

**Women's Decision-Making Rights in the Household: A Case
Study on Awra Amba Community in Fogera Woreda**

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Center for Human Rights**

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Degree
of Master of Arts in Human Rights at the Center for Human
Rights, Addis Ababa University

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College of Law and Governance Studies
Center for Human Rights

January 2015

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES
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Declaration

I, Solomon Ambawu, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been fully acknowledged.

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Acknowledgment

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Meron Zeleke for her scholarly and constructive comments as well as her uninterrupted inputs. Without her reliable cooperation, the study would not have been in effect.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Amon Bekele, Wondirad Asmamaw and Yeshiwas Ebabu in helping me through the editorial work. I am also more than indebted to all the informants of the study community for their cooperation and valuable information for the completion of this project. I am very grateful to Awra Amban community tour guide Asnakachew Hafiz for his cooperation. My appreciation also goes to my friend Zelalem Lisanu who helped me gather data in the field from the beginning up to the end.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my mother Teyeku Bogale for her support and encouragement throughout my life.

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Definitions of Local Terms

Alfeter: *is Islamic religious festival celebrated by Muslims throughout the world that marks the end of Romadan.*

Arba: *is a commemoration of a dead person via providing a food for beggars after 40 days funeral ceremony which is performing by Ethiopian Orthodox Christian believers.*

Enjera: *is a sourdough-risen flatbread with a unique, slightly spongy texture, traditionally made out of teff flour.*

Gotoch: *are sub-administrative unit of kebele in Ethiopia/neighboring villages.*

Kebele: *is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia.*

Semania: *is a commemoration of a dead person via providing a food for beggars after 80 days funeral ceremony which is performing by Ethiopian Orthodox Christian believers.*

Teff: *is an annual grass, a species of lovegrass native to the northern Ethiopian highlands.*

Woreda: *is the third-level administrative division of Ethiopia*

Acronyms

ACHPR- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

ACRWC- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AU- African Union

CAT- Convention against Torture

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women

CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRPD- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSA- Central Statistical Agency

DEVAW- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

DHS- Demographic and Health Surveys

EC- Ethiopian Calendar

EDHS- Ethiopian Demographic and Health Surveys

ETB- Ethiopian Birr

FDRE- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

GC- Gregorian Calendar

GIS- Geographical Information System

HIV- Human Immune Virus

HPR- House of Peoples Representatives

ICCPR- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICERD- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ICESCR- International Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights

ICPD- International Conference on Population and Development

ILO- International Labour Organization

IMF- International Monetary Fund

IPPF- International Planned Parenthood Federation

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

MDG- Millennium Development Goals

OAU- Organization of African Unity

ORDA- Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara

SIDA- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

UDHR- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN- United Nations

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund

USAID- United States Agency for International Development

WHO- World Health Organization

Abstract

The study was conducted with the objective of assessing the extent of women's decision-making power at a household level in a rural community. The research was conducted in Amhara Regional State, Fogera woreda, specifically on the Awra Amba community. As a way of addressing this general objective, the study has looked into decision-making on reproductive rights, sexual rights, mobility, the right to access health care services and financial matters. The study henceforth revealed the existence of gender equality at the household, particularly when it comes to decision-making participation. Both husband and wife have equal rights as they jointly shared household decision-making power. There is no exclusive power either for the husband or wife to decide on household matters on his/her own. Most couples mutually decide on those issues based on negotiation and discussion. This study has mainly employed qualitative research method and has utilized both primary and secondary sources of data.

Key words: *Women's Decision-making Rights, Reproductive Rights, Sexual Rights, Sexuality, Freedom of Movement, the Right to Accessing Health-care Services, Economic Decision-making Rights and Awra Amba Community.*

Chapter One

1.1. Background of the Study

Women constitute a little over half of the world's population.¹ In Ethiopia women constitute up-to 49.5% of the total population.² In the study region, the Amhara National Regional State, women constitute 49.8% of the total population.³ Despite this fact, most women are not economically active like their men-counterparts and often they are assigned to perform activities at the domestic spheres and 'unpaid family care responsibilities'.⁴ In circumstance where women are engaged in the public spheres, they earn lower salary compared to men in most countries.⁵ According to ILO, "Gender wage differentials may be due to a variety of factors, including crowding of women in low paying industries and differences in skills and work experience, but may also be the result of discrimination".⁶

In addition, in male dominated society, some people believe that women's participation in the public spheres may bring infidelity.⁷ As such, the vast majority of women are denied their fundamental rights among others; the right to inheritance, political participation, decision-making rights, economic rights and others related to land because of their low status in the societal structure.⁸

¹ IMF (2013): "Women, Work and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity": Strategy, Policy and Review Department and Fiscal Affairs Department, p.4: Accessed from: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2013/sdn1310.pdf>, November 28, 2014.

² FDRE Population Census Commission (2008): *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex*: Addis Ababa, p.22.

³ *Ibid*

⁴ ILO (2009): "Global Employment Trends for Women: March 2009": Geneva, Switzerland, p.10: Accessed from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_103456.pdf, November 28, 2014.

⁵ UN (2010): *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs: New York, p.96.

⁶ See, ILO... supra note 4, p.6.

⁷ World Bank (2012): *East Asia and Pacific Regional Report: Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific: A Companion to the World Development Report*: Washington DC, p.1.

⁸ *Ibid*

Moreover, culture and social norms produce the notion of gender, which is different from the biological sense of sex.⁹ Culturally speaking, gender provides certain roles and behaviors in a society. Accordingly, men often get such rights of being aggressive, hard-hitting, risk taker and having multiple sexual partners. On the other hand, women are often expected to be submissive, soft and emotional.¹⁰

As per classical sociological perspective men have been accorded with the managerial, instrumental and decision-making power at the household and public affairs while women are expected to administer and fulfill maintenance tasks, “expressive roles, taking care of the home and emotional life”.¹¹ In other words, many women are socially and culturally discriminated from major tasks affecting their lives. This may hinder them to promote and protect their equality with men affecting their human and economic well-being. In the patriarchal social organization, the role of women is not considered as such significant and decisive in the domestic as well as public spheres, especially when it comes to decision-making.¹² From a human rights perspective, such discriminatory practice and tradition gravely violates and negatively affects women’s fundamental rights, most importantly their right to participation in economic, social and political arenas.

As Karla (1995) cited in Shahnaj argues, women’s participation in household decision-making is restricted not only at the age of maturity but also since the age of infancy.¹³ As a result of such male dominated and women unfriendly cultural norms and values, a

⁹ Ruth A. Wienclaw (2011): “Gender Difference: Biology and Culture” in Salem Press (ed) (2011): *Gender Roles and Equality: Sociology Reference Guide*: Published by Salem Press, First edition, California and New Jersey, p.15-16.

¹⁰ WHO (2009): “Promoting Gender Equality to Prevent Violence against Women”: Genève, Switzerland, p.3: Accessed from: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/gender.pdf, November 10, 2013.

¹¹ Simone, I. Flynn (2011): “Family Gender Roles” in Salem Press (ed) (2011): *Family Gender Roles: Sociology Reference Guide: Gender Roles and Equality*: First edition, Published by Salem Press, California and New Jersey, p. 65.

¹² Muzamil Jan and Shubeana Akhtar (2008): “An Analysis of Decision-Making Power among Married and Unmarried Women”: India, p.43-44: Accessed from: <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/S-HCS/HCS-02-0-000-08-Web/HCS-02-1-001-08-Abst-Text/HCS-02-1-043-08-036-Jan-M/HCS-02-1-043-08-036-Jan-M-Tt.pdf>, November 10, 2013.

¹³ Shahnaj Parveen: “Rural Women’s Participation in Household Decision-Making”: Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, p.1: Accessed from: <http://www.geocities.ws/shahnaj1969/HouseholdDM.pdf>, November 10, 2013.

woman may develop a sense of marginalization and powerlessness.¹⁴ Therefore, women are in one way or the other deprived of their decision-making power both within the family and the society due to women unfriendly cultures.¹⁵

For this reason, women in the 18th and 19th century started significant movement towards gender equality, including empowering themselves and recognizing fundamental rights of women.¹⁶ Their movement comprised critical issues like political participation including the right to elect and be elected.¹⁷ In the same vein, modern feminist movement raised different questions which were not the agenda of prior feminist movements- as a way of addressing the gender disparities *inter-alia* the right to education, ‘wage disparity’, equal economic opportunities and reproductive rights.¹⁸ Actually, women movements aimed at disestablishing those traditional values, cultural settings and ‘religious patriarchy’¹⁹ that are hindering the equality, dignity and status of women in all parts of the world started to spring.

Like other societies in developing states’, many traditional societies in Africa are ‘patriarchal’,²⁰ and they have cultural norms, values and religious teachings, which endorse hierarchical relationship between men and women.²¹ In this arrangement, women

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ Carolyn Sprague (2011): *The Women’s Rights Movement: Sociology Reference Guide: Gender Roles and Equality*: First edition, the Editors of Salem Press, California and New Jersey, p.5-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ Religious patriarchy means the hierarchical relationship between men and women in a religious structure. Some religious institutions recognized the authority of men over women in different respects, for example, in Catholic and Orthodox Christianity women lack leadership role, priesthood, the authority to be bishop and so on. Besides, like Orthodox Christianity, in Islamic religion women have not authority to command their husbands rather they simply obey. Women also have not power to control their fertility because of religious teachings.

²⁰ It is often discussed based on empirical studies that, several patriarchal social organizations, particularly in traditional societies promote the interest of men in relation to the social, cultural, political and economic arenas. It also provides authority, leadership role and decision-making power for male gender. On the other hand, women are expected to respect and obey what husbands say. This ideology either directly or indirectly calls the violation of women’s fundamental rights, unless they get leadership role, decision-making participation and other issues that can be affecting their well-being. But it does not mean that all patriarchal societal structures are unfriendly for the protection of women’s rights.

²¹ Kimanj Njogu and Elizabeth Orchardson-Mazni: “Gender Inequality and Women’s Rights in the Great Lakes: Can Culture Contribute to Women’s Empowerment?” p.59: Accessed from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SHS/pdf/Culture-Womens-Empowerment.pdf>, November 10, 2013.

mostly occupy the subordinate position where as men are the dominant ones.²² Mostly, the system also allows men to be the head of the household whereas women often are reduced to the role of being housewives. In this regard, husbands or men have recognized power over wives or women.²³

Additionally, most men have decision-making power in the domestic as well as public arenas.²⁴ Domestically men pass decision in relation to reproductions or family planning, household consumption, child rearing, sexuality and division of labor. Consequently, those traditional values in Africa adversely affect the well-being and moral as well as legal status of most women.²⁵ As per radical feminists, “patriarchy was the power of men that oppressed women and was responsible for their unhappiness. Radical feminists reasoned that, the demise of patriarchy would bring about women’s fulfillment and allow them to become whole”.²⁶

1.2. Statement of the Problem

As prior studies conducted in different parts of Ethiopia assert, most women in Ethiopia in monogamous and polygamous families are alienated from household decision-making power.²⁷ They rather traditionally engaged with domestic activities like child bearing, child rearing, fetching water, collecting fuel wood and preparing food, taking care of the elderly and sick.²⁸ For instance, less than 25% of women have decision-making power on

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ Mary Kassian (2005): *Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture*: Crossway Book, USA, p.27; Nina Katrin (2009): “Patriarchy and the Subordination of Women: From a Radical Feminist Point of view”, p.9: Accessed from: http://skemman.is/stream/get/1946/3017/9955/1/Nina_Katrin_Johannasdottir_fixed.pdf, November 28, 2014.

²⁷ Hirut Terefe (2002):“Violence against Women from Gender and Cultural Perspectives” in Panos Ethiopia (ed) (2002): *Reflections: Documentation of Panos Ethiopia's Forum on Gender*: Master Printing Press, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Meron Zeleke (2005): *The Socio-Economic Role and Status of Gumuz Women*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Social Anthropology, MA Thesis, p.68.

²⁸ Jelaludin Ahmed, *et.al* (2001): “Gender Issues, Population and Development in Ethiopia”: Central Statistic Agency, Addis Ababa, Rome, p.2: Accessed from: http://www.irpps.cnr.it/etiopia/pdf/Gender_Issues_Population_and_Development.PDF, December 20, 2013.

reproductive rights or family planning.²⁹ This shows that the majority of women in Ethiopia lack decision-making rights on the use of contraceptive.

Women's restriction on controlling their fertility or family planning resulted in negative effects on their health and education. Most of the time reproductive burdens such as child bearing and child rearing are responsibilities of women.³⁰ As a result, maternal mortality is high in the world and particularly in developing countries. Sub-Sahara African countries rate badly in this respect due to HIV/AIDS, poor quality of reproductive health care services, inadequate family planning and pregnancy complications.³¹ In Ethiopia maternal mortality rate is very high among other developing nations, in this regard "the maternal mortality ratio, was measured at 871 maternal death per 100,000 live birth in 2000 and fell to 676 in 2011".³²

Furthermore, most women are not given the right to decide on their own sexuality.³³ This is even worse when they are unable to decide by themselves on having sexual intercourse with their husbands particularly in circumstances where they suspect husbands have sexually transmitted disease, when they are tired of household activities and when they lack the interest.³⁴ However, husbands may forcefully rape their wives. This is otherwise known as marital rape. Marital rape is considered as a violation of the basic human rights of women.³⁵

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.12.

³⁰ Ethiopian Society of Population Studies (2008): *Gender Inequalities and Women's Empowerment: In-depth Analysis of the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey 2005*: Addis Ababa, p.29.

³¹ WHO (2010): "Trends in Maternal Mortality:1990-2008": Geneva, Switzerland: Accessed from: https://www.google.com.et/search?hl=en&noj=1&q=WHO+2008+maternal+mortality+report&oq=WHO+2008+maternal+mortality+report&gs_l=serp.3..0i22i30.1845063.1884789.0.1885709.45.44.1.0.0.0.819.11504.11j7j10j10j2j1j3.44.0.ekp%2Ckps%3D1000...0...1.1.32.serp..14.31.6070.ugZZojs7Bc, December 20, 2013.

³² UNICEF (2012): *Investing in Boys and Girls in Ethiopia: Past, Present and Future*: Printed in Ethiopia, p.35-36.

³³ See, Jelaludin Ahmed... supra note 28, p.12.

³⁴ See, Ethiopian Society of Population Studies... supra note 30, p.18; Andrienne Rich (1986): "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (ed) (2007): *Culture, Society and Sexuality*: Second edition, Rutledge, London and New York, p.210.

³⁵ See, DEVAW General Assembly Resolution 48/104 of December 1993, p.115 and 117.

Besides, most rural women have restricted decision-making power related with taking care of their own health and visiting one's own family or relatives.³⁶ For example, only 16% of rural area women can independently decide on their own health care and 8% of women have autonomy to visit their families and friends.³⁷

Additionally, most women are discriminated from economic decision-making participation in the areas of large household purchase, land and land related issues. Although, nearly 50 % of women autonomously decide on household daily needs only 10% of women have final say on 'large household purchases'.³⁸ According to, Almaz most women are not autonomous to make decision on land and land related issues including what needs to be sold among grown crops, what kind of crops to be cultivated and how to control and manage household income.³⁹ In general, most women have no or have limited rights to independently decide by themselves on major household purchases and the use and transfer of land.

The situation in the Amhara National Regional State is not exceptional. The majority of women in Amhara region are suffering from marginalization, stereotype and gender based violence.⁴⁰ Like other Ethiopian women, most women in Amhara region have low status and inferior position in the social structure.⁴¹ Women's low status in the society constrained them from participating at major household decision-making. On the contrary, on specific issues women are allowed to decide independently i.e. on common household issues including small household purchases and household daily consumption etc.⁴²

³⁶ See, Jelaludin Ahmed... supra note 28, p.40; Ramzi Mabsout (2009): *Capability and Health Functioning in Ethiopian Households*: Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, p.15.

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Ramzi Mabsout (2009): *Capability and Health Functioning in Ethiopian Households*: Reabound University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, p.35. Large household purchase means expenditure to buy expensive items or goods among others, land, cattle, house and productive materials.

³⁹ Almaz Woldetensay (2007): *Women's Access to and Control over Land in the Current Land Administration System in the Two Rural Kebeles in Ada'a Woreda of Oromia Region*: Addis Ababa University, Institutes of Gender Studies, MA Thesis, p.80.

⁴⁰ Askale Teklu (2005): *Land Registration and Women's Land Rights in Amhara Region*: Research Report 4 Ethiopia, Russell Press, Nottingham, UK, p.9.

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² *Ibid*

The Awra Amba community is one of the villages located in Weji-Arba Amba *Kebele* of Fogera district. It is an emerging community built on humanist value.⁴³ It has different values and philosophies. “The community is founded on values such as honesty, equality, solidarity, rationalism-which include gender equality, respect of children, the elderly, work, peace and harmony”.⁴⁴ The community also widely promotes non-sexual division of labour in which, male engages in tasks assigned for women in neighboring societies such as baking *enjera*, cooking and taking care of child while women engages in tasks assigned for men such as plowing, milling and harvesting. Moreover, they are not affiliated to any of the universal religions while believing in the existence of one supernatural force.⁴⁵ They engage in work throughout the whole week except Sunday.

As a result of their different social values and norms from other societies of the Amhara region in general and their neighboring societies in particular, the community has attracted the attention of researchers from different academic disciplines. Among others, Mulat Asnake (2005) investigated the masculine gender identity construction of Awra Amba community. Solomon Atnafu (2005) addressed the changes of gender roles and the creation of new culture by Awra Amban community, in his anthropological study. Moreover, Abebaw Yirga (2007) focused on the cross-cultural experience of Awra Amban community’s children at pre-primary school. Furthermore, Yonas Mekonnen (2009) addressed the practice of child-rearing in Awra Amba community. Eskinder Teferi (2012) deals with the role of gender equality in the peace and development endeavor of Awra Amba community. Finally, Merhatsidk Mekonnen (2009) explored the mechanisms and resolution of family disputes in Awra Amba community.

From the above researchers point of view this study is somehow related with Merhatsidk’s study. However it differs from his work in the sense that he did not address women’s decision-making participation in relation to reproductive rights and health, sexuality, freedom of movement and financial decision-making. Hence, the study critically reviewed the available literature on Awra Amba community, though; previous

⁴³ Robert Joumard (2012): *Awra Amba: A Current Experiment of Utopian Socialism*: Bron, France, p.5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.75.

⁴⁵ Solomon Ambawu (2011): *Zumra’s Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*: Addis Ababa University, College of Social Science and Humanities, Dept, Philosophy, BA Senior Essay, p.24; Robert Joumard (2012): *Awra Amba: A Current Experiment of Utopian Socialism*: Bron, France, p.6.

researchers have not picked up the topic as a separate issue and addressed it independently.

1.3. Research Objectives

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine women's decision-making rights at a household among the Awra Amba community in Fogera *Woreda*.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

1. To examine women's reproductive rights and their sexual rights in Awra Amba community.
2. To investigate women's decision-making rights in relation to their freedom of movement to visit family or friends in the study community.
3. To explore women's rights to independently access health-care services.
4. To examine whether women participate in financial decision-making at a household level.

1.4. Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following basic questions developed in line with the research objective.

1.4.1. General Question

“How do women participate at a household decision-making in Awra Amba community?”

1.4.2. Specific Questions

1. How do women exercise their reproductive rights and sexual rights in the study community?

2. In what ways do women participate in financial decision-making at a household level?
3. Do women have freedom of movement in Awra Amba community including the right to visit one's family or friends, and independently accessing health-care services?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Cultural and traditional attitudes toward women in Ethiopia negatively affect their status and recognition in participating in the social, economic and political life. Around 85% of Ethiopians are settled in rural areas. Rural people are less educated and have different traditional practices and social expectations that adversely affect the situation and rights of women. The reason for this is that, those traditional values strongly promote the status and power of men at the expense of women.

This research is designed to study the experience of women in household decision-making participation with a focus in Awra Amba community. Awra Amba community is usually considered as pro-human rights and known for empowering women by different actors and researchers. The researcher believes that investigating the practical experience of Awra Amban community's women decision-making rights will create a good understanding about gender equality in the domestic spheres. Therefore, this study is significant for the following reasons:

- It may help as a reference for other students who want to do further researches.
- It offers some sorts of knowledge about the rights of women on decision-making in the household in Awra Amba community.
- The findings may provide information for policy makers and other human rights activists' governmental and non-governmental organs working on related theme.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

The research is delimited to study only women's decision-making rights at the household level in one *Woreda* of Amhara National Regional State. It will not consider women's

decision-making or participation in the public sphere, though there is a link between the two. This is because; time and resources are the main constraints to cover all gender issues.

1.7. Rationales of the Study

The study was conducted in Awra Amba community. The reasons behind for the selection of the community were:-

- The different features of the community in relation to norms, principles and cultural practices than that of the rest of Fogera *Woreda* residents.
- The researcher's prior research experience on "*Zumra's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*" for the partial fulfillment of BA degree in Philosophy and the familiarity with Awra Amba community.

1.7.1. Rationales for the Selection of Research Topic

When I did my first degree research on Awra Amba community which is "*Zumra's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*" I have looked non-gender based division of labour among males and females. In this case, I have raised a question: "does non-sexual division of labour has an implication for the participation of women in household matters especially in decision-making?" So, women's decision-making participation in the household is provoked me to investigate it. In this regard, women are purposively selected that of men this is because there is a premise that most men are dominant while most women are subordinate in the traditional social structure of Amhara. Hence, investigate the status of women that of men is valid to know their experience about decision-making power in the household since most women are marginalized section of societies in most traditional societies in Amhara.

1.8. Research Methodology

In order to address the general as well as specific objectives of this study the researcher used qualitative research methods. This is because qualitative research is appropriate to deeply investigate the experience of people and social reality in general and human rights

violation in particular.⁴⁶ Qualitative research by its very nature is more appropriate to study human rights violation in detail such as the experience of domestic child abuse, sexual harassment, domestic violence against women, discrimination and so on.⁴⁷

Moreover, qualitative approach is more important and appropriate than quantitative approach to study; hear, learn and understand the experience of women in the domestic affair, specially their participation in household decision-making.⁴⁸ So, the researcher used qualitative methods so as to obtain good result, to make meaningful inference and to interpret the social reality in the study area.

1.8.1. Sources of Data

The researcher used primary and secondary sources of data while conducting the study. The methods used to gain include in-depth interviews, interviews with key informants as well as focus group discussions. In addition, the researcher used secondary sources of data including, scholarly journals, documents from *Woreda* offices, related research articles and international human right instruments.

The researcher believes that qualitative methods properly answered the general as well as specific questions of this study. The researcher also arranged comfortable places for people involved in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions so as to avoid noisy and disturbing environment. To create a good understanding, the researcher used Amharic language for communication because Amharic is their first language. The researcher also gathered data from different places such as Awra Amba, Weji and Woreta. For instance, semi-structured interviews were conducted at Awra Amba, Weji and Woreta, whereas in-depth interviews were conducted at Awra Amba. Even if, the investigated issues are women's issues, the researcher did not face certain problems during field work as a male researcher because the researcher's prior field experience and

⁴⁶ Yitayew Alemayew and Wondemagegn Tadesse (2013): *Human Rights Research: A Practical Guide Book on Methodology and Methods*: Center for Human Rights, Addis Ababa University, p.113.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.113.

⁴⁸ Paul Ten Have (2004): *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology*: Sage publication, London, p.4.

women at Awra Amba community are free and open. Moreover, the researcher stayed from March 14 up to April 30 so as to gather adequate data.

1.8.1.1. In-depth Interview

An in-depth interview is one of the best tools of qualitative research methods to understand the social reality.⁴⁹ It also provides an opportunity for the researcher to internalize the experience, stories and facts of informants from original standpoint.⁵⁰ In this study, the main focus is on women rather than men. Therefore, the researcher deeply interviewed informants such as, married women regarding their participation on household decision-making. Even if, married women are the spotlight of the study the researcher also included male informants.

In-depth interviews were held for married women as well as married men informants. The researcher conducted the interview questions for 15 married women and 10 married men respectively. The researcher prepared interview guideline and interviewed the informants in Amharic. The researcher used both tape recorder and notes to get the original accounts of informants.

1.8.1.2. Key Informant Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to enrich and strengthen the study. The guiding questions were raised for elders and community founder, complaint hearing committee, Woji- Arba Amba *Kebele* official, Woji-Arba Amba health officer, Fogera *Woreda* Women, Children and Youth Affair head about Awra Amba community's women's decision-making participation in the domestic spheres. The researcher used tape recorder with the consent of informants. For those who are not interested, the researcher used notes. The key informants were selected purposively based on their relevance to the issue.

⁴⁹ Carolyn B and Plena N (2006): *Conducting In-depth Interviews: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-depth Interviews for Evaluation Input*: Pathfinder International, p.142.

⁵⁰ Robert K. Yin (2011): *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*: The Guilford Press, New York and London, p. 141 and 142.

1.8.1.3. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is another tool of qualitative data collection methods.⁵¹ This technique helped the researcher to acquire adequate knowledge from informants during their discussions.⁵² Two focus group discussions were held to obtain adequate knowledge from informants during their discussions and fill the gap while the data gathered from interviews. Focus group interviews contained six informants in a single discussion. The composition of FGDs considered gender whereby separate FGDs were held for married men and married women. The separate discussion between men and women brought valid information from both sides. In this primary data collection method, the researcher has got more information about the experience of women in relation to household decision-making participation by creating detail group discussions in the study area. Moreover, the researcher used tape recorder and notes during the discussions. The researcher had the role of facilitator as well during the focus group discussions.

1.8.1.4. Document Review

In order to enrich the study, the researcher critically reviewed different key documents on women and decision-making participation. Besides, the researcher analyzed relevant documents among other books, articles, journals, thesis, other significant written documents from *Woreda* offices and international human rights instruments. Secondary data collection methods strengthened the study because it provided theories and previously written documents to address the objective of this study.

1.8.2. Sampling Technique

In this study the researcher employed purposive sampling technique to answer the research questions. This is because; “qualitative researches normally adopt non-probability or non-random sampling, compared to random sampling techniques of quantitative research which aspires to draw a representative sample from a population”.⁵³

⁵¹ Bruce L. Berg (2001): *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Science*: Fourth edition, Ally and Bacon Company, USA, p.111.

⁵² *Ibid*

⁵³ See, Yitayew Alemayew and Wondemagegn Tadesse ... supra note 46, p.130.

*“Under non-probability sampling the organizers of the inquiry purposively choose the particular units of the universe for constituting a sample on the basis that the small mass that they so select out of a huge one will be typical or representative of the whole. In such a design, personal element has a great chance of entering in to the selection of the sample. The investigator may select a sample which shall yield results favorable to his point of view and if that happens, the entire enquiry may get vitiated”.*⁵⁴ Further, “when developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population”.⁵⁵

In this case, the researcher has purposively selected the informants with different criterion so as to obtain adequate and relevant knowledge. The first criterion is age. Those who are more than 19 for females and 20 for males are purposively selected. For the reason that, the study community has set forth an age limitation for women and men to enter in to marriage life. In this regard, females should be 19 and above while males 20 and above. This helps the couples to be matured enough in order to live responsible and good life. The second criterion is marital status. The researcher has selected married couples than that of non-married ones. This is because; decision-making at the household is more decisive for married women than to women who are not married. In other words, in cases of women who are not married/especially those living with their families/, their decision-making right is totally seized and exercised by their parents. However, when a woman engages in marriage; her decision-making participation will be automatically different from her previous life experience. Therefore, single women decision-making participation in the household is open for further investigation to future researches.

Additionally, key informants were purposively selected both in and out of the study community. Because, they have adequate knowledge and familiar with the issue at hand. Further, the researcher purposively selected informants for group discussions. This helped the researcher in acquiring variety of responses so as to achieve the general and specific objectives of the study.

⁵⁴ C.R. Kothari (2004): *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*: Second Edition, New Age International Private Limited Publisher, New Delhi, p.59.

⁵⁵ See, Bruce L. Berg... supra note 51, p.32.

1.9. Ethical Consideration

To realize the study, it is necessary to get the free and full consent of informants.⁵⁶ In this case the researcher announced certain ethical principles for informants either to continue or withdraw from the interviews. Additionally, the researcher informed the informants about the confidentiality. Since respecting confidentiality is one of the key elements of conducting research.⁵⁷ Further, the researcher did not disclose the name of informants unless they are willing. Finally, the researcher has received the consent of interviewees in using tape recorder and notes.

1.9.1. Organization of the Paper

The present study comprises a total of six chapters. Chapter one consists; the introduction part, statement of the problem, research objective, research question, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, rationales of the study, research methodology and ethical consideration. Chapter two presents review of related literatures and legal frameworks such as international, national as well as regional. Chapter three deals the description of the study area to create understanding about the study community. Chapter four presents women's decision-making rights in the household at Awra Amba community. Chapter five consists; women's decision-making rights on mobility and financial matters. Finally, the last chapter provides a precise conclusion.

1.9.2. Conceptualizing Related Terms

- Women's Decision-making Rights: are rights exercising and enjoying by married women in major household matters among others reproductive matters, sexual matters, accessing health facilities, visiting family or friends and financial matters as equal with men.
- Reproductive Rights: are the rights of married women to freely and responsibly decide on the number and timing of their children with the absence of coercion and discrimination.

⁵⁶ See, Robert K. Yin... supra note 50, p.46.

⁵⁷ See, Bruce L. Berg... supra note 51, p.57.

- Sexual Rights: are the rights of women to freely and responsibly decide on sexual matters including when and how to have sex without coercion and violence.
- Sexuality: is a valuable, natural and integral aspect of personhood of all human beings which is exercising by everyone to attain the highest standard of health. It includes pleasure, sexual activity, sexual orientation, eroticism, intimacy and reproduction.⁵⁸
- Freedom of Movement: is the right of married women to freely move to visit their family or friends.
- The Right to Accessing Health-care Services: is the freedom of married women to autonomously accessing health facilities including education and information on family planning methods, condom and antenatal care.
- Economic Decision-making Rights: are the rights of married women to freely decide on financial matters in the household such as large household purchase, small household purchase, selling of agricultural products or properties, land and land related issues.
- Awra Amba Community: a community which is found in Weji-Arba Amba *Kebele*, Fogera *Woreda* of Amhara National Regional State with a total of 482 peoples.

⁵⁸ IPPF (2008):“Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration”,p.11_12: Accessed from: http://www.google.com.et/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CBwQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ippf.org%2Fsystem%2Ffiles%2Fsexualrightsippfdeclaration_1.pdf&ei=mF3TVJHpN9HpaKTFgfgP&usg=AFQjCNEPL93_VuwEcMEQU-A7m7FIY3k4IA&bvm=bv.85464276,bs.1,d.bGQ,February 4, 2015.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review and Legal Frameworks

2.1. Conceptual Frameworks

2.1.1. Patriarchy

Patriarchy is “a social system in which men have come to be dominant in relation to women”.⁵⁹ As per, Estelle patriarchy is a system of social interaction, which highly promotes the superiority of men and the inferiority of women at various levels.⁶⁰ It simply endorses the power of men to control women in the social, political and economic aspect of life.⁶¹ Besides, it strongly maintains the powerlessness of women in the social interaction due to cultural settings.⁶² In a patriarchal social structure, women are expected to be submissive, lenient and obedient for male, since, the system stands to foster the interest of male and the hierarchical relationship between men and women.⁶³

Moreover, the social structure created gender roles for members of its community. In effect, gender socialization benefits the male sex and disregards the female one.⁶⁴ But gender role socialization varies from culture to culture and society to society. Thus, the system greatly advances the control of women by men or the control of powerless via those who have power.⁶⁵

Conversely, there is a notion of matriarchy. The Sage English Dictionary defined matriarchy as “a form of social organization in which a female is the family head and title is traced through the female line”.⁶⁶ According to Amadiume matriarchy is a form of

⁵⁹ Mary Holmes (2007): *What is Gender?: Sociological Approach*: Sage Publication Ltd, Printed in Great Britain, p.2.

⁶⁰ Estelle Disch (1997): *Reconstructing Gender: A Multi Cultural Anthology*: Mayfield Publishing Company, Toronto, p.11.

⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.19.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ The Sage English Dictionary and Thesaurus.

social system in which household is directed under matricentric unit.⁶⁷ In light of these definitions, the discourse of matriarchy is common in traditional African societies. In this regard, the structure is based on matricentric production unit.⁶⁸ Unlike the patriarchal experiences of European societies, traditional African societies were the root of matriarchy.⁶⁹ In such a situation, matriarchal social structure consisted “mothers, sons and daughters”, on the other hand, fathers or husbands are treated as an outsider.⁷⁰

In matriarchal social arrangement females take the leadership role or they can be head of the house. It also brings forth love and compassionate unlike the violence and totalitarian structure of patriarchy.⁷¹

2.1.2. Family

Family is “a group of what consisting of parents and their children living together as a unit. It is also a group of people related by blood or marriage”.⁷² This definition is related with the Awra Amban notion of family, since, it consists parents and children so as to lead a good life. As Barbara cited in Michael the traditional notion of family is defined as nuclear institution which has legal basis.⁷³ But in the case of the study community, the institution of marriage has no legal basis rather on the custom of the community. In effect, it allowed monogamous marriage, companionship and sexually exclusiveness.⁷⁴

This statement is clearly fit with the norms of the study community. Because, the rule of family relation is strongly prohibits polygamous marriage and having multiple sexual partners. It is also forbidden sexual intercourse before marriage. Another more or less similar definition noted by Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:

⁶⁷ Ifi Amadiume (1997): *Re-inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*: Zed Books Ltd, London and New York, p.21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.37.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.40.

⁷² Catherine Soanes and Sara Hawker (ed) (2008): *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English*: Third Edition, Revised Oxford University Press, New York, p.359.

⁷³ Michael S. Kimmel (2000): *The Gendered Society*: Oxford University Press, New York, p.111.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

*The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. In different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist. The rights, capabilities and responsibilities of family members must be respected.*⁷⁵

In most traditional social structures, the nuclear family structure assigned certain division of labour for males and females.⁷⁶ In this respect, the female are expected to perform only the domestic affairs or to be housewives while the male expected to do the public spheres among others, generating of household income, providing the family consumption and controlling the behavior of the family.⁷⁷ Since private power is resides in the hands of the husband.⁷⁸ However, in Awra Amba community, the role of men and women is identical. There is no division of labour based on gender rather on ability or capacity of the individuals. Women engage in activities which are considered as men in neighboring societies such as plowing, milling, harvesting and weaving. Men also engage in tasks which are assigned for women such as cooking, baking *enjera*, spinning and taking care of children. Additionally, both husband and wife engage in economic activities and contribute equally for household incomes. In effect, private power resides in the hands of husband and wife.

However, in different structure of the family there are responsibilities and rights for its member. To protect and foster such duties in the household needs law.⁷⁹ The law is governing the family relationship. Particularly, the family law is a key instrument by setting a rule to govern the behavior of the family. It applies in the formation, during and throughout family life.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 29.

⁷⁶ See, Michael S. Kimmel...supra note 73, p.111.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁷⁹ Aschale Ashagrie and Marta Belete (2009): "Law of family: Teaching Material": Prepared by under the Sponsorship of the Justice and Legal System Research Institute, p.23: Accessed from: <https://chilot.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/family-law-teaching-material.pdf>, December 25, 2013.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

2.1.3. Decision-making

The Collins Co-build English Dictionary defined decision-making as the “process of reaching at what should be done or which is the best of various possible action”.⁸¹ “*The legal term for being able to make decisions is ‘legal capacity’. All countries have laws and practices that relate to legal capacity. These laws apply to all people and have been used to determine who can make decisions and what kinds of decisions they can make*”.⁸²

In this regard, decisions require choices, alternative and values. As a result, most of the times, it maintains the good one and avoids the bad consequences of certain actions.⁸³

This definition fits with the notion of decision-making in Awra Amba community. In the family life, both husband and wife pass decision so as to lead a happy life. The decision is relies on negotiation. This helps them to avoid the negative consequences of certain actions. Decision-making directs the decision makers to brazen out uncertainty and ambivalent deeds that occur in the present and future time frameworks.⁸⁴

The process of decision-making is transcending from domestic spheres to public one.⁸⁵

For example, household decision-making is acted up on either via husband or wife or shared jointly. Further, decision-making process within the family may bring bargaining among its members. The bargaining is a human product.⁸⁶ But some of them are natural. For instance, husbands and wives could bargain on household matters to pass the final say. Unfortunately, most of the time men have decision-making power over women in the family.⁸⁷ In the case of Awra Amba community, household decision-making is acted up on jointly. No one dominates the other. Most household decision-making overtake after a discussion held among husband and wife. Husband has no exceptional power regarding decisions. He does not marginalize his wife on specific household issues. Rather both husband and wife shared jointly household decision-making power.

⁸¹ Collins Co-build English Dictionary.

⁸² inclusion-international.org/the-right-to-decide-background-information-on-decision-making/, Accessed in March 12, 2014.

⁸³ Barry F. Anderson (2002): *The Three Secrets of Wise Decision-making*: Single Reef Press, Portland, p.5.

⁸⁴ Helga Drummund (2001): *The Art of Decision-making: Mirrors, Imagination Masks of Fate*: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, New York, *et.al*, p.2.

⁸⁵ Agnes R. Quisumbing (ed) (2003): *Household Decisions, Gender and Development: A Synthesis of Recent Research*: Blackwell Publishing, Washington DC, p.40.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

2.2. International Human Rights Instruments on Women's Decision-making Rights

Women's equality, their ability to make their own decisions freely and without coercion, is central to any effective population and development policy. Amnesty International

Different international instruments have comprised the human rights of women. Such instruments have been realized after a massive efforts hold via feminists, human rights activists, NGOs and women supporter groups. Those international human rights instruments have been realized in order to eradicate historical injustices against women, discrimination, violence, exploitation and suppression of women. Among other things, UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, DEVAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, ICPD, African Charter on Peoples and Human Rights and Women's Protocol has been realized. Hence, the following topic will discuss the rights of women particularly decision-making participation which was articulated under CEDAW.

2.2.1. CEDAW: A Milestone for Women's Rights

The rights of women are incorporated under different international human rights instruments as a human right after an extensive struggle made by human rights advocates.⁸⁸ CEDAW is one of the major human rights instruments which recognized and protected the rights of women in the global arena. It is a result of a recent phenomenon which entered in to force in 1981.⁸⁹ It is vigorous to struggle against all forms of discrimination against women in the social, political and economic aspects of life.⁹⁰ So as to address different forms of marginalization and subordination against women it requires ratification of the legal documents through state parties. States are also expected to take positive steps to avoid discrimination against women.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Geraldine Terry (2007): *Women's Rights: Small Guide to Big Issue*: Pluto Press, London, p.24.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.27.

Likewise, CEDAW obliges the international community to eliminate all forms of marginalization and suppression of women in all aspects of life throughout the world.⁹² As per CEDAW discrimination against women violates the dignity, equality, development and well-being of women.⁹³ It also violates the equal participation of women with men in the social, political, economic, cultural and family life.⁹⁴ Article 1 of the convention defines the term discrimination against women in the following manner:

*Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.*⁹⁵

Although, CEDAW recognized different aspects of rights for women it did not raise decision-making at household level as a right. Rather, it simply endorsed women's decision-making participation at the public arena such as political participation. But, it indirectly touched women's equality at marriage and family relation. For instance, article 16(1) stated that "*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women*".⁹⁶ Put in other words, women should not be discriminated in household decision-making participation. Because, unless women participate in household decision-making, their life will be threatened since men or husband may pass a decision to advance his own interest. Further, both partners are equal in the contribution of household development, peace and security.

In particular, article 16(h) stipulated the joint management of household or the equal rights of spouses in household decision-making participation. "*The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment*

⁹² UNDP (2008): *Compendium of Key Documents Relating to Human Rights and HIV in Eastern and Southern Africa*: Pretoria University Law Press, Johannesburg, p.10.

⁹³ *Ibid*

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

⁹⁵ See, CEDAW, article 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, article 6(1).

*and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration”.*⁹⁷ Additionally, sub article c recognized the equality and responsibility of spouses to take part in all household matters including dissolution.⁹⁸

2.2.2. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

After an immense global struggle and movement the international community gathered at Beijing, China to apprehend the equality, status, well-being, development and peace of women.⁹⁹ As a result of intensive meetings the global community in September 1995 realized the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In particular, the Beijing Declaration fills the gap which is not mentioned under the original international human rights instruments.¹⁰⁰ Among others, “sexual rights, reproductive health and freedom” were the spotlight of the Platform. *“Although, inclusion of these concerns in international debate was not new such language had been discussed intensively at the population conference in Cairo in 1994-many Governments were not willing to expand women’s achievement in this area”.*¹⁰¹

For the achievement of women’s equality the international human rights advocates, NGOs and other activists participated in the Beijing platform. They also influenced international community to establish the platform.¹⁰² Particularly, the Platform mentioned the decision-making powers of women in this manner:

The equitable distribution of power and decision-making at all levels is dependent on Governments and other actors undertaking statistical gender analysis and mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and the implementation of programmes. Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women. In some

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, article 16(h).

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, article 16.

⁹⁹ Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (1996): “Summary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”: USA, p.2: Accessed from: <http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/Declaration.PDF>, December 25, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.2.

¹⁰² Fred T. Sai (1997): *The ICPD Programme of Action: Pious hope or Workable guide?*: Health Transition Review Supplement, Volume 7, p.1-2.

*countries, affirmative action has led to 33.3 per cent or larger representation in local and national Governments.*¹⁰³

As discussed above, in different societal and cultural settings there is a division of labour in the family. In this circumstance, men are dominant over women in household division of labour due to decision-making power.¹⁰⁴ The unbalanced power relation between men and women in the household restricts women's right to participate in the public decision-making process.¹⁰⁵ The dominant position of men in household and community level decision-making participation strongly shackles the equal participation of women in the social, economic and political aspects.¹⁰⁶ So, avoiding such inequalities among men and women in household can bring quality of life for women. It also realizes the participation of women in the public life, if there is a joint and shared power relation and responsibilities among men and women in the family.¹⁰⁷

Pursuant to article 189 of the Platform for Action, "*in addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively*".¹⁰⁸ In other expression, the international community such as, government, local NGOs, international NGOs and other actors have a huge responsibility to tackle gender inequalities in the private as well as public decision-making.

2.2.3. International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

The ICPD Programme of Action is another human rights instrument to protect and promote the well-being and rights of individuals.¹⁰⁹ It also aimed to improve the lives of human societies. It was adopted in 1999 by UN General Assembly in Cairo with the help

¹⁰³ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 187.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, paragraph 185.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, paragraph 189.

¹⁰⁹ See, the ICPD Programme of Action.

of UNFPA. For its implementation 179 states are participated.¹¹⁰ Accordingly, the Programme of Action upholds the interconnectedness of population and development. In other words, it demands to bring quality of life for human beings via “reinforcing linkages between population and development”.¹¹¹ The action needs to empower women, daughters and a girl-child. Consequently, it endorsed reproductive health as basic human rights.¹¹²

The preamble of the Programme of Action confirmed to realize the equality of women in the development and peace endeavor.¹¹³ Further, it desired to eliminate maternal mortality by creating an intensive opportunities and education for women to participate in decision-making process *inter-alia* reproductive matters, health, family planning and sexual matters.¹¹⁴

In assertion of women’s decision-making participation principle 4 emphasized that the international community has a duty to realize the equal participation of women in the familial, social, economic and political life.¹¹⁵ To apprehend women’s equality on household decision-making participation it is better to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.¹¹⁶

In a similar fashion, the Programme of Action confirmed the participation of women in the following way:

The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is highly important. In addition, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both men and women is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of households. In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well being as a result of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence. In

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

¹¹² *Ibid*

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, principle 4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

*addition improving the status of women also enhances their decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life, especially in the area of sexuality and reproduction.*¹¹⁷

Moreover, paragraph 4.3(b) asserted the empowerment of women in the decision-making process, particularly in education, sexuality, reproductive matters, mobility, and economic matters. It is believed that their empowerment could contribute to the sustainable development of a given country.¹¹⁸ In another expression, women should equally participate with men in the decision-making process of the households that may affect their lives. Among others, they should participate in the control of their own fertility, sexuality, freedom of movement to visit family or friends and independently accessing health care services. Besides, they should pass decisions on large household expenditure, daily consumption expenditure, land and land related issues and managing household incomes.

2.2.4. African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights was adopted in 1981 at Nairobi, Kenya via the inherent will of African states.¹¹⁹ It is also known as the "Banjul Charter". It is a significant regional human rights instrument to protect individuals as well as peoples against repression and totalitarian governments.¹²⁰ In addition, the Charter has achieved to reconcile regionalism or particularistic perspectives of human rights and the global paradigm.¹²¹ In light of this reconciliation, the Charter consists of regional norms, values as well as international human rights norms.¹²²

The charter is the pivotal human rights instruments of the OAU/AU. It recognized individual rights as well as people rights, rights and duties, and socio-economic rights, in

¹¹⁷ See, the ICPD Programme of Action, paragraph 4.1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, paragraph 4.3.b.

¹¹⁹ Philip Amoah (1992): *The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: An Effective Weapon for Human Rights*: Genève, Switzerland, p.226.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

¹²¹ Solomon E and Armand T (2010): *Compendium of African Sub-Regional Human Rights Documents*: Pretoria University Law Press, Johannesburg, p.VI.

¹²² *Ibid*

*addition to civil and political rights. The supervisory mechanism created by the charter is the African commission on human and peoples rights.*¹²³

In addition to people's rights, the Charter promotes and protects the rights of women as equal to men in different aspects of life.

2.2.5. African Protocol on the Rights of Women

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (here in after women's protocol) was adopted in Maputo, Mozambique in 2003. It entered in to force in 2005.¹²⁴ As a matter of fact, it is aimed at challenging and eradicating cultural particularities which is affecting the well-being, status and equality of women in Africa.¹²⁵ The discourse of this protocol intends to promote and protect the human rights of women in the continent.¹²⁶ Among other things, the protocol forwards previously established regional as well as the international human rights instruments for women. The protocol guarantees the rights of women in relation to reproductive and sexual matters for the first time in the global arena.¹²⁷ It also allowed medical abortion in circumstance of rape and successive pregnancy if it affects the health of mothers. "And it is the first instrument of its kind developed by Africans for Africans".¹²⁸

In particular, the protocol noted: "a woman and a man shall jointly contribute to safeguarding the interests of the family, protecting and educating their children".¹²⁹ "During her marriage, a woman shall have the right to acquire her own property and to administer and manage it freely".¹³⁰ As per, above article the equal rights of women is not limited only on educating children but also equally contribute and participating on economic aspects of the family life. In an attempt to strengthen the equality of women in

¹²³ Christof H and Magnas K (ed) (2010): *Compendium of Key Human Rights Documents of the African Union*: Fourth edition, Pulp, Johannesburg, p.29.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.61.

¹²⁵ Fareda Banda (2006): *Blazing a Trail: The African Protocol on Women's Rights comes in to Force*: Journal of African law, UK, p.2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

¹²⁷ Rose G and Rosemary S (2005): *The African Women's Protocol: A New Dimension for Women's Rights in Africa*: Gender and Development, Vol 13 No 3, Taylor and Francis Group and Oxfam GB, p.42.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.42.

¹²⁹ See, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (hereinafter, Women's Protocol), article 6(i).

¹³⁰ *Ibid* article 6(j).

the private aspects of life mainly in the decision-making participation state parties have huge responsibilities to realize it.¹³¹ In line with this assertion, article 19(b) emphasizes on government to ensure the equal participation of women in household decision-making, development, policies and strategies.¹³²

2.3. Main Themes of Women’s Decision-making Rights

2.3.1. Reproductive Rights

The discourse of reproductive rights has been an issue of many feminist activists.¹³³ Women historically are suppressed from controlling their own fertility because of the influence of religious fundamentalist and opponents of human rights movements.¹³⁴ According to women’s rights supporter groups’, reproductive rights are women’s health issues. Since reproductive matters, such as the burden of pregnancy and its complications is the main cause and effect of their health, unless women control their procreation, their bodily integrity and equality would be affected.¹³⁵

As the study done by Julie and Sandra (2001) reveals, *“it is estimated that, of the 200 million pregnancies each year, approximately 50 percent are unplanned and 25 percent unwanted. Reproductive rights include the right to a safe and legal abortion. Women should be able to make decisions about reproductive free of discrimination, coercion and violence”*.¹³⁶ In general, due to lack of decision-making power in the household, many women especially in traditional societies, their health and status is threatened.

Indeed, women reproductive rights are aimed at eliminating maternal mortality, sexually transmitted disease, HIV/AIDS and reproductive cancer.¹³⁷ Moreover, such reproductive

¹³¹ *Ibid* article 9(2).

¹³² *Ibid* article 19(b).

¹³³ Sonia Correa and Rosalind Petchesky (1994): “Reproductive and Sexual Rights: A Feminist Perspective” in Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (ed) (2007): *Culture, Society and Sexuality*: Second edition, Rutledge, London and New York, p.298.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.298.

¹³⁶ Julie H. Levison and Sandra P. Levison (2001): “Women’s Health and Human Rights” in Marjorie Agosin (ed) (2001): *Women, Gender and Human Rights: A Global Perspective*: Rutgers University Press, USA, p.144.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p.144.

rights allow women to make decision on their own lives including controlling their family size, using of contraception and abortion.¹³⁸ The practice of reproductive health requires responsibilities from different groups such as men and women, parents and societies in an attempt to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination in relation to the procreation of women and upbringing of children.¹³⁹

International human rights instruments for women such as CEDAW permit women to exercise and enjoy reproductive rights universally without any distinction.¹⁴⁰ In other words, women have the right to pass their own decisions regarding family planning, abortion and numbers of children in the family. This requires responsibility from the government which is providing reproductive services and education.¹⁴¹

As indicated by ICPD paragraph 7.3, reproductive rights are human rights in such a way that it includes “*the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents*”.¹⁴²

Alike, CEDAW and Women’s Protocol under article 16(e) and 14 respectively pointed out the extent of women’s reproductive rights. In this regard, women have full right to freely and responsibly decide when and how to have children.¹⁴³ They also have the freedom to use any acceptable contraceptive methods to control their own fertility rate. Further, they can use pregnancy preventive measures such as condom and family planning.¹⁴⁴ With the purpose of protecting themselves from sexually transmitted disease

¹³⁸ *Ibid*

¹³⁹ Stephen P. Marks (ed) (2006): *Health and Human Rights: Basic International Documents*: Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University Press, Published by Francis-Xavier Bangoud, USA, p.212.

¹⁴⁰ Maria I. Plata (1994): “Chapter 22: Reproductive Rights as Human Rights: The Colombian Case” in Rebecca G. Cook (ed) (1994): *Human Rights of Women National: International Perspectives*: University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, USA, p.515.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*

¹⁴² See, the ICPD, paragraph 7.3.

¹⁴³ See, CEDAW, article 16(e); Women’s Protocol, article 14.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

and HIV/AIDS, they have the right to access information, education and know their husbands' health status.¹⁴⁵

Likewise, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action under paragraph 95 recognized the reproductive rights of women to freely decide, on the number, timing and spacing of children with the absence of domestic violence and coercion, in respect of, their living standard, future of their children and the growth of population.¹⁴⁶ In line with this assertion, paragraph 97 stated that women should decide on their own fertility because pregnancy complication and childbirth are the cause of women's mortality and morbidity, especially in the developing states.¹⁴⁷

Regarding abortion, women have the right to freely decide on their own health if the pregnancy affects them. In this case, article 14(2)c of women's protocol commands state parties to take appropriate measures to: "*protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the fetus*".¹⁴⁸ In such a way, they can access health care services to abort safely in medical treatment, since unsafe abortion endangers the lives of many women particularly the poor, throughout the world.¹⁴⁹

In addition to the provision of government for the achievement of women's reproductive rights, men have shared responsibilities vis-à-vis reproductive matters. Men have power over women in most spheres of life especially on the size of the family.¹⁵⁰ So, to improve the well-being of women or mothers, men have huge imperative by taking care of the reproductive health of women and sharing their reproductive burdens such as child bearing, child rearing and domestic tasks.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁶ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 95.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, paragraph 97.

¹⁴⁸ See, Women's Protocol, article 14(2)c.

¹⁴⁹ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 97.

¹⁵⁰ See, the ICPD, paragraph 4.24; CEDAW, article 5(b).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*

2.3.2. Sexual Rights

Sexuality is a recent conversation, which derived from medical professionals during the 1860s.¹⁵² With respect to sexual intercourse, men have more social liberties than women. The dominance of men within the social as well as family life restricted women to use preventive measures, such as condom.¹⁵³

Among others, “*Stoic viewed sexual relationships as important areas of government concerns; they believed that government should oversee the family which they considered the basis of the social order, as well as other types of sexual activities, in order to promote public order and civic harmony*”.¹⁵⁴ In other words, stoic philosophers promoted a safe sexual intercourse among intimate partners or couples for the sake of household harmony. Government also has a duty to strengthen appropriate sexual relation in the family life by taking necessary measures.

The sexual autonomy of women stated under different human rights instruments to improve the health of women. For instance, the Beijing Declaration underlined the sexual rights of women in its Platform. In this respect, both men and women have the right to make safe sexual relations. It implies that, women have freedom to freely decide on sexual matters, when and how to have sexual intercourse.¹⁵⁵ Further, “*sexual rights are a component of human rights, they are an evolving set of entitlements related to sexuality that contribute to the freedom, equality and dignity of all people, and they cannot be ignored*”.¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the unbalanced power relation between men and women in the private as well as public life leads women to have unsafe sexual intercourse.¹⁵⁷ They are also

¹⁵² Andrian Thatcher (2011): *God, Sex and Gender: An Introduction*: Wiley-Lackwell, UK, p.5.

¹⁵³ WHO (2005): *Alcohol use and Sexual Risk Behavior: A Cross-Cultural Study in Eight Countries*: Genève, Switzerland, p.7.

¹⁵⁴ Merry E. Wiesnar (2000): *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice*: Rutledge, London and New York, p.24.

¹⁵⁵ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 94.

¹⁵⁶ IPPF (2008): “Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration”: Accessed from: http://www.google.com.et/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CBwQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ippf.org%2Fsystem%2Ffiles%2Fsexualrightsippfdeclaration_1.pdf&ei=mF3TVJHpN9HpaKTFgfgP&usg=AFQjCNEPL93_VuwEcMEQU-A7m7FIY3k4IA&bvm=bv.85464276,bs.1,d.bGQ, February 4, 2015.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, paragraph 98.

subject to sexual violence due to lack of social liberties to have safe and responsible sexual intercourses.¹⁵⁸ Besides, women are far from accessing information, education and sexual health services. Consequently, they are vulnerable to other sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS because of sexual violence.¹⁵⁹

Speaking from human rights perspective, with the aim of bring gender equality in the society, predominantly on sexuality, men should be able to communicate with women concerning sexual matters.¹⁶⁰ Men can play a significant role in the empowerment of women by taking a shared responsibility on the practice of safe and responsible sexual intercourse.¹⁶¹ Unless men are responsible on sexual matters, it is impossible to prevent sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. As women's protocol already stipulated, to be free from health problems women have rights to be informed about the health status of their own husbands such as HIV/AIDS.¹⁶² State parties also should encourage men to take part on the realization of gender equality from domestic life up to public one.¹⁶³ Furthermore, governments have duty to protect women's rights by taking appropriate measures such as introducing strong legislation and other punishment mechanism for the perpetrators.¹⁶⁴

Additionally, women's sexual autonomy includes the absence of marital rape.¹⁶⁵ For instance, the Beijing Declaration criminalized forced sex among couples during marriage. It also strongly promoted the equality of men and women in relation to sexual relations.¹⁶⁶ In this regard, both have imperative obligations to engage in safe sex via, free consent, mutual respect and shared responsibility for the consequences of sexual relations. Husbands also have duties to respect the bodily integrity of their wives.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, state parties have huge responsibilities to take necessary measures on the protection of women's human rights from violence in the domestic as well as public life.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁰ See, the ICPD, paragraph 4.24; Women's Protocol article 14(e).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*

¹⁶² *Ibid*

¹⁶³ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁵ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 96.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, paragraph 96.

“To enact and enforce laws to prohibit all forms of violence against women including unwanted or forced sex whether the violence takes place in private or public”.¹⁶⁸ Thus, unless women exercise their sexual and reproductive rights their bodily integrity would be affected.

2.3.3. Freedom of Movement

The international community has prepared different discussions to realize the rights of women in the global arena, among others, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.¹⁶⁹ For example, their civil rights discussion included family health, sexuality, domestic violence and freedom of movement.¹⁷⁰

The legal documents such as UDHR and ICCPR under article 13 and article 12 respectively articulate mobility rights for individuals within the jurisdiction of the nation.¹⁷¹ Similarly, article 12(1) of CEDAW stated that “*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning*”.¹⁷²

Moreover, women have recognized rights on freedom of movement. For instance, the ICPD affirmed under paragraph 7.2 “The right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and child birth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant”.¹⁷³ Simply put, these legal instruments addressed the rights of women on mobility to access health care services around their proximity or other environment. They should go independently to access health care services to control their own fertility or getting information about family planning or contraception methods. Their mobility rights also help them to access education and information about health issues, sexuality and family planning methods.

¹⁶⁸ See, Women’s Protocol, article 4(2)a.

¹⁶⁹ Natasha Thomsen (2007): *Global Issues: Women’s Rights*: Infobase Publishing, USA.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁷¹ See, UDHR, article 13; ICCPR, article 12.

¹⁷² See, CEDAW, article 12 (1).

¹⁷³ See, the ICPD, paragraph 7.2.

Although, “Women have different and unequal access to and use of basic health resources, including primary health services for the prevention and treatment of childhood diseases, malnutrition, anemia, diarrheal diseases, communicable diseases, malaria and other tropical diseases and tuberculosis, among others. Women also have different and unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of their health. In many developing countries, the lack of emergency obstetric services is also of particular concern. Health policies and programmes often perpetuate gender stereotypes and fail to consider socio-economic disparities and other differences among women and may not fully take account of the lack of autonomy of women regarding their health. Women’s health is also affected by gender bias in the health system and by the provision of inadequate and inappropriate medical services to women”.¹⁷⁴

Correspondingly, paragraph 7.2 of the ICPD recognized the rights of women on independently accessing health care services without coercion to control their own health, pregnancy and sexuality.¹⁷⁵ Freedom on mobility can enhance women’s well-being because it allowed women to access education and information about their fertility, sexuality and health.¹⁷⁶ Further, women’s mobility rights can solve reproductive health problems and sexually transmitted disease. Therefore, women should go to access appropriate health care services freely to have healthy infant and healthy family.¹⁷⁷

2.3.4. Decisions on Economic Rights

Economic rights are one of the significant aspects of rights, among others, women’s rights such as reproductive rights, sexuality and mobility. But the participation of women in financial matters in the private and public life is not that much satisfactory.¹⁷⁸ The majority of women are alienated from economic aspects of life. In this regard, gender

¹⁷⁴ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 90.

¹⁷⁵ See, the ICPD, paragraph 7.2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁸ Fondo Sikod (2007): *Gender Division of Labour and Women’s Decision-Making Power in Rural Households in Cameroon*: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Africa Development, Vol. XXXII, No. 3, Yaoundé, p.62 and 63.

based division of labor is responsible for the marginalization of women in economic decision-making participation.¹⁷⁹

On the one hand, women are assigned to perform mainly household tasks. On the other hand, men are allowed to do public activities as a result of gender socialization and social settings.¹⁸⁰ Yet, household tasks are not incentives unlike public activities.¹⁸¹ Accordingly, men or husbands are economic providers for the family while women or wives are expected to receive from their spouses.¹⁸² Unfortunately, such division of labour between the two sexes creates difference on economic decision-making participation. As a result, most women have little or no power on economic decision making participation in the household since; they are not income providers for the household.¹⁸³

To overcome the economic barriers and low decision-making participation of women the international community designed different legal instruments among others, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This declaration clearly stipulates for the empowerment of women on economic decision-making participation. It says, “*Women’s poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in the decision-making process. Poverty can also force women into situations in which they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation*”.¹⁸⁴

Similarly, paragraph 150 of the Platform for Action fully recognized the economic rights and decision-making participation of women in financial matters. In this respect, it argued that the unequal power relation between men and women in the social structure brought inequalities in the area of accessing resources and opportunities in line with

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.62 and 63.

¹⁸¹ UN (2010): *The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*: Department of Economic and Social Affairs: New York, p.101.

¹⁸² See, Fondo Sikod...supra note 178, p.62 and 63.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁴ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 50.

economic matters.¹⁸⁵ Notwithstanding, some educated women are exemplified in gender equality, the majority of women in the world are alienated from economic decision-making participation in the family level.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, women's limited power in the household has resulted in the marginalization of governmental economic decision-making participation such as commerce, monetary and tax system.¹⁸⁷

2.4. National Human Rights Frameworks

2.4.1. FDRE Constitution

The FDRE constitution was adopted in 1995.¹⁸⁸ It comprehended different regional as well as international human rights instruments. The major ratified human rights instruments are the integral parts of the constitution such as ICERD, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CAT, CRC, CRPD, ACHPR and ACRWC.¹⁸⁹ Principally, chapter three of the constitution stipulated two categories of rights such as human and democratic rights. It also provided limitation and derogation amongst the given rights.¹⁹⁰ As well, the national constitution recognized the human rights of women in line with the international legal documents. In line with this assertion, article 34 of the FDRE constitution clearly articulated the rights of women within the family. In this regard, it says that during marriage life men and women have equal rights.¹⁹¹

In other words, rights within family are equally guaranteed for both women and men in the marriage life since, the couples are equal partners in the peace building, development and healthy life of the family. They also enter in to marriage life via their free consent. So, both sexes should equally participate in the decision-making process within the household that may affect their lives.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, paragraph 150.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁸ Adem Kassie (2011): *Human Rights under the Ethiopian Constitution: A Descriptive Overview*: Mizan Law Review, Vol 5 no 1, p.41.

¹⁸⁹ Girmachew Alemu, *et.al* (2013): *Ethiopian Human Rights Handbook*: Addis Ababa University, School of Law, Center for Human Rights, p.28.

¹⁹⁰ See, Adem Kassie... Supra note 188, p.41.

¹⁹¹ See, the FDRE constitution, article 34.

Besides, article 35 stated the equal rights of women with their men counterparts. Under sub article 2 it mentioned that “women have equal rights with men in marriage as prescribed by this constitution”.¹⁹² To make it clear, women should equally share household matters that impinge on their well-being include decisions in reproductive matters, health, and sexuality.¹⁹³

2.4.2. The Revised National Family Code of Ethiopia

The Revised family code of Ethiopia was adopted in 2000 in Addis Ababa by HPR.¹⁹⁴ It should be noted that the revised family code is an amendment to the Civil Code of 1960. It was finally agreed that the provisions of the Civil Code relating to family matters were coined to bring the family under the *patria potesta* of the man, provisions that are now being considered as anachronistic by the progressive sector of the society.¹⁹⁵ Developments since the change of government in 1991 revitalized the move towards family law reform. The struggle for equal rights of women brought about demands for reconsideration of marital relationships to the forefront.¹⁹⁶ The revised family code which came into force as of the 4th of July, 2000, has in its preamble, outlined three principles as its policy premises which are:

1. To make rules of the Civil Code on family relations consistent with the overall economic reality of the constitution.
2. To amend existing laws in such a way that they give priority to the well-being, upbringing and protection of children.
3. To provide and efficient machinery for a fair and speedy resolution of marital and other familial disputes.¹⁹⁷

The revised family code recognized fundamental freedoms and rights of married women in the family. Further, the family code guarantees equal rights of couples without

¹⁹² *Ibid*, article 35.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁴ See, the Revised National Family Code of Ethiopia, p.1.

¹⁹⁵ Tilahun Teshome, *Ethiopia: Reflections on the Revised Family Code of 2000*: Research paper submitted to Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (Unpublished), p.4.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁷ Preamble to the Revised Family Code of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 213/2000, Federal *Negarit Gazeta* Extraordinary Issue No. 1/2000.

discrimination. It is also consistent with the federal constitution. For instance, article 50(1) of the family code recognized the joint management of the household. It avowed that: “the spouses shall have equal rights in the management of the family”.¹⁹⁸ In simple terms, both have equal or joint decision-making power in the family matters. There is no domination between the couples. As part of the family husbands and wives should support and respect each other.

Regarding administrating their common properties article 66(1) states that “Common property shall be administered conjointly by the spouses unless there is an agreement which empowers one of them to administer all or part of the common”.¹⁹⁹ Besides, article 68(1)(a) stipulated that “sale, exchange, rent out, pledge or mortgage or alienate in any other way a common immovable property to confer a right to third parties on such property”.²⁰⁰ By virtue of these two articles, spouses who have entered in to marriage life have equal rights to administer, protect and share their own family properties. They should also jointly decide on their own common properties whether to sell, transfer and use it. In other words, women’s economic rights are guaranteed under this revised national family code of Ethiopia including passing decisions on financial matters.

2.4.3. The Amhara National Regional State Family Code

The Amhara national regional state is one of the nine regions in Ethiopia. The regional state adopted its own constitution to protect its inhabitants from any violation and unlawful deeds. The constitution is in harmony with the national constitution. It also incorporated human rights and fundamental freedoms to protect the well-being of the people and gender equality. The legal documents of this region also confirmed the international as well as the national human rights instruments.

In particular, the Amhara regional state established legal document such as family code to promote and protect the rights of women, especially married ones. The preamble states: “Specifically realizing that marriage shall be based on the free consent of the spouses; it

¹⁹⁸ See, the Revised National Family Code of Ethiopia, article 50(1).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, article 66(1).

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, article 68(1)a.

has been necessary to enact and execute specific laws which guarantee the equality of the spouses during the conclusion, duration and dissolution of marriage”.²⁰¹ The family code of this regional state was adopted in 2003 in Bahir Dar under the auspices of the council of Amhara regional state.²⁰² Besides, the family code of Amhara regional state is similar with the federal revised family code of Ethiopia.

Above all, article 61(1) of this regional state family code recognized the mutuality of household managements. It says “the spouse shall have equal rights in the management of the family”.²⁰³ Simply put, women have equal rights with men in relation to the management of the household including decision-making. They are also equal to pass the final say or decisions in all aspects of life in the family that may affect their well-being. As well, women can share the decision-making power pertaining to the situation of their child. In this regard, article 61(1) of the family code articulated that “*the spouse, in all cases, co-operate, to protect the security and the interest of the family to bring up and ensure the good behavior and eructation of their children in order to make them responsible citizen*”.²⁰⁴

In addition, relating to financial or economic matters of the family both women and men have equal power to participate in the decision-making process. For example, article 77(1) of the family code mentions: “common property shall be administered co-jointly by the spouse unless there is an agreement which empowers one of them to administer all or parts of the common property”.²⁰⁵ As the law already stipulated, women and men should equally administer household incomes, as well as land and land related issues. Women should also participate when decisions are made on the selling of properties and selling of products. In general, as per the Amhara national regional state family code, women and men have equal powers to pass shared and responsible decisions on reproductive matters, sexuality, mobility, and financial matters without gender discrimination.

²⁰¹ See, the Preamble to the Family Code of Amhara National Regional State.

²⁰² *Ibid*

²⁰³ *Ibid*, p.139.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.42.

Chapter Three

3. Description of the Study Area

3.1. Geography

The Awra Amba community is found in South Gondar, Amhara National Regional State. In particular it located in Woji-Arba Amba *Kebele*, Fogera *Woreda*.²⁰⁶ Woji-Arba Amba *Kebele* administers Awra Amba and its neighboring villages (*gotoch*) such as; Tizab and Maksegn on the East, Jib Gudguad on the North, Arba Chane on the West and Jib Gudguad on the South.²⁰⁷ The study area resides 630 km North-west of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, 71 km North of Bahir Dar, the capital city of the Amhara National Regional State, 32 km South-east of Debre Tabor, the capital of South Gondar administrative zone and 12 km from Woreta, the capital of Fogera *Woreda*.²⁰⁸

It is also geographically located between “11⁰55’ 25’’-11⁰ 56’ 07’’ N latitude and 37⁰ 45’ 50’’ -37⁰47’ 50’’ E longitudes.²⁰⁹ The study area is endowed with different indigenous trees, among others, Acacia and Eucalyptus which serve for daily energy consumption and construction of residential houses. Nowadays, the coverage of the study area by natural plants is being depleted as a result of deforestation.²¹⁰ The altitude of Awra Amba, Woji-Arba Amba *Kebele*, Fogera *Woreda* ranges “from 1900 through 2200 meters above sea level”.²¹¹ The landscape of Awra Amba is formatted by “largely flat, undulating and rolling plain in the downstream as well as monotonous and hilly in the

²⁰⁶ Fogera *Woreda* Culture and Tourism Office (2003 E.C): *The Establishment of Awra Amba community*: Woreta, p.1; Awra Amba Community (2012): *Journey for Peace*: Woreta, p.7.

²⁰⁷ Abebaw Yirga (2007): *The Cross-cultural Experiences of the Awra Amba Community Children at Primary School: Implications for Multicultural Education*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate, Dept, Education in Multicultural and Multilingual Education, MA Thesis, p44.

²⁰⁸ See, Fogera *Woreda* Culture and Tourism Office... supra note 206, p.7.

²⁰⁹ Solomon Atnafu (2005): *Social Transformation among the Awra Amba Community (North-western Ethiopia, Amhara Region): Changes in Gender Roles and Values*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Social Anthropology, MA Thesis, p.28.

²¹⁰ Merhatsidik Mekonnen (2009): *The Wisdom of Mediating Family Disputes in the Awra Amba Community*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate, Dept, Institutes of Peace and Security, MA Thesis, p.28.

²¹¹ See, Merhatsidik Mekonnen... supra note 210, p.28; ORDA cited in Yassin Seid Mohamed (2008): *The Working Traditions and their Contribution to Rural Development, in Awra Amba Community, Northern Amhara Region-Ethiopia*: Mekelle University, Faculty of Dry land and Agriculture and Natural Resource, MS Thesis; See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209 as ORDA cited, p.27.

upper-stream of the watershed. The slope of the area ranges between 2% and 50%, the average being 10%”.²¹² Accordingly, rolling plain is the largest landscape. It has also 18 degree Celsius temperature, with 1440ml annual rain fall.²¹³

The climatic condition of the study area is *Woina dega*.²¹⁴ The land size of the study area is 17.5 hectare.²¹⁵ However, as ORDA cited in Joumard, its landscape is 43 hectare. Among others, “28.2 ha cultivated land, 11 ha grass, and 1.3 ha protected as bush and 2.5 ha settlement”.²¹⁶ It is also bounded by different small mountains, *Amba Gira* from South-west, *Tizab* from the North-east, *Debora* from the North, *Awra Amba Kidane Mehiret* from the South and *Kaso* from West.²¹⁷

²¹² *Ibid*

²¹³ *Ibid*

²¹⁴ *Woina dega* is one of the moderate climatic conditions or average temperature in Ethiopia among *dega* and *kola*.

²¹⁵ See, Fogera *Woreda* Culture and Tourism Office... supra note 206, p.7.

²¹⁶ Robert Joumard (2012): *Awra Amba: A Current Experiment of Utopian Socialism*: Bron, France, p.2.

²¹⁷ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.27.

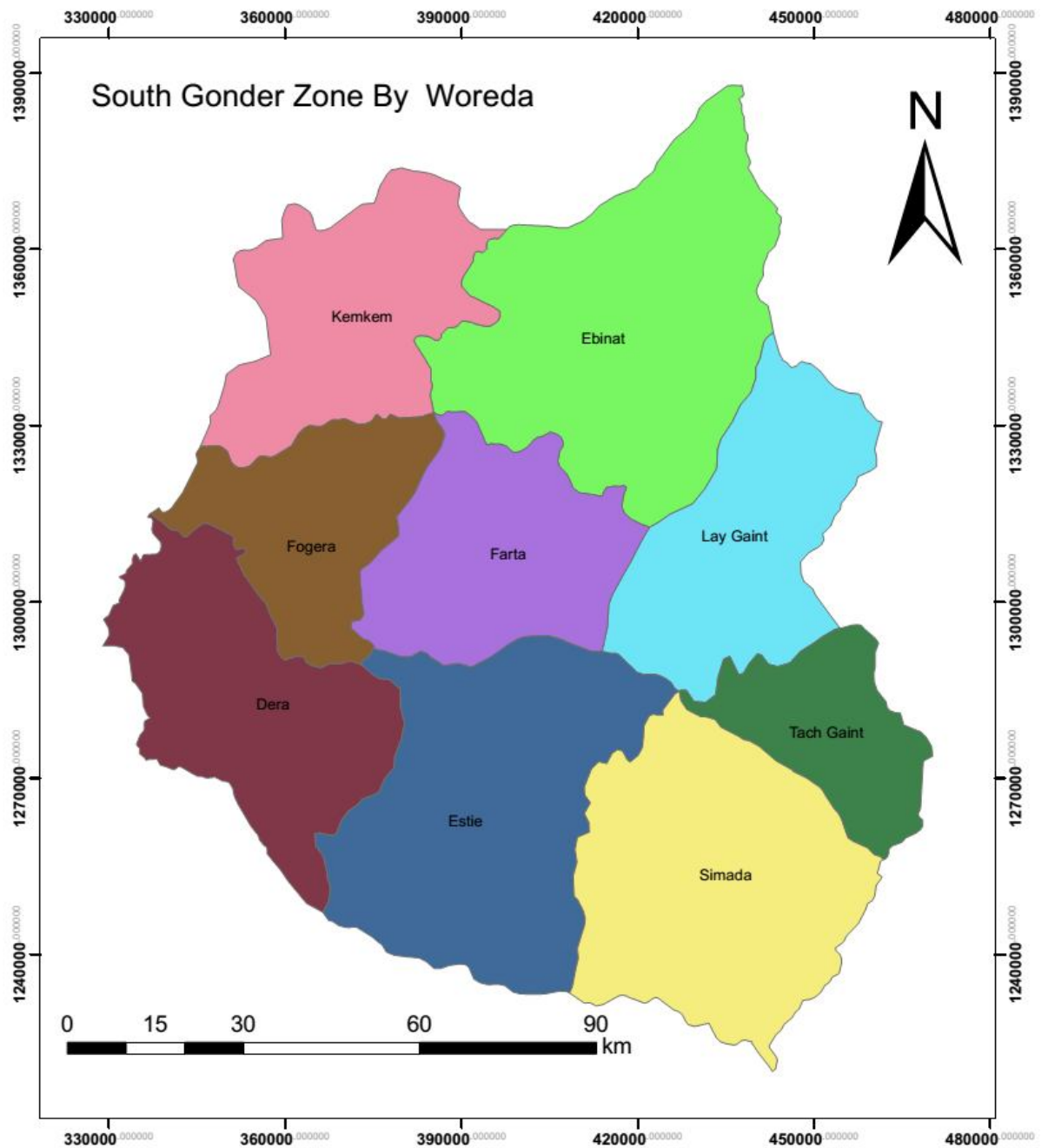


Figure 2: Maps of South (Dehub) Gondar Divided by 9 Administrative Weredas.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ GIS Lab

3.2.Population

Originally the Awra Amban community members were not from the same group; rather they were gathered from different background of the Amhara region.²²⁰ As per Solomon, the population of the study community is from diverse religious, cultural and ethnic background, most of them are from peasant communities in the same region.²²¹ The majority of the founders have Muslim background. In addition, most of the founders were born and raised there. Geographically speaking, the majority of the founders' origin is around Fogera *Wereda Kebeles* such as *Woji-Arba Amba Kebele* and its adjacent *Woreda* such as *Libokemkem*.²²²

The community is willing to welcome new members if they accept the values, principles and philosophy of the community.²²³ The newcomers are also expected to accept the human dignity, division of labour based on capacity rather gender, caring of elderly people and gender equality. The age of a new member should be more than 18 years.²²⁴ However, Joumard stated that, even if individuals want to join the community, members of the community are very reluctant to welcome new members due to lack of enough space for work.²²⁵

Moreover, the current demographic figure of the community is 482 persons of whom 249 are women and 233 are men.²²⁶ Looking at the demographic feature of the community, the number of females' is higher than males'. "The average family size at household level is closer to four that ranges from one to seven".²²⁷

The community is founded by a visionary man called Zumra Nuru. He was born on August 21, 1947 in *Simada Wereda* of South Gondar. His mother is from the same

²²⁰ Yonas Mekonnen (2009): *Childrearing Practices in Awra Amba Community (Focus on Emotional and Behavioral Challenges in Infancy Development)*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate, Dept, Special Needs Education, MA Thesis, p.26.

²²¹ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.28; See, Robert Joumard... supra note 216, p.23.

²²² *Ibid*

²²³ See, Fogera *Woreda* Culture and Tourism Office... supra note 206, p.7.

²²⁴ *Ibid*

²²⁵ Robert Joumard (2010): *Awra Amba: An Ethiopian Utopia: According to the Web*: Lyon, France, p.2.

²²⁶ The Awra Amba community Information Center, 2014. The total population size counted in 2006 E.C by Awra Amba community members themselves.

²²⁷ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.31.

Wereda while his father is from Wollo.²²⁸ After the death of his father, he traveled in-to different areas such as Debre Markos (Gojjam), Feres Bet (Gojjam), Dessie (Wollo), Simada (South Gondar), Dera and Fogera (South Gondar) in order to get followers to realize his thoughts. Finally, he got peoples who share his ideas and philosophy in the present residence Sinko village Fogera *Wereda Alem Ber Kebele*.²²⁹

3.3. Economy

The community has created different means of income to alleviate poverty that affected its members due to scarcity of arable land. In this case they diversified the source of income towards trade, weaving, milling, shopping and tourism.²³⁰ As per Joumard, “The cooperative owns a weaving workshop, a mill, shops, and an Isuzu truck. Weaving is the first sources of the cooperative’s income then trade, then milling, and finally the truck”.²³¹

As Yassin cited in Joumard however, there is a scarcity of agricultural land, the community is partially engaged in agricultural work during wet season-since the community undertakes weaving during dry season.²³² “When the area of grassland are included, we get a surface farm land per Awra Amba household of about 0.16 ha or 0.41 ha, whereas the figure for the *Wereda* is 2.1ha: Awra Amba is far to be able to live from its land”.²³³

The main agricultural products of the community during wet season are maize, *teff* and beans (*bollokie*). Among these productions *teff* and beans (*bollokie*) are the lowest, while maize is relatively better.²³⁴ But, the result of agricultural products are insufficient to feed

²²⁸ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.1; See, Yonas Mekonnen... supra note 220, p.26.

²²⁹ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.29-30.

²³⁰ See, Fogera *Woreda* Culture and Tourism Office... supra note 206, p.7.

²³¹ Robert Joumard (2010): *An Ethiopian Utopia*: Lyon, France, p.7.

²³² See, Robert Joumard... supra note 216, p.44; See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.38.

²³³ Robert Joumard (2012): *Awra Amba: A Current Experiment of Utopian Socialism*: Bron, France, p.29.

²³⁴ *Ibid*

four five or family members. Thus, they are obliged to buy agricultural consumption products.²³⁵

3.4. Different Values and Principles of Awra Amba Community

3.4.1. Gender Equality

In different section of societies the role of men and women is different as a result of religious beliefs, cultures and norms. However, in Awra Amba community the role of men and women is identical. There is no pervasive gender disparity in relation to leadership, decision-making, marriage, self administration and distribution of property.²³⁶ As per, Solomon no one has authority over the other between the two sexes. There is also no patricentric unit.²³⁷ Women and men have equal rights regardless of any distinction. Further, there is no gender based division of labour between the sexes. Women engage in activities considered for men such as plowing, milling, harvesting and weaving. Similarly, men engage in tasks which are assigned for women in neighboring societies, such as cooking, baking *enjera*, spinning and taking care of children.²³⁸

In a similar fashion, female children have equal protection, respect and rights as male children. There is no mistreatment of female children.²³⁹ Both are equally treated and access the community services including education. In most cases, in Awra Amba community every member is equally treated without any variations.²⁴⁰

3.4.2. Religion

The community does not believe in religious sects. Members of the community are not followers of the world religions. They do not also believe in expressing religious practices in holy places like Church or Mosque.²⁴¹ Further, they do not have religious rites like Christmas, Easter, *Alfeter* and Epiphany. Moreover, the community does not

²³⁵ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.39.

²³⁶ Solomon Ambawu (2011): *Zumra's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*: Addis Ababa University, College of Social Science and Humanities, Dept, Philosophy, BA Senior Essay, p.32.

²³⁷ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.39.

²³⁸ See, Yonas Mekonnen ... supra note 220, p.28.

²³⁹ *Ibid*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*

²⁴¹ See, Abebaw Yirga... supra note 207, p.48.

undertake commemoration for the dead such as *Arba*, *Semania*, *Sedoka* as Christians and Muslims do.²⁴²

The community does not have religion but faith or belief. They believe in the existence of supernatural force or creator of earth and heaven. They do not give a name for this supernatural force like the Christians God or Muslims Allah.²⁴³ But, they accept prayer for the creator individually. *“According to Zumra, prayers are an expression of feelings and interests towards the creator. Praying in heart enables a person to communicate with the creator. Praying should be a right attitude of heart comprising faith and humility. Private praying directly to creator is important than a group praying. Praying heartily also is necessary to bring something good from the creator. One can address his prayers to the creator at any where”*.²⁴⁴

3.4.3. Funeral Ceremony

The Awra Amba community has funeral ceremony different from the rest of the surrounding communities. The number of people who bury a dead person is also different. Yet, the number of assigned persons for burial depends on the age of the deceased.²⁴⁵ For instance, if the deceased is a child the number would be 3 up to 4 persons. But, if it is old or an adult, it would be 6 up to 7 people. Nevertheless, there is no agreed rule for the number of people who bury the dead. Until the accomplishment of the funeral ceremony, peoples, including the family of the deceased, wait at home.²⁴⁶

Mourning and funeral services are considered as harmful traditional practices in Awra Amba community. *“Zumra indicated that assisting others at the time of sickness is more emphasized than expressing deep mourning much after death. The main ethical argument of Zumra on funeral ceremony is that immediately after the funeral ceremony is over every person including the family who lost their member comes back to their work. The community believes in strongly supporting each other before any problem occurs.*

²⁴² *Ibid*, p.48.

²⁴³ See, Solomon Ambawu... supra note 236, p.24.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.24.

²⁴⁵ See, Abebaw Yirga... supra note 207, p.51.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.51.

*According to Zumra, sorrow is morally wrong after the death of a person, because, no person returns the life of deceased person’.*²⁴⁷

According to Solomon, the community mourns a maximum of one evening so as to treat the deceased family through joke and conversation. Even so, the community does not allow accepting new comers for mourning after burial in another day; they do not express the mourning in a tent. After burial, the community members including the family of deceased go back to their daily routines.²⁴⁸

3.5. Social Organizations

The community has developed different social structures. The structure is related to membership. There are two kinds of membership structures. The first membership is called community membership: in which the members’ share the idea and philosophy of the community, either inside or outside of the compound. They are also responsible to spread and implement the values and principles of the community but with the absence of participating and sharing the communist’s task and benefits.²⁴⁹ The second membership is called union membership/cooperative membership: in which the members are expected to reside inside the compound and accept the values and principles of the community, participate in all activities within boundary and finally share the benefits.²⁵⁰ The cooperative membership is eligible for those who are living in the geographic boundary of the community.²⁵¹

In addition, the community has organized itself in-to 13 different committees of a local administrative structure to solve problems and leading a good life inside the community. The committees have their own authority and responsibility to deal numerous concerns and activities in the community.²⁵² “Hierarchically, the committees are composed of one main committee i.e. the development committee and 12 other sub-committees. All of the

²⁴⁷ See, Solomon Ambawu... supra note 236, p. 30.

²⁴⁸ See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p.70.

²⁴⁹ See, Abebaw Yirga... supra note 207, p.47.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.47.

²⁵¹ Eskinder Teferi (2012): *The Role of Gender Equality in Promoting Peace and Development: The Case of Awra Amba Community in Fogera Woreda of Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Institute of Peace and Security, MA Thesis, p.55.

²⁵² *Ibid*, p.51.

sub- committees have horizontal relationship with the others and are autonomous in their own justifications”.²⁵³

In order to check and control of the duties of leading committee (development committee), there are two immediate committees. Members of the community elect representatives for each committee by a show of hands. “The most important decisions are voted by the adults older than 18”.²⁵⁴ The process of election is based on the free consent of the members which is called democratic election.²⁵⁵ The election process also takes places in every three years. The elected person has 3 years term in power for all committees. There is no time limit for a person to stay in power, as long as he/she gets the majority vote. In other words, there is a re-election process repeatedly if a person secures the majority vote.²⁵⁶

The criterion for persons to be elected to join the committees is educational and management skills. “*Practically individuals are selected on the basis of their merits like education (at least those who can read and write), skills (like management and interpersonal skills), exposure to the regional city and other towns, previous experience as committee members, etc*”.²⁵⁷ However, there is no election campaign. This is because; “*there are no any special benefits and privileges extended from the various committee members. Such members including the chairperson of the development committee, who is also considered as the leader of the community, shoulder the tremendous responsibility and burdens of leadership without salary or any additional wage*”.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ *Ibid*

²⁵⁴ See, Robert Joumard...supra note 225, p.6.

²⁵⁵ See, Eskinder Teferi... supra note 251, p.52.

²⁵⁶ See, Abebaw Yirga... supra note 207, p.47; See, Solomon Atnafu... supra note 209, p. 58.

²⁵⁷ See, Eskiner Teferi... supra note 251, p.52.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*

No	Committees	Responsibility	Executive members
1	Development committee	Coordinating and overseeing all activities done by all sub-committees	5
2	Weekly development committee	Coordinating and managing all members of the community to participate once a week- Tuesday	5
3	Guest reception committee	Receive guests who visit Awra Amba and provide information	4
4	Legislative committee	Make rules and regulations	15
5	Lost and found property storing committee	Store the properties found by members of the community and return back to the owner	3
6	Elderly and orphans care committee	Support the elderly and orphans	5
7	Patients and maternity care committee	Caring for patients and new mothers	5
8	Problem identifying committee	Identify problems	3
9	Complaint resolving committee	Resolve complaints	3
10	Security committee	Safeguarding the community's welfare	3
11	Education committee	Provide educational materials	5
12	Hygiene and sanitation committee	Keeping the village clean	3
13	Field work assigning committee	Assign tasks for community members based on their capacity	3

*Table 1: Social Organization of Awra Amba community with 13 Committees and their tasks.*²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ Awra Amba Community Information Centre. The table format is organized by the researcher himself.

Chapter Four

4. Women's Decision-making Rights in the Household at Awra Amba Community

This chapter presents findings of the study along with a descriptive analysis and summarization of the qualitative data in relation to the major research questions addressed in the study. It specifically presents issues pertaining to decision-making in marriage and family life at Awra Amba community by addressing five major variables of: Women's Reproductive Rights, Sexual Rights, their right to accessing health care services, Women's right to visit their family or friends and economic decision-making. As has been elucidated in chapter one of this thesis, these are part of the major variables used to understand and address women's rights in the community. Those variables were purposively selected as major and integral part of this thesis. In this research it is difficult to cover all rights of women because of lack of time and the notion of rights are broad. For the researcher the five variables are outstanding since women experience them in their daily life. Besides, women daily bases their decisions on major household issues such as reproductive matters, sexual intercourses, movements to access health services or visiting family and financial matters.

4.1. Marriage and Family life at Awra Amba Community

Marriage and family life are intertwined. Marriage is an institution which “offers both an antidote to loneliness and the potential for enduring, supportive intimacy. A good marriage gives each partner a dependable companion, a secure and comfortable lover, an intimate friend”.²⁶⁰ The UDHR also explains the essence of family as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state”.²⁶¹ Inherently, decision-making on different issues affecting the lives of married couples is part and parcel of marriage life. In such a situation, men and women are

²⁶⁰ David G. Mayers and Letha Dawson Scanzonzi (2005): “What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage”, p.17: Accessed from: <http://www.thedivineconspiracy.org/Z5223R.pdf>, November 12, 2014.

²⁶¹ See, Major Human Rights Instruments: A Selected Collection, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16(3), published with the support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vienna, Austria.

defined as actors to take part in the decision-making process under different international human rights instruments. Hence, the study investigated decision-making participation of women at the household level in the Awra Amba community.

As a way of addressing and understanding the theme under discussion, the researcher looked at the overall family structure in the study area which gives an insight into the different roles assigned to members of given family among the Awra Amba community. In Awra Amba community marital relationship is based on free consent of the couple. Neither family nor community leaders intervene while the couples enter into marriage. This is consistent with one of the earlier studies by Abebaw who quoted Zumra “though I am the leader of the community, I have no any role or influence in choosing a girl to a boy or a boy to a girl”.²⁶²

Thus, it is only if the woman is interested in her male counterpart that she accepts the marriage proposal. The community’s rule also allows women to engage in marriage life based on their own preferences. In the same vein, females can send a marriage proposal to the one they fall in love with. Yet, the community in this regard has set forth age limitation for women and men to enter into marriage. Females should be at the age of 19 years and above whereas males should be 20 years and above.²⁶³ This is because the community believes that the couples will be mature enough when they reach the minimum age limit set by the community.

Such age limitation for female is totally different from the rest of the surrounding communities within the region. For example, “*in Amhara, those women interviewed in the DHS 2005 who were between 45-49 were married, on average, when they were just over 13 and half years old; those who were 20-24 years old were married on average when they were just 15 years old*”.²⁶⁴ Such a minimum age limit set in Awra Amba community, it can be argued, protects young girls and boys from early marriage. In addition, partners are expected to abstain from sexual intercourse before marriage. There is no polygamous marriage in the community.

²⁶² See, Abebaw Yirga... supra note 207, p.49.

²⁶³ Awra Amba Community (2012): *Journey for Peace*: Woreta, p.4.

²⁶⁴ UNICEF (2012): *Investing in Boys and Girls in Ethiopia: Past, Present and Future*: printed in Ethiopia, p.21.

In Awra Amba community if someone wants to get married he/she can send friends, family or elders for mediation. This means, unlike the traditional mode of sending elders from the male families to the bride's parents, in Awra Amba community, both are at liberty to send elders to one another depending on their wishes. If after the mediation the couples decide to get married they are expected to sign a marriage agreement in front of community elders. "The community approves the marriage after three to five older people have verified the minimal age of the young people and their agreement".²⁶⁵ The community does not cherish wedding ceremonies which often ends up in extravagancy or wastage of resources. Instead of spending money on wedding ceremonies, such capital is used as a startup capital for the newly wedded couples.

Informants have accented the point that, in the community household management is the duty of both the husband and wife and there is no concept of household head in the community. Most importantly, their marriage life has no relation with their world view of religion. As Christians, they do not conclude marriage ceremonies in line with Church rules or religious rituals. Since they do not follow any world of religious sect such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and other traditional beliefs, rather they believe on the existence of one supernatural force, their marriage life is concluded in the absence of religious traditions or ceremonies.

In line with the set objectives and questions of the study, different aspects of decision-making participation in the household have been examined. The following sub-sections present those points in detail.

4.1.1. Reproductive Rights

Even though reproductive rights are regarded as one of basic rights, their inclusion in this category of rights is a recent phenomenon.²⁶⁶ "The core issue in reproductive health is the ability of women to have agency and make decisions that shape the course of their lives, such as determination of when to start a family, its size, and-interval between children.

²⁶⁵ See, Robert Joumard... supra note 216, p.52.

²⁶⁶ See, the ICPD, paragraph 7.3.

But it is estimated that, of the 200 million pregnancies each year, approximately 50 percent are unplanned and 25 percent unwanted in a global level”.²⁶⁷

It allows the spouses to pass decisions on reproductive matters such as on the number, timing and spacing of children. By principle, such decisions should be made freely and responsibly without coercion, discrimination and violence. Women also have rights on abortion if it affects their well-being and health.²⁶⁸ As the collected data shows, in Awra Amba community, most spouses (married men and women) have equal decision-making participation regarding reproductive matters. Conversely, as per FDRE Ministry of Health “most Ethiopian women lack the reproductive and social self-determination needed to exercise their reproductive rights – a condition that, in turn, perpetuates their low reproductive health and social status”.²⁶⁹ The reason is that, “social and economic status of women undermines their desire and ability to regulate fertility”.²⁷⁰ In this regard one of the female informants in the study community alluded:

*I have equal decision-making rights regarding reproductive matters as it is a communal issue for both of us. I equally decide with my husband on the number of children I want to have, when to have them (the timing).*²⁷¹

Furthermore, as a way of understanding the existing reproductive rights of women in the community the same question has been posed to male informants. As the collected data shows, most male informants in Awra Amba community along with their female counterparts pass decisions on reproductive matters through compromise. The shared responsibilities of men on reproductive matters can enhance the well-being as well as the health status women. It has also positive effect on the minimization of population growth and poverty reduction. This is because having many children by itself can be threatening the economic well-being of the family. In this regard, the researcher agrees with ILO’s study which is published in 2003 confirmed that “a strong relationship exists in Ethiopia

²⁶⁷ Julie H. Levison and Sandra P. Levison (2002): “Women’s Health and Human Rights” in Marjorie Agosid (ed) (2002): *Women, Gender, and Human Rights: A Global Perspective*: Rutgers University Press, USA, p.144.

²⁶⁸ See, the ICPD, paragraph 7.3.

²⁶⁹ FDRE Ministry of Health (2006): “National Reproductive Health Strategy 2006-2015”, p.4: Accessed from: http://phe-ethiopia.org/admin/uploads/attachment-161-National_RH_strat%5B1%5D.pdf, December 2, 2014.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.12.

²⁷¹ Interview with a female informant (informant 1, female, age 32), March 14, 2014.

between demographic characteristics and the probability of a household being poor”.²⁷² Some of the male informants informed the researcher the following points about shared responsibilities:

*I believe that neither men nor women should independently decide on reproductive matters. Both of them should equally decide on the issue. Any problem that might arise due to pregnancy complications of my wife is of an equal concern to me. Accordingly, the number and timing of children is decided jointly after a discussion is made.*²⁷³

In line with the data obtained from the in-depth interviews, participants in the FGDs also asserted of the equal rights women have in household decision-making participation in reproductive issues. Moreover, the researcher clearly examined the rights of married women at Awra Amba community in relation to the use of contraceptive, as well as right to have an abortion. During the interviews and discussions, the researcher found that most married women have the right to freely use contraceptive methods and condoms. Having rights on the use of contraceptive methods and condom can reduce the family size in particular population growth in general. It is also essential to protect women from sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

However, as a study done by WABEK BON in most part of Ethiopia “knowledge about reproductive rights was equally low among both men and women, due to men’s access to and control over resources; as well as decision-making capacity and their frequent interaction outside of their home sphere, men had better access to services and information with regards to health and HIV/AIDS”.²⁷⁴ Additionally, in most parts of Ethiopia the rights of most women on the use of contraceptive is minimal as a result of “religious belief barring women from using contraception, limited decision making, negotiating power and male’s non-involvement in population issues including using contraception”.²⁷⁵ Some of the female informants mentioned the issues in this manner:

²⁷² World Bank (2004): “Ethiopia: A Country Status Report on Health and Poverty”, p.V: Accessed from: <http://www.crdaethiopia.org/PolicyDocuments/CSR%20on%20Health%20and%20Poverty.pdf>, December 2, 2014.

²⁷³ Interview with a male informant (informant 22, male, age 36), April 2, 2014.

²⁷⁴ WABEK BON Development Consultant PLC (2006): “Ethiopia: Country Gender Profile: Final Report”, p.26: Accessed from: http://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/gender/background/pdf/e06eth.pdf, December 2, 2014.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.27.

*I have the right to use contraceptives. At this moment, I am using a birth control shot (Depo-provera). However, the birth control shot was not that suitable for my health and I started using condom, even if the condom has no sexual satisfaction. My husband is also willing that I use suitable contraceptive.*²⁷⁶

Additionally, the health extension worker witnessed about the freedom of married women on preventive mechanisms such as condom and birth control shot (Depo-provera). Most married women can freely control their own procreation and use any preventive mechanisms they prefer. On the other hand, they have the right to decide when to become pregnant and have children. The community has set a rule to free mothers from any arduous tasks for 90 days after giving birth.²⁷⁷

Besides, abortion is allowed when it endangers the health of mothers. Either it happened due to unplanned pregnancies or other cases. Since, it has effect on women's health. One informant stated; "I have the right to abort if it has any threat on my health".²⁷⁸ As well, the data indicates that married women will not face any resistance from their husbands if they decide to have an abortion. The following quotes capture additional comments shared by informants:

*I did not experience unwanted pregnancy which led to abortion because there is a free discussion and agreement with in the family. I have experienced health problem while I gave birth after a three year interval. But this is not due to unwanted pregnancy but it was just unfortunate circumstance.*²⁷⁹

*I have aborted twice while I was eight and two months pregnant respectively. Since, it has effect on my health. But, my husband did not refuse me not to abort. Rather he took me in to health-care services. Then I get cured.*²⁸⁰

As the findings of the study attest, most married women are not forced by their husbands to have many children. Moreover, unwanted pregnancy did not affect the life of most women. This is because; there is a communication between husbands and wives. However, some women have faced health problems due to pregnancy complication or abortion. This is not as a result of unwanted pregnancy rather unfortunate circumstances.

²⁷⁶ Interview with a female informant (informant 6, female, age 28), March 17, 2014).

²⁷⁷ Fogera Woreda Culture and Tourism Office (2003 E.C): *The Awra Amba Community Establishment: Woreta*, p.8.

²⁷⁸ Interview with a female informant (informant 3, female, age 29), March 14, 2014.

²⁷⁹ Interview with a female informant (informant 1, female, age 32), March 14, 2014).

²⁸⁰ Interview with a female informant (informant 14, female, age 36), March 28, 2014.

The non-existence of abortion due to unwanted pregnancy can safeguard the health status of women and make them happy throughout their life. Such progress is also positively contributes for the development of women's health status in a given country. However, as Abdela indicated, abortion is a cause for the death of many women in Ethiopia “the major causes of maternal deaths in Ethiopia are similar to most developing countries: infection, hemorrhage, obstructed labor, abortion and hypertension in pregnancy”.²⁸¹

Moreover, when asked one of the key informants such as Fogera *Woreda* Women, Children and Youth Affair officer stated that Awra Amba community is different from the surrounding communities on the promotion and protection of gender equality. This may be an exemplary for other societies in order to empower women and protect their rights especially reproductive matters. The comment is:

*While I am working in the gender office I observed that the Awra Amba community is different in the district of Fogera. There is no male domination at all. Women have equal rights with men in all matters including reproductive issues.*²⁸²

Therefore, it can be argued that, most married women in Awra Amba community have rights on reproductive issues including passing decision on the number and timing of their children. They have also rights to freely use contraceptive methods and condom. Likewise, they are at liberty to pass decision in the case of abortion if it endangers their life. Along with women, men are also expected to share household responsibilities and burdens in relation to reproductive roles such as child bearing and child rearing. However, Awra Amban community's experience on sharing of reproductive roles such as child bearing by men is different from other Ethiopian societies. For instance, a study done by Meron on Gumuz society indicated that, “the biological and generational reproductive roles are natural to women and it is only them who should feed, care for,

²⁸¹ Ahmed Abdela (2010): *Maternal Mortality Trend in Ethiopia*: Addis Ababa University, Medical Faculty, Dept, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Ethiop. J. Health Dev, Addis Ababa, p.117.

²⁸² Interview with key informant, Fogera *Woreda* Women, Children and Youth Affair officer, a female, age 26, March 28, 2014.

and socialization their children. The Gumuz consider these tasks as exclusive roles of women and the dominants, which are reserved for women”.²⁸³

4.1.2. Sexual Rights

Sexual right is a recent discourse which includes the sexual health of women.²⁸⁴

*The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality including free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relation including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behavior and its consequences.*²⁸⁵

Like reproductive matters, informants provided their experience about sexual matters. Sexuality is not only a discourse but also it is a human desire. As the data shows, most married women at Awra Amba community freely and responsibly decide on sexual matters and its consequences. The couple’s responsible decisions on sexual matters can improve the well-being and health status of women. Since responsible decision on sexual matters and its consequences is a source of extenuating unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDS. The following statement reflects on the nature of sexual rights in the Awra Amba community:

*I have freedom to decide on sexual matters. If I want to make sex I can ask him. Since the community set forth the rights of women as equal with men to discuss in all household matters. Sex is a gift of creator. So, I try to satisfy him while he desired it and he also fulfill my sexual desire.*²⁸⁶

Many informants during the in-depth interviews asserted the autonomy of women vis-à-vis sexual intercourse. In Awra Amba community, most women are equal in sexual matters. They can decide when and how to have sex. The cultural norm of the community allows spouses to express their sexual feeling each other with the absence of shame. They

²⁸³ Meron Zeleke (2005): *The Socio-Economic Role and Status of Gumuz Women*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Social Anthropology, MA Thesis, p.61.

²⁸⁴ Sonia Correa *et.al*, (ed) (2008): *Sexuality, Health and Human Rights*: Routledge, London and New York, p.170.

²⁸⁵ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 96.

²⁸⁶ Interview with a female informant (informant 14, female, age 36), March 28, 2014.

also believed that sex is a common good for sexual partners. But in most parts of societies in Ethiopia talking on sexual matters is considered as taboo and shame.

Regarding refusal to have sex, one of the female informants stated “*on several occasions I have refused to have sexual intercourse with my husband. Those instances were when I am tired and felt unwell. Since, I do not have sexual desire at such circumstances. He also understands me*”.²⁸⁷ Accordingly, the researcher tried to know if there are cases of violence directed against married women due to refusal to have sex. But, as the data shows, in Awra Amba community, the majority of married women have not faced sexual violence such as marital rape. The following statement explicitly highlights the absence of marital rape or forced sex:

*I am telling you since we have discussion and believe on it, forced sex does not happen. Unless I am willing to make sexual intercourse, he never tries to force me. I think rape or forced sex happens if there is no internal unity among the husband and wife. My husband understands me when I refuse to have sex.*²⁸⁸

Hence, the collected data indicated the absence of marital rape or forced sex. Marital rape or forced sex is a socially condemned act. This is a result of the community’s cultural norms. And also it stems from the inherent care that exists between the spouses. The absence of marital rape is one step to struggle violence against women particularly wife beating. This is because, sometimes husbands desire to have sexual intercourse with the dearth of their wives’ consent and then the refusal to have sex may leads to domestic violence such as beating and rape. Most informants argued that women may refuse to have sex with their husbands while they are engaged in a busy environment and become tired. Similarly, according to Yohannes in Ethiopia, “overall, 60% of women agree with all reasons for refusing sex in most parts of Ethiopia. Again, women with higher education, urban women, the richest women, women with exposure to media, and women employed for cash are more likely than others to agree with reasons of refusing sex”.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Interview with a female informant (informant 13, female, age 38), March 26, 2014.

²⁸⁸ Interview with a female informant (informants 3, female, age 29), March 14, 2014.

²⁸⁹ Yohannes Dibaba (2013): *Women’s Autonomy and Reproductive Healthcare-Seeking Behavior in Ethiopia*: DHS Working Papers, Published by USAID, Calverton, Maryland, USA, p.18.

As per *Kebele* official and Women's affair, there were no pervasive measures reported by most married women in relation the experience of domestic violence, such as beating, threatening, abuse and psychological attack as a result of marital rape. According to, Merhatsidik "not many people in the entire membership of the community somehow locked up in a serious familial dispute of one sort or another are more inclined to frequently visit the nearby *Kebele* Social *Shengo* and the civilian bench of the *Woreda* court in search of appropriate remedies, otherwise available to them by these alternative institutions of their own making".²⁹⁰ The following reflects informants' comments in relation to complaints:

*My husband does not beat me due to refusal to have sex. I have not also gone to the police station, court or even complaint hearing committee of the community. Since we maintain our life through free communication, such has not been a problem for us. And we accept the principles of gender equality of the community.*²⁹¹

*We have never received complaints from victims either due to refusal of sex or in any case from the whole of family matters. However, the community has established a complaint hearing committee for any eventuality of complaints that might arise in the future.*²⁹²

As per key informants, domestic violence such as wife beating or conflict is widely condemned. This is the result of the cultural settings and practices of the Awra Amba community. The researcher agrees with the UNDP's report which says, many women worldwide have faced violence from their partners and this has lead to illness up-to death. Most women also have suffered from pregnancy complications, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDS as a result of sexual violence.²⁹³

To sum up, the findings show that the existence of gender equality in Awra Amba community is quite different from the surrounding communities. The majority of married women have equal rights in relation to sexual intercourse decision-making participation

²⁹⁰ Merhatsidik Mekonnen (2009): *The Wisdom of Mediating Family Disputes in the Awra Amba Community*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate, Dept, Institutes of Peace and Security, MA Thesis, p.80.

²⁹¹ Interview with a female informant (informant 7, female, age 28), March 18, 2014.

²⁹² Interview with a compliant hearing committee, April 16, 2014.

²⁹³ UNDP (2005): *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*: Earthscan, UK and USA, p.15.

including when and how to have sex. Even if many married women refuse to have sex their husbands did not try to force/rape them. There is no prevalent domestic violence or conflict among husband and wife due to the refusal to have sex. The community believes that conflict leads to divorce. But, it should be based on valid reason. One of the key informants stated, divorce may occur when there is sexual intercourse related problem, sterility and unremitting nagging among the couples.²⁹⁴ In other expression, sterility, sexually related problem and chronic nagging are valid reasons to lead to divorce. Regarding conflict and divorce, one of the key informants stated:

*While am living in Awra Amba community, I have seen some divorce due to sexual related problems. In this case, not more than three persons have got divorced. But I do not know the exact date. In my guess, it is around 1970s E.C. Finally, they entered into division of common property through Kebele officials.*²⁹⁵

It is valid to argue that, married women at Awra Amba community have different experience that of the surrounding communities on sexual matters. This is because they freely speaking on sexual intercourse with their husbands without shame. In effect, they deconstructed traditional norms which are affected the status of women on sexual matters among others forced sex or marital rape and shaming of sexual communication.

4.1.3. The Right to Accessing Health-Care Services

Accessing health care services independently is a basic human right especially for women.²⁹⁶ Unfortunately, many women in developing countries lack the chance to access health care services independently due to different factors.²⁹⁷ Freedom of movement is necessary for women to access health facilities. But the social settings do not allow women to independently access it, especially, in traditional patriarchal societies.²⁹⁸ Women's limited power on decision-making to access health services has resulted negative impacts on their health.²⁹⁹ However, not all social settings foster the suppression

²⁹⁴ Interview with a key informant community elder, male, age 31, April 17, 2014. The age of the elder is counted since he joined the community or Zumra Nuru. Because he believes that my real life is began when I met him.

²⁹⁵ Interview with a key informant community elder, male, age 31, April 17, 2014.

²⁹⁶ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 90.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, paragraph 92.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*

of women; some of them are women friendly. As the data gathered illustrates, the culture of Awra Amba community is friendly for women mainly to access health care services independently. Most informants stated that they can freely decide on accessing health care services. The following statement affirmed the decision-making rights of women on accessing health care services:

*I can autonomously decide to access health care services. But I should not go alone due to different reasons such as fear of attack from surrounding communities. It is difficult even for males to go alone.*³⁰⁰

As stated above, most Awra Amban community women have the right to freely decide on accessing health care services. Like other family matters, the couples also discuss on independently accessing health services far from their residence. Nevertheless, due to fear of attack from neighboring communities, members of the community such as women cannot go alone to access health services. As one of the key informants stated, “*The neighboring communities discriminate members of the Awra Amba community because the later do not have religious belonging*”.³⁰¹ Such underlying tensions between Awra Amba community and the surrounding communities creates frustration and deep rooted fear on both men and women to travel without company. The researcher agrees with Abebaw’s prior study, “the Awra Ambans may have a better relationship than the previous years, but what the surrounding communities and Zumra himself asserted can be a witness for the existence of insincere and unpleasant relationship. For example, the way they burry is one of the matters that are hated by the surrounding communities”.³⁰²

Regarding permission of accessing health care services most women have not faced denial to autonomously decide on the issue. In this regard, one female informant stated, “*I can independently access health service everywhere. But I should inform him. Otherwise, he may refuse the idea unless I inform him. In this regard, I accessed condoms, contraceptive methods and other medical drugs independently*”.³⁰³ On the

³⁰⁰ Interview with a female informant (informant 2, female, age 34), March 14, 2014.

³⁰¹ Interview with Woji-Arba Amba Kebele official, a male, age 32, April 8, 2014.

³⁰² Abebaw Yirga (2007): *The Cross-cultural Experiences of the Awra Amba Community Children at Primary School: Implications for Multicultural Education*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate, Dept, Education in Multicultural and Multilingual Education, MA Thesis,p.63 and 65.

³⁰³ Interview with a female informant (informant 7, female, age 28), March 18, 2014.

contrary, a study done by Yohannes, in different parts of Ethiopia most women have experienced low decision-making power on accessing health services including a big problem to get permission from their husbands. “The odds of receiving antenatal care from a health professional are 34% higher for women who say that permission to go for medical care is not a big problem compared with women who say that getting permission is a big problem”.³⁰⁴

Likewise, during FGD, participants clearly stated their equal status with men in relation to health matter decision-making participation. As the data indicates women should inform their husband while they want to visit health care service. But if the health problem is serious, she may decide unilateral access to the health service. Since the health problem is urgent and needs timely treatment. Otherwise, it leads to conflict.

Additionally, several married women at Awra Amba community have not experienced violence due to accessing health care services autonomously. They did not also take serious measures against their husbands. The existence of gender equality among men and women fosters the health status and well-being of women where they independently access health services without discrimination. Discrimination against women to access health-care services on the use of contraceptive, antenatal care and other treatments on serious disease is an immediate cause for the death of women. In this regard, the researcher agrees with UNFPA’s report which is, “high maternal mortality is associated with inadequate and poor-quality maternal health-care”.³⁰⁵

In summary, most women have rights to independently accessing health care services. Even if there is a chance to access medical treatments freely, women at Awra Amba community cannot go alone to access them due to fear of attacks from surrounding communities. Several married women have not experienced refusal from the side of their husbands. Besides, there is no pervasive measure reported for concerned bodies due to refusal of accessing health facilities.

³⁰⁴ See, Yohannes Dibaba... supra note 289, p.21.

³⁰⁵ UNFPA (2012): *Trends in Maternal Health In Ethiopia: Challenges in Achieving the MDG for Maternal Mortality: In-depth Analysis of EDHS 2000-2011*: Addis Ababa, p.32.

Chapter Five

5. Women's Decision-making Rights on Mobility and Financial Matters

5.1. Women's Decision-making Rights on Visiting One's Own Relatives or Friends

The right to freedom of movement is recognized under different international human right instruments. Among others, the ICCPR under article 12(1) states “Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence”.³⁰⁶ Freedom of movement is necessary for individuals, mainly women, to visit their own family or friends. Unfortunately, many women in traditional societies of Ethiopia are denied of such basic right.³⁰⁷ In other words, most rural married women cannot decide freely to visit their own family, particularly those who are living in Ethiopia.³⁰⁸ As the collected data reveals, most married women at Awra Amba community have different experience regarding decisions on mobility than that of the surrounding communities. The following statement explicitly shows the experience of women at Awra Amba community regarding their right to visit their family and friends:

*I can visit my family who are found in Woreta and Alem ber. But I should inform my husband as well as the community. If he refuses the idea I could not visit them. I should also get permission from the community members if there is an urgent issue. Otherwise, wasting the working time of community is bad. And also sharing the benefit without equally participating in the community work is evil for me. Or else,-I can go by the leisure time that I have once a week, Sunday.*³⁰⁹

Even if most women in the community have the freedom to move they cannot simply move whenever they feel like it. There should be two conditions fulfilled. One is getting permission from the community members. This is for the reason that the Awra Amba community leads a communal life which is different from the rest of residents in Fogera

³⁰⁶ See, the ICCPR, article 12(1).

³⁰⁷ Ramzi Mabsout (2009): *Capability and Health Functioning in Ethiopian Households*: Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, p.15.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*

³⁰⁹ Interview with a female informant (informant 1, female, age 32), March 14, 2014.

district. The community members are working together throughout the whole week except for Sunday. In this regard, women can visit their family or friends in their leisure time including Sunday. Since wasting the working time is forbidden in the community and considered as evil.

The second condition set is women should communicate with their men counterparts regarding mobility. Since communication among husband and wife strengthens the healthy interaction of the family. One of the informants stated *“I have never decided to visit my family without communicating the information. Because, I believe that visiting family without discussion will result in conflict. So, communication is important to settle the family matters and prevent conflict”*.³¹⁰ Freedom of movement is vital for women so as to get education and life experience beyond their residence area. It is also important to access health service such as contraceptive, condom and antenatal care in order to protect one’s own health. Besides, the researcher agrees with Yohannes’s argument on freedom of movement which is, *“permission to seek medical care is significantly associated with both ever-uses of modern contraception and antenatal care use, even after adjusting for socio-demographic factors. Women’s freedom of movement is important to use of reproductive health-care services”*.³¹¹

In addition, most married women at Awra Amba community have not faced refusal to their right of mobility from their husbands. They did not also experience low decision-making power on mobility. During FGD, male participants stated *“since we are leading a communal life when she wants to go somewhere she must get permission because she may face certain problems out there. We believe that our relatives should be visiting us rather than we visiting them, in order for them to share our experiences”*.³¹²

As stated above, most married women in Awra Amba community did not face domestic violence such as beating, insulting and threatening caused by household decision-making. Furthermore, during FGD female participants mentioned that they did not face violence from their husbands. So, it is valid to argue that most married women at Awra Amba

³¹⁰ Interview with a female informant (informant 6, female, age 28), March 17, 2014.

³¹¹ See, Yohannes Dibaba... supra note 289, p.23.

³¹² FGD, male participants, April 15, 2014.

community have equal rights with men in relation to household matters. They are jointly deciding in most household matters. Most women can freely decide to visit their family and friends with permission from their husbands and community members. Yet, a study done by Alemthsehay and Kerebih in North-West Ethiopia argued, “regarding on perception of husbands and community on visiting families or freedom of movement or female involving in the social events/works, majority of the respondents pointed out as it is unacceptable by the husbands and the community as well. In this community involving in the social work even some jobs (chair person of *Ekub*, *Eder*, *Kebele* member, women affairs) considered as activities which are left for widowed or divorced women”.³¹³

As a member of the community, they should get permission from the members. As married women they should communicate with their husbands. They do not however experience refusal and violence. If that is not the case, two things would happen; conflict with the husband and taking away from the community. One of the rules of the community says a person can be erased from the community if he/she is not willing and timely performing the community tasks. Finally, he/she is not recovering from their fault after receiving an advice.³¹⁴

As a principle, the community members accept all human beings as brothers and sisters. In Awra Amba community, humanity has great value rather than a particular kinship. Even if there is freedom to visit one’s own relatives or friends some of the informants do not accept the idea for such kind of visitation. Rather, they need to be visited by them in order to share Awra Amban community experiences.

5.2. Financial Decision-Making

Economic right is recognized under different human right instruments. Among others, the ICESCR under article 3 states “the State Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and

³¹³ Alemthsehay Mekonnen and Kerebih Asrese (2014): *Household Decision-making Status of Women in Dabat District, North-West Ethiopia, 2009 GC*: Bahir Dar University, Science Journal of Public Health. Vol. 2, No. 2, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, p.115.

³¹⁴ Fogera Woreda Culture and Tourism Office (2003 E.C): *The Awra Amba Community Establishment*: Woreta, p. 7.

cultural rights set forth in the present Covenant”.³¹⁵ It includes the right to participate in financial decision-making at the household. But in most part of the world, most women are marginalized from economic decision-making.³¹⁶ Women should exercise their economic rights by equally participating with their male counterparts on financial decision-making at the household. As the collected data indicates, most women in Awra Amba community properly exercise their economic decision-making rights at the household. Economic decision-making in the household includes the right to participate on large and small household purchases, selling of agricultural products and properties, land and land related issues. When one of the informants was asked about large household purchases stated:

*Before passing decision we prepare a discussion on what we should be buying. Then either my husband or I can go to the market to purchase household consumption such as teff. In addition we have built a house in 1999 E.C with the expense of 8000 ETB.*³¹⁷

It can be argued that many women at Awra Amba community have equal decision-making participation in financial matters, particularly in large household purchases. Like reproductive health and mobility matters the Awra Amban couples base their decisions on discussion for financial matters. As per the community founder in Awra Amba community, priority is given to ideas rather than simple engagement in manual or laborious work. *“Equality of ideas designates the equality of person but non gender based division of labour cannot designate equality among person particularly men and women”*.³¹⁸ Both men and women engage in different kinds of activities based on their ability rather than sex.

In a similar fashion, women in Awra Amba community equally participate with their men counterparts in small household purchases. When one of the female informants asked about small household purchases stated that “everything is decided based on the free

³¹⁵ See, ICESCR, article 3.

³¹⁶ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 150.

³¹⁷ Interview with a female informant (informant 4, female, age 27), March 16, 2014.

³¹⁸ Interview with community founder, April 30, 2014.

discussion of the family. Either my husband or I can buy small household purchases such as daily consumption”.³¹⁹

As the data shows, in Awra Amba community there are no discriminatory practices with regard to small and large household purchases. There is no division of power among husband and wife to decide household matters either large household expenditures or small household expenditures. The couples mutually decide on most household matters. The equal participation of women in most household economic matters can enhance the economic well-being of the family. The wise economic decision between men and women has positive effect on the reduction of extravagancy in particular, poverty in general. This is because; one person dominant decision (either male-dominant or female-dominant) may bring negative consequences on the economic well-being of the family unless consulting among husbands and wives.

As a result, the researcher indentified the difference between large household and small household expenditures. Large household expenditures are buying of weaving machine, plowing machine, bee hives and yearly consumption. Further, medical expenditure and house building expenditure are taken as a large expenditure. On the other hand, daily consumption and small shopping are small household expenditures.

Besides, most women in Awra Amba community equally decide on land and land related issues even if there is a lack of arable land for household level. This is because the government did not distribute arable land for them. The researcher agrees with Yonas’s argument on the shortage of arable land, “members of the Awra Amba community, therefore, were not given agricultural land to cultivate, but instead were pushed in to the most infertile and malaria infested corner of the district”.³²⁰ The following statement provides their assertions for land and land related issues:

We do not have lands owned at household level it is rather communal. The existing land has been used for construction of houses for 482 residents and also serves as an arable

³¹⁹ Interview with a female informant (informant 6, female, age 28), March 17, 2014.

³²⁰ Yonas Mekonnen (2009): *Childrearing Practices in Awra Amba Community (Focus on Emotional and Behavioral Challenges in Infancy Development)*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate, Dept, Special Needs Education, MA Thesis, p.29.

*land for the 141 households. Besides, it serves as grazing area for cattle. Although, there is land for plowing, it is very limited.*³²¹

As the collected data indicates, in Awra Amba community, there is shortage of land for the community in general and for household members in particular. Despite land limitations affecting the economic well-being of the household, most women still participate equally on land and land related issues, which are communally owned. Even if shortage of arable land affects the economic output, the community has wisely shifted to non-agrarian economic activities, such as modern weaving. According to Joumard, “as they cannot live only from agriculture due to soil poverty and scarcity, they diversified their activities to weaving, milling and trade. These activities are conducted mainly within the cooperative, except weaving, of which an important part is made by each family at home and is privately managed”.³²²

Although there is no land which is owned at household level, most women can pass final decisions on what kinds of crops to grow over the communally possessed land. They also make a decision on which kind of properties to be sold and the type of crop to be cultivated on the land. When asked, one informant stated “*there is a yearly discussion about what kinds of crop should be cultivated. In this case, all members of the community equally participate on the discussion*”.³²³ During the FGD female participants also asserted their equal participation on the community’s farming outcomes. The community arranges discussions annually to collect ideas and making-decisions on agricultural matters.

In a nutshell, most married women at Awra Amba community have equally recognized rights to participate on economic matters of the household as well as the community at large. Their equality in decision-making is not limited to small household purchases but it also extends to large household expenditures. Besides, they can decide freely on the selling of household products and properties. As stated above, the members of the community are allowed to engage in private tasks after the working time of communal

³²¹ Interview with a female informant (informant 4, female, age 27), March 16, 2014.

³²² Robert Joumard (2012): *Awra Amba: A Current Experiment of Utopian Socialism*: Bron, France, p.6.

³²³ Interview with a female informant (informant 4, female, age 27), March 16, 2014.

tasks is over. In this case, they engage in private weaving activities, raising hen, and working on bee products.

Hence, most married women can decide freely on those private livelihoods. Even if the community faces land limitations to produce abundant agricultural products, privately they are designed to escape from the limitation via commercial activities such as weaving, shopping, car rent and tourism. In this regard, most women participate on the communal agricultural activities. This includes what kinds of crop should grow and what kind of crops should be sold among the cultivated crops.

As the data clearly shows, most married women in Awra Amba community do not face low decision-making participation regarding economic matters in general within the community and particularly in the household. However, as per Meron, women among the Gumuz society “participate at all levels of productive activities. However they have limited access to dispose the products of their hard work. Women in the society are denied the right of owning valued crops. Women have right of owning those crops for consumption. Men’s decision-making on such market oriented crops starts with earlier stage when the products are kept in granaries”.³²⁴ -Due to lack of economic decision-making participation, most married women have not faced problems throughout their life. As most informants stated, they did not face conflict and reported the same for concerned bodies on economic matters.

5.2.1. Division of Labour

As Yassin cited in Joumard, in different section of societies in Amhara region there are ostracized occupations such as craft and manual activities.³²⁵ But, in Awra Amba community work has great value and respect. They considered it as the “essence of life”.³²⁶ “Work is an answer to poverty, and it is first of all a means of accomplishment

³²⁴ Meron Zeleke (2005): *The Socio-Economic Role and Status of Gumuz Women*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Social Anthropology, MA Thesis, p.68-69.

³²⁵ See, Robert Joumard... supra note 322, p.9.

³²⁶ *Ibid*

and to be involved in the community welfare is a fundamental need rather than a means to meet ones deeds”.³²⁷

There is no gender based division of labor at the household. Men can engage in household tasks usually considered as females activities. Likewise, women engage in activities which are culturally considered as males. In Awra Amba community, while men engage in cooking or baking *enjera* women will on the contrary be engage in plowing, milling, weaving and harvesting. Such non-gender based division of labour is different from among most Ethiopian societies. For example, the researcher agrees with Meron’s argument, “Among the Gumuz men and women have different roles and responsibilities, which in most cases are socially constructed. Women are responsible for all household chores in addition to the support they provide in agriculture and livestock production. There are also some activities that are considered exclusive roles of male and female in the society”.³²⁸ The existence of gender equality is manifested in the way the husband and wife take part on household activities. One of the key informants stated:

*There is no division of labour for female sex and male sex. Rather we believe in the ability of the individual person.*³²⁹

According to Zumra, there is no division of labour based on biological distinction, rather based on ability or capacity. Women and men are equal by nature except their biological and psychological difference.³³⁰ Division of labour for men and women is a social creation rather than something endowed from nature. The separation of work for the two sexes is created by ignorance. Unless people engage in certain tasks there will be dependency.³³¹

The main goal of life for Awra Amba community is work since they believe that it promotes independence. As per Zumra, human existence depends on work otherwise there would be no survival. The community members spend their time working in almost

³²⁷ *Ibid*

³²⁸ See, Meron Zeleke... supra note 324, p.47-48.

³²⁹ Interview with community founder, April 30, 2014.

³³⁰ Solomon Ambawu (2011): *Zumra’s Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*: Addis Ababa University, College of Social Science and Humanities, Dept, Philosophy, BA Senior Essay, p.32.

³³¹ *Ibid*

of the days of the week.³³² There is “no wasteful celebration as Christians or Muslims in the expense of work”. Additionally, the community has rules in which members can perform their private work after they finish the communal work. But, this should not affect the work time of the community.³³³

*According to Zumra, there is no leisure time in Awra Amba community. Because he thinks the community does not have sufficient capital to sustainably develop. They always engage in certain activity until the final goal is achieved. He argued that leisure would come after avoiding poverty and attaining growth. The community members feel happiness in their work activity than rest.*³³⁴

As stated by Solomon, “for the Awra Amba community, work is an occupation or their designation rather than a habit for them, work was not merely a means for the satisfaction of their needs; rather work itself was viewed as a need—probably Awra Amba’s most important need—the satisfaction of which became an end in itself”.³³⁵

In general, the non-existence of gender-based division of labour in Awra Amba community enhances women’s rights in the household particularly in decision-making participation. The equal participation of husband and wife at the household activities without separation of work including equal economic contribution for household management produces power negotiation. The engagements of women in economic activities contribute for their decision-making participation at the household. It reduces the domination of women by men.

³³² See, Solomon Ambawu... supra note 330, p.33; Solomon Atnafu (2005): *Social Transformation among the Awra Amba Community (North-western Ethiopia, Amhara Region): Changes in Gender Roles and Values*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Social Anthropology, MA Thesis, p.49.

³³³ *Ibid*, p.33; *Ibid*, p.52.

³³⁴ See, Solomon Ambawu... supra note 330, p.33.

³³⁵ Solomon Atnafu (2005): *Social Transformation among the Awra Amba Community (North-western Ethiopia, Amhara Region): Changes in Gender Roles and Values*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Social Anthropology, MA Thesis, p.48.

Chapter Six

6. Conclusion

The study addressed women's decision-making rights at the household by analyzing the specific case of Awra Amba community. For this purpose, firstly women's decision-making participation on reproductive matters has been examined. Secondly, women's decision-making rights on sexual matters and its consequences were evaluated. Thirdly, women's decision-making rights to access health care services independently have been investigated. Fourthly, women's decision-making rights on visiting one's own family or friends were considered. Fifthly, women's decision-making rights on economic matters were explored. Finally, division of labor at the household has been examined.

According to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that gender equality exists in most household matters in Awra Amba community. This goes in line with the Beijing Declaration paragraph 187 that underscores, equal distribution of decision-making power at all levels is essential for the empowerment of women.³³⁶

The findings also indicate that the Awra Amba community's culture is women friendly; it respect the equality of every member especially men and women. In this community women are relatively emancipated from cultural domination and traditional patriarchal practices. Most married women in the home life have equal rights with their male counterparts. This affirms the provision of CEDAW art 16(1) which says men and women should exercise equal rights without discrimination in marriage and family life.³³⁷

Regarding reproductive matters, most women equally participate with their husbands on the number and timing of children. This is in line with the international human right instruments such as CEDAW article 16(e), Women's Protocol article 14 and ICPD paragraph 7.3. For example ICPD under paragraph 7.3 states "*the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so*".³³⁸ The reproductive

³³⁶ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 187.

³³⁷ See, CEDAW, article 16(1).

³³⁸ See, the ICPD, paragraph 7.3.

role such as child bearing and child rearing is the responsibility of both sexes. This is because there is no sexual division of labor in this community. Men are responsible to control the family size along with women. This is compatible with the ICPD paragraph 4.24 and CEDAW article 5(b) men have shared responsibilities vis-à-vis reproductive matters.³³⁹ Moreover, having large family size by itself can negatively affect the economic well-being of the home life.

There is no male dominance on reproductive matters. Since the community believes in gender equality and decides when and how to have children based on consensus. The rights of women to use pregnancy preventive measure such as contraceptive methods and condom are also respected. This practice confirms the statement of CEDAW and Women's Protocol under article 16(e) and 14 respectively which says women can use pregnancy preventive measures such as condom and family planning.³⁴⁰ As a result, freedom on pregnancy measures sustain married women's reproductive health and their well-being in general.

Furthermore, most women have the right to decide on whether to have an abortion if the pregnancy endangers their health. However, abortion is realized after discussion is held between the spouses. This is consistent with Women's Protocol article 14(2)c "*protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the fetus*".³⁴¹ Husbands also do not refuse their wives to abort if the pregnancy affects them. They do not force their wives to have large family size.

Most Awra Amban women also fully exercise their sexual rights with the absence of pressure. They decide freely and responsibly on sexual matters. They are also free of coercion and violence in relation to sexuality. They also make sexual intercourse based on free consent and sharing of responsibilities for sexual behavior and its consequences. This is in line with the Beijing Declaration "*the human rights of women include their*

³³⁹ See, the ICPD, paragraph 4.24; CEDAW, article 5(b).

³⁴⁰ See, CEDAW, article 16(e); Women's Protocol, article 14.

³⁴¹ See, Women's Protocol, article 14(2)c.

*right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behavior and its consequences”.*³⁴²

Most women also can autonomously ask their husbands when and how to have sex without them feeling ashamed of each other. This explicitly affirms the ICPD paragraph 4.24 *“it is essential to improve communication between men and women on issues of sexuality and reproductive health, and the understanding of their joint responsibilities”.*³⁴³ The majority of husbands do not force/rape their wives while their wives refuse to have intercourse due to different reasons.

Most married women are autonomous in relation to accessing health care services which is far from their place of residence. They can travel to access contraceptive, condom and health treatments after family level discussion is held. This is similar with the international legal instruments such as CEDAW article 12(1) and ICPD paragraph 7.2. For instance, the ICPD states *“the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and child birth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant”.*³⁴⁴ Household discussion is a central issue for this community to reach agreement for most household matters. But most women cannot access such kind of health services on their own due to fear of attack from surrounding communities. To defend such attacks they decide to travel in groups. Many married women do not experience refusal to access health care services autonomously on the side of their husbands.

As the findings of the study disclose, the majority of women have freedom of movement to visit one’s relative and friends. Yet, at the same time they are expected to communicate of this with their husbands and the community members. At this point, international legal instruments do not clearly mention the rights of married women either

³⁴² See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 96.

³⁴³ See, ICPD, paragraph 4.24.

³⁴⁴ See, ICPD, paragraph 7.2.

visiting family or friends rather UDHR and ICCPR under article 13 and article 12 respectively articulate mobility rights for individuals within the jurisdiction of the nation.³⁴⁵ On the one hand, married women's communication with their husbands can solve conflicts within the home life. Moreover, their communication with the community members is essential to lead a fruitful communal life. Since the community is maintaining socialism. Unless women inform the members it is wasting of the working time of the community. Accordingly, to visit their family and friends women should get permission from their husbands and the community members.

As the findings display, most women also exercise their economic rights especially participating on decision-making of financial issues of the household. They equally decide on economic matters such as large and small household expenditure, selling of agricultural products and properties, land and land related issue with their male counterparts. Indeed, the Beijing Declaration mentions "*women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in the decision-making process*".³⁴⁶ But the participation of married women in economic decision-making is different in Awra Amba community. Like other household matters the household members prepare discussion on financial matters. There is no division of power among husband and wife to decide household matters either large or small household expenditures.

Additionally, they equally decide on land and land related issues which are seized communally. Because there is no household level owned arable land, rather land in the community's perception is owned communally. Hence, most women do not face low decision-making problem on economic matters.

There is no also gender-based division of labour at the household level. Women are engaged in tasks which are culturally reserved for men such as plowing, milling, harvesting and weaving. Similarly, men are also engaged in activities traditionally reserved for women such as baking *enjera*, cooking, fetching water and nursing children.

³⁴⁵ See, UDHR, article 13; ICCPR, article 12.

³⁴⁶ See, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 50.

In Awra Amba community activities are performed based on the ability or capability of the individual person and are not based on gender. This brings the economic participation of women and results in women having decision-making power. If women equally contribute for household income then their decision-making participation would be realized.

Generally, most women have not experienced conflict with their counterparts in relation to household decision-making participation. In particular, no pervasive conflicts happen in the home life because of reproductive issues. Violence directed against in most married women does not happen in the home life caused by refusal of sex. They do not experience domestic violence such as beating, threatening, abuse and psychological attack on account of refusal of sexual intercourse. Accordingly, severe attacks have never been reported to the concerned bodies i.e. *Kebele* officials, Women's affair and even for complaint hearing committee of the community. This is because there is a communication among the husband and wife and there is bond of solidarity.

The overall result of this findings and analysis confirms that the cultural norm of Awra Amba community has resulted in gender equality. Particularly, Zumra Nuru (the founder) has highly contributed for the promotion and protection of women's rights on household decision-making participation. He is a male feminist who motivated to bring equality among men and women. He is also a revolutionary to bring gender equality. He revolted against traditional cultural practices that affect the status and well-being of women and patriarchal ideologies. This is similar with one of the previous studies by, Eskinder, "The existing gender relations in the Awra Amba community are emanated from the personal extrospection of the community founder and from his ambitions to establish an alternative community characterized by equality between men and women in all spheres of life".³⁴⁷ There is no pervasive superiority of men and the inferiority of women at Awra Amba community. Most husbands are not dominant in any household matters rather both sexes have equal rights and responsibilities for their household management.

³⁴⁷ Eskinder Teferi (2012): *The Role of Gender Equality in Promoting Peace and Development: The Case of Awra Amba Community in Fogera Woreda of Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia*: Addis Ababa University, School of Graduate Studies, Dept, Institute of Peace and Security, MA Thesis, p.61.

As the findings indicate, Awra Amba community has women friendly cultural norm and practices on the promotion and protection of gender equality. In this regard, most women have equal decision-making rights with their men counterparts that may affect their life. So it is good to share their experience for surrounding communities and other people so as to empower women.

It is therefore argued in this thesis that women's decision-making in the household should be taken as a right, because denial of women's participation at household decision-making matters strongly violates their fundamental rights which are stated under different international human rights instruments such as UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, DEVAW, CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Women's Protocol and ICPD.

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Appendix I: Interview Guidelines

1. Interview Guideline for Married Women at Awra Amba Community

The researcher has designed these questions for an in-depth interview to conduct a research on Women's Decision-making Rights in the Household: A Case Study on Awra Amba Community in Fogera *Woreda*, for the partial fulfillment of MA Degree Award in Human Rights. In order to realize this study your support is necessary. In this regard, genuine answers are very important for the following questions. Additionally, your valid response will be kept secret. It has merely academic purpose. The researcher also will use tape recorder to understand the original account of your response. So, do not hesitate to provide your experience and genuine information.

Name----- **Academic status**-----

Age-----

Place of birth -----

General Information

1. Could you please describe the situation of marriage life in Awra Amba community?
2. How do you see the inherent will of couples to enter in marriage? What is the specific age?
3. Is there any intervention while you enter in to marriage? If yes, why? If no, why not?
4. Who is the head of the house?
5. Could you please explain women's rights in household decision-making participation in Awra Amba community?

A. Questions on Reproductive Rights

1. Could you please explain your decision-making power on reproductive matters?

2. Have you ever been communicated with your husband regarding reproductive matters? If so, explain it in detail?
3. Do you think that women should independently decide on the number and timing of children? If yes, how? If no, why not?
4. How do you describe your freedom on the use of contraceptive methods?
5. Did your husband force you too large the family size? If yes, why?
6. While you are living in Awra Amba community have you ever experienced health problem due to unwanted pregnancy? Could you please describe those problems?
7. Could you please explain your right on abortion? Have you ever been experienced it? Did your husband forces you not to abort? If so, why?
8. How do you see your autonomy on the use of condom?
9. Have you ever been denied your reproductive rights? If yes, what was your measure?
10. Do you have any additional idea on reproductive matters?

B. Questions on Sexuality

1. Could you please explain your autonomy on sexual matters?
2. Have you ever been communicated with your husband regarding sexual intercourse? If so, explain it in detail?
3. What do you think about your free decision on when and how to have safe sex?
4. Have you ever been refused to have sex with your husband? If yes why?
5. Have you ever been experienced forced sexual intercourses? If yes, explain your measurement?
6. How did the forced sex affect your life?
7. Have you experienced violence or beating due to refusal of sex? If yes explain your measurement?
8. Do you have further comments on sexual matters?

C. Questions on Financial Decision-making

1. Could you please explain your rights on decision-making participation on financial issues?
2. Have you ever been independently decided on large household purchase? If yes, how if no, why not?
3. What is your decision-making right on small household expenditure and daily household purchase?
4. Could you please describe your rights on land and land related issues?
5. How do you see your participation on the selling of products or properties among grown crops?
6. Could you please explain your decision-making rights on what kinds of crops should be grow?
7. How do you manage household income?
8. Could you please explain the time that you experienced low decision-making participation on financial issues? How did it affect your life?
9. Do you have further comments on this topic?

D. Questions on Freedom of Movement

1. Could you please explain your decision-making power on mobility to visit your family or relatives?
2. Have you ever been communicated with your husband regarding visiting your family or relatives? If so, explain it in detail?
3. Have you ever been independently decided on visiting your family or friends? If yes, how? If no, why not?
4. Did your husband refused you to visit your family or relatives? If yes, why?
5. While you are living in Awra Amba community have you ever experienced violence when you independently decided to see your family or relatives? If yes, how if no, why not?
6. Do you think that low decision-making power on mobility is affecting your life? If yes, how if not, why not?

7. Do you have additional ideas on freedom of movement?

E. Questions on the Right to Accessing Health-Care Services

1. Could you please explain your decision-making power on independently accessing health care services?
2. Have you ever been communicated with your husband on independently accessing health care services? If yes? Explain it in detail?
3. Have you ever been denied by your husband to autonomously accessing health care services? If yes, how if no, why not?
4. How the denial of accessing health care services did affect your life?
5. Have you ever been experienced violence while you independently accessing health care services? If so what was your measurement?
6. Do you have additional comments on this topic?

2. Interview Guideline for Married Men at Awra Amba Community

Name----- Academic status-----

Age-----

Place of birth-----

1. Could you please explain women's rights on household decision-making participation in Awra Amba community?
2. Do you think that women are equal with men in household decision-making participation? If yes, how? If not, why not?
3. Do you think that husband is dominant on reproductive matters such as on wives use of contraception methods, when and how to reproduce a wife? If yes, how? If not, why not?
4. Have you ever been forced your wife too large the family size? If yes, why?
5. How do you see sexuality? Do you think that women are free to decide, when and how to have safe sex?
6. Have you been forced your wife to have sex while she refused to do it? If yes, why
7. Could you please explain women's rights in financial decision-making?
8. What do you think about women's freedom of movement to visit their family or relatives?
9. Have you ever been refused your wife to independently visit her family or friends? If yes, why?
10. Have you ever been abused her while she goes independently? If yes, why?
11. Do you think that women can independently access health care services, if yes, how if no, why not?
12. Have you ever been abused her while she goes independently to access it? If yes, why?
13. Do you have further comments about women's decision-making rights in the household?

3. Interview Guideline for Community Founder, Elders and Complaint Hearing Committee

Name----- **Academic status**-----

Age-----

Place of birth-----

1. Could you please explain women's rights in household decision-making participation in Awra Amba community?
2. Do you think that women are equal with men in household decision-making participation? If yes, how? If no, why not?
3. Could you please explain the rights of women in reproductive matters?
4. What do you think about women's sexual rights?
5. How do women participate in financial decision-making?
6. Do you think that women can independently access health care services?
7. What do you think about women's freedom in relation to visiting family or friends?
8. Have you ever been received complaints or report from married women regarding denial of household decision-making participation? If yes, what was the measurement?

4. Interview Questions for Women's Affairs and *Kebele* Official

Name----- **Sex**-----

Age-----

Academic status-----

1. What do you think on the existing situation of Awra Amban community's women?
2. Do you think that women are equal with men regarding household decision-making in the study community?
3. Have you ever been received or informed a complaints or report from married women in Awra Amba community?
4. How do you see the equality of women in relation to reproductive matter, sexuality, health, freedom of movement and economic decision-making participation?
5. Do you have additional comments on women's decision-making power in Awra Amba community?

5. Interview Questions for Health Extension Workers

Name----- Sex-----

Age-----

Academic status-----

1. What do you think about the existing situation of women in Awra Amba community?
2. Do you think that women are equal with men on the participation of household decision-making in the study community?
3. Could you please explain the existing reality of married women regarding reproductive issues?
4. What do you think about married women's sexual rights in the study community?
5. Do you think that married women can independently access health care services in the study community? If so, how if not, why not?
6. Have you ever heard problems from married women regarding reproductive matters, health and sexuality? If so, explain it in detail?
7. Do you have additional comments on women's decision-making power in the study community?

6. Interview Questions for Group Discussion for Females and Males Informants

Name----- **Academic status**-----

Age-----

Place of birth-----

1. Could you please explain women's rights in household decision-making participation?
2. What do you think about women's decision-making rights on reproductive matters?
3. How do you see women's participation on financial decision-making?
4. Could you please describe women's freedom on visiting their own family or friends?
5. Discuss the rights of women in relation to independently accessing health care services?
6. Could you please explain refusal of women from major household decision-making participation?
7. Discuss the measurement while women refused to exercise their decision-making rights?
8. Do you have additional comments on women's decision-making participation in the household in Awra Amba community?

Appendix II: Background of the Informants

No	Informants	Sex	Age	Place of birth	Academic status
1	Informant 1	Female	32	Awra Amba	High school level
2	Informant 2	Female	34	»	Primary level
3	Informant 3	Female	29	»	Basic education
4	Informant 4	Female	27	»	Basic education
5	Informant 5	Female	32	»	Basic education
6	Informant 6	Female	28	»	Primary level
7	Informant 7	Female	28	»	High school level
8	Informant 8	Female	30	»	Basic education
9	Informant 9	Female	37	»	Basic education
10	Informant 10	Female	28	»	Primary level
11	Informant 11	Female	36	»	Basic education
12	Informant 12	Female	26	»	High school level
13	Informant 13	Female	38	»	Basic education
14	Informant 14	Female	36	»	Basic education
15	Informant 15	Female	28	»	Basic education
16	Informant 16	Male	26	»	Degree
17	Informant 17	Male	36	»	Basic education
18	Informant 18	Male	43	»	Basic education
19	Informant 19	Male	38	»	Primary level
20	Informant 20	Male	33	»	Basic education
21	Informant 21	Male	25	»	Basic education
22	Informant 22	Male	36	»	Basic education
23	Informant 23	Male	42	»	Primary level
24	Informant 24	Male	48	»	Primary level
25	Informant 25	Male	28	»	Basic education

Appendix III: Background of Key Informants

No	Key informants	Sex	Age	Academic status
1	Women's Affair	Female	28	Degree
2	Kebele Official	Male	32	Primary level
3	Health Extension Worker	Female	23	Diploma
4	Community Founder	Male	67	Uneducated
5	Community Elder	Male	31	Basic education
6	Compliant Hearing Committee	Male	37	Primary level

Appendix IV: Background of Female FGD Participants

No	Female FGD participants	Age	Place of birth	Academic status
1	Participant 1	32	Awra Amba	High school level
2	Participant 2	25	Awra Amba	High school level
3	Participant 3	33	Awra Amba	Primary level
4	Participant 4	35	Awra Amba	Primary level
5	Participant 5	38	Awra Amba	Basic education
6	Participant 6	25	Awra Amba	High school level

Appendix V: Background of Male FGD Participants

No	Male FGD participants	Age	Place of birth	Academic status
1	Participant 1	45	Awra Amba	Basic education
2	Participant 2	37	Awra Amba	Basic education
3	Participant 3	41	Wudo	Basic education
4	Participant 4	37	Awra Amba	Basic education
5	Participant 5	38	Awra Amba	Primary level
6	Participant 6	38	Awra Amba	Primary level