

Rural Women Participation in Decision-Making Power and Natural Resource Management in Ethiopia: A Case of Delanta District, South Wello Zone

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Abstract

Women encompass half of the world's population but not have position to control the benefits of economic resources. This study has to investigate rural women's decision-making power in resources employment in Ethiopia the case of Delanta District. The survey was conducted in six rural districts from 36 rural districts. The interviewee respondents were selected using stratified random sampling techniques by elevation and gender based and then 75% women and 25% men households picked up in their dwellers. The data collection tools comprised of questionnaires, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observation and enumeration in fieldwork. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using percentage, mean score, cumulative frequency, standard deviation, χ^2 test, t-test and SPSS. As the results have shown, women have primary roles in natural resources management but in secondary role for decision-making power in the study area. Major economic sectors were extremely decided by either husbands or shared. Of course, some exceptions, women are able to make decision on economic and production of which sale of poultry (81%), dairy products (69%) and household items (68%). Women predominantly performed milk processing (83%), barn cleaning (61%) and care of newborn animals (52%), cooking (94%), grinding (88.5%), fetching (80%) and collecting fuel-wood (75%). Despite their roles in agricultural sectors, women have marginalized for so long. They have limited access and control of agricultural products, extension services and information. This is due to social, cultural and work discrimination which, in turn, have made women to lose self-confidence in decision-making power. Thus, to strengthen and develop women with economic, social and political affairs, federal and regional governments, and other concerned bodies should take appropriate measures to ensure women equality with men, without any discrimination. Women should also participate at all stages of project planning, implementation and assessment.

Keywords: *Decision-Making; Gender; Labor Work; Natural Resource; Women Participation*

Introduction

Women have been ascertained to play a very significant role in national development but it is rather unfortunate that women are still being treated as second fiddle while in some communities they are relegated even to the extent that they are not allowed to hold any key positions and yet the bulk of household responsibilities rest on them [1]. For instance, in communities where there are gender discrimination women are the worst hit of any program or project aimed at boosting the standard of living of the people. In some part of Asia and other developing countries, young females are often exposed to excess poverty-induced nutritional and health risk within household and these appears to be one factor explaining the missing millions of women.

Women in developing countries play significant roles in maintaining the three pillars of food security-food production, economic access to available food, and nutritional security. According to IFAD [2] report, in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, food production could increase by 10 to 20% if women faced fewer constraints. The empowerment of women and equal opportunities for both sexes

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are fundamental in reducing poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Still, they play these roles in the face of enormous social, cultural and economic constraints. One key reason for this is that agricultural policies are simply not supporting smallholder farmers. Even where smallholder farmers do get support, a huge gender gap exists in terms of what women receive in relation to men [3].

Once upon a time males made all the important decisions in marital relationships and females dutifully complied with whatever the males wished, that is not the dominant pattern in contemporary world marital relationships even in USA and European countries. Although men are generally observed to exercise more power than women within the marriage relationship today, more marital relationships in the U.S. are striving for an equalitarian pattern—a balance of power and decision-making [1,4]. The equalitarian marital dyad, which exists in many marriages today, represents the opposite join extreme. In this type of relationship the decision-making is shared by the marital partners, with some being made together and others *delegated* by one partner to the other [5]. Women's contribution to local and community development is significant, but rural women everywhere are in a minority in decision-making and planning, particularly at regional and national levels. This is due to women's multiple roles and workload but is also due to the persistence of traditional views about women's and men's roles in society [6].

Agricultural development is a complex process and a challenging one as well. Smallholder farmers currently produce 90% of food in Africa and around half of all food worldwide [7]. Across the developing world, women account for 60 to 80% of these farmers [8]. The sustainable production of food is the pillar of food security. Women account for 70 to 80% of household food production in Sub-Saharan Africa, 65% in Asia, and 45% in Latin America and the Caribbean [9]. Women work longer than men to achieve the same level of living. There is evidence that, as women participate more in market work under pressure of poverty their domestic labor is not substantially reassigned to men. Rural women farmers play a vital role in food production to sustain their food security. They account for 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, and 100% of those who process basic foodstuffs and they undertake from 60 to 90% of the marketing [10].

According to the EBC 14 August [11] stated that in Ethiopia over eight million people currently face food insecurity, and the challenge of meeting their food and nutritional requirements is to become greater in the years to the front. One untapped source of agricultural growth to help meet these needs could lie in reducing the bias against women in agriculture. The set of gender as a fundamental issue in assuring food security both at national, household and individual levels cannot be overstated.

Statement of the Problem

Women are altruistic, putting their children and household food security first, engaging in food crop production for subsistence using unimproved technology [12]. However, they are marginalized from education, occupation, political decision-making power, the distribution of resources, wealth as well as the enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family and in public life [13]. Rural women play a central role in the economy of the rural society. They take different responsibilities and roles, such as producers of crops, ranching and keeping poultry, children education, housekeeping, supervising family economy and managing it, collecting firewood and weaving carpet, illiterate women who have no possibility to utilize mass media properly, would not be able to do their duties and roles, and so, would not be effective in developing rural societies [14]. Rural women divide their time between agricultural and domestic tasks and spend about 16 hour per day in such work. In rural areas women undertake 53% of all workload and devote 20% more time than men for work [15,16].

The decision-making power of women is a basic process underlying all functions of family resource management. Since decision is universal in all human endeavors, the process is vital to all social concerns and it is not limited to management. Women are twice as likely as men to be involved in agriculture related activities [17]. Agricultural development must address gender in order to achieve significant impact in the reduction of hunger and poverty. This will be achieved if opportunities for women to participate in income-generating activities, learning and decision making processes continue to increase. Women from poor households engage in a variety of income-

generating and expenditure-saving activities. In some cases, these activities supplement the contribution by males while in others they are the primary or the sole source of household livelihoods [13].

Women's lower social power and status, the inability to be in charge of the remuneration of profitable assets imposes external constraints in shaping their life patterns. Among the majority of the world's population, women receive only a small proportion of opportunities and benefits for their work than their male colleagues. For instance, women receive only 5% of extension services in many developing countries [3] and 12% of some agricultural training in European countries [4]. Women farmers, have less access than men to productive resources and government support, even though they make up the majority of farmers. This has a crippling impact on women's ability to lead empowered lives and achieve basic human rights. In the world, women's decision-making power may be limited and male family members often have the primary say in matters related to finances, freedom of movement, children's education, health care seeking behavior and the use of family planning methods [18]. Freedom in decision-making is a significant aspect of an individual's autonomy, empowerment and personal freedom. It comprises the ability to take decisions and to act accordingly in order to achieve personal wishes, desires or goals [19].

Gender differences become clearer when looking at women's workloads. Women, especially in developing countries have very high workload in food production compared to men and in decision-making power they are often subordinate to men. It is estimated that women provide 85 to 90 percent of the time spent on household food processing and preparation across a wide range of countries [16,20,21]. Women are also usually responsible for child care and household chores; depending on the household structure and size, these tasks may be extremely time intensive.

According to ILO [22] and World Bank [23] reports, there is no country in the world in which women's quality of life is equal to that of men. Along with the complex measures that include among others longevity, health status, educational opportunities, employment, political powers and property rights, women are always disadvantaged. There is a need to acknowledge the fact that improving women's decision-making power relative to men's within households would lead to improvements in a variety of well-being outcomes for members. It is observed that women make dominant contributions in economic, social and political developments. However, women are placed at the bottom stratum in the society with regard to employment, income, education and political participation [7].

Domestic violence continues to pose the greatest obstacle to women's participation in decision-making. The existing statistics are still inadequate, but the available data indicate that, worldwide, one out of every ten women is or has been the victim of violence at the hands of her partner. Based on internationally compiled statistics, it is estimated that 2% of the victims of domestic violence are men and 75% are women, while the remaining 23% are cases of reciprocal violence [24]. Whatever the culturally ideal position of men and women may be, major economic and social transformations taking place in the globalized world are rapidly and substantially changing household formations and patterns of obligations [25].

Ethiopian women, like women elsewhere, are not treated equal to men. Their rights over the management of household property depend on the form of marriage. Household property may be pertaining to the production and/or may be to the domestic field. According to the Ethiopian constitution [26] Article 35 the civil code states that women in Ethiopia have equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. However, in practical application men and women have no equal access to work, payment, social insurance, education, leisure and rest. The aforementioned moments are also more challenged the Ethiopian women farmers. They have constraints including lack of land for farming, limited access in communication between men and women and control of agricultural products, credit facilities, skill training, education, extension services and information, their contribution is not appreciated. In this sense, women are negatively influenced by traditional pattern and economic policies. Most of women's work lies in the margin of major development efforts and programs. Hitherto without the complementarities of women's work, such efforts and programs would barely work even though men own such assets and inputs as land, credit, seeds, livestock, technology and infrastructure.

As part of the Ethiopian women, the Delanta District women in South Wello Zone share the female subordination and the overall problems that are faced by Ethiopian women. Women’s work burdens have increased following the out-migration of men seeking other income earning opportunities, and as access to water and fuel has deteriorated with environmental change. These problems will be analyzed in this study from the viewpoint of a population-geographic analysis in conjunction with the necessary solutions. This paper would hence briefly assess the rural Ethiopian women’s crucial roles in agro-economic development both as food producers and providers and as promoters of sustainable agricultural productivity in the country at large and the family in particular. Besides, this study deals about some of the major problems that women face while promoting agricultural activities due to their subordinate position in rural Ethiopia in general and the study area in particular.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to assess the overall role of women in decision-making power and resources control as well as comprehend the major constraints to their empowerment. In line with the general objective, the specific objectives of the study would be as follows:

- To assess the status of rural women in decision-making power and resource employment;
- To evaluate the major limitations faced by women involvement in decision-making power and resource processes.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the paper outlined the following research questions:

- What are the major roles of women in decision-making power and resources management?
- What are the main constraints of women participation in decision-making power and resource employment?

Materials and Methods

Description of the study area

Delanta district lies between 11° 29' 29.82" to 11° 41' 25.53" N and 39° 02' 19.19" to 39° 14' 05.04" E with an altitude ranging from 1500 to 3819 meter above sea level at the bottom of the valleys (Gosh Meda) and the top of the mountain (Mekelet), respectively. It is located about 499 Km from north of Addis Ababa, 98 Km northwest of Dessie town and 104 Km west of Woldia town (Figure 1).

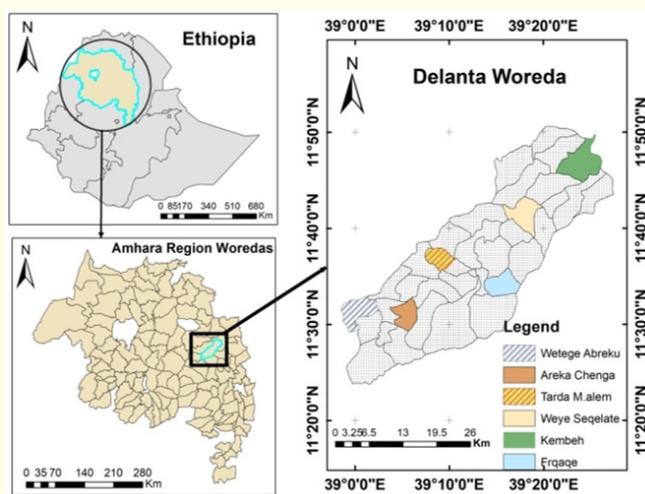


Figure 1: Location map of the study area.

Climate of the study area

According to traditional agro-ecological classification of Ethiopia, the study area falls in all the categories that basically correlate with elevation. These are Kolla (lowland), WoinaDega (midland), Dega (highland) and Wurch (very highland) (Table 1).

Traditional ACZ	Kolla	WoinaDega	Dega	Wurch
Elevation (m)	1500 - 1800	1800 - 2400	2400 - 3500	> 3500
Temperature (°C)	18 - 20	15 - 18	10 - 15	< 10
Rainfall (mm)	300 - 900	500 - 1500	700 - 1700	> 900
Dominant crop	Sorghum, maize	Teff, maize, wheat	Barley, wheat	Barley

Table 1: Traditional agro-ecological zones (ACZ) of the northern Ethiopian highlands.
 Source: Adapted from Getahun [27].

The climate of the area is characterized by dry seasons (from October to February cold-dry and March to June hot-dry) and wet season (from mid-June to September). The rainfall pattern is bimodal with peak periods from mid-July to early September. The mean annual rainfall of the study area is about 812 mm of which 75 - 80% is received in summer (Kiremt) and 25-20% in the spring (Belg) seasons. The mean annual minimum and maximum temperatures are 6.8 and 19.6°C, respectively. Peoples living on upper topographic position their farming activities primarily depend on Belg rains, while those on middle and lower topographic positions rely on both the Kiremt and Belg rains. However, there is small, erratic and unreliable rainfall and the area is prone to sporadic droughts.

The major landforms of the District comprise extensive plateaus, chains of hills with mountainous ridge, river-valleys and very deep gorges at the boundary. It is oval in shape with dendritic drainage pattern, steep ridges, and numerous convex hills at the plain area and gorges at the boundary. Soils of the study area are influenced by topography with high surface runoff during the main rainy season. The soils are classified as Mazi-PellicVertisols, Mazi-Calcic Vertisols, HaplicCambisols and MollicLeptosols [28].

Land use systems and their coverage

According to WAOR [29], the total area of the District is 10,5678 ha stretching from lowland to highland, much of it being in the mid-altitude ranges dominated by plateaus and all of them were covered by crops and other plants. Average land holding size is one hectare per household (0.75 ha for crop production and 0.25 ha for grazing). The land uses are both private (farming) and communal (grazing) land holdings. The general classification of the area is about 30% mountainous, 30% plains, 36.5% gorges and 3.5% other land features. The largest proportion of the land is currently unutilized which accounts about 45%. Cultivated and grazing lands are the major land use types in the area. Agriculture is the predominant economic sector which engaged over 95% of the population [29]. The overall farming system was mixed both livestock and crop production and characterized by subsistence natures. It is strongly oriented towards crop production to sustain farmers’ livelihoods and their major sources of traction for ploughing and threshing are oxen and horses. Crop residues and intensive grazing are major livestock feed resources in the area.

The common rain fed crops grown in the area are bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.), food barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.), faba bean (*Vicia faba* L.), lentil (*Lens culinaris* L.), grass pea (*Lathyrus sativus* L.), chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L.), teff (*Eragrostis tef* L.) and sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* (L.) Moench. The natural woodland and vegetations have disappeared due to increasing demand for fuel-wood, overgrazing and conversion into cultivated lands. There are small patches of remnant natural forests found on farm boundaries and around churches. Planted tree species like *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Cupressus lustanica*, *Acacia saligna* and *Acacia decurrens* are common around homesteads and conserved areas. The *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* plantations are replacing the cultivated lands and expanding on backyards, stream banks and gully sides.

Population size and distribution

As per CSA [30] revealed that Delanta was densely populated area its average family size of the district was five. The rural population constituted 96.5% of which males 51 and females 49% of the total population. The district was divided by 36 local districts those stretched into different agro-ecological zones. The people of the district did not usually produce food for year-round consumption even in a year considered to be normal climatically. This is due to over population, severe land degradation, land shortage and erratic rainfall.

Data sources and sampling techniques

The researcher was conducted in several of sources and tools for data collection including primary and secondary sources, pilot test and various types of data collection procedures.

Data types and sources

Both the primary and secondary data were considered for this study. The primary data was conducted through household surveys which were administered through field observations, questionnaires, formal interviews and focal group discussion with rural women, men, women affair office and other concerned authorities. For this purpose, questionnaires were developed and provided to all key respondents. Most of the items were close-ended and some open-ended questions were also included due to accomplish qualitative information on the attitudes, beliefs and practices of the people in general and women in particular. The secondary data from both published and unpublished documents of governmental and non-governmental organizations were dug out to supplement and strengthen the primary data. Historical, cultural, socio-economic backgrounds of the area were obtained by using secondary materials.

Pilot test and data collection procedure

To check the appropriateness of the items in the instrument and to make necessary correction on the feedbacks obtained from the respondents, pilot test was administered by taking five men and fifteen women. Based on the pre-test results, some improvements were made in preparing the final questionnaires. Finally, 360 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the key respondents and all of them were filled in and gathered.

Sampling techniques

The target populations were rural women and to know the attitudes of men towards women’s job 25% of the total population were considered men. The sample size was 300 rural households of which 75% of women. One of the motives of the survey was to investigate variation in the patterns of agricultural works and coping mechanisms based on agro-ecological variations. To this end, six local districts (Kebeles) were selected based on the above stated variations and to make the study manageable, 50 household was taken from each rural district using simple stratified random sampling techniques (Table 2).

Site name	NRP	Agro-ecological zone
Keda-Mistinkir	50	Kolla (Lowland < 2100m)
Kembehdega	50	Dega (Highland > 2700m)
Tsehaymewucha	50	Dega (Highland > 2700m)
Tardat-Medhanealem	50	Woina Dega (Midland b/n 2100 and 2700m)
Arka-Chinga	50	Woina Dega (Midland b/n 2100 and 2700m)
Wetege-Aberkut	50	Kolla (Lowland < 2100m)
Total	300	

Table 2: Site local of the study peasant associations.

Source: Based on Field Survey.

Methods of data analysis

The primary data have been analyzed and presented by using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The descriptive techniques include percentage, cumulative frequency, standard deviation, while the inferential statistical techniques used Chi-Square tests. The Chi-Square test was employed to see the association or homogeneity between the agro-ecological zones with reference to responses regarding agricultural works and coping strategies used by peasants during famine (scarcity of food) and its impacts.

Results and Discussion

Role of Rural Women in Decision-making power

The foundation of agriculture and agricultural development in developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa is rural development, without which all efforts at agricultural development will be useless. The majority of the farmers work at the subsistence, smallholder level, with intensive agriculture being uncommon. In Ethiopia, women are almost half of the population, but do not usually have saying in major decisions that are taken, not only in the households, but also at the national level-decisions that affect their lives and their relations with men. In the household, men and women are involved in different activities to ensure the availability of goods and services for family consumption and well-being. The gender division of labor in the households is the main economic strategy used to meet family basic needs for shelter, food, health, procreation and education. The nature of this division of labor is one that constrains development. These decisions shape the way the nation functions.

As the study indicates that part of the reason for the obscurity of women’s economic contribution comes from their failure to have an adequate say in decision-making process. Women lack secure access to land and are unable to provide the collateral that would secure access to credit for their independent agricultural activities. They are also ignored by service providers. This tradition is manifested in all walks of society life. Women in study area have the secondary role in deciding what crops to plant (12.5%), purchase of farm inputs (10.5%), sale and purchase of large livestock (31%), and sale and rent farmland (9%). These and other similar major economic decisions are either extremely dominated by husbands or are shared by both. Of course, there are some exceptions even in traditional times where women were able to make decision or influence the male’s decision on economic and production related matters. These are sale and purchase of poultry (80.5%), dairy products (68.5%) and household items (68%) like salt, pepper, kerosene. There is also limited access to modern improved technologies and their general circumstance does not always merit tangible investments in capital, inputs and labor (Table 3). As was contested by Sikod [31] in Cameroon and Rahman [32] in Nigeria, activities, resources and opportunities of people are significantly influenced by gender-that is, by the socio-economic and cultural dimension of being male or female. The different types of activities and tasks are generally allocated to women and men within the family in terms of subsistence production and production for the market. Although these activities may be different, they have a social connectedness. As change in the division of labor is one of the variables which influence decision-making power of women. For example, activities that confer more income earning power on women tend to increase their participation in decision-making in the household.

Types of activities	Male		Female		Male and Female	
	NRP	%	NRP	%	NRP	%
Types of crops to plant	223	62.0	45	12.5	92	25.5
Purchase of farm inputs	256	71.0	38	10.5	67	18.5
Purchase and sale: Cattle	94	26.0	31	8.5	236	65.5
Sheep/Goats	103	28.5	40	11.0	218	60.5
Equines families	131	36.5	41	11.5	187	52.0
Sale and purchase: Poultry	29	8.0	290	80.5	41	11.5
Dairy products	34	9.5	247	68.5	79	22.0
Sale and rent farm	103	28.5	32	9.0	225	62.5
Purchasing children’s materials	58	16.0	43	12.0	259	72.0
Spending family income	225	62.5	41	11.5	94	26.0
Purchase of household items	52	14.5	245	68.0	63	17.5

Table 3: Decisions on the amount of household unit expenses in the study area.

Source: Based on Field Survey; NRP: Number of Respondents.

Many family decisions focus on the quality of inter personal relationships and are concerned with strengthening bonds amongst individual family members. The family decision-making involves the utilization of goods or money. There are forces operating to diffuse the cohesiveness of the family as the lightly knit unit. This was the case when men had full control and women had no say about the organization of the family economy. As the survey shows, in Delanta District women cannot decide to sell animals or grains directly, but only through a man in consultation with him. The main constraints that hampered women’s decision-making power are lack of education and culture/custom which account for 91% of the total respondents in both cases, and burden of family responsibility is 61% (Table 4). In line with this, FAO [33] stated that the cultural set up of the society encourages women’s subordination and men’s superiority. Women decision-making in family finance and economic activities are limited to income generated from cottage production (handicrafts) and possibly to small income generating agricultural and related activities (poultry, dairy products, horticulture). As to observe the agro-ecological factors, there is no significant variation among the agro-ecology zones on women’s decision-making power in the study area (Table 4).

Types of activities	Dega		WoinaDega		Kolla		Total	
	NRP	%	NRP	%	NRP	%	NRP	%
Lack of education	113	93.6	112	93.4	101	84.0	325	90.8
Religious influence	5	3.8	6	5.0	43	36.2	54	15.0
Culture/custom constraints	103	86.7	109	90.8	115	96.5	328	91.0
Burden of family responsibility	60	50.0	79	65.8	79	66.2	218	60.7
Others (pregnancy, lactation)	38	31.7	28	23.3	29	24.0	95	26.3

Table 4: Major constraints of women decision-making power.
Source: Based on Field Survey and NRP: Number of Respondents.

Role of rural women in resource management

The term resource is a broad concept to define and refer to various aspects, but the interest of this study concentrates on farmland, agricultural output and household income. It is accepted that the decision-making process is a reflection of the resources control management. Traditionally, in all of Ethiopian indigenous cultures, public space is considered to be a male domain. Women have had little to say in public matters. They have virtually no decision-making powers with respect to resource distribution at the communal level. At the domestic level, however, women enjoy some limited decision-making (Table 5).

Types of income sources H		Dega (NRP = 120)		WoinaDega (NRP = 120)		Kolla (NRP = 120)		Total (NRP = 360)	
		W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H
Sale of crops/grains	No	89	31	107	13	113	7	308.0	52.0
	%	74.0	26.0	89.0	11.0	94.0	6.0	85.7	14.3
Sale of large animals	No	113	7	98	22	118	2	329.0	31.0
	%	94.0	6.0	82.0	18.0	98.0	2.0	91.3	8.7
Sale of small animals	No	26	94	20	100	12	108	59.0	301.0
	%	22.0	78.0	17.0	83.0	10.0	90.0	16.3	83.7
Sale of dairy products	No	17	103	12	108	36	84	65.0	295.0
	%	14.0	86.0	10.0	90.0	30.0	70.0	18.0	82.0
Sale of handicrafts	No	0	120	6	114	24	96	30.0	330.0
	%	0.0	100.0	5.0	95.0	20.0	80.0	8.3	91.7
Sale of local beer	No	0	120	0	120	0	120	0.0	360.0
	%	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Sale of fuel-wood	No	103	17	110	10	55	65	269.0	91.0
	%	86.0	14.0	92.0	8.0	46.0	54.0	74.7	25.3

Table 5: Family asset control in the sampled households.
Source: Based on Field Survey; H: Husband; NRP: Number of Respondents and W: Wife.

In both constitutions of the Derg regime [34] and of the FDRE [26], the state shall be the owner of all lands and people have the right to use, transfer, administer and control irrespective of sex differences. When we are talking about the land on a traditional or modern scale in Ethiopia, one thinks of the man on the front line. Women are in marginal positions with regards to access, decision and control of resources. Women also manage household consumption and food preparation as was also reported by Nahusenay and Tesfaye [35] and Doss., *et al.* [36], women face many constraints in the multiple activities they pursue—less land ownership, access to credit, extension and other services, and ability to hire labor. Too often, these constraints as well as women’s current and potential contributions to agricultural production go unrecognized.

The study showed that women have limited control over the outputs from their labor and therefore lack incentives to increase their production. The major income sources are decided/controlled by men/husbands in all agro-ecological zones while minor income sources by wives (women). The sale of cereal crops (87%) and large animals (89%) including cattle, sheep, goat and equines is dominantly the domain of husbands, while the sale of small animals like poultry and dairy products for women (84%) the total respondents in both cases, handicrafts 93% (cotton and wool spinning, grass basketry, pottery) and local liquor sales such as areky/katicala, tella (100%) are performed by women (Table 5). Women’s triple roles (reproduction, production and community roles) have been central to the critique of many women in development-inspired development programs where women’s work burdens actually increased. As was contested by Ogunlela and Mukhtar [37], the role that women play and their position in meeting the challenges of agricultural production and development are quite dominant and prominent. Their relevance and significance, therefore, cannot be overemphasized.

In case of fuel-wood sale activities, we can see it in two ways. Women undertake the majority of agricultural work in addition to domestic or reproductive work and have limited control over their own labor. As the interviewees stated that the amount of fuel-wood/construction materials is large in quantity like eucalyptus tree, the activity is done mostly by men, while less in amount and dry woods packed on human beings or animals, the activity is carried out either by men or women. Women play a vital role in advancing agricultural development and food security. They participate in many aspects of rural life – in paid employment, trade and marketing, as well as many unpaid activities, such as tending to crops and animals, collecting water and wood for fuel, and caring for family members.

In the study area, males have the right to register and control the land resources. Women are culturally denied such a right except when they divorce or become widows. In the survey, further attempt was made to understand the feeling of women regarding the existing land registration practice. None of the respondents have expressed dismay towards the tradition of registering land in the name of their husbands. Some aspect of resource control system is who holds the income derived from various sources. The various sources of income are identified and the respondents were asked to express who hold the money derived from this sources and who ought to hold. As was contested with Jackson [38] what evidence there is from sub-Saharan Africa (but also from elsewhere) indicates that the demands that husbands can make of wives are not open-ended; that marriage is not simply an institution for the exploitation of women; and that ‘back grounding shared interests can underestimate the extent to which women have rational commitments to household arrangements, even though they appear to be gender inequitable’

Major constraints for women’s decision making power

Women and men face different violence and risks, some of them explained by biological differences (sex), others resulting from socially constructed norms and expectations. In most societies, relations between men and women are largely unequal and hierarchical, often resulting in unequal access for women and girls to social goods and services (Table 6). Lack of empowerment negatively influences the health and well-being of millions of girls and women all over the world. Women are risk reluctant in their economic undertakings and constrained in taking advantage of new opportunities, including new markets in the agricultural sector, by their limited educational background, their poor networks and their mobility restrictions. In most societies, reproductive tasks or tasks related to child bearing and care and maintenance of the household (cooking, fetching water and firewood) are assigned to women. Besides, women also manage community resources while men participate in formal community politics.

Types of constraints	Low		Moderate		High	
	NRP	%	NRP	%	NRP	%
Educational level -Illiterate	-	-	18	9.0	182	91.0
Poor access to farm information-women are less informed than men	33	16.7	70	35.0	97	48.3
Traditional habit/cultural	42	20.8	83	41.7	75	37.5
Women are only subordinate to male counterparts	25	12.5	60	30.0	115	57.5
Low self-confidence of women in making farm decisions	10	5.0	38	19.2	152	75.8
Lack of knowledge about farming	28	14.2	55	27.5	117	58.3
Political participation	153	76.5	28	14.0	19	9.5
Domestic violence	131	65.5	43	21.5	26	13.0

Table 6: Major social constraints against women’s involvement in decision-making power.

Source: Based on Field Survey; NRP: Number of Respondents.

Empowerment in this context has multiple facets: it refers to autonomy and decision-making power over health, access to and control over resources are low such as educational level-Illiterate (91%), women are only subordinate to male counterparts (58%), lack of adequate professional training such as access to farm information -women are less informed than men (48.3%), lack of knowledge about farming (58.3%) and low self-confidence of women in making farm decisions (76%), low political participation (77%) in the study area. As was contested by WHO [19], gender inequities determine much about the health risks a woman faces in her life, her knowledge, her vulnerability, personal resilience, capacity, self-confidence and access to social support systems which help her to deal with health problems as they arise. For instance, inadequate access to education for women leads to diminished social and economic opportunities, and as a result, women’s access to cash income in many countries is limited. Women’s economic activity rate is low as compared to men. Moreover, limitations on physical mobility of women and girls and restrictions on women’s decision-making and autonomy provide obstacles for women and girls to effectively access and use health care services.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The majority of the farmers work at the subsistence and smallholder level with intensive agriculture. Women in study area who accounts 49% almost half of the population but they have limited control and put the secondary levels of the deciding-making power about the natural resources utilization. The major income sources are decided/controlled by men (husbands) in all agro-ecological zones the sale and rent of farmlands, the purchase of farm inputs, the sale and purchase of large animals [cattle, sheep, goat and equines], the sale of eucalyptus tree, crops to plant, and the sale of cereal crops that affect their lives and their relations with men and therefore lack incentives to increase their production. The disparities of gender in terms of work opportunity, income generation, social network services, agricultural extension training, education, Kebele leaders and decision-making power are excluded women in the district. Surprisingly, among 36 Kebeles (rural district) in the study area, there is no woman in Kebele leadership like chairman, vice chairman and secretary. Such exclusions are related with cultural taboos, backward technologies and partisan religions. For example, women do not plough with oxen and men do not cook their food. These are taboos laid against women and men.

Women are unable to voice their specific requirements even though women are responsible for caring their family members and maintaining their homes; they make them indispensable roles for managing natural resources [water resource, forest/fuel wood, fodder and land resources] and have more closer to these natural resources rather than other members of the community, their access to these resources is limited. They are also denied full access to loans, education and information. As a result showed, women’s contribution to natural resources management is undoubtedly enormously significant, while sometimes their contributions are difficult to quantify with

any accuracy. Because invariably women are more involved in unpaid activities like tending to animals, processing and preparing food, collecting fuelwood and fetching water, caring family members and maintaining their homes, and engaging in seasonal and part-time work activities. In general women are conservationists and sustainers of the natural environment in the area.

Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Therefore, recognition and empowerment of women in these and many other roles could be accelerated the conservation and proper utilize of natural resources. Moreover, a comprehensive solution should be built to avoid the existing cultural corruption on women involvements in the development and natural management. The policy-makers design a transparent and open policy structure including women utilizations. The governments, private sectors, and other concerned bodies prepare awareness creation programs to give accreditations for their indispensable labors and to share their burden in agricultural labor force and household activities.

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