Introduction

True women empowerment takes place when women challenge the existing norms and culture, to effectively improve their well being. While doing so, it carefully interprets the World Bank’s definition of empowerment within the South Asian contexts and makes comprehensible distinctions between community driven development and efficiency improving activities that are culturally considered to be women’s domain and activities which truly empower women. Based on this conceptual framework, the results of the Focus Group Discussions and interviews analyze the activities through which the Self Help Groups impact the lives of women in India. It is argued that only a fraction of these activities are truly empowering for the participating women, however, drawing inference from the household data, preliminary results indicate that SHGs could be leading to empowerment of women.

Economic globalization is exerting more power throughout a few corporations and international financial agencies, and greatly responsible for the women poverty. When women work outside, generally they earn, on average, far less than men do. They are also more likely to work in more unsafe forms of employment in terms of work guarantee, with low wages, little financial security and few or no social benefits. Women not only earn less than men earn but also tend to own fewer assets. Smaller wages and less control over household income constrain their ability to articulate. Empowerment goes beyond economic betterment and well-being, to strategic gender interests. Women are increasingly the ones who suffer most from the poverty. In other words, today, women undertake most of jobs with low returns, and this working condition still prevails.

Microfinance tries to fight global poverty and bring opportunities to the world's poorest people. Of course, microfinance approach does not offer sufficient solutions reduce to poverty & empower the women. Otherwise, with tiny loans and financial services, it helps the poor, mostly women, start businesses and escape poverty. Microfinance programs targeting women have become a major plank of donor poverty alleviation strategies in the 1990s and funding is set to further increase into the next century under governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), some initiatives and donor agencies activities. This study focuses on some solutions for the women empower & global poverty problem such as microfinance approach.
Development experience shows that gender inequalities are a major factor impeding progress towards the Millennium Development Goals of poverty reduction. It is also widely recognized that apart from managing household, bearing children, rural women bring income with productive activities ranging from traditional work in the fields to working in factories or running small and petty businesses. They have also proven that they can be better entrepreneurs and development managers in any kind of human development activities. Therefore, it is important and utmost necessary to make rural women empowered in taking decisions to enable them to be in the central part of any human development process. The empowerment of women also considered as an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Against the background of the patriarchal system of society, the women need special attention to ensure their development and participation in the decision making process at home, in the community and governance. One of the viable strategies, quite often talked about, is the role of enterprise to empower rural women.

Empowerment can range from personal empowerment that can exist within the existing social order. Thus this kind of empowerment would correspond to the right to make one’s own choices, to increased autonomy and to control over economic resources. But confidence and self-esteem also play an essential role in change. Empowerment signifies increased participation in decision-making and it is this process through which people feel themselves to be capable of making decisions and the right to do so. Personal empowerment can lead to changes in existing institutions and norms, however, without the collective empowerment the personal empowerment and choices are limited. For women to become a successful entrepreneur, she needs access to capital, technical and managerial know-how and market.