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**The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Exercise of Women Economic Rights: Particular
Emphasis on the Rights of Women in the Informal Sector in Lideta Sub-City**

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**The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Exercise of Women Economic Rights: Particular
Emphasis on the Rights of Women in the Informal Sector inLideta Sub City**

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Ababa University*

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June 2021


Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis on “**The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Exercise of Women Economic Rights: Particular Emphasis on the Rights of Women in the Informal Sector in Lideta Sub City**” is my own work and the reference used duly cited and acknowledged.

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List of Abbreviations

ACHPR- African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

FDRE- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

ICCPR- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR- International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ILO- International Labour Organization

MSE - Micro and Small Enterprises

SDGs- Sustainable Development Goals

TIN -TaxpayerIdentification number

UNECA-United Nation Economic Commission For Africa

UDHR- Universal Declaration of Human Right

VAWG- Violence against Women

WHO -World Health Organization

Abstract

Currently, the world is hit by a pandemic called Covid- 19, which has shown to affect and make everyone vulnerable. The pandemic by itself appears not to discriminate against anyone but the level of its impact creates inequality, particularly against women. Women in most places are found at higher risk of vulnerability because of the pandemic in all aspects of their life; mainly their economic rights are being highly impacted. Among women, those engaged in the informal sector are affected and facing serious economic problems. The pandemic exacerbated the already existed poor living and working situations of those women living in poverty.

To fight the pandemic the government of Ethiopia implemented different response measures as a precaution to reduce the spread of the virus. But the response measures taken by the government further impacted those women differently. It particularly affects those engaged in the informal sector that are dependent on their daily incomes to win their near-to-ground livelihood and work to fulfil their family's basic human needs which are pivotal to enjoy essential socio-economic rights. Thus, the research is designed qualitatively to investigate the women's lived experience of informal engagement and how the pandemic and the response measures impacted their economic rights and related basic human rights. To do so, primary data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Moreover, secondary data obtained from different writings and field observations were also used.

Therefore, the study examine show the pandemic as well as the associated response measures taken by the government affected the economic rights of the women and in turn challenged their full enjoyment of human rights including their rights to health, food, education, water, sanitation, social protection, and non-discrimination .The study also found economic participation and opportunities as a main factors that are essential for women in the informal sector to engage equally in any type of work they choose, so that they contribute to the labour force. This principal causes are also identified as grounds to generate decent work conditions as well as assist the women to transfer to formalization in the study area. But the pandemic as well as the response measures impacted the factors which are key for women economic growth. Such incidence extended to and violates women means to economic equality, which is empowerment.

CHAPTER ONE

I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency -but it is far more.

It is an economic crisis. A social crisis and a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis.¹

A. Background of the study

Following the first-time identification of Covid-19 in December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that Covid-19 is a global pandemic in March 2020 and warned about its highly contagious nature.²The pandemic is threatening to overwhelm public health care systems and is having devastating impacts throughout the globe on all spheres of life – the economy, social security, education, and food production.³ Historically, viruses have the ability to infect all vulnerable hosts, most often than not, discriminating against age, race, gender.⁴But, given that all are vulnerable, there are groups who are at a higher risk of vulnerability because of the pandemic in all aspects of their life. Because of the corona virus almost every human creature living in the world is supposed vulnerable, although there may be risk factors increasing vulnerability to living condition, as well as right protection of individuals and groups. “*Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impact of Covid-1 9 is exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex.*”⁵

COVID-19 pandemic hit the world too early, but it slowly begun to spread into Africa and particularly in a dramatic manner in Ethiopia. The situation is further exacerbated in Africa with inadequate health and economic infrastructures and existing social, political, and environmental vulnerabilities. Thus, “*the impact of COVID-19 on Africa, particularly on women*

¹AntónioGutierrez,we are all in this Together: Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery adopted by UN, 23 April 2020. www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and

²A global outlook to the interruption of education due to COVID-19 Pandemic: Navigating in a time of uncertainty and crisis, *Asian Journal of Distance Education* Volume 15, Issue 1, 2020, p1.

³Statement on the corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic economic, social, and cultural rights, adopted by UN Economic and social council 17, April,2020, p1, accessed on January27,2021<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3856957?ln=en>

⁴Michelle Norvell, MSN, APRN, FNP-C Estrella P Evangelista DNP, An Evaluation of MMR Titers, and Its Association with COVID19 Severity of Illness, March 20,2020

⁵ Policy Brief ,The impact of COVID-19 on women , adopted by UN Secretary General 9, April,2020<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>

*and girls who continue to face structural, social, cultural, and economic injustices is significant and overwhelming.”*⁶

In Ethiopia, the Government let the whole country know about the first case in March 2020 and the number of cases started to increase since the first notice on the 13th of March. As of 19, June 2021, there are 275,036 cases including 4280 deaths reported by Ministry of Health.⁷ Amongst these cases vulnerable groups of the society are primarily affected in all aspects of life. Still now the outbreak is creating a greater number in human health in the developed world, but it continues manufacturing a bigger risk in the exercise of human rights and vulnerability to human health, economy, societal relation, security and creates inequality when it goes to the poorest countries like Ethiopia “*where inequality is one feature of the social condition in its capital city, Addis Ababa.*”⁸

A quarter of the Ethiopian population aged 15 years and older is estimated to have been living in extreme poverty during 2020, with estimates of 25.7% for women⁹ and the coming of the pandemic aggravated the already existed living situations of those women living in poverty. It has an ability of resulting on a massive societal and economic disruption in a nation and mostly its women who are more likely to carry the burden of the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. It is evident that because of the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination even under the normal conditions, women in Ethiopia are one of the most vulnerable groups in the country and when such incidence added in the already existed inequality regarding equal access to economic opportunities, apparently its women who would be primarily affected because of the virus. This is true for Women in Ethiopia where the pandemic acts as adding factor to the country economy which already exists in unequal

⁶African Union, The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and empowerment, June 30, 2020 available at <https://au.int/sw/node/38776> accessed February 6/2021

⁷Ethiopian public health institute, www.ephi.gov.et accessed June 19/2021

⁸Erasmus+ Program of the European Union, ,City profile: Addis Ababa, Report prepared in, Social Inclusion and Energy Management for Informal Urban Settlements project, Erena D.et.al,(2017)pp-12, <file:///C:/Users/SAM2/Desktop/citation%20%20collection/City%20Profil%20Addis%20Ababa.pdf> accessed on February 14/2021

⁹UN WOMEN, OHCHR, *Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA) on the impact of COVID 19 on Women and Men in Ethiopia*, Gender perspective, 2020, P7 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/EthiopiaRGA_2012202002.pdf accessed February 8/2021

situation. Thus, the pandemic is more expanding the gender gap and inequality which is one of the county main agenda that many are fighting to narrow.

By the time WHO announced COVID-19 as a global public health emergency, countries immediately responded. One of the common measures adopted includes the declaration of a state of emergency, limiting certain human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as restricting socio-economic activities.¹⁰ In Ethiopia State of Emergency was declared as a precaution to reduce the speed of the virus followed by strict measures such as social distancing, closure of schools, and restrictions on business which requires people interaction, gatherings, and meetings. During the state of emergency, in certain areas of Addis Ababa where the virus hits harder and infected large number of inhabitants of the area, a partial lockdown of places as well as stay home orders in selected households was implemented. For instance, in selected areas under Lideta Sub City (where this research is conducted) where the virus was transmitted in large number, many households were forced to stay at home for some time to reduce the chances of infection. Such orders created a challenge in the protection of economic security and exercise of basic human rights of peoples. In such cases, women become more vulnerable.

It is evident that COVID-19 pandemic and associated control measures have increased the economic vulnerability of women, men, and households.¹¹ *“The measures disturb the normal functioning of individuals, communities, and businesses with serious consequences to the social and economic wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of the society and those whose survival depends on day-to-day engagement in economic activities.”*¹² According to gender rapid assessment survey conducted by UN WOMEN on the impact of the pandemic on women and men in Ethiopia, movement restrictions associated with the state of emergency and other social distancing measures significantly changed the economic activities of most peoples in the country one way another. Also the survey revealed many were affected by declines in personal incomes as well as declines in combined household incomes.¹³ Although the measures adopted were later eased, they have caused harm in terms of loss of livelihoods of poor households and the

¹⁰JG Akech, ‘Exacerbated inequalities: Implications of COVID-19 for the socio-economic rights of women and children in South Sudan’ (2020)20, *African Human Rights Law Journal* 584-606, accessed January 26/2021.

¹¹ UN WOMEN, OHCHR, supra note 9, p 56.

¹²ACHPR, press statement on human rights based effective response to the novel COVID-19 Virus in Africa, March 24, 2020, <https://www.achpr.org/pressrelease/detail?id=483> Accessed on January 27/2021

¹³UN WOMEN, OHCHR, supra note 9, P8.

*'population at risk.'*¹⁴Such restrictive measures affect particularly women who run here and there informally to win their near to ground income and fulfil their family basic needs. Women are more exposed to informality in low and lower-middle income countries and are often in more vulnerable situations than their male counterparts¹⁵ which is also one of the distinguishing elements of women regarding their economic practice in Addis Ababa. Such economic inequalities affect those poor engaged in the informal sector, mainly poor women in the sector. The informal sector is one of the sections that poor people mostly women are engaged in certain activities to support themselves and their families. ILO describes the informal sector as “*activities of the working poor*”.¹⁶ And such working poor affected in time of health crises like covid 19. And particularly, the livelihoods of women who depend on daily retail from the informal economy are badly impacted. According to ILO, out of the 740 million women working in the informal economy, 42 percent are found in sectors rated by ILO as sectors at high risk of COVID-19 impact in terms of job losses and a decline in working hours. And “*women self-employed and the informal economy are rated as one of the sectors which are in a threat.*”¹⁷

The outbreak knocked out hard and interrupted many activities in the City of Addis Ababa. And its effect mostly reflected on women engaged in the informal sector. As a result, their human right is being affected in many ways. During the declaration of the state of emergency and out of fear the virus would spread, most people were forced to lock behind their homes and limit their movement. On the grounds of the self-closure, many had stopped to consume out of their home. The problems doubled for women in the informal sector who lives in the study area where the virus hits most and where the government specifically orders many households to stay at home for an undefined period of time.

The stay-at-home order and interruptions of their informal working put them in economic crises and made them incapable of fighting with scarcity. The outcome of such incidence is affecting their socio-economic rights, which are interdependent with other human rights. As strongly and rightly argued, the way in which women in the informal sector are dealt with during

¹⁴ JG Akech, Exacerbated inequalities, supra note 10, P586.

¹⁵ ILO, brief on COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy, May 2020, p 1

¹⁶ ILO, the informal sector, 11 March 2002, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/video/video-news-releases/WCMS_074529/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁷ ILO, policy Brief, The COVID-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work, May 2020 pp1-2.

COVID-19 may start another pandemic in the form of deepening social inequalities; *women's loss of income and livelihoods is a recipe for a rise in poverty.*¹⁸

Thus, this research studied the impact of COVID-19 on the protection and exercise of women rights in Ethiopia, specifically the economic rights of women engaged in the informal sector and living particularly in Addis Ababa Lideta sub city, Worde 03 where a partial shutdown was taken as a measure for some time. Particularly, this research tried to identify how the pandemic violates women's working conditions, especially those who are more vulnerable to the reduction in their earnings and engaged in the informal sector to win their basic human needs which are essential to exercise their basic human rights. The research further assessed how the measures taken by the government affected the lives of women and its visible consequence which is doubling the inequality that already exists.

B. Statement of the problem

The pandemic by itself does not discriminate against anyone but its impact creates inequality, particularly against women. Since the coming of COVID 19, the government took measures to control the transmission of the virus. There have been many attempts like public services, economic and social assistance actions to overcome the hardships and protect the right of vulnerable groups particularly women, children, and the elderly. But there still exists a vast area in which the pandemic causes a massive social conflict and economic crises. As a result, many women's rights are violated and the living conditions of women during the outbreak shifted to another lower level and their basic human rights are found in a particular situation.

In this terrifying moment, women's rights are becoming more at risk in all spheres of life. If the economic rights of women are impacted, it's apparent that challenges on the full enjoyment of human rights including the rights to health, food, education, housing, water and sanitation, social protection, non-discrimination as well as unjust and unfair conditions of work occurred.

The onset of COVID-19 in a poor country like Ethiopia where protection of women's right is in the infant stage, the pandemic and the response measures implemented to tackle the outbreak further widen the gap that exists in the protection of women's rights. And more human rights matters are occurring every day. As a result, women are supposed to either laid off

¹⁸JG Akech, Exacerbated inequalities supra note 10, P600

voluntarily or forced to stop engaging in their income-generating activities. Even some move to stay at home to safeguard themselves and family from the virus.

Women living in Addis Ababa continue to suffer economically since they are away from their economic opportunities which they used to enjoy before the pandemic, loses their job which resulted not only in shortage of daily meal and food insecurity but also increases the unpaid care work of women. The economic loss or reduction in income also creates inequality even among the women themselves. The unequal impact of the pandemic on the exercise of basic rights of women is becoming visible. Women in low-income producing activity or women in the informal sector are groups of women who are more subjected to the effect of COVID-19. The response measures taken by the government further impact those women differently.

The disruptions across the economy of women might continue to be sensed within the coming years. It will generate a wide gap in the exercise of women's rights, between women engaged in low income activates or informal sectors whose economy is mixed with their household economy and women engaged in the formal or other areas other than informal sectors. The continuing and indirect effects of the pandemic will likely be felt much more severely on the exercise of rights of women in the informal sector.

Therefore, this study examined the impact of COVID-19 and the responses brought in the enjoyment of economic rights of women engaged in the informal sector. Further, it assessed how far the economic challenges affect the protection and exercise of other basic human rights of women.

C. Objective of the study

1. General objective

The general objective of this study is examining the impact of Covid 19 and associated measures by the government on the enjoyment of economic rights of women engaged in the informal sector.

2. The specific objectives of the study are: -

- Examine the livelihood of poor women in the informal sector in relation to the pandemic and the challenges they face with their basic socio- economic rights

- Examine the measures adopted by the Government to fight the pandemic and assess the implications of such measures on socio-economic rights of women.
- To identify the human rights implications of the pandemic
- To assess responsibilities of the government in protection of women human rights in the time of the pandemic.
- Assess COVID-19 response measures implemented in the research area and the pressure that emanated between women in the informal sector and their right to economic activities in the study area.

D. Research questions

The research plans to deal with the following questions: -

- Why COVID-19 challenges women's human rights differently and how it affects their economic rights?
- How does the pandemic violate the working environment of women in the informal sector?
- How government COVID-19 response measures affect women economic rights?
- Are there other human rights of women at risk in relation with violation of women's rights to exercise economic activities during the pandemic?

E. Scope of the study

The scope of the study area is limited to Addis Ababa Lideta Sub-City Woreda 03. It focused particularly on women living in the Woreda and engaged in the informal sector. Even if in the Woreda many women are found engaged in the informal sector, this research limited itself to those women recognized by the Woreda Administration as women in the informal sector. These women are found and listed under two offices of the Woreda namely, Trade and Industry office as well as Urban Jobs creation and food security office. And transferring those women from the informal engagement to the formal sector through process is the mutual goal of the two-sector offices. The process includes increasing women's opportunity to shift from the informal sector to decent work and engage them in the formal sector.

Concerning rights, this research did not deal with each type of women rights affected by COVID 19. Rather limited with economic rights of women which are the key right for the enjoyment of other basic human rights. However, it does not mean that other rights of women, as well as consequences, not discussed in this research rather were discussed when found necessary to describe and explain further the stated rights.

F. Significance of the study

It is well-known that many studies are conducted regarding women rights but very few in relations to pandemic's impact on women's rights protection before the coming of COVID-19. Thus, the finding of the study will be helpful in identifying that women's right primarily violated and need immediate meaningful action during such existing and similar outbreak occurrences. That means it have an opportunity for the government to check its capacity of readiness if another unexpected outbreak happens in Addis Ababa.

Similarly, the findings of the study helps future researchers who want to conduct a research in these areas since there is no much research conducted regarding rights of women engaged in the informal sector during the existence of unforeseen pandemic outbreak like COVID 19. On the other hand, issue of COVID 19 is world top phenomenon and since the onset of the pandemic many response measures are being taken to curb problems related to the pandemic. But all actions taking place are not viewed in gender lens. So, the research helps to show the created gaps in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in particular regards to women economic rights.

Furthermore, because of the corona virus, the lifestyle of many women already changed so these studies gave a clue on how women can cope up and adopt a new lifestyle, succeed, and avoid situations that led to abuse of economic rights.

G. Limitations of the Study

Most of the respondents commence their vending after 4-5 pm (10 -11 o'clock local time) which required the researcher to wait for the respondents until the allowed time of vending started. And because of the limited time the women have, a few number of women showed an intention of not wanting to share and spend their limited working time by conducting an interview. Lack

of cooperation by families of the respondents was another challenge even if the objective of the research was explained to them in vast. (Since most of the informal women retail around their home, their family members easily follow their action). Moreover, all most all of the interviewstook place after 6 pm (12 o'clock local time),which created a pressure on the researcher to stay in the research area at night-time.In addition because of late time of vending it was difficult to conduct more than two or three interview in a day.

The other is since the issue under research is quite new, finding empirical reports regarding pandemic outbreak and its result on women rights were challenging. Moreover, the study is conducted only on a selected vulnerable group, which is women in the informal sector.Thus, this research might not reveal that other women are also becoming vulnerable because of the outbreak. Moreover, the study is conducted in a specific area, and it is limited to show the right of other women in Addis Ababa who were affected by COVID-19.

H. Research design and methodology

For better understanding of the effect of the pandemic and response measures taken to minimize the risk of COVID-19 ,on the exercise of women's economic right,the researcher used a qualitative research with phenomenological method.

According to Creswell, phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon.¹⁹*And qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.*²⁰Thus, the study explored the commonality of a lived experience of women in the informal sector living at Lideta, Woreda03, from their point of view and further investigated their perception, how they feel and describe the situation they are passing through in this pandemic time.

¹⁹Creswell, J.W. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among the Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2013, pp.77-83 <file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/CRESWELLQualitative-Inquiry-and-Research-Design-Creswell.pdf>

²⁰Creswell, J. W *Research Design; Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed Methods Approaches* (Fourth ed.). (V.K.al, Ed.) London, UK: SAGE publications India Pvt.Ltd, 2014.

Moreover, the use of qualitative research helped the researcher in understanding the research problem or topic of the research from the perspective of the sample population in this study from women in the informal sector living in Lideta sub city, woreda 03.

1. Sampling methods

In qualitative research sampling is usually selected purposively. This means participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the project.²¹ In this regard, the researcher used purposive sampling in selecting study subjects. In this study, among the Sub-Cities found in Addis Ababa, the researcher purposely selected Lideta sub-city, because:

- Out of the four inner cities in Addis Ababa (Addis Ketema, Arada, and Kirkos), Lideta Sub-City is one which has the largest share of inner-city informal settlement.²² It is where low-income groups are concentrated²³; including women engaged in the informal sector. In the area people are living in a densely manner which is a risk factor for the virus to transmit from one another. And it is an area reported by the government where the virus transmitted in large number and imposed several households to stay at home as well as different responsive measures were taking place to curb the transmission in the sub city differently from other sub cities.

Regarding the Woreda, among other Woredas of the Sub-City the researcher purposely chose the study area (Even if the researcher is not familiarized with the study area), woreda 03, because:

- During onset of the pandemic in the city of Addis Ababa almost everyone was mentally stressed about health and economic impact²⁴ but it differently impacted women and aggravated the already existed inequality of women in all spheres of life. Therefore, the study area is selected purposively believing that women in the informal sector in the area disproportionately affected by the pandemic when compared to other women in Addis

²¹Nouria Brikci, Judith Green, *A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology*, 26-Jun-2018 <https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/Qualitative-research-methodology.pdf>, accessed February 23/2021

²²Erasmus+ Program of the European Union, supra note 8, p.23.

²³Id, p.20

²⁴Yigrem Ali Chekole, Solomon Yimer Minaye, Semagn Mekonnen Abate, and Birhanie Mekuriaw, *Perceived Stress and Its Associated Factors during COVID-19 among Healthcare Providers in Ethiopia: A Cross-Sectional Study*, research Article adopted by Hindawi Advances in public Health <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/aph/2020/5036861/>

Ababa. It is an area where specifically a partial lockdown (stay home order) out of all other sub cities was experienced and it was an area which gained an attention and media coverage about the situation of the community during state of emergency because of explicit partial lock down of the woreda. Various national media's reported about the anxiety and wrong judgments that members of the woreda were facing from others by considering the people of the woreda as a transmitter of the virus. The researcher was then very much concerned with the adverse consequences the people might face on the enjoyment of their basic human rights. As the result, women in the informal sector found in the frontline of basic human rights abuse because of the restriction of movement and the pandemic impact on their economic activities.

Considering the above such scenario would have a negative longer consequence on the exercise of women socio-economic right, the study area was selected purposively. Therefore, in general, the study employed purposive sampling with a view of drawing in-depth understanding on the phenomenon and effects of the pandemic on the enjoyment of women economic right in the sub city.

Having in mind the Sub City which is inner and where many households were forced to stay at home, the researcher obtained prior information through discussion with Lideta Sub-City, Woreda 03 executives. Then the researcher contacted and studied women on the focus area who are engaged in the informal sector and registered under the supervision of two different offices of the Woreda. These women are recognized by the woreda administration as women in the informal sector but in the process of formalization. The women are found engaged in five different informal service sectors under each office. The existence of such data helped the researcher to specify primarily the type of the informal sector women are mostly engaged with in the Woreda. Furthermore, it helped the researcher to set an inclusion criterion of women as a respondent, which is women registered under the Woreda and women engaged in one out of the 5 informal activities. So, such segregated data was employed by the researcher to select samples from every type of informal sector that are obtained by the women, so as to generate enough data that would answer the research problem clearly.

In selection of sample respondents, a total of 20 women engaged in the informal sector were selected from the two offices based on the type of informal sector that the women are

engaged in. 10 women from each section and 2 women from each type of informal service sector were selected as a sample. The primary criteria considered for selection was being female followed by type of informal engagement and marital status consequently.

In order to obtain more information, the researcher purposively selected relevant employees and experts who directly work on the study area and supervise the women activities. They are representatives from Woreda 03 and Lideta Sub-City Administrations.

2. Methods of Data Collection

The research used both primary and secondary sources of data to ensure the trustworthiness of the collected data.

a) *Primary source of data*

Thus, by using qualitative research, the researcher tried to look at the participants from inside of their world. The researcher went into the real world of the women that is being studied and came face-to-face with them and their realities. So, for this study to collect primary data mainly the research used interview questions (in-depth and semi structured), Focus Group discussion (FGD) with the women who experienced the occurrences of the pandemic and physical observation to examine the living situation of the women in actual basis.

(1) Interview

A face-to-face interview which was guided by interview research questions was conducted. To arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon, which is the pandemic, phenomenology enabled to develop interview questions in a way that allow interviewees to express their own views on phenomena under study.²⁵ Then in-depth interview guiding questions served specifically with issues regarding the effect of the pandemic and the response measures on the enjoyment of their economic right as well as questions in relation with other rights which can possibly be at risk because of economic right challenges and related questions in connection with their working environment.

²⁵Mark Bevan, *A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing*, January 2014.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259699638>

Moreover, the qualitative research designed also used in terms of semi structured interview to substantiate the data collected. Such interview helped the researcher to go deeper and add more relevant questions which were not included in the research question primarily but emanates later from the women during in depth interview and relates with the issue.

As it's stated above, interview has been conducted with 20 women engaged under different five type of informal sector. These women are registered and found under both sector offices (Trade and industry office and Urban Job creation and food security office). Except one interview all of the interviews held at their location or "shade" where the women conduct their vending. And 1 interview took place at the house of the interviewee based on her demand. Regarding time of interview the entire interview conducted after 5 pm (11 o'clock local time) since several women are not allowed to start vending before that time. The total interview length for each of the interview questions were not limited by time, rather depend on the length of time that it took the women to respond. It helped the researcher gain more information from the women living experience during COVID-19.

Then to substantiate the data acquired through interview, as additional input of information, key informant interview was conducted with peoples who have got a direct link with the issue in the research question. Totally 8 key informants participated in the interview. Out of the total number 2 of them were head of the offices (Trade and industry office and Urban Job creation and food security office) while the other 6 were senior experts from the woreda and Sub-City Administration. Additionally, the questions to the key informants were focused mainly on response measures taken by the government in the study area. All of the interviews were conducted at the office of the experts. In both cases all interview questions were designed as open-ended questions. Furthermore, prior to all the interview and focus group discussions consents were taken from each woman who participated on this study.

(2) Focus group discussion

As a supplementary to the individual interview as well as to gain compiled and articulated ideas regarding the impact that the women are facing during this pandemic in relation with the enjoyment of their economic rights, FGD were also utilized. Two different FGDs were conducted constituting 6 and 7 women in each discussion. It was aimed to conduct the FGD by participants comprised of 1 representative from each 5 types of informal sector registered under the woreda. But when the FGD was conducted additional three participants

were added by the researcher. The participants of the FGDs were the same women who participated in the individual interview.

(3) Observation

In this study the researcher also undertook physical observations as a source of data after observing the real condition of the women during face-to-face interview as well as by observing the general working environment and the situation the women are dealing with because of the pandemic on the exercise of their economic right and other rights which are at risk because of COVID-19.

b) Secondary sources of data

In addition to the primary sources the study used secondary literatures, including both published and unpublished materials such as, different international instruments, policy briefs, guidelines, journals, news, and literatures of different organizations and individuals in order to examine how COVID-19 impacted the right to economic activity of women and trigger an adverse effect on the enjoyment of other interrelated rights of women. Moreover, the secondary data helped the study to analyse and determine the responses implemented by the government to combat the pandemic, whether created inequality on women in the informal sector in the study area.

3. Method of data analysis

After Primary data is obtained using qualitative research methodology, the data analysis of this study followed by reading, transcribing, reducing, and interpreting. Then analysed using descriptive analysis methods by providing the stories of the women. Finally, after each story analysing of findings based on the nature of the research topic conducted.

4. Ethical and safety considerations

The research was conducted in manner anonymity is ensured. The participants were asked about their consent primarily and it's after they show their willingness the interview as well as recording was conducted.

CHAPTER TWO

II. Review of Literatures and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter is divided into five parts. The first part addresses the history of early pandemics in the protection of human rights, particularly impacts on women's rights and greater exposure. It also covers the issue of women's rights in the era of different pandemics in the past. These parts help to understand that the current pandemic is not new phenomena in the world and that previous public health crisis have also impacted human rights of individuals in all aspects of life. The second section identifies the impacts of COVID-19 on the rights that are at the frontline as well as its effect on the core human rights principles of non-discrimination and indivisibility. The third part identifies impacts of COVID-19 on selected fundamental rights including right to life, movement, health, food, and social security rights of women. This helps to understand how human rights are interrelated and how the Covid-19 impact on economic rights of women extends on the exercise of other rights. The fourth part specifically deals with the right to work and realization of economic rights in the era of COVID-19. The impacts of COVID-19 on the informal sector are analyzed under this part. The final section of this chapter deals with the gendered impacts of COVID-19.

A. History of Early Pandemics and Women's Situations in the Era of Pandemics

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a pandemic as *“an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people”*.²⁶

Pandemics share the common characteristics by the level of threats they cause to the survival of humankind. They can either be results of manmade tragedies or unforeseen natural occurrences that can impact the world population in more or less similar manner. Such occurrence are connecting people living in different parts of the world and enables them to share the same level of experience and reminds human beings how they are interdependent and equally

²⁶Heath Kelly, Bulletin of the World Health Organization, adopted by WHO <https://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/7/11-088815/en/>, accessed March 9, 2021.

vulnerable. There are instances where such phenomena could connect and impact humankind in a positive or negative ways. As a negative incidence, pandemics can be stated as an event which connect the globe at once and force the world to exert collective approach to tackle the situation before it threatens the life of the nation and triggers more human rights violation. Thus, early pandemics that occurred in the world can be taken as an illustration for public health effects and concerns of individual lives in many aspects.

*“As humans have spread across the world, so have infectious diseases.”*²⁷The world has been experiencing a pandemic in different times. And the range of its effect and the area it covers vary depending on country’s readiness to tackle such incidences and protect human beings. However, historically different diseases have affected humankind since the earliest days. According to many writings the shift into agrarian community is cited as the major reason for the spread of diseases. Apart from those the widespread trade activities which generated new means for human and animal interactions had sped up the occurrence of pandemics during early times.²⁸The more humans became settled in larger cities, pursued more exotic trade routes, and increased contact with different people, animals, and ecosystems, the more likely pandemics would occur.²⁹

Literatures show that the increase in human interaction globally triggered different plagues to occur in one place and easily stretch into other areas rapidly. This shows how human beings have interrelated and coming closer to one another. There are some historically known major deadly pandemics that have occurred through time, which have widespread and affected certain regions or the whole world. The major ones include Antonine Plague, Black death, new world smallpox, Spanish flu, swine flu, SARS, Ebola, MERS and the current COVID 19.³⁰

From the earlier ones for instance Antonine Plague, sometimes referred to as the Plague of Galen, erupted in 165 B.C, at the height of Roman Empire.³¹ It initially affected soldiers at the war front and later transmitted to the rest of the community. It was also mentioned

²⁷NicolasLePan, The visual history of pandemics, World Economic Forum, 15 March ,2020 available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/a-visual-history-of-pandemics>

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Ibid

³⁰Ibid

³¹John Horgan, World History Encyclopedia, May2019. Available at https://www.worldhistory.org/Antonine_Plague/

by some as one of the reasons for the decline of the strong empire back then. The deadliest pandemic recently before COVID-19 is Ebola. It was identified for the first time in 1976 near the Ebola River in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Ebola emerged at around 20 different instances since then and killed several people in most African states.³²

Ebola is very fatal and its probability to cause death is much higher than the current COVID-19 virus. In the year it was first identified there were 280 deaths out of the total 318 infected people in DRC (formerly known as Zaire) and 151 deaths out of 284 in Sudan.³³ The case fatality rate was 88% and 53% in DRC and Sudan, respectively.³⁴ The measures taken to contain the spread of the Ebola outbreak was almost like the recent measures adopted to control the spread of COVID-19. Back in early times the international community developed an early strategy to curb the outbreak. Later on, the world come up with a strategy from past occurrences of the Ebola to successfully control the spread.

Researchers have found that *exposure between males and females have been shown to be the important factor in the transmission of Ebola and the transmission of the virus has been related to direct contact with blood and other bodily fluids of people who are acute Sly ill, and, in most communities, the social burden of caregiving often falls solely to women.*³⁵ Consequently, women are more likely to be exposed as they take care of their family member. Protecting family roles have resulted in shift in gender roles of many epidemics due to the social customs. In most traditional communities' women's role is limited to child rearing and raising responsibilities as men are considered bread winners of the family. Due to the impacts of the pandemic women are forced to double responsibilities of care and taking part in an informal sector to support the household money-wise. In Ethiopia for instance, more women are affected by HIV/AIDS due to the extension of the caregiving tasks. Women are caregivers not only at a household level but also in health care institutions working from being a doctor to a janitor. The same applies when it comes to exposure to COVID-19, most women are forced to take the care

³²Center for Disease Control and Prevention ,History of Ebola Virus Disease Outbreaks. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/history/chronology.html>

³³Bell BP, Damon IK, Jernigan DB, et al. *Overview, Control Strategies, and Lessons Learned in the CDC Response to the 2014–2016 Ebola Epidemic*. MMWR Suppl 2016;65(Suppl-3):4–11. DOI:Available at [http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su6503a2external icon](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su6503a2external_icon).

³⁴ Id.

³⁵WHO Ebola Response Team Ebola virus disease in West Africa The first 9 months of the epidemic and forward projections. *N Engl J Med*. 2014;371:1481–95. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5452690/#ref1>

giving tasks and work in congested informal vending areas where there is an increased exposure to the virus.

*Experience from the Ebola and Zika outbreaks also shows that epidemics most often impacted vulnerable groups disproportionately, based on economic status, disability, age, and gender.*³⁶ Older peoples , persons with disabilities, low-income families, households highly exposed to shocks, and in general informal workers without social protection are highly impacted both by the disease and the government responses. Moreover, available evidence and lessons emerging from past global outbreaks of infectious disease suggest that pandemics exacerbate vulnerabilities that are already there prior to the outbreak *The 2014 Ebola outbreak revealed the gender issues and its exacerbated health inequities and social injustice issues that women were facing.*³⁷ Ebola virus had severely impacted women's livelihoods and economic security. Its impacts are still visible in the post-Ebola situation as small businesses and trade run by women struggle to return to its initial economic buoyancy.³⁸

Similarly, with the coming of AIDS in early time women were more exposed to the virus, discriminated and neglected in many ways when they found to have AIDS. The International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights indicated that vulnerability to HIV infection and to its impact feeds on violations of human rights, including discrimination against women and violations which create and sustain poverty.³⁹It disproportionately affects women and girls because of their unequal cultural, social and economic status in society.⁴⁰ Moreover, Stigma

³⁶Sara E. Davies Belinda Bennet, *A gendered human rights analysis of Ebola and Zika: locating gender in global health emergencies*, *International Affairs*, Volume 92, Issue 5, September 2016,<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12704>

³⁷Vijay Kumar Chattu, SanniYaya , *Emerging infectious diseases and outbreaks: implications for women's reproductive health and rights in resource-poor settings*,pp2<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32238177/> , Accessed March 15

³⁸West Africa network for peace building, *The impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on women: Lessons from the Ebola outbreak in W/Africa*,June2020,p6

³⁹Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights* , Consolidated Version2006,p6https://www.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/Documents/Publications/HIVAIDSGuidelinesen.pdf&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1

⁴⁰<https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-social-issues/key-affected-populations/women>

against women living with HIV/AIDS further leads to economic violence on women.⁴¹ The society acceptance of an individual with HIV AIDS differ for a Thus, HIV epidemic unfortunately remains an epidemic of women⁴²

The response for each of the pandemic differs depending on understanding of the causes of the diseases. From early times to present, the world is taking measures and responding to challenge the driving force behind pandemics and ranked them by their impact on human life.⁴³ Similar to the current COVID-19 prevention response, historically Quarantine was also taken as a primary measure to prevent the transmission of plague pandemics. In the 14th century quarantine was used to prevent a pandemic in America, and it was also employed to contain the spread of cholera outbreak in the 19th century.⁴⁴ There were even laws which were enacted to deal with early pandemics. The 1944 Public Health Service Act in the US was signed by President Roosevelt to tackle public health problems and to eradicate widely prevalent diseases which place an unnecessary burden upon the health and economy.⁴⁵ The enactment of such Public Health Service Act four years before the introduction of the UDHR indicates the awareness as to the interdependence of health and economic rights at the time.

All the above historically stated outbreaks clearly indicate the deeply rooted connection between different pandemic outbreaks and the direct impact on the full enjoyment of women's human rights. In grave cases pandemics may threaten the life of the nation as a whole and may trigger the temporary suspension of the basic human rights.⁴⁶ But their effect can be multi-dimensional on vulnerable sections of the society, particularly on women. The recent COVID-19 crisis case can serve as the best illustration to understand the complexity of the situation on women's rights. In addition to losing their income, women are facing fear and experience violence both in public and private spheres. Generally, as the issue of gender equality is a recent agenda of the world, its apparent and imaginable how early pandemics had impacted women.

⁴¹Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau, Calling for Systematic and Transformative Response: Addressing the Culture of Impunity in Gender-Based Violence and Violations against Marginalized Women Submission for the CEDAW General Recommendations No. 19

⁴²<https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-social-issues/key-affected-populations/women>

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴Center for Disease Control and Prevention, History of Quarantine, <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/historyquarantine.html#Early%20American%20Quarantine>

⁴⁵Public Health Report, Public Health Service Act , Vol. 59 ,No 28 ,July 14,1944

⁴⁶ See article 4 of the ICCPR.

B. The New Pandemic: COVID- 19

From the above historical occurrences of pandemics, it is apparent that the world has been experiencing different pandemic in different times and it continues to inflict harm and been a challenge to the full enjoyment of basic human rights. It only took few years after Ebola and MERS for the deadly COVID-19 pandemic to take the stage and affect every corner of the world at the same time. It has proved to be clearly of an international public health concern.⁴⁷

There is still an ongoing debate about the origin of the virus. Some claim it naturally came from animals while others accuse China's laboratories for the spread of the virus. The WHO was very late to declare COVID-19 as global pandemic citing concerns with the alarming levels of spread and severity. It is a family of viruses known to cause respiratory infections. The virus can easily transmit via contact with infectious material and is characterized especially by fever, cough, and problem of breathing.⁴⁸ While conducting this research, the world found a vaccine that played an important role in curbing the spread of COVID-19 but the controversy over efficacy still persists. There is also an ongoing vaccine equity issue as the economically developed states are taking the monopoly over the vaccines produced so far and failed to reach an agreement to waive the patent protections over the vaccines. As a result, developing countries like India are severely impacted and lost thousands of people due to the inaccessibility of the vaccines. At this time, COVID-19 has infected more than 179 million people and claimed the lives of more than 3.8 million people worldwide. The virus totally changed people's lifestyle and affected every profession and activity. Moreover, *"it has a broad range of health impacts across the globe including physical, mental health, hospitalizations, and deaths."*⁴⁹

*"This highly emerging pathogenic infectious disease and the panic it has caused are a stark reminder of how deeply interconnected our modern world has become."*⁵⁰ And it is a good reminder and indicator to the world that human rights are interdependent and interrelated. It also

⁴⁷HarapanHarapan, Naoyaltoh , Amanda Yufika , WiraWinardi ,Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19): A literature review, *Article in Journal of Infection and Public Health*· April 2020, , <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7142680/>

⁴⁸Focus on Characteristics of COVID-19 with the Special Reference to the Impact of COVID-19 on the UrogenitalSystem, Yang M. · Li H. · Sun J. · Zhao Y. · Tang D, <https://www.karger.com/Article/FullText/499255>

⁴⁹Nelia Viveiros & Amy E. Bonomi , Novel Corona virus (COVID-19): Violence, Reproductive Rights and Related Health Risks for Women, Opportunities for Practice Innovation , *Journal of Family Violence* , June 2020

⁵⁰Vijay Kumar Chattu, Sanni Yaya , , supra note 37

shows how every action and each human deeds which are considered ordinary can be changed or restored into new ordinary settings that are never been experienced before.

This situation affected the lives of billions of people. It has also impacted people's physical as well as psychological health. With regard to the psychological symptoms, anxiety/stress and fear about attending community event, and reduced autonomy and concerns about income, job, security, and soon have already been observed in a population⁵¹ Apart from the health crisis the pandemic caused vast economic problems that followed the total lockdowns that has resulted in losing of millions of jobs and forced people to rely on the social benefits from the state. The degree of the pandemic's harm varies depending on states resources, the individual's health status, gender, and work situation. For workers, their workplaces were shutdown, low-income works are reduced, and those essential workers are forced to work in uncertain situations in panic and fear. The pandemic allowed others to work from home and required them to adapt to a new working situation. For students, the pandemic forced them to stay at home and adopt to a new way of e-learning. In less developed states, due to the poor internet infrastructures the teaching learning process was highly affected, and it did not benefit the students including those in higher educational institutions.

As children were forced to stay at home it increased risk of, or exposure to child protection incidents or make them witness to interpersonal violence.⁵²For Women, additional workload in the household added and created gender differences on paid and unpaid care work. And the already existed inequality of women in all aspects of life intensified.

Since the pandemic is creating negative effects on all facets of individual's life, in many countries the spread of coronavirus is generating a growing sense of urgency.⁵³The fatalities and impacts of the virus vary depending on the country's political, social, and economic readiness. The pandemic brings significant threats to physical safety, economic security, and trust in institutions.⁵⁴

⁵¹Yigrem Ali Chekole, supra note 24.p.2

⁵²Ibid

⁵³Large-scale disruptions from corona virus: No longer 'if' or 'when, 'but 'now, The conversation ,academic rigorous ,journalistsflair.' <https://theconversation.com/large-scale-disruptions-from-coronavirus-no-longer-if-or-when-but-now-133651>

⁵⁴Russell Sage ,Foundation Social ,political ,Economic and psychological consequences of the Covid 19 Pandemic<https://www.russellsage.org/research/funding/covid-19-pandemic>

In order to curb the pandemic, the world is employing many responses. From the simple precaution of WHO, which is frequently washing hands, keeping social distance, avoiding large crowds to the utmost condition declaring state of emergency and limitation of some human rights are taking place to keep the transmission of the pandemic at manageable stage. Thus, the only choice the world left with to protect the respected life of human beings is, to adopt unusual measures. For instance, in many countries' extensive lockdowns, adapted to slow transmission of the virus and restrict freedom of movement and, in the process, freedom to enjoy many other human rights adversely affected. Such measures can inadvertently affect people's livelihoods and security, their access to health care, to food, water and sanitation, work, education as well as to leisure. Measures are being taken to mitigate any such unintended consequences.⁵⁵ Moreover, to curb the pandemic countries are allocating a huge amount of money for buying, manufacturing, and distributing medical tools. On the other hand, the world is conducting humanitarian responses to grant aid to the vulnerable groups. Thus, this situation reminded the world that a single occurrence can affect individual's life equally and that every individual survival depends on another individual rights protection.

All countries in the world are affected by the virus and Ethiopia is not different from others. Similar with the measures taken by the rest of the world, to curb the problems of the virus starting from the first case was confirmed, the government of Ethiopia has been taking its best possible measures. The government declared a state of emergency, ordered the closure of schools, government offices, the prohibition of mass exercise, rituals and large meetings and called the people to stay at home. However, it was insufficient to contain the spread of the virus, as many of the people hardly eat three times a day, could not afford to lockdown themselves for long days. Still the pandemic continues to show its impacts on diverse aspect of the country. The pandemic is treating individuals differently and intensified the already existing discrimination and gaps between men and women due to the greater exposure of the later to the virus.

⁵⁵United Nation Sustainable Development Group, Covid 19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together, April 2020 ,pp 2 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/covid-19-and-human-rights-we-are-all-together>

C. COVID-19 and Human Rights

*“Using human rights as a frame is a useful way to ensure that groups and individuals particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and its social and economic impacts can demand their right”.*⁵⁶

Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings. It is apparent that these universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. Moreover, human rights are interdependent to each other. *“They range from the most fundamental the right to life to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health, and liberty.”*⁵⁷ accordingly, *the language and principles of human rights relate to the rights that underpin the survival and basic wellbeing of communities and individuals, including their rights to life, health, and an adequate standard of living.*⁵⁸ Due to the unexpected outbreak like COVID-19, guaranteeing human rights for everyone faces a challenge in every country around the world but to a differing degree. *“The public health crisis is fast becoming an economic and social crisis and a protection and human rights crisis rolled into one.”*⁵⁹ And *COVID-19 is highlighting the deep economic and social inequalities and inadequate health and social protection systems that require urgent attention as part of the public health response*⁶⁰ For groups of peoples who are listed under vulnerable group of the society such as women, children, peoples with disability, and for older peoples the pandemic make worse their situation and their basic human rights are impacted in a different way. Moreover, due to mandated social distancing, much livelihood faces disruptions in work, school, social and family relations.

1. Core Human Rights Principles and COVID-19

a) Indivisibility and Independence of Human Rights

International human rights instruments highlighted how civil and political rights are indivisible from and interdependent with economic, social, and cultural rights. The one important

⁵⁶Oxfam, COVID 19 and Human rights, States’ obligations and businesses’ responsibilities in responding to the pandemic, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621037/dp-covid-19-human-rights-principles-070820-advance-en.pdf?sequence=4>.

⁵⁷UNOHCR, What are Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/pags/whatarehumanrights.aspx.The>.

⁵⁸Oxfam, supra note 56

⁵⁹United Nation Sustainable Development Group, Covid 19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together, April 2020 ,p 2 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/covid-19-and-human-rights-we-are-all-together>

⁶⁰Ibid

situation that the pandemic confirmed is the indivisibility and interdependency of all sets of rights. It also perfectly taught the world that one set of rights cannot be enjoyed fully without the other. In order to protect and sustain human right to life, socio economic rights such as adequate nutrition, work, livelihood, health care and social protection must be fulfilled.

During the health crises making progress in civil and political rights makes it easier to exercise economic, social, and cultural rights. Similarly, violating economic, social, and cultural rights can negatively affect many other rights.⁶¹As Amartya Sen urged civil and political rights can reduce the risk of major social and economic disaster by empowering individuals. In other words, promoting and protecting individual civil and political rights results in achieving a secured economy.⁶²Human rights are inherent to the dignity of every human person and as a result all have equal status and cannot be positioned in a ranked order. The fulfilment of one right often depends wholly or in part upon the fulfilment of other rights. In other words, denial of one right invariably violates enjoyment of other rights. For instance, fulfilment of the right to health depends in certain circumstances, on fulfilment of economic rights, education and information. And other right like the right to adequate standard of living which cannot be compromised at the expense of other rights, such as the right to health or the right to education.⁶³Generally, indivisibility and interdependence are central principles of human rights, as are the inherent dignity of the human being, participation and gender equity.⁶⁴

Thus, it is also important to reflect on the human rights implications of COVID-19 responses since it affects the enjoyment of several rights.⁶⁵For instance, the current outbreak emphasizes the indivisibility and interdependent of the protection of health right with other rights enshrined in the core covenants. Particularly rights protected under the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) such as the right to economic participation, the right to safe and healthy working

⁶¹UNOHCR, supra note 57

⁶²Odi Briefing Paper, Economic Theory freedom and Human rights All human rights : The work of Amartya Sen, November 2001

⁶³UNFPA, Human Rights Principles, <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/human-rights-principles#:~:text=Indivisibility%3A%20Human%20rights%20are%20indivisible,positioned%20in%20a%20hierarchical%20order>

⁶⁴Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Hand book for National Human Rights Institutions ,2005,PP4

⁶⁵United Nation Sustainable Development Group, Covid 19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together, April 2020, p 2 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/covid-19-and-human-rights-we-are-all-together>

condition and right to education are some of the rights highly impacted because of the public health issues and the response measures.

b) The Principle of Non-discrimination

Both the ICCPR and ICESCR have incorporated the right to non-discrimination and oblige member states to guarantee the rights to everyone within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind including race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.⁶⁶The COVID-19 situation infringes this basic principle of non-discrimination in a different context. The non-discrimination principle under most of the covenants is understood as any exclusion or differential treatment that have the purpose or effect of nullifying the recognized rights based on prohibit grounds.⁶⁷Even if the virus does not discriminate by itself but the impact does unfortunately discriminate against those in a disadvantaged position⁶⁸ and widens the already existing gaps in inequality.

The adverse effects of the crisis are not distributed equally. *They are being felt most by those who already belong to the most vulnerable and least protected segments of the society, including the poor and socially excluded workers and producers in the informal economy, and those living in the contexts of fragility. As a result, the crisis exacerbates inequality, creates discrimination and disempowerment.*⁶⁹The UN treaty bodies have urged governments to take extra care of those particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, including people living in poverty. The treaty bodies also stressed that women are at a disproportionately high risk because in many societies they are the main caregivers for family members.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has urged that even if in times which is

⁶⁶Articles 2(1) and 2(2) of the ICCPR and the ICESCR respectively. Differential treatment to have an acceptance it should be based on reasonable and objective criteria and if the aim is to achieve a purpose which is legitimate.

⁶⁷ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 20 (art. 2, para. 2, Available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4a60961f2.html>

⁶⁸United Nation Sustainable Development Group, Covid ,supra note 681 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/covid-19-and-human-rights-we-are-all-together>

⁶⁹ILO ,Issue paper on COVID-19 and fundamental principles and rights at work https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@ipec/documents/publication/wcms_757247.pdf

⁷⁰UNOHCHR, UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies call for human rights approach in fighting COVID-19, March 24, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25742&LangID=E>.

hard like COVID-19, vulnerable members of society must be protected, for instance through the adoption of relatively low-cost targeted programmes.⁷¹

Generally, the outbreak magnifies that in all aspects of life individuals are not equal before the pandemic, and they are not equal in the face of it. Those who were poor before have become poorer; those who were disadvantaged are now placed in a greater disadvantageous position.⁷²

D. Impacted Rights at the Forefront during COVID-19

Civil and political as well as economic and social rights are impacted directly or indirectly. Thus, the coming of the pandemic let the world to understand that human rights are indivisible and interdependent. Its impact on civil and political rights reflected one way another on economic and social rights. Consequently, there are rights which are found in the frontline and impacted by the pandemic. For instance, because of the public health impact, measures were taken to protect individual's life. Meanwhile, in the protection of the individual's life from the pandemic, other rights of individuals impacted such as economic rights of individuals. And economic right specifically interrelated with other rights like health, education, food and those rights subsequently impacted because of the public health issues and the response measures.

Thus, the rights stated under from both categories of rights are found in the frontline and impacted by the outbreak, then results an adverse effect on economic right of women or means of securing their necessities.

1. Civil and Political Rights

The two rights first and foremost impacted and are found in the frontline adverse effect of the pandemic are individuals right to life and freedom of movement. The effect of the pandemic on both rights posed an impact on socio-economic rights, like food, education, work etc, which are basic and define humanity. Currently the world is combating COVID-19 to protect the lives of all human

⁷¹UNOHCHR, The Right to Health World Health Organization, Fact Sheet No.31 available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>

⁷²Commissioner for human rights, The impact of covid 19 on human rights and how to move forward ,adopted by Council of Europe .<https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-human-rights-and-how-to-move-forward>,Accessed on April 11/2021.

beings. And one of the rights which is primarily impacted by the coming of the pandemic is the right to life. The Human Rights Committee describes the right to life as ‘*the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted even in situations of armed conflict and other public emergencies which threatens the life of the nation*’⁷³. Countries all over the world are trying to control the transmission of the virus, to ensure that every individual live with dignity and security during the pandemic.⁷⁴ But in the middle of the struggle to curb the pandemic’s health impact, vulnerable groups other rights which are essential to live are neglected. This right which is stated under UDHR Article 3 and Article 6 of the ICCPR respectively and many other regional instruments is the starting point for states’ human rights obligations.⁷⁵ Invoking the right to life reminds us that all States have a duty to protect human life, including by addressing the general conditions in society that give rise to direct threats to life. And during the outbreak States are making extraordinary efforts to do this, which must remain as a primary focus.⁷⁶

The UN Human Rights Committee on General Comment no. 36 examined positive duties arising from the right to life in which “*The duty to protect life also implies that States parties should take appropriate measures to address the general conditions in society that may give rise to direct threats to life or prevent individuals from enjoying their right to life with dignity*”. These general conditions may include the prevalence of life-threatening diseases, such as AIDS, tuberculosis, or malaria.⁷⁷ The Committee comment surely applies for COVID-19 outbreak too. The current outbreak is a life-threatening disease which resulted an adverse impact on all other rights including economic rights of individuals, which requires state parties to take the appropriate measures.

Freedom of movement is the other fundamental rights recognized under the ICCPR and Ethiopian constitution.⁷⁸ It is an indispensable condition for the free development of a person. There can be permissible restrictions of the freedom of movement, but they must be narrowly tailored and serve a specific purpose. ICCPR authorizes States to restrict these rights only to protect national security, public order, public health or morals and the rights and freedoms of

⁷³Oxfam, supra note 56,p7

⁷⁴United Nation Sustainable Development Group, supra note 59

⁷⁵Oxfam, supra note 56,p7

⁷⁶United Nation Sustainable Development Group, supra note 59,p7

⁷⁷UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), *General comment no. 36, Article 6 (Right to Life)*, 3 September 2019, CCPR/C/GC/35, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5e5e75e04.html>

⁷⁸ See art.12 of the ICCPR.

others.⁷⁹ In order to be permissible, such restrictions must be provided by law and must be necessary in a democratic society.⁸⁰

Alike the right to life, the right to movement is among the list of civil and political rights impacted by the pandemic. The right can be suspended when an epidemic with a magnitude of COVID-19 occurs in the country. But failure to carefully design the limitation on the right to movement can have a serious repercussion on the right to survival of the poor women who must move to earn their daily incomes from the informal trading activities. Those women engaged in the informal vending activities have the right to move freely within the national territory and has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose their residence as well as the freedom to leave the country at any time they wish to.⁸¹ With regard to the economic rights the constitution further provides that “every Ethiopian has the right to engage freely in economic activity and to pursue a livelihood of his choice anywhere within the national territory”.⁸²

2. Socio-Economic Rights

Right to Food is one of the socioeconomic rights which impacted by the unexpected outbreak. It is a right stated under ICESCR, under adequate standard of living.⁸³ The covenant obliges member states to recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The ESCRs Committee stated that the right to adequate food is realized when everyone individually or in community with others, always has physical and economic access to adequate food or means for its procurement.⁸⁴ There must be regular and unrestricted access to food directly or by the means of financial purchase enabling the person to lead a dignified life free of fear.⁸⁵ The ESCRs Committee also affirms that the right to adequate food is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the human person and is indispensable for the

⁷⁹Art.12(3) of ICCPR.

⁸⁰ Id.

⁸¹Article 32 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution.

⁸²Id, Art.41(1).

⁸³ Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976.

⁸⁴ Paragraph 7: General Comment No. 12 on the Right to Adequate Food on Art. 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 12 May 1999. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c11.pdf>

⁸⁵ Id.

fulfilment of other human rights enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights.⁸⁶ It will be impossible to eradicate poverty and ensure human rights protection without guaranteeing the right to food. Similarly, the EFDRE constitution under article 90 also guarantees the right to food of people to the extent the countries resources permit.

The right to food in gender issues is closely connected to resources and labour.⁸⁷ However, COVID had and is still affecting the realization of this right for women since it has restricted people's movement, employment, and accessibility of food. In other words, food may be available however some vulnerable groups like women and children specially have difficulty to get access to sufficient and adequate food. For example if a women is unable to go out and work or if she lost her employment due to the pandemic, it will be hard for her to feed herself or her family especially if it's a household led by a single mothers .Food systems from the pandemic both related to the food production side (production and processing) and demand side (economic and physical access to food) could negatively affect food security.⁸⁸Besides women working in the informal sectors struggles as it is to cope up with the increasing cost of living. Thus even if they manage to work through the pandemic, everything starting from cost of food items has increased due to lack of production, closure of stores, decrease in imported items and limitation in movement (transportation of food items form the rural to urban settings), all these making it difficult to realize the right to food of most people specially women.

In addition, women were disproportionately affected by COVID in the sense that in some households where school meal is the only food family has, women might sacrifice her portion for her family members.⁸⁹ This will also have an impact on her health and to the extreme case her right to life since it will be hard to recover from COVID if your immunity is affected due to lack of nutrition.

The Right to Social Security/Protection the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right of everyone to social security including social

⁸⁶ICESCR Committee General Comment 12 para.4.

⁸⁷<http://www.fao.org/right-to-food/news/news-detail/fr/c/1379278/>

⁸⁸Devereux, S, C Béné, and J Hoddinott . Conceptualising COVID-19's Impacts on Household Food Security. *Food Security* 12: 2020 (769– 72)

⁸⁹<https://www.righttofoodandnutrition.org/monitoring-report-right-food-and-nutrition-during-covid-19>

assistance.⁹⁰ The right to social security encompasses the provision of in cash or in-kind assistances to those who are in need. The right to social security is of central importance in guaranteeing human dignity for all persons when they are faced with circumstances that deprive them of their capacity to fully realize their Covenant rights and in situations like COVID-19 which threatens the right to take part in a gainful activity, the government needs to devise non-contributory schemes to address the basic needs of those in need..⁹¹

The right to social security or protection has a direct relationship with other rights. It plays an important role in supporting the realization of many of the fundamental human rights recognized under the international bill of rights. For example, the ESCRs Committee requires States to provide social services to combat poverty and social exclusion and provide supporting social services to those in need. *Most importantly states must consider schemes that provide social protection to individuals belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, for example pandemic or disaster related allowance for small scale traders or livelihood protection for self-employed women in the informal economy.*⁹²

The ICESCR and the ILO conventions also require states to ensure the right to social security for everyone within their confines. But States parties must give special attention to those individuals and groups who traditionally face difficulties in exercising this right, in particular women, who are mostly inadequately protected by social protection as they work in the informal economy. In addition to that when women have guaranteed social protection services, they are less likely to be financially dependent on their abusers. Under the Ethiopian constitution the State has the obligation to allocate an ever-increasing resource to provide to the public health, education, and other social services.⁹³

Right to Health is also one of the fundamental rights that make a life worth living. The right to health is inherent to the right to life.⁹⁴ Since the issue of the right to life and health are

⁹⁰ See art.9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976.

⁹¹ of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment.Para. 1 No. 19: Theright to social security (Art. 9 of the Covenant), 4 February 2008, E/C.12/GC/19, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47b17b5b39c.html> accessed on 14May 2021.

⁹²Id, para.28.

⁹³Article 41(3) of the 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia.

⁹⁴United Nation Sustainable Development Group, Covid 19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together, April 2020 ,p4<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/covid-19-and-human-rights-we-are-all-together>,

pivotal rights for the exercise of other rights, the human rights treaty bodies called on States to adopt measures to protect the rights to life and health, and to ensure access to health care to all who need it without discrimination.⁹⁵

The coming of the pandemic shows the importance of placing the human right to health at the base of human rights protection agenda as well the very centre of the design of our health systems.⁹⁶ It is an inclusive right which associate with access to health care and a wide range of factors that can help us lead a healthy life. Without the realization of other rights, the right to health cannot be exercised. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which monitors state compliance with the covenant, has stated that:

*The right to health is closely related to and dependent upon the realization of other human rights, as contained in the International Bill of Rights, including the rights to food, housing, work, education, human dignity, life, non-discrimination, equality, the prohibition against torture, privacy, access to information, and the freedoms of association, assembly, and movement. These and other rights and freedoms address integral components of the right to health.*⁹⁷

Moreover, the committee calls these rights the “*underlying determinants of health*” including ,safe drinking water and adequate sanitation; safe food, adequate nutrition and housing, healthy working and environmental conditions, health-related education and gender equality.⁹⁸ It indicates that the factors and conditions which protect and promote the right to health beyond health services, goods and facilities, shows that the right to health is dependent on, and contributes to, the realization of many other human rights.⁹⁹

The gendered impact of the pandemic also reflected on reproductive health right. The coming of the pandemic fragile and worsen the health care service and specific health right of women which had little protections and global wide attention before the coming of COVID-19. It is a health right of women which is affirmed in international covenants. The Committee on

⁹⁵UNOHCHR, UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies call for human rights approach in fighting COVID-19, March 24, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25742&LangID=E>.

⁹⁶Commissioner for human rights, The impact of covid 19 on human rights and how to move forward ,adopted by Council of Europe ,<https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-human-rights-and-how-to-move-forward>, Accessed on April 11/2021.

⁹⁷Human Rights Watch ,Human Rights Dimension of Covid 19 responses, March 19,29020 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/19/human-rights-dimensions-covid-19-response>

⁹⁸UNOHCHR, The Right to Health World Health Organization, Fact Sheet No.

31 <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>

⁹⁹Id,p6

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have both clearly indicated that women's right to health includes their sexual and reproductive health.¹⁰⁰ Women's sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education and the prohibition of discrimination.¹⁰¹

The pandemic is limiting such right of women to sexual and reproductive health services right and from acquiring their right to access appropriate health-care services. Moreover, deeper poverty among women with intersectional identities results in higher rates of infections and health problems.

During the pandemic, women developed a fear to go to health institution and seek a healthcare or sexual and reproductive health service and those poor women because of reduction in income lessen from accessing reproductive health care. Thus, health strategies should address not only the medical dimensions of the pandemic but also the human rights and gender-specific consequences of measures must be taken as part of the health response¹⁰²

Generally, the pandemic expose to the world that those rights which are universal can be impacted universally, but the adverse effect might differ depending on the living condition of the individuals. Its adverse effect has intensified on those living under poverty.

Right to Education is another human rights issue which is also found in the frontline of the pandemic impact . Education is considered as both a human right and an indispensable means of realizing other basic human rights. This right is reaffirmed in numerous international and national treaties. For instance, UDHR and ICESCR recognized that everyone has the right to education. This right is enshrined to all, and it includes equal access and equitable learning opportunity to everyone without discrimination on the bases of vulnerability. It is also considered as a primary empowerment vehicle for tackling inequality and creating an even playing field for those discriminated in the past.

But the coming of the pandemic caused unexpected violation to the education system, which creates inequality. It becomes a reminder for the world to revise that the right to education

¹⁰⁰UNOHCHR, Womens Rights Are Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/events/whrd/womenrightsarehr.pdf>

¹⁰¹Ibid

¹⁰²Oxfam, supra note 56

is not equally applicable to all and that the inequality gap is too shallow which needs more work and response. In countries like Ethiopia access to education is the major instrument to transform the lives of women and girls into the era of gender equality. The Human Rights Committee recognizes the vital role that education has in empowering women, safeguarding women and children from exploitative, hazardous labour and sexual exploitation as well as promoting human rights and democracy.¹⁰³ The ICESCR contains comprehensive provision on the right to education. The ESCRs committee has also elaborated the normative contents of the right to education provided under article 13 of the covenant. The committee noted that the right to education in all its forms and at all levels must exhibit interrelated and essential features one of which is accessibility.

The temporary measures, lockdowns, and school closures due to COVID-19 have hit women's education particularly hard and threaten to roll back years of progress. As women and girls were put out of the school system, the consequences were devastating on the lives of women. Throughout the country there are growing reports of rape, domestic violence, and sexual abuse against women as a result of the stay-at-home orders following school closures. It also places women at a greater risk of teen pregnancy, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and other forms of gender-based violence all of which decrease their likelihood of continuing their education.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, families forced to stay at home and care for their children, which increase unpaid care work of women and creates inequality and place women in unequal position from achieving learning and working opportunity.

Women who are engaged in the informal sector were affected and cannot concentrate on their trading activities as they were forced to leave younger women and girls at home with male relatives and family members that may abuse them. In some situations, the women are forced to take the children to the streets where they undertake the vending activities. In addition to that women and girls account for the significant share of the number of schools drop-outs after COVID-19. The CSCRs committee boldly reminds to respect, protect, and fulfil each of the essential features (availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability) of the right to education.

¹⁰³CESCR Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on 8 December 1999, CESCR General Comment No. 13 on the Right to Education (Art. 13) Adopted at the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on 8 December 1999. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c22.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ UN, POLICY BRIEF: EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND August 2020. Available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf10.

For many children also, the COVID-19 crisis means limited or no education. Its effect is disproportionately distributed. The world effort to meet SDGs goal 4 which is equal education is disturbed because of the outbreak. For children who are already experiencing barriers to access education, those who are excluded for a variety of reasons and those who are already in a vulnerable situation as well as living in poor and rural area, the situation exacerbated. For such groups of peoples, the problem would continue, and number of children drop out would rise due to the pandemic economic impact of many families' incapability to afford for school.

Besides the violation of the right to education, the pandemic disrupts the means of access to food for many children, particularly children living in poverty and are from families with low-income work. This would bring social and economic problems and long effect on the children, their parents as well population. That is why education is recognized as not only a fundamental human right rather enabling right with direct impact on the realization of all other human rights. It is a global common good and a primary driver of progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as bedrock of just, equal, inclusive peaceful societies.¹⁰⁵

E. Right to Work and Realization of Economic Rights of Women during COVID-19

Economy is important to ensure the maximisation of human life.¹⁰⁶ But, we are now experiencing a “corona virus shock”, a phenomenon at risk of greatly affecting the global economy, societies, and human rights.¹⁰⁷ Since April and May of 2020 when the severity of the pandemic was first revealed in the world, a large share of workplaces globally experienced wide-scale closures.¹⁰⁸ By June 2020 workplaces in most economies had partially re-opened, but even into 2021, may have not returned to ‘business as usual’. The reduced business activity has led to higher unemployment rates and shorter working hours, especially in those sectors more directly affected by social-distancing measures.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the current situation *demonstrates that an*

¹⁰⁵UN , Policy Brief: ,supra note 104 at 3.

¹⁰⁶ Tiago Ferreira Lopes, Human Security Paradigms and Economic Crisis in first year of the North Caucasus Federal District, Brazilian political science review <https://www.scielo.br/pdf/bpsr/v7n1/04.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, COVID-19: Urgent appeal for a human rights response to the economic recession, Geneva, Adopted by the United Nation Human Rights special procedure ,15 April 2020, pp.7

¹⁰⁸ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, In Sight Report, March, 2021, pp 43

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

economic crisis is rapidly coming on the horizon, with immediate economic impacts that have already been felt through job losses”¹¹⁰and high reduction in income of individuals.

There is no doubt that the pandemic created a large-scale impact on global economy and posed crisis on human rights of people around the world. From a human right viewpoint, the decline economy has a direct bearing on the full enjoyment of basic human rights, including food, access to water and sanitation, health, education, economic participation, social protection as well as fair and favourable conditions of work. In other words, the situation that the pandemic posed revealed that enjoyment of one right is the means for the protection of other basic human rights.

Furthermore, the crisis and the global economic shock associated with it, has the potential to impact on human rights directly and indirectly, including on the ability of individuals to exercise and claim their rights and on the ability of States to fulfil their obligations. But, the same economic shock can have different impacts on different vulnerable and marginalized groups,¹¹¹which can also turn out to be increasing for some vulnerable groups such as women.

Women are entitled to enjoy the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as other individuals. And women’s rights include a set of rights reserved mostly to women. Out of all the rights, Women economic rights are one of the fundamental human rights expressed in international and many regional as well as national human rights instruments. From the international covenants, CEDAW is an international instrument that specifically deals with women’s rights in general and it stated about women’s economic and social rights. Other than the CEDAW, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the ILO Conventions guaranteed women’s economic rights. All these instruments secure the economic right of women primarily by identifying the human rights core principles like non-discrimination, equality, and participation to full enjoyment of women economic rights.

The economic right of women which revolves in the center of rights for the exercise of other rights is the right to work. Under, ICESCR, its recognized as the rights to fair and favorable condition of work, the right to safe work at workplace, the exercise of other rights not to be

¹¹⁰Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, *supra* note 107 .pp3

¹¹¹Id.p4

discriminated at workplace etc. but the contemporary world put the work of the women in a worse place.

While “*the right to work is crucial, women’s economic rights are more than that.*” They require the right to an adequate standard of living. As well as the right to food and the right to housing. They should also have access to public services such as healthcare, education, social and, economic participation VAWG services etc.¹¹² This internationally recognized rights are to be enjoyed by every individual without creating a boundary on the type of work as informal or formal work since workers’ rights are, after all, human rights. Since the onset of the pandemic such basic economic rights of women are violated directly or indirectly.

The major issues which violate and undermines women economic rights such as poor working condition, lack of fair and job security, unemployment, inequality in workplace, social insecurity continues to stand still because of the pandemic. Lock down, stay home order and travel ban where measures factors which impact women equal participation of work condition during the outbreak. For the millions of women workers already in vulnerable situation such as women in the informal sector, the COVID-19 crisis has devastating consequences: their fundamental rights at work are under threat, pushing them and their families towards greater insecurity.¹¹³As the result women’s right to work equally with men being violated and posed gender parity on the labour force.

Data suggests that some of “*the sectors hardest hit by pandemic are fields where women are more likely to be employed and self-employed including tourism and retail, as well as jobs in the informal sectors of developing countries.*”¹¹⁴ As it’s indicated in the above section most women in the economy are engaged on care, unpaid and low paid job as well as informal sectors than men, which are mainly impacted by the unpredictable event that affects badly the economy. Thus, it is apparent that during such pandemic working women who tried to earn their daily livelihood are hardly hit by the economic crisis harder than men. Most likely they lose their potential income generating activities which are pivotal for the exercise of their basic needs. Loss of daily income activities combined with care work of women in the household put women

¹¹²Women kind worldwide, Advancing women economic Rights,<https://www.womankind.org.uk/what-we-do/womens-economic-rights/>

¹¹³ILO, Issue paper on COVID-19 and fundamental principles and rights at work,2020

¹¹⁴Ishaan Tharoor,<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/04/02/women-disadvantaged-pandemic-wef-report/>

back by a whole generation and take back early initiatives toward gender parity in various economies.

According to ILO declaration of Philadelphia, all human beings, irrespective of race, creed, or sex, have the right to pursue their material well-being in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity;¹¹⁵This declaration confirm that everyone has the right conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity. Thus, the right to work which is economic right of women needs proper observance and the guarantees that are free of any form of discrimination, equally participation of women in the economy and empowerment are critical factors in eradicating poverty and a means for proper working and living conditions of women. According to the World Bank, about 155 countries have at least one Law that limits women Economic opportunities, while 100 states place restrictions on the type of jobs women can do.¹¹⁶ Above all, women capability to exercise freely their economic rights and empowering women are ground roots for ensuring their autonomy. The constraints on the exercise of women's right to work have a repercussion on exercise of their basic human rights, including their economic, social, and cultural rights in general.¹¹⁷

F. Informal Sector

Although there are not universally accurate or accepted description or definition, there abroad understands that the term “informal economy” accommodates considerable diversity in terms of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs with identifiable characteristics.¹¹⁸But the concept originally applied to self-employment in small, unregistered enterprises. It has been expanded to include wage employment in unprotected jobs.¹¹⁹They experience specific disadvantages and problems that vary in intensity across national, rural, and urban contexts. *The term “informal economy” is preferable to “informal sector” because the workers and*

¹¹⁵ILO, Declaration of Philadelphia; Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labor Organization, 26th session, 10th May 1944.

¹¹⁶Article adopted by UNOHCHR, 30 Articles, on the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

¹¹⁷Inter American Commission on Human Rights, The work, Education and resource of Women: The Road to equality in Guaranteeing Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, November, 3, 2011, pp29

¹¹⁸ILO, Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy, The General Conference of the International Labor Organization, meeting in its 90th, Session, 2002.

¹¹⁹<https://www.wiego.org/informal-economy>

*enterprises in question do not fall within anyone sector of economic activity but cut across many sectors.*¹²⁰

In the 1991 Report of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference, the informal sector was described as:

*“Very small-scale units producing and distributing goods and services, and consisting largely of independent, self-employed producers in urban areas of developing countries, some of whom also employ family labour and/or a few hired workers or apprentices; which operate with very little capital, or none at all; which utilize a low level of technology and skills; which therefore operate at a low level of productivity; and which generally provide very low and irregular incomes and highly unstable employment to those who work in it”.*¹²¹

Many literatures identify domestic work and street vendors among the informal services. Workers in the informal economy include both wage workers and own-account workers. Most own-account workers are as insecure and vulnerable as wage workers and move from one situation to the other. Because they lack protection, rights and representation of these workers often remain trapped in poverty.¹²²

Work in the informal economy is often characterized by small or undefined workplaces, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity, low or irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology. Workers in the informal economy characterized by varying degrees of dependency and vulnerability.¹²³

Individuals enter the informal sector when they got no option, but by choosing the need to live. The informal economy has significant job and income generation potential due to the relative ease of entry and low requirements for education, skills, technology, and capital. The informal economy also helps to meet the needs of poor consumers by providing accessible and low-priced goods and services.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ILO, supra note 118

¹²¹ILO, , Decent work and the informal economy International Labour Conference, Geneva, 90th Session 2002, Report VI)

¹²²ILO, supra note 118

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴Ibid

One of the UNs 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is devoted to decent work and economic growth and the UN hopes to achieve full decent work for all women and men by 2030, which includes works of women in the informal sector.¹²⁵ The ILO is concerned with decent work. The goal is not just the creation of jobs, but the creation of jobs of acceptable quality. It could relate to various forms of work, and to different conditions of work, as well as feelings of value and satisfaction.¹²⁶ The different kind of work includes both informal and formal works. As a result, various initiatives have developed within the ILO to promote employment and productivity in the informal sector and in small enterprises.¹²⁷

A data from woman kind shows that 61% of the world's workers are informal workers and in low-income countries 92% of women work informally.¹²⁸ Literatures shows that 2 billion small and micro business owners' livelihoods are dependent on the informal economy worldwide and it is a primary source of employment in Africa, particularly for women.¹²⁹ Even if men are more exposed globally to informal working than women, but women are more likely to be working in the most vulnerable positions. And Informal employment is more common among women than men in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, southern Asia and, more generally, in low- and lower-middle-income countries.¹³⁰

The coming of the pandemic apparently worsens the situation of some groups of peoples who were already found in unstable condition. Out of the groups of people, women in all form are primarily affected. But women engaged in low income generating activity listed to the most impacted by the coming of the outbreak and they are found extremely vulnerable in their socioeconomic rights. And the impact of economic rights spill-over to other human rights such as the right to education, housing, health, life and work. These rights are mostly considered as quality-of-life indicators¹³¹.

The feminization of poverty and discrimination by gender, age, ethnicity or disability also mean that the most vulnerable and marginalized groups tend to end up in the informal

¹²⁵<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>

¹²⁶ ILO Report of the Director-General: Decent work 87th Session, Geneva, June 1999s, <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>

¹²⁷Ibid

¹²⁸<https://www.womankind.org.uk/why-womens-economic-rights-are-the-key-to-reducing-violence-against-women/>

¹²⁹Africa Union, Protecting Migrant Workers in the Informal Economy: Inclusion of Migrant workers in COVID-19 Response, Policy brief II, November 2020, pp 1-3.

¹³⁰ ILO, Building Back better for women: Women Dire position in the informal economy, September 2020.

¹³¹<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00207237608737626?needAccess=true>

economy.¹³² Women are also discriminated against in terms of access to education and training and other economic resources. And it is apparent that women generally must balance the triple responsibilities of bread winning, domestic chores, and elder care and childcare. Such situation placed women more likely than men to be in the informal economy.¹³³ Women engagement in informality can also be traced to several other socio-economic factors. Even if poverty prevents them from real opportunities and choices for decent and protected work.¹³⁴ Still the informal economy is means of employment and income for the women living in poverty.

ILO specifies that women in informal employment are over-represented in the most vulnerable employment category of contributing family workers, home-based workers doing piece-rate work in the lower tiers of supply chains (whatever their employment status), domestic workers and street vendor.¹³⁵ Informal working women, such as street vendors, and market traders provide essential goods and services, notably to those (e.g. the urban poor) who have to buy the basic needs of life in small amounts.¹³⁶ Despite frequently operating without legal recognition or security, many vital functions are provided by informal traders. They are crucial to the food security of the urban poor, in addition to providing jobs, especially for women. Informal traders are very often easily accessible, tend to sell products at lower prices, provide customers with credit, and allow smaller amounts of transactions than supermarkets.¹³⁷

The informal sector progressively becomes a safety net for disadvantaged people in developing countries like Ethiopia. In recent years, many countries have devoted considerable attention to informal employment, and attempts have been made to understand the mechanisms through which the benefits of growth may or may not be transmitted to the poor.¹³⁸ A new consensus has emerged around the belief that if economic growth is not associated with formal job creation, a shift towards better employment opportunities in the formal economy and an

¹³²ILO, *supra* note 118 para 20.

¹³³*Ibid.*

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵ILO Report of the Director-General: Decent work 87th Session, Geneva, June 1999s, <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>

¹³⁶The Informal Sector and COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa, Knowledge, evidence, and learning for development September 2020.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

¹³⁸ ILO: Transitioning from the informal to the formal economy International Labor Conference 103rd Session 2014 Report V (1)

improvement in the conditions of employment in informal activities, it will continue to generate inequality, poverty and vulnerability.¹³⁹In view of the decent work deficits in the informal economy, breaking out of informality is increasingly seen as the principal development challenge across regions and as being central to realizing decent work as a global development goal, and to a fair globalization.¹⁴⁰Issues' concerning the informal economy and possible strategies towards formalization is therefore gaining new momentum at all levels and in various circles in the world.¹⁴¹

It is said that in many studies, informal economy is where most women and the poor are to be found, but it is also here where official efforts for social protection are limited. In order to create an environment where women in the informal sector can socially protected many countries are taking steps to formalization of women informal services. The government of Ethiopia developed a very articulated program to support formalization of informal workers as a workout to poverty.¹⁴²It is known that Ethiopian cities play an increasingly important role in economic development, both in creating value added per person and in providing a better quality of life. However, in large area of the city the informal sector work exists in vast.¹⁴³That is why the government is trying to achieve decent work for women.

In Ethiopia to improve the working conditions and social and legal protection of informal sector the government is taking an action to formalize the informal sector. It's conducting an operation and registering informal, illegal workers as "job seekers. "In such government program mainly, women are engaged. Women operating in the informal sector organized by the government under Small Enterprises (MSEs) and under Trade and Industry. Benefits of formalization can be realized only if there are proper institutions and enabling environments. These women continue to work as informal vendors but in an organized manner with the two-government body's direct supervision. In other words, the government is functioning to promote

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴²A research on women in the informal economy in three districts of Ethiopia. Available at <https://www.ituc-csi.org/a-research-on-women-in-the>

¹⁴³Jan Fransen and Meine Pieter van Dijk 2 performs much worse Informality in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1 October, 2008

the informal sector to formalization. For street vendors; formalization involves secure access to public space, licenses to sell, and identity cards and infrastructure support.¹⁴⁴

Details regarding the mechanism that the country is applying to shift the women from informal to formal sector combined with their living condition will be elaborated under the next chapter.

1. Impact of COVID-19 Vs. Women in the informal Sector

The COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to increase extreme poverty mainly in the less developed economies. The pandemic induced global new poor are estimated to be between 119 and 124 million in 2020. In 2021, the estimated COVID-19 induced poor is set to rise to between 143 and 163 million.¹⁴⁵ According to the UNECA, vulnerable households affected by COVID-19 are expected to face a 4.2% increased probability of staying in poverty for years into the future. In Ethiopia, for instance, on average, COVID-19 is estimated to increase the number of poor families by about 26 million people this year and next year, doubling the current poverty rate of 22% to 48%.¹⁴⁶ The rising in number of peoples living under poverty responds in economic recession. In the current situation the health crisis itself and the governmental measures implemented to face it are leading the world into an economic recession.¹⁴⁷ As a result the damage to the global economy continues to be felt disproportionately by 740 million women in the informal economy. These individuals especially in developing and emerging countries are among the world's most vulnerable and least represented.¹⁴⁸

Mostly women in the informal sector lives under poverty. And with the coming of the outbreak the lives of those women living in poverty and engaged in the informal sectors are mainly affected. The situation brought a negative impact on those women economic rights, for the most part its effect magnifies on their working condition. Adequate standards of living, access to health, principle of non-discrimination, education, equal participation, and working freely are some of the rights mostly impacted by situation of poverty. Even if freedom from

¹⁴⁴ WIEGO, Formalizing the Informal Economy, <https://www.wiego.org/our-work-impact/themes/formalization>

¹⁴⁵ World bank blogs , published on Data blog <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021>

¹⁴⁶ plan international ,African child Policy ,*Under Siege , impact of covid 19 on girls in Africa* , June 2020,p14

¹⁴⁷ Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, supra note 107,pp3

¹⁴⁸ ILO, Building Back better for women: supra note 130

poverty is not explicitly recognised as a human right in any international human rights treaties, it's a main factor for many basic human rights particularly economic and social rights violation. That is why CEDAW preamble stated its concern with the situations of women in poverty recognizing they have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs.¹⁴⁹

It has been said that the pandemic affected all women regardless of their age, social or economic background. But its effect on women who have already been victims of marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination has been disproportionately severe and more likely to have long-lasting and irreversible impacts. Women with disabilities, domestic workers, women living and/or working on the street and in urban slums/informal workers/, have especially been more severely affected.¹⁵⁰ And those women are found in a vulnerable situation even before the coming of COVID -19.

Moreover, sectors and economic activities in the informal economy are heavily hit by the consequences and measures taken by the government, mainly the state of emergency responses accelerates the vulnerability of women in the informal sector about their main human rights to food, water, health, adequate living standard. These women live depend on daily income and for many women in the informal economy, to stop working or working remotely at home is not an option. In the absence of income replacement or savings, staying home means losing their jobs and, for many, losing their livelihoods¹⁵¹. Continuing to work during the pandemic was a matter of survival for them and their dependents. ILO indicated that putting *their health in peril as hand washing, self-isolation and wearing masks or other personal protective measures are not realistic at all for them.*¹⁵²

The situation is not different for Ethiopian women engaged in the informal sector. Public health emergencies, such as COVID-19, highly impacted livelihoods especially in developing countries such as Ethiopia. This is particularly true for women who are more likely to engage in informal or low-wage activities such as petty trading, street vendors, daily wage labor and

¹⁴⁹CEDAW, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 entry into force 3 September 1981, in accordance with article 27(1), under the preamble

¹⁵⁰plan international ,African child Policy ,Under Siege , supra note 146

¹⁵¹ILO, Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises and workers in the informal economy in developing and emerging ,April,2020,pp1

¹⁵²ILO, Building Back better for women: supra note 130

domestic work. Besides, the direct health effects of COVID-19, the measures to control the pandemic, such as lockdowns, closure of schools, discontinuing livelihood opportunities, have the potential to create long lasting effect on the women economic rights. These measures are particularly detrimental for poor and vulnerable people in countries like Ethiopia with weak social safety nets and inadequate economic resources to buffer against lost livelihoods.¹⁵³ Disease control measures that do not consider the gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls may also increase their protection risks and lead to negative coping mechanism¹⁵⁴ and magnified the gendered impact of the pandemic.

G. Gendered Impacts of COVID-19

*The impacts of crises are never gender-neutral, and COVID-19 is no exception.*¹⁵⁵

Protection and exercise of women right also be applicable in time of global health crises such as COVID-19. Even the outbreak impact everyone in the globe its impact and the response measures taken to curb the outbreak discriminate women by creating inequality and led down the rights declared internationally.

Women are identified as one of the vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are also groups of people who are vulnerable even during the normal time. And the coming of this pandemic made women more vulnerable in different ways: from health to the economy. Existing social and cultural norms and practices that underlie structures of systemic gender discrimination and marginalization clearly manifest themselves during the pandemic.¹⁵⁶ Besides the primary health impact of COVID-19 on women it posed multidimensional and infringed many other human rights of women.

As stated above, since the onset of the outbreak, the world is reporting the gendered impact of the pandemic effect on women's sexual, reproductive, mental health, as well as on their economic, societal, and political participation and economic empowerment. The situation

¹⁵³Lancet psychiatry, COVID-19 mental health impact and responses in low-income and middle-income countries: reimagining global mental health, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(21\)00025-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(21)00025-0/fulltext)

¹⁵⁴One UN Assessment , Socio-Economic Impact of Covid 19 , adopted by UN Ethiopia, May 2020

¹⁵⁵<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women>

¹⁵⁶ Plan International, African Child Policy supra note 146 at 6.

indicated that if it continues its effect on women rights likely increase and brings more complicated violations.

The COVID-19 profound shock to our societies and economies, underscores society's reliance on women both on the front line and at home, while simultaneously exposing structural inequalities across every sphere, from health, economic security to social protection.¹⁵⁷ Generally, the gendered impact of the pandemic entrenched the existing gender discrimination, posed higher socio-economic vulnerability, exacerbated domestic violence, and worsens reproductive health of women¹⁵⁸

Increased Risks to Gender Based Violence in COVID-19 Era: Because of economic as well as health impact of the pandemic many women and girl child forced to stay at home. As the result it posed, domestic violence. Emerging data show that violence against women and girls has intensified since the outbreak of COVID-19.¹⁵⁹ Violence against women and girls is a serious violation of human rights and is addressed in detail under General Recommendation 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Consequences of gender-based violence can include physical and sexual harm, altered mental health, loss of income and, too often, death.¹⁶⁰ Many literatures indicated that the coming of the pandemic intensified pre-existing gender inequalities, the existing VAWG crises and social norms, rises in stress levels, and lockdown conditions have led to increased violence against women, mostly by intimate partners.¹⁶¹ If the pandemic continues, it is likely to cause a one-third reduction in progress towards ending gender-based violence by 2030.¹⁶²

The pandemic and the follow up protective responses bring another problem in the protection of women's rights throughout the world. Quarantines and stay-home measures, movement restrictions related to COVID-19 as well as loss of job have brought potential victims and potential perpetrators together under the confines of the home setting, increasing girls' close and constant exposure to abuse and violence.¹⁶³ During this time it comes to be known and

¹⁵⁷UN WOMEN, How COVID-19 impacted women and girls in a nutshell <https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html>

¹⁵⁸United Nation Sustainable Development Group, supra note 59 ,p11

¹⁵⁹UN WOMEN, From Insight to Action, Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-1, ,2020,pp.10.

¹⁶⁰Oxfam, COVID -9 and Human rights, States' supra note 56, p 15.

¹⁶¹Ibid

¹⁶²plan international ,African child Policy ,supra note 146

¹⁶³Id,p2

labelled by UN as the “*shadow pandemic*” and many countries have reported increases in gender based violence: domestic and sexual violence.¹⁶⁴The UN Special Reporter on Violence against Women has rightly noted that “For too many women and children, home can be a place of fear and abuse. That situation worsens considerably in cases of isolation such as the lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic”.¹⁶⁵

What is more, during lockdowns and stay home orders, family economic hardship and social stress combined with movement restrictions and overcrowded homes intensified the in gender-based violence. Thus, the pandemic’s economic impacts are likely to increase and put women and girls in fragile economies and dependent position particularly made them more vulnerable. Thus violence against women which is a human right added to the economic impact of COVID-19 and bears an economic cost as well down economic recovery across the world.¹⁶⁶

During the pandemic women who are more in a vulnerable situation disproportionately affected by GBV. According to UN Women especially essential and informal workers, such as street vendors are at heightened risk of violence as they navigate deserted urban or rural public spaces and transportation services under lockdown.¹⁶⁷These women are forced to work in a deserted area even during lockdown since they should earn a daily income for their livelihood. Women with disability vulnerability situation also increased during the pandemic. The lockdowns and quarantine measures have also exacerbated the situation of women with disability exposure to sexual and physical abuse and exploitation. Even in some countries, health workers those risking their lives on the frontline to combat the disease have been attacked. Moreover, women, in lower paid, part-time, and sometimes precarious working conditions, exposed to abuse and gender-based violence.

No country is immune or unaffected by the ‘shadow pandemic’, the violence and abuse against women worsened by lockdown measures. For instance, in Ethiopia Violence’s committed at the private sphere were topics during the state of emergency when, physical distancing and stay home were suggested to curb the spread of the virus, it has brought a negative consequence.

¹⁶⁴UN WOMEN, Violence against Women and girls :the shadow pandemic April6,2020,<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

¹⁶⁵plan international ,African child Policy , ,supra note 146,p2

¹⁶⁶UN WOMEN, Violence against Women and girls :the shadow pandemic ,supra note 164

¹⁶⁷UN WOMEN ,How covid 19 impact women and girls supra note 157

In Addis Ababa during the state of emergency one of the impacts of the pandemic that was reported mostly was sexual violence of 101 girls being sexually abused. According to Addis Ababa Women and Children Affairs Office the girls were raped during school closure.¹⁶⁸ A rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 in children in Ethiopia also revealed that having a large family size living together in a small house has been a factor in the increase in violence against children¹⁶⁹

Women's Unpaid Care Work: The other gendered effect of the pandemic is reflected in an increased unpaid care work for women, which creates social and economic insecurity. The crisis caused gender inequalities more evident: *women are the most affected by the increase in unemployment, poverty, and the overload of unpaid care.*¹⁷⁰ During the outbreak, unpaid care work exacerbated as the result women and girls face increased care-giving roles in the home, putting them under additional stress.¹⁷¹ In the same manner the pandemic creates additional unpaid care work on workers mostly women with family responsibilities.

The closure of businesses, school shut down as well closure of formal and informal sectors mostly performed by women are some of the reasons identified in most literatures for the increased unpaid care work. The situation puts an increased financial strain on communities, particularly in segments of the population that are already vulnerable like women in the informal sector. Such women disproportionately work in insecure, lower-paid, part-time, and informal employment, with little or no income security and social protection, therefore less protected from economic recession in times of crisis.¹⁷² Mainly, COVID-19 has drastically affected sectors with high shares of female workers, many women have been left without jobs and income, prompting them to stay in the private sphere of home and perform more domestic responsibilities. This can widen gender gaps in labor force participation, wages, and unpaid care work.¹⁷³ Beyond lost

¹⁶⁸Crispin Adriaanse School closures factors in rape of Ethiopia girls during COVID -19 lockdown ,Jun 4, 2020<https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/school-closures-factor-in-rape-of-ethiopian-girls-during-covid-19-lockdown-48970387>

¹⁶⁹plan international ,African child Policy ,supra note 146 p10

¹⁷⁰UN women, The economic impact of covid 19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean ,Nov ,2020.

¹⁷¹United Nation Human Rights Commission Of the High Commission ,Covid 19 guidance ,13 may 2020 .,https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/COVID-19_Guidance.pdf

¹⁷²UN WOMEN, Violence against Women and girls,supra note 164

¹⁷³EsunaDugarova,Unpaid care work in times of the COVID-19 crisis: Gendered impacts, emerging evidence and promising policy responses,Paper prepared for the UN Expert Group

jobs and reduced incomes, for many women the pandemic has also increased ‘*time poverty*’¹⁷⁴

We are reminded that globally, women on average do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. This has long-term consequences for their economic security and overall well-being.¹⁷⁵ And it would create large amount of unpaid care work. Unpaid care work is indispensable to the development of economy and societies and is central to human well-being. The goods and services produced through unpaid care work are critical in sustaining the “*economically active*” labor force on a daily and generational basis.¹⁷⁶ It is estimated that unpaid care and domestic work account for anywhere between 10 and 39 percent of Gross Domestic Product and can contribute more to the economy than the manufacturing, commerce or transportation sectors.¹⁷⁷

Meeting, pp7 https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2020/09/Duragova.Paper_.pdf

¹⁷⁴UN WOMEN, From insight to action, Gender equality in the wake of covid19, 2020, pp8

¹⁷⁵UN WOMEN, Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in East and Southern Africa, Abridged version, March 2021

¹⁷⁶Esuna Dugarova, Unpaid care work in times of the COVID-19 crisis, supra note 173 .p 4

¹⁷⁷UN WOMEN, redistribute unpaid care work, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/redistribute-unpaid-work#notes>.

CHAPTER THREE

III. International and national Legal frameworks in relation with economic rights of women

A. COVID-19 regulations and their impact on human rights: state of emergency

The WHO after declaring the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic, urged governments to take immediate actions to stop the spread of the virus.,¹⁷⁸ Most countries heeded the call and started taking measures to bring the pandemic under control. These measures, in most circumstances, included declaring states of emergencies, which introduced restrictions on individual and groups rights.

Even though governments are within their bounds to make restrictions on some rights during such a pandemic, they must follow the requirements and conditions laid down in international human rights law. In this respect, Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is of paramount importance: on the one hand, it allows for a state party to derogate temporarily from part of its obligations under the Covenant; On the other hand, it subjects both this very measure of derogation, as well as its material consequences, to a specific regime of safeguards.¹⁷⁹

Article 4 of the ICCPR

1. In time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States Parties to the present Covenant may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Covenant to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin.

2. No derogation from articles 6, 7, 8 (paragraphs 1 and 2), 11, 15, 16 and 18 may be made under this provision.

3. Any State Party to the present Covenant availing itself of the right of derogation shall immediately inform the other States Parties to the present Covenant, through the intermediary of

¹⁷⁸Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Dimension of COVID-9,supra note 97 at 10.

¹⁷⁹Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 29, Article 4: Derogations during a State of Emergency, 31 August 2001 CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.11.

the Secretary General of the United Nations, of the provisions from which it has derogated and of the reasons by which it was actuated. A further communication shall be made, through the same intermediary, on the date on which it terminates such derogation.

A fundamental requirement for any measures derogating from the covenant is that such measures are limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation.¹⁸⁰ This requirement relates to the duration, geographical coverage, and material scope of the state of emergency and any measures of derogation resorted to because of the emergency.¹⁸¹ Hence, restrictions on rights for reasons of public health or national emergency should be legal, necessary, and proportionate. And some rights, including the right to life, are non-derogable even during a pandemic. Furthermore, Article 4 clearly prohibits discrimination on any ground and any government response or measures taken by the state should equally be applicable.

Article 93 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia provides for the procedures for declaration of state of emergency. The Council of Ministers of the Federal Government is empowered to decree a state of emergency should an external invasion, a breakdown of law and order which endangers the constitutional order and which cannot be controlled by the regular law enforcement agencies and personnel, a natural disaster, or an epidemic occur.¹⁸² And when a state of emergency is declared, the Council of Ministers of the Federal Government has the power to suspend such political and democratic rights contained in the Constitution to the extent necessary to avert the conditions that required the declaration of a state of emergency except those rights provided for in Articles 1, 18, 25 and sub Articles 1 and 2 of Article 39 of the Constitution.¹⁸³ The House of Peoples' Representatives, is the body designated to approve the state of emergency proclaimed by the Council of Ministers.¹⁸⁴ It is also responsible to establish a State of Emergency Inquiry Board, which have the powers and responsibilities to inspect and follow up that no measure taken during the state of emergency is inhumane, to recommend corrective measures if it finds any case of inhumane treatment, as well as to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators of inhumane acts.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰Ibid

¹⁸¹Ibid

¹⁸²Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No1/1995, 21 August 1995, Article 93

¹⁸³Ibid

¹⁸⁴Ibid

¹⁸⁵Ibid

According to the Syracuse Principles, which is an international law principle, during serious public health threats and public emergencies threatening the life of the nations,¹⁸⁶ restrictions of some rights can be applicable. However, these restrictions have to be provided for and carried out in accordance with the law, directed towards a legitimate objective of general interest, based on scientific evidence and neither arbitrary nor discriminatory in application, of limited duration, respectful of human dignity, subject to review, and proportionate to achieve the objective.¹⁸⁷ The limited duration and any reduction of rights need to take into consideration the disproportionate impact on specific populations or vulnerable groups.¹⁸⁸

Despite what the laws and principles provide as stated in the preceding paragraphs, most of the time quarantines and lockdowns are difficult to impose and enforce uniformly, they are often arbitrary or discriminatory in application.¹⁸⁹ Even when the State of Emergency declared imposes certain restriction that are strictly necessary and provides for proportionate measures to combat the outbreak, the measures, more often than not, will have impact on the enjoyment of certain rights and freedom. The discriminatory effect of the measures exacerbates the existing gap of socio-economic status of individuals. That is why it is particularly important to ensure that the rights of vulnerable groups, including the rights of women, has been considered while imposing these measures. In this regard, the special Rapporteur of the AU underlined the obligation of states parties to ensure that measures adopted within the frame woke of COVID 19 national responses are not used as an opportunity to discriminate against stigmatize or target individuals or groups¹⁹⁰

For instance, the Global COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker¹⁹¹ revealed that the measures taken to contain the Covid-19 pandemic are not compatible with the socio-economic rights protection and governments are not doing enough to protect women and girls from the

¹⁸⁶Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation of Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Siracusa Principles), UN Doc. E/CN.4/1984/4 (1984)

¹⁸⁷Ibid

¹⁸⁸Human Rights Watch, supra note 97

¹⁸⁹Ibid

¹⁹⁰ACHPR Press release of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Focal Point on Reprisals in Africa on the protection of Human Rights Defenders during the COVID-19 pandemic, May 11, 2020. Available at <https://www.achpr.org/pressrelease/detail?id=496>

¹⁹¹The Global COVID-19 Gender Response Tracker analyses 2,500 measures across 206 countries to assess the extent to which policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have been gender-sensitive. Specifically, it analyses government measures with a gender lens in three areas: those that tackle violence against women and girls, support unpaid care, and strengthen women's economic security.

economic and social fallout caused by the COVID-19 crisis.¹⁹²The results signal that 42 countries, one-fifth of those analysed, have no gender-sensitive measures in response to COVID-19 at all. Only 25 countries – 12 per cent of the world –have introduced measures that cover violence against women and girls, support unpaid care, and strengthen women’s economic security.¹⁹³

In a similar fashion to the rest of the world, the Government of Ethiopia declared a state of emergency and adopted certain measures to put the pandemic under control. The “State of Emergency Proclamation Enacted to Counter and Control the Spread of COVID-19 and ease its Impact” was approved by the House of Peoples’ Representatives for a five months period.¹⁹⁴The House also established a State of Emergency Inquiry Board to follow up and monitor the implementation of the state of emergency.

Then the Council of Ministers adopted a regulation which provided in details the particulars of measures adopted and the rights to be suspended in order to counter and mitigate the humanitarian, social, economic and political damage that could be caused by COVID-19.¹⁹⁵The list of measures include lock downs, ban on greetings by handshake, closure of schools, banning of all public gatherings, prohibition to conduct meetings for religious, government, social or political purposes in places of worship, public institutions, hotels, meeting halls or any other place, ban on all movements at land borders, except for the flow of cargo and essential goods, ban on cross country public transportation¹⁹⁶.

These measures have brought dire economic impacts. The survey findings conducted by UN WOMEN confirm that in Ethiopia, the economic consequences of the state of emergency and movement control measures impacted on the individual incomes of most women and men as well as the combined incomes of their households¹⁹⁷And in some selected areas of Addis Ababa,

¹⁹²UN WOMEN,UNDP,COVID 19 Global gender Response Tracker , The UNDP-UNWOMEN Women Global Covid 19 Gender ResponseTracker,Global Gender Response Tracker assesses COVID-19 measures for women,<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response>

¹⁹³Ibid

¹⁹⁴Council of Ministers regulation no.466/2020.The regulation seeds to implement a state of emergency proclamation no.3/2020 seeds to proclamation no.3//2020 ,enacted to counter and control the spread of Covid 19 and mitigate Impact and Control the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate its Impact.

¹⁹⁵April 2020.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ UN WOMEN, OHCHR supra note 9, p12.

where the virus hits the most, stay at home order was declared for many household members. The stay-at-home order differently impacted the residence of these areas. It particularly affected women who are engaged in informal sectors or in works which are not considered by most as a decent work. These women often depend on public space and social interaction, which were restricted to control the outbreak, to earn a living. The stay-at-home order crippled their opportunity to work and earn their daily income.

Even if the measures taken are considered necessary to control the spread of the virus, the obligation to stay at home put women in a more vulnerable position given the traditional gender roles in the country. The stay-at-home measures created a tension between the response measures and the economic right of women. It prevented them from exercising economic activity which impacted their other rights including their right to health, equal and safe labour practices, the right to food and the right to education.

B. Legal Frameworks for the Protection of Socio-Economic Rights of Women

1. ICESCR

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is one out of the nine core international human rights instruments that specifically guarantees and provides the legal framework to protect, promote and safeguard economic, social, and cultural rights. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966. The Covenant consists of rights which are fundamental for the full enjoyment of human rights including the right to work which includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by a work one freely chooses or accepts and the right to work in just safe and favourable conditions, the right to social security and to social protection, the right to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing, housing, and to continuous improvement of the standard of living, the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, as well as the right to education.¹⁹⁸

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) is the basis for the Covenant. Though not binding, the UDHR is the first important instrument to proclaim protection and recognizes a variety of economic, social, and cultural rights.¹⁹⁹ Particularly, Article 23(1) of the

¹⁹⁸See Article 6,7,10,11,12,13 of ICESCR.

¹⁹⁹UDHR, Article 22,25,26.

UDHR stipulates the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions or work, and to protection against unemployment. Thus, the right to work is entitled to anyone without distinction on the type of work conducted by individuals.

The right to work is essential for realizing other human rights and forms an inseparable and inherent part of human dignity²⁰⁰. The right to work is one of the primary economic rights. It is essential for the realization of many of the socioeconomic rights such as the right to food, education, and health. The right confers upon every individual the opportunity to engage in any type of work for a living. This of course, includes the work conducted by women in the formal and informal sector to gain income. The right to work of a women in any chosen work provides an opportunity for the women to enjoy the other rights protected under the ICESCR including the rights to social security, protection of the family, an adequate standard of living (including freedom from hunger, access to clean water, adequate housing, and protection of property), and mental and physical health.²⁰¹. Since, the right to work freely in any chosen or accepted work is so essential particularly for vulnerable groups, governments must avoid actions and measures that discriminate against vulnerable groups from engaging in formal or informal work and exert more effort to ensure the right to work for the disadvantaged such as women.

Article 2 and three of the ICESCR are the most relevant in the protection of women economic rights under the ICESCR. *They relate with non-discrimination and equality of women that all persons are entitled to the rights and exercise without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property birth or other status, and equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.*²⁰² While many economic, social and cultural rights are subject to progressive realization, the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural rights has stated that the rights enshrined under Article 2 and 3 are obligations that the states should immediately

²⁰⁰Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, The right to work ,General comment No. 18, Thirty-fifth session, Geneva, 7-25 November 2005

²⁰¹International Justice Resource Center , Economic Social and cultural rights ,https://ijrcenter.org/thematic-research-guides/economic-social-and-cultural-rights-2/#Legal_Protections

²⁰² ICESR, Article 2,3

implement,²⁰³ together with rights which are essential for the protection of women economic rights. Other than in those two articles, states are required to undertake all the appropriate measures and to use the maximum of their available resources to realize economic, social, and cultural human rights contained in the ICESCR.

Thus, any inequality and discrimination of women rights including unequal economic participation and opportunities requires the immediate action of the state to eliminate, control and avert the situation and attitudes that either engender or perpetuate discrimination against women.²⁰⁴ Necessary actions may include special temporary measures to “suppress conditions that perpetuate discrimination.”²⁰⁵

Even during pandemic times, states are expected to identify discriminatory responsive measures and take necessary corrective actions to curb the condition that created discrimination on the exercise of women economic rights.

2. CEDAW

The other international covenant which enshrined women’s right in a comprehensive manner is the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Convention deals in detail about women rights in all aspects of life. The core principles of human rights, non-discrimination, and equality of women, are guaranteed and required to be applicable in all rights enshrined under the Convention. It imposes obligation on States Parties to the Covenant to ensure the equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights without any distinction on the basis of sex.²⁰⁶ While UDHR and ICESCR recognize all rights to be respected, CEDAW establishes the scope of the principle of equality and the prohibition of gender-based discrimination with respect to these rights,

²⁰³Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 18: *The Right to Work* (Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), 2005, para. 33

²⁰⁴International Justice Resource Center, *supra* note 201

²⁰⁵Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 16: *The equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights* (Art. 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), 2005, Para. 15

²⁰⁶CEDAW

and identifies the measures that the States Parties must adopt to achieve full equality and eliminate discrimination in these areas.²⁰⁷

State parties' obligation to create equal opportunity for women in all aspects of life and the obligation to eliminate any discrimination provided under CEDAW, is also applicable to Article 11 of the Convention, which specifies economic right of women: right to work. Under the ICESCR, women have the right to fair wages, adequate working conditions, and employment without discrimination. Likewise, Article 11 of CEDAW provides for equal right of women with men with regards to work. It also requires States parties to take "all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment. Specifically, the provision gives protection regarding women's rights in relation with work opportunities, protection of health and safety, choice of profession and social security."²⁰⁸

The measures taken to control the Covid-19 outbreak violated these rights of women provided under the Convention directly and indirectly. Thus, in accordance with Article 4 of the CEDAW, the State parties have to adopt temporary measures aimed at accelerating equal participation and creating opportunity of work for women.²⁰⁹The measure maybe discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

Moreover, CEDAW requires States to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination in matters relating to family life and underlines the equal responsibilities of men and women in the context of family life. For example, with regards to COVID 19 the right which is enshrined under the convention which is equal responsibility regarding the family life is violated and women are struggling with the intensified unpaid work and take care of their family.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷Inter American Commission on Human Rights,*The Work, Education, and resource of Women: The Road to equality in Guaranteeing Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, November ,3 ,2011,pp. 17.

²⁰⁸ See CEDAW, Article 11

²⁰⁹United

Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation 25, *Temporary Special Measures*, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/2004/I/WP.1/Rev.1, 30 (2004), para. 18

²¹⁰ See CEDAW, Article 16

3. ILO Convention

Workers related rights are further elaborated and recognized in a specific manner under the ILO Conventions. ILO's mission is to improve the situation of human beings in the world of work and to find sustainable opportunities for decent work.²¹¹The primary goal of ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.²¹²The ILO Convention calls for the improvement of the "*conditions of labour*", whether organized or not, and wherever work might occur, whether in the formal or the informal economy, whether at home, in the community or in the voluntary sector.²¹³

ILO declares that "*Women have transformed the labour markets of the world. In many countries the increasing labour force participation of women is driving employment trends.*" That is why in every declaration of ILO, the issue of eradication of discrimination in any form at work is stated as fundamental to decent work and central to social justice.²¹⁴The ILO Convention on Discrimination defines discrimination as "*any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of sex which has the effect of nullifying or impairing quality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation*". States that are party to this Convention are obligated to adopt and implement a national policy to combat discrimination, by employing measures that are appropriate to conditions that posed the discrimination.²¹⁵

ILO recognizes that among *workers in the informal economy the problems are the greatest. In the informal economy, workers rights are the least respected. They are underemployed and poorly remunerated, have no social protection, and for whom social dialogue and participation*

²¹¹ILO, Report of the Director-General: Decent work 87th Session, Geneva, June 1999 <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>

²¹²Ibid

²¹³ Ibid

²¹⁴ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, adopted by the International Labor Conference at its Eighty-sixth Session, Geneva, June 18, 1998; ILO, *Time for equality at work: Global report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*.

²¹⁵ILO, C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0::NO::P55_TYPE,P55_LANG,P55_DOCUMENT,P55_NODE:CON,en,C111./Document

*have little meaning.*²¹⁶ Most people enter the informal economy when they are left with zero option, and needs to survive and to have access to basic income-generating activities. As the large majority of workers in the informal economy and their families do not benefit from social protection, they are particularly vulnerable to various risks and contingencies.²¹⁷ The situation that the health crises created around the world is an evidence that women in the informal sector are vulnerable to any contingencies. That is why ILO stresses and is working on the transfer of informal works to formalization so that workers at the informal sector would be able to acquire many of the rights workers in the formal sector enjoy. In these transfers vulnerable groups, mostly women, in the informal sector would be the most beneficiaries.

The first step towards designing effective interventions to facilitate transitions to formality is to recognize the heterogeneity of the informal economy, the many different categories of work involved and the various drivers that are leading to both the growth of the informal economy and the in formalization of the formal economy.²¹⁸ Although the informal economy covers many different realities, there is global consensus that inclusive development is not possible unless rights and opportunities are extended to workers in the informal economy. And the persistence of a large informal economy is incompatible with substantial progress in achieving decent work and undermines the ability of enterprises to become more productive.²¹⁹

The commitment to decent work is anchored in the ILO's Declaration of Philadelphia, which affirms the right of everyone to "*conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity*"²²⁰ The challenge of reducing decent work deficit is greatest where work is performed outside the scope or application of the legal and institutional frameworks. In the world today, most people work in the informal economy because most of them are unable to find other jobs or start businesses in the formal economy.²²¹

²¹⁶ILO, Report of the Director-General: Decent work 87th Session, Geneva, June 1999s <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>

²¹⁷ILO, Transitioning from the informal to the formal economy International Labor Conference 103rd Session 2014 Report V(1).

²¹⁸Ibid

²¹⁹Ibid

²²⁰ILO, General Conference of the International Labor Organization, Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy, par 1, meeting in its 90th Session, 2002

²²¹Id, Para 2

C. National Legal Frameworks on Women's Economic Rights

Ethiopia has ratified many international instruments that deals with socioeconomic rights, such as the ICESCR and CEDAW. According to Article 9/4/ of the FDRE Constitution, all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land. Since Ethiopia has ratified the ICESCR and CEDAW, all the rights enshrined therein forms part of the law of the land.

Moreover, the constitution provides to all Ethiopians rights, opportunities and access to health services, work, decent shelter and food security, among other rights .The socio-economic rights in the constitution are provided under a single Article.²²² The rights enshrined therein include the right to engage freely in economic activity, equal job opportunities for the unemployed and the poor, the right to choose his or her means of livelihood, occupation and profession, right to equal access to public health services, education and other social services. Sub Article 6 and 7 of Article 41 particularly provide protection for the vulnerable by obliging the state to create job opportunities for unemployed and the poor citizens, without making any distinction on the type of work conducted by the individuals.

It is also very important to refer to the National Policy Principles and Objectives of the Constitution (Articles 89-91) when dealing with socio-economic rights. As an Economic Objective, the government has the duty to ensure that all Ethiopians get equal opportunity to improve their economic condition and to promote equitable distribution of wealth among them²²³ and it shall take measures to avert any natural and man-made disasters, and, in the event of disasters, to provide timely assistance to the victims. And article 89(3) must be read in conjunction with sub article 7 of the provision which stipulates that the government shall ensure the participation of women in equality with men in all economic and social development endeavours.²²⁴ Hence, the government must employ the principle of equality and non-discrimination regarding work opportunity and participation to improve the lives of everyone without distinction based on sex. And in time of natural disaster, like the Covid 19 pandemic, the

²²²FDRE ,.Constitution Article 41.

²²³Id, article 89(2).

²²⁴Id, article 89(7).

timely assistance provided by the government should reach to all equally and shall not discriminate on any grounds.

Furthermore, the socioeconomic goals provided in the Constitution requires the government to endeavour to protect and promote health, welfare and living standards of the working population of the country²²⁵ as well as to the extent the country's resources permit, aim at providing to all citizens without discrimination access to public health and education, clean water, housing, food and social security.²²⁶ Thus, the constitution places a duty on the government to take the lead for the realization of the socioeconomic rights without discrimination and to make the rights accessible to all, especially the most vulnerable groups.

Article 41 (3) of the Constitution provides for 'equal access.' Accordingly, the government is duty bound to prevent laws, policies and measures which pose discrimination on the enjoyment of public health, education, and other social services.²²⁷ In addition, taking in to account the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia, the constitution entitles women to affirmative measures to ensure that women equally participate and get the opportunity to enjoy of socioeconomic rights in reality.²²⁸

²²⁵ Id, constitution 89(8)

²²⁶ Id ,constitution Article 90

²²⁷ Id, Constitution 41(4)

²²⁸ Id, Constitution Article 35(2)

CHAPTER FOUR

IV. Empirical Impact of the Pandemic and the Response Measures on the Economic Rights of Women in the Informal Sector

Introduction

In this chapter, based on the data obtained from the study area, the research primarily tries to illustrate operation of the informal sector and the methods implemented to transfer the women from informal sectors to formalization. The second part examines the living and working conditions of the women in the study area. This will help to identify and examine the degree of the impact of the measures taken to curb the pandemic on the factors pivotal for realizing women economic rights, particularly those women working in the informal sectors. The last topic analyses how the pandemic impact the women rights to work freely and engage in economic activities of their choice and as a result how it adversely affects their exercise of other essential human rights.

Thus, the data analysed to demonstrate the above points were collected from women engaged in the informal sector and are found in the process of formalization through an in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Interviews with relevant government officers and experts were also conducted. Observation obtained from the study area is also used as one source of data. Literatures, particularly recent assessment proved to be essential inputs in data analysis and interpretation.

The initial intention of the research was to conduct and collect data from women engaged in any informal sector in the study area. But once the field study and data collection have started, the researcher learned that there are specifically recognized women in the informal sector. These women are identified by the woreda administration and are engaged in different types of informal work. In addition, the researcher has also learned that the Woreda administration is working to transform these groups of women into the formal sector. Hence, the research narrowed its focus on those women who are still engaged in the informal sector, specifically recognized by the woreda administration and in the process of transition to formalization. According to ILO, *Formalization is the process of bringing informal workers and*

*economic units under the coverage of formal arrangements, while ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods, and entrepreneurship.*²²⁹

A. Overview of the operational method of informal sectors in the study area

Addis Ababa is the Federal Capital of Ethiopia and a Chartered City; having three layers of Government: City Government at the top, 11 Sub City Administrations in the Middle²³⁰ and 116 Woredas, which are the lowest administrative units.²³¹ The city is one of the fastest growing cities in Africa. Despite the strong economic growth trends, Addis Ababa faces significant development challenges. For instance, unemployment and poverty levels in Addis Ababa remain high, estimated at 23.5% and 22% respectively and the informal sector employs about 30% of the economically active labour force in the city.²³² This informal sector exists in all the 11 Sub-Cities of Addis Ababa. Lideta Sub-City is one of these 11 sub cities of Addis Ababa, where this research is conducted.

Lideta Sub-City covers an area of 9.18 sq.km, which makes it the 2nd smallest Sub-City in Addis Ababa. There are 10 Woredas in the Sub-City with an estimated population of 246,805, out of which 129,764 are female and the rest are 117,041 Male.²³³ It is one of the inner Sub-Cities where social and economic problems are the norm than the exception.²³⁴ Out of the 10 Woredas in Lideta Sub-City, Woreda 03, commonly known as “Abinet Sefer,” is the one where the study has been conducted. It is the most densely populated woreda in the sub-city.

There are 27 sector offices within the woreda administration. Among the 27 sector offices, Trade and Industry Office as well as Urban Job Creation and Food Security Office of Woreda 3 administration are the two sector offices responsible for creating a conducive situation for the formalization of the informal sector.

²²⁹ILO, Formalization of the Informal Economy: Area of Critical Importance, Governing Body 325th Session, Geneva, 29 October–12 November 2015, 8 October 2015. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/ed_norm/-/relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_412833.pdf

²³⁰Office of the Mayor Addis Ababa, <http://www.addisababa.gov.et/ar/web/guest/city-map>, Accessed on May 9, 2021.

²³¹Erasmus+ Program of the European Union, Supra note 8, p 6, accessed on May 9, 2021.

²³²Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Enhancing Urban Resilience Adopted by City Strength, Resilient City Program June 2015

²³³Analysis of the Spatial Accessibility of Addis Ababa’s Light Rail Transit: The Case of East–West available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40864-018-0076-6>

²³⁴Interview with Tsehaye Hailu, Trade and Industry Office, Office Head at Lideta Sub-City Woreda 03 administration. (11 January –March 2021)

One of the problems that the Addis Ababa city administration is working on and taking steps to address is creating decent work for residents of the city and are engaged in the informal sectors. Consequently, and with the aim of managing the informal sector activities, the woreda administration (specifically Trade and Industry Office) is taking measures to transfer women in the informal sector to a more well-organized work and formalize their informal activity in due course.²³⁵ Thus, Lideta Sub-City Trade and Industry office provide support to such endeavours of the woreda administration.

In the woreda, the number of women who participate in the informal sector far exceeds that of the men. The informal sector is a means of livelihood for many women and many of these women cannot fit in the formal sector for so many reasons. The number of women joining the informal work in the woreda is increasing from time to time as several women in the woreda consider the informal sector as their only opportunity to participate in the economy.²³⁶ Consequently, Woreda 03, administration has registered 89 individuals who are engaged in informal works, out of whom 65 are women and who are the focus of this research, (the research only covers these women: engaged in the informal sector, registered by the woreda administration and has been operating since mid-2018).

The woreda administration is taking several actions to improve the livelihoods of those women by facilitating the road to formalization, in accordance with directive number 88/2009 and guideline number 5/2010 on formalization of the informal trade.²³⁷ The directive is issued by the Addis Ababa City Administration Trade and Industry Development Office in order to address the issue of informal works, mainly street vending, by facilitating for it to be operated in an appropriate manner and to provide assistance to individuals to shift to the formal sector.²³⁸ The directive defines informal traders as individuals who are not registered in the commercial registry, have no trade license in accordance with trade proclamation as well as have no place to operate and retail. The informal traders, however, are expected to have a tax payer Identification number (TIN) number. It also allows the residents of the city to vend on the street

²³⁵Ibid

²³⁶Ibid

²³⁷ Interview with Melesewu belay, Coordinator of Informal sector works, Lideta sub city, Woreda 03 (15 January, 18 February, March 3 2021)

²³⁸ Addis Ababa city administration Trade and industry Development office Directive and guideline number 88/2009 and 5/2010

but only in venues specifically allocated for such activities by their respective Woredas²³⁹. These locations are mainly in areas where there are no heavy traffic and in places where the shades to be constructed for vending do not change the outlook of the city.²⁴⁰ This also helps informal workers to retail their goods without running and hiding from officials.²⁴¹ The city administration should be commended for providing temporary locations to the informal workers to operate because it lessens the burden that street vendors exert to sell their items and that it is a key step in the process of ensuring decent work. However, the directive states that the body which offered the venues (in this case the Woreda administration) can reclaim the area. This creates a sense of insecurity for the informal traders and poses real risk of losing their means of livelihood.²⁴²

To participate in the formalization arrangement, the informal workers must primarily be registered by the woreda administration and be able to prove that they do not have a decent work anywhere in the city. Then, the woreda administration will issue them TIN. Unlike formal workers where the government sets the tax, the informal workers are not expected to pay a fixed amount of tax. They set their own taxes and pay what they believe they owe the government. This was intentionally done to make the vendors feel that they are in actual process of formalization²⁴³. The vendors must remain in such arrangement for three years in order for them to fully transfer from the informal sector into formal business. But most of the informal traders, mainly the women, remain under the informal engagement even after 3 years has passed. There are several reasons that contribute for not transferring to a formal sector. For instance, a respondent revealed that they were unable to transfer to a formal economy because of lack of money and a reasonable place to operate as the daily income they have been getting from the informal business is only enough to cover daily expenses and not for savings.²⁴⁴

The directive allows for five (5) types or categories of informal street vending. These are vending on (1) Cloths (2) Fruits and vegetables or “Gulit” (3) Simple electronics (4) Hot drinks like coffee and tea or “Bunnateteu” (5) Fast-food services. According to the coordinator of

²³⁹Addis Ababa City Administration Trade and Industry Development Office Directive and Guideline Number5/2010.

²⁴⁰Ibid.

²⁴¹Interview with respondent 2, engaged in selling clothes, registered under Trade & Industry Office.

²⁴²Ibid

²⁴³Interview with TsehayeHailu, supra note 234.

²⁴⁴Interview with respondent 3, engaged in selling vegetable “Gulit”, registered under Trade & Industry office.(18,January 2021)

informal sector at the Woreda, the informal workers can register in any of the five categories that they are interested to work on. Except in simple electronics, women are the major participants in the above-mentioned categories of work.²⁴⁵The participation of women in simple electronics category is low compared to men. Selling of simple electronics will enable the informal traders earn more money than the rest of the categories of work. Unfortunately, this category of work is mainly occupied by men in the study area. In other words, it is observed that the women are engaged in the most vulnerable type of vending.

The informal trade arrangement is a great opportunity for many poor women as a means to engage in a work which is consistent with their capacity. Moreover, since most of the women taking part in the informal trade are residents of the area or they conduct the informal service around their home, it accords them with the opportunity to perform their family responsibilities side by side but there still exists one major hurdle. These women are allowed to work only after 5 pm (11 local time).²⁴⁶ In addition to limiting the amount of income they could generate from their activities it may make the women to be susceptible to more violence as they are forced to work at night times as well as limits the working opportunity of the women.

In a similar manner to the Trade and Industry Office, Urban Job Creation and Food Security Office, commonly known Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE), also takes the lead in implementing formalization and promoting benefits to the informal workers. MSE is well-known as a facilitator of the creation of conducive environment for many job seekers and entrepreneurs. It is the reason behind various economic activities that generate job opportunities for the large segment of the population, mainly women. The Office registers informal workers and provides them with temporary shade under its “Trade” segment which is one area of operation of the Office.

In this arrangement, the informal workers are operating in one out of the five informal types of activities recognized by the Woreda Administration. Under the office of MSE, there are 170 registered informal workers, and many of the workers are women.²⁴⁷This office also follows most of the procedures that the Trade and Industry Office of the Woreda undertake to improve

²⁴⁵ Interview with Meleseu Belay, supra note 237

²⁴⁶Ibid

²⁴⁷Interview with LensaRegassa , Job creation expert at Lideta Sub-City Woreda 03.(17,February 2021)

the informal sector service. The one major difference is that the informal workers registered under the MSE are provided with an ID card (Badge) which shows that the person who holds the ID card is an informal street vendor working temporarily in a specified location (shade) identified by the office.²⁴⁸This is not the case for informal workers registered at the Trade and Industry Office; they will not be issued with an ID card (badge).

The ID brings with it a lot of benefits. It testifies that the holder is a registered informal worker of the woreda. Thus, the ID holders need not run and hide from officials while vending their items. The ID card remains valid for six months. But the problem with the ID is, it states that the shade can be reclaimed by the Office at any time. This has created uncertainty in the minds of the vendors.²⁴⁹Moreover, their time of work is specified on the ID. Most of them are permitted to start vending after 10 o'clock local time. This has limited the time the informal workers spend on their job thereby minimizing their income and gain a living at any time. According to the respondents, the limitations on the time of work further exacerbated their situation during the Covid 19 pandemic since they were forced to stay at home for some time.

In practice, even though the woreda administration has the right, it is not reclaiming the place of vending or letting the IDs expire after 6 months. It is rather renewing the ID for the informal workers to encourage the works of the informal workers and promote formalization through progress.²⁵⁰Moreover, the office of MSE facilitates the informal workers access to credit from Addis Saving and Credit Union which helps them get a start-up initial capital and improve their culture of saving.

Even if the two offices in the Woreda administration are working a commendable work in the formalization process of informal workers, there needs to be a clear demarcation as to the mandate of the two offices. The office which was officially mandated by the directive, and which is operating with the guideline in relation to workers in the informal sector is the Trade and Industry Development Office. It is not clear with what mandate the MSE is operating, and the researcher observed that there is a huge misunderstanding and even personal disagreement

²⁴⁸Interview with AbubakerArebo, Head of Job Creation Enterprise and Development Office, Lideta Sub-City, Woreda 03(13,January 2021, 12,February)

²⁴⁹Interview with respondent11, engaged in selling coffee and tea drinks (Bunnatetu),registered under Jon creation office.(18,January ,March 10 2021)

²⁵⁰Interview withJob creation expert at Lideta Sub-City,Woreda,03(17,February 20201)

between the two offices as to their mandate with regards to the informal workers. Thus the woreda administration needs to make the necessary arrangements and have a legal framework as to who has the mandate or devise a way where the two offices can work in cooperation.

Generally, the effort of the government to transform the informal trading through a process of formal arrangement and facilitating individual's access to decent work go in line with SDGs goal 8. And providing an opportunity to participate in the economy and securing a livelihood are means to realize economic rights, mainly work right which is pivotal to the exercise of other rights of women.

B. Living and working condition of the women in the informal sector

Women are struggling to find work that guarantees safe working conditions and social protection without discrimination. To participate equally and take control of their economic rights, most women are engaged in different kinds of sectors. In a developing country like Ethiopia, women engage in low income -generating and in the informal sector of the economy. This is how they earn for the livelihoods and the basic needs of their family which are essential for the protection of their key human rights – starting from the right to life to their economic rights.

The informal sector operators are among the working group of the society that face multiple challenges and their condition of work in the sector hampers the exercise of their essential human rights. It is indicated in the literature section of this paper that the informal sector is where most women and the poor are found. The COVID-19 crisis is impacting more women than the rest of the community. And women in the informal sector, where the study took place, are not different from this reality.

There are many determining factors that led women to work in the informal economy. Data from the majority of the respondents revealed that, most of them entered into the informal sector due to extreme poverty and lack of the necessary education to join the formal work. Thus in order to earn the livelihood to sustain their family as well as to ensure their basic needs like

food, health, education etc, they join informal vending.²⁵¹ That is why they see informal vending as a better place for self-employment. It is examined that most of the women interviewed are found as the main provider of the family unit. It means all basic needs of the family are dependent on the little daily income that the women earn from the informal selling. Even the amounts of income they earn vary depending on the type of vending the women are engaged in. For instance, the information gathered from the women revealed that from the above listed five types of informal engagements, on average 200 Birr is the highest and 50-70 is the lowest daily income earned by most of the women before COVID-19. These are daily earnings of the women from Selling clothes and vegetables, respectively. And with the coming of Covid-19 their daily earning has even reduced to 20 -10 birr for those engaged in selling of vegetables, locally known “Gulits”. And for some women earning a daily income even become difficult. Some of the respondents indicated that they return back to their home without selling anything during the outbreak. As one respondent explained:

Before the corona I used to earn around 100 birrs per a day. But with the coming of the pandemic customers do not consume from street vendors like before and as the result I couldn't even earn my daily income and went to home several days with an empty hand for my kids ,which is very pain full .Above all the vegetables that I sell cannot be reserved for long ,they become damaged if I don't sell them within a day or two ,which is a loss and I cannot bring a new vegetables since my income reduced .²⁵²

This narration revealed the hefty effects of the unprecedented pandemic on the normal livelihoods and working conditions of the societies who are vulnerable and found in poverty. It affected the informal work which the women carry out to sustain themselves and their family. It drives them away from conducting their informal works, violating the exercise of economic rights of the women, which resulted in violating their only daily meal sources.

Another factor that can be sited for their present living and working condition in the informal sector as most of the respondents indicated is lack of adequate education. It is apparent that education, being one of the socioeconomic rights, is a facilitator for formal employment and

²⁵¹ Interview during Focus Group Discussion with informal workers registered under Job creation office (18,February20201)

²⁵²Interview with respondent 12,engaged in selling vegetables “Gulit” and registered under Job creation office.(28,January 20201)

a means for improved living condition of individuals. Mostly those engaged in the informal sector lack education which is one of the elements that is required to be in the formal sector. The research finding indicates that the majority of the women do not have adequate education and some even never been at school and most of them have little education. Thus, the education level of these women forced them to stay in the sector and have no other choice of livelihood.

Regarding this point one of the respondents associated her lack of education and the informal activity she is operating with the current outbreak covid 19 as follow:

*If I were educated, now I would have been somewhere in the formal employment or had been employee of the government with monthly salary but not selling second-hand clothes. And at present during covid 19 I would have stayed home with a salary like other formal employees till the outbreak effect lessens. But because of my illiteracy I do not have a choice rather continue vending informally since I must cover my family livelihoods.*²⁵³

The data from the above respondent and also similarly other respondents revealed that because of the poverty level that the women are found, and because of little or no education, informal engagement is seen as the best option to sustain their living and working opportunity. Even some of the women exposed themselves to the pandemic and were operating their informal engagement in order to satisfy their basic needs required to meet essential human rights such as food.

Besides education, age group is found to be one of the determining factors with regard the working condition of informal works. Logically it is assumed that the young age group can run here and there and carry out informal works. However, in the study area it is observed that the women age group composition is from young to old age and brings no variation in participation in the informal sector. Thus, it's analysed that the women being provided with stable location or shade to work eliminate age group from being a factor to engage in informal activity in the study area. This enables every woman in different age group to obtain the opportunity to engage in economic activity and meet their basic socio-economic rights and work without age distinction.

²⁵³Interview with respondent 15 engaged in selling second-hand clothes and registered under Job creation office.(22,February 20201)

But the only difference in relation to age occurred with the coming of COVID 19. Most of the women who are old age and engaged in vending are forced to stay at home. Some of them even stop working with a fear of contracting the virus easily because of pre-existing health conditions. For instance, a 16-year-old girl who sell cheap clothes and shoes stated that:

*When COVID-19 outbreak hits, my mother who is old and has a pre-existing health issue(asthmatic) and used to work on this shade immediately stop working and closed the shade. For our house, the only means of income to fulfil our fundamental needs is the daily earning that my mother obtains from selling of cheap clothes and shoes in this shade. Since my mother is unable to work, the only option the family had was to send me to work in the shade. Because of this I stopped going to school for this year and probably till the pandemic ends and my mother takeover the shade again.*²⁵⁴

From the interview it can be analysed that the coming of the outbreak set an age as one factor that bound a women from operating the informal work which was not an issue in the study area before COVID-19. Moreover, from the above story it is evident that the outbreak impact goes further than affecting the women in the informal economic activity to violating their family members rights and affected the right to education of the girl child at home.

Generally, from these discussions it's notable that the poor living and working condition of women in the informal sector is impacted and their situation was further intensified with the coming of the outbreak which also stretched into violating their family member's socio-economic rights.

C. COVID-19Vs.Factors Central to the Realization and Implementation of Women's Economic Rights

Work in the informal economy is often characterized by small or undefined workplaces, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity.²⁵⁵ There are also further characterizations of the informal activity that include low or irregular incomes, lack of access to information, markets, finance, training, and technology.²⁵⁶ The outcome of such scenarios is a challenge to decent working condition and hampers the shift to formalization process of those engaged in the informal activities. In order to change the situation and give

²⁵⁴Interview with respondent13, engaged in selling shoes(under selling clothes type of informal selling) , Registered under Job creation office(12,February 20201)

²⁵⁵ILO, Decent work for Sustainable Development (DW4SD) Resource Platform,Thematic Area Informal Economy.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

better opportunity for those who are working in the informal sector, the city administration is working towards transferring informal workers to formalization. This process of formalization creates a better opportunity, mainly for women that account for a significant number of people in the informal sector. However, with the coming of the pandemic the positive beginnings and changes to equality and decent work put to halt and many women good working conditions, opportunity and a means of empowerments were affected.

In order to curb the pandemic one of the response measures undertaken by the government was a state of emergency followed by various responses depending on the area where the pandemic hits most. These measures did not take into consideration those women engaged in the informal sector and the type of work they perform. For instance, in Lideta Sub-City where the pandemic hits harder, the government imposed lockdown and orders many households to stay home²⁵⁷ without giving due regards and consideration to individuals whose lives mainly depend on a daily income earned from informal works. In other words, these workers were forced to stop working by the administrative authority.

One of the key informants from Woreda 03, Lideta Sub-City said that:

*After ministry of health announced that certain area of Lideta Sub-City was hit hardest by the pandemic, the sub city Urban Job creation and food security office directs the woreda head offices to impose a stay home order until the outbreak eases. Then based on the sub-city administration direction, the woreda forced all the informal workers to get back to their home and stop vending in the shades for indefinite time.*²⁵⁸

This measure taken by the woreda to the pandemic did not put the fundamental human rights of the informal workers at the centre of the response. It lacks compromising the lives of the individuals engaged in informal sector in the area. For informal workers, spending a day without selling means escaping a meal. But the Woreda Administration has confirmed that, even if the stay home order was implemented at that time, the Woreda was reaching to those in the informal sector through a social protection scheme by providing food and sanitary materials for

²⁵⁷Interview with TsehayeHailu, Head of Trade and Industry Office Lideta Sub-City Woreda 03 and Interview with AbubakerArebo, office head of Job Creation Enterprise and Development office, Lideta Sub-City Woreda respectively. (27, January, 2021)

²⁵⁸Interview with TsehayeHailu, supra note 234.

the most vulnerable.²⁵⁹To the reverse what most of the respondents indicated regarding social protection is the opposite to what the officials of the woreda stated. They indicated that they were not assisted with any food or sanitary materials.

Thus, it can be asserted that, the pandemic along with the specific measures to stop its spread impacted the working condition of the women, their opportunities to work in the informal sector and their ongoing effort to formalization. Moreover, it creates inequality and violates the women's right of equal participation in the work force of the country, as well as blocked a means that empower women to work. Particularly, the action of the woreda lacks to conform that it creates inequality on the factors that are pivotal for the realization of women economic rights : opportunity and participation, empowerment and non-discrimination/equality .

1. Economic Opportunity and Participation

For women to exercise and enjoy social and economic rights, they should be able to freely choose and live the lives they want to lead. *To do this, women must have their economic rights realised. This means having adequate housing, an education, access to good healthcare, controlling properties, living free from violence, having access to decent work and opportunity to engage and participate in a work they choose.*²⁶⁰ Thus, the freedom to choose and participate in any work is one of the fundamental factors for the realization of their economic rights. Therefore, for a woman working under informal sector and being recognized by a certain authority is an economic opportunity to improve the quality of their existing informal work and pave their way to benefit from formalization. For this the respondents at the study area are witness. They confirmed that the informal vending and being embraced by the process of formalization, economically and socially posed an opportunity for many women equally to participate in work and a way to decent work as well as a means to improve their livelihood.²⁶¹Thus, work opportunity and participation are found as elements essential for

²⁵⁹Interview with TsehayeHailu and Interview with AbubakerArebo supra note 256.

²⁶⁰Women kind worldwide, supra note 112.

²⁶¹Interview during Group Discussions,supra note 251.

women to enjoy equally the fruit of economic rights with the rest of the community in the study area .

During focus group discussion, the participants indicated that their being provided with a place to work, or a temporary shade is a good working opportunity for them to vend and continue their livelihood. Besides that, it is observed that the shade is found near their residence area which created an opportunity for the women to take care of their unpaid care work at home easily while working/selling in their shades.

But the coming of the pandemic and the lockdown, made the women stay home and lose their opportunities to cross the line to decent work. It took them back to their original position which for most is severe poverty. Even prior to the pandemic those women earn inadequate income to meet their basic human rights. During FGD, the women indicated that during the onset of the outbreak some women forced to quit their work and some others continues working but they earn much lesser than the amount of earning they used to earn before the pandemic and unable to meet essential human rights of their family as before. They also pointed out that those who quit become economically dependent on others and back to their care work burdens.

One respondent explained how the pandemic affected her opportunity to work as follows:

The measures that the woreda took disproportionately affected many women including me. In the normal time most of us are allowed to work after 10 o'clock (local time) and used to sell until it gets dark which is imaginable how little we can earn with the limited 3-4 hours of time. And during this COVID time we were even prohibited from going out and retail in the little time we have. Even after I reopened the shade people start to fear gathering in this small shade because of the pandemic. This pandemic changed all my plans to expand and improve my retailing. It is very difficult for poor women like me to stay at home with empty hands and no food to serve for my family. I am even thinking to leave the shade and conduct street vending like I used to operate in main road areas which are not allowed by the government, at least I can run to buyers and sell my things without time bound rather than sitting in this shade and waiting them to come.²⁶²

Similarly, another respondent also explained:

²⁶²Interview with respondent 4 engaged in selling coffee and tea, registered under Trade and Industry Office.(18,February 20201)

During the onset of COVID-19 students were not going to school and I used to spend most of my time at home to take care of my 9- and 5-years old kids. Before the coming of COVID-19 when my kids went to school and until the time allowed to open the shade reach, I used to engage myself in more than one informal activity, particularly used to wash peoples' clothes and gain additional income. But after covid and kids spending most of their time at home I am forced to quit washing clothes for two reasons. One is to take care of my kids, but the main reason is by the time the partial lockdown was eased and I went to the peoples I used to wash clothes for, they told me that they do not want me to wash their clothes any more since the area I live at is the most COVID affected and known to the public for its partial lockdown. And now what I earn from selling cooked potatoes (registered under fast food type of informal sector) is not enough. Even these days there come many days I spend without selling anything and go back home empty hand.²⁶³

Regarding the time schedule of work mentioned by the interviewees, key informant of the research explained that there is an arrangement of time schedule made by the local administration for the women when to commence there vending. It permits the women to work 10-12 o'clock (local time) depending on the type of informal vending they are engaged.²⁶⁴ For instance, women engaged in vending vegetables and fruits("gulits"), cloths and simple electronics are allowed to start working after 4 Pm, and those engaged in selling coffee and tea can sell the whole day(but those listed under trade and industry are not allowed to work before 4 Pm). If women are found working before the time stipulated on her ID (badge) the civil authorities will force them to stop working.

From the above information it can be analysed that the situation that the government created for the women to work in an informal sector in authorized manner plays a major role in enhancing women's economic right to work by creating work opportunity and a good working condition for those who are poor and unable to participate in the formal job environment for various reason. It also open the door for many women to participate in the economy, have a better access to work and change their and lives of those around them and meet their basic needs such as food, health, clothes. On the other hand, placing a boundary or a time limit on the work is a violation to the right to work and it has negative impact on their economic rights. It also

²⁶³Interview with respondent 8 engaged in selling fast foods and registered under Trade and Industry Office.(16,February 20201)

²⁶⁴Interview withLensaRegassa, supra note247.

further hinders them from participating equally and affects them from freely exercising their economic activity to earn their livelihood.

It also limits their working opportunity and makes them to earn less than those who operate full day. In the same manner working after 4 Pm or working in the street after 6 Pm is unsafe for women and increase the chances of facing gender-based violence. This situation violates the economic rights of every individual which is stated under the ICESCR and the FDRE Constitution which is the right to work in a safe working condition. As most women have a responsibility to take care of children and the household, they cannot work longer hours after 4 Pm like the men this situation creates gender inequality in the work market. The pandemic combined with the stay-at-home order doubled this situation and intensified the already vulnerable situation of the women and resulted in a regressive move by wiping out the good progresses made before the pandemic to gradually transfer these women to a decent working environment.

It can be further analysed that the socioeconomic rights which are guaranteed under the constitution that gave ever Ethiopian to get an equal opportunity to improve their economic condition is violated during this pandemic. Since the pandemic forced many of the women to cease working and leave the economic opportunity which was created for them. It deprived and violated their opportunity in changing their economic and social conditions and impacted the path that the Woreda as well as the women build to the betterment of the standard of life in the informal sector.

Moreover, from the above information it can be analysed that woman providing care work and the additional burden of work, violated their working opportunity. The gendered perspective of work also deters them from participating in the economy in equal manner with others. Such situation intensified the status of women who do not have other means of income other than the informal sector. In other words, to the traditionally accepted role of women, the school closure had brought additional unpaid care work to the women in the informal sector and blocked their effort made to transfer to decent work. It is found to be a barrier to the progress that they started to formalize their sector. And also an obstacle to the progress women made to ensure their economic autonomy which is pivotal for the realization of their basic human rights.

Generally, including the pandemic effect in the study area, the coming of the pandemic reduced women economic participation throughout the country. For instance, if we take Ethiopia, according to the 2020 Global Gender Report Ethiopia achieved 56.8% or 125th place in economic opportunities. This rank reveals that despite all the efforts to lessen the gender gap, there still exists gender disparity and women are not provided with the fundamental economic opportunities.²⁶⁵ The occurrence of the pandemic also contributes to the wider gender gap in the country which ranked poorly in terms of gender equality and the promotion and implementation of human rights of women. Moreover, the economic crisis that the women in the informal sector suffer results in an impact on their household income, loss of economic opportunities and increased unpaid care works. The crisis also contributes to the changes in family structures as well as an increase in the number of female heads of household. The measures taken to eradicate the pandemic take the chance of many women from remaining and participating in the labour market.

2. Empowerment

*One of the key elements to a human rights-based approach is empowerment.*²⁶⁶ It is vital for the achievement of sustainable development. That is why women's equality and empowerment is considered as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²⁶⁷ As women constitute half of the world population, empowering women in all aspects of life is pivotal to the development of the country. Women's economic empowerment is the most important sphere of empowerment in the quest for gender equality and driving inclusive economic growth. It is also fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling them to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. Thus, along with women's rights to participate, empowerment is one of the components for the protection of the economic rights of women.

The government's agenda of formalizing the works of informal workers enhance women's empowerment. Engaging those women in the informal economy enables them to create saving, generate self-employment and helps them to earn their own or independent income. It further creates an opportunity for the women to participate in the economy equally with men and

²⁶⁵World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, In Sight Report, March 2021.

²⁶⁶<http://ennhri.org/about-nhris/human-rights-based-approach/>

²⁶⁷<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>

decreases women's dependency on men. This creates an income security for the women and supports them to ensure at least their essential human needs such as food, education, health care service which are essential for the protection of individual human rights.

In this research most of the respondents pointed out that being registered in one of the 5 types of informal sectors and being embraced under the on-going formalization process has created them favourable working condition. But most importantly it helps them, develop self-rule, freely and equally participate as well as become independent to cover expenses for purchasing food, buying medicines and meet other necessities in addition to paying water and electric bills. Some of the respondents stated that they started to have "*equib*" as well as engaged in saving and credit arrangements. Other respondents also explain that it is a good working opportunity for women to have a specified safe working place which empowers them to expand their economic activities in the spaces they already acquired.

But, since the coming of the pandemic as well as because of the stay home order, and the shift in government's attention eroded the empowering measures and women's economic opportunity and participation issues were relegated.²⁶⁸ Almost all the respondents indicated that because of the outbreak their current working situation put their basic human needs in question.

The participants further clarified that for a woman who lives in poverty and whose economic resources depend on the informal activities, dependency on others aid and debt become the only option to sustain their livelihoods. The reduction in low-income activities than the women used to conduct before the pandemic makes them vulnerable and give up on improving their working environment. The women are also put in a position to take loans from other individuals to sustain their lives and cope up to meet the essential expenses.

The research finds that most saving and credit institutions did not grant saving and credit opportunities for women in the informal sector, while they offer the opportunities to women in the formal sector. These scenario devoid women in the informal sector the chance to participate in work opportunities. But one of the prospects of women who are under this study and

²⁶⁸Interview during Group discussion with informal workers registered under Industry and Trade Office.(15,February 20201)

recognized by the Woreda is their being beneficiary from Addis Saving and Credit Association as indicated above under operational frame section. It is one of the means which empowers the women to make an effort to shift into decent work and join the formal economic activities. But because of COVID-19 women are forced to consume their saving in order to meet their basic socio-economic rights. In addition, they become unable to pay the credit they were granted from the association.

The other concern raised by women during interview was regarding “*equib*” which is one means of generating and saving money for most women engaged in the informal sector and utilised by many of them. The respondents explained that they have “*equib*” and save between 10-20 birr per day which assist them to cover their basic social rights, such as health emergency, pay for their debt (that they were provided as start-up capital at the beginning of their journey to decent work), buy food and mostly save for school needs. But with the coming of COVID-19 income of the women was reduced by half and they become unable to secure earnings. This situation has forced them to discontinue their saving or leave the “*equib*” and end upon searching for credit or help from their relatives, friends and other family members.²⁶⁹

Generally, even if all the debt that the women face because of COVID-19 are not human rights, the negative implications it brought and the effort that the women in the informal sector exert to pay their debt indirectly impact the exercise of their human rights. In addition, it affects their economic rights which are key for women’s empowerment and participation in the economy.

3. Non –Discrimination

Discriminating individuals from equally participating in the economy and shading empowerment mechanism, violates one of the core principles of human rights which is prohibition of discrimination on the enjoyment of human rights. The principle prohibits actions or measures that have the purpose or effect of hampering the equal enjoyment of rights by women. The loss of women’s economic opportunities combined with the additional unpaid care work and loss of income has intensified the inequality that was already in place even prior to the

²⁶⁹Interview with respondent 9 engaged in selling vegetables and registered under Trade and Industry Office.

pandemic and creates discrimination on economic participation. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic is making the effort to ensure equal responsibility regarding the family life more challenging. Women are facing more burdens in taking care of the family because of the intensified unpaid work as a result of the pandemic. The 2020 Global Gender Inequality Index is an evidence for the increased gender inequality in Ethiopia as it ranked 82nd across three dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status).²⁷⁰ The rank is the result of the pandemic as well as the response measures that took place to curb the pandemic. It covers the glimpse of achievements recorded on gender equality prior to it. Even if the pandemic indiscriminately impacts every individual and portion of the society, there are predictable groups of the society that are more vulnerable. The restrictions measure implemented to curb the pandemic affects differently and creates inequality on women in the informal sector and women with intersectional identity.

One of the respondents indicated that the discrimination that the pandemic posed on women is not comparable with men, particularly as it discriminates women with disability. She explained how the pandemic and the response measures in a different way affect women with disability as follows:

*My extended family member who earns a living by selling church materials (candles and tuafe) at a nearby church was unable to feed her family since churches were closed for a long time. Even after churches were reopened people barley buy from her. It is me and my husband sharing her from what we earn, which is even not sufficient for as well. And now she totally stopped vending and found herself in a huge debt.*²⁷¹

This information indicated that the government's response to the pandemic did not take into consideration segments of the society who are more vulnerable such as persons with disabilities. Even if women with intersectional identity are more vulnerable and need special protection of human rights during such outbreak, rather the response measure impacted them differently and creates discrimination.

²⁷⁰World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Reportsupra note 265.

²⁷¹Interview with respondent 17, engaged in selling simple electronics, Registered under Trade and Industry office(12,February ,20201)

Discrimination also took place on individuals during COVID-19 in a new and different way. During the onset of the pandemic in Addis Ababa, everyone was feeling unsafe for so many reasons. People fear the virus as well as the discrimination that they may face if they got infected. As it is stated in this research, the study area is the one identified place where a number of individuals were hit hard once, and the Sub-City Administration implemented a forced stay-at-home measure. The measures of the administration treated the inhabitants of the Woreda and their families differently and they were socially stigmatized and discriminated by residents from nearby area that were not under partial lock down.²⁷²In the context of the outbreak stigma lead to discrimination and ultimately results on economic loss.

This situation well expressed by the following participant as:

It is not because we are infected with the virus that we were stigmatized rather we live in the area where the partial lock down was implemented. Before the corona other than selling clothes in this shade I used to braid hair in hair salon and get an additional income. I used to make very good money from the braiding. Then during the partial lockdown in this area as everyone was forced to stay at home, I also stopped vending in the shade as well as stopped the braiding business. But after the stay home lighten and most selling continue as usual, I went to the prior place where I do the braiding. But the reply was what I did not totally expected. The women I used to work the braiding with, told me that her customers would feel less safe if I continue working at her place. Thus, she told me to stop coming and that I do not have that work anymore since I live in the area where people where infected and a stay home order took place. It was a good means of income for me and for my family and it was an opportunity to a better job for me.²⁷³

Similarly, another participant expressed the occurrence as follows:

After the partial lock down eased, I went to “Merkato” to buy things that I need to retail in my shade. And the person who used to provide me the necessity materials in a good price, send his employee to tell me that I am no longer allowed to buy from his shop since my area of residence was publicised and known that it was under a lock down for the increased number of COVID-19 infections in the area.²⁷⁴

During the FGD, in relation to the sigma and discrimination the women reflected as follow:

²⁷²Interview during Group discussion .supra note 251

²⁷³Interview with respondent 14engaged in selling cloths and registered under Job CreationOffice.(4,February 20201)

²⁷⁴Interview with respondent 12 engaged in selling vegetables “Gulit” and registered under Job creation Office.

Everything got worse after our area was singled out as most hit by the virus in Addis and the partial stay at home order notified in public. It posed a stigma on every one of us. The stigma and the discrimination did not stop on us, but it also extends and affects our family members. They were unable to move and work freely. For instance, the husbands of the two of us who worked in a factory (which is a well-known soft drinks factory around the study area) were reduced from their work on the mere ground of their being from the area where the virus most hit and stay home order was implemented. They both lost their jobs. They were discriminated by other workers of the factory. As my husband has lost of job, the income that we used to generate to our household lessens significantly. As the result we all became dependent on the little saving I made from vending²⁷⁵.

Generally, from the above reflections it is analysed that the pandemic together with the measures that have put in place not only resulted in the loss of economic opportunities but also brought negative treatments and social stigmatization that led to discrimination based on economic status of individuals. It created a discriminatory behaviour on the women social life which extended to their economic right to work freely and participate in a conducive working environment which is the main aspect to decent work or formalization .Generally the discrimination and the stigma posed a challenge on the women working environment .It also affect the factors which are found by the researcher essential for women to enjoy equally their economic rights .Thus, the outbreak turn out to be a means that intensified the existing gender inequality in the labour force.

D. Assessment of Essential Rights Related to Economic Rights of Women

As discussed in detail under the literature section, the realization of one right often depends wholly or in part upon the fulfilment of other rights. It means impact on the exercise of one right has direct effect on the enjoyment of other rights. For this, COVID-19 outbreak and its impact are an excellent \proof for the interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights. For instance, realization of economic rights makes things easier to exercise other rights such as the right to food, health, education, and above all life. Thus, the opportunity to earn a livelihood by work relates with necessities of life which are essential to exercise other rights.

²⁷⁵ Focus Group Discussion with informal workers, supra note 251.

1. Right to Food

As clearly established under human rights law principles, individuals should not have to choose between their basic human rights. For instance, it is intolerable that economic conditions would leave people having to choose between reducing foods intakes or having a home or accessing health care.²⁷⁶ But *to die from hunger or from the virus” is the all-too-real dilemma faced by many informal economy workers.*²⁷⁷ This situation well expressed by an old women participant as follows:

*Do you think it is easy to sit at home and see four of your kids looking for food? Being exposed to the virus was the last issue in my mind so I took the risk and was conducting the “gulit” work even during the time everyone was forced to stay at home for some time in this area. Even the civil authorities had forced me to respect the restriction measure and stay back at home. But I rejected their order and continued to go out for my shade.*²⁷⁸

Similarly, in connection with access to food, during individual and focus group discussion most of the respondents who have kids explained that the coming of the pandemic affected not only their livelihoods but also their children’s’ access to food. The respondents explicated that the school closure posed and exacerbated the problem that they were already facing because of the pandemic. It was from school feeding program that many of their children managed to have two meals a day. This is a good opportunity and helped for most mothers who earn only between 50 – 200 Birr per day from informal vending activities.

In relation to school colures during state of emergency and access to food to her children one respondent articulated the effect as follows:

The Introduction of school feeding is a relief not only for me but for most of us who are engaged in the informal sector. Our children eat their breakfast and lunch at schools, and it helps usnot to worry about what to feed them. But with the closure of schools this opportunity was gone. For instance at the time we were forced to stay at home for sometimes, I was forced to use all the saving that I had

²⁷⁶Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, ‘ COVID-19 Economy vs Human Rights: A Misleading Dichotomy,’ *Journal of Health and Human Rights* June 2020, <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2020/04/covid-19-economy-vs-human-rights-a-misleading-dichotomy/> accessed on February 16, 2021

²⁷⁷ILO, brief on COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy, May 2020,

²⁷⁸Interview with respondent 18, engaged in selling “Gulit” Registered under job creation(17,February 2021)

*to cover my food expenses.... I am very much happy that the schools are reopened, and I am relieved now.*²⁷⁹

Simply the results from the two narrations explains that any actions or deeds implemented without measuring the consequences and statuses of individuals economic activities or work situation, posed an impact on the protection of the right to food and access to adequate food. For instance, the discontinued school feeding programme on the onset of the pandemic affected not only the children access to food but also required the mothers for additional intake of food whereas their means of income was reduced .

2. Children's Access to Education

One of the rights which mainly impacted by the pandemic is the right to education. The pandemic revealed that the issue of education is not found in the same page to all and equally accessible. Following the school closure what was pioneered in the teaching and learning process was through online method. But the response created inequality between students those who learned in private and public schools as well as in rural and urban areas. Children who went to private schools only benefited from the virtual teaching system due to better resource and access to the internet. Such scenario affected access to education of a child and created inequality. Mostly, students in most public schools and rural settings have limited or no access to the virtual platform. As an illustration, many of the respondents' children in the study area goes to public schools which are not in a position to provide an online learning.

Regarding the situation one of the respondents illustrated the issue as follows:

*When school closed, I thought it was only the school feeding interruption that would impact me, but my 9-year-oldson repetitive question was different from my expectation. He was asking me every time why I was not going to his school and brought him teaching materials as well as why the school was not sending learning materials via my phone like two of his cousins. There was a clear concern and anxiety on my child as he was not benefiting from the online system the way his cousins had.*²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹Interview with respondent 11, engaged in selling drinks(bunnatetu) ,registered under Jon creation office(17,February 2021)

²⁸⁰Interview with respondent 14 engaged in selling simple electronics and registered under Job creationOffice(8,February 2021).

The above narration illustrated that the effect of the pandemic intensified and revealed the disparity that existed on the learning system and posed inequality on educational level of children. The violation it created on the education of a child even continued after schools were reopened after 10 months of closure. There is high percentage of dropouts of girl children as they become responsible to sustain families from post-pandemic economic crises. In relation to this impact the following case illustrates the situation in a better term:

Even if school reopened before a month, I am not still going to school, and I don't think I will be able to go this year. My elder sister who used to sell in this shade started working in a café to bring more money to our family. And if we do not use the shade the Woreda Administration would reclaim it. So, in order not to give back the shade to the Woreda, I quit going to school and started working in the shade. Everything started when my father was forced to stop working because of corona so we need more income for our family.²⁸¹

In similar vein, the above illustrated case of a girl(respondent13) who stopped schooling to continue her mother's informal vending also reveals how the right to education is interrelated and impacted by the loss of income or loss of economic opportunity.

3. Right to Health

The right to health is one of the essential human rights of women which is central for the exercise of other human rights. This right was primarily affected by the coming of the pandemic and creates a health problem without any distinction on the ground of sex. But in addition to the visible health impact, it brought in every individual, the health crises it posed on women, mainly those engaged in day-to-day activity very much differ. It causes physical and mental health problems on these groups of the community for two main reasons. First, their daily means of income activity disrupted. As a result of such occurrence, the woman generates a stress and anxiety.²⁸²They lost confidence on the sector and developed anxiety regarding their economic security. Second, in addition to fear of the virus, the social stigma and discrimination adverse

²⁸¹Interview with respondent 6 engaged in selling fast food “French Fries” and registered under Job Creation Office.(17,February 2021)

²⁸² Interview with respondent 14 engaged in selling simple electronics and registered under Job Creation Office.(4,February 2020)

effect on their economic opportunity generated a concern on the women.²⁸³ In light of this concern, one of the respondents said that:

I was mentally suffering, even afraid for long time to start my business again with the perception of peoples not buying from me and fear of stigma. Even my sister who was pregnant at the time of the partial lockdown rejected to go to a hospital and discontinue her monthly pregnancy check-up for consecutive three months.

Therefore, it can be analysed that the outbreak violated the right to health, which is stated under ICESCR, article 12 which affirms the rights of every member of human person to the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Its adverse effect reflected on the women opportunity to work and continue participating in the economy.

4. The Right to Social Protection

The principle is that social protection should be applied for all without any discrimination based on type work or engagement of an individual. Any social protection scheme must recognize workers in the informal sector and benefit them equally mainly in time of unexpected event like COVID-19.

Following the outbreak, the government was broadcasting through all medias that relief measures and aids were provided to the most in need. Particularly there were announcement regarding the government support to the areas where a stay –at-home order was in place. For instance, Lideta Sub-City Woreda03, was one of the area were social protection was provided²⁸⁴ Similarly during interview, the woreda officials assured what the government was announcing in media and indicated that they were distributing aids to the list economically vulnerable and economically impacted by the pandemic. But to the contrary, most of the respondents indicated that they did not receive any relief measures. And few respondents pointed out that the Woreda administration provided aid during the lock down but the distribution of the aid was unfair and created inequality. Further they indicated that the administration was selecting and providing not to the most vulnerable, rather it reached for small number of households who were not even in

²⁸³Interview during Group discussion with informal workers, supra note 264

²⁸⁴Interview with Mulualem Asefa, Public relation Officer at Woreda03 Communications at Woreda and secondary documents obtained from various broadcasting reports regarding the aid.

need of immediate assistance. This statement further elaborated by the words of the following respondents as follow:

To obtain an aid, we were registered by the administration and categorized under poorest of the poor and those better than the poor category. But after some days we noticed that unfairly food and sanitary materials were provided to selected households who did not even acquire an ID and not registered by the Woreda as an informal worker. But when we requested for an aid, the woreda administration told us that those of us with an ID (referring to informal workers with Badges) are not eligible to obtain a social protection .We were considered as groups who has a business and can survive the pandemic.²⁸⁵

The above information revealed that the government is obliged to protect its people's right by providing a social protection scheme during such pandemic time without any discrimination on the ground of work type. But the outbreak become a means for violating the principle of equality to social protection and created discrimination. It's analysed that the scheme did not targeted social assistance benefit mainly for the women in the informal sector who experiences a particular risk or contingency as a result of the pandemic.

5. Right to Movement

During the state of emergency one of the measures taken to curb the spread of the virus was restriction of movement among regions in addition to the international flights restrictions. The travel restriction forced many traders to interrupt their businesses. Such scenario goes under and affects those small vendors engaged in the informal sector. In the study area one of the activities conducted by the informal vendors is selling of second-hand clothes. In the field work it was observed that most of the vendors sell second-hand clothes for cheap prices. These people were affected by travel restrictions that took place during the state of emergency. As most of the peoples' daily livelihoods depend mainly on imported second-hand clothes from abroad. This restriction of movement and its impact on work opportunity of the informal workers is further detailed by a participant as follows:

²⁸⁵Interview during Focus Group Discussions with informal workers, supra note 251.

*I am the only bread winner of the family. As you see I am selling second-hand clothes for the last two years. Since COVID-19 has occurred my work badly diminished. I don't know why, since this pandemic happened Second hand-clothes are not available on sale that much as before. Also, the desire on the part of the public to buy second-hand clothes has significantly reduced. This is due to the allegations that the clothes are collected from dead bodies of individuals who died due to COVID-19 in different part of the world and imported to Ethiopia. Even after the restriction of movement is over, such clothes are not that much available as before and the number of days that I start to go home with an empty hands is increasing.*²⁸⁶

From the narration it can be analysed that the restriction on movement during the pandemic created an economic crisis and reduced the working opportunity and continuity of informal workers engaged in selling second-hand clothes. Thus, the right to movement adverse effect on the women economic participation and opportunity to continue the vending reflected evidently.

6. Access to water and right to sanitation

Sanitation along with access to water is a human right. One of the means advised by WHO, to tackle the spread of the virus is washing hands frequently with a water by using soap or a sanitizer to keep personal hygiene during the pandemic. In a country like Ethiopia, particularly where people live in inner areas similar to where the research is conducted, right to accessing adequate water and affording for hygiene keeping materials falls under question. Most of the people in Addis Ababa did not get safe drinking water frequently and the rest struggle with interruption in access to water. Besides the accessibility of sufficient safe water, affordability of sanitation materials creates discrimination. Acquiring hygienic materials and access to sanitation facilities like sanitizer for those women engaged in the informal sector and whose income

²⁸⁶Interview with respondent 15 engaged in selling second hand clothes and registered under Job Creation Office.(8,February 20201)

reduced because of the pandemic, is the least they demand during the outbreak. The situation was further elaborated by one respondent as follows:

Even if we are aware about washing hand with soap and alcohol minimize the risk of the virus transmission ,how can I afford a sanitizer for my family with the daily and reduced income that I earn .Serving such sanitary materials for my families is not my priority rather its feeding them that worries me the most. It had been said that the government was providing such sanitary materials to the poor who cannot afford, but we saw nothing from the government side²⁸⁷.

From the above data it can be analysed that the adverse effect of the pandemic on the economy of the women, even extended and exposed the living situation and paying ability of those women engaged in the informal sector. The outbreak intensified the already downgraded work of the women and put them in a position not even able to afford for hygiene keeping materials like other groups of the society.

Findings

Generally, the paper finds that the pandemic and the specific response measure that implemented in the area provoke the already vulnerable type of informal work operated mostly by women in the study area. And specifically: -

- The implementation of the response measures on the limited working hours exacerbated the pre-existing informal situation of the women. In the first place, placing a boundary or a time limit on their work is a violation to the right to work and it has a negative impact on their economic rights.
- The pandemic is found as an obstacle to the road that women were taking to formalization. Their process of expanding and growing their informal work to a better decent work impacted.
- Participation and opportunities are identified as main factors for the realization of economic rights of women, particularly found on paving the way for the women to decent work conditions and formalization in the study area. But it is found that because of the pandemic and the measures, the women effort to equally participate and utilize their work opportunity affected by the outbreak.

²⁸⁷ Ibid

- The loss of women's economic opportunities and participation resulted on loss of work, income and interest of working as well as increased the unpaid care work . Consequently, it intensified the inequality that was already in place even prior to the pandemic and created discrimination on economic participation of the women.
- The pandemic effect on the women working environment mainly violates their means of empowerments and situations which boost and empowered women's to participate in the labour force. For those women who live in poverty and whose economic resources depend on the daily informal activities, the pandemic effect on their economic empowerment , results on lose of courage to improve their working environment. Thus, they started to depend on others aid, took a loan and debt become the only option to sustain their livelihoods as well as to guarantee their basic human rights.
- The measures taken by the Woreda to the pandemic did not put the fundamental human rights of the informal workers at the centre of the response. It did not consider the situation of the women engaged in the informal sector and the type of work they operate can easily be violated with such restrictions. The negative effect of the pandemic on the economic rights of the women adversely impacted basic human rights of the women including their right to food, access to education, health, social protection, water and sanitation.
- It also found that the level of social protection provided to the women in the informal sector has been neither sufficient nor fairly allocated and reached the poor women engaged in the informal sector.
- At this time, control measures are lifted, and the pandemic seems ease in the eye of the society, but the crises it caused continues to be faced by informal workers, particularly women whose economic rights are in inequality even prior to the pandemic. On top, their current working situation continues to put their basic human needs which are pivotal for the exercise of their essential human rights in question.

CHAPTER FIVE

A. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Conclusion

The research indicates that the unexpected incidence of COVID-19 is a triggering factor that pulled back already existing initiations regarding women human right protection and activities that were taking place in a structural manner to bring gender equality in all spheres of women's life. It discusses how the pandemic affects the economic rights of women by designating women in the informal sector. It also discusses about the protective measures implemented by the government in general and the stay-at-home measure adopted in the study area in specific and its implications on ensuring the economic rights of women in the informal sector.

The doctrinal review indicates in general the international standards that embody fundamental human rights alternatively, are to be enjoyed by people whether they work in the formal or informal sector without any discrimination. In order to explain the pandemic's varying effects on women, the research focuses on selected specific rights of women most impacted because of the pandemic. Thus, the research reveals that the crisis has intensified the already existing gender inequalities and violates rights that are specific to women.

The study has also analysed the impact of the restrictive measures taken by the government has differently impacted women engaged in the informal sector. The particular lockdown measure implemented in the study area lack considering the rights of vulnerable women and posed a discrimination and inequality on the protection and exercise of their basic rights to survival. The study reveals that the pandemic along with the response affected their economic rights, mainly their work opportunity, participation, and how it creates discrimination.

The research in its empirical evidence identifies the informal sector's progress toward formalization. The study found out that informal vending and being embraced by the process of formalization, economically and socially created an opportunity for the women to equally participate in work and served to achieve a decent work as well as a means to improve their livelihood. To this end, it is revealed that the pandemic with the stay-home order retreats the already started good initiations of the government as well as the women in the informal sector to

decent work or formalization. The research concludes that work opportunities and the means of empowerment that are pivotal to transit women to decent work are violated. Finally, the measures resulted in the interruption of their vending, income reduction, economic dependency, increase in unpaid care work, and most of all inability to meet their basic needs such as food, health, cloth, education which are objects of human rights. Thus, it concludes that because of the pandemic women's opportunities to work in a safe working condition and sustaining their economic and social condition are violated.

In the study, it has been shown that human rights are interrelated and the realization of the economic rights of women is essential to make things easier for the exercise other human rights. And the study indicates how the pandemic's effect on the economic rights of women negatively affected other human rights such as the right to food, health, education, water, social protection, etc. In other words, the stay-at-home order and interruptions of women's informal working put them in economic crises and made them incapable of saving money. The outcome of such incidence is affecting their socio-economic rights, which are interdependent with other human basic survival rights. Thus based on the results of the study, it is concluded that any impact on the economic right, particularly the right to work freely and earn a livelihood, brings an effect on the protection of other rights.

It is concluded that the partial lockdown did not take into consideration those women engaged in the informal sector and the type of work they operate can easily be violated with such restrictions. It is shown in the study that those women and their families' survival mainly depends on a daily income or informal works. In other words, it can be concluded that the measures taken by the administration did not take into consideration that the human rights of the informal workers could be impacted at the centre of the response or lack in compromising the lives of the individuals.

The data from informants show that the specific measure taken by the administration specifically creates stigmatization that led to discrimination against women in the area. And it is concluded that the pandemic combined with the measures affected not only economic opportunities, the process to formalization or means of women empowerment but also the social life of the women which extended to their economic right to work freely and participate in a conducive working environment which is the main aspect to decent work or formalization. It is

also shown in the study that the pandemic has resulted in creating stress and a problem in the women's emotional health as well as they lose confidence in the sector they are engaged.

The research reveals that the social protection measures that were provided to individuals as immediate relief to tackle COVID-19 do not make women beneficiaries of the social protection response as it was publicized by the government. Rather, it identified that the adopted social protection responses were unfairly allocated and reached to those who were not economically impacted because of the pandemic in the study area .

2. Recommendations

In accordance with the result of the study, the subsequent lists of recommendation are the following:

In general, the government indicate or identify those human rights are to be enjoyed by people whether they work in formal or informal settings. It also must identify or conduct pandemic impact assessment which target the women in the informal sector and who are more prone to the impacts. The government is also expected to take into consideration and generate an approach that at least can help women to manage the pandemic's impact. It is also important to set an approach that is gender-inclusive and responsive to the needs of women during and after such incidence or any other unprecedented events.

In particular, the right of informal workers who are not most of the time recognized with social protection or safety nets needs equal protection. In times of such pandemic or any national disaster, informal workers are recognized after other segments of the society are served. Thus, rather than trying to work and fix at the time of the crisis, the government should devise a program that embraces and protects the interests of those engaged in the informal sectors for survival. Moreover, the government is obliged to come up with policies that expand job opportunities through different programmes and projects for informal worker and poor women that are more prone to social problems.

So as to continue the process of formalization and progress of decent work that was taking place before the outbreak, the government should empower the women whose informal businesses are affected by COVID-19 by providing the necessary technical and financial stimulus packages. In

other words, the government should create a mode that brings back women to the previous position, so that they can make an effort and be in the process of formalization by taking into account the identified impacts of the pandemic including loss of job, closures of businesses, discontinuing of saving/*equib*, increase in unpaid care work, loss of interest in continuing the informal trade and dependency which are alarming concern identified through the analysis that intensified the economic and the social inequality and leads women to poverty.

The government should stretch a new reform system and advance mechanisms that can provide the women a working opportunity and empower them again till their economic crisis addressed and rights that are abused because of their economic rights restored over again. For instance, the administration in collaboration with the loan and credit association can reduce and provide them with interest-free loans until the women can manage their businesses again.

The pandemic is a great lesson to the world, and it revealed that the most vulnerable in the normal time become more vulnerable, particularly women engaged in low-income activities. This situation opens the door for the government and other organizations working on the protection and promotion of women's economic rights to plan and extend their preparation in relation to unexpected events. In other words, every effort made by the government regarding women's rights should consider those who are more vulnerable and those with intersectional identities. The government should also strengthen and prepare its risk management and preponderance mechanism to be viewed through gender lens or policymakers to moderate their suggestion in more targeted and gender sensitive way. In so doing, all the recovery policies or plans must be enacted or arranged in a hierarchal order. The women who are more vulnerable even during normal times must be at the top of the policy agenda. Generally, the government must assess the differential effects of the pandemic on women and come up with measures that are women-centred and protect their economic rights.

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Interviews

Interview with 20 respondents (women) engaged in one of the 5 type of informal works in the study area.

Interview with 2 of the Coordinator of Informal sector works at,Lideta sub city Woreda 03 from Trade and Industry Office and Urban Job Creation and Food Security Office

Interview with 6 experts of Informal sector works at,Lideta sub city Woreda 03 from Trade and Industry Office and Urban Job Creation and Food Security Office

Two focus group discussions withwomen engaged in one outof the 5 type of informal works in the study area.

Annexes

Annexes I

Instructions Provided to the Interviewees

- a) Name is not a mandatory to tell or confidentiality is well respected.
- b) You have the right not to answer to any of the questions that you do not want to respond
- c) If you don't feel like to continue you can withdraw at any moment from the interview or the discussion.
- d) All the information will be confidential and only be used for the research propose

Personal Information of the Respondents

1. Age
2. Marital statues
3. Level of Education
4. What is your relation to the household(Head, Mother, Daughter)
5. For how long you are living in this area.
6. House of composition
 - a. Do you live alone?
 - b. How many people are living with you at home?
 - c. Do you have any children?
 - d. Are there any elderly people at home? Any dependents?

Interview Questions for Women in the Informal Sector

- **Questions for both Offices (Trade and Industry Office and Urban Job Creation and Food Security Office)**

1. What types of informal sectors are you engaged in currently?
2. What are your reasons for joining the informal sector?
3. What was your engagement for living before entering into the informal sector?
4. How long do you stay in this work?

5. What was your start-up source for this business?
6. What is the advantage that you get by registering and recognized by the administration as an informal vendor? Does it create any economic opportunity for you?
7. What is your viewpoint regarding the outbreak on the informal sectors? And how do you compare the outbreak impacts with other sectors conducted around here?
8. What is your general average monthly household income before covid 19? And What's the average monthly household income after COVID-19? How do u describe its effects on your earning?
9. What was your average income that you earn particularly from the informal vending before COVID-19? And how much do you earn during COVID-19? How does u describe its effect?
10. Do you have saving? How much saving do you have before the pandemic? And how it is affected by the pandemic?
11. Is there any other means of income you have other than the informal vending?
12. Is there social protection grants or in-kind support from the government that you received during the pandemics? Describe if any
13. How does COVID-19 affect yours and your family's work?
14. What were the difficulties that you and your family members faced during COVID-19 with regard to your economy? Describe
15. Is there any member of your family that lost a job/faced an income or saving reduction due to the pandemic?
16. Does the pandemic create discrimination or inequality on your economic activity?
17. Did the pandemic force you to fall back onto familial and other social support networks? What were the measures you took?
18. What challenges you faced due to the measures taken to lessen the COVID-19 impacts? And how does the specific stay home order that took place in your living area affect you differently?

19. How long did you stay at home because of the specific stay home order that took place in your area?

20. What was the problem that you faced because of closure of school? And problems that your child faced during closure of school?

21. Is there any task/activity that you used to do before COVID-19? And whether the amount of time that you spend on these activities has changed since the onset of COVID-19?

22. How does COVID-19 impacted your daily meal?

23. How does Covid 19 affected yours and your family's health?

24. Is there any case of incidence of GBV, on experiences of someone you know during the pandemic?

25. How do u describe the living condition of the area in relation with access to water, access to sanitation, sufficient living area?

26. What mechanism did you implement to face the outbreak of COVID-19, even after reopening your workplace?

Questions for the Focus Group Discussion

1. What is the advantage of being recognized by the administrative office as informal sectors?
2. In what way the pandemic affected you and your family?
3. How do you explain the effect of the pandemic on your work generally?
4. How does the specific stay home order that took place in your area only affect you?
5. How does the pandemic
6. What was the response of the administrative office to aid women engaged in the Informal sector, particularly during the specific lockdown order?
7. How do you describe the effect of the pandemic after you reopened your working places?
8. Is there any support from the side of the Woreda that helped you to revive your work after you reopened your working place?

Annexes II

II. Interview Questions for Responsible Administrative Officials Questions for Trade and Industry Office as well as Urban job creation and food office

-Name of the respondent:

-Work Position:

1. What are the process that the informal workers should pass through to be recognized by the Woreda?
2. What is the role of your sector with regards to informal sectors registered under your office?
3. How do the informal sectors that are allowed to operate in this area?
4. What is the ultimate goal of your office regarding the informal workers? How does your office support the women in the informal sector?
5. What kind of support does your office provides to the informal workers?
6. How do you explain the overall socio- economic contribution of informal sectors to the economy?
7. What are the problems that informal sectors faced during COVID-19? In particular women identified under your office as informal workers.
8. How do you explain the particular lockdown that took place in this area?
9. What was the Woreda's immediate response to COVID-19? And what was your response to the partial lockdown that took place in a specific place of the Woreda?
10. Was there a different mechanism that your office implemented to support women engaged in the informal sector during the partial lockdown?