

Research Article

The Practice of Empowering Areas of Women in Multi-Purpose Agricultural Cooperatives in North Gondar Zone of Amhara Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The cooperative societies play a very important role in coordinating the people towards the development of the nation. Cooperative societies are providing services to its member. The women who live in rural areas are the neediest people because of male dominated society. Women have all the skills and potentials, but they can't come up in their life due to lack of support from their family members. Multi-purpose agricultural cooperative societies encourage the rural women for the empowerment in their day to day life. This study was conducted in the five sample districts of North Gondar Zone of Amhara region namely, Chilga, Debark, East Belesa, Quara and Metema. Among the five districts, a total of 267 sample households were selected from sample multipurpose cooperatives by using systematic random sampling technique. The main objective of the study is to assess the practices of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives in addressing women socio-economic needs. The study will transfer the suggestions which serve the community in taking effective measures in improving the practice of empowering areas of women in multi-purpose Agricultural cooperatives and the new strategies to diversify the existing activities of the society so that it can effectively benefit to the large weaker sections of the society in rural areas.

Keywords: Cooperative societies, rural women, empowerment, North Gondar, socio-economic needs.

Introduction

Multipurpose Agricultural Cooperatives are expected to benefit the members and support the overall development of the country by mobilization the collective intervention. They fail to meet the anticipated objectives due to technical, institutional, financial and government bottlenecks. Women's empowerment is essential because in most cases women are responsible for their children and for their family, thus empowering women is empowering the society in large (World Bank, 2001; Quisumbing, 2003, Aregawi and Hailesilassie, 2013). The global statistics show that Women are in charge of 60-80% of the world's work, and produce 50 % of the food. Despite the fact that their contribution is significant, they have limited economic advantage and access to productive resources (Lawless et al., 1996; Mayoux, 2009). In most cases multipurpose agricultural cooperative does not consider gender issue, for instance, women's are under presented from local cooperative offices from the head up to guard staffed by male. This is, therefore, with the absence or little representation women their participation and claiming rights and benefits will not get an answer. Women face, often, major obstacles to joining and being active members of typically male dominated cooperatives (Thomas et al., 2015).

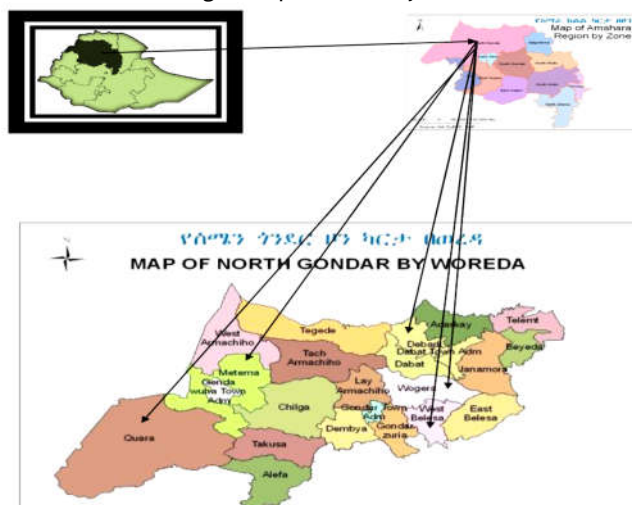
Due to unequal gender norms and relations, women have a lower socio-economic status, compared to their male counterparts, which limits their opportunities to access and participate in formal groups. Their restricted access to, control over, and ownership of land, credit, and information, as compared to men, disadvantage them from meeting conditions of formal group membership and leadership (World Bank, 2009; FAO, 2011). Considering the above facts, this study was aimed with the following objectives:

1. To examine the role of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives on women empowerment.
2. To assess practices of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives in addressing women socio-economic needs.

Materials and methods

Study area: This study was conducted in the five sample districts of North Gondar Zone of Amhara region namely, Chilga, Debark, East Belesa, Quara and Metema (Fig. 1). These districts were considered as representatives of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives in North Gondar Zone in terms of accessibility, livelihood zone and various agro-ecology.

Fig. 1. Map of the study area.



North Gondar was selected as a study area where there is diverse agricultural production and farming systems and 410 multipurpose agricultural cooperatives established legally in the zone.

Data collection: Both primary and secondary data sources were used for this study. The primary data sources were collected by using household survey, FGDs, KII and on-site observation. Secondary data was also collected from panel data, line cooperative office, library and University of Gondar internet service and other pertinent documents and grey literatures. This study followed a multi-stage sampling procedure. Among the five districts, a total of 267 sample households were selected from sample multipurpose cooperatives by using systematic random sampling technique taking into consideration proportion to the size of the member in each sample multipurpose agricultural cooperatives.

Data analysis: The researcher employed for data analysis both qualitative and quantities analysis techniques. Qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively whereas quantitative data gathered from household survey was analyzed by using descriptive statistical tools.

Results and discussion

The researcher employed for data analysis both qualitative and quantities analysis techniques. Qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively whereas quantitative data gathered from household survey was analyzed by using descriptive statistical tools. From Table 1, it was clear that, 34.3% were female whereas 65.7% were male respondents. Concerning their age, 15.4% of them were found under the age category of 14-30, 42.7% were under 31-45 age group, 28.7% were found under 46-60 and the rest 13.3% of the respondents were greater than 60 years.

Educational status of the respondents was categorized that, 49.7% of them were illiterate, 21%, 11.2%, 12.6%, 3.5% and 2.1% of the respondents were read and write, 1-4, 5-8, 9-10, 11-12 grade completed respectively. From the total respondents, 93.7% of them were orthodox religion follower whereas 5.6% were Muslim religion follower and the rest 0.7% of the respondents were other religion followers. So, the majority of the respondents were followers of orthodox religion.

Women empowerment areas of multipurpose agricultural cooperatives: It is clear from Table 2 that 78.3% of them knew that there were women members, 1.4% didn't know and the rest 19.6% of the respondents responded that they don't know whether there were women members or not in their cooperative. 6.3% of the respondents said the number of women members were less than five, 13.3% of them said the number of women members were about 6-20 and the rest 55.9% of the respondents didn't know the number of women members in their cooperative society. Regarding to motivational aspects to attract the new women members, 63.6% of the respondents responded that their cooperative was using different motivational mechanisms to attract new women members, 32.2% of them said their cooperative didn't motivate women to be member of their cooperative and the rest 4.2% of them said that they didn't know whether their cooperative motivated the women or not the attract them to be a member. In order to increase women members' participation in their cooperative and to attract new women members, there are different types of motivational mechanisms which every cooperative must use. It is clear from Table 3, 30.8% of them said their cooperative used awareness creation for motivational purpose. 15.4% said simplifying membership criteria was one motivational mechanism, 36.4% said priority given to women for membership was the motivational aspect 7.7% of the respondents were said cover cost of share and registration fee was the means of motivation which was used by their cooperative. The rest 9.8% of them said that they didn't know whether their cooperative used motivational mechanisms or not to motivate women members and attract women to be the member of their cooperative society.

The practice of empowering areas of women in multi-purpose agricultural cooperatives: It is clear from Table 4 that the empowering areas of women in multipurpose agricultural cooperatives were identified by member respondents. It indicates that the practice of those empowering areas of women and the majority of the respondents responded that their cooperative couldn't practice those empowering areas to empower women members.

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Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Parameters	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the respondents	Male	94	65.7
	Female	49	34.3
	Total	143	100.0
Age of the respondents	14-30	22	15.4
	31-45	61	42.7
	46-60	41	28.7
	>60	19	13.3
	Total	143	100.0
Educational status	Illiterate	71	49.7
	Read and Write	30	21.0
	1-4	16	11.2
	5-8	18	12.6
	9-10	5	3.5
	11-12	3	2.1
	Total	143	100.0
Religion	Orthodox	134	93.7
	Muslim	8	5.6
	others	1	0.7
	Total	143	100.0

Source: Primary data.

Table 2. The presence of women members in the cooperative.

No.	Are there women members in your MPAC	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	112	78.3
2.	No	2	1.4
3.	I don't know	29	19.6
	Total	143	100.0
No.	How many women members in your MPAC?	Frequency	Percentage
1.	<5	9	6.3
2.	6-20	19	13.3
3.	>20	35	24.5
4.	I don't know	80	55.9
	Total	143	100.0
No.	Did your coop motivate women to be a membership	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	91	63.6
2.	No	46	32.2
3.	I don't know	6	4.2
	Total	143	100.0

Sources: Primary data.

Table 3. Types of motivation that the cooperative used.

S.No.	Motivational aspects	Frequency	Percentage
1.	awareness creation	44	30.8
2.	simplify membership criteria	22	15.4
3.	priorities given to women for membership	52	36.4
4.	cover cost of share & reg. fee	11	7.7
6.	I don't know	14	9.8
	Total	143	100.0

Source: Primary data.

Table 4. The practice of the methods of empowering women by MPACs.

No.	Characteristics	Practiced		Not practiced	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1.	Access of small scale machine to empower women	61	42.7	82	57.3
2.	Access of training	52	36.4	91	63.6
3.	Access of credit	56	39.2	87	60.8
4.	Elected as a committee	62	43.4	81	56.6
5.	Participated in decision making	58	40.6	85	59.4
6.	Participated in committee election	69	48.3	74	51.7
7.	Participated in GA meetings	79	55.2	64	44.8
8.	Participated in nomination, voting, casting d/t committees	73	51.0	70	49.0
9.	Market access for women members	67	46.9	76	53.1
10.	Participated in patronage dividend	51	35.7	92	64.3
11.	Access of consumer goods	69	48.3	74	51.7
12.	Access of buying additional share	64	44.8	79	55.2
13.	Access of production inputs	70	49.0	73	51.0
14.	Access of job opportunity	47	32.9	96	67.1
15.	Create comfortable working condition	53	37.1	90	62.9
16.	By giving leadership position in special case	49	34.3	94	65.7

Source: Primary data.

Conclusion

There are empowering areas of women in multipurpose agricultural cooperatives which were identified by the respondents. Women participation in decision making, general assembly meeting, access of credit, access of small scale machine, access of training, elected as a committee, participated in committee election, Participated in nomination, voting and casting committees, Market access for women members, Participated in patronage dividend, Access of consumer goods, Access of buying additional share, Access of production inputs, Access of job opportunity, Create comfortable working condition, giving leadership position in special case all those are very important empowering areas which were identified by the majority of respondents, but as indicated by the majorities of the respondents, they couldn't use them to empower women members.

Recommendations

The women should be invited to participate in decision making, general assembly meeting, create access for credit, access of small scale machine, access of training, elected as a committee, participated in committee election, Participated in nomination, voting and casting committees, Market access for women members, Participated in patronage dividend, Access of consumer goods, Access of buying additional share, Access of production inputs, Access of job opportunity, Create comfortable working condition, giving leadership position in special case all those are very important empowering areas.

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