5 to 7)	16	52.6
Large (8 and above)	8	27.4
Total	30	100

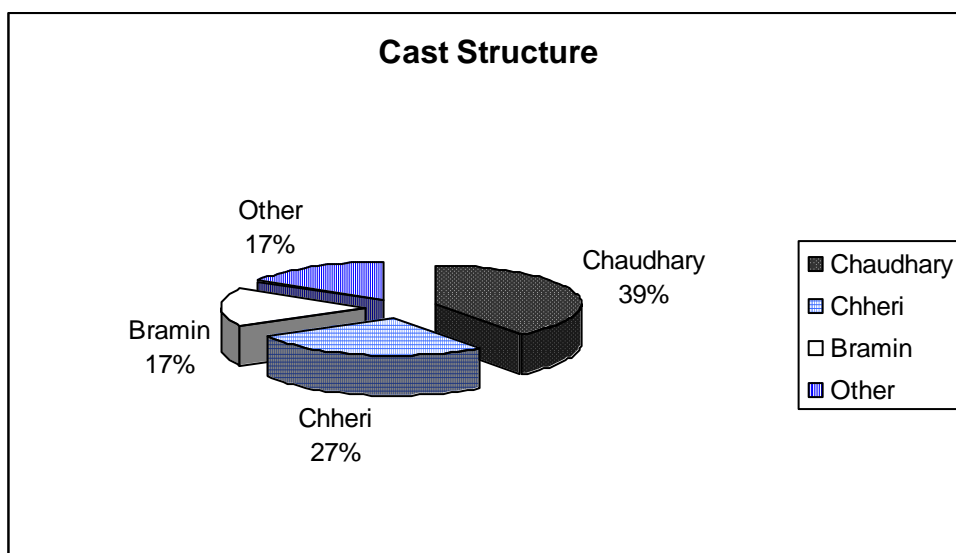
Source: Field Survey, 2009.

The table reveals that majority of the members (52.6%) were medium family size (5 to 7 members). Only 6 respondents (20%) were found small family size, they were containing only up to four family numbers which was less than the nation status. Large family size was observed in 27.4% respondents.

6.5. Caste structure in the group

This data was collected to reflect the caste composition in the group. In the society, the caste system may create the discrimination. It represented the social structure in a community. It creates binding force among and between the caste groups.

Fig-3 Cast structure of the group



Source : Field survey, 2009.

In this farmer group, majority of the members were from the *chhetri* background. Out of thirty respondent 12 (39 %) were the Chaudhary, 8 (27%) were the Chhetri, 5 (17%) were Bramin and 5 (17%) were other casts. It means, there is a heterogeneous type of population in the groups terms of caste.

6.6 Educational Background

The educational status of group members reflects the economic standard of the members in the society. Similarly, educational status of the society indicates the level of development in this locality.

It was found that, there were no any illiterate members who could not read and write. All the respondents were found that they could at least read and write. Majority of the respondents (50%) were passed primary level of education. Very few number of members i.e. 4- members (13.2%) were passed SLC and above level. There are also 13.2 % respondents i.e. four, who had received the informal education in their own farm house.

6.7. Occupational Status

It reflects the income source of the group members. The data was taken to know the major income sources of the members.

The existing occupational status of the respondents was different. Out of 30 respondents, 42.9% respondents have the agricultural farming as a major income source; similarly 42.9% have service, 10% business and 4% have the carpenter as a major source of income. This tells us that this group is not a homogeneous group if we see in terms of occupational status. The range of occupational background is varied; hence, they might not provide equal time in the group activities. In the district, majority of the population (85%) are dependent in agriculture.

6.8. Land size

The land area available for cultivation indicates the economic condition of a family as well. The data was taken to know the land available per group members. The land was divided in to three categories during the study. These are : Very small (up to 0.25 ha), small (0.3 to 0.5 ha), medium (0.55 to 0.75) and large (0.8 and above). This division was done

Table-4 Land holding size of the members.

Land holding size	Percentage
Very small (up to 0.25 ha)	0 %
Small (0.3 to 0.5 ha)	40 %
Medium (0.55 to 0.75 ha)	50 %
Large (0.8 ha and above)	10 %

Total	100 %
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Source: Field Survey, 2009.

From the table we can see that majority respondents have less than 0.75 ha cultivable land. 50 percent respondents have the land in between 0.55 ha to 0.75 ha land only. The average land holding in this areas' respondents was found that 0.63 ha cultivable land. There is no respondent who have the land more than one ha in the study area. If we see the district record, 63 percent house holdings in the district have less than 0.5 ha of land. If we see from the side of land available of respondents, we can say a homogeneous group.

6.9. Farming Land

In this study, the members were given more emphasizing on vegetable farming, even though, they were adopting an integrated farming system in their field. All the respondents had the total land 378.5 ropani, out of this total land, the vegetable growing land was only 70.5 (19%) ropani of the total land. In the area, most of the land (71.20%) was irrigated. Very few lands (28 %) were un-irrigated. Out of total areas of vegetable land, they were growing fresh vegetable in 77 % and vegetable seed in 23 % of land. The 16 members were involving in vegetable seed production only. The remaining members were producing both fresh vegetable and vegetable seed.

6.10. Members Involve in vegetable farming

It was found that females' involvement in vegetable farming is higher (59%) than the male. The involvement of male in the vegetable farming was only 41 percent. The less involvement of male in vegetable farming was due to office and business works. The higher participation of female group in the vegetable farming was due to the house wife.

6.11. Population of group.

The total family members of the 30 respondents were 197, among these members 99 (50.25 %) were male and remaining 98 (49.75%) were the female. The average family size per respondents was 6.56, which is higher than the average district family size (5.62). Out of 30 respondents, the female (66.6%) has the more contribution in agriculture farming than male (33.3%). But in the district report, the male (53%) has the higher contribution in the agriculture farming than the female (47%) only. In the district 92.50 % of the people are totally dependent on agriculture farming for their livelihood. If we compare with the population of the VDC, the population of the study area is little bit different with the VDC, i.e. the percentage of VDC population is 49.41 % male and 50.59 % female where as in the study group 50.25 % were male and 49.75 were female members.

6.12 Group Formation and its Characteristics

Although, the process of group formation is essentially based on voluntary action, there is a need for someone to initiate the process. Group formation process is a fundamental activity in group development. The important steps and processes identified for study were group formation efforts put by agencies and community during awareness creation, initiation, formation, setting goals, adopting structure and decision of structure derived by efforts of the agencies/community across the group.

6.12.1 Members' Involvement in group

Out of thirty respondents, 83 % respondents were spent 6 to 10 years in group, only few members were observed who spent less than five years period in the group. There were 10 % respondents, who were already spent more than one decade in the group. Among the

respondents, most of the members (80%) were general members; very less (20%) were in the post of executive body, any way all the respondents were as a member in the group.

6.12.5. Points consideration in group formation

Table-8 Points to be considered during group formation.

S.N.	Points	No. of Respondent	Percent
1.	Goal	11	37
2.	Objective/ strategies	18	60
3.	Working area	15	50
4.	Group activities	27	90
5.	Committee formation	8	27
6.	Common Status	1	3.3
7	Responsibilities provide	6	20
8	Thinking on transparency	1	3.3
9	Participation of poorer people.	3	10
10	Consideration on executive members selection	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

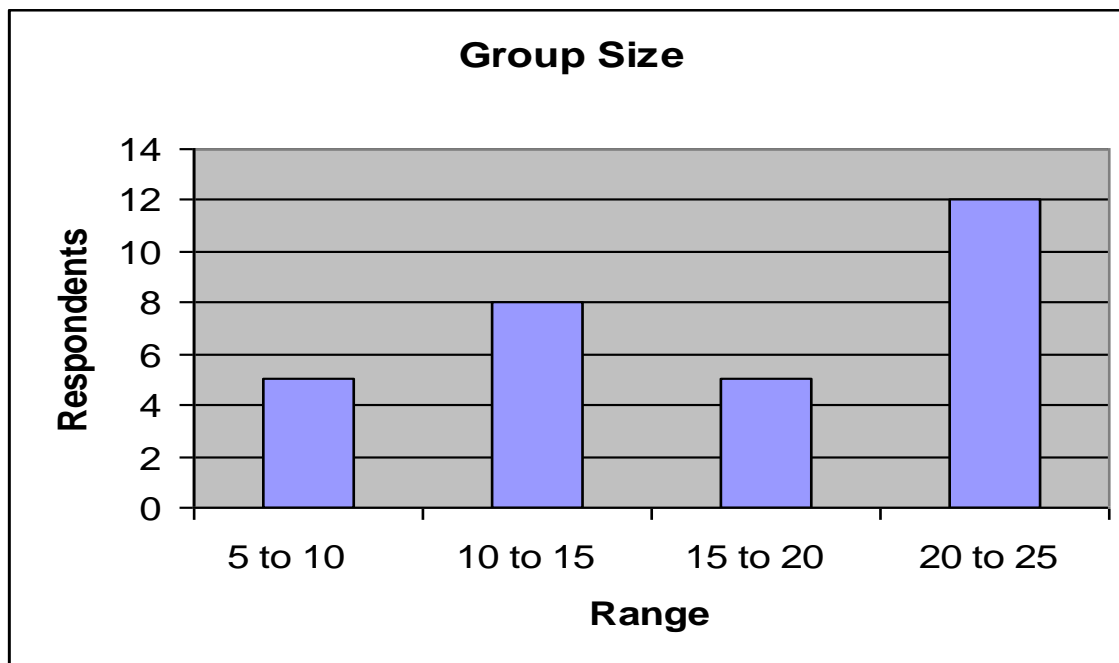
Majority of the respondents (60%) were replied that group objectives and group strategies are the major points to be considered at the time of group formation. Some respondents (37%) have been given the more emphasis on the goal. Only a single respondent brought his view about the common status and selection of the executive member of the group. The 27% respondents were in favored of committee formation and group activities points, are the major considerations while forming the group. The 10 % respondents were thinking the participation of poorer people was the key point during the group formation.

6.12.6. Group size

The group size effects on the intimacy of the group members. During the study, the range of group was divided in to four categories and asked members views in this matter. What they answered is shown from both table and figure.

Twelve respondents (40%) had said that the group having 20 to 25 members is the better to handle and work. The other eight respondents (26%) supported that 10 to 15 members are better in a group. But, some respondents (17%) kept their views differently and up hold 15 to 20 members group are more sustainable than others and leftover respondents (17 %) corroborated 5 to 10 members in a group would be most appropriate group size.

Fig-7. Range of group members



Source: Field survey, 2009.

6.13 Group Leadership

Leadership considered as the process of influencing others to get the job done effectively over a sustained period of time. Leaders play a critical role in influencing the work

behaviors of other in the system. Leadership is one of the major considerations in comprehending the effectiveness of an organization. The result of successful institutionalization can be to create a cadre of local leadership, in the proper sense of the term—a numerous set of persons with common expectations and aspirations that can be relied on to perform task in a predictable and component fashion. The processes such as leadership criteria, leadership selection, leadership rotation and leadership structures of the group are the key processes for an organization to be an effective. These processes were used as the criteria of evaluating the leadership of group under the study.

6.13.1 Leadership qualities

In the group, the role of leadership is crucial. The weak leadership could not run the group in right way. A success and failure of a group depends on that group leader. We were asked members' views about this matter.

During the study forty percentage respondents had emphasized on the characters of initiatives, clear and honesty. 20 % respondents had given more emphasized on impartial habit, good behavior, Understandable, Industrious and responsible toward society. 37 % respondents were on the support of Possess social thought. Two respondents (7%) said that ability to identify the problems and quick decision for the action are the leadership qualities. Some other respondents (10%) had told that to be a good leader, he/she should possess the character of Courageous and helpful, Listen to other patiently, believable from society and to able to identify the problems of the others and possess a social behavior character.

6.14 Group Communication and Interaction.

It is important to understand the process of group communication and barriers thereto, because effective communication is vital to influence others, to express feelings and emotions, to provide, receive and exchange information and to ensure that the integrity of the formal structure of the organization or group is maintained by following the appropriate channels of communication laid down by organization. In essence, communication is one of the most vital processes that keep the wheels of an organization running smoothly.

6.14.1 Method used to communicate the new messages to the members.

Communication and interaction is the blood vessel of the group organization and has to keep healthy and free flowing so that the system can function smoothly and effectively.

The group could receive various new messages from its stakeholders from time to time. I was also studied about the system prevailing to communicate the messages to other in this group. From the study, it was found that both individual and mass or group contact methods of communication were used to communicate any message to the group members. Most of the time, they usually prefer to communicate in mass or group.

6.14.2. Barrier in communication

The factors barrier to communication may be language problems, status effects, physical distinctions, information overload, time pressures, cultural differences, trust level, perceptual distinctions, self concept and absence of two way communication.

The information was taken about the barriers pertaining in the communication during the study, all the respondents (30) were said that there were no any barriers to receive messages from the group.

6.14.3 Knowledge sharing

In this group, the practices of knowledge sharing among the members were highly pleasant. No one member in the group was unsatisfied about this matter. From the experiences, it was found that higher the knowledge sharing lower the conflict in the group.

6.14.4. Discussion in the group

The discussion taking place among the group members helps to strengthen the group. Due to the group discussion, the group becomes more active. The matters of group discussion may be different according to situations. Due to the multiple responses of the respondents, the frequency and percentage of the respondents given in the table is higher than the total number of respondents involved in the interview .

From the study, it was shown that the more discussion usually took place in the subject of future strategy, program implementation, fund collection and distribution in the group. Besides this, the studied has also shown that in other subjects, for example; loan distribution, future of the group, program planning, activeness of the group and other subject matters would be the matters of group discussion.

6.15 Decision Making Process

Decisions can be made in groups in different ways, for example: individual decision making, consultative decision making, and group decision making. When the issues to be decided are complex, and require varied skills, knowledge base, expertise, and experience for generating the required problem solutions, group problem solving processes should be attempted and are likely to result in better decisions and solutions than individual decision making (Sekaran,1989).

6.15.1 Decision- making Process in group

To know the decision making process followed by this group, the information in this regard was taken and reflected by the table. During the study, the options of the decision making process was given to the respondents.

The questions were asked the respondents about the decision making processes followed in the group. In very few cases, decision taking practice was followed from the leader after discussion with the group members. Most of the decision in the group issues was taken by group consensus. There is no practice of self decision.

6.16 Conflict and Debate

Conflict is universal. It occurs in all times and places. There has never been a time or a society in which some individuals or groups did not come into conflict and debate. Conflict occurs in the group is not always harmful but it has positive functions as well. It strengthens the dynamic process of the group. Some time, the conflict congeals the morale and promotes the solidarity of the group. Similarly, it may tend to a new consensus in the group.

5.16.1 Conflict in group

Most of the respondents (60%) answered conflict prevailing in the group. Very less number were answered no conflict appeared in the group. Some members did not want to show any response about this matter.

6.16.2. Nature of conflict in the group

Generally the conflicts appear in the group is not a fixed time, it may appear according to the situations occur in the group. The views of members was taken during the study about this matter are given in details in following table. Respondents had provided the multiple

responses in this regard also, hence, the frequency and percentage of the respondents given in the table is higher than the total number of respondents involved in the interview .

Usually, the conflict is appeared during the period of program implementation, fund collection and distribution among the group members. The other conditions of conflict appeared in the group are; conflict occurs in the methods follow to solve problem, conflict emerge usually during the executive member selection. Similarly, conflict appears at the time of project selection as well. The study table clearly shows that the conditions of conflict and debate appeared in the group might be different.

6.16.3 Reasons of Conflict

Some of the reasons of conflict received from the respondents are: try to take more opportunities by limited members, do not return the credit in time from the members, demand more loan from the group, more practice follow to punish economically, sometime, election creates conflict between/ among the group members, absence of majority of group members in the meeting, try to take more opportunity by a single member in the same program, try to carry on more programs by a member in his own area only, try to take more opportunities by limited members.

Different respondents had given different reasons of conflict occurred in the group. Fifty percent respondents had said that economic punishment is the major reason of conflict in the group. The other forty four percent respondents believed that more loan demand from the group was the major issues of conflict. The reasons of conflict appeared in the group might be different according to respondents answered.

6.16.4 Changes appeared in the group due to the conflict.

Due to the conflict, some positive changes in the group may appear. According to respondents, the changes appeared in the group and group members are mentioned in details in table above. Out of 30 respondents, 56.3 % respondents had told that owing to conflict, group has become more active. Very few members (13.2%) were told that because of the conflict, all the members has learnt to talk more consciously and sharing the knowledge among the members. There are also many other changes appear in the group are: members able to select good leader, members become more active, development of participatory approach practice in the group and development of unanimously decision process practices within the group.

6.16.5 Solution measures of conflict in the group

Different respondents had given different ideas about the solution measures of conflict. Out of 30 members, 13 members (42.9%) kept their views that the solution measures of conflict is the practice of group discussion and group decision. 39.6 % had given more emphasized on transparency and 59.4 % forced to implement the group decision practice in the field. Equal division of opportunity among the members is another measure to reduce the conflict in the group, were answered by the 50 % respondents.

Conclusion

Members of the groups give more emphasis on group interest and needs than their personal benefits. The groups are relatively effective groups. Because, the groups have their own group objectives, common interest, active participation, regular meeting, good record keeping system, close physical distance, maintaining revolving fund, good coordination and linkage with line agencies, constituted rules and regulations to maintain the discipline, effective use of internal resources, follow group decision procedure, more

interaction within group, work division among the members were some of the example of effective group.

Due to the various ranges of occupational status, the members could not give the equal time in the group activities. Hence, the contribution of female members on agriculture sector in this group is higher than male. But the ratio of male and female was coincided with the government policy of group formation. There was male dominance in the group. There is unity in the group members. All the group members are working together to achieve the group goals. Homogeneity in terms of caste, and land size, helps to maintain the cohesion in the members. There is some problem in efficient two way communications in some groups and there is no problem in others.

The study clearly revealed that conflict is also necessary to put and run any type of organizations in right track. Transformation of the existing conflict in right track is essential. The executive committees should be aware toward conflict management aspect to reduce the possible harms. The decision making process, knowledge sharing among the members, work division in the groups, opportunity sharing and message communicate in time play the great role for the satisfaction of members. The study found that there was satisfactory participation the group members. The role of leadership is crucial in the group. Hence, the members would be clever during the selection of leaders. The success or failure of group depends on the leadership.

Recommendations

This study is expected to be helpful for extension personal and line agency involved in applying farmers' group approach. Due to limitation of studies, some of the factors related to understand the group effectiveness could not be covered in as much details as needed.

Therefore, in order to understand the performance, effectiveness, constraints and opportunities of the groups it requires further in-depth study on these factors.

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