

The Role of North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) in Women Development in Bara locality , North Kordofan State, Sudan

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Abstract: The current study was conducted to investigate the role of North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) as a microfinance institution in women development, in Bara Locality. The study depended on primary data that were collected via structured questionnaire and direct interviewing with respondents. The study used multi-stage random sampling technique while SPSS soft word was run for descriptive measures. The results showed that the project had played a key role in development and skills building of rural women by training them in, adult education, local food industry and nutrition culture; these activities had positive impacts on women where they had opportunities to increase their income through small projects and to participate in home and project decision making; where 33.8% of them were enrolled in adult education and 73.8% of the them were married which refers to the social stability. The women played an important role in family care, where 46.3% of them were householders and 26.3% of them were village committee members. 71.3% of them were within the active age group; which refers to the contribution of women in bringing domestic income and 97.5% of them used the micro-finance in sheep breeding and small projects such as; weaving and food industry. 95% of them practiced agriculture as main occupation and 67.5% of them owned agricultural land.

91.3% had achieved profits from their investments and their average saving size was SDG 1296.67. The average income was SDG 1012.5 and 2837.5, and the average expenditures were, 1250 and 1050 before and after the project respectively. This makes an increment in income by 180% and decrement in expenditure by 16%. Also 56.3% had repaid their loans in time. 25% of them have children dropped out of school. 66.3% used to buy drinking water and 68.8% of them used to fetch water and firewood themselves. The study findings concluded that, more wells and water yards have to be established to solve the water problem in the study area.

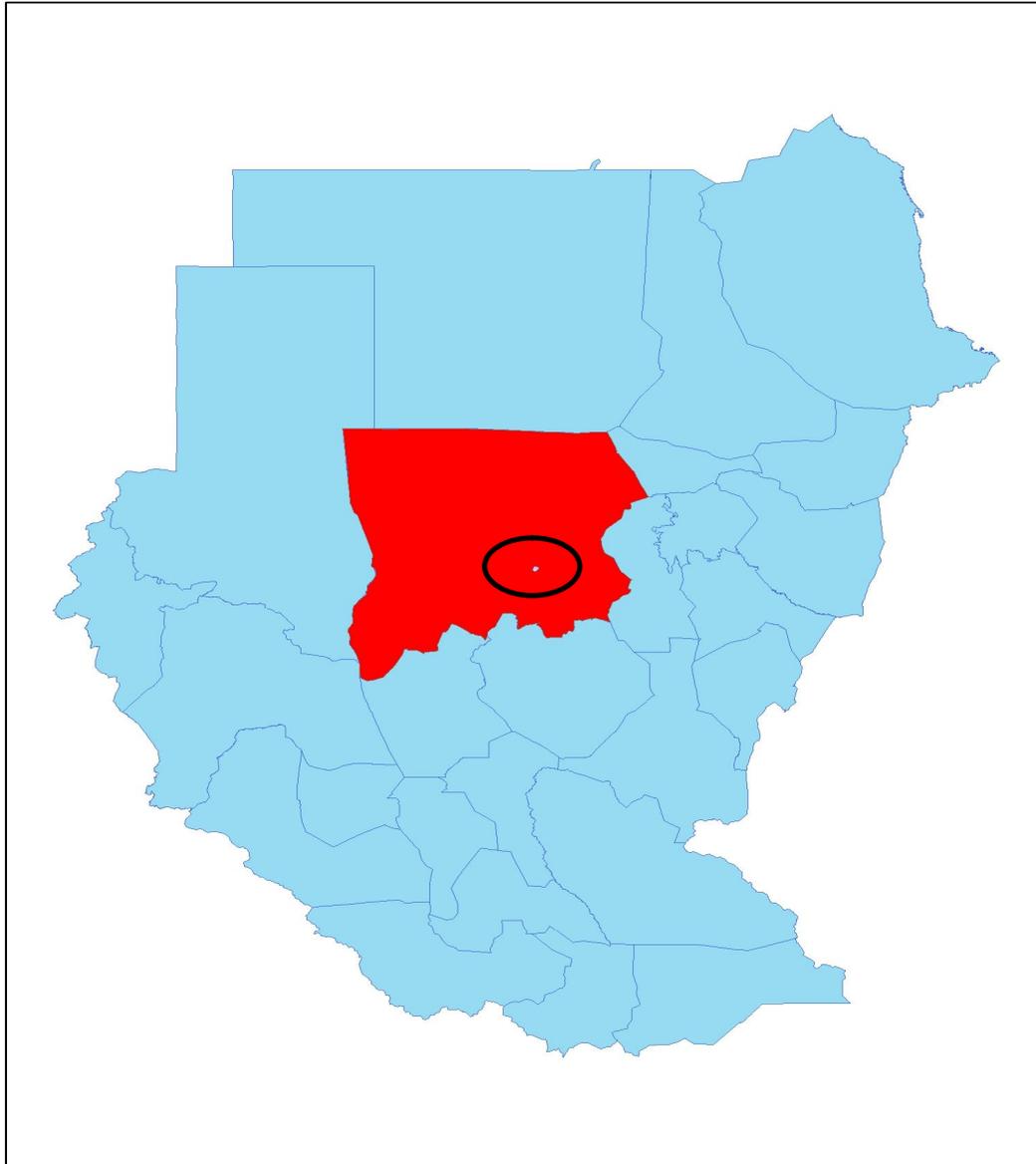
Keywords: Women development, Micro-finance, Rural development, North Kordofan

INTRODUCTION

This study was carried out in Om Kreidem Administration, Bara locality(Fig.1), North Kordofan State. The northern part of the NKS. It lies between latitudes $13^{\circ} 18'$ and $14^{\circ} 13'$ North and longitudes $58^{\circ} 45'$ and $31^{\circ} 48'$ East and it is about 56 km North of Elobeid town ,(Suleiman, 2008). The households in the area exhibit similar socio-economic characteristics. Their activities include crop farming, livestock breeding and Gum Arabic production. Basic financial services, like credit, savings and insurance, give people an opportunity to borrow, save, invest and protect their families against risk. But with little income or collateral, poor people are seldom able to borrow money from banks and other formal financial institutions. Microfinance institutions, such as financial cooperatives, financial non-governmental organizations and rural banks among others, can provide poor people with small amounts of credit at reasonable interest rates. Poor people also need saving services, basic insurance options and affordable remittance systems to best manage their assets and generate income. Still, only a fraction of the world; poorest people have access to such services. While the microfinance sector continues to grow, at least 400 million poor and low-income people are not being served by microfinance (Kabeer, N. 1998). The recognition of microfinance as one of the priority sectors for Sudan started only in the mid-1990s. The financing regulations of the Bank of Sudan are still being revised, and lack proper identification of microfinance activities. A number of Banks, Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and social funds have been involved with

microfinance in the Sudan, and more Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) are slowly being launched. Over 100 local and foreign NGOs, in direct coordination with government authorities, are active in providing microcredit, emergency loans, medical care and educational services to poor people in the Sudan. In addition, many rural development projects include components of microfinance support. Microfinance NGOs have been much closer to grassroots operations than have the formal lending institutions, (Maria, A. S, 2007). Poor women in particular benefit from microfinance services. Women's status, is elevated when they are responsible for managing loans and savings. The ability to generate and control their own income can further empower poor women. Research shows that credit extended to women has a significant impact on their families' quality of life, especially their children. Poor women also tend to have the best credit ratings. In Bangladesh, for example, women have shown to default on loans far less often than men, (IFAD Office, MFU, 2007). In North Kordofan State (NKS) the major economic activities are agricultural production and Gum Arabic; but NKS is facing a number of complex problems such as deterioration of resources, high living expenses, and shortage in potable water, low credit supply all of which culminated in reduction of crop and livestock production and income levels with associated expenditure levels. These could be the reasons to entering the North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP). NKRDP is financed by the international Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Sudan Government. The amount of finance was US 14,566,500. (NKRDP, 2001). The overall goal of the project was to improve the living standard of the communities of the project area, and particularly, assure their food security and enhance the resilience to drought and natural disaster in way of life. There is a huge potential for the development of Microfinance programs in the country, particularly in the light of current socioeconomic conditions and the Government's declarations for prioritizing poverty alleviation in its policies. However, there are many challenging constraints facing this recent Microfinance sector which, unless addressed, will limit its effectiveness in fulfilling its role in poverty alleviation and economic development. Some of these challenges are: Lack of clear policy direction for MFIs, outreach to the poor is still limited among many microfinance service providers. Absence of coordination between microfinance providers. The training and experience of the personnel in commercial banks is not suitable for servicing rural poor clients, (Baden, S et al, 1995). Accordingly, this study had attempted to investigate the role of Microfinance (NKRDP) in improving the socio-economic situation of women in

study areaB. It aims to study impact of microfinance on the socio-economic structure for women in Bara locality. To assess the effect of microfinance on income generating and expenditure .This figure is the study area (black circle).



The study depended mainly on primary data that was collected via a structured questionnaire and direct interviewing with respondents. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select eighty respondents as a sample size (State- Locality- Administrative- Villages, and because there were different periods of entering the project in different villages the study adopted (stratified sampling to selected the villages); with each stratum the sampled villages were selected using simple random

sampling. And due to the homogeneity of the population in socio-economic activities and social characteristics, 5 villages were selected namely (Om Gavella, Om Mahlna, Korra, Om Ramad birra and Injammeina) the participant respondents (females) were selected from each village according to the total number of population in each village, 80 questionnaires were distributed as the sample size (10%) of the population. Secondary data was collected from previous studies, internet, others related literature on the same subject and the different institutional sources. To achieve the research objectives; the data was analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) in terms of descriptive statistical analysis (frequencies, percentages and cross tabulation) and spreadsheet(Excel program) to obtain the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is an important link between maternal education and schooling of children especially girls. The educated women tend to have fewer children and tend to enter occupations which provides higher earning, hence women will be able to learn more and earn more and keep better health for themselves and their children and the constrains can also be reduced. Education is one of constrain that faces women in agriculture. Often education status level affects their access to information and their dealing with complementary inputs such as improved seeds, credit and access to markets (Saito, K., & Weidman, C.J. (1990). From figure (1) which shows distribution of the respondents according to their education level where 36.3% of them were illiterates, 18.8% were intermediate education, 7.5% of them had informal education (khalwa), 3.8% had secondary education, while 33.8% had adult education; which indicate the high contribution of the project in adult education.

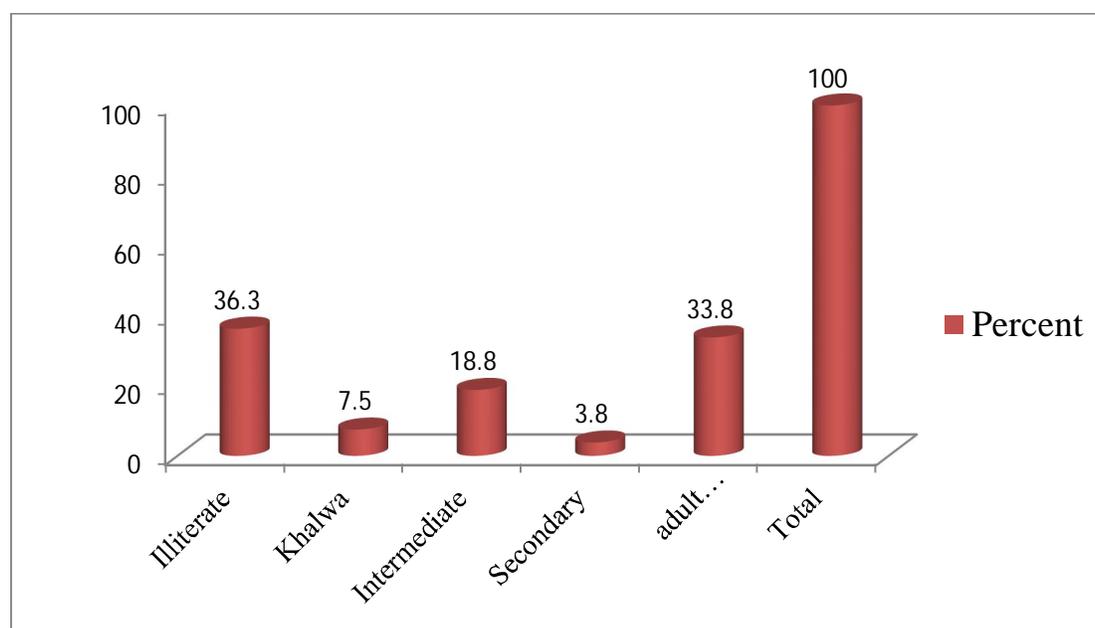


Figure (1): Distribution of respondents according to the education levels:

Table (1) shows that the majority of respondent's 97.5% funding was animal breeding and small projects such as weaving and food industry machines and only 2.5% their funding was animal production and medicines, which explain that animal breeding and small projects were the main activities.

Table (1): The types of activities funded:

types of activities	Frequency	Percent
Animal breeding and small projects	78	97.5
Animal production and medicines	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

Source: field survey 2009.

Table (2) shows That 26.3% of them were members in the village committee; which indicated the high participations of women in decision making in the project

Table (2): participants' and non participants' respondents in the village committee of Bara Locality, North Kordofan State:

Village Committees	Frequency	Percent
Participant	21	26.3
Non participant	59	73.8
Total	80	100.0

Source: field survey (2009)

Several studies stated that rural women often have difficulty in obtaining credit because they do not own land or because they are not familiar to deal with banks. However, they do not poorly educated, or because they rarely hold title to land. Also extension programs customarily address male farmers and ignore women farmers. Sometimes male extension farmers prefer to talk to men rather than women. Also women face other constraints as they do not receive technology, which help them to save more time in the farm. As a result, they tend to spend about 15-16 hours per day using traditional tools (Saito, K., & Weidman, C.J. 1990). But in this study and from the table below it is observed that 18.8% of loans problems were due to lack of guarantees and lack of donors and 81.3% of problems were due to lack of donors and not convinced with bank financing.

Table (3): The loans problems from other finance sources:

loans problems	Frequency	Percent
Lack of guarantees and lack of donors	15	18.8
Lack of donors and not convinced with bank financing	65	81.3
Total	80	100

Source: field survey 2009

Figure (2): showed total and average income and expenditures before and after the project. The average income was 1012.5 and 2837.5, and the average expenditures

were, 1250 and 1050 before and after project respectively; which explain the positive impact of the project in increasing respondent's income and reduction of expenditures due to the contribution of the project in training health aid and supported them with cheap medicines; which were distributed to respondents, and providing drinking water.

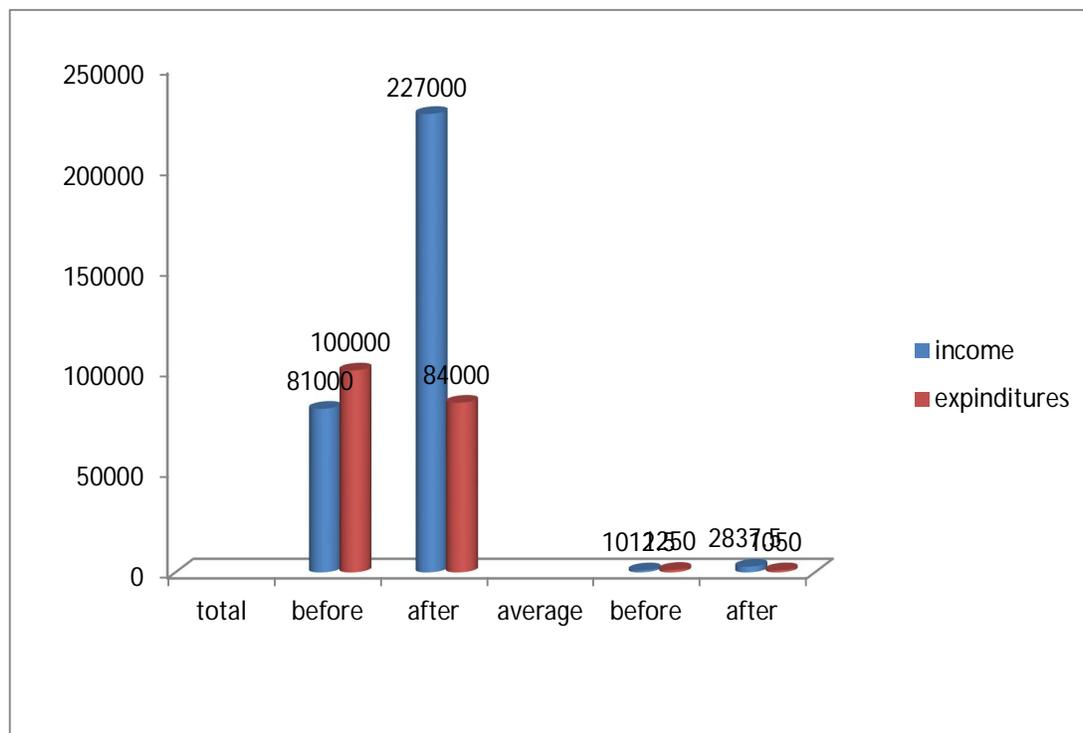


Figure (2): The total and average income and expenditure before and after the project

As shown in figure (3) 12% of respondents used their returns to cover the family expenditures, expansion of the activities and saving .Also 88% of them used their returns to cover the family expenditures; which explain the contribution of women in the household expenditure.

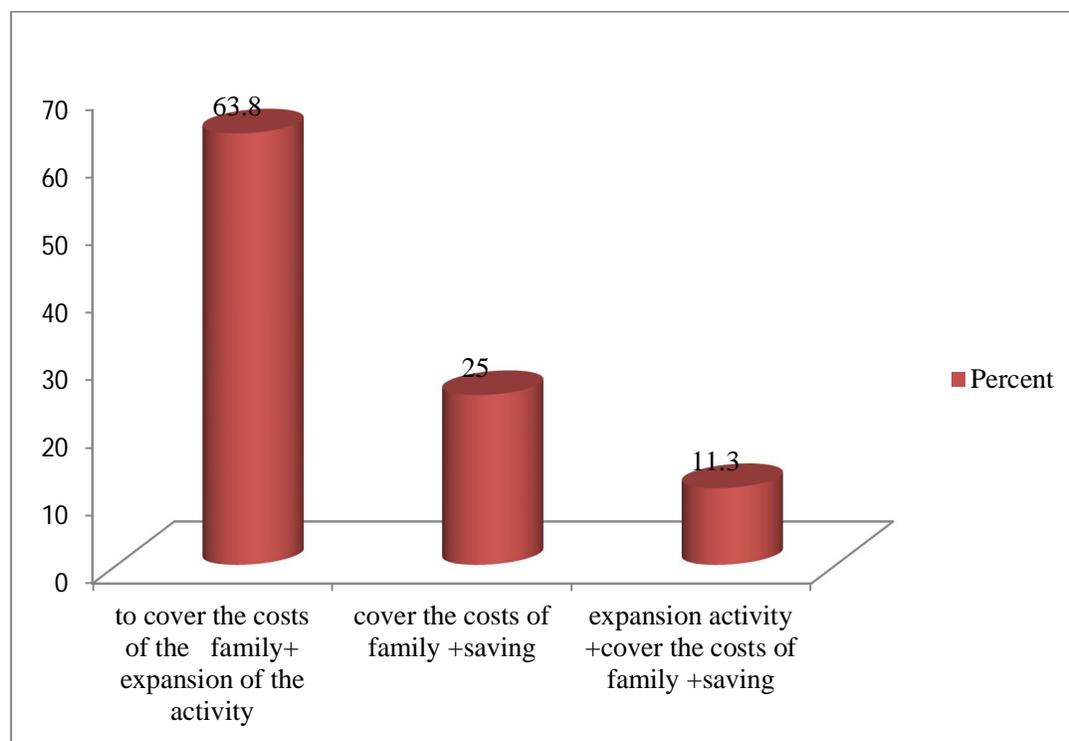


Figure (3): The distribution of the return from the project

Table (4): showed the repaid of funding, about 56.3% of respondents repaid the funding on time, while about 43.7% repaid just part of it due to the failure of season. The time of repayment was one year. Also the results pointed to that; there was one collateral (sandougs of village) to receive funding; which explain that the procedures was simple. The results showed that the total interest rate was 3% distributed as the following: 1% to capital, 0.5% to the village committee, 0.5% to services and 1% to the agricultural bank.

Table (4): The level of repayment of funds

Repaid of funds	Frequency	Percent
Repaid all funds in time	45	56.3
Repaid part of fund	35	43.8
Total	80	100.0

The results showed that 80% of the respondents said that the project helped in providing education services, also 96.3% of them mentioned that the project helped in providing health services, 60% of them said that the project helped in providing water services also 63.8% of them said that the project helped in providing fuel services and 65% of them said that the project helped in providing handicrafts. Also the results showed that about 91.25% of the respondents have got profits from their investments. Also the results showed that; about 97.5% of the respondents said that the productivity and production from funded activities were satisfactory, also the result showed that (98.8%) of respondents' funding size was adequate, also the majority of respondents 98.8% said the project provided guidance to the beneficiaries (respondents) as shown in figure (4).

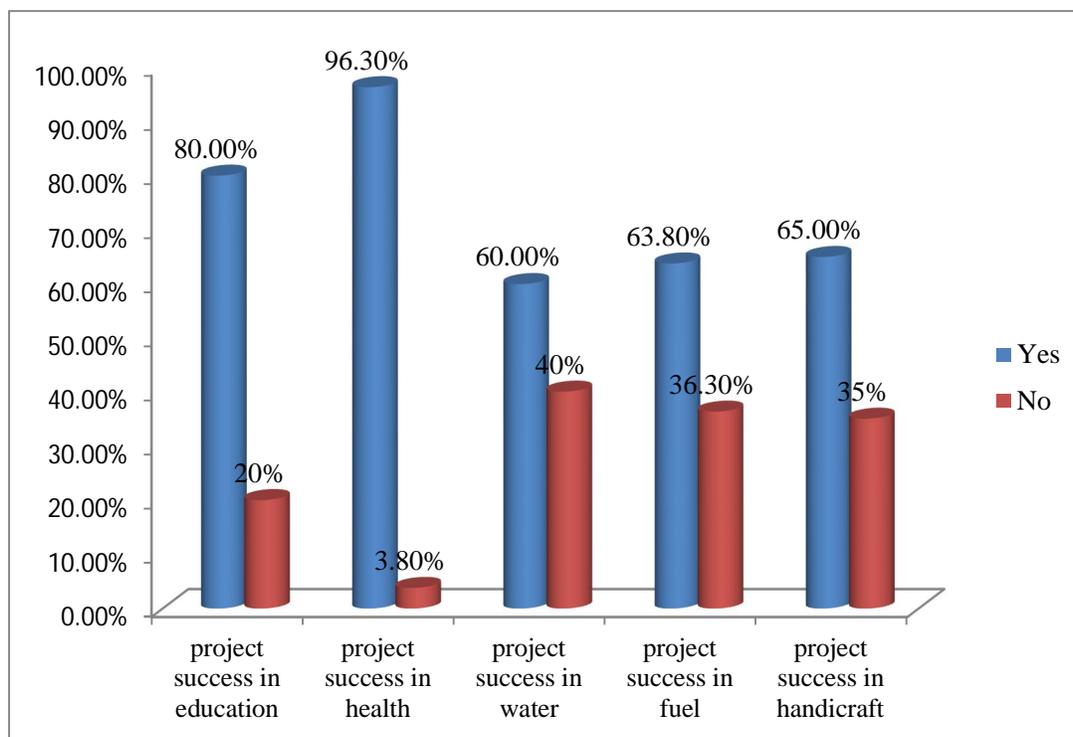


Figure (4): Perception of respondents about project success

From figure (5) it is observed that the project weakness were, lack of water services (63.8%), lack of education services (20%), lack of water + education services + health services (15%) and lack of water + education services(1.3%). 30% of the

respondents faced problems in marketing their products and 70.8% of the problems were caused by prices fluctuations.

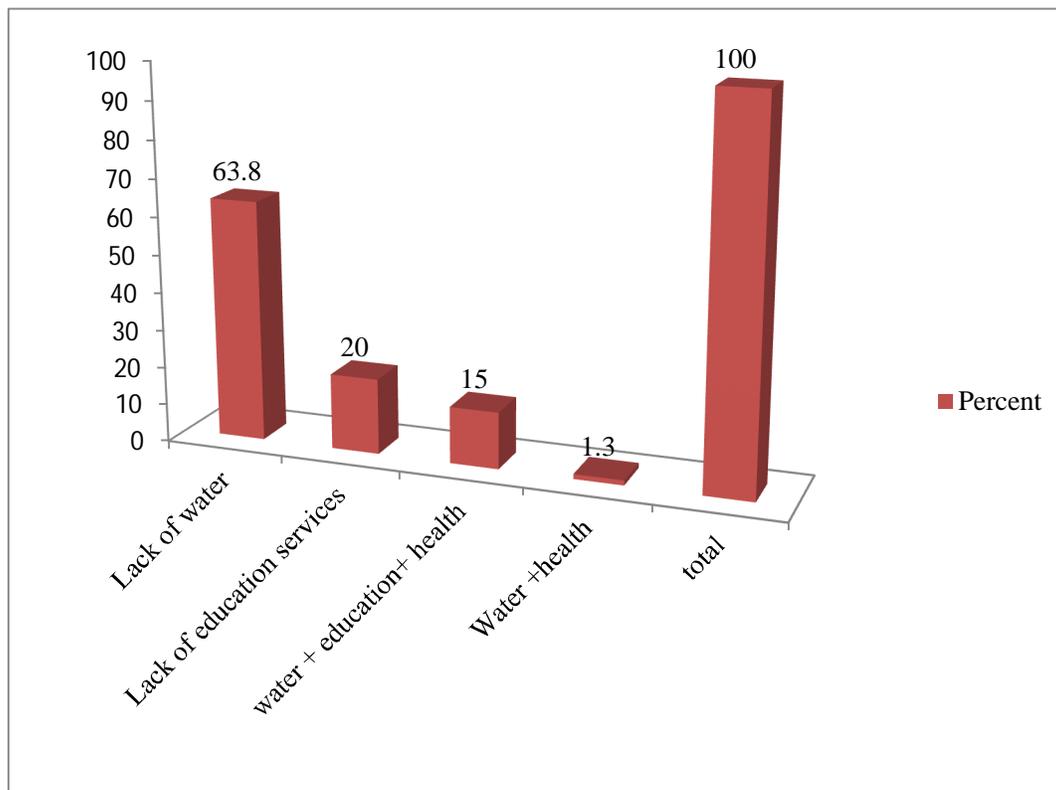


Figure (5): Perception of respondents about project weaknesses:

The figure (6) showed the availability of different services before and after the project. The criterias were ranking between (weak, middle, good, very good and no change), from figure we observe the level of the education , health and fuel: before the project were weak and middle but changed after the project to good and very good respectively according to the perceptions of respondents, while the level of water was weak before the project and the change was also weak; which explain that the contribution of the project in providing water was weak in the study area

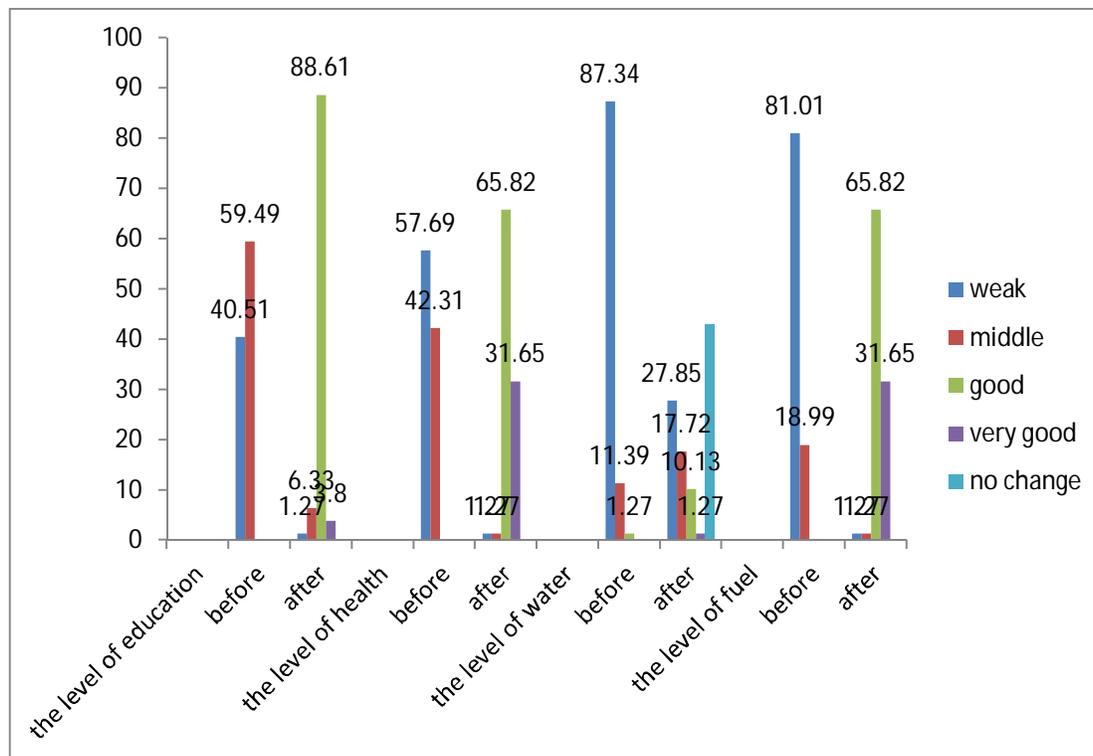


Figure (6): The availability of education, health, water and fuel before and after the project:

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the majority of the respondents 97.5% funding was animal breeding and small projects such as weaving and food industry machines, and 26.3% of them were members in the village committee; which indicate the high participations from the women in decision making in the project, it is observed that 18.8% of loans problems were due to lack of guarantees and lack of donors and 81.3% of problems were due to lack of donors and not convinced with bank financing. Also the results showed that the total and average income and expiditures before and after the project was 1012.5 and 2837.5, and the average expenditures were, 1250 and 1050 respectively, 12% of respondents used their returns to cover the family expenditures, expansion of the activities and saving. About 56.3% of

respondents repaid the funds on time, while about 43.7% repaid just part of it due to the failure of the season. The results showed that 80%, 96.3%, 60%, 63.8% and 65% of the respondents mentioned that the project helped in providing education services, health services, water services, fuel services and handcrafts respectively. Results showed that about 91.25% of the respondents had got profits from their investments. Also about 97.5% and 98.8% of them mentioned that the productivity and production from funded activities were satisfactory and funding size was adequate respectively.

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