

Full Length Research Paper

Gender and youth challenges and opportunities in rural community: The case of Goregora, West Dembia district of North West Ethiopia

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The study was conducted in Goregora, North West Ethiopia. The main objective of the study was to analyze gender role, gender and youth challenges and opportunities in the study area. Two stage sampling technique was employed. Male (32) and female (28), in total 60 sample respondents were interviewed. The sample size for this study was a function of the variability of the population characteristics, time and resource availability. Data were collected through focus group discussion, key informant interview, sample household interview and observation. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in the form of description and narration respectively. According to the study, 45% of the sample respondents said that there was gender based discriminatory practice. Challenges related to youth and genders were also found. Besides, the research result indicated that the contribution of men and women in the division of labor was unequal. Therefore, concerned body should organize experience-sharing event among household and best practice should be scale out. In addition, governmental and nongovernmental organization should provide awareness creation training for both sexes.

Key words: Challenges, community, gender, rural.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is about a socially constructed set of norms and values that govern social relations, behaviors, opportunities and accesses, risks and vulnerabilities for men and women. It became developmental concern more than three decades (Jerneck, 2018). According to the

global and local evidences show heavy bias against women and girls in case of division of labor, access to and control over resources, decision making power and equal beneficiaries from any development endeavors (Lal and Khurana, 2011). To address inequalities between

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men and women in every aspects of human life gender mainstreaming approach was introduced in Beijing conference (1995) (Bekhouche et al., 2013). Gender mainstreaming incorporates series steps of actions that begin from gender analysis. Gender analysis is a fundamental step toward identifying, assessing and informing actions that are essential to address gender inequality in programs and institutions and to benefit men and women equitably (Akpan, 2015).

Gender roles are socially defined tasks, responsibilities, and behaviors, which are appropriate for men and women. They vary from society to society and can change over time (Manfre et al., 2013). Hence, both men and women perform different activities in the study areas. Women farmers perform different paid and unpaid activities, but their work remains undervalued and not considered as work (Baden, 2013; Bekhouche et al., 2013). In Ethiopia, gender inequality is a serious concern. The country stands 129th out of 136 countries in the gender related development index (UNDP, 2011) and 116th in the global gender gap index (World Economic Forum, 2011). Ethiopian women and girls are subordinate to their husbands, families as well as vulnerable to various forms of gender based violence such as early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and domestic violence. Furthermore, the physical hardship they face or undergo in their everyday lives has not yet been given emphasis (UN, 2014).

The agricultural sector in Ethiopia, which employs more than 80% of the population, shows disproportionate exertion of labor and imbalanced control over products between men and women. Gender related norms and values gives high value for men as heads of the household with more privileges to control key resources and decision-making power over women. Even if the contribution of women to agricultural production and maintenance of the household is immense, their role is unrecognized or undervalued in the eyes of the community and local administrations. As a result, most rural women were left out from agricultural support programs/extension services, introduction of new farming technologies and income diversification interventions (Oxfam, 2015).

Currently, regional governments have established women's affairs bureaus and departments, employed them, and afforded them with recurrent significant budgets (Spadacini and Nichols, 1998). The government also set up a micro enterprise scheme whereby a group of entrepreneurs can develop business plan, access credit and obtain support from the government. This scheme designed to benefit women more by facilitating their economic empowerment. A review made by the investigators on challenges and opportunities of gender and youth shows that no study was conducted in the study area. Therefore this paper provides details of information on gender and youth challenges and opportunities in rural community in North West Ethiopia to

attain the following objectives: (1) Identifying and analyzing gender role; (2) Identifying gender based discriminatory practice and their methods used to avoid discriminatory practice, and (3) Assessing the gender and youth challenges and opportunities in rural community.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling techniques and sample size

The study was conducted in Gorgora, West Dembia District of North West Ethiopia. The study employed two stage sampling technique such as purposive and simple random sampling. The study area was selected using non-random purposive sampling due to time and resource availability to collect data.

Meanwhile, simple random sampling was employed to select sample respondents. Smallholder farmers were the target group for the study. The sample size for this study was a function of the variability of the population characteristics (either homogenous or heterogeneous), time and resource availability. Based on these criteria, male (32) and female (28) totally 60 sample respondents were selected and interviewed from target area. The sampling covers from young (who has not married) up to the elders to collect information for meeting stated objective. Data collected through sample household interview were triangulated by using different data collection tools such as focus group discussion, key informant interview and observation.

Data analysis

After the collection of data to achieve stated objectives, gender analysis was used to analyze data gathered on gender differences and social relations to identify and understand the different roles, challenges and opportunities in the community. Both qualitative and quantitative tools were used to carry out data analysis of the gender issue in the community. Under the quantitative tools, descriptive analysis such as range, chart and percentage was utilized, whereas qualitative data were analyzed through narration. Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 20 was utilized to carry out analysis for quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio economic characteristics of the sample respondents

Among the sample respondents, 53.3% of the respondents were male, whereas 46.7% of them were female. The minimum and maximum age of the respondent was 18 and 82, respectively having the mean age of 42.82 years. Number of family members ranged from 1 to 10 and mean of 5.38. The marital status of sample respondent was single (8.3%), married (88.3%) and divorced (3.3%). From the total sample of the respondents, 73.3% of them were illiterate and the rest of them were literate. The sample respondents reported that they were engaged in different income generating activities in their community such as farming (86.7%), private employment (6.7%) and other like petty trade and private guard (6.7%).

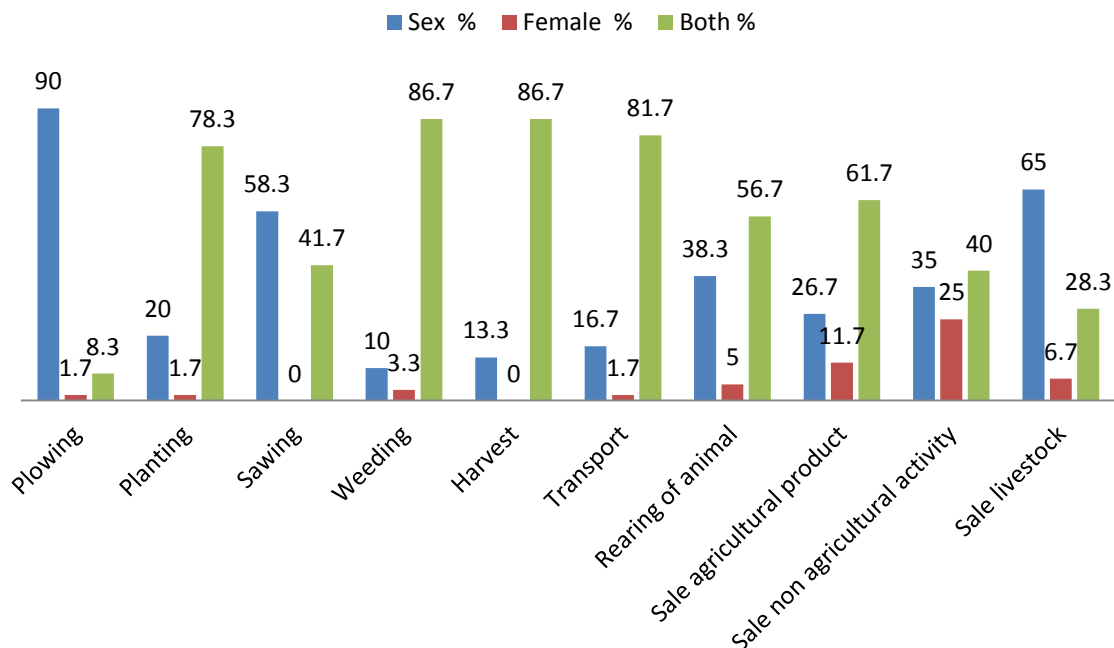


Figure 1. Productive activity performed by both sex.

Gender role (division of labor)

Productive role

The productive activities were considered as income generating activities in the community. The different studies revealed that, it was considered as the men activity/role (Baden, 2013; Bekhouche et al., 2013). In the study area, sample respondents were engaging in different income generating activities to improve their livelihood. In the household, men and women have different roles with different degree of participation. Activities or role performed by men and women in the study area were plowing, planting, sawing, weeding, harvesting, transporting, rearing of animal, selling agricultural products like crops and non-agricultural product like fire woods and livestock. The result of the study indicates that men mostly did activities such as plowing, sawing and selling of livestock. As indicated in Figure 1, the sample respondents said that men performed plowing (90%), sawing (58.3%) and selling of livestock (65%) compared to women. Meanwhile, activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, transporting, rearing of animals, selling of agricultural and non-agricultural products were major activities done by both men and women in the study area. The sample respondents said that activities such as planting (78.3%), weeding (86.7%), harvesting (86.7%), transporting (81.7%), rearing of animals (56.7%), selling of agricultural product (61.7%) and non-agricultural product (40.0%) were done by both men and women.

According to Bassazenew (2008), the rigidity of

gender division of labour was seen in productive activities like plowing, sowing and applying fertilizer and there were some activities, which were done minimal involvement of women in farm activities due to domestic workload, cultural norm and beliefs and their perception. According to (Care, n.d), men in Ethiopia, did alone plowing only from the agricultural activities. In the study area, there was rigidity in productive activities like sowing and harvesting activities, that is, women participation on these activities was minimal (Figure 1).

Reproductive role

The activities, which were done mostly in home and that time consuming, were so called reproductive activities. Most scholars argue that it was considered women activities (Baden, 2013; Bekhouche et al., 2013; Cohen, 2004; Ferrant, Pesando and Nowacka, 2014; Sikod, 2007; Standing, 2008). These include washing cloth, brining water, preparing food, clothing, medication and schooling, cooking, cleaning and nursing activity. The study revealed that women performed most activities such as washing cloth (76.7%), brining water (68.3%), preparing food (75%), cooking (78.3%) and cleaning activity (78.3%). However, the participation of men in reproductive activities was below average. The sample respondents said that activities like clothing (46.7%), medication (63.3%), schooling (76.7%) and nursing (48.3%) were done by both sex (Figure 2).

The domestic gender division of labor varies based on geographic regions, household income and societies.

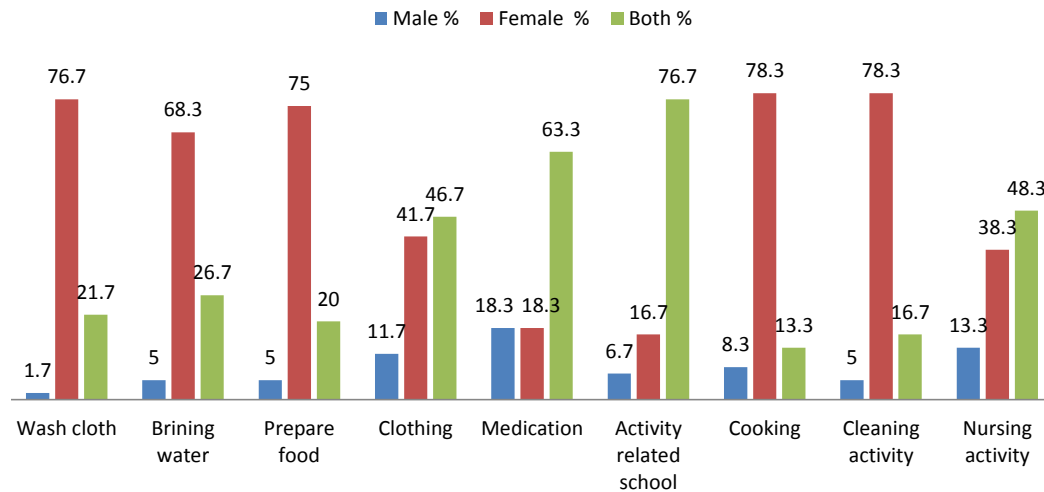


Figure 2. Reproductive activities performed by both sex.

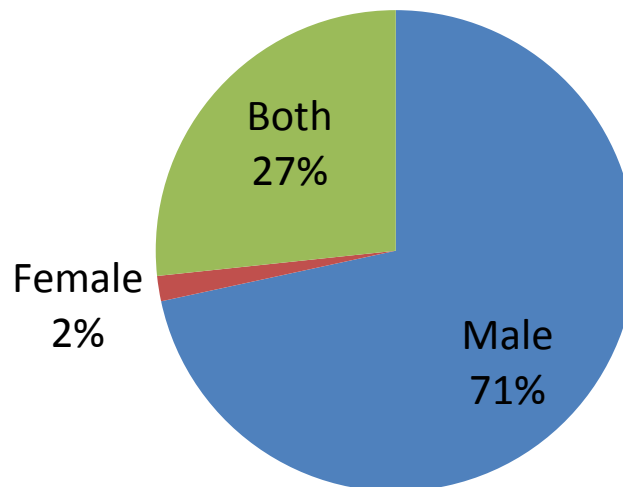


Figure 3. Community management activities performed by both sex in percentage.

Nevertheless, around the world, unpaid work/domestic works were mostly considered as female responsibility. They also spend more time on domestic work compared to the male (Ferrant et al., 2014). In line with these in the study area, reproductive role was assumed the task of women and the participation of men were minimal but not rigid. In contrast to these, study conducted by Bassazene (2008) revealed that the household division of labor in domestic task was mostly rigid.

Community management

In the study area activities such as *Idir*, *Ekub*, *Debo*, wedding, funeral and security were considered as community management activities. Such activities were

the most crucial for the social developments of the community. Being member of institution has paramount role in building human capacity in management and administration but women have no chance to join institution compared to men (Coles and Mitchell, 2011). The study also revealed that sample respondents said that male (71%), both male and female (27%) and female (2%), did the community management activities. This shows that the participation of women in social development aspect was low (Figure 3).

Gender based discriminatory practice

Both men and women are victims of gender-based violence's as result of socio cultural factors. However,

women are the primary victims at household and societal level. For a long period women were faced with unconstructive effect through customary practices like dominance of men (Baden, 2013). In this study, 45% of the sample respondents said that there was gender based discriminatory practice in the study area. Some of the gender based discriminatory practices in the area were patriarchal system, low payment with same activity, and design of the technologies. According to the study, 31.75% of the sample respondents said that there was patriarchal system in the study area. However, 68.3% of the sample respondents said that there was no practice of patriarchal system. Many individuals argued that patriarchal system was manifested by paying fewer amounts of birr by same work. The study found no consensus about payment. For example, 71.7% of the sample respondents said that there were individuals that receive low payment. On the other hand, 28.3% of the respondents said that there was no individual that receive low payment. Meanwhile, more than half, that is, 55.8% of respondents said that females were receiving low payment. The sample respondents said that male (18.6%) and both male and female (25.6%) received low payment. In the study area, the designed technologies were not suited to physical condition of male and female. Among the sample respondents, 95% of them said that technology did not suit physical condition of males and females. Especially, technologies did not suit with the physical condition of the female farmers. During the focus group discussion and key informant interviews, participants mentioned some of the gender based discriminatory practice such as men perceive themselves as superior to women, have more land ownership authority, low participation women in meetings, work discrimination, cultural belief such as women should not go outside and female genital mutilation. However, communities with government have used some methods to avoid unethical and immoral activities through government punishment, applying affirmative action and consultation. In most cases, women were faced with problems in the community during their live with their male counterpart.

As discussed previously in Africa particularly Ethiopia there were different gender based problems like stereotyped perception of society towards women which impedes social and economic development (Bayeh, 2016). Besides, deep-rooted patriarchal social norms, religious practices, biased attitudes and traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) were different challenges that encountered women in the rural community of Ethiopia (Care, n.d).

Gender and rural youth challenges and opportunities in the community

Challenges were problems face by smallholder farmers to

improve their livelihood. The major common challenges that faced both men and women farmers in study area include shortage of land, shortage of access to credit, shortage of technology, low literacy, less cash to pay for transport and religious reasons. According to the study result, shortage of land (90%) and religious reasons (26.7%) were the most and least challenges in the study area, respectively.

Women play a significant role in different agricultural and non-agricultural activities (Harun, 2014). Even though, women participated in different activities, they were faced with challenge to access and control of resources such as land, financial credit and skills training (Care, n.d). Like other world, women in the study area were faced with different challenges while they were engaging in life improving activities. The study revealed that 68.3% of the sample respondents believed that rural women were exposed to various problems in the community. These include challenges such as shortage of time (53.3%) and lack of freedom to move out side community (45%). In addition to these, lack of access to education, workload related to household activities, unsustainable support from women's association/group, lack of access to get training services, mobility problem/fear of movement alone, feeling of inferiority and shortage of women empowerment training were common problems, which women encountered in the community.

Lack of land access and unemployment were the challenges that faced youths. Particularly, lack of land access made them away from an agricultural livelihood and outmigration (Bezu and Holden, 2014). Rural youth in the study area faced different challenges in their life. For instance, 81.7% of the sample respondents' revealed that rural youth was victims of different challenges. Among which lack of employment, shortage of land, low opportunity for job, lack of initial budget, lack of empowerment by government, lack of coordination among youth, lack of credit and diseases like HIV AIDS were the common challenges for both male and female youth. Besides, lack of participation in training, small land size, lack of productive land, shortage of enough money for more production, lack of technical training and less payment were the common problems that faced rural youth. However, mostly usage of drug, alcoholic drinks and addiction to alcohol were the major challenges for male youths. During the key informant interview, particularly for female youth attending school due to farness and work burden by family were the major challenges.

Even if there are several challenges, there also some favourable conditions that help farmer to improve their livelihood. These include the existence of formal and informal group, good loan repayment rate, meeting place, skills and indigenous knowledge. According to the study result, these opportunities varied based on the respondent response, that is, existence of formal group (51.7%), good loan repayment rate (38.3%), informal

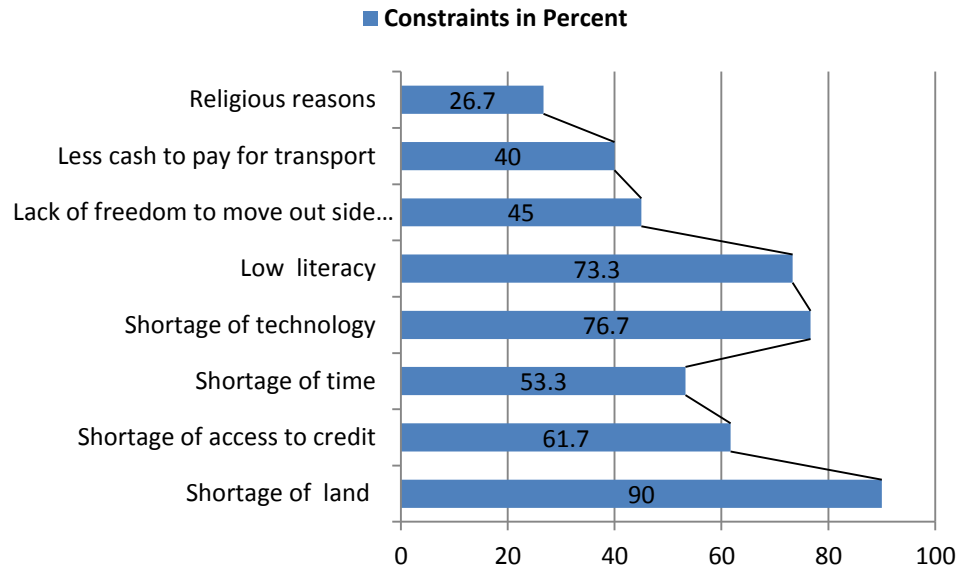


Figure 4. Gender challenges (in percentage).

group (85%), meeting place (80%), existing skills (73.3%) and indigenous knowledge (63.3). Hence the existence of the informal group (85%) and good loan repayment rate (38.3%) were the most and least opportunity in the study area, respectively (Figure 4).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

According to the result of the study, in most households the division of labor between men and women was not equal. Men predominantly did some activities and women performed most of them, and only a few of the tasks were done by both sexes. Most productive activities were done by both sexes. However, role played by women alone compared with men were small. Some productive activities like sawing were done by men alone. Mostly, the reproductive activities were under the shoulder of women. Men did community management activities and this may be because women were so busy with reproductive activities and this is due to cultural barriers. According to the study, some of the sample respondents reported that there was no gender based discriminatory practice, though some of them mentioned gender based discriminatory practice such as patriarchal system, low payment with same activity, and design of technologies. Respondents also reported the existence of different challenges that inhibit them from improving their livelihood; among which shortage of land was the major one. Lacks of access to education, workload, shortage of women empowerment training were also the challenges that women face. In the study area, rural youth were faced with challenges such as lack of employment, shortage of land, disease like HIV and AIDs, lack of

technical training, work burden and alcohol addiction. The existence of formal and informal group and indigenous knowledge were opportunities that existed in the community. Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were given:

1. The research result indicated that the contribution of men and women in the division of labor was unequal. Hence, governmental and nongovernmental organization should provide awareness creation training for both sexes of the community.
2. Gender discriminatory practice and challenges that face community vary from individual to individual. Therefore, concerned bodies should organize experience-sharing event among households and best practice should be scale out.
3. Shortage of land was the most severe challenge for the community especially rural youths. Hence, the government should reform the land to benefit landless youth.
4. Government should also formulate policy related to usage of drug by youth to reduce addiction.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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