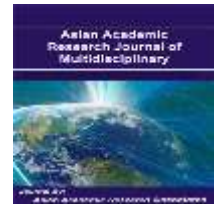




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**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING GENDER
MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN FOUR
SELECTED BUREAUS OF OROMIA**
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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to assess the opportunities and challenges of implementing gender mainstreaming in four selected bureaus of Oromia. Document analysis and key informant interviews with gender focal persons and experts were used to collect data. The study showed that there was a huge gap between men and women in participating and getting benefit from various development activities of the region before the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in all sectors following the formulation of the 1995 Women's policy of the region and other subsequent legislations, programs and projects. Hence, various institutional and practical measures were taken to mainstream gender in the studied sectors. Gender mainstreaming issues are incorporated in the policies, organizational structure, various development programs and projects of the four sectoral bureaus in order to ensure gender equality between men and women in contributing and benefiting from development activities of the region. With the attempts made so far, women's participation in and benefit from education, health and economically gainful agricultural activities have been increasing from time to time. For instance, the percentage of female student's educational participation and completion at all school levels have shown dramatic improvement compared to the situation before 1995 Women's Policy formulation and other subsequent institutional and practical measures taken. Similar changes have been brought in the health and agricultural sectors. The study also identified the availability of various regional gender sensitive policies, legislations, programs, stakeholders, improvement in societal perception on the issues of gender equality and availability of natural resources in the region as the major opportunities for gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, poverty, less number of women on decision making positions and inadequate knowledge about gender mainstreaming among implementers are identified as the major challenges.

Key terms: Gender, Mainstreaming, Opportunities, Challenges, Oromia

Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is a theoretical concept that constitutes feminist theories; it is also a practice because it is a policy strategy to achieve gender equality and to tackle gender insensitive development processes (Walby, 2004; ECOSOC, 1997; Sedibelwana, 2008). Gender mainstreaming has become an international concern rooted in development policies, and adopted by the UN at the 1995 conference on women in Beijing (Walby, 2004). Since then UN member states and governments around the world have adopted it as a development strategy. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality. (ECOSOC, 1997). Different institutions ('National Gender Machinery') were established to ensure gender equality through implementing gender mainstreaming (Hassim, 2003). Generally, gender mainstreaming tends to ensure the concerns of both men and women in all activities of policies and programmes in socio-economic and political spheres (Sedibelwana, 2008, p. 1; MoA, 2011). The concern of gender mainstreaming into all policies and programmes has been repeatedly reaffirmed by UN (ECOSCO, 2011).

Effects of gender mainstreaming for achieving gender equality may be affected by the type of models selected for intervention. Walby (2004) identified three possible models for implementing gender mainstreaming as a strategy. The first model enables women's engagement in previously male domains so as to ensure sameness, and the existing male norm remains the standard. The second model seeks equal valuation of women's and men's contributions maintaining the existing gender segregated societal structures and existing differences. The third looks into restructuring the existing gender relationship through a new standard for both men and women. This is the transformation of gender relations. However, Rees (1998) questions the appropriateness of the first and second models to constitute gender mainstreaming for their inadequacy to respond issues associated with masculinity and femininity. For Booth (2003), the three are complementary rather than mutually exclusive because one is essential for successful achievement of the other. In this study, the theoretical framework of gender

mainstreaming in Ethiopia/Oromia will be analyzed against the existing socio-cultural, economic and political conditions.

Statement of the problem

Like women in other parts of the world, Ethiopian women had been victims of gender discrimination and inequalities and denied recognition for long regardless of their significant contributions in social, economic and political spheres (FDRE, 2006; FDRE, 1998; MOWA, 2006; MoA, 2011). Ethiopian Society of Population Studies (2008) based on its analysis of 2005 DHS data reported that women have less educational access and attainment, limited media access, lower economic status; suffer from harmful cultural practices such as genital mutilation, rape, early marriage, abduction; and experience sexual violence particularly in rural Ethiopia. As a result, it suggests women specific, region/culture-specific and gender sensitive rural development programs in order to be effective in mainstreaming gender. This is important because gender is culture specific in itself.

The problem of gender inequality and is quite relevant to Ethiopia whereby patriarchy is dominant and women are given lower positions (Ethiopian Society of Population Studies, 2008). The issue of gender equality has been attempted to be addressed in Ethiopia since the time of Imperial regime though on varying degrees. Non-governmental sectors were the main actors during the Imperial and Derg regimes and Ethiopia achieved the first policy on women in 1993. The Notional Policy on Women in 1993 has shown government's commitment to ensure gender equality which was also included in the Federal Constitution of 1995. In addition, Ethiopia has adopted UN's 1995 (Beijing) Gender Mainstreaming and decided to formulate a National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAP-GE) (MOWA, 2006). The Government of Ethiopia has also included NAP-GE into a Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) to ensure gender equality in the poverty reduction efforts (MoA, 2011). Following this, different sectors like HIV/AIDS (UN 2011), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE, 1994), and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA, 2011) among others have attempted to mainstream gender issues into their development plans. The

sectors also have offices deal with gender mainstreaming concerns within their ministries so as to effectively contribute to the sustainable development of the country and ensure gender equality. UN recognizes that incorporation of gender and HIV/AIDS issues into plans is emphasized by government (UN, 2011). It also reported that good results were accomplished in raising gender awareness and empowering women.

As gender inequality is historically rooted and structurally inbuilt, gender mainstreaming may not smoothly reach to its end of ensuring gender equality. Even the concept of gender (and its mainstreaming) is not easily understood in the country programme and it can be mistakenly interpreted as women specific concern (UN, 2011). Although one cannot deny the possible existence of opportunities to effectively implement it, threatening factors are expected because of different nature of gendered inequalities (Pradhan, 2004). Getachew (2009) states that implementation of gender mainstreaming involves challenging status quo and changing policies and institutions, adjustment to the attitudes of individuals, values, and organization so as to actively promote gender equality. Therefore, gender mainstreaming need to be understood as complex, multidimensional, and long process.

Therefore, this study has looked into the major achievements of Bureau of Oromia Women and Children's efforts of implementing gender mainstreaming as well as the possible threats to its effectiveness. The bureau is responsible to follow the implementation of the strategy by different sectors at regional level. In this regard, the conceptualization of gender and gender mainstreaming, approaches in the implementation of gender mainstreaming, outcomes, and unfilled gaps were examined. In addition to the aforementioned bureau, three more bureaus namely, Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Education, and Bureau of Health, were included in the study. These bureaus were purposively selected because of their significance on gender matters in general as well as relatively higher attention given to the sectors. Flinton., eta al., (2008) state that regardless of the existence of suitable laws to ensure gender equality in Ethiopia and regions (Afar and Oromia), property rights of women is less than that of men because of

different practical barriers at different levels. They found that property division among men and women is highly affected by cultural traditions such as marriage patterns and inheritance rules. The challenges include structural/institutional, community, interpersonal/relational, and personal/individual levels of stakeholders in the matter. Sectoral variation of such possible obstacles in implementing gender mainstreaming is explored. Hence comprehensive assessment of the opportunities and challenges of gender mainstreaming is presented unlike the fragmented works which had been sector-specific.

Even though a number of studies dealt with gender differences and inequalities in different regions and some at country level have been conducted, it is important to examine culture or region specific matters of gender mainstreaming. This study attempts to analyze the outcome of gender mainstreaming strategy since its adoption into Ethiopian Development Policy focusing on its major achievements and challenges in Oromia. Factors of success and failures were identified.

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to assess the opportunities and challenges of implementing gender mainstreaming in Oromia region. The specific objectives include:

- To examine the extent of incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the implementations of different sectors
- To pin point the major opportunities in implementing gender mainstreaming
- To identify the main challenges that implementing gender mainstreaming have been facing
- To identify sectors that have success or limitations in implementing gender mainstreaming plans
- To evaluate the theoretical framework and implications of gender mainstreaming in the context of Oromia

Materials and Methods

Study Area and Data Collection Methods

This study was conducted in Oromia National Regional State in 2012/13. Qualitative research approach was used to explore the socio-cultural and political aspects of gender mainstreaming. That is, how socio-cultural factors affect gender relationship and gender mainstreaming were explored specific to the Oromo society. In addition, the way political environment have influenced those issues are also best understood qualitatively. Historical aspect of gender is also understood through qualitative analysis of persistence and challenge, hence, opportunities and challenges of gender mainstreaming. Expertise and officers' experience and feeling who are very closer to implementation of the strategy are better explored through qualitative approach. Quantitative research approach was used to analyze the number of achievements and failures in implementing gender mainstreaming. Numerical accomplishments against the initial plans to measure effectiveness of different sectors in achieving objectives set at regional levels are also well manipulated though quantitative research approach.

A combination of documentary analysis, in-depth key informant interview and focus group discussion (FGD) were employed. The key informant interview and FGD were used to collect information from gender expertise and officials on individual and in group setting respectively. Their experience, feelings and meanings they attach to gender mainstreaming were explored. Information about primarily concerns, challenges faced, major achievements and lessons learned were gathered through this method. The researchers are aware of the limitation of secondary sources as such information/data are gathered for official purposes different from this research topic. Yet we believe that the method provides fertile evidence and therefore dependable if used with primary sources to substantiate the mentioned limitation and to avoid ambiguity that may arise in using the official sources. Finally, these methods were triangulated to make use of the advantage of each method. Semi-structured interview guide, and checklist to collect information/data. Interview guide was useful to collect information through key informant interview and checklist for secondary materials.

Sampling and Sample Size

Bureaus of Women and Children's Affairs, Agriculture, Education, and Health of Oromia and their workers are the direct study targets. And the indirect targets of the study included women and different sectors that incorporated gender mainstreaming. The researchers used non-probability sampling technique. Non-probability sampling was utilized to select key informants. The researchers used purposive and convenience sampling techniques in selecting the aforementioned study participants. The perceived knowledge and experience of the informants and discussants are the criteria of selection. In addition, the convenience of the site in terms time and accessibility and appropriateness for the research topic were taken into account. Accordingly, 4 higher officials and 8 experts were interviewed

Data Analysis

Qualitative information was analyzed using content and thematic analysis. Information collected through in-depth key informant interview organized and classified (re-classified) into thematic topics and then analyzed to generate meanings and implications. Quantitative data was analyzed using percentage, tables and graphs.

Definition of terms

Opportunities: Refer to socio-economic, political and cultural environment for gender mainstreaming. These include political stability, decentralization, expansion of Information Communication Technology and the presence of good governance can be considered as opportunities or favorable conditions so as to ensure gender equality in a given country or region. Opportunities in this context also refer to the existing national policies, legal instruments and gender sensitive development plans that might facilitate or create conducive environment for gender mainstreaming practice.

Challenges: These are obstacles or impediments that hinder effective gender mainstreaming practice in selected bureaus.

Bureaus: Executive organs established at Oromia Regional state with specific authorities, duties and responsibilities.

Gender: Refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women in a given culture or location.

Gender mainstreaming: Is the process of incorporating making planned actions, legislations, policies, development programs and projects gender sensitive at all levels. It refers to the integration of the needs and concerns of women and men in the design, resource allocation, execution and evaluation of development plans or program (UN 2002).

Gender equality: Refers to an equal sharing of power between men and women, equal access to social and economic services, administrative and leadership positions, equal pay for work of equal value and equal share in important decision making bodies (UN 2002).

Outcome of the Research

This research has generated important information for different government sectors, Oromia Women and Children's Affairs in particular, policy makers, and finally women. The identified opportunities and challenges of gender mainstreaming help the implementers of the strategy. Feedbacks of the finding also help different sectors and Oromia Women and Children's Affairs improve their plans. This critical analysis of conditions of gender mainstreaming can inform policy makers with issues to be considered. Moreover, academicians, researchers, students, and readers in general will get to date information on the issue. Results about opportunities, challenges and policy implications (positive or negative outcomes) of gender mainstreaming will give law-makers important insights to evaluate the existing provisions.

Results and Discussions

The data required for this study was gathered from Oromia Bureaus of Women's and children's Affairs, Agriculture, Health and Education thorough interview of concerned gender experts and document review. The study focuses on how gender mainstreaming is

conceptualized, the type of gender mainstreaming model being followed, measures taken to mainstream gender, opportunities, challenges and achievements recorded so far. This part of the study is concerned with the thematic analysis of the data as follows.

Oromia Region Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs Perspective

According to the Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs gender focal person, "*gender mainstreaming refers to being gender sensitive at all stages of the development planning and implementation of policies, plans, programs and projects*". Gender mainstreaming is not only about integrating or including women in development agendas that have already been decided by others but also a transformative process. It involves a need for changes in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can participate, influence and benefit from improvements brought by development process in the region. This requires changes in organizational structures, procedures and cultures to create conducive environment, for the realization of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming requires the existence of gender equality issues at all levels, in all sectors, and involves all members of the society; we can no longer just think of gender issues as women's issues that only exist in sectors such as health and education. Its aim is to transform the entire mainstreaming to ensure that it involves and is responsive to all members of the society.

According to this key informant, even though women of Ethiopia in general and that of Oromia region in particular had much contribution to the socio-economic and political development of the country, their efforts have not been recognized well by the past regimes before the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took the leading position. There were no policies, programs and projects that specifically focused on providing women equal chance to participate and benefit from the country's development. Even if existed, they were meant only to further the political interest of those regimes. This led women to become the largest proportion of the segment of the society in the country that live in abject poverty in every aspect of life.

The key informant added that in order to ensure women's equal participation and benefit from the socio-economic and political development of their country, the FDRE government has taken various institutional and practical measures. Gender mainstreaming strategy is one of the measures taken so far. Thus, gender mainstreaming is a strategy to incorporate gender issues in development policies, programs and projects so that women and men would benefit equally from these changes as stated by the key informants. It is meant to create enabling environment and enhance the capacity of the implementers to integrate gender issues in the overall activities of government as per the duties and responsibilities given to them.

The concept of gender mainstreaming in Ethiopia is in line with a global strategy for promoting gender equality as it was decided in the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995. It is a strategy for making concerns and experiences of women and men to be an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres. To implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the FDRE entered into commitment and ratified a number of international conventions and protocols on women's rights. Following the nation wide commitment to tackle the existing gender inequalities, the following institutional and practical measures intended to realize gender equality were also taken by Oromia regional state according to Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs (OBWCA, 2008).

- **Constitutional:** The formulation of regional constitution that gives equal rights and opportunities for all people's including women.
- **Policy:** Cultural, Developmental Social Welfare, Population, Health, Education and Training policies were formulated.
- **Legal:** Family Law, Criminal Law, Government Employee Proclamation, Employee and employer Proclamation etc
- **Programs and Packages:** Health Sector Development Program, Education Sector Development Program, Industrial Sector and Town's Development Programs,

Poverty Reduction Program, Youths, Development and Change Package, Women's Development and Change Packages

Each of these policies, programs, laws; proclamations and packages have the following emphasis with regard to improving the situations of women. Here are the emphasis of some of these major institutional instruments to ensure gender equality according to the information obtained from documents of Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs.

The constitution of the region: In accordance with the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution, the Oromia Regional Government Constitution has also given due attention for equality of men and women in all aspects of social, economic, legal and political activities. The Oromia National Regional Government Constitution guarantees gender equality in all aspects of the region's development endeavors including employment. It stipulates men's and women's equality in employment, promotion, pay, transfer, and pension entitlement.

The 1995 regional Policy on Women: The Policy has clearly stated the regional government's commitment to abolish all discriminatory laws, regulations and practices against women and its efforts to create enabling environment for the full participation of all members of the society in the socio-economic and political sectors, with special focus on women.

Oromia Women's Development and Change Package (2008): This is a strategy document designed in line with the ideas provided in the FDRE constitution, National Women's Policy and the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality. Oromia Regional Government Women's Development and Change Package has clearly pointed out the government's commitment to mobilize women and enhance their participation and benefit from economic, social and political activities. The package has clearly indicated rural and urban specific major strategic issues to solve women's problems. Core plan has been developed to strengthen implementation of the package at grass root level.

Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP):

PASDEP was one of the main implementation strategies designed to achieve gender equality in all development goals of the country in general and in Oromia Region in particular. PASDEP has dual goals. These are the goal of reducing poverty and ensure gender equality according to Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's (2008). This strategy is a foundation and guiding framework for all policies and programs in the region and is committed to address not only the regionally set development priorities but also the nationally and internationally set goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declared to alleviate abject poverty.

The Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs(OBWCA) is given the mandate to follow up the implementation of these institutional and practical measures designed to be taken by various sectors to narrow gender gap through its Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, Follow - up and Evaluation Department. With the implementation of the above mentioned policies, proclamations, laws, programs and packages, a number of improvements have been observed in the socio-economic and political situations of women. According to Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs report (2008), the following are the major improvements have been observed on the lives of women in the region. Women of the region have got:

- constitutional guarantee to have equal rights and opportunities to resources
- the rights to decide with whom and at what time establish families and have children
- freedom from the practices of harmful traditional practices and the subordination of their male counterparts
- The right to participate in decision makings at different levels such as regional, zonal, Woreda and kebele levels.
- Access to education and trainings , saving and credit schemes, family planning, technologies that reduce work burdens, health services and potable water supply nearby their homes
- Equal right to own, use, sale and transfer properties including land

The detail measures taken to narrow down gender gap in the region and achievements recorded so far are discussed below with special attention to Oromia bureaus of education, agriculture and health sectors.

Incorporation of gender mainstreaming in different sectors and success achieved

Education

Education is universally recognized as playing a vital role in sustainable social and economic development. Education is always cited as one of the most priority areas for attention and the investment of resources in order to ensure gender equality between men and women.

According to key informant interview with Oromia Regional State Education Bureau gender focal person, *“The benefits of education for citizens in general and for women in particular are well recognized by Oromia Education Bureau. Education improves the quality of life in different aspects. It promotes health, expands access to paid employment, increases productivity in market and non-market work, and facilitates individual’s social and political participation.”* According to the key informant, *“Educated women use family planning and have smaller families, provide better care and hence fewer of their children die in infancy, and the children who survive are healthier and have better chance of education. Moreover, educated women are better prepared and get opportunity to enter the paid labor force, which is critical to their welfare and that of their families.”*

Available literatures also witness that not only does education have a significant multifaceted effect, given the responsibility of women for socializing the next generation; it also enhances the capacity of women for contributing to the social, economic and political aspects of national development. Moreover, education has numerous contributions for bringing about change which can redress gender imbalances between women and men as well as other social groups.

Considerable gender inequalities prevailed in the education sector of the country before the issue of gender mainstreaming became effective as the key informant stated. *“Women had no equal opportunity to get access to education with men because of social, cultural, economic, political and physical barriers. Society had no balanced attitude on girl’s and boy’s education. Boys had better opportunity to attend schools than girls. Girls were expected to master domestic household activities that enable them to become good house wives. Moreover, school distribution was skewed toward urban areas. Hence, the majority of rural poor children in general and girls in particular had little access to education during the past regimes before FDRE government.*

In order to reverse these situations and ensure gender equality in the educational system of the region, the Oromia Bureau of Education has implemented various gender mainstreaming strategies designed at regional level. With the actions taken various encouraging changes have been observed in the region with regards to education according to the key informant.

In relation with this, the study examined indicators such as literacy, enrolment, access to education and attainment, as well as other areas such as legal and administrative frameworks, the proportions of women in decision-making positions, resource allocation, curriculum development, and the organization of schools and classrooms. According to information obtained from Oromia Regional State 1995 Women’s policy document, though females constitute 50% of the total population of the region, female’s educational participation was only 23%. However, now females’ educational participation rate has shown dramatic changes. The following table depicts the improvement in female’s educational participation in the region.

Table 1: Females' educational participation in Oromia before 1995

School level	Females' participation in %
Primary school	30
Junior secondary school(5-8)	41
Secondary school(9-12)	30
College Diploma	14.5

Source: Oromia Regional State 1995 Women's policy document

As it is observed from the above table, though women constitute half of the total population of the region, their school participation was very low compared to their male counter parts. Gender biased educational policies of the past regimes, inaccessibility of schools and gender biased societal outlooks were the major reasons for the low school participation of women according to the key informant interview with the regional Women's Affairs Bureau and Educational Bureau.

The regional educational bureau gender focal person added that government has made many efforts to expand schools so that all school age children in general and females in particular get access to education nearby their localities. The issue of gender equality has also become part of the education curriculum of the region. Moreover, various awareness raising activities and discussions were made with communities and community leaders at various levels on the benefit of girl's education and factors that hinder them not to attend schools. With the efforts made so far, encouraging improvements have been obtained. The following table reveals the situation.

Table 2: Females' educational participation in Oromia in 2012/13

School	Number of students		Female's participation in %
	Male	Female	
Primary school(1-8)	3,241,454	2,992,112	48
Secondary school(9-10)	292,551	239,360	45
Preparatory(11-12)	59,494	41,344	41
Technical and vocational	-	-	49
College Diploma	-	-	53

Source: Oromia Regional State Women's and Children's Affairs Bureau Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) document, 2011/13

Of the 31,477,184 total population of the region, females constitute 49.73 % (15,625,645) as information obtained from Oromia Bureau of Women's and Children's Affairs GTP 2012/2013 document. As it is depicted in Ttable 2, female's school participation is approaching to that of males at all levels, however, still there is little gap between the two sexes. This implies that ensuring gender equality in terms of school participation has almost achieved its goal. Apart from these, female completion of primary, secondary and preparatory schools has also shown improvement as the Table 3 indicates.

Table 3: Female's educational completion in Oromia in 2011/12

Type of exam	Number of students passed		% of female students passed
	Male	Female	
8 th grade national exam	155,109	143,177	48
10 th grade national exam	31,655	30,414	49
12 th grade national exam	2,358	1,059	31

Source: Oromia Regional State Women's and Children's Affairs Bureau Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) document, 2011/13

As table 3 indicates, of the total number 298,286 students passed 8th grade national exam, females constitute 143,177(48%) and of the total number of 62,069 students passed 10th grade national exam in the same year the number of female students passed to preparatory schools account for 30,414(49%). Likewise, of the total number of 3,417 students that passed 12th grade university entrance exam in 2011/12, the number of female students scored university entrance point account for 1,059(31%).

Health Bureau

According to Oromia Reional State Health Bureau Policy, gender is recognized as one of the key social determinant of health. The policy emphasized that it is a socially constructed values and norms that shape our mind-set, which in turn governs our behaviors, roles and relations as men, women, boys or girls. It plays an important role in human life creating or denying opportunities for a sole reason of a given sex. It also determines vulnerabilities, disease and various types of risks. Hence, sex differences and gender inequalities are major causes of inequity in health care systems because of the different roles women and men play in society. Apart from the natural differences between men and women, gender related perceptions and unequal treatment determine the overall health and wellbeing of a given person.

According to Oromia Bureau of Heath gender focal person, in many societies, gender norms and values give low status for women as compared to men. In addition to the different sex specific diseases, women often have less power to get direct access, control and use of resources. As they are expected to feed their family members first in many societies, there are times in which they skip their meals especially in times of food shortages and suffer from lack of adequate and balanced diet in most cases. Thus, they have often less capacity and opportunities to take measures to protect themselves from diseases when compared with their male counterparts.

As a result, females are more vulnerable to various types of health risks and Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) such as early marriage, abduction, gender based domestic

violence and female genital mutilation (FGM) that result in serious health consequences. Oromia region is not an exception to these facts. Of the 60% of the segments of the society over which harmful traditional practices are exercised, 50% of them are women according to Oromia region 1995 Women's policy document. However, this does not mean that boys and men never experience difficulties as a result of social values and norms related to gender. Apart from these, there was no equity in the distribution of health services between urban and rural areas. The following table shows the health situation of women in Oromia Regional State before the issue of gender mainstreaming strategies and programs started in all sectors including the health sector.

Table 4: Women's access to various health services and vulnerability to health risks before 1995

Types of health services	% of women having access	Women's vulnerability to health risks	Vulnerability in rate/ or percent
Family planning	21.9	Maternal mortality	870/100,000
Professional delivery service	5%	Women's share of people suffer from harmful traditional practices	50%

Source: Oromia Women's Growth and Change Package Document, 2008

The researchers could not get comprehensive data that clearly shows the health situation of women's in the region before gender mainstreaming started in the health sector. However, very few information mentioned in the Table 4 was obtained. As this meager information shows, women's access to various health services was very low while vulnerability to various health risks was high.

Recognizing the effect of gender related problems on the health of families in general and on women in particular the regional government health bureau has taken various measures to improve the health situation of citizens in the region in general and that of

women in particular. The following are some of the major measures taken to ensure gender equality in the health sector according to information obtained from key informant interview with gender focal person.

Preparation of Gender mainstreaming document: The regional health bureau started gender mainstreaming in its health sector by the preparation of gender mainstreaming document that enables it to ensure gender equality in health care system. The gender mainstreaming document is used as a reference and guiding document in making health related decisions. In the gender mainstreaming document, specific health problems facing men and women are recognized. It is important to note that the regional health policy accords special attention to the health of the family, particularly women and children.

Expansion of health care services and health education: The Oromia regional government has made great effort to make health services accessible to the community especially to women through the construction of health centers, clinics, health posts, hospitals and the training of health professionals. Moreover, the regional health bureau has been making efforts to create improved access for women and girls to health information, reproductive health and service delivery systems.

Training and deployment of health extension workers: The Oromia regional state has trained and deployed a number of health extension workers on each of the kebeles in the region. These health extension workers provide health education on the prevention of disease, environmental and personal hygiene, reproductive health services, family planning, maternity and child care, and first aid health treatments for the grass root level communities in general with special emphasis on women. The health extension workers also give particular emphasis to the abandonment of harmful traditional practices and gender based violence. The focus on these two harmful traditional practices is mainly because of their critical implication on the reproductive health of women and girls. Results of the above interventions have been very rewarding according the interview with

Oromia Bureau of Health gender focal person. The Table 5 shows the status of women's access to various health services in the region.

Table 5: Women's access to various health services in Oromia region in 2011/2012

Types of health services	% of women having access
Family planning	63
Prenatal follow up and care coverage	88.5
Postnatal follow up and care coverage	43.8
Professional delivery service	26%

Source: Oromia Regional State Women's and Children's Affairs Bureau Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) document, 2011/2013

As Table 5 indicates, the number of women in reproductive age group getting access to family planning reached 63% as of 2011/12. This shows much improvement as compared to the 5% before the 1995 or the formulation of the regional Women's Policy and other programs and strategies to mainstream gender issues in different sectors. Similarly, women getting prenatal and post natal care and follow up reached 88.5% and 43.8% respectively as information obtained from the regional document analysis. In addition, the percent of women getting professional support during delivery reached 26%. These indicate success achieved so far because of the institutional and practical measures taken at system, organizational and grass root level.

Bureau of Agriculture

Women play a significant role in the country's rural agricultural economy. They are responsible for a large part of the labor that produces many of Oromia's main cereal crops, pulses, and livestock, particularly small ruminants and poultry. According to the Oromia Women's and Children's Affairs (2008) Women's Growth and Change document (2006), especially rural women work for 13-18 hours on domestic and agricultural

activities. Contrary to these, the majority of the work done by women tends to be economically invisible.

As a consequence, their important role is not translated into an equality of opportunities, especially when it comes to gaining access to productive resources, markets, and services. Women face various challenges such as access to improved seed varieties, proper training, and extension services and lack markets in which to sell their goods compared to males. Females in both male headed households and female-headed households tend to have poor access to productive resources because of gender division of labor and cultural barriers as understood from interview with the regional Bureau of Agriculture gender focal person. Hence, empowering women through improved access to key productive resources and agricultural services is targeted as appropriate measure since rural women's contribution to agricultural production and food security is quite immense.

Therefore, gender equality is a major issue that needs to be considered in any development process including agriculture in order to ensure both men and women contribute and benefit equally from it. The Oromia Regional State Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development has taken various measures to ensure gender equality in the agricultural sector.

- Participatory, innovative, learning culture at farmer's training centers that is responsive and relevant to the needs of women and men farmers;
- Addressing HIV/AIDS in agricultural programming;
- Increasing the number of female trainees that enter development agent training, colleges and the number of female experts trained at all level
- empowering women farmers, increasing women farmer's access to extension services and promotion of best practices for environmentally sustainable local development
- introducing technologies which would reduce the workloads of women
- Improving women's access, use and control of agricultural resources including land.

With the measures taken so far, the following major changes have been brought in the region regarding female's contribution to and benefit from agricultural development programs and projects.

Access to Farming Land: A number of women acquired farming land identity card with their husbands and now they have the right to inherit and get land in the form of gifts from relatives. They have also got the right to inherit or give their lands to their children or relatives in case their husbands die.

Participation in various agricultural activities: Thousands of women have started to engage in economically gainful agricultural activities such as irrigation, coffee production, poultry, dairy farming, bee keeping, animal fattening, hide and skin works individually and in groups. With their participation in these areas of the sector, they benefited a lot economically. For instance, a number of women have become milliners and awarded for their success by the ex-prime minister of our country, Meles Zenawi, and the regional presidents at different times on national and regional Farmers Day.

Opportunities and challenges for realizing gender mainstreaming strategy in Oromia

Opportunities: The following socio-economic and political environments are identified as potential opportunities to further the success of gender mainstreaming in Oromia Regional State.

- **Political:** The presence of regional Women's Policy, presence of Women's and Children's Affairs Bureau at regional level and gender focal persons in all sectors from region to kebele levels, presence of different women's associations, commitment of the government to reform the civil service by mainstreaming gender at all levels, commitment of international communities to address gender issues
- **Economic:** presence of gender sensitive poverty reduction strategies and programs
- **Social:** high demand for qualified female and male gender experts, media coverage of gender issues, presence of various gender supportive social systems such as the Oromo *Geda system*(indigenous Ormo administration system), the Qallu Institution and various religious organizations

- **Stakeholders:** existence of different governmental and nongovernmental organizations working on gender and reproductive health issues, availability of donor organization favoring activities on gender mainstreaming
- **Technological innovations:** Various technologies that reduces female's domestic work burden and increase their participation in development activities are being innovated and introduced
- **Change in societal attitudes:** Presence of positive societal attitudes on girl's education and participation in various development activities though it is not to the desired level
- **Legal:** constitutional and other legal guarantees of women's economic, political and social rights
- **Natural resources:** The region is also endowed with various natural resources such as water, land, minerals and others which can contribute a lot to attempt made to narrow the gender gap between men and women if developed.

Challenges

From the key informant interviews and document analysis, the following are identified as the major challenges to the efforts to effectively and sufficiently address gender mainstreaming strategies in Oromia region.

Poverty related issues: Even though various measures have been taken by government through its different sectors to ensure gender equality, still women constitute the major proportion of the poor segments of society. This needs further intervention as it generally impedes female's contribution to development and benefit from the outcomes.

Less number of women in political structures and decision making: even though the constitution of the country gives equal rights for women in all matters that affect their lives, the number of women in decision making bodies and leadership position of the region such as regional council is still very few.

Inadequate gender awareness among implementers: According to the key informant interviews, most of the gender focal persons assigned in different sectors at woredas and kebele levels less aware of gender mainstreaming. In most sectors gender mainstreaming

is considered as the duties and responsibilities of only gender focal persons who push for the promotion of gender issue. Even there is resistance against gender mainstreaming in some sectors.

Limited employment opportunities: Though the number of female graduates from various colleges in the region and universities in the country is increasing, few of them are getting employment opportunities due to limited absorbing capacity of the market economy.

Conclusions

The Oromia Bureau of women's and Children Affairs, Bureau of Education, Bureau of Health and Bureau of Agriculture have taken institutional and practical measures to ensure gender equality between men and women so that they can contribute and equally benefit from the outcomes of development endeavors in their respective sectors.

With the attempts made so far, the huge gender gap existed between men and women before 1995 Women's Policy formulation and other subsequent institutional and practical measures taken have now shown dramatic improvement.

Women's participation in and benefit from education, health and economically gainful agricultural activities have been increasing from time to time. The percentage of female student's educational participation and completion at all school levels have shown dramatic improvement compared to the situation the situation before 1995. Similar changes have been brought in the health and agricultural sectors. These indicate that gender inequality with respect to these sectors is significantly reduced.

The availability of various regional gender sensitive policies, legislations, programs, stakeholders, improvement in societal attitude on the issues of gender equality and availability of natural resources in the region are the major opportunities for gender mainstreaming despite, poverty, less number of women on decision making positions and inadequate knowledge about gender mainstreaming among implementers which are challenge the success of the sectors.

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