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Assessment of Rural Women Participation on Income Generating Activities in Assosa District, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, Western Ethiopia

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Abstract
The study examined the income generating activities of women in Assosa district, BGR, western Ethiopia. The study applied two stage sampling techniques to select 122 sampled respondents for the study. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Frequency, percentages and tables were used as means of data presentation. The reaserch result reaveled that most (37.7%) of the respondents were between the age category of 26-35 years, most primary educational level attendants (39.36%) with low participation at secondary and above levels, most married (67%). The most prominent IGAs undertaken by rural women in the study area were selling fruit and vegitables, selling animal product, engaging in petty trading, hair dressing, firewood selling and charcoal. The level of gross margin of the IGAs made by women were positive, indicating their average monthly earned revenue was greater than what they are expending per month. Womens who were generating income in engaging in different IGAs face a considerable constraint such as credit access shortage, lack of technical support and training, lack of business premises, lack of reliable market problem and infrastructural problems. Outcome to these study, it is recommended that womens, as entrepreuners, can support increasing household income level in specific and national income level, in general if the concerned body supports them in different aspects.
Keywords: Rural, Women's, Income Generation, Assosa, Western Ethiopia

1. Introduction

An income generating activity is any activity that generates income for the family, in that the activities may include: agriculture, livestock rising, fishing, post harvest processing ans service which directed towards to economic focus and aims to increase cash available to the family, improve the local economy, and strengthen the livelihood strategies so that the population is less vulnearable (Action Against Hunger, 2009). Income generation can help to achieve economic development if women becomes the key actors in the economic system. Nevertheless, womens were neglected in development plans and a potentially large economic contribution were untapped left. This is because, women represent the majority of the population, in that they are responsible for about 50 percent of the world's food production and in some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, they provide between 60 and 80 percent of the food for household consumption (Onyebu, 2016). Additionally, according to Oladeji *et al.,* (2006), most women were responsible for providing a healthy and balanced diet educating member of the familyin the rural community and socio-culturally, womens play dual role: as wives and mothers (Onyebu, 2016; Winnark, 2001).

However, they are concentrated at the bottom of the ladder in terms of employment, education, income, and status (Overhort, Anderson, cloud and Austin, 2011). This is due to the fact that important roles they play have not been recognized. The discriminatory political, economic and social rules and regulation prevailing in Ethiopia have barred women from enjoying the fruits of their labor. Without equal opportunities, they have lagged behind men in all fields of self-advancement (Gopal, 1998). In addition, because their participation in economy has not been valued, Ethiopian women have not received their fair share of the nation's wealth (Gopal, 1998).

According to FAO report (2010) and Fontana and Paciello (2010), most of womens economic activities including caring for children, elderly and ill, collecting fuel wood and water, household maintaining and cooking, were not valued because they doent have a market price, hence were not recorded in the national account system. In line with the above statement, womens were engaged in socio economic activities such as: household crop production such as seed sowing, weeding, fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide application, harvesting and post harvesting, and logistical (transporting, handling and storage) activities.

Currently, different governmental and non-governmental organizations are integrating Women into development by empowering and providing them with available resource in order to increase women efficiency and effectively in their existing roles. However, their participation level in development and income generating activities is very low especially; with in rural women due to illiteracy, work burden, low provision of

information for income generating activities.

Assosa district has a large number of women. The society gives less emphasis for women even though they are driving force of development. They have less access to resource to run small business for income generation. Even though they begin the business, the income they get from that business rests on the hands of their husbands. Thus, the study examined the main factors that affect women participation on income generating activities in the selected study area with the specific objectives of: identifying the socio-economic characteristics of women in the study area, assessing women's participation in on-farm activities, analyzing the profitability of IGAs undertaken by women and and identifying the constraints encountered by women in IGAs in the study area.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Description of the Study Area

Assosa district, the study area, is one of the 20 districts of the BGR. Agro-ecologically, the district is mostly classified as lowland with an average rainfall of 1,275 mm per annum and an altitude range of 1300-1570 MASL. The total population of the district was 92,687, of whom about 73.98% live in rural set-ups while the remaining 26.01% were urban dwellers. Moreover, mixed farming (crop production and livestock rearing) is the predominant sources of livelihood for the majority of the population in the area. The crop production is dominated by rain fed agriculture and livestock rearing is practiced in a traditional way (BGRDGA, 2010).

2.2. Sample Size and Sampling Method

The study employed two-stage sampling techniques. In the first stage, Assosa district was selected purposively as a representative for the rural households of the BGR as a whole and Assosa district in particular. In the second stage, three kebeles were selected randomly from the total of 74 rural household in the district. The determined sample size were distributed proportionally to the selected sample households. Sample size for this study was determined by using Yemane's formula at 95 percent confidence level and level of error margin 0.9.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where, n=sample size
N=Target population number
e= Level of error margin
1= The probability event occurrence

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)2} \qquad \frac{18{,}811}{1+18{,}811(0.09)2} = 122$$

Accordingly, the selected 122 sampled women households were interviewed by using semi structured questionnaire. The sample size for each stratum will be determined in advance.

2.3. Methods of Data Collection

The study used primary data on the women participation on income generating activities through questionnaire survey from sample. In addition, field observation and interview of key informants were conducted. To supliment the primary data collected, secondary data was collected from different sources such as jourals, researchs, publications and so on.

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. In addition, it utilizes both primary and secondary data in order to generate information at the household level on income generating activities through questionnaire survey from sample. Field trips were made before the start of the actual survey to pre-test of the interview schedule on the selected kebeles. After a pre-testing, there was a meeting with data collectors on their field experiences, clarity of questions and checking weather relevant questions were not considered and omitting which was not relevant. After modification was made, the final version of the questionnaire were prepared. Primary data was collected by using a structured interview method from households. The interview schedule were prepared in English and then translated to Amharic version for data collection to be easy. Secondary sources of data were obtained from various literatures, journals, research papers, reviews and other sources were reviewed on issues connected with womens participation on income generating activities.

2.4. Methods of Data Analysis

As the type and methods of data collection are both quantitative and qualitative in nature, the analysis is also entails both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, table and frequencies were used to analyze the data. Qualitative analysis were used to an open-ended questions and quantitative analysis will employed to analysis closed-ended questions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic Characterstics of Womens Participating in (IGAs)

The study was conducted in Assosa district of selected rural kebeles. Most of the people in the study area were farmers and mostly they are engaged in on-farm activities and sometimes off-farm activities. The study analysed the demographic characterstics of the selected sampled respondents based on age, educational status and marital status and the variables were analyzed and discussed in the following table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Distribution of the respondents according to their age, educational level and marital status

Category	Frequency	Percent
Age (Years)		
15-25	9	7.37
26-35	46	37.7
36-45	36	29.5
Above 46	31	29.5
Educational status		
Illitrate	44	36.06
Primary level		
Grade 1-4	27	22.13
Grade 5-8	21	17.23
Secondary Education		
Grade 9-10	15	12.29
Grade 11-12	10	8.19
Post secondary education	1	0.83
Adult education	4	3.27
Marital Status		
Married	82	67
Single	21	17.44
Divorced	15	12.29
Widow	4	3.27

Source: own survey computation (2016)

3.1.1. Age Profile of the respondents

According to Newell (1986), age was considered as the number of completed years lived by the respondents at the time of interview. In addition, URT (2005) indicated that age is a vital demographic variable and is primary basis of demographic classification in crucial statistics, censuses, and surveys. From the total selected sampled respondents of 122 who were involved in IGAs in the study area, majority of the respondents (37.7%) fall in the age group of 26-35, while about 7.37% of the respondents were with in 15-25 years, and the remaining 29.5% of the respondents were 36-45 age and above 46, respectively. As in general, majority of the respondents were found at age category of 26-45 (67.2%). From the above data, we can conclude that most of the respondents were at the productive age. Due to these, they were more initiated for participation in income generating activities. As the age of the respondents increase, in the adult age, the interest of participation in income generating activities will increases from time to time. But, as the age proceed over the adult age and came to the oldness, the participation level of women in income generating activities decreased due to oldness of them. As they become older and older, they loose the interest of participating in income generating activities. In general, as age increase the participation level of income generating activities decrease.

3.1.2. Educational status of the respondents

According to Frank (2008), education is always valued as the means of liberation from ignorance and enables one to peform effectively the economic activities. Table 3.1 showed that 36.06% of the respondents were illiterate (not able to read and write), 22.13%, 17.23%, 12.29%, 8.19%, 0.83% and 3.27% of the womens who were engaged in IGAs were at the educational status of grade 1-4, 5-8, 9-10, 11-12, post secondary education and adult education, respectively. From the above table, majority of the respondents were under the category of primary education attendants (39.36%) followed by secondary level 20.48%. the participation of the respondents from prmary to the next educational level was very low due to high rate of drop out. This was due to girls reach the age of puberity at the average age of 14-16 and in most rural areas get married through family arrangement or by abduction, unavailability of high school to girls neighborhood. Therefore, girls need to walk far, to reach them but their families fear for their safey, including the danger of rape and furthermore, in cases where womens would need to reside in a different town in order to receive such education, their families were unable to afford for housing, food and related expenses.

3.1.3. Marital status of the respondents

The above table showed that 67% of the respondents were married, 17.44% of the respondents were single, 12.29% of the respondents were divorced and 3.27% of the respondents were widow. The fact that the majority of the respondents were married could have the implication on the increased burden on women both in farm activities (off-farm and on-farm activities). Generally, we can conclude from the above result that majority of the women were participant in income generating activities when they are married. But when they were widowed and divorced, family leading responsibility were loaded on them. Due to these, they were not participate more in income generating activities. As in similar way, a women in a single marital status were mostly spent their time in helping their parents. Hence, they did not participte in income generating activities. Finally, women those married had more chance of participating in income generating activities than those of widowed, divorced and single.

3.2. Profitability Analysis of Womens IGAs by using Gross Margin Product (GMP)

Analysis of profit made by IGA by women was undertaken by gross margin. Gross margin refers to the difference between the price paid and received by a specific marketing agency, such as a single consumer, or by any type of marketing agency such as retailers or assemblers or by any combination of marketing agencies such as the marketing system as a whole. Hasell (2003) and McClure (2004) revealed the the gross margin analysis can be used to examine the profitability of a given agency or any business activity in that it shows how the management can effectively bring profits from selling of a given product downturn and fend off competition. Hence, Gross margin is used in order to examine the IGAs and gives a guideline to IGA performance.

The study revealed that the income generating activities made by womens in the study area who were interviewed showed positive, indicating their engagement in business activities were profitable. This was due to the fact that the average monthly income or revenue obtained from different source is higher than the average monthly variable expenditure incurred by the respondents. For instance, in the table , the total average revenue obtained by IGAs of womens selling fruits and vegitables were 204.97 birr per month. But, the respective average variable cost incurred by the respondents were merley 115 birr per month, making a net profit of 89.97 birr. The above research result showed that evenif IGAs made by women were petty in nature, womens obtained profits. Hence, if the problems facing womens were alevated and if they gain the necessary support from government and non government bodies, their business can boost and will produce more profit and in that they can contribute to increase household income as well as to the national income in general.

Table 3.2. The profitability of income generating activities undertaken by women

Category	Average monthly revenue (Birr)	Average monthly Total variable cost (TVC)	GMP/IGAs in Birr
Types of IGAs			
Selling Fruit & vegetables	204.97	115	89.97
Selling animal prodct	459.7	172	287.7
Petty trading	1120	50	1070
Hair dressing	198.68	8	190.68
Firewood selling	283.6	15	268.6
Selling charcoal	500	82.68	417.32
Total	2766.95	442.68	1906.95

3.3. Women's participation in on-farm activities

Table 3.3: Types and level of participation of the women in on-farm activities.

	Who participate more on production		Who participate more on selling and decide on income	
Activities	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Cereal Crop	18	15	6	9.67
Coffee	25	20.5	8	12.9
Fruit	46	37.7	16	25.8
Livestock	15	12	8	12.9
Chat	9	7.4	7	11.2
Vegetable	9	7.4	17	27.53

Source: Own survey 2016

Table 3.3: indicates the level of participation of women in various on- farm activitiey in the production, selling and deciding on income that generated from cereal crop,bean, fruit, livestock and Vegetable products.

The study indicated that 37.7% and 20.5% of women's were engaged or participated in the production of Fruit and coffee production, respectively, indicating theat from the total agricultural activies existed in the study

area, women's participation on the fruit and coffee production were dominant. Due to the arid and semi arid characterstics of the agro ecology in the study area, women's participation on cereal production was very low. The study also revealed that due to rain fed nature of agriculture that farmers were relying less on crop production, women's were also participate on raring of animals for having and selling the edable and non edable parts of livestock. Hence, from the total sampled women's of 122, about 15 of them (12%) rely on livestock production.

According to table 3.3, even if 7.4% of women's were participated in the production of vegitables (Ethiopian cabbage, green peppers and red peppers) in the study area, around 27.53% of the women's earn income by seeling vegitables. Women's preferred to buy than to produce vegitables at a lower price from other market actors and by adding a certain value on it such as washing in the river steam, segmenting and moving the vegitable product from where the price is lower to were it was higher, they obtained selling of vegitable was a profitable job in the selected study area. Likewise, womens were actively engaged in the selling of fruits and obtain a considerable farm income which was around 25.8%. Also, womens were not dependent in merley selling fruit product, also, they were prominent producers of fruits in the study area.this was because, the study area was agro ecologically conducive for the production of yearly round fruit products such as papaya, mango, avocado banana and the like. Only 9.67% of the women were earning farm income by selling cereal production. This was due to low production score of cereals in the study area. Hence, women's production and dependandcy on cereal is insignificant.

Since the principlal economic activity in the rural part of Ethiopia, in general and Assosa district, in particular, is agriculture, majority of the women's were receiving income by selling agricultural products and agriculture becomes their priciplal means of livelihood.

3.4. Constraints come upon by women's in income generating activities

Table 3.4: Major constraints encountering in income generating activities by the respondents

Category	Response	Percentage
Credit acess	48	39.3
Technical support and training	29	23.77
Business premises	15	12.29
Reliable market problem	6	4.9
Infrastructure problem	24	19.74

In the study area, womens were encountering so much problems in income generating activities. The research result depicted that from the total interviewd respondents, about 39.3% of the respondents have the credit access problem (Table 3.4). the main reason for credit acess problem was fear of crop failure, no money for down payment, lack of collateral and the existence of high interest rate by the major financial institutions. Hence, this credit shortage enabled womens to start their income generating activities at a very small initial capital. The existence of shortage of cash in the hands of women makes them not to expand their business activies.

In addition, the study result indicated that about 19.74%, 23.77%, 12.29% and 4.9% of the respondents replied that there was infrastructural problem, lack of technical support and training , unreliable business premises and lack of reliable market problems, respectively. But, from the study areas, it was observed that the performance of womens whose IGAs were strong have a strong and well studied business skills built along with a clearly stated vision. This study is in line with findings of UDEC (2002) and Frank (2008) in that IGAs that its performance is poor have the general characterstics of: operating at a very small scale with a very little opportunity to expand and invest, lack of skills facing their IGAs, undiversified business or depending in one or two business activies, providing identical products, using outdated technology with having poor technical entrepreunal skills, they tend to function in not well organized market with a very low marketing skills, making them to receive a very low marketing margin when they are in marketing chains.

4. Conclusion

Majority of the women who were participated in different IGAs were under the category of young and economically active age group with high participation of primary education enrollment. A significant number of the respondents were illiterate as well with very low level educational participation of post secondary education participation.

IGAs undertaken by rural women in the study area were selling fruit and vegitables, selling animal product, engaging in petty trading, hair dressing, firewood selling and charcoal.

The level of gross margin of the IGAs made by women were positive, indicating their average monthly earned revenue was greater than what they are expending per month.

Womens who were generating income in engaging in different IGAs face a considerable constraint such as credit access shortage, lack of technical support and training, lack of business premises, lack of reliable market

problem and infrastructural problems.

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