

Review Paper

The Role of Women's Empowerment in Enhancing Health and Wellbeing and in Ensuring Sustainable Development, and Implications for Policy in Ethiopia: A Review Paper

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Abstract

The paper explains the role of women's empowerment in enhancing health and wellbeing and in ensuring sustainable development and then states the implications for policy in Ethiopia. Women are the bedrock of a nation. As mothers, nurturers, primary caregivers, producers, laborers, and so on, women shoulder the greater burden of children's, households', and communities' welfare obligations, and they make up more than half the labor force in agriculture and related activities mainly in developing countries. However, whether women effectively perform these vital roles depends on women's empowerment status. Thus, women's empowerment is a fundamental strategy to address human, social, and economic development issues. Especially in developing countries like Ethiopia where women have been disproportionately represented among the disadvantaged because of the widespread and deep-rooted gender-based inequalities, women's empowerment is one of the most important development concerns. Because it enables women to challenge and overcome the deep-rooted traditions and systems that oppress them, ensures their full participation, enhances their health and wellbeing, and improves their performances in maintaining their children's, families' and communities' welfare, and in the overall socioeconomic activities. Briefly women's empowerment is a key to alleviate poverty, to enhance health and wellbeing, to create a good nation, and to secure future prosperity. That is, without realizing women's empowerment and gender equality, it is unthinkable to achieve sound and sustainable development. Having cognizant of this fact, the Ethiopian Government has issued different women's empowerment efforts, especially since 1990s, in line with consecutive five year development plans. However, even though there are so obvious improvements in various aspects as a result, women continue to experience lower socioeconomic status and a multitude of problems. Therefore, in order to eliminate all barriers of women's empowerment and ensure their full empowerment and participation at all stages of the society, there must be effective, sustainable, and extensive involvement of all social institutions- family, education, economy, religion, state, and health care systems, including non-governmental organizations and private sectors.

Keywords: Women empowerment, health, wellbeing, development, policy, Ethiopia

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Introduction

Women are the backbone of society. They often play enormous and critical roles in society. They perform key roles in maintaining children's, families' and communities' health and wellbeing, and in the overall socioeconomic matters of their societies especially in developing countries (Kesanta et al., 2015; United Nations, 2007 and Young, 1988). In most African countries where they tend to account for about 51% of the population, women tend to shoulder the greater burden of child, family and community welfare and obligations. They are often primary caregivers and nurturers of the family and community members, and they often dominate household-level food production and preparation. Also they make up more than half the labor force in economic and agricultural activities and play a vital role as labourers, producers, processors and traders; moreover, they are well-known in using resources efficiently (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2011; Mirabito, 2012 and World Economic Forum, 2012). However, it is obvious that women's performances in these socioeconomic matters are determined by their status and wellbeing; that is, a nation's wellbeing and development depends on its women empowerment status. Due to this fact, nowadays, more than ever, the empowerment of women

and gender equality issue has been accepted as one of the most important development concerns globally as gender inequality is widespread in all cultures, especially, in developing countries (Anant et al., 2013 and Shara, 1998). Accordingly, in Ethiopia where poverty and gender inequality have been a central challenge, women's empowerment has become one of the different cross-cutting development issues (FDRE, 2014; MoFED, 2006 and Women's Policy, 1993).

According to the current population projection, Ethiopia has a population of about 100 Million, out of which slightly more than half are women. The economy of the country is dominated by traditional subsistence agriculture sector. And women perform more than half of agricultural labor, in addition to shouldering a greater burden of domestic responsibilities. However, as they experience serious deep-rooted gender discrimination related problems in all aspects of life, women are more vulnerable to poverty than men (Bogalech & Mengistu, 2007; FDRE, 2002, 2014 and MoFED, 2006).

Ethiopia aspires to alleviate poverty and envisions attaining a middle-income status by the year 2025. Accordingly, the Government introduced a consecutive five year development plans, especially since 2002, which include Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program and Agricultural Development Led Industrialization Policy (2002/3-204/5); a Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (2005/6-2009/10); Growth and Transformation Plan I (2010/11-2014/5), and Growth and Transformation Plan II (2015/16-2019/20). And having understood the importance of engaging women in its poverty alleviation efforts, the Government has issued the first women policy in 1993 which primarily aimed at institutionalizing the political, economic, and social rights of women. And to ensure adequate implementation of the policy and to promote women's empowerment thereby to insure their effective participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political matters, different women's development initiative projects, including affirmative action practices, have been introduced in line with the consecutive five-year development plans (Ayrorit, 2013; FDRE, 1995, 2002, 2013, 2016; MoFED, 2006, 2010 and Women's Policy, 1993).

Consequently, in Ethiopia, there is a significant progress. For instance, there is a significant economic growth gains; there is an extensive improvement in health and education services coverage. And there is improvement in societal attitudes towards women's empowerment and participation, and there is improvement in women's lives in all aspects. Specifically, there are significant reductions in previously serious problems and harmful traditional practices; for instance, female genital mutilation reduced from 80% in 2000 to 23% in 2011; child marriage reduced from 33.1% in 1997 to 8% in 2012, and maternal mortality showed steep decline from 1800/100,000 in 1995 to 420/100,000 in 2012/13. There is also continuous decline in gender gap in gross enrollment ratio in education, and there is significant progress in the number of women within the different arms of government at various levels. And women's representation and participation in the labor market (both in formal and informal) and in small, micro, and medium enterprises has also progressively increased (FDRE, 2013, 2014; Marry Hallward & Ousman, 2011; MoFED, 2006, 2010, 2012 and Shimeles, 2011).

However, in spite of all these improvements, gender inequality is still a challenge in the country because of the deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and patriarchal systems which give women a relatively inferior status and a diminished position in every aspect of life. There are yet differences in a number of socio-economic indicators between men and women; women's socioeconomic participation holds lower. Accordingly, low level positions and status, limited rights, neglected roles, little decision making power in most family and community issues, limited access to resources, unmet need for reproductive health-related information and services, unemployment, concentration in a bulk of unpaid, household work and in low paid jobs, and limited aspirations still characterizes women's lives in Ethiopia. Rural women, especially, continue to face more individual, community, and institutional barriers to fully exercise their rights. Also, there is limited capacity in terms of educated and skilled personnel to practice, follow up, monitor, and evaluate women empowerment activities properly (Ayrorit, 2013; Biseswar, 2011; Bogalech & Mengistu, 2007; Enanu, 2013 and FDRE, 2014).

In addition, in spite of the increase in economic growth gains and progress in social services coverage in the country, Ethiopia is still a poor country with a high poverty rate, and ranks very poor for most human development and health indicators. And apparently the most victims are women and children. Accordingly, millions of children in Ethiopia have been living in unfavorable conditions. As a result, a great number of them (especially girls) have been exposed to migration and human trafficking for purposes of child labor and prostitution (Abu, 2013; Addisu, 2008; ECPAT International, 2007; Guarcello & Rosati, 2007; Poluha, 2004; Shimeles, 2011 and World Bank, 2013). And these problems are also indicators of women's unempowerment or gender inequality, in Ethiopia, as the unempowerment of women does not only hurt women, but also, their children, families, communities and their society as a whole (Mirabito, 2012; World Bank, 2003 and Yibeltal et al, 2015).

Obviously, ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment and full participation in society, at all stages, is a prerequisite to attain overall development (including the enhancement of health and wellbeing) and to ensure sustainability (Mirabito, 2012; Mosedale, 2005 and Noeleen Heyzer, 2005). Hence, development efforts need a sound consideration of women's empowerment. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are: to elucidate the women's empowerment issues; to explain the role of women's empowerment in enhancing health and wellbeing and in ensuring sustainable development, and to state the implications for policy in Ethiopia. And the paper prepared through extensive consultation of literature, including academic research reports and articles (from multidisciplinary sources), international organizations' reports, and Ethiopian Government documents concerning the issue.

Women's Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been so much raised and discussed by writers throughout the world. It is concerned with improving and promoting an individual's or group's ability to enable them make strategic life choices, in a context where this ability was previously denied to them, and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. It generally helps to increase individuals' or groups' political, social, spiritual/cultural and economic strength so that they can act on their own behalf, analyze and understand their problems, influence decisions that affect their lives, and increase their power and control over the resources necessary for sustainable and dignified life (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Kabeer, 2001; Makombe, Temba & Kihombo, 1999; Misana, 1995; Muro, 1994; Narayan, 2006 and Rifkin & Pridmore, 2001).

Accordingly, women's empowerment refers to the liberation of women from the deep-rooted social, economic, political, and gender-based discrimination in all structures of society. And it is concerned with the expansion in women's ability and freedom to make strategic life choices, a process that occurs overtime, and it involves women having the ability to formulate choices, control resources, and make decisions affecting important life outcomes for themselves, their families, and communities. Therefore, women's empowerment is not only enjoying equal facilities (e.g., like higher literacy and better health care), access to resources (e.g., like land and occupation), and improved standards of living but also having the power for decision making and using these rights and facilities. It enhances woman's self-awareness and self-confidence, thus, enables them to realize their full potential in all spheres of life so that they participate in different matters including policy and decision making process at all levels of society (Kabeer, 2001; Sidney Schuler & Syed Hashemi, 1994; Syed Hashemi and Sidney Schuler, 1993 and UNDP, 2006).

Women empowerment is multidimensional and complex; it includes economic, social, cultural, familial and interpersonal, legal, political, reproductive, and psychological empowerment. Accordingly, economic and political participation, decision making power, and power over economic resources are seen as some of the key components of the women empowerment measures (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003; Malhotra & Mather, 1997; PrathibhaVarkey et al, 2010 and Susan Lee-Rife, 2003). Thus, Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) recommended that women's empowerment needs to occur wisely along all of the dimensions of empowerment; otherwise, women may be empowered in one area of life while not in others. And they noted that measuring empowerment indicators in these various dimensions should happen at different levels of social aggregation, such as the household, community, regional, national, and global levels. Moreover, since women empowerment can be seen as both an outcome/end by itself and as a process, which is concerned with combating disempowerment of women, indicators of women's empowerment as an outcome should directly measure women's control over their lives, sources or environment, while indicators of process should document the existence or absence of an appropriate setting for empowerment and women's access to different sources of empowerment for the attainment of women's practical needs and women's capacity building (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Kabeer, 1999 and Narayan, 2006).

Furthermore, since women are divided into different heterogeneous categories based on socioeconomic class, life cycle, ethnicity, etc., it is necessary to consider women's empowerment from the perspective of women's group/category characteristics, and it is needed to consider how social, economic, cultural, and other categories related to gender relations interact with each other and create inequalities among women. This is an important issue to examine whether the policies that are designed to promote gender equality are benefiting all (or both the privileged groups of women and the disadvantaged ones). In addition, women's empowerment is not static over the life course rather it varies over time based on the accumulation of experiences, resources, achievements, age, and marital status. And a woman's level of empowerment at any given time is, in part, a product of her prior empowerment. Hence, examining the influence of earlier levels of women empowerment on their current conditions expands our understanding of the determinants of empowerment and helps us to understand and identify key points of intervention to empower women and thereby improve their wellbeing (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Calvès, 2009; Charmes & Wieringa, 2003 and Susan Lee-Rife, 2003).

There are different women empowerment strategies. Especially, the following are very important in empowering women. These are: promoting women's education and encouraging them achieve higher literacy and professional status; building women's self-confidence; women's life skill training and capacity building; promoting women's participation in income-generating activities and employment; supporting women's association, membership, and participation in social and economic groups; encouraging women property ownership; uplifting women's marketing, microenterprise practices and entrepreneurship; promoting sexuality education and reliable information on human sexuality and health among women; encouraging health extension workers regular women visits and counseling; making policy advocacy for women; conducting a communication campaign in favor of women within a community and transmit positive messages about their value and their real and potential contributions to their families and communities; introducing a robust and effective legal system that protects and promotes the rights of women; enabling women to have due position in governance, and promoting their involvement in the decision-making process in all societal matters at all levels. And these empowerment strategies are interdependent and interconnected (ECA/ATRCW, 1990; Kar SB et al., 1999; Madeleine et al., 2013; Makombe, et al., 1999; Melba Sheila D'Souza, et al., 2013 and Shirin Ebadi, 2013). In order to empower women fully, we need to address all empowerment components through employing comprehensive empowerment strategies. That is way strategies and efforts, for example, that focused only on women's attainment of practical needs such as income and health facilities but ignored women's capacity building failed to attain their objectives. Because awareness, confidence and skill building is also necessary in the process of

social, economic, cultural, and political empowerment and integration of women into the whole societal mainstream (Makombe et al., 1999).

The Role of Women's Empowerment in Enhancing (Women's, Children's, Households', and Community's) Health and Wellbeing

Women's empowerment enriches women's overall health and wellbeing. Because empowerment improves women's self-efficacy and self-esteem, creates a greater sense of control, increases their knowledge and awareness, and broadens women's social networks and social support. Empowered women are more likely to have greater bargaining power and control over resources within the households to make the right decisions, to access health and education services, to have fewer children, to have sustainable income, to have freedom of movement, and they are less likely to suffer from domestic violence, depression, and vulnerability to infectious disease and human trafficking, etc. (Gibbon, 2000; Harrison, 2009; Kara L. Ross, et al., 2015; Kermonde et al, 2007; Prathibha Varkey et al., 2010; Stein, 1997 and Wallerstein, 2006). That is, women with a high degree of empowerment are more likely to have good health and wellbeing.

And underpowered women have poor health because they lack knowledge and awareness required for healthy life; they have low access to services/resources, and they have many more unmet needs (Motlaq et al, 2013 and Pakseresht et al., 2005). Unempowerment of women is strongly associated with poor health and reduced wellbeing (Mirabito, 2012 and Stein, 1997). As Melba Sheila D'Souza et al., (2013) explained it, poor literacy; low employment and income generating opportunities; poor (reproductive) health services, choices and preferences; poor mobility; poor quality of marital relationships and communication, and poor decision making power are some of the facets of unempowerment that challenge women's health and well-being.

Women empowerment does not only help to enhance their (women's) health and wellbeing but also it can help to enhance that of their children's, families', and community's. Because women often play vital socioeconomic roles on which the wellbeing of family and community members depends (Food and Agriculture Organization; Mirabito, 2012 and Young, 1988), and women empowerment and improvements in their health and wellbeing effectively enhances their performances in these socioeconomic responsibilities. It enables them take actions effectively to advance interests of their children, households, and communities, in addition to their own interests (Kara L. Ross et al., 2015; Kesanta & Andre, 2015 and Prathibha Varkey et al., 2010).

Improvements in women's status and wellbeing can help to reduce child neglect and mortality, decrease fertility and overcrowding, and broaden social concerns and cares because women are more often than men spend money on family and children. And empowered women are more likely to raise healthy children who are more likely to get an education and make important contributions to family income (Bhagowalia et al., 2012; Prathibha Varkey et al., 2010 and International Food Policy Research Institute, 2003). On the other hand, women's lack of empowerment is believed to be an important factor in the persistent prevalence of infant death and child malnutrition. Because survival and proper development of children requires both the availability of resources as well as the power to use already available resources among women who are mostly responsible for the care of children. Woman's empowerment status is more important determinants of infant survival than wealth index of the household and husbands' status; even though improvements in household wealth and husband status is an important condition, it not sufficient in reducing infant mortality because woman's power is a more vital one in translating available resources into child health outcomes (World Bank, 2003 and Yibeltal et al, 2015). Thus, in communities where women exert more economic and political power, children experience more positive nutritional outcomes and have lower infant mortality, even after accounting for differences in economic development between countries and after controlling for income inequality within the society (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2003 and Kawachi et al., 1999). Especially, higher levels of maternal education are associated with lower fertility rates, enhanced child nutrition, and improved quality of child care (Karestan Koenena et al., 2006 and Bhagowalia et al., 2012).

Hence, women's social status could be an important societal level determinant of children's well-being. Women's status in a society is, generally, determined by women's access to education and health services, economic opportunities, and decision making power each of which has direct implications for child well-being more likely than that of men can do. Because women with access to education are more likely to be exposed to knowledge needed to give care for children. And women with good access to health services during and after pregnancy are more likely to receive cares and information which could have direct consequences on children's health and wellbeing; similarly, women with good power may have control over household income, therefore, could have resources to get the required services for themselves and their children. Also women who have greater economic resources and knowledge have psychological confidence, and they are more likely to be free from domestic violence and maternal depression which affect children. And they are more likely in influencing and making decisions and in advocating the interest of their children in intra-household bargaining and in convincing their male partners thereby may get/influence power at the community level and play a more active role in demanding/providing better services for their children (Bhagowalia et al., 2012; Karestan Koenena et al., 2006 and WHO, 1995). Thus it can be said that children embody the social status of their mothers, especially, during pregnancy and early childhood. And educational empowerment, economic autonomy, intra-household decision-making power and community level empowerment of women are, generally, known as the well-known interrelated ways through which women's status transferred to child well-being (Kishor, 2000; Moses-Kolko & Roth, 2004; Quisumbing & Maluccio, 2003 and Smith et al., 2003).

This implies that in circumstances where women experience empowerment in all aspects, the health and wellbeing of children can be ensured and promoted. Thus, investing on improving women's empowerment is a decisive measure to enhance the health and wellbeing of children.

Also women's status affects the well-being of the entire household and community members and the whole society. Even though men benefit from the traditional patriarchal arrangements, the cost of such system is for the entire family, community and society members. Studies indicate that a society that is known by gender inequalities is likely to be unhealthy place to live for both men and women, compared to a more egalitarian one (Karestan Koenena et al., 2006; Prathibha Varkey et al., 2010 and United Nations, 1996). For example, Kawachi et al. (1999) stated that women and men experience higher morbidity and mortality where women have lower social status. Because factors which affect women's economic security, for example, also affect the material wellbeing of the entire household members to which women belong, thus, affect their overall wellbeing. And women's access to labor force participation and earnings could directly influence the economic well-being of women thereby the health status of their entire families because it affects women's life and capacity to perform their primary care giving and other roles effectively in the family (Kesanta & Andre, 2015 and Mirabito, 2012). For instance, when women have more control over resources, household expenditure patterns are geared relatively more towards human development inputs, such as food, health and education. Thus, women empowerment also enriches community's wellbeing for the community is so built from individuals. In addition, women's empowerment is effective on fertility issues and population's stability (Prathibha Varkey et al., 2010; Woodall et al., 2010; United Nations, 1996 and Zahra Kiani1 et al., 2016). Therefore, the well-being of a family, community, and society depends upon women's status within them. That is, improving women's status is improving their society's health and wellbeing.

The Role of Women's Empowerment in Alleviating Poverty and Ensuring Sustainable Development

The empowerment of women and gender equality is a key to alleviate poverty and to ensure sustainable development (Makombe et al., 1999; Mosedale, 2005 and Muro, 1994). Because, it is essential to unlock and enhance women's potential, especially, in developing countries, where women are slightly more than half of the population and play so many critical roles in society. Women play an enormous role in the agricultural sector in these countries. Particularly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, they cover more than 50 % of the agricultural labor force, and they also constitute a significant proportion in the agri-food supply chain. They carry the greater burden of work both in domestic and economic activities; they carry on average 53% of the total work burden and they often spend longer hours on work (De Schutter, 2013; FAO, 2011; Kesanta et al., 2015 and Quisumbing et al., 1995). They are also better resource managers for they bear most of the responsibility and impacts associated with procuring and using resources. And they are utility maximizers because they have better understanding of existing resource inputs and the resource alternatives available to them so that they can make more informed decisions on how to effectively use those inputs. Women are also change agents. Studies indicate that they are intelligent in addressing social problems in their communities and in influencing social norms for the better life. They possess the knowledge, capabilities and effective networks to drive real solutions in the area of sustainability and resource scarcity. And across society, they hold key roles that influence how to produce, consume and save. Furthermore, they educate and shape their children's future household and resource management habits (Ackerly, 1995; Sharma, 2003; United Nations, 2010 and World Economic Forum, 2012).

Thus, investing in women can bolster productivity, reduce hunger/ food crisis and poverty, and promote economic growth and development in all instances. For instance, strengthening women's economic roles gives them more autonomy, thus, helps them gain visibility and voice, and enables them to influence or make right decisions affecting them and their families, and enhances their ability to plan for the future. And educational empowerment is essential to unlock women's potential, and it makes women aware of their rights and responsibilities and helps them overcome barriers in their way. And it gives women a voice in the entire development process. It also enables them know how to use the natural environment for subsistence and income, and it provides them with the tools they need to replicate sustainable solutions both in their home and in their surrounding community. It, thereby, even may contribute to the global competitiveness of women's country because the economic competitiveness of a country is increasingly depending on how well it educates its young women (Bhagowalia et al., 2012; Holly Mead et al. 2001; Sidney Ruth Schuler & Syed Hashemi, 1994 and World Economic Forum, 2012).

Besides education, improving women's health status also makes them more efficient and skilled laborers. Furthermore, political empowerment gives them access to resources and to the institutions that shape social norms and attitudes, and provides them with a voice within key decision-making processes. And when a woman is given decision-making capacity, she is more likely to create change and mobilize toward greater equity and development (Kabeer, 1999; Kara L. Ross et al., 2015; Malhotra & Mather, 1997; Prathibha Varkey et al., 2010; Sharma, 2003 and Smith et al. 2003).

Interestingly, all these have positive impact on the overall development of children. Empowered women raise healthy, educated, and productive children. Therefore, women empowerment is a crucial pathway for arresting the inter-generational transmission of poverty and creating a good nation (Kara L. Ross et al., 2015 and Smith et al., 2003). Hence, ensuring women's empowerment, in all its dimensions, is a prerequisite to overcome widespread socioeconomic problems in developing countries like Ethiopia and to ensure future prosperity.

Conclusion and Implications for Policy in Ethiopia

Women's empowerment is a fundamental strategy to address human, social, and economic development issues especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. Because women shoulder the greater burden of children's, households', and communities' welfare obligations, and they make up more than half the labor force in agricultural and other related activities. Specifically, as mothers, nurturers, primary caregivers, producers, laborers, and so on women often play enormous roles which are so vital for their children's, households', and communities' health and wellbeing, and for the overall socioeconomic development. But traditionally they have experienced unbalanced opportunities and have been disproportionately represented among the disadvantaged economically, socially, culturally, and in terms of health due to the deep-rooted traditional systems and practices that oppress and harm them. Empowerment enables women to challenge and overcome these deep-rooted gender-based inequalities, enhances their health and wellbeing, ensures their effective participation, and improves their performances in maintaining their children's, families' and communities' welfare, and in the overall socioeconomic activities. Thus, empowering women is empowering humanity. It is a key to alleviate poverty, to enhance health and wellbeing, to create a good nation, and to ensure sustainability. Having understood this fact, the Ethiopian Government has issued different women empowerment efforts (especially since 1990s) in line with consecutive five-year development plans. However, although there are so obvious improvements in various aspects as a result, still a myriad of problems, including lower socioeconomic status and participation in their families, communities, and society characterize women's lives because women have not experienced empowerment, in all its dimensions, properly.

Thus, if the nation is to achieve sound development and secure its future prosperity, women's empowerment and gender equality must be realized. Therefore, this paper calls for the following measures:

- ✓ Since women's empowerment is multidimensional, there must be strong commitment and extensive involvements of all development policies, partners, and stakeholders, including health, education, national employment, agriculture, business, and industrial development agencies, nongovernmental organizations, policy makers, communities, religious bodies, the private sectors, husbands, parents, teachers, and all facets of society at all levels.
- ✓ Besides the affirmative action practices and the legal intervention which formally lifts the hindrances of women's empowerment, there should be strong cooperation among policy makers and communities to work together, especially in examining the diverse influences and circumstances which have been the causes for the oppression of women and still the barriers to the empowerment of women. Policy practitioners need to work strongly with community elders, religious figures, and local traditional leaders to address all of the multidimensional constraints, inequalities and evils facing women in all aspects, including in education, employment and earnings, political participations, decision making, and health and reproductive rights related issues.
- ✓ Particularly, the Government should make a stronger commitment to women's capacity and self-confidence building. Because the empowerment of women from within is necessary to enable them to challenge and overcome the deep-rooted traditions that made them internalize the feeling of powerlessness and put them at disadvantaged position in all circumstances. Hence, education and employment policies practitioners need to do more in cooperation. Appropriate and adequate education and training opportunities should be available, and employment and promotion opportunities should be improved for women. Also agricultural and other business policies practitioners need to work strongly to produce women property owners and confident women entrepreneurs in agricultural and other business activities. Furthermore, an equitable representation and meaningful participation of women in all social positions, including in policy-making and analysis, should be ensured.
- ✓ Moreover, health and education policies figures should cooperate with communities and work properly to promote healthy lifestyles and practices to enhance the health of women and girls, especially reproductive health which often affects women's status and lives throughout the society. Also there should be legal education services and rights awareness for women starting from the grassroots level to enable them have awareness and power over different socioeconomic dimensions that affect their lives. In particular, the needs of the more disadvantaged women, such as the remote, poorer and others who are more vulnerable to different troubles which make the gender related problems worse, must be carefully addressed.
- ✓ In general, policy practitioners, in cooperation with all of the concerned bodies, must employ context specific, comprehensive, simultaneous, sustainable, and effective intervention strategies at all levels i.e., at individual, family, community, and country levels. And practitioners in all sectors and at all levels should get continuous skill and capacity building training in order to play their roles properly. Also women themselves need to get proper understanding of the women's empowerment issue and act accordingly. And there must be regular monitoring and evaluations at all levels and in all sectors to make improvements, or to identify, scale up and replicate better practices.

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