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## **Assessment of the Factors Affecting Women Participation in Cooperatives: The Case of West Shewa Zone Districts**

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### **Abstract**

In developing countries there were to some extent equal treatments of rural women with men because as traditional perception women could not go far and only doing their surrounding the garden. This perception of cultural were limited the participation level of rural women in cooperative and adversely affected rural women through made them lack of education access and training services provided by cooperatives or agents of cooperatives. The main objectives of study were assessing the factors affecting participation of rural women in cooperatives and evaluate the women participation in internal affairs of cooperatives. West Shewa zone has 22 districts and out of the existing districts, six districts were selected to carry out the research study for assessing the factors affecting women participation in cooperatives and investigate degree of women participation in cooperatives. The total population of rural members in the focused study area were 4,867 and sample size of the research was 356 and it determined by using Kothari formula. The main objective of the study was to assess the factors affecting rural women participation in cooperatives and investigate the degree of rural women participation in cooperatives. The study employed mixed method research approach as research design. It also employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and

analysis. Beyond the social, political and economic constraints, women often face cultural barriers that restrict their involvement in public meetings or that place their domestic responsibilities before their economic or social involvement in agricultural cooperatives. Lack of education access of women has limited their equally participation in cooperatives. Since most women have no access to education they did not recognize the advantage of some development interventions so that they are unwilling to accept something which is new for them. In the study, the problem observed that against the women did not participate in activities report with equality are lack of infrastructures facility, poor network linkages among them, and lack of interest due to self-individuals affairs and self-complain as lack of sufficient knowledge and responsibilities with understood them self as someone ignores their idea generation and suggestion in internal affairs of cooperatives. Majority of member's lacks of communication access such as telephone or mobile cell and they living in dispersion area had limited cooperatives to disseminate information about the cooperative's attending regular meeting. It is also familiar that in developing countries poor infrastructures facilities were the main factors that affect equal participation of women in cooperatives.

**Keywords:** Rural Women, Participation, Factors Affecting Women, Cooperatives

### **Introduction**

It is general knowledge that women's participation in cooperatives is low, especially in rural cooperatives. In the developing world, cultural and religious factors are often hinder its movement: women's "inside" role, discretion, not speaking in front of men, traditions of men negotiating and handling money matters, illiteracy, family size supposed inferior abilities, and social pressures make it difficult for women to play an active and visible public role. To date women's active involvement and leadership in agricultural cooperatives continue to be rather low. Beyond the social, political and economic constraints, women often face cultural barriers that restrict their involvement in public meetings or that place their domestic responsibilities before their economic or social involvement in agricultural cooperatives. In some countries, this is due to the basic fact that only owners and tenants of land, most often men, can become members of agricultural cooperatives or that the fee charged for cooperative membership is beyond the means of economically dependent rural women (FAO, 2010).

The reasons for the persisting gender inequality are numerous and complex, but include, among others factors, basic structural and socio-cultural issues beyond the control of the cooperative movement – such as inequalities in access to resources, education and training, unequal division of labour and use of time between women and men as well as stereotyped conceptions on the roles of women and men – as well as legal constraints stemming from cooperative law or, as is more of frequently the case, related legislation (property, land and inheritance rights) or cooperative by-laws (Eva M., 2010).

Cooperatives can play important roles in overcoming the barriers faced by women and in supporting small agricultural producers. Evidences shows that cooperatives have the capacity to empower their members economically and socially by create sustainable employment through equitable and inclusive business models that are more resilient to shocks. Cooperatives offer small producers a range of services, aimed at improving the livelihood of its members (Harris, 2010). While the advantages of the cooperative approach are clear, challenges persist. In cooperatives in the majority of African countries, women remain under-represented as both employees, members and in particular leaders. For instance, ICA data from Kenya show that women comprise 40% of employees in agricultural cooperatives, only 26% of members, and a mere 9% of management (Ibid). Achieving active and equal participation of women being able to influence decision-making and shape the cooperative's agenda as leaders, or being able to access benefits such as services or education as members, for instance which is not shown by statistics, is an even greater challenge, although the democratic nature of the cooperative does mean women members, like men, can have a stronger voice in the cooperative's matters than in other types of enterprise (Ibid).

### **Factors Affecting Women Participation in Cooperative**

The world over, statistics show that women's participation in cooperatives is low, especially in rural cooperatives. In the developing world, cultural and religious factors are often hinder its movement: women's "inside" role, discretion, not speaking in front of men, traditions of men negotiating and handling money matters, illiteracy, family size supposed inferior abilities, and social pressures make it difficult for women to play an active and visible public role (Journal of International Women's Studies, 2002).

To date women's active involvement and leadership in agricultural cooperatives continue to be rather low. Beyond the social, political and economic constraints, women often face cultural barriers that restrict their involvement in public meetings or that place their domestic responsibilities before their economic or social involvement in agricultural cooperatives. In some countries, this is due to the basic fact that only owners and tenants of land, most often men, can become members of agricultural cooperatives or that the fee charged for cooperative membership is beyond the means of economically dependent rural women (FAO, 2010).

The reasons for the persisting gender inequality are numerous and complex, but include, among others factors, basic structural and socio-cultural issues beyond the control of the cooperative movement – such as inequalities in access to resources, education and training, unequal division of labour and use of time between women and men as well as stereotyped conceptions on the roles of women and men – as

well as legal constraints stemming from cooperative law or, as is more of frequently the case, related legislation (property, land and inheritance rights) or cooperative by-laws (Eva M., 2010).

A research conducted on Socio-economic factors affecting the participation of women in agricultural co-operatives in Gwoza local government, Borno state, Nigeria revealed that cultural beliefs and low level of education were found to be the major problems militating against women participation in co-operatives (YL Idrisa, *et al*, 2007).

### **Research Design and Sampling**

The study employed a mixed research design, uses both primary data and secondary data collected to assess the factors affecting participation of rural women in cooperative and investigate participation level of rural women in cooperatives. FGD and interview methods were also employed so as to identify the factors affecting participation of women in cooperatives and their livelihood activities. Research survey has been collected from 356 respondents of the twelve primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives societies selected in six districts of West Shewa Zone.

The factors affecting participation of rural women in cooperatives and their participation level were investigated in detail through focused on Six Districts of West Shewa Zone selected. The researcher purposively used the large proportion of women members of primary multipurpose agricultural cooperative societies to determine the focus area of District and target of area of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives to avoid the sample biased. There were exist 481 primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives societies in the zone and the researcher had selected six districts purposively rely on the large proportion of members of rural women and from each Woreda two Primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives societies were selected purposively that had faith large proportion of members of rural women in primary agricultural cooperatives for further assessing the role of primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives societies in building sustainable livelihood of rural women.

West Shewa zone had 22 districts or in local language Woreda and only six districts selected purposively focusing on the large proportion of rural women members in agricultural cooperatives and from each selected districts; two PMACS generally 12 were chosen based on large proportion of members of rural women in cooperatives. The total population of the target cooperatives was 4,867 and difficult to contact all population due to time and budget constraints. For this fact, the researcher had used Kothari (2004) formula to determine sample size that present true value of population and the determined sample size had been contacted by using simple random sampling methods. Thus, sample size survey from members of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives is 356 and from the two discussions focus group is to be 16 and key informant interview is 3 respondents.

### **Participation of Women in Internal Affairs of Their Cooperatives**

Women's equal participation in agricultural cooperatives is both a women's right and important for sustainable and people-centred development. If cooperatives are gender-responsive and inclusive, they can help women overcome gender specific constraints to improve their self-confidence, knowledge, leadership skills, income, and access to

agricultural inputs, social networks, and position in value-chains. In the study, the participation of status of women in cooperatives had been strictly observed due to the participation of women in cooperatives is very important for empowering of social economic participation. Thus, the

following, table shows perception of rural women participation in the internal affairs of cooperatives.

### Participation status of rural women in Cooperatives

Table 1

How often do you participate in the following affairs of the cooperative?	Most of time		Sometimes		Not at all		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Attending Regular Meeting	161	45.2%	172	48.3%	23	6.5%	356	100.0%
Approving or amending rules & regulations of the cooperative	145	40.7%	180	50.6%	31	8.7%	356	100.0%
Approving Audit Report	138	38.8%	196	55.1%	22	6.2%	356	100.0%
Evaluating & Approving Executed	132	37.1%	200	56.2%	24	6.7%	356	100.0%
Activities Report	107	30.1%	220	61.8%	29	8.1%	356	100.0%
Discharging responsibilities	162	45.5%	145	40.7%	49	13.8%	356	100.0%
Purchasing and Selling Products	137	38.5%	150	42.1%	69	19.4%	356	100.0%

Source: From Researcher Survey, 2023 n=356

**Attending Regular Meeting:** Principles of cooperative is stated that all members of cooperative has to meeting on general assembly once in a year to evaluate all activities of their cooperatives and forward best direction to their cooperatives' improvement in the futurity. As it is shown in above table 4.1, 48.3% of respondents replied that as they participated in attending regular meeting in sometimes followed by most of times participated with 45.2% of respondents. A minimal number of respondents 6.5% reacted that not at all participated in attending regular meeting held by the cooperatives. As FGD made with specific members of women in cooperative, the cooperative head had informed as to participate on regular meeting prior to the period through our cooperative coordinators, in actually for the reason of our affairs or some problem exist in side of transportation facilities all members not equally attended in regular meeting of the cooperatives, also sometimes we were lack of information about the period of regular meeting held by cooperatives, these events has made us not equally attending regular meeting. Key informant interview made with senior administrative staff of cooperatives, Mr. TgesayeBersisa, he explained that there were problem to get the all members due to majority of member's lacks of communication access such as telephone or mobile cell and they living in dispersion area had limited cooperatives to disseminate information about the cooperative's attending regular meeting.

It is same fact that Development Resource Center (2007) has reported that rural based cooperatives can promote the participation of women in economic production, which in turn helps in food production and rural development through cooperatives; women are able to unite in solidarity and provide a network of mutual support to overcome cultural restrictions to pursuing commercial or economic activities. When women are more economically and socially empowered, evidence shows that there are direct and positive impacts on women's household and community decision-making power and on access to and control over productive assets. Therefore, network access which encourage interconnection of the members is very important to empower rural women effectively participate in internal affairs of cooperatives and empowering them to access sufficient information.

**Approving or Amending Rules and Regulations:** Regarding approving or amending rules and regulation of

the cooperatives, about 50.6% of respondents were replied as sometimes participated while 40.7% of participants reacted that as they participated with most of time and the remains 8.7% of respondents responded that as they not contributed at all. As the FGD made with specific members from JawiBuri and Kilinto Primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives, from both discussion the same suggestion had been disclosed, as the rules and regulation of cooperatives revised per three years, but small number of members had been contributed in amending rules and regulation and majority of members were deprived to take part in amending rules and regulation of cooperatives. They stated that as per principles of cooperatives, cooperative office of districts integrated with regional cooperative office decided revision of our cooperatives rules and regulations then they delivered to all members for only purpose of accepting the decision about the revision, such causes had been ignored our equally participation in cooperative on policy and regulation amendment.

**Approving Audit Report:** The operational activities of every cooperative are audited at once in a year based on fiscal accounting period. During general assembly, the auditing report of the cooperative activities had presented for approving decision, as two third members of cooperatives believe that the quality of audit report presented become too adequate for approving rather when more than two third of cooperatives did not believe the quality of audit report by the professional, it is rejected and the gaps of audit report clearly stated and forwarded for final decision with incorporated all comments. Accordingly, the research survey shows that 55.1% of women in cooperatives were participated in approving audit report with sometimes while 38.8% of respondents reacted that as they most of time participated in approving audit report of the cooperatives activities. In others, a minimal number of respondents 6.2% answered that not participated at all in approving audit report of the cooperatives. As per the key informant interview made with one of the senior Cooperatives administration, he disclosed that the majority of cooperatives members did not know the concept of audit due to their education access is low and majority of them could not read and write, for this fact for approving audit report some members of cooperatives informed to emanate their suggestion regarding the prepared draft audit and then after the professional of accounting consultancy

accumulated all missed cost materials and report the result of audit.

As result, lack of education access of women has limited their equally participation in approving audit report of cooperatives. Since most women have no access to education they did not recognize the advantage of some development interventions so that they are unwilling to accept something which is new for them. In other, education of women so as to develop their ability and to have confidence on their action, therefore, cooperative should facilitate the access of education with formal and informal to improve human capital of women because education is key factors that change human being and having great contribution in socio-economic development.

#### **Evaluating and Approving Executed Activities:**

Cooperatives are established with objective, mission and vision to realize its concern for community and bring concrete change in socio-economic development or economically empowering social activity. To realize its mission and vision, the planning activities of the cooperatives held in a period has gone improved through evaluating and approving executed activities. So, evaluating and approving the executed activities is the internal affairs of cooperatives that promote participation of women in cooperative. Out of total participant, 56.2% of the respondents answered that as they participate in evaluating and approving report of executed activities of the cooperative with sometimes while 37.1% of the respondents replied that as they participate most of time in approving executed activities of the cooperatives, 6.7% of participants did not obtain participate in evaluating and approving the executed activities of their cooperatives at all. Also, the participation level of women on different activity report has been observed, as a result, 61.8% of respondents reacted that they participate in activity report with sometimes while 30.1% of participant answered that most of time participated on activity report of the cooperatives, the others 8.1% respondents that as they did not participate on relevant activity report at all. In the study, the problem observed that against the women did not participate in activities report with equality are lack of infrastructures facility, poor network linkages among them, and lack of interest due to self-individuals affairs and self-complain as lack of sufficient knowledge and responsibilities with understood them self as someone ignores their idea generation and suggestion in internal affairs of cooperatives.

**Discharging responsibility:** It is the others factors that promote the participation of women in cooperatives. Properly discharging responsibility is the key indicators positive impact of the economic or capital growth of cooperatives. As result, about majority of respondent's 45.5% reacted that as they most of time discharging their responsibility in cooperative to improve daily activities of cooperatives while 40.7% of participants amplified that they are discharging their responsibility in cooperative and minimal number of respondents 13.8% did not discharging their responsibility at all. Miss understanding their responsibility and accountability in cooperatives had limited small number of members to adequately discharging responsibility. This problem can be solved through frequently delivering training service, provision of information about the responsibility and duties of the

members having in the cooperatives and accessing education opportunities with formal and formal to empower them to properly discharging responsibility.

**Purchasing and selling products:** The capacity of purchasing and selling products of the cooperatives is the indicator of their capital increments. Cooperative that having adequate capital has efficiently participate in purchasing agricultural products at harvesting time with low price and sold at increasing price of final products. In reality, about 42.1% of respondents responded that as they most of time participate in purchasing and selling of final products whereas 38.5% of participants reacted as most of time take part in activities but about 19.4% of respondents revealed they did not participate at all in purchasing and selling of final products of the cooperatives.

Achieving active and equal participation of women being able to influence decision-making and shape the cooperative's agenda as leaders, or being able to access benefits such as services or education as members, for instance which is not shown by statistics, is an even greater challenge, although the democratic nature of the cooperative does mean women members, like men, can have a stronger voice in the cooperative's matters than in other types of enterprise (Ibid). Almost of the participants are reacted as they participant internal affairs of cooperatives with sometimes and followed by most of time, for improving equal participation of rural women with men, the cooperatives should give attention to encourage more women through promoted training service, access of social network and experience sharing cooperation among cooperatives. Therefore, the head of cooperatives should pay attentions to improve the participation level of women with equally men participation in cooperative on every internal affair of cooperative societies.

#### **Participation of women on Voting Rights and Equally Control of Economic Capitals of Cooperatives**

Democratic member control is cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner. Member's economic participation is members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

In the study, equal voting rights participation of rural women are observed, as it is shown in below table 4.2, about 78.9% of respondents reacted that as they having equal voting rights with men members of the cooperatives while 21.1% of respondents revealed that as they do not having equal voting rights with men members of cooperatives. The majority of participants are stated as their cooperatives



applied equal voting rights of women members with men in cooperatives and but only minimal of respondents had been complain equal voting rights did not take part in their cooperatives. The research implies that cooperatives have promoted equal voting rights of women with men members of cooperatives and in any case of business there were small number of members complain their firms or entrepreneurship in negative side for the next improvement. Therefore, it is the best strategies to the owner of business to bearing change in future rely on its weakness and threat consequently noticeable. Keeping equal voting rights and impartiality participation women with men in cooperatives activities would develop the equal accessibility of resource and achieving the target set of goals and objectives in their cooperatives. Hence, developing a culture of discussion with together, making decision clearly the cause and effects to cooperatives and periodically evaluate the implementation of goal setting in cooperatives can be strength the participation level of members.

**Status of rural women in equal voting rights ad control the economic capitals of cooperatives**

Do you have equal voting rights with men members of the cooperative * Do you equally control the economic capitals with other members? Cross tabulation				
Do you have equal voting rights with men members of the cooperative		Do you equally control the economic capitals with other members?		Total
		Yes	No	
Yes	Count	169	112	281
	% of Total	47.5%	31.5%	78.9%
NO	Count	19	56	75
	% of Total	5.3%	15.7%	21.1%
Total	Count	188	168	356
	% of Total	52.8%	47.2%	100.0%

Source: Computed from Own Research Survey, 20233 n =356

In others, in the study equally economic participation of rural women in cooperatives to control economic capitals is assessed. As a result has shown in above table, about 52.8% of respondents revealed as they equally control their economic capitals in the cooperatives while 47.2% of participants responded that they did not participate equally with men members of cooperatives to control or supervise the economic capital of their cooperatives. There were weaknesses of cooperatives to ensure equal economic participation of women with men members of cooperatives. Indeed, to promote the members economic participation principles of cooperatives, all head of primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives societies should be encourage equal involvement of rural women with men members in cooperatives because the result of respondents which approached to the result of equal participation is against that poor equal participation of women in economic participation.

**Factor affecting Participation of Women in Cooperatives**  
Prakash (2003) [12] stated that lack of leadership and inadequate participation in the organizational and economic, affairs of their agricultural cooperatives, absence of property inheritance rights, restriction on acquiring membership of

agricultural cooperatives consequently being deprived of farm credit etc. The problems of women in cooperatives are classified as organizational or internal problems, external problems, and infrastructural related problems. Internal problem is emanated from the poor management, lack of adequate skilled and experience, poor technical competency of managerial, poor transparency and accountability. Inadequate capital, unequal participation men and women in decision and lack of knowledge about duties and responsibilities but those problems are under the capacity of members to manage. External factors are factors that beyond the capacity of members to manage the events happen and adversely influenced all livelihood performance of women such as high cost of production, low prices of produces, interference of government on internal affairs of cooperatives, distance from cooperatives location, political instability and social conflict, tribe and race discrimination, market saturation for the final products are some instance of external factors. Finally, infrastructures constraints are other factors that affect the participation level of women in cooperatives; those can be emanated from external factors issue or internal factors due to poor managing the infrastructures facilities already stretched at location site of the cooperatives.

The pressures that weaken women's participation in all agricultural cooperatives in the community were viewed in three ways, each of which was viewed from the participants' perspectives on these problems. Similarly, weak cooperative structure, lack of strong leadership and lack of timely control have led to weak participation of women, which when the structure of all-farm cooperatives is being developed, the economic situation of all-farm cooperatives through it shows a lack of attention to strengthening factors. Therefore, to further strengthen the participation of women members of all agricultural cooperatives, leader with sufficient skills, long years of work experience and positive attitude and can run all agricultural cooperatives in the right way should be appointed as members they have a duty. Besides, government organ, focus with development infrastructures such as accessibility of electrification throughout rural area, facilitating rural road which increase urban-rural linkages and saving time for activities is the vital important to improve participation level of women.

Rural women participation in cooperatives were affected by internal factors, external and infrastructures facilities, internal factors is emanated from weakness of internal structures of cooperatives and poor qualified staff, external factors by weakness of government give direction and intervention in cooperatives or beyond managing capacity of concerned body and shortage of infrastructures facilities happened due to poor national planning to develop main development of infrastructures which gave open access service for all communities or members cooperatives. Therefore, the researcher has observed that three categories of factors affecting participation of rural women in cooperatives was the major factors and the degree of the factors affecting equal participation of rural women in cooperatives were stated herewith under table.

**Factors affecting participation of women in Cooperatives**

Constraints	Degree of Importance							
	Important		Less important		Don't know		Total	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
<b>1. Organizational Constraints</b>								
In efficient Managerial system	138	38.8%	156	43.8%	62	17.4%	356	100.0%
Lack of transparency and accountability	130	36.5%	166	46.6%	60	16.9%	356	100.0%
Inadequate capital	211	59.3%	145	40.7%	0	0.0%	356	100.0%
Unequal participation of men and women in decision making	130	36.5%	168	47.2%	58	16.3%	356	100.0%
Lack of knowledge about duties and responsibilities	132	37.1%	167	46.9%	57	16.0%	356	100.0%
Poor management working activities	125	35.1%	157	44.1%	74	20.8%	356	100.0%
<b>2. External Constricts</b>								
High cost of production	215	60.4%	136	38.2%	5	1.4%	356	100.0%
Low prices of produces	89	25.0%	166	46.6%	101	28.4%	356	100.0%
Interference by government on internal affairs of cooperatives	96	27.0%	186	52.2%	74	20.8%	356	100.0%
Distance from cooperatives location	98	27.5%	166	46.6%	92	25.8%	356	100.0%
Political instability and social conflict	235	66.0%	121	34.0%	0	0.0%	356	100.0%
Tribe or race discrimination	81	22.8%	126	35.4%	149	41.9%	356	100.0%
Market saturation for the final products	73	20.5%	174	48.9%	109	30.6%	356	100.0%
Highly speed inputs cost increased	228	64.0%	105	29.5%	23	6.5%	356	100.0%
<b>3. Infrastructures Constraints</b>								
Lack of transportation facility	190	53.4%	97	27.2%	69	19.4%	356	100.0%
Shortage of electrification service	184	51.7%	107	30.1%	65	18.3%	356	100.0%
Accessibility of rural road and easily linkages urban rural	193	54.2%	100	28.1%	63	17.7%	356	100.0%

Source: Computed from Own Research Survey, 2023 n= 356

**Organizational problems:**

Under organizational factors some of factors are stated which adversely affected participation performance of women in cooperatives. Thus, factors turn by turn mentioned as under herewith:

**Inefficient Managerial System:** It is expected that the management who have efficient managing systems or tactics could be pull or renovate mind of all members to equally participate in general meeting or at every time the affairs of cooperatives held to improve in internal structure of cooperatives. As it is shown in table 4.3: the majority of participants 43.8% identified the existence of inefficient managerial system as less important whereas 38.8% of respondents has reacted that inefficient managerial system is more important, 17.4% of participants answered that do not know either exist or not inefficient managerial system in cooperatives.

**Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** Transparency and accountability is a main clue to equally treating participation of rural women in cooperatives with fairness rather than discriminate to each other's. Thus, lack of transparency and accountability is one of the aspects which affected the participation level of women in cooperatives. About 46.6% of the respondents replied that lack of transparency and accountability is as less important while 36.5% and 16.9% of participants answered that the lack of transparency and accountability is as important and don't know about the problem respectively. The researcher has understood that there is less important lack of transparency and accountability which slightly affected participation of members in cooperatives.

**Inadequate Capital:** Capital is one of the indicators of sustainable livelihood or outcomes meaning as increment of capital of cooperatives, ability of members to cope with stress and shocks are laterally increased. For this fact, increment of capital promoted self-confidence of the members to standby with the challenges and problem in their cooperatives. From the question provided to participants about majority of respondents 59.3% replied that inadequate capital is as an important problem while 40.7% of respondents reacted that as less important problem of cooperatives and all participants has identified inadequate

capital which is one of the main problem that made women do not participate in cooperatives. As interview and FGD made with particular participants, they stated that inadequate capital is the serious problem including inability to provide credit service, inability to hire full time staffs, limitations to increase the cooperatives with necessary facilities and to provide better training service so as to capacitate both the members and administrative staff, the members and administrative bodies of cooperative provided different reason for the inadequate capital, the core reason stated from administrative staff was the delay as well as cut-off credit service from lending institution (union, micro finance and banking industries, reduction of financial fund from NGOs and the trend in international market that challenge profitability of the cooperatives are the causes for inadequate capital and as observed from the participants, the main problem for inadequate capital was lack of accessing of farming inputs with time, poor credit service, political instability through the region and poor business movement of cooperatives.

**Unequal participation of men and women in cooperatives:** Democracy is one of the principles of cooperatives which enforced all members to participate in cooperative with equal treating of women with men. The data depicted that 47.2% of participants recognized that unequal participation of men and women in cooperatives is less important problem ad 36.5% respondents acknowledged that as it is important problem, about 16.3% of respondents responded that don't know about whether exist or not unequal participation of women and men in cooperatives. The FGD and interview discussion also shows that there is no such considerable gender-based discrimination among members of the cooperative in terms of accessing the services. Though the respondents demand increased presentation in the administrative positions, they are happy with positive treatment from both the managerial staffs and men members of the cooperatives.

**Lack of Knowledge about Responsibilities:** Asked to rate the extent of lack of knowledge about responsibilities as a problem of the cooperative, 46.9% of the respondents replied that it is less important problem of the cooperative, about 37.1% of the respondents graded it is as important

problem of the cooperative while 16% of them replied that they don't know about the problem. The researcher conducted FGD and interview discussions with particular members from two primary multipurpose agricultural cooperative societies, accordingly, members of cooperatives who contacted for interview and FGD, they stated that majority of administrative staff having low level education, lack of adequate experience about the purpose of cooperative and their education status also unrelated with cooperative concept such problem is held responsible for their limited knowledge about their responsibilities.

**Poor Management of Activities:** It is a common factor that affects the participation of women in cooperatives. The management who have good technical competency and qualification status know how to managing daily activities of cooperatives and can employ equal participation of women with men in cooperatives upon any internal affairs and meeting of cooperatives. In other hands, the management who do not have self-confidence and qualification could not made decision with equal consideration and reasonable for disputes of membership. Therefore, the researcher had provided question to rate the extent of respondents' response in regarding poor management activities, accordingly, 44.1% of respondents had reacted that poor management working activities is less important problem which sometimes abuse equal participation of women in cooperatives and 35.1% of respondents reflected that poor management activities is as an important problem of women in cooperatives that adversely impact the contribution of women and principles of cooperatives' member economic participation while 20.8% of participants replied that don't know about the problem. Poor management activities would be made the members to hate their cooperatives and reason out poor image or reputation of cooperatives.

#### **External Problems:**

External factors are factors that beyond the capacity of members to manage the events happen and adversely influenced all livelihood performance of members. To investigate the external problem, the researcher has asked the respondents to rate the extent of problem of participation of women in cooperatives. So, particular external factors in cooperative are explained under:

**High Cost of production:** It is commonly well known that cost of production since 2021 G.C has increased periodically and reached at the level of cooperatives could not supply inputs that improve production capacity of members. Such weakness of cooperative has driven from highly overrun the price of farming inputs and other related materials used for increasing the yield of production. From the asked regarding high cost of production, 60.4% of respondents answered that high cost of production is one of the important problems of the cooperative, 38.2 % of the respondents replied that it is as less important. The majority respondent's responses have failed under important and less important problem of cooperatives is high cost of production. From this figure, the researcher has identified the main issue of women in cooperatives is lack of accessing varies agricultural inputs with affordable price while 1.4% of participant had reacted that we don't know about the problem.

**Low price of produces:** Low price of produces is another problem of cooperative. As a result, majority of respondents 46.6% replied that low price of produces is less important

problem of the cooperatives and 28.4% of respondent's ranked as don't know about the problem while 25% of respondents reacted that low price of produce is an important problem of the cooperatives. From this figure, the researcher has understood that the problem of cooperatives is not as much of low price of produces. The data from interview and FGD has disclosed from the respondents of cooperatives, the main issue is not low price of product but the increment of price on our agricultural output and farm inputs has mismatched meaning the price of farm inputs has increased over than output of agricultural products, such event has minimized our income level less than what we generated in preceding years.

**Interference by Government on internal affairs of Cooperative:** From asked, 52.2% participants ranked Interference by government on internal affairs of cooperatives is less important problem and 27% of respondents replied that it is as important problem whereas 20.8% of participants reacted that we don't know about the problem. The survey research has revealed that interference by the government is not important problem in the cooperatives for majority of the respondents. Particular of respondents expressed that there is some degree of intervention by government in internal affairs of the cooperatives. This in turn challenges the Democracy, independent and autonomy of the cooperatives, which one of the central principles of cooperative. As interviewed made with particular members, government had interference in ways of cooperative supply farm inputs and on price determination, ways of delivery service and to assign staff or employee to the cooperatives.

**Distance from Cooperative:** Distance from cooperative is less important problem for 46.6% of the respondents, 27.5% of respondents ranked as it is important problem of cooperative while 25.8% of respondents responded that don't know about the problem of distance from cooperatives. From research survey understood that distance from cooperatives is less important problem and majority of members did not have distance problem from cooperatives.

**Political instability and social conflict:** Political instability and social conflicts among the factors affecting the participation of women in cooperatives is the second ranked next to highly speed costs of inputs increased. Accordingly, political instability and social conflict is the serious important problem of cooperatives for 66% of respondents while 34% of participants replied that it is as less important problem of cooperatives. All response of respondents were failed under serious important and less important problem of cooperatives that mean they don't know about the problem response is zero value.

**Tribe or Race Discrimination:** Tribe or race discrimination is another factor that made the cooperative to suffer. From the asked, the majority of respondents 41.9% replied that don't know about the problem in regarding the tribe or race discrimination, about 35.4% and 22.8% of respondents ranked race discrimination is less important and important problem respectively. Therefore, the survey has depicted that case of tribe or race discrimination is rarely happen in cooperatives and majority of PMACS has delivery service without race-based discrimination.

**Market saturation for the final products:** It is lack of sufficient market for the final product due to similar competition or new entrant who supply same or better quality product increased in the market destination. In order

to rank market status of final products of the women in cooperatives, the researcher has asked participants, as result about 48.9% of respondents responded that market saturation for the final product is less important problem and 20.5% of participants reacted that it is as an important problem while 41.9% of participants shows that don't know about the problem.

**Highly cost of inputs:** Primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives is one of cooperatives which have mandate to provide agricultural inputs to their members. Therefore, agricultural inputs such as fertilizer; variety seeds, herbicides and pesticides are main inputs that used to increase the yield of production. To investigate its accessibility and costs of those farm inputs, from the researcher asked about 64% of respondents replied that highly speed increased cost of input is a serious important problem and 29.5% of respondents answered that it is as less an important problem of women in cooperatives while 6.5% of participants replied don't know about the problem in case of speedily increased cost of inputs. The researcher has made interview with particular members, they has complained that the price of agricultural input supply since 2021G.C has increased from time to time and it has reached at a level of members could not afford to utilize for their production and some of members has started to cultivate with bare agricultural inputs specially for fertilizer and herbicides inputs, accordingly their yield of production was highly decreased due to shortage of agricultural input supply and overrun of its costs.

#### **Infrastructure Related Problems:**

Government organ has primary duties and responsibilities to facilitate infrastructures to the communities and societies for ensuring sustainable development through the country. Thus, accessibility of transportation service, rural electrification and accessibility of rural road and easily linkage urban-rural societies are the other factors that contribute to socio-economic development to the cooperatives. In further, the influence of infrastructures on cooperatives has stated hereunder:

**Inaccessibility of Transportation Service:** Poor access of transportation service is adversely affect the participation level of women in cooperatives, in contrary adequate access of transportation motivated or initiated rural women to easily participated in cooperatives through saving their time which previous burned their time on voyage for reality of poor access transportation service and road facilities. From enquiry, 53.4% of respondents replied that inaccessibility of transportation service is an important problem of the cooperative and 27.2% of respondents answered that it is as less an important problem while 19.4% of respondents reacted that don't know the problem inline of transportation service.

**Shortage of Electrification Service:** Inaccessibility of electrification service is also other factors that influence the members to concentrate on one dimension of product. Specially, for agro processing industry such as bakery processing, dairy processing and vegetable and fruits processing and fattening animals are common agro processing industries. For poor access of rural electrification, the cooperatives could not develop such as activities that play significant role in their business diversification from farming activities. As per primary data collected from participants, about 51.7% of respondents

ranked that shortage of rural electrification are an important problem and 30.1% of respondents replied that it is as less important problem for the cooperatives while 18.3% of participants reacted that don't know about the problem of inaccessibility of electrification.

**Accessibility of Rural Road and Linkages with Urban-Rural:** Accessibility of road among rural and urban is promoted the performance of rural communities or societies to easily linked to each other's, in contrary poor access of road discouraged the motivation of members to link with urban-rural for the purpose of getting goods and service from each other's. Urban residence could be got fresh products from rural residence and rural residence could be got consumption goods from urban residences. Therefore, mutual benefit has understood from the linkages of rural and urban. Poor accessibility of infrastructures is adversely affected mutual benefits of rural and urban residences. As observed, 54.2% of respondents reacted that inaccessibility of road is a serious important problem of cooperative and 28.1% of participants replied that it is as less important problem whereas 17.7% of respondents shows that don't know about the problem in regarding accessibility of the road facility which encourage interconnection of rural and urban residence.

#### **Conclusion**

The study implies that internal factors, external and infrastructures facilities were the common factors that affect degree of rural women participation in cooperatives. Recently, overrun of agricultural farming costs had been highly affected the degree of participation of rural women in cooperatives followed by political instability within different districts of the zone. Also, the study revealed that poor access of education for rural women has affected their equal participation and the majority of respondents among the categories of education about 24.2% were cannot read and write. As result, lack of education access of women has limited their equally participation in cooperatives. Since most women have no access to education they did not recognize the advantage of some development interventions so that they are unwilling to accept something which is new for them. In other, education of women so as to develop their ability and to have confidence on their action, therefore, cooperative should facilitate the access of education with formal and informal to improve human capital of women because education is key factors that change human being and having great contribution in socio-economic development.

#### **Recommendations**

The major findings presented during research study are forwarded as the following:

- Almost of the participants reacted as they participant internal affairs of cooperatives with sometimes and followed by most of time, for improving equal participation of rural women with men, the cooperatives should give attention to encourage more women through promoted training service, access of social network and experience sharing cooperation among cooperatives. Therefore, the head of cooperatives should pay attentions to improve the participation level of women with equally men participation in cooperative on every internal affair of cooperative societies.



- There were weaknesses of cooperatives to ensure equal economic participation of women with men members of cooperatives. Indeed, to promote the members economic participation principles of cooperatives, all head of primary multipurpose agricultural cooperatives societies should be encourage equal involvement of rural women with men members in cooperatives because the result of respondents which approached to the result of equal participation is poor equal participation of women in economic participation.
- Education accessibility is strength the members to effectively participate in their cooperatives and has positive impact on income growth of the cooperatives, therefore the cooperatives should focused on delivering education service with formal and informal to improve the human capital of rural women in cooperatives.

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