

Assessment of Challenges and Opportunities of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sectors: The Case of Selected Woredas in Hadiya Zone

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ABSTRACT

This article assessed the major challenges and opportunities in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in local public sector offices. The study emphasized the women and children affairs offices in five selected woredas of Hadiya Zone, in SNNPR. The descriptive type of research was employed with mixed approaches to collect and analyze the data. The samples of five woredas were selected by using simple random sampling technique. The office of Women and Children Affairs was selected purposively, on the basis of its bureaucratic responsibility to coordinate and monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Woredas. To get sufficient information on the issue, the study included all employees and managers of the office because of their smaller size. Hence, 212 respondents were included as sample of the study. The data was collected by distributing questionnaire for 200 employees and interviewing 12 key informants. For the issues needing further clarification, focus group discussions were held. Moreover, the secondary data was obtained through document reviews. The results were presented in simple descriptive statistical graphs and analyzed using frequency and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed in the form of narration. The study revealed that the implementation gender mainstreaming is still unsatisfactory. The study also confirmed that lack of commitment from the managers, attitudinal

problems of employees, lack of finance and lack of technical capacity of gender experts are the common challenges inhibiting the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the study woredas. On the other hand, the study identified that the existence young talents as gender focal persons, the suitable policies, guidelines, manuals, handbooks for fulfilling gender mainstreaming as critical opportunities. In addition, the study noted that the increasing commitments of non-state actors to support gender mainstreaming activities are the major opportunities to be utilized to achieve the gender mainstreaming goals. Thus, it was recommended that regional level gender machineries should provide adequate guidance and support to the woredas by delivering gender training, disseminating information through guidelines, manuals, handbooks, so as to build their technical capacities required to ensure effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. The public sector managers at Woreda level should utilize the existing opportunities to put in place gender responsive organizational cultures by demonstrating their commitment through allocating adequate budgets to gender mainstreaming activities. Gender officers should play catalytic role to deepen the awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity of all staff members. There should be close coordination and communication among the Regional, Zonal and Woredas

level Gender Machineries through exchanging information and resources.

Key words: Gender mainstreaming, Challenges, Opportunities, local government, Public Sectors, Gender machineries, SNNPR, Hadiya Zone, Woredas

INTRODUCTION

Globally, gender mainstreaming has been widely recognized strategy to eradicate poverty by providing opportunities for women and men to actively participate in political, economic, social affair of a given nation. Particularly, gender mainstreaming in public service institutions ensures equal access to employment, training, and promotion opportunities for women and men and it serves as a tool to ensure gender equality in work place (Verloo, 2005). However, bringing gender equality in workplace involves equal participation of women and men in the organizational decision making process. This means that any organization has to engage and ensure that both men and women contribute and get benefits equally from its endeavors.

Studies indicate that gender mainstreaming in local public service offices have a major effect to rural development. It enables women and men to jointly develop strategic plans to strengthen the development of their communities. For instance, gender mainstreaming in local public sector offices ensures the balanced participation of men and women in the governance process, which provides the basis for the removal of structural and systemic barriers to women's participation (Gregorian, 2007).

Gender mainstreaming also ameliorates spirit of democratic public administration at local level. For instance, if women and men equally participate in decisions made within the organization, the experiences, capabilities and their interests will be

reflected in the development agenda (UN Women, 2013). The evidences indicate that women constitute at least half of the world population. Hence, any development strategies ignoring such critical component cannot achieve the desired outcome. In this regard, Blickhäuser and Barga (2007) argue that gender mainstreaming leads to the promotion of democracy and social equality and leads to the achievement of social innovation. Studies worldwide indicate that sustainable and accelerated national development can be achieved when the entire population of men, women and children are educated, enlightened and are in a position to contribute meaningfully towards national development. Hence, the sustainable development cannot be realized unless women's and men's equal participation in public institutions and their equal benefits from services are guaranteed (UN, 2002).

Moreover, Innes (2000) notes the worth of gender mainstreaming in realizing good governance in public service. It guarantees institutions to be responsive to the diverse needs and interests of women and men, and distribute benefits equitably between them (ECOSOC, 1997). In other words Gender mainstreaming contributes to socio-economic and cultural progress and leads to greater fairness, equity and justice for women and men, thus enhancing the accountability of governments to address the needs of all citizens. This implies that the greater participation of women in public sector decision making positions, can possibly lead to realization of the principle of accountability and transparency. It is believed that bringing more women into decision-making positions in public service can, promote the principle of rule of law. Evidences indicate that in most cases women have been shown to be less likely to practice corruption, such as taking bribes. Hence, gender mainstreaming is regarded as

the precondition to achieve the inclusive and effective public administration system in a given country (UNDP, 2014). It provides the opportunities for the participation of many more people, in the affairs of their organization. It involves women and men and makes full use of human resources including their talents, skills, experiences. It acknowledges the shared responsibility of women and men in achieving the organizational goals (European Council, 2004).

It was thanks to the United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing China in 1995 that explicitly declared gender mainstreaming as a global strategy to bring about gender equality in all areas of public administration. It was in this conference that the member states including our country adopted the Platform for Action, which calls for the promotion of the policy of gender mainstreaming. It is with this realization that the governments around the world and supranational organizations set up institutions to ensure gender mainstreaming strategy to realize gender equality and women empowerment (Verloo, 2005). Evidences indicate that there has been widespread commitment by governments, donor agencies, non-government organizations and other international and national players to implement gender mainstreaming by addressing gender equity as a priority objective (Pradhan, 2004). For instance, different countries have adopted important institutional measures to increase the awareness, knowledge, and capacity of professional staff for implementing gender mainstreaming, including training programmes and gender focal point systems (UN Women, 2016). This document also confirms that global political system still manages to neglect women's participation in public sector decision making positions. Consequently, the rights of half global citizens are evaded and neglected. For

instance, only 22.8% of all national parliamentarians were women as of June 2016; 11 women are serving as Heads of State and 12 are serving as Heads of Government, as of October 2017 (Ibid). Despite the global commitment to bring gender equality in work place, gender imbalances still persist at all levels of public administration systems.

In our country the government has declared its explicit commitment to promote gender equality in public administration through gender mainstreaming. To this effect, the government has signed a number of regional, national and international policy commitments to bring gender equality. The National Policy on Women and Federal constitution were formulated, incorporating the rights of women in the country's development. Appropriate institutional structures responsible to implement the policy were established were established up to the lowest administrative levels of the country (FDRE, 2006). Now days, the gender mainstreaming machineries are present from federal to regional, zonal, woredas and kebele levels. At federal level, Gender Machineries across all line ministries and public organizations have been in operation. At regional levels, Bureau of Women, Children & Youth Affairs exist. Similar structures have been in operation at lower administrative hierarchies. They are responsible to initiate, coordinate and monitor gender responsive development process within the country (Emabet, n.d). Nationally, encouraging progresses have been registered in terms of bringing gender equality in work places.

Similarly, in the SNNPR the regional government is taking actions to ensure equal

participation of women and men through gender mainstreaming. Amongst others, the incorporation of gender focal points in the organizational structures Woreda and kebele levels is the major one (SNNPR, 2007). Therefore, the gender mainstreaming units have been inaugurated in the region, Zone, Woreda, and kebele levels. These are bureaucratic structures carrying out the task of promoting gender equality and women empowerment at local levels.

On the basis of measures taken by the government at both federal and regional levels, women are becoming active participants in the public sector decision making positions. However, the evidences in local levels reveal that gender disparity is persistent in public service institutions. Particularly, in rural woredas of Hadiya Zone, women holding managerial decision-making positions are very few. In some woredas it was observed that only 15% of women hold decision-making positions in public sector office. In some other woredas the gaps still exist in the implementation of gender equality measures. This suggests that there are constraints attributing to the poor implementation of gender mainstreaming to bring equality. Unless these constraints are identified and the possible solutions designed, the goal of gender equality and women empowerment will not be realized. As the result, the researcher strongly believes that much effort is needed if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be met by 2030. It is also essential to stress gender equality in decision-making positions and ensure that existing gender inequalities are not perpetuated and allowed to manifest for the next generations to come. Therefore,

it is important to have full insight about the major constraints and existing opportunities to gender mainstreaming so as to suggest practical solutions. Thus, the aim of this study was to examine gender mainstreaming challenges and opportunities at local level by taking the Women and Children Affairs office as point of reference from the five rural woredas of Hadiya Zone.

WHAT IS GENDER

MAINSTREAMING?

Gender mainstreaming is the methodology globally adopted to realize the goal of women advancement and gender equality. It was primarily adopted by United Nations system and latter on it was adopted by the European Union as methodology to be applied along with special measures on behalf of the under-represented gender. Now days, gender mainstreaming has gained international recognition and become the most important technique to achieve gender equality, equal opportunities, obligations and rights of both men and women in both developed and developing countries (Burton and Pollack, 2002).

It is absolutely imperative to stress the fact that gender mainstreaming is not only focused on women; it is about men, women, children, and society in general. It is essential to take measurement to allow men to feel valued and be able to positively participate in the gender mainstreaming process, which will assure taking responsibility to play a role in gender equality (Grigorian, 2007). Therefore, in mainstreaming gender what come to the center of attention is maintaining gender equality by it considering both sexes not just women.

To further clarify the concept, In United Nations Development Program report (2007), gender mainstreaming is defined as women's participation and empowerment to tackle the issues of gender inequality. It is also described as taking into account equal participation of equality women and men in the organizational policies, programs, leadership, budgetary activities, and procedures. The European Commission (2008), explicitly stated that gender mainstreaming involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This implies that mainstreaming gender involves systematic examination of measures and policies and taking into account the major possible effects while defining and implementing them.

Blickhäuser and Borgen (2007), clarify the concept of gender mainstreaming in terms of, changing the way governments and organizations work so that the complexities and differences between men's and women's experiences, needs and priorities are equally valued, automatically considered and addressed from the outset, at all levels, in all sectors, at all stages of the policy and program cycle. Further, they have indicated that the objective of gender mainstreaming is to incorporate dimensions of equal opportunities and gender equality for women and men in all the policies and activities.

According to International Labor Organization (2010), gender mainstreaming

includes those gender specific activities, and affirmative action, when ever women or men are in disadvantageous position. In other words, gender mainstreaming includes those gender specific interventions that can target women exclusively; both men and women, or only men, to enable them participate in and benefit equally from development efforts.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), puts gender mainstreaming as process of bringing the perceptions, experiences, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making (ECOSOC, 1997). Therefore, from the definitions given above gender mainstreaming can be understood as, development strategy that puts gender equality agenda at the centre organizational policies, strategies, operational plans, programmes, budgeting, and institutional structures and processes.

PRINCIPLES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING

At organizational level gender mainstreaming involves a process of building organizational capacity and commitment to attain gender sensitive planning, budgeting, staffing, decision making (UNDP, 2007). Hence, gender mainstreaming is a principle to be applied throughout the organizational work processes to bring the two basic goals of gender equality and empower women (ECOSOC, 1997). The documents reviewed on the theoretical foundation of the gender mainstreaming put the following major principles as enabling factors to achieve gender equality. Innes (2000):

- ❖ The first and foremost one is formal acknowledgement from leaders senior managers that gender equality

is an essential component of sustainable development. Commitment of political leaders and authorities create an enabling environment for the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

- ❖ The policy framework supported by specific gender equality policies, action plans clearly articulating the government's commitment to gender equality and identify the broad mechanisms to realize this goal. It includes the international commitments ratified to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.
- ❖ Adequate structures, mechanisms and processes should be in place to realize the goals of gender mainstreaming. It is recognized that national women's machineries are expected to provide leadership in gender mainstreaming and co-ordinate and monitor the whole process.
- ❖ Allocation of sufficient resources is also critical factor to meet official commitment of gender mainstreaming. Resources must be allocated to support the structures and practices required for mainstreaming activities. Adequate budgets must be allocated to Gender Machineries and public sectors, to engage in gender responsive planning and implementation.
- ❖ Adequate motivation; mainstreaming requires that individuals working within government sectors are not only given the opportunity to develop new skills and take on new responsibilities, but have the motivation to do so. There needs to be encouragement and incentives for both male and female government

employees participating in the process.

United Nations Environmental Program (2012) practical political commitment for gender equality is closely tied up with senior management active leadership and resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, the text reads that;

Leadership is crucial to strengthening and making effective progress with gender mainstreaming in the organization. Without clear and sufficient guidance, vision and knowledge from the management level, there is a risk of ineffective Gender mainstreaming. This observation is not specific to the issue of gender equality but is applicable to any mainstreaming process (UNEP, 2012:p.45).

European Council (2004) identifies the strong political will from government as the first prerequisite. It emphasizes that the government must state a clear mission statement to mainstream the gender equality in all policies and programmes. It is also underlined that gender equality policies, action plans, legislations and anti-discrimination laws; national gender equality machineries with sufficient tools and resources (both human and financial), divisions or focal points to exert influence on policy at all levels. Furthermore, awareness-raising through training, education researches is the most important factor for gender mainstreaming. The fifth factor is allocation of necessary funds and human resources to realize the goals set in gender mainstreaming strategy. Finally, participation of greater number of women in political and public decision-making positions is very important to ensure that the various values, interests and life experiences of women are taken into account when decisions are made. In pursuing the goals of gender mainstreaming at organizational

level, it is assumed that the combination of all these principles should be effectively utilized.

OVERVIEW GENDER

MAINSTREAMING IN ETHIOPIA

As member of United Nation, Ethiopia has been committed to implement both national and international conventions. It was the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) in Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995, which called for the mainstreaming of a gender perspectives in the design, implementation and monitoring of all policies, programs. To realize the conventions, the Ethiopian government has been trying to put in place appropriate institutional, legal and policy frame works that will enhance to mainstream gender equality issues in all aspects of the country's development endeavors. More importantly, the country's constitution assures equal rights of women with men in every sphere and emphasizes the provision of affirmative action to remedy the past inequalities suffered by women (FDRE, 1995).

In addition to this, the government has renewed its commitment towards realizing the National Policy on Women (Women's Policy) with the need to create appropriate structures within government offices and institutions to establish equitable and gender-sensitive public policies (FDRE, 2000). On the basis of this, different bureaucratic structures or gender machineries have been set up at different levels ranging from federal to the lowest administrative units of the country. The Government has also prioritized gender equality and women empowerment in broader national development plans with clearly specified targets and mechanisms for addressing poverty reduction and women's empowerment. The Most recent national

development plans of (Growth and Transformation Plan I (2010/11-2015) and Growth and Transformation Plan II (2016/17-2020) have mainstreamed gender perspectives and further identified gender equality issue as the major areas of concern. This was accompanied by laying the ground for the broader national development and strengthening the institutional structures mandated to coordinate and monitor the efforts of gender mainstreaming in public sectors. For the purpose of this study, let us see the institutional or bureaucratic measures taken in the country to realize the gender mainstreaming goals.

INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERIES

The importance of national administrative machineries to design, implement, monitor and evaluate as well as advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women has been highlighted in the Beijing Plate Form for Action (FDRE, 2006). Nationally, gender machineries are the principal policy coordinating units. However, the success depends up on the capacity of these machineries to coordinate the efforts of public sectors, non- governmental organizations and women associations towards realizing gender equality goals (Ibid).

Considering the international and national commitments, the government of Ethiopia has established institutional structures dedicated to the advancement of women as a fully-fledged Ministry in 2005 and become member of the national cabinet (FDRE, 2000). The Ministry of Women Affair was restructured with extended mandates as the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs in 2010. It has been accorded clear mandates to promote gender equality through various mechanisms including follow up and evaluation of the integration

of gender issues in policies and programs at all levels of government.

Based on the decentralized system, national gender machineries have been established at different levels of public administration in the country. Accordingly, the gender machinery is present from federal to regional, zonal, Woreda to kebele levels. At federal level, Women Affairs Machineries across all line ministries and Public organizations have been in operation. At regional levels, Bureau of Women, Children & Youth Affairs exist. Similar structures have been also operating at zonal, woreda and kebele levels. In all cases gender focal points have been established in order to incorporate gender issue in local development programs. In all of these government structures, the gender machineries are members of management committees and/or cabinet. In order to effectively carry out their duties, the structures are equipped with human and material resources. The machineries are also allocated government budget to conduct their activities (Emabet, n.d).

Among others, the Ministry of Women's Affairs have duty and responsibility to ensure the balanced participation of women in decision making positions in various government organs at different levels. It has also assigned duty to ensure equal opportunities are created for women to actively participate in political, economical and social activities. In order to bring gender equality in public administration and benefit thereof, the existence of policies and institutional structures are of a prime concern. In this regard, in view of existing policy and institutional frameworks in the country, one can argue that there is a favorable policy and institutional set ups to bring gender equality in public sectors.

Regardless of the suitable frameworks created by the government, women participation in political and public sector is

low. They are still largely underrepresented in decision-making positions at all levels. They have also not made major progress in attaining influential power in legislative bodies. The findings in this regard indicate that the number of women leaders and decision makers at the various level of the decentralized government structure is still very low. (FDRE, 2006). For instance, in the executive branch of the government (Ministers, deputy Ministers, etc), women constitute (only 13%) and in the Civil service, women occupied only 24.3% of the higher positions (Ministers, commissioners, deputies, Directors, Division Heads, etc) (Aberash, A., et al., 2014).

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

A National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2006) has been produced as further commitment towards gender mainstreaming. This action plan is with the goal of assisting women to achieve gender equality through active and empowered participation in all development programs. It also works towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For instance, the goal number three of Millennium Development Goals focuses on gender equality with the target of eliminating gender disparity in education, employment and political participation.

Ethiopia has ratified the UN charter on Human Rights and more importantly the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which outlines a variety of political, social, economic, and legislative issues that countries have to work on to eliminate discrimination against women and create equality between men and women. It also reiterates that state parties will adopt the necessary measures to achieve human rights of women identified in the Convention. CEDAW also discusses a

procedure of reporting and follow up of the measures states have taken up in order to eliminate discrimination against women.

As indicated above, despite national and international instruments that proclaim equal participation of women and men in Ethiopia, their implementations have been far from successful. Gender mainstreaming has not been translated into concrete action at all levels; In particular, more efforts are still needed in the area of increasing women in top-decision making positions in local government public sectors offices (ADB, 2004). Hence, these facts indicate that more efforts are needed to operationalise the institutional instruments which are already in place to bring about gender equity in public sectors decision making positions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Government of Ethiopia has given due attention to eradication of poverty and attainment of meaningful development in the country. Among other things, special attention has been directed towards gender equality in public sector policies, programs, and institutional structures. In other words, the government has created suitable legal, policy and institutional environment for effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Despite the efforts being made in the sphere of gender mainstreaming at both Federal and local levels, the efforts have not been effective. In this regard, the World Gender Report (2009) cited in African Development Bank (2011) ranks Ethiopia's status in terms of gender equality, 122th out of 134 countries surveyed. This indicates that there is slow progress towards gender equality in the country.

In the context of public sector administration, the issue of gender

inequality has been the major problem. For instance, study by Emabet (n.d) on federal government employees shows that women occupy (only 18.3%) of all professional and scientific positions, and (25%) of administrative positions, indicating that the upper and middle level positions in the civil service are still overwhelmingly dominated by men. The above facts imply that gender equality has not been effectively achieved in public sector. The official document released from the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCAs) (2017) indicates the serious constraint encountering gender mainstreaming at federal level is considering gender mainstreaming as the sole responsibility of gender machineries. The document also reveals that the implementation of gender mainstreaming is constrained due to lack of commitment and political will by the leadership to fight for issues of gender equality. Hence, these are some of the common challenges encountering the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in public institutions.

In Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), the regional government has undertaken various measures to realize gender equality. However, these are not sufficient by themselves. There are still a number of obstacles in achieving the goals of gender mainstreaming in the region. The situation analysis conducted by the Regional Women Affairs Bureau (WAB) indicates a number of challenges accompany the implementation of gender mainstreaming in regional sector bureaus. The major ones include; lack of institutional capacity of Women Affairs Bureau; and low level of awareness and capacity among public sector organizations to mainstream gender issues in development planning (SNNPR, 2007).

Similarly, in the case of Hadiya zone, the present condition of gender mainstreaming

is not satisfactory. The pilot study conducted by the researcher of this study in some public sector offices, shows that there are challenges that have been negatively affecting the achievement of the objectives of gender mainstreaming. The study reveals that the effective implementation gender mainstreaming has been constrained by factors such as low level of awareness on the part of law enforcing authorities; lack of adequate budgets to the activities of gender mainstreaming. These are some of the challenges which are practically hampering the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. The mentioned constraints have been significantly contributing for the Zonal socio-economic underdevelopment, as they hinder women and men from maximizing their contributions to the development process and share the benefits equally. As result, in-depth study is necessary to truly assess the major challenges and the existing opportunities, so as to fully realize the goal of gender mainstreaming.

Now days, at the national and regional levels, there are range of empirical literatures indicating the progresses made and challenges encountered with regards to the implementation of gender mainstreaming. However, there is scanty of literatures on the issue under investigation particularly at local government offices in Hadiya Zone. Thus, this study provides locally relevant information regarding the practices, challenges and opportunities of gender mainstreaming to fill the knowledge gap. Therefore, in other words, to bring about gender equality in the public sectors, it is necessary to identify the major challenges contributing to the poor implementation of gender mainstreaming and suggest the practical solutions.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In Hadiya Zone women constitute almost half of the total population. However, in most of public sector organizations in rural woredas, the representation of women in decision making positions is still very low. Women are suffering from socio-cultural discrimination and have fewer opportunities as compared to men for their further education, higher level employment, leadership despite the attentions of the government to bring about gender equality in all areas of work that should be effectively utilized as the existing opportunities to its realization.

Moreover, while working in local civil service institutions in the study area for the past 10 years, researcher of this study encountered a number of difficulties to mainstream gender perspectives in the local public sector organizations. The practical experiences given him an opportunity to be familiar with and observe the practical challenges related to gender mainstreaming. In addition, despite the availability of empirical studies examining the gender mainstreaming challenges at federal and regional level organizations, there is scanty of empirical evidences on the topic under the investigation specifically in Hadiya Zone rural woredas. Hence, the researcher strongly believes that it is an appropriate and relevant to conduct in-depth assessment of the challenges and opportunities of gender mainstreaming in selected woredas of Hadiya zone.

BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

More specifically this study answers the following basic questions:

- ❖ Is gender unit incorporated in the organizational structure of the selected woredas?
- ❖ What is the extent of gender awareness in the selected woredas?

- ❖ What is the level of managerial commitment to bring gender equality concerns in the study woredas?
- ❖ What are the major challenges to bring gender equality in the study areas?
- ❖ What opportunities are there to bring gender equality in the study areas?
- ❖ What do you recommend as solutions to the major challenges?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study is to assess the major challenges and opportunities of gender mainstreaming in Hadiya Zone selected woredas so as to suggest practical solutions. The study has the following specific objectives:

- ❖ To evaluate gender responsiveness of the organizational structures in the selected woredas?
- ❖ To understand the level gender awareness of staff in the selected woredas?
- ❖ To measure the level of managerial commitment to bring gender equality in the study woredas?
- ❖ To identify the major challenges to bring gender equality in the study woredas.
- ❖ To see the existing opportunities to mainstream gender in the study woredas.
- ❖ To suggest possible remedies to Gender mainstreaming in the woredas.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In usual circumstances, everything has its own meaning and why it will be done. Therefore, this study has the following benefits:

- ❖ It gives the material understanding and serves as a knowledge base of the existing gender mainstreaming

practices, challenges, achievements, and opportunities for the policy makers, public administrators, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders for future actions.

- ❖ It indicates the fundamental problems underlying the gender mainstreaming activities in local government to design corrective measures.
- ❖ It assists Gender Focal Persons at local levels to better understand the underlying principles of gender mainstreaming and their application in their organizational activities.
- ❖ It initiates the government officials and other concerned actors to focus on addressing the identified challenges by capitalizing the advantage of existing opportunities;
- ❖ It serves as the basis for other researchers to conduct more intensive researches on the same issue in other areas.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), Hadiya Zone, five selected woredas. Sectorally, the study was delimited to Women and Children Affairs office. This is mainly because this office is mainly responsible to coordinate monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming at grass root level and assumed to represent the whole situation in the Zone. In addition to this, the aim is to ensure the manageability of the study. Moreover, since the issue of gender mainstreaming is very broad, the study was focused only on examination of the major challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation at organizational level.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The type of research employed was descriptive type. Basically, the choice of appropriate research type and approach depends on the nature of the problem to be studied, the objectives, and the type of data needed (Berman, 2007). Hence, this study utilized the mixed approaches to detailed view of the existing situation on the issue under investigation.

TARGET POPULATION

The target population of the study was all employees and managers currently working in Women and Children Affairs offices of Hadiya Zone.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Two staged cluster sampling method was employed to select administrative woredas in the Hadiya Zone and identify the participants of the study. Out of the ten rural woredas, five (Sorro, Anilemo, Shashogo, and Misha, East badawacho) were selected by using simple random sampling technique. This technique was preferred because it provides equal chance for all respondents found in different woredas of the zone. From each woredas, the Office of Women and Children Affairs was included purposively, the criteria being that this sector dealing with gender equality and women empowerment issues as part of their major responsibility at grass root level. In addition, to get detailed information on the issues under investigation, the Zonal level Women, Children and Youth Affairs (WCYA) Department was included by using purposive sampling method, as it is entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating and facilitating the overall implementation of gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the Zone and rural woredas. This also helps to see a complete picture of the issue in the Zone. Since the number of employees working in Women and Children

Affairs office in each selected woredas is less than 50 which is small, as cited in Kotteri (2004), census survey was conducted. Thus, this study was an opportunity to all staff members to provide information and express their views and opinions towards gender mainstreaming activities.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Different methods of data collection were utilized to generate pertinent data on the issue under the study. The primary data was gathered through questionnaires (which was with close and open ended questions) distributed to 200 respondents. From this, 150 (75%) were properly filled and returned. To substantiate the information collected through questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the five managers and five gender focal persons from each woredas. In addition, to get further information, the researchers made an attempt to conduct interview with the Manager and gender focal persons in the zonal Women and Children Affairs department. Thus, 12 respondents were interviewed. For issues that require further clarification and exploration of the group views, experiences and debates on the topic under the study, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in each woredas. To this end, the total of 200 respondents were included as part of the study. Furthermore, secondary data were obtained through analysis of relevant documents including, international conventions, journal articles, books, conference papers, organizational reports; national and regional policy documents, proclamations, gender manuals, guidelines and reports; and strategic and annual plans, reports, human resource records produced by women and children affairs were reviewed.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

To ensure the completeness, consistency, accuracy and homogeneity, the collected data was edited, and errors and omissions were corrected. The data collected from primary sources using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, FGDs were summarized, organized, coded, and condensed in to sub-sections based on their similarities. The analysis of quantitative data was made using simple descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages) and tools such as tables and graphs, were used to present the findings. The qualitative data obtained through interviews and FGDs was analyzed and interpreted in the form of narration in line with the quantitative analysis. Hence, the findings from quantitative and qualitative surveys were discussed in together with the review of documents according to the order of research questions and objectives.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Kumar (2005), research conducted with human subjects should be carried out in an ethical manner. He suggested that while carrying out a research, the researcher have a duty to him/herself and to the individual who is participating in the research. So even if the outcome of the proposed research is for a good cause, if it involves the researcher lying or deceiving his subjects in some way, failure to protect confidentiality of the information gathered and the privacy of individual participants would be regarded as unethical manner.

Accordingly, in conducting this research, permission was obtained from the officials. In all study woredas, respondents were informed about the purpose the study and their consent was obtained. Moreover, maximum efforts were made to avoid using illegitimate information and the information collected was treated and used only for the purpose of the study without allowing any

negligence in using it and fully protecting its confidentiality.

LIMITATIONS

Inability to cover a large number of public sector offices was considered as a minor limitation of the study, which was mainly due to shortage of time and budget constraints. In addition to this, the researcher had encountered a number of challenges due to inaccessibility of officials for interview and group discussions; negligence of some respondents to fill questionnaires. However, these problems had been solved by convincing the managers and staff on the major objectives and significances of the study. After getting permission from officials, explanations were provided to all of staff members in their respective woredas. Moreover, Assistant data collectors were involved in data collection process after having training on the major items and objectives of the questionnaire. The researchers had been flexible at interview and FGD schedules to access the managers. Appropriate rapport was established during interview and FGD to get detailed information about the issues studied.

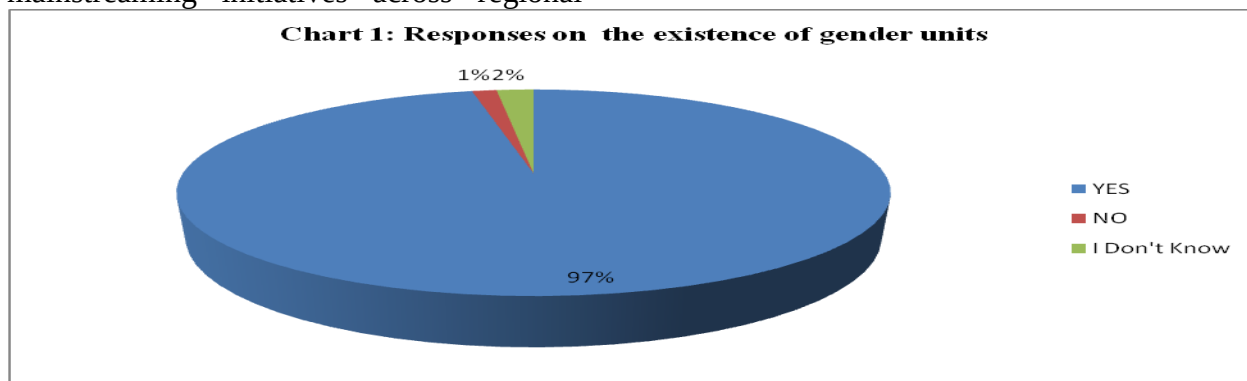
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the major findings of the study were presented, analyzed and discussed in line with the order of basic research questions and objectives. Specifically, the appraisal was conducted on the major aspects of gender mainstreaming, including the gender responsiveness of the organizational structure, accessibility of gender related publications, the gender awareness of staff members, the commitment of managers to gender mainstreaming and associated challenges and opportunities are analyzed and discussed.

GENDER RESPONSIVENESS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Evidences indicate that the implementations of gender mainstreaming needs gender responsive institutional structures with clear mandate and human and financial resources, and well defined accountability frameworks (MoWCYA, 2010). Accordingly, the guideline set by SNNPR Women Children and Youth Affairs Bureau, provides the frame work for measuring the gender mainstreaming initiatives across regional

sector bureaus. It is indicated that the commitment of an organization for gender equity and equality can be expressed through the establishment of a gender structures and assigning the necessary human and financial resources to carry out daily responsibilities. In this regard, the respondents were asked whether gender units are part of organizational structures in their respective woredas. The results were displayed as in the chart 1 below.



(Source: Questionnaire, 2019)

As it is clearly indicated in Chart 1 above, a great majority (97%) of the total respondents confirmed the existence of gender unit in their woredas, which are responsible to support and coordinate the gender mainstreaming activities. The remaining (1%) and (2%) replied that 'no' and they 'don't know' respectively, the existence of gender units. In addition, the interview conducted with managers in all study woredas reflected that gender units have been established in all sector offices. However, they pointed that these gender units have not been allocated the necessary budgetary resources to effectively carry out their assigned duties.

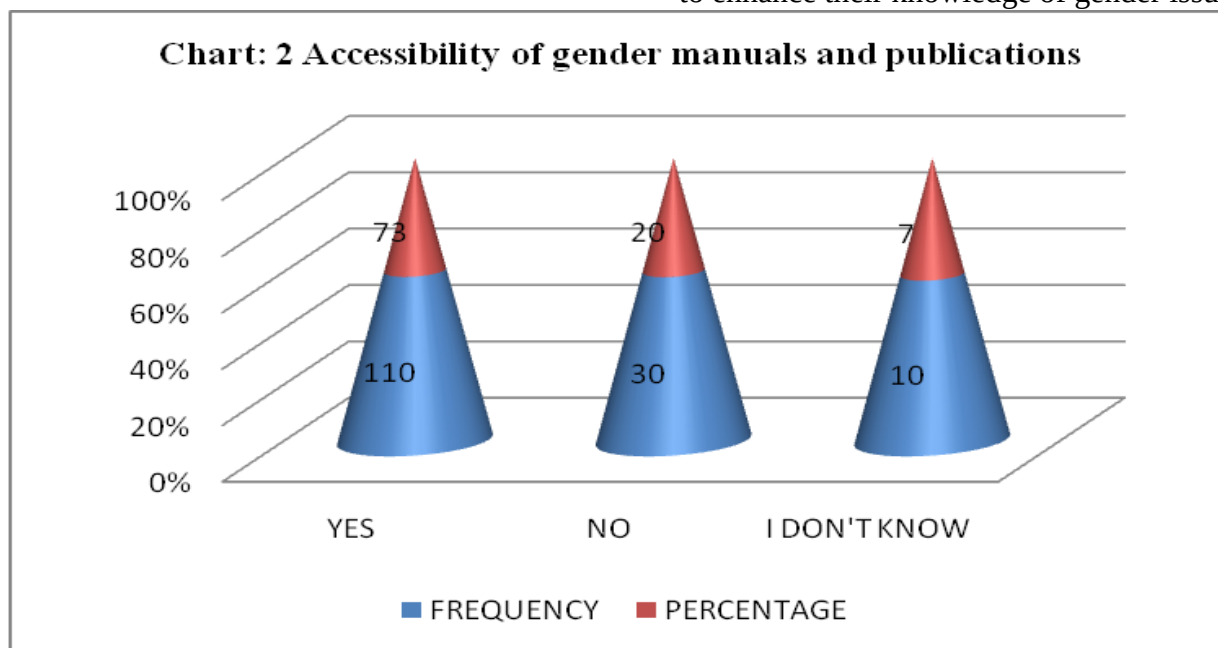
Basically, gender units are expected to facilitate the gender mainstreaming efforts by raising awareness of staff members about gender issues within their respective organizations. They are also expected to

bring about changes in the attitudes of staff members by creating awareness on gender issues. However, the results from interviews with the managers and group discussions indicated that gender officers were not playing the expected roles in all study woredas. The participants of the group discussion further noted that gender officers were not guiding the staff members to integrate gender equality issues in their plans. Furthermore, it was indicated that gender officers have not yet prepared checklists, to follow up the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the sector offices. According to researcher's observation during data collection process, gender focal persons currently assigned are young and inexperienced and they are not provided any gender training. As a result, they lack the capacity to influence and implement gender and gender related activities in their respective woredas. Hence, the above findings confirmed that gender

focal persons were not acting as principal resource persons and reference points to implement gender mainstreaming in all study wordas.

Another aspect of the organizational commitment to gender mainstreaming is measured in terms of putting in place the tools such as gender manuals and hand books to provide support for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Such documents provide practical information and knowledge for staff members to integrate gender issues into their work processes. The knowledge and awareness of staff members to gender mainstreaming depends on the accessibility of tools such as guidelines, manuals, and handbooks on gender issues. The documents reviewed indicate that the accessibility of such tools to staff members could provide considerable amount of knowledge gender issues.

In this regard, the respondents were asked whether they have access to get and read gender related manuals and other publications in their work places. As shown in the (chart 2) below, the majority of respondents 100(73%) replied that they have no access to such publications, and the remaining 30(20%) replied they have no access, while only 10(7%) expressed that they have no idea about the accessibility to such publications. The results from interviews and focus group discussions also confirmed that there is a difficulty to get gender related manuals, hand books, guidelines. The evidences by Rao and Kelleher (2002) notes that putting in place the necessary manuals and guide lines may enhance the gender mainstreaming efforts within a given organization by enhancing the knowledge and awareness of staff. However, the findings in all study wordas reflected that staff members have low access to get and read gender related publications to enhance their knowledge of gender issues.



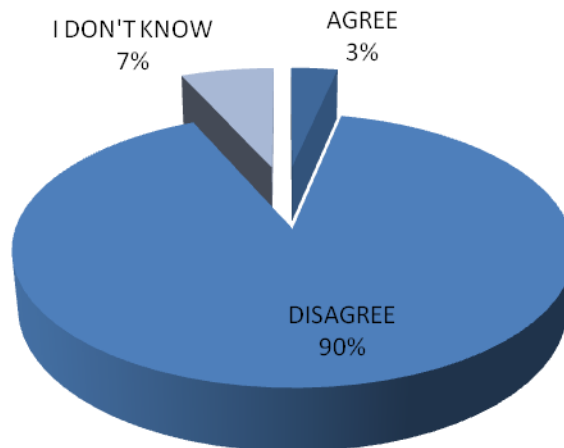
(Source: Questionnaire, 2019)

The findings here further raise the need to further examine how managers were committed to institutionalize gender issues

by orienting all organizational members to focus on gender equality issues. The documents reviewed emphasize that the explicit managerial commitment is mandatory to put in place gender sensitive organizational culture. Survey participants

were asked whether the managers of the sectors are giving priority for gender equality and equity in their respective work places. See the results (as in chart 3) below.

Chart 3: Managerial commitment on gender mainstreaming



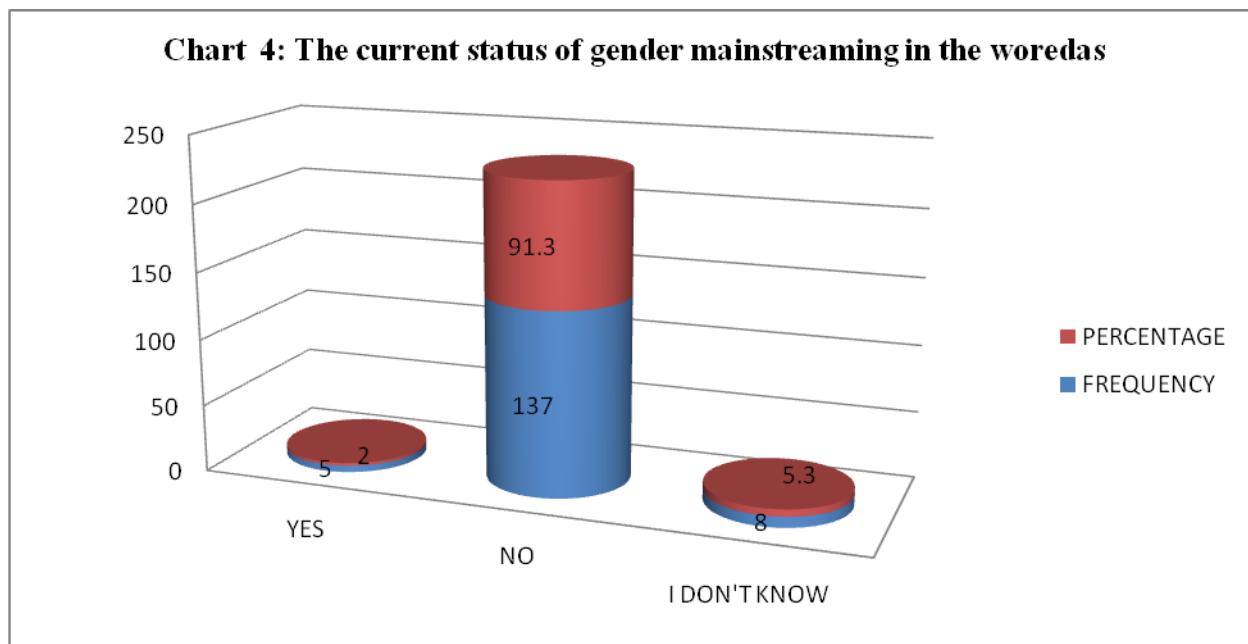
(Source: Questionnaire, 2019)

From the chart 3, it is clearly indicated that substantial parentage of respondents (90%) expressed their doubts on managerial commitment in supporting gender mainstreaming, and only (3%) of respondents agreed that there is managerial commitment, whereas (7%) of them had no idea on the issue in their offices. Similarly, the interviews conducted with gender officers and the discussions with focus group participants revealed that the managerial commitment to gender mainstreaming is very low.

Hence, the findings indicate that majority of respondents were dissatisfied on the level of leadership and managerial commitment to

install gender sensitive organizational culture. Therefore, it is important to relate these findings to the fact that different persons view gender equality issues differently. In this case, the pervious findings by Wendoh and Wallace (2005) indicates different officials approach the importance and implementation of gender mainstreaming differently and give higher priority to other activities and rank gender issues at a lower level.

In addition to the above facts from the findings, the respondents were asked to evaluate the situation of gender mainstreaming in the study areas. Accordingly, the views of respondents were presented as follows.

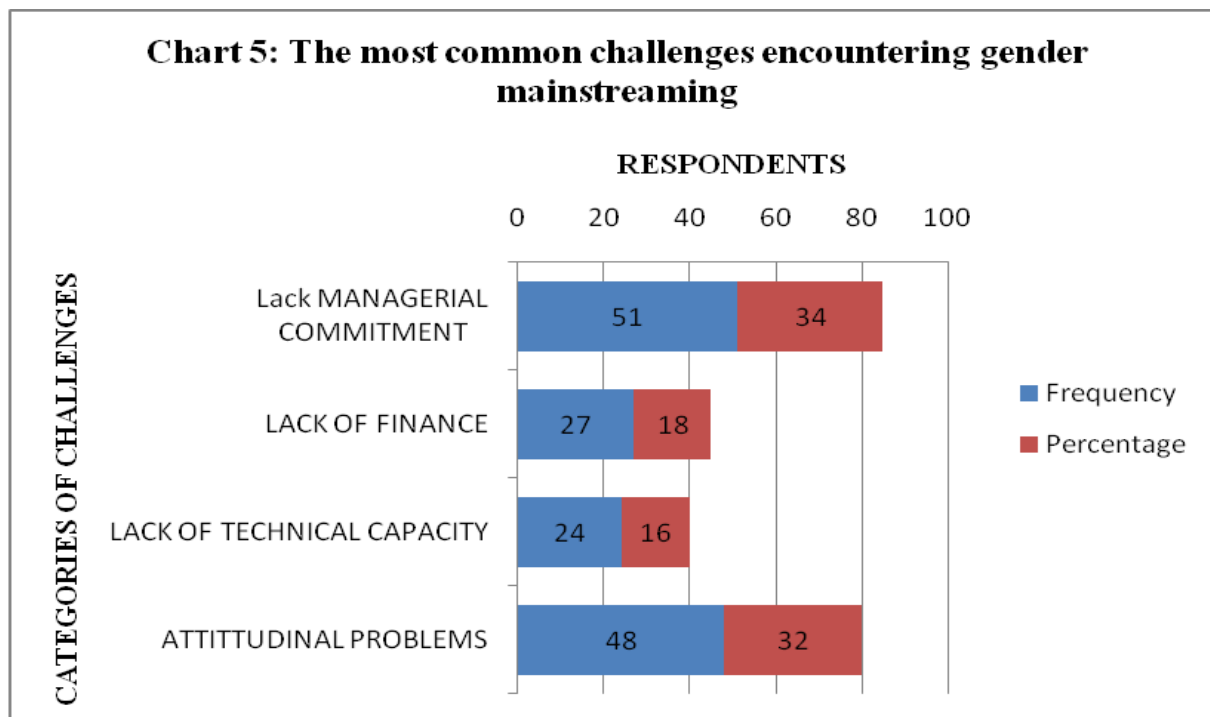


(Source: Questionnaire, 2019)

In Chart 4 above, concerning whether the current status of implementing gender mainstreaming is adequate, the great majority of the respondents, 137 (91.3%) confirmed that the situation is not satisfactory. About 5(2%) of the respondents agreed that the present condition of gender mainstreaming in their woredas is adequate and the remaining, 8(5.3%) don't know whether the present condition of gender mainstreaming in their woredas is adequate or not. In line with this, the information gathered through the interviews and focused group discussions confirmed that the present condition of gender mainstreaming is unsatisfactory in all study woredas. Therefore, identifying the major challenges to gender mainstreaming, ranking them in order of their severity and suggesting appropriate measures to address them is the very objective this study.

CHALLENGES FACED IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING

As indicated in the above section, overall implementation of gender mainstreaming has been slow and lagging much behind in all study woredas. A number of factors were identified as constraints inhibiting the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. This section provides the broader discussion of findings obtained from questionnaire, interviews, FGD, and document review. According to the survey conducted to staff members in the study sector Offices, respondents indicated the challenges they experienced in their respective woredas. On this basis, the responses of respondents were presented in the following table and discussed thereafter.



(Source: Questionnaire, 2019)

As depicted in the chart 5 above, the respondents confirmed the major challenges encountering the gender mainstreaming efforts in their respective woredas. Accordingly, 34%, 32%, 18%, and 16%, replied that the most commonly encountering challenges of gender mainstreaming as, lack of commitment from managers, gender biased attitudes held by the staff members, lack of finance, and lack of technical capacity within organization respectively. The documents reviewed during the study indicate that managers and leaders must have an obligation to put in place gendered organizational cultures by being aggressive towards gender issues in their daily speeches, statements and plans; and by putting in place the culture of open and regular discussion on gender equality

issues. The discussions conducted with group participants alleged that managers were not sensitive to gender equality issues. Group discussants expressed that the Managers were not cognizant on how to carry out gender mainstreaming in their organizations. In addition, group discussants noted the common challenges with gender mainstreaming such as lack of budget, lack of skills/knowledge or lack of training on gender mainstreaming. The group discussants and gender officers further expressed that that there are still resistances in accepting females employees as equal professional partners in public sectors.

Therefore, findings with regards to managerial commitment should alert the management to aggressively install gender friendly organizational cultures by giving adequate attention to the issue. The earlier studies in this regard suggest that the political will and leadership from authorities is crucial to create an enabling environment for the implementation of gender

mainstreaming. This implies that formal acknowledgement from organizational managers that gender equality is an essential component of sustainable development is a starting point of the game.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GENDER

MAINSTREAMING

Notwithstanding the identified challenges and weaknesses which inhibit the gender mainstreaming efforts, the researcher noted the specific opportunities to be effectively utilized to realize the goal of gender equality and women empowerment in the study woredas. According to the views of respondents to the open ended items of questionnaire, the interviews with the key informants, and focus group discussions identified the suitable institutional structures as the major opportunity. In this regard, it was observed that the structure of the gender machinery is established up to kebele levels with clear responsibility and accountability frameworks. Across all Woreda sector offices, gender mainstreaming support business process is staffed by the young and energetic gender focal persons. Furthermore, the duties and responsibilities of the gender officers clearly stated in job description.

The other enabler for implementation of gender mainstreaming as pointed by focus group discussants was the favorable policy and legal frame works. The documents reviewed with regards to policy and legal provisions on Ethiopian women indicate that suitable policy and legal conditions have been created by the government. Hence, it was noted that the national women policy, gender mainstreaming guidelines, manuals are highly important to offer practical steps for managers, and experts in fulfilling gender mainstreaming responsibilities.

Besides, women-specific policies, like affirmative action measures during the process of recruitment, and promotion have been put in place to enhance gender equality in all study woredas. It was also added that affirmative action measures are considered while deciding on issues like appointment to leadership positions, committee formation, and selection for training and educational opportunities. Moreover, most of respondents pointed that the recently implemented BPR introduced the culture of team work and open discussions and created equal ground for women to actively participate in the affairs of their organizations.

The respondents also noted that the availability of committed women managers in decision making positions and particularly the inclusion of heads of Women Affairs offices as member of Woreda level cabinet could be one of the enabler to promoting gender mainstreaming in the study areas. They added that the reform efforts being made by the current government is the major promontory factor to gender mainstreaming. Moreover, it was pointed that the existence of women associations at grassroots level and the keen interest of different NGOs towards promoting gender equality are the existing opportunities towards realizing the gender equality goal. In line with the above results, the previous findings by Ogato, (2013) indicates that the current constitution and subsequently promulgated legal reforms and policies have created an enabling environment for the promotion of gender equality and the emergence of various types of women's organizations working towards realization of gender equality and empowerment of women.

CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this study was to identify the major challenges and opportunities in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the selected woredas of Hadiya Zone. Based on the data analysis, interpretation and major findings, the study had finally come up with the following conclusions:

- ❖ From the findings it is observed that efforts are being made to incorporate the gender units within organizational structures across all study woredas. It is also observed that further attempts are made to create gender offices and assign the necessary human, financial, and physical resources to them. Despite such positive efforts in the study woredas, the gender units are not playing the expected roles and responsibilities. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the assigned gender units have not been providing adequate assistance in the gender mainstreaming efforts in all study woredas.
- ❖ The findings reveal that the commitment of senior managers to institutionalize gender mainstreaming is insufficient. It is also reflected that publications related to gender mainstreaming is inaccessible to the staff members in all study woredas. The findings also indicate that the provision of gender sensitive training and awareness creation is inadequate. Hence, it is possible to conclude that there is gender sensitive organizational culture has not been established yet in all study woredas.
- ❖ The lessons learned from the study suggest that the efforts being made to

mainstream gender perspectives in all study woredas have been facing common challenges. The managerial commitment to address these challenges is also examined as very low. Therefore, it could be possible to infer that the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming is still unsatisfactory. This also concludes that the gender machinery at district level is not working as to the standard and require capacity development themselves so as to provide adequate coordination and capacity building support to the other sector offices in the woredas.

- ❖ Finally, the findings of this study that there are several opportunities already existing in the study woredas that would serve as enabling factors to effectively realize the goals of gender mainstreaming. However, these opportunities are not effectively utilized in all study woredas. Hence, it is concluded that the managers and leaders in the study Woreda sector offices are not ‘walking their talks’.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are forwarded as interventions to effectively implement gender mainstreaming in the local government public sectors:

- ❖ The political will and the top of management is the most important precondition for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. As a starting point of the game, the managers should formally acknowledge that achieving

gender equality is an essential component of achieving the organizational goal. In this regard, it should be compulsory for all managers in public sector offices to create gender-equitable organizational culture by capacitating and enhancing the level of gender awareness to the staff and disseminating gender sensitive information to the public in general.

- ❖ The Woreda level administrators should promote a culture of gender equality by widely popularizing the gender equality agendas in their daily speeches and work plans. More importantly, they should also demonstrate their commitment through allocating adequate budget for gender training at Woreda level.
- ❖ The mere existence of gender machineries at Woreda level may not be sufficient in itself. Therefore, the regional and zonal level gender machineries should provide technical, financial, and material support for lower level gender machineries. Effective coordination and communication should be established among gender machineries and all other actors.
- ❖ It should be desirable to strengthen the capacity of Gender Focal persons by providing them adequate training, and allocating the necessary resources and authorities to carry out their daily duties.
- ❖ For gender mainstreaming to be successful, staff members should have up-to-date knowledge and awareness of gender issues. Hence, gender focal persons should play catalytic role to deepen the

awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity of all staff members.

- ❖ Critically analyzing the existing opportunities and utilizing their advantages is one of the steps towards effective gender mainstreaming at local levels. Therefore, it is recommended that the leaders of the selected sector offices should devote full energy to utilize the existing opportunities to solve the major challenges so as to realize the gender mainstreaming goals.

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