

Women Political Participations at a Local Government in Ethiopia: The Case of Sebeta Town

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Abstract

Women equal participation in local government plays a pivotal role in the general processes of the advancement of women. In Ethiopia, although women are granted constitutional rights to take part in any affairs affecting their life, they do not exercise equal rights of participating in politics due to many of factors. The general objective of this study was to assess the political participation of women in local government and identify factors affecting their participation. Both qualitative and quantitative research approach were followed. The research is both descriptive and explanatory in its type. The researcher has collected both primary data from both women and men citizens of the town and government officials. The study identified that the political participation of women in Sebeta town is low compared to men except for their equal participation in election. The study found that women are underrepresented in local power structure, decision making body and political parties. This is mainly due to factors like: educational constraints, gender based division of labor and institutional factors.

Keywords: local government, participation, women, council, cabinet and decision making.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power by overthrowing the military rule in 1991. In 1995, a new Constitution was promulgated formally established the country on a federal basis with a federal government at the centre and nine regional states. The constitution laid the foundation for further decentralization by requiring the regional states to establish and adequately empower local government. The objective that underpins the creation and empowerment of local government, as envisaged in the constitution is to enable the people to participate directly in the administration of local government (FDRE Constitution Art. 50). Furthermore, Article 25 of FDRE constitution guarantees all persons equality before the law, and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of gender (FDRE Constitution, 1995).

Article 35 of FDRE constitution provides equal opportunity for women to participate in the decision making process by giving them the right to vote and be elected. The historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account, women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life as well as in public and private institutions (FDRE Constitution, 1995 Art. 35(3)).

More specifically, FDRE constitution states that:

.....women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal right with men. Women have the right to full consultation in the formulation of national development policies, the designing and execution of projects, and particularly in the case of projects affecting the interests of women (FDRE Constitution 1995, Art. 35).

Ethiopia's constitution and national policies are consistent with international legal instruments on gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the most comprehensive treaty on women's human rights, which came into force in 1981, has been ratified or acceded to by 165 states worldwide (Shimelis, 2015). According to FDRE's national report on the implementation of the Beijing declaration and platform for action in 2000, Ethiopia adopted international agreements to promote gender equality and improve the lives of women. As a means to implement these global agreements, different policies and legislations have also been enacted. These are the National Policy on Women, National Population Policy, Education Policy, Cultural Policy, and other legal documents.

Women equal participation in local government plays a pivotal role in the general processes of the advancement of women. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's standpoint at all levels of decision-making, the goal of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. However, according to Permanent Mission of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations report in 2012, the participation of women in government structure is still low (FDRE, 2012). For example, the percentage of female members in Ethiopia parliament is only 22% in 2010. With regard to leadership and decision making, in the same year, women's representation is 13% at ministerial, 25% at commissioner and 12.7% at ambassador level.

Oromia regional state is the largest constituent units of Ethiopian federation in terms of geography and population. The regional state transferred power to local level through its revised constitution of 2002. The

revised constitution of Oromia regional state declared the establishment of woreda and kebele administrations below the zonal administration. Woreda administration in the Oromia regional state has a woreda council and a woreda administration council. Under the regional constitution of Oromia, a woreda council, a woreda administration council and a kebele administration have similar organization, functions and powers (Revised Constitution of Oromia region, Art 76, 2002).

Sebeta is one of the towns of Oromia region found at 24 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa. The town was established in 1933. The town administration is divided into eight kebeles with considerable decision-making power in local affairs. According to the central statistics authority (2007) the total population of the town was 49,331 male constitute 24,356 are male and the rest 24,975 are female. According to proclamation No.65/2003 of Oromia national regional state provided for the establishment of urban local governments in the region the grading of towns in the region depends on the number of residents, accordingly the cities in the region shall be grouped into four grades grade one being the highest and grade four the lowest in terms of populations. Accordingly, Sebeta town is grade one town and managed by mayor who is directly appointed and accountable to the president of the region.

In Sebeta town administration of Oromia regional state women consists of nearly half of the total population. In Sebeta town administration, even though women play some role in the local government administration, the extent of their participation is an issue which should be investigated. Hence, the main aim of this study is to assess attitude of women towards equal gender participation, examine the political participation of women in their local government and investigate major factors that have been affecting women participation in the politics of Sebeta town administration.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Even though gender equality is one of the normative foundations of modern democracy and a main developmental goal promoted by the United Nations, women are still markedly underrepresented in politics. As of June 2014, only 22.3 percent of the members in single or lower houses of 190 parliaments around the world were women (Stockemer and Tremblay, 2015). Experiences from many countries show that, in comparison with men, women are constrained by factors such as culture and tradition, religion, political turmoil, violence, money, workloads and lack of opportunities from taking part in politics. According to UNDP (2007) equal participation of women in decision making is a demand of democracy and a precondition to incorporating their interest in the decisions made.

In Ethiopia women are granted constitutional rights to take part in any affairs affecting their life. However, due to a combination of various factors they are not equally participating in politics and their roles are closely tied to their reproductive and house hold activities where as politics and community affairs are seen as unsuitable for them. According to FDRE (2006) report, the majority of Ethiopian women, like other African countries, occupy lower position in the society. They do not have equal access to education, politics and employment. They play critical role for the well being of the society, but their role in politics is very limited.

In their public and private lives, women have to struggle to articulate their desires and to find their own voices. For a long time, women have been seen as extensions of men; as people who cannot politically stand on their own, but have to be propped by men. To be more specific, according to a national report of FDRE (2004), in spite of the government policy of equal opportunity for men and women to participate in the democratization of the country, women have not been adequately represented at all levels of decision-making positions. While a few researchers have in recent past began to document on women participation in leadership positions in Ethiopia, such documentation has not focused on factors that affect women political participation at a local level.

There is very little evidence-based research or scholarly work on women participation at local level which Sebeta town is one. For example, apart from the fact that large number of women took part in the national elections of 2015, not much is studied. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess women political participation at the local level, mechanisms and extent of their participation, factors that would inhibit their participation at the local government in Sebeta town administration.

1.3 Research questions

Based on the key issues raised in the research problem and gaps identified in knowledge related to women's participation in the democratic process at the local level and the factors that influence the level of engagement in local governance, this research will raise and investigate the following main research questions:

1. What is the attitude of Sebeta town citizens regarding equal gender participation in politics?
2. What are the mechanisms through which women in Sebeta town administration participate in local politics?
3. What are the major factors that hinder women political participation at local level?

1.4 Research methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of the research and answer the research questions, the research was conducted using descriptive research methods to collect both qualitative and quantitative types of data. The descriptive study was designed to analyze the collected data using an interpretive means of data analysis. This research was generated results either in qualitative and quantitative form or in the form which are not subject to rigorous quantitative analysis. Therefore, the research approach of this study was mixed approach.

1.4.1 Sampling, data sources and techniques

The researcher used multistage simple random sampling technique in identifying and selecting appropriate kebeles and sample respondents from each sample kebeles. Accordingly, out of 8 kebeles, 3 of them were selected. Then, 100 residents (20 male and 80 female), from each randomly selected kebeles were selected as a respondents. The rationale of selecting male as a respondent is to generate data which leads to comparative analysis. Furthermore, key informant from town and kebele council and cabinet members were selected using purposive sampling technique. Primary data were gathered from citizens of the town, individuals working in town and kebele council, women affair office, women associations and other different administrative organs of Sebeta town. Questionnaire, key informant interview, focus group discussion and document review were method of data collections.

1.4.2 Method of data analysis

The data collected from primary and secondary sources used different instruments was organized and presented in to sub-sections based on their similarities and relations. The data were interpreted and analyzed thematically. Data collected through questionnaire were presented in table and analyzed. The data collected through key informant interview and focus group discussion was analyzed qualitatively based on descriptive analysis. Moreover, comparisons of facts and views were made in order to make the findings more reliable and complete.

2. Local government under Oromia constitution

Oromia regional state is the largest, in terms of population and geography, among the nine regional states of Ethiopia's federation. The Oromia regional constitutions were adopted after the promulgation of the federal constitution in 1995 and underwent revision starting in 2000. They are supreme regional laws that, as discussed below, can be amended only in a special procedure, and each defines, inter alia, the structures of the local government units within the state's jurisdiction.

According to revised constitution of Oromia region (2002), woreda administrations are created by the region and are empowered to prepare and decide on economic development and social service its territorial area. As it is stipulated on revised constitution of Oromia region (2002), members of woreda councils are elected by the citizens of the district, and these councils select their executive cabinets. While woredas are elected levels of government, they are accountable for implementing directives from the regional state or the zones. For instance, they are in charge of implementing policies, laws, regulations and directives issued by the regional state organs. Moreover, each and every woreda is a body hierarchically subordinate to the regional government (Revised Constitution of Oromia region, Art. 79, 2002).

Below the woreda administration, in the local government structure of the region, is the kebele administration. Kebele administrations are the closest government level to the community, serving as local level institutions in both rural and urban areas. In addition to elected local councils, the kebeles have executive cabinets which coordinate planning and administrative functions; these are selected by the members of the local councils. They really up on woredas for their budget and respond to the woredas' directives (Revised constitution of Oromia region, Article 95, 2002).

3. Data presentation and discussion

3.1 Women representation in Cabinet

The representation of woman in local power structure is one of the relevant issues assessed by the researcher. Women representation in cabinet includes their representation in state cabinet, woreda and kebele cabinet and kebele council. The data is presented in annexed table one indicated that woman only constitute only 7.5% bureau heads of Oromia regional state. In addition, the proportion of woman in woreda and kebele cabinet is only 11.5% and 5% respectively. On the other hand, men constitute more than 88% in all cabinet positions at state and below state level. According to a data from house of people's representative of Ethiopia, in 1995 the proportions of women Member of Parliament were 2.3 percent and in 2015 the proportion raised to 39 percent. As the data from Oromia state council indicate in 1995 the proportion of women in state council were 3.4 percent and the representation of women increased to 47 percent in 2015. This implies that the progress achieved in the representation of woman in state council is not observed in the case of cabinet.

3.2 Respondents view of equal gender political participation

In this section the data collected from woman and man citizens living in Sebeta town through questionnaire is

presented. The respondents were asked to give answer regarding equal participation of woman and man in politics. The respondents were asked whether they know that woman and man have equal right to participate in politics. While 93.3% of women responded yes, all of the male respondents' response was yes. Regarding the importance of equal gender participation in politics, except 2.3% of women both categories of respondents' response were yes. Finally the table revealed that 67.2% of woman thinks that woman and man are not equally participating in the politics of the study area (Table 2). The data show that there is no significant knowledge gap in relation with awareness of equal political right and importance of equal political participation in Sebeta town.

3.3 Participation in election

Women participation in election is one of the democratic rights granted by the constitution of Ethiopia. According to the constitution of Ethiopia both woman and man have equal right to elect and be elected. The data collected regarding this case is presented in annexed table three. With respect to the participation of woman on election the data in table 3 shows that 86.6% of woman respondents have participated on the previous election by casting their vote. On the other hand the proportion of man who casted their vote during election 2015 were 93.3% of the total. Election campaign, selection of election committee and announcement of election rules are considered as events proceeding election. As table three show, while only 15.5% of woman participated on these events, 73% man has taken part on these events. As presented above the proportion of woman who have ever thought of running for election are only 22.2% of the total. In addition, only the same proportions of them are member of political party. However, 80% of men have ever thought of running for an election in the study area and 43.3% of them are member of political party (Table 3). According to the data woman participation on election as a voter is nearly equal to man. However, their participation in political party and thinking of running for election is low.

3.4 Council and political party membership

In analyzing the participation of women in politics it is important to identify their representation in local government decision making body and political parties. Regarding political party membership, the constitution granted the citizens to be a member of any legally registered political party.

There is one city council and eight kebele councils in Sebeta town administration. From the data collected the researcher identified that only 20% of women respondents are member of either city or kebele council (Table 4). From this, it is possible to understand that majority of sample women are not member of either councils. That means both councils, where the decisions regarding local issue are made, are dominated by man. It is in this situation that the major decisions that affect the life of both are made. One can understand that it is less likely to expect decisions made in favor of woman's representation in the decision making bodies.

The data from the town administration revealed that during the 2008 and 2013 local election the number of women who were members of the town administrative council were 9 and 32 respectively. On the other hand the proportion of men counterpart was 42 and 27 respectively. In the case of kebele administration council, during the same time the number of women kebele councilors were 288 and 625 respectively. According to the data, during the 2013 local election, the proportion of men and women in kebele administration council became equal. Regarding the progress made in terms of ensuring equal representation of woman in kebele council the ruling party secretary of the Woreda stated that:

.....this is due to the commitment made by the party and local government to correct the imbalance of representation at kebele administration council. Our party always needs equal participation of men and women in decision making body (Key informant, 2016).

This shows that where there is greater determination and commitment by the government to enhance women equal involvement in decision making body, it is possible to have equal representation of women. Membership in political party is also another opportunity for women to participate in politics. However, data revealed that only 22.2% of women respondents are member of political parties (Table 4). This implies, like other types of participations, women involvements in party politics is very low. Hence, majority of women are not being benefited from political gains of being a party member. The researcher note that the efforts of political parties in increasing their membership is either do not directed towards women or totally non existence in the study area.

3.5 Participation on meetings

One of the means through which the citizens involved in the local government is by attending meeting conducted by the local government. Attending local government meetings gives an opportunity of raising different issues of their local administration and also a chance of knowing the administrators and officials will be gained. In order to assess the political participation the researcher asked the respondents whether they frequently participate on meetings or not. As presented in annexed table 5, only 26.6% of woman frequently attends meetings. On the other hand, 80% man attends meetings frequently. The researcher asked the respondents to explain why they do

not frequently participate and they stated that it is very difficult for them to frequently attend meeting due to the burden they have around their home. They also reported that except for attendance purpose, their presence does not bring any a change at all.

However, the secretary of the OPDO party was asked to reflect on the low level of women participation and stated that:

Our party do not feel that women participation on a meeting is low in Sebeta town, but we know that they are not are not regular attendant like men. Our party values the participation of women in local government meeting and we expect women to raise important issues on meetings (Key informant, 2016).

Only 20% of women have ever willingly raised political related issues on a meeting. The proportion of men who has ever willingly raised political issues on a meeting constitutes 3.3% of the total (Table 5). The table also revealed that only 33.3% of women respondents know their kebele chairman. However, 86.6% man knows their kebele chairman. The data indicate that, compared to man, the participation of women on meetings as an attendant and active participant is very low.

4. Critical analysis of women political participation

Almost all of the women respondents believe in the importance of women equal participation in politics and greater majority of women participated in the recently conducted local election. Accordingly, women believe in equal political participation and participation in vote casting, appear to be consistent throughout the three kebeles. The good story, however, seems to stop here. Despite this apparently high level of electoral involvement and interest in participation, women are at great disadvantage in actual perception and participation of their local government. From the data collected the researcher identified the following aspects related with women political participation in Sebeta town administration.

4.1 Restricted participation

As stated by Wang and Dai (2010), political participation at local level may take different forms like election, decision-making and democratic management. In the context of this research, election constitutes the involvement of women in recent kebele and town administration elections. According to the author's definition, participation in decision making refers to the involvement of women in local decision making through participation in local assembly and meeting. On the other hand, democratic management is their participation in forwarding concern, suggestion to and administrative issues to the town/ kebele meeting to get government attention.

Hence, it is believed that participation in election and raising administrative issues on meetings to the local government gives opportunities for women to take part in local government politics. However, the data collected revealed that women political participation is not consistent. While a majority of them do participate in election as a voter, women's participation in decision making is very low. The researcher found that the reason of women participation on election was mainly exercising political right, to promote good governance, insistence from local government cadres and a fear that local government bodies. On the other hand, the ruling party of the area believe that greater women participation on election were not due to fear, but because of the encouragements made by the government to exercise political right. Personal inconveniency and thinking of one vote does not change things at all were found to be the main reason for not voting on the election.

Regarding democratic management, while majority of the male citizens frequently take part in the deliberation and meeting at local level, the proportion of female is very limited. While three out of four male frequently participated in local government decision making, only one out of four women do the same. Moreover, it is possible to note that even though they participate in local government meetings, the possibility of women bringing political issues to the attention of local government is much less than male in Sebeta Town Administration.

More importantly, the researcher identified that majority of the cases by which the women reported to local government body is reporting to local police on security issue or conflict, reporting when there is social service interruption and similar cases. In real political participation sense, this does not constitute meaningful political participation like running for election, holding decision making position and raising key political issues to be considered by the government.

Therefore, women in Sebeta town are playing insignificant political role in attending meetings and raising political issues to get the government attention. Based on more explanation given by respondents, the researcher found that fear of action from the local cadres was one of the reasons for low level of political participation by women of the study area. The researcher also note that the fact that the respondents really fear to write and talk about politics during data collection. Therefore, it is normal to expect women in this situation to only raise the issues that the local government of the area wants to be raised.

The other area of political participation difference observed between women and men were the involvement and interactions women have with local government leaders. As the size of kebele residents are

relatively small and the leaders themselves are also local people, one can expect that women know their local government leader very well. However, while the majority of male know their kebele chairman, two third of the women reported that they do not know who the chairman of their kebele is. The study found that though women participation on election as a voter is almost equal to men, other aspect of political participation is very low. The data indicated a promising result regarding voting, but shows also that women participation in politics other than voting is very limited

4.2 Representation in decision making body

At the local government level, the highest decision making body is Woreda/Town administration council. Kebele administration council is the highest decision making body at the kebele level. Therefore, woreda and kebele administration council are considered as decision making body.

The revised constitution of Oromia article 35 has explicitly stated that in each government body, special arrangement like affirmative action will be made to increase the representation of women. However, in the study area a significant portion of kebele and town administration council still have a very few female members. In many kebeles, women cadres simply do not exist.

Women's representation in kebele administration council (cabinet) is even worse. Out of 8 kebele administration in Sebeta town administration, in 6 kebele administration council, the council does not have a female member (cadre) at all. To put it simply, out of 40 kebele administration cabinet there are only 2 female cadres found in Kebele 03 (Welate) and kebele 04 (Furi). Kebele 01, 02 (Alemgena) 05 (Dima), 06 (Dalati), 07 and 08 have no woman cabinet at all. Women kebele cabinet member only accounts 5% of the total in the study area. In the kebeles where women are found in decision making body their number does not exceed one.

Another critical decision making body at local government level is town administration council. The Town administration council is also termed as town cabinet and the members are heads of different sectors of the town administration. Accordingly, in Sebeta town administration there are 26 sectoral offices. This means there are 26 heads that are responsible for their office. Out of 26 woreda administration council or cabinets, there are only 3 (11%) female cabinet. The remaining position is totally dominated by male cabinet. Even those women who managed to be among the cabinet hold positions which are not considered as a key. The researcher notes that reservation of non-critical positions for women implies that women are in the decision making body merely for sake of at least having one woman cabinet in the circle. Position such as mayor, vice mayor, party secretary, revenue bureau, land development and management, and the like, seem almost reserved for male, while less crucial positions such as: vice head of youth and sport affairs, women and children office affairs, women league and vice of different office heads is left for women if any. Women's representation in branch Party organizations is also low compared to their men counterpart. Out of the total members of the OPDO branch party members (3900) in Sebeta town the female constitutes (1390) 35 percent.

4.3 Civic skills

Civic skill refers to knowing how to cope in group and skills necessary for participation in politics (Lawless and Fox, 2012). According to the authors, understanding the agenda and ideology of the candidates competing for election indicate meaningful election. Though political participation of women in Sebeta town is high in electing local leaders, their participation is affected by lack of civic skill and political interest.

The researcher identified the low level of interest of women in taking part in different aspects of politics coming before the election. Though the majority of women did vote during the recent local election their involvement in politics preceding the election is very low. In line with this, the discussion made with participants of focus group discussion confirmed the same situation. The key informants of the study also stated the low level of women participation in events preceding the election.

In the Sebeta town administration, before the date of election, an election observant council is elected, election rule is announced, candidates are announced and campaign is conducted among others. Of the female respondents, only 15.5 percent of them participated in all these events before the election. Comparatively, majority of their men counterpart attended events preceding the election. Majority of women cast their vote during the election without properly understanding the program and profile of the candidates competing for election. This implies that there is greater possibility that they vote based on what they heard from their husband, neighbors or other family members. This is mainly due to lack of civic skills and political interest.

In relation with women interest and dream in running for election, the study noted that female showed low level of interest. Small number of women reported that they would run for an election indeed. However, majority of sample men in the study area responded that they would run for an election. The study found that women in the study area even if they election, as the existing situation shows, they seldom stand for leadership positions and they often go for a marginal role.

5. Constraints to women political participation

Multiple factors contribute to the situation of today where women are underrepresented in political leadership. Women's political involvement, participation and access to formal political power structures are linked to many different structural and functional constraints which differ across countries. In order to identify factors for the low level of women political participation in Sebeta, the researcher collected relevant data through interview with key informants from office of the ruling party, office of women and children affairs, mayor office, women cabinet and councilors. In addition, representatives of the above offices and women cabinet and councilors also participated on one focus group discussion held at the mayor office. Accordingly, the researcher note different factors as a constraint for women political participation. The factors that are considered as a constraint for women political participation is thematically organized and critically analyzed as follows.

5.1 Education

In relation with the issue under investigation investigating the effect of education on women's political participation is important. Many social science researches, for instance Delys (2014), indicated that education is one of the main factors determining individual's ability to exploit opportunities. In line with this the key informants and participants of the focus group discussion unanimously stressed on the importance of girls' education in determining political participation. During the interviews, almost all women and majority of men stated girls' education as the major factor for the low level of women participation in politics.

Data obtained from sample kebele administration office is also consistent. Majority of women received maximum of preliminary school education. According to the data obtained from the sample kebeles only one out of four women are able to go to college or university. In all sample kebeles, women who participate in local government decision making attended a level of education which is higher than an average female in the kebele. All the 3 cabinet members of town administrations and the two kebele administration cabinet received college or university education. This implies that women with college education or higher are involved in local government politics. Hence, it is important to underline that women with college education and greater constitute only one fourth of all and women with college education or above has a greater possibility to become a local government cadre.

5.2 Gender awareness

According to Wang and Dai (2010), gender is used in reference to the different expectations, demands and limits placed on male and female sexes by the society. Studies have noted that role specification based on gender is also a determinant of women's participation in politics. In agrarian society like Ethiopia, labor division is based on gender. Accordingly the role of women is restricted to domestic or household affairs and that man is public affairs. Therefore, the inadequate participation of women in politics can be attributed to inequalities resulted from gender based role division. In the study area the data collected through interview and focus group discussion indicated that the role of majority of women is restricted to domestic roles and they took limited role in local politics.

The data collected revealed that almost all of the respondents reported that both sex needs to equally participate in local politics. Though such believe in equal gender participation in politics is very important in shaping people's behavior, the reality is different. Regarding this issue, majority of interviewee and discussion participants raised the problem of socially constructed gender base role as a reason. Majority of them argued that previously existing believe of the community that limits the participation of women to domestic affairs is not totally eradicated.

5.3 Institutional factors

Though the existence of regular local government election is considered as one of the prerequisite for the participation of women in local politics, ensuring sustainable and active participation requires more than election. One of woman cabinet who were the key informant of the study indicated that insufficient attention is given by the ruling party in increasing the representation of women in local government. Explaining this, the key informant stated that:

.....only in a very few areas the government is on the way to improve women representation. For instance during the recent national government election, the greater majority of candidates nominated by the party to run for national government are Female (6 out of 9) candidates. However, the government neglects the case of the women at the local government level (Woman cabinet, 2016).

Regarding this, the researcher asked the secretary of the ruling party of Sebeta town administration weather there is quota system or not. He stated that:

.....at a party level there is a principle which require women to be represented by appropriate quota. However, proper implementation of quota is problematic due to the fact that the quota principle does not made clear how many female and how the decision making position should be distributed

between men and women. This has resulted in women always holding non-critical positions in both Woreda and kebele administration (Key informant, 2016).

From this the study note that underrepresentation of women in decision making position might have resulted in the reproduction of inequality in politics. Because many studies indicate that the existence of women at a decision making and leadership position has a positive impact on the moral and motivation of other women to inspire for political participation. In addition to psychological contribution, there is a possibility of devising strategies, policies and rules that ensure more representation of women in decision making position where there are women in decision making circle.

From the key informant interview and focus group discussion the study note that women's lack of education and political awareness, gender based division of roles, historical legacies and absence of appropriate and specific rules guiding the quanta principles has affected their level of political participation. In this context it is expected that different types of women's organization will play a key role in filling this gap. The researcher raised the role of these organizations to be discussed by the participants of the focus group discussion. The researcher notes that their role is very insignificant and does not go beyond conveying message which comes from the ruling party. Given the low level of women interest in running for local elections and under representation in local government structure, women should be able to draw support from women associations and organizations. However, the leagues and federation's presence and capacity did not result in what is expected.

6. Conclusion

The study noted that women accounted for 5% of the members in kebele administration council (cabinets) in Sebeta. At the woreda administration level, women constituted 11% of woreda administration councils (sectoral heads). Women have been more successful in casting their vote in election. More than 86% of women casted their vote in a recent election. However, they lack sufficient information about the profile and programs of the candidates and they went for election merely to fulfill the task. Very few women have tried to know the profile and policies of the competing candidates running for election. Small proportion (22.2%) of women in the area would run for an election. Almost all of them feel that they are not fit for election personally and also the existing situation doesn't allow them to run for election conveniently.

Almost all women believe in equal participation of both sex in politics and the importance of women political participation. However, greater majority of women are not frequent participant on meetings held at a local level. While majority of male citizens frequently take part in the deliberation and meeting at local level, the proportion for women amounts to only one fourth of the total. The study found that women feel that their involvement in such type of discussion has nothing to change and they prefer to stay at business and hear the decision from men who attend regularly. Hence, it is very unlikely to expect decisions made under the domination of men to fully incorporate the political interest of females.

In terms of bringing meaningful political and administrative cases to the attention of their local government, women show little initiatives. They only voluntarily forward security and social service related issues like crime reporting, water service and waste disposal issues to the attention of the local government. In fact, the study identified that women fear of intimidation and other political action by the local cadres is one of the reasons for not raising other meaningful political issues. Even if the size of the residents of the kebeles are small in number, the study found that while majority of male citizens know their kebele chairman well; almost half of women do not know the chairmen of their kebele at all.

Though the study noted that the participation of men and women in election as a voter is similar, their participation in other aspect is very low. Greater majority of women only participate in a political activity they consider as responsibility and a must of them is mainly election. The study found the existence of progress in terms of women political participation post 1990s at the house of people's representative and regional state council level. However, the progress is very insignificant at local government level.

The study revealed that, beside lack of equal education opportunity in previous time, one of the hindrances to women political participation is the historically rooted gender based division of labor. They consider attending meeting, election campaign and other political activities as time wasting, because they have to take care of their domestic affairs like rearing children and cooking. More importantly, lack of specific law guiding the quota system and other institutional factors has limited women political participation. Finally, low level of commitment from women league, town administration and the ruling party also contributed to the persistence of the case. Therefore, meaningful action from the ruling party and town administration is very important in enhancing political participation of women in Sebeta town administration.

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Table 1: Women representation in Cabinet

S/n	Position	Female		Male		Total
		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
1	State cabinet(Bureau heads	4	7.5	49	92.5	53
2	Woreda Cabinet	3	11.5	23	88.5	26
3	Kebele Cabinet	2	5	38	95	40

Source: Own Compiled

Table 2: Respondents view of equal gender political participation

Questions	Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1 Do you know that women and men have equal right in taking part in politics?	93.3%	6.7%	100%	-
2 Do you think that equal gender participation in politics is important or not.	97.7%	2.3%	100%	-
3 Do you think that women and men are equally participating in the politics of Sebeta town administration?	28.8%	67.2%	66.6	35.4

Source: Survey Data, 2016

Table 3: Participation in Election

Questions	Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1 Have you taken part in the previous local election?	86.6%	13.4%	93.3%	6.7%
2 Have you participated in events before election?	15.5%	84.5%	73.3%	26.7%
3 Have you thought of running to be elected?	22.2%	77.8%	80%	20%

Source: Survey data, 2016

Table 4: Council and political party membership

Questions	Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1 Are you a member of either woreda or kebele council?	20%	80%	66.6%	33.4%
2 Are you a member of any political party?	22.2%	77.8%	43.3%	56.7%

Source: Survey Data, 2016

Table 5: Participation on meetings

	Questions	Female		Male	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Do you frequently participate in town and kebele meetings?	26.6%	73.4%	80%	20%
2	Have you ever willingly raised politics related issues to get government attention?	20%	80%	73.3%	26.8%
3	Do you know the chairman of your kebele?	33.3%	66.7	86.6%	13.4%

Source: Survey Data, 2016