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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Change in the Socio-Economic Status of Women Pottery Makers in  
the Outskirts of Addis Ababa: The Case of Ensira Pottery Center**

**By: Melkam Mengistie**

**July, 2024**  
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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the Outskirts of Addis Ababa: The Case of Ensira Pottery Center**

**By:**

**Melkam Mengistie**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa  
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Arts in Social Anthropology**

**Advisor: Getaneh Mehari (PhD)**

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## **Declaration**

I, Melkam Mengistie, solemnly declare that the thesis titled

**Change in the Socio-Economic Status of Women Pottery Makers in the Outskirts of Addis Ababa: The Case of Ensira Pottery Center** is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university. I further affirm that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged through proper citation.

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## **Glossary of Local Terms**

<b>Alolo</b>	small soft stones used for smoothing undried pottery aiding in refining the surface texture before further processing.
<b>Borebor</b>	it is red clay soil used to make pottery and due to its color, the product of pottery become colorful. It comes from <i>Menz meda</i> .
<b>Denbaqie</b>	a white clay soil used to make pottery and comes from <i>fiche selale</i> .
<b>Madagos</b>	it is the process of softening the pottery by using emery-paper to ready for glazing.
<b>Mafef</b>	it is the process of cutting out of unwanted mud from the product of pottery.

## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>IDI</b>	In-Depth Interview
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>SES</b>	Socio-Economic Status
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## Abstract

*This study examines the socio-economic status of women potters in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, focusing the Ensira Pottery Center. The research employs qualitative research approach, combining both primary and secondary data collection techniques. Primary data is gathered through participant observation, key informant interview, in-depth interview and focus group discussion, while secondary data is gathered from existing literature and published documents. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lives and livelihoods of women pottery makers, considering factors such as their socio-economic status within the pottery community, health status and the challenges they face. By employing ethnographic methods such as participant observation, the research delves into the daily lives of the potters exploring their production process, economic activities and social interactions. Key informant interview offers insights into the broader context of pottery making in the center including market opportunity, government policies and community support structures. In-depth interview provides a deeper description of individual experience allowing participants to share their personal narratives and perspectives on issues such as gender roles, income generation and access to resources. Additionally, focus group discussions facilitate collective dialogue among pottery makers, enabling the exchange of ideas, experiences, and potential solutions to the common challenges. The findings of this study contribute to existing knowledge on the socio-economic status of women pottery makers in urban setting, their contributions to local economies, and the barriers they encounter in pursuing their livelihoods. The research also identifies areas for intervention and support with the aim of improving the economic empowerment and social well-being of women engaged in pottery in Addis Ababa, Gullele sub-city particularly at Ensira Pottery Center. This research also tried to identify the main problems related to health issue, the smoke generated during the pottery burning and drying process, along with traditional firing methods in open-air kilns, can result in respiratory issues such as asthma and bronchitis.*

**Key Words:** Women, Pottery Makers, Socio-Economic Status, Ensira Pottery Center

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

According to Naik (2022), in the global context, Artisans mostly worked in traditional and unorganized sector in which they are vulnerable to exploitation and low wages. They fall in lower socio-economic strata. Particularly in India, peoples are mostly engaged in household or cottage industries in which they work hard but do not get enough to maintain standard of lines. A major problem for this issue the middlemen who takeout a substantial share of profit leaving very little for the artisans. Traditionally, the artisans had been the backbone of the Indian handicraft's society, but not treated in respectful way.

Pottery making is one of the oldest material cultures in Africa. Although oral knowledge is lost with the passing of each elder in the majority of the continent's regions, information about material culture can still be preserved (Moges, 2010). Various academics contend that women are the main producers of pottery in Africa. For instance, traditional pottery making in Nigeria is controlled by women. The majority of the pottery items are household wares that are mostly used by women (Peters, 2016). Pottery has historically been seen as a female occupation in African cultures, with women contributing to its production for centuries. However, modern pottery has seen gender prejudices favoring men's "high" craft over women's "low" craft, leading to a decrease in women's involvement in pottery techniques (Mercy, Kwame and Lemuel, 2017).

In Ethiopia, craft workers play a crucial role in society but have a low status, often considered "not real people." Minority groups of craft workers are excluded from mainstream society, with three paradoxes at the heart of this incongruity. Firstly, their products are vital for rural livelihoods, but the specialized workers are generally despised. Second, there is a disparity between ideological marginalization and the practical reality of personalized dyadic relationships between farmers and artisans. Third, some marginalized groups play significant social and cultural roles, such as midwives, initiators, musicians, and gravediggers. Despite the lack of rigorous ethnographic data on the lives of these marginalized minorities, there is a growing body of research on the experiences of these marginalized groups in Ethiopia (Freeman, 2001).

Social scientists, archaeologists use a number of methods to measure social and economic status among agrarian societies. Pottery, one of the most ubiquitous of household artifacts, provides another means of establishing status. There is a strong association between the use of pottery and food in Gamo society. Different pottery forms are used to process a variety of Gamo foods for everyday consumption. Food represents socioeconomic status in Gamo society. An important element is that the Gamo still produce and use pottery on a daily basis, which allows for documenting the relationship between food, wealth and pottery (Arthur, 2002).

According to Mulu (2007), Pottery is still an important source of livelihood for many people in Ethiopia. This is true for the crafts community of Kechene, an old settlement area in northern Addis Ababa. Women of the Kechene crafts community are actively involved in pottery as an important source of income. Kechene women potters gain the knowledge of the traditional skill from their mothers, sisters and neighbors. They testify that it is after they organized their cooperative that they became more professional in pottery designs and production.

Ensira Pottery Center was established on the initiative of Takele Uma, the former deputy mayor of Addis Ababa city administration. Women organized at the Ensira Pottery Center, which is located in the Chelot Medhaniyalem neighborhood of the Gullele District, are engaged in various pottery works after receiving some support (e.g., training, workshop building) from the city administration. For a living, they shape, burn, smoke and mold soil from the earth to create pots, dishes, mugs and vases. For the majority of potters, this craft has been passed down from one generation to the next to improve the life of the potters. Before Ensira established many women used to work around their houses. The hope of a brighter tomorrow is what keeps the potters at the Center going for the time being (Woreda 04, 2023).

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Craft-workers such as potters and tanners in Ethiopia face marginalization across various cultural settings. Several researchers, including Freeman (2001), Getachew (2001), Nahu Senay (2001), Pankhurst (2001), Wolde-Sellasié (2001), Arthur (2002), Mulu (2007), Moges (2010), Peters (2016), Kefale (2018), Mohammed and Desta (2019) have extensively studied the lives and status of these marginalized groups in diverse cultural contexts. This marginalization encompasses social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Social marginalization is evident in

segregation and non-reciprocal relations, leading to restrictions on social interaction, association membership, burial practices, and intermarriage. The most marginalized individuals are often unwelcome at farmers' social events, and even if permitted to attend, they may face discrimination such as being barred from entering houses or relegated to sitting on the floor instead of stools.

Marginalized occupational groups are expected to provide services at farmers' weddings and funerals, yet reciprocity is lacking, with farmers generally not reciprocating invitations or services (Pankhurst and Freeman, 2001). Marginalized minorities, including craft workers such as potters and tanners, have historically faced discrimination and exclusion in Ethiopian society. Freeman (2001) highlights how marginalized groups were buried separately, but during the Derg period, attempts were made to integrate them into common burial sites. However, instances of returning to separate burials have been reported, demonstrating the persistence of social exclusion. Pankhurst and Freeman (2001) focus on the prevalence of social exclusion targeting craft workers, with restrictions on marriage to members of the dominant society and sexual involvement considered polluting and dangerous. Getachew (2001) describes the relationship between tanners and potters (Fuga) and the Yem as characterized by a patron-client relationship. In terms of the economic dimension, craft workers have historically had limited access to land and livestock, often living on the land of patrons or lords (Pankhurst and Freeman, 2001). They were subject to labor for their patrons and had to give tribute in the form of produce, contributing to their economic marginalization. Culturally, marginalized craft workers are subjected to negative stereotyping, polluting activities, and mythological justifications for their disadvantaged status (Pankhurst and Freeman, 2001). They are often depicted as antisocial, unreliable, and lacking in ethical respect, perpetuating their cultural marginalization. These stereotypes are reinforced through mythology, associating minorities with nature and wildness or even portraying them as descended from unions with animals (Pankhurst and Freeman, 2001).

The existing research on marginalized craft workers in Ethiopia, particularly potters, has predominantly concentrated on rural areas, with limited exploration in urban settings. Mulu's urban study focused on women potters in Kechene, Addis Ababa, emphasizing traditional production methods and local skills (Mulu, 2007). Furthermore, the health effects and socio-economic implications of pottery production have not been thoroughly investigated. This



research aims to address these gaps by examining change in the lives and status of potters at Ensira Pottery Center, with a specific focus on changes in socio-economic status, health impacts, and future aspirations.

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine change in the socio-economic status of women pottery makers in the outskirts of Addis Ababa the case of Ensira Pottery Center. The specific objectives of this research would be the following:

- To examine the socio-economic background of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center.
- To investigate the changes in the socio-economic status of women pottery makers after joining Ensira Pottery Center.
- To explore the impact of pottery making activity on the health of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center.
- To explore the aspiration of women potters working at the center related to their future lives.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The significance of studying the socio-economic status of women pottery makers in the outskirts of Addis Ababa: the case of Ensira Pottery Center cannot be overstated. Firstly, it addresses on the challenges and opportunities faced by women engaged in pottery making, drawing attention to their needs and contributions. This can attract the interest of governmental and non-governmental organizations, leading to the development of targeted initiatives and support programs aimed at empowering women in this traditional craft.

Additionally, the study serves to fill the gap in the existing research. By synthesizing current knowledge and generating new insights, it contributes to a deeper understanding of the socio-economic status affecting women potters in the study area. This not only informs policy and program development but also provides a foundation for further research in the field of gender, economic empowerment, and traditional crafts. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as valuable literature for scholars and researchers interested in exploring similar topics in the

future. By documenting the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of women potters, this research provides a comprehensive resource for academic inquiry and analysis, enriching the body of knowledge on women's economic activities and livelihoods.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

The scope of this research included conceptual and spatial limitations. Conceptually, the study aims to investigate four primary aspects related to women pottery makers. Firstly, it seeks to explore the socio-economic backgrounds of these pottery maker women's. Secondly, the research focuses on understanding the changes in the socio-economic status of women pottery makers after they join at Ensira Pottery Center, examining any improvements or challenges they may face in terms of employment opportunities, income stability, and social mobility. Thirdly, the study delves into the impact of pottery making activity on the health of women pottery makers, examining potential occupational risks, physical strains, and health-related issues associated with their work. Finally, it investigates the aspirations of women potters working at the center regarding their future lives, including their goals, aspirations, and desires for personal and professional development. Spatially, the research is limited to the context of Addis Ababa, specifically focusing on the Gullele sub-city area and the case of Ensira Pottery Center. By narrowing the geographical scope to this specific urban setting and pottery center, the study aims to provide detailed insights into the socio-economic backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations of women engaged in pottery making within this particular context. In summary, the scope of this study is confined both conceptually and spatially, focusing on understanding the socio-economic background, changes in status, health impacts, and aspirations of women pottery makers in Addis Ababa, particularly within the Gullele sub-city area and the context of the Ensira Pottery Center.

### **1.6. Fieldwork experience**

Upon completing the research proposal, I made an effort to gather appropriate data for this thesis. I selected the Ensira Pottery Center, which is located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The main reason for choosing this study area is, because as an ethnographer conducting research in my local community, I regularly observe the potters who work in my neighborhood on a daily basis. Over an extended period of three months, I worked alongside them as a pottery-making trainee and collecting data from them. In my role as a participant observer, my aim is to gather rich, first-hand data by closely studying the potters' routine activities and practices.

I intend to gain a comprehensive, detailed understanding of the potters' skill, culture, and viewpoints by fully immersing myself in their everyday lives and work. I am able to record every little thing of their lived experiences with this ethnographic method that might not be available with other research techniques. I've been more interested about the potters' work and the importance it has for the larger community as a result of my frequent observations of them in their natural environment.

On March 3, 2023, in the morning, I arrived at the pottery center with the goal of closely observing the daily activities and practices of the women potters. Upon entering the workspace, I was introduced to Genet Assefa, the 41-year-old chairperson of the Ensira Pottery Center. Genet is employed full-time as a skilled potter and is also an active member of the center's leadership. As the chairperson, Genet plays a key role in coordinating the center's operations, marketing initiatives, and community engagement efforts.

Upon my arrival at the Ensira Pottery Center, I presented Genet with the letter of support that I had obtained from the Department of Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University. I explained the purpose and goals of my ethnographic field study, emphasizing my desire to closely observe and document the daily lives and practices of the female potters working at the center. Genet was open to my research support letter and expressed enthusiasm about the potential insights that my study could provide. She not only granted me approval to conduct my fieldwork at the Ensira Pottery Center, but also introduced me to the other women potters who work at the communal workspace and give training for me.

She took that her and the other potters would find this research useful, as it would allow them to better understand the significance of their craft-based livelihoods and the broader cultural role of pottery-making within their community. I assured the potters that my aim was to gather rich, nuanced data that could ultimately benefit them and illuminate their experiences from an ethnographic perspective. With Genet's authorization and the potters' openness to my presence, I was able to begin my participant observation fieldwork at the Ensira Pottery Center, eager to immerse myself in the daily lives and creative processes of these skilled female artisans.

In my role as a participant observer, I plan to closely relate with Genet and the other female potters during their daily routines at the center. By immersing myself in their work processes,

social interactions, and broader cultural practices, I aim to document rich ethnographic data that provides nuanced insights into the lived experiences of these artisans. This in-depth, qualitative approach will allow me to better understand the pivotal role that pottery plays within the local community from the potters' own perspectives.

This involved a combination of participant observation, informal discussions, and in-depth interviews. Through the in-depth interviews, I was able to gather rich, qualitative data from nineteen of the women potters. They not only shared insights about their lived experiences, but also demonstrated the hands-on pottery-making techniques. In addition to the individual potters, I also conducted interviews with nine key informants who hold leadership roles at the Ensira Pottery Center. These discussions provided valuable administrative and contextual information about the center's operations, goals, and significance within the community.

To supplement the ethnographic data collected directly from the potters and center administrators, I also gathered demographic and background information about the pottery-making activities in the place. This included details about the population, geographic location, production outputs, and the broader women's pottery association based in Woreda 04, the administrative district where the Ensira Pottery Center is located within in the outskirts of Addis Ababa.

By employing this multifaceted approach combining participant observation, in-depth interviews, and the collection of contextual data I was able to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Ensira Pottery Center, the female artisans who work there, and the pivotal role that pottery-making plays within the local community.

In addition to the ethnographic fieldwork, I also held extensive consultation and discussion sessions with my academic advisor. These meetings provided me with valuable, constructive feedback that helped me identify potential gaps or areas for improvement in my research instruments and approach. Concurrently, I engaged in an extensive literature review, searching for relevant scholarly sources that could contextualize and inform my study of the female potters and their communal workspace. This in-depth exploration of the existing research on related topics further strengthened the foundation for my ethnographic inquiry.

I began my full-time fieldwork at the Ensira Pottery Center on March 14, 2023. During the first month, I immersed myself in intensive interviewing, often spending full days engaging with the women potters in their workplace. Even during my lunch breaks, I continued my discussions and observations, fully embedded within the routines and activities of the artisans. After the initial month of participant observation and in-depth individual interviews, I shifted my focus to conducting key informant interviews. This involved speaking extensively with the potters who held leadership roles and administrative responsibilities within the Ensira Pottery Center.

Through this multifaceted approach - combining fieldwork, advisor consultations, literature reviews, and interviews with both individual potters and center administrators - I was able to develop a rich, nuanced understanding of the Ensira Pottery Center and the lived experiences of the female artisans who work there. During my immersive fieldwork at the Center, the women potters took note of my level of familiarity and skill in pottery-making. They crosschecked myself either she is able to make pot or not? I make traditional meal pot called *Taba* that leads me build trust with the members of Ensira. I demonstrated a genuine appreciation for their cultural traditions from them. This shared culinary experience helped me forge strong interpersonal connections and establish a foundation of trust with my key informants. The potters recognized my sincere interest in their lives and practices, which in turn enabled me to gather more detailed and honest information during my interviews and discussions. My close rapport with the key informants, as well as my local research assistant, proved invaluable in facilitating open and productive conversations. The potters felt comfortable sharing their perspectives, attitudes, and experiences, knowing that the information they provided would be used solely for academic purposes and to potentially benefit the Ensira Pottery Center's initiatives. This multifaceted approach of immersing myself in the potters' daily routines, demonstrating cultural familiarity through cultivating trusting relationships with my key informants, allowed me to gather rich and comprehensive data that captured the lived realities and perspectives of the female artisans at the Ensira Pottery Center.

On the other day (Monday), May 20, 2023, I go to the Ensira Pottery Center escorted by my research assistant and a photographer. My research assistant Bony Tesfaye, was a 23-year-old man who arrived at Addis Ababa University at 2:00 AM local time to meet with me. Together, we then traveled to the Ensira Pottery Center to conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with

the female potters. When we arrived at the center, my research assistant was surprised by the women potters. The inclusion of a research assistant, as well as a photographer, indicates that I employed a multi-pronged approach to data collection, incorporating both qualitative interviewing and visual documentation to capture the nuances of the pottery-making community at Ensira.

When my research assistant observed the female potters at work, he commented that their job appeared quite difficult and challenging, potentially posing health risks. Upon hearing this feedback, one of the FGD participants responded by saying that the pottery work was still better than their previous conditions.

On that initial, we conducted a single FGD session with the potters. Notably, during the midday break, the women engaged in a collective prayer ritual, which I and my research assistant also participated in. This gesture of inclusion further strengthened the rapport and trust between the research team and the potter women's. Over the course of my fieldwork, I conducted a total of four separate FGD sessions, spread out across different days. In addition to these structured group discussions, I also engaged in numerous informal conversations and dialogues with the individual potters, allowing me to gather rich data about their lived experiences and perspectives.

This approach such as combining FGDs, participant observation, and informal discussions, enabled me to develop a nuanced, holistic understanding of the Ensira Pottery Center and the women. During my fieldwork, I continued to engage in spontaneous observations, taking videos and photos of the pottery-making processes. This was facilitated by me and my role as both an ethnographer and a pottery-making trainer at the Center. For the final FGD session, on the last date of June the participants were the husbands of the women potters. However, since they were not members of the craft society, they did not consent to having their audio recorded, photos taken, or their names listed. Their primary concern was the fear of being marginalized due to their wives' pottery-making occupation. Despite these limitations, I documented each interaction and carefully recorded my daily experiences throughout the fieldwork process. At the end of each day, I would return home to carefully document what I had been told by the participants and what I had observed.

## **Challenges during Field Work**

The working conditions at the Ensira Pottery Center posed significant challenges for conducting interviews with the women potters. The dusty and smoky conditions were not only bothersome for me as the researcher, but they also seemed to be distressing for the women potters themselves.

None of the women are willing to be photographed, and they have different reasons for this. For example: - They have children who are married to other neighborhoods from Kechene, so they want their children not to be displaced from their marriage. The reason for this is that the society has a different attitude towards pottery makers, thinking that if their mother is seen making clay in a photo or in the media, her daughter might be divorced. One day a woman came to the center for personal purpose and she posted it on the website as child labor. Seeing this, the legal body duplicated the photo and went to them and told them that they wanted to prosecute them. They all went out and argued. They don't want to be photographed because of this.

The women potters were unwilling to step away from their pottery work, even during the FGD sessions. There was a strong sense of competition between them, and they were unwilling to pause their production, even they do not stand from their seat temporarily except lunch time and the rain is come. Adhering to the standard FGD guidelines, such as seating participants in a circle and limiting group size to around 6 individuals, proved challenging given the pottery workers' hesitance to step away from their tasks.

When I interviewed the spouses of the potters during a separate FGD session, they refused to allow me to take their photographs. This was due to their fear of being marginalized or stigmatized by the public, as they were not officially part of the pottery craft society. These logistical and cultural challenges required me to navigate the research environment sensitively, balancing the need for robust data collection with respect for the participants' concerns and priorities. My ability to adapt and find alternative ways to document the pottery community's experiences was likely crucial to the success of your fieldwork.

## **1.7. Organization of the Study**

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study, including background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives both (general and specific), significance, scope, field work experience with its challenges and organization of the thesis. Chapter Two provides a review of related literature, covering conceptual, theoretical, and empirical aspects. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the study area description, research approach, design, data collection methods, sample size and sampling techniques, data analysis methods and ethical considerations. Chapters Four presents the data analysis and interpretation. Finally Chapter five concludes the thesis with recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1. Definition of Pottery

The term pottery is derived from either French word '*poterie*' or the Latin word '*potuim*' which means drinking vessel. This term is generally understood to mean domestic ceramic vessel". Pottery has traditionally been seen as a product of ancient cultures. But it is still in use throughout the world by different societies. This important material culture can be investigated through ethno- archaeological studies for the reconstruction of the history of past humans. In many ways, the origin of pottery presents a classic problem in the history of technology. Yet, in spite of the difficulties this technology places in the way of the beginner, it has arisen in many parts of the world at different times. The knowledge of making and using pottery containers spread widely as "practical technology." The beginning of pottery and the type of pots produced vary regionally. It is evident that multiple locations and multiple causes are implicated in the origin of pottery around the world (Kefale, 2018).

In Ethiopia, pottery making is widely accepted as the technological achievement of the Neolithic communities. It is the process of producing different objects with clay after fire is being applied at higher temperature resulting in hard and durable materials. Pottery has been playing a vital role to ensure survival besides agriculture, in processing, transporting, cooking and storing (Mohammed and Desta, 2019).

Traditional handicrafts have a long history of producing the most essential utilities for both rural and urban communities' daily life. This sector supports agricultural materials like ploughshares and their accessories, cotton clothing of various kinds, and leather goods (dresses, grain container and sleeping mats). The traditional Ethiopian baking plate, cooking pots, and water containers are made by women potters. The community benefits from traditional handicrafts, which also serve as vehicles for the beliefs of the community through artistic designs and paintings (Mulu, 2007).

Tilahun (2016), states that pottery is one of the earliest human creative synthetic materials. However, there is no clear evidence as to when the technology was begun and it does not mean that pottery is the first tool that was used as storage/container in the history of human kind. Instead, there could be tools that preceded the innovation of clay vessels. During early prehistoric time probably, people used containers made of light organic materials. Baskets and leather bags were used initially as storage equipment long before the appearance of pottery. In prehistoric man 's history of technological development stone, bone and wooden tools were made and used for hundreds of thousands of years before the advent of fired clay vessels.

## **2.2. Theoretical Review of Craft Workers**

Ethnographic research plays a crucial role in uncovering the lived experiences of women and elucidating the socio-economic challenges they face within specific cultural settings. This paper examines how three theoretical perspectives structural functionalism, feminism, and cultural ecology can inform ethnographic studies of women's socio-economic status. By critically analyzing these perspectives through an ethnographic lens, we can gain deeper insights into the complex social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape women's opportunities and outcomes

### **2.2.1. Feminist Anthropology Theory**

Feminist theory provides critical insights into gender inequalities, power dynamics, and resistance strategies within patriarchal societies (Collins, 2000). Feminist perspectives highlight the importance of intersectionality, acknowledging how gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and ethnicity to shape women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

It explores gender dynamics, power relations, and women's agency within cultural and social contexts (Ortner, 1974). Applying feminist theory can illuminate the gendered division of labor in pottery making, women's economic contributions, and the ways in which gender norms and inequalities intersect with socio-economic factors to shape women's experiences and opportunities within the pottery industry. Feminist theories offer critical perspectives on gender inequality and advocate for the empowerment of women in society (Hooks, 1984).

Liberal feminism focuses on achieving gender equality through legal and political reforms, such as equal pay legislation and reproductive rights (Sen, 1990). Radical feminism challenges the patriarchal foundations of society and calls for fundamental social transformation to address the root causes of women's oppression (Firestone, 1970).

Intersectional feminism recognizes the intersecting influences of gender, race, class, and other social identities on women's experiences of socio-economic status (Crenshaw, 1989). By highlighting the diversity of women's experiences and the intersecting systems of oppression they face, feminism sheds light on the structural barriers that limit women's access to resources, opportunities, and power (Collins, 2000). This theory aids for this research to examine the relationships of women potters within the broader society, considering various social, cultural and economic dimensions.

### **2.2.2. Structural Functionalism Theory**

Structural functionalism, a sociological theory pioneered by Durkheim (1893), emphasizes the functions and dysfunctions of social institutions in maintaining social order and stability. Within pottery communities, structural functionalism can be applied to understand the division of labor, social roles, and community cohesion among women artisans (Blau and Duncan, 1967). It examines how social institutions and practices contribute to the maintenance of social order and stability (Malinowski, 1944). Adopting this perspective can help analyze the functional roles of women pottery makers within their community, including their economic contributions, social roles, and the ways in which pottery production serves as a form of social cohesion and cultural expression.

Structural functionalism posits that society is composed of interconnected parts, each serving specific functions to maintain social order and stability (Parsons, 1951). Within this framework, gender roles are often seen as functional for the functioning of social institutions such as the family, economy, and education system (Durkheim, 1893). However, structural functionalism has been criticized for reinforcing traditional gender norms and perpetuating inequalities in access to resources and opportunities (Tumin, 1953). For example, Blau and Duncan (1967) argue those women's roles as caregivers and homemakers may limit their participation in the labor market and hinder their economic independence.

### **2.2.3. Cultural Ecology theory**

Cultural ecology, an anthropological approach pioneered by Julian Steward (1955), examines the dynamic interplay between culture, environment, and socio-economic systems. Cultural ecology offers insights into how environmental factors, technological innovations, and cultural traditions influence pottery-making practices and economic strategies among women artisans (Gadgil and Guha, 1992).

Cultural ecology explores the relationship between human societies and their environments, emphasizing how cultural practices and economic activities are shaped by ecological conditions. Steward (1955) argues that human societies adapt to their environments through cultural practices such as subsistence strategies, resource management, and technological innovations. In the case of women pottery makers, cultural ecology would analyze the environmental constraints and opportunities for pottery production, including access to raw materials, energy sources, and ecological knowledge (Steward, 1955 and Rappaport, 1968). By drawing on these theoretical perspectives, I can gain a deeper understanding of the socio-economic status within Ensira Pottery Center, including the roles of gender, class, culture, and power in shaping women's experiences and livelihoods within the pottery industry.

For example, Boserup (1970) argues that in agrarian societies, women may play crucial roles in food production and resource management, but their contributions may be undervalued or marginalized within patriarchal social structures. By analyzing the interactions between culture, ecology, and gender, cultural ecology offers insights into the adaptive strategies and resilience of women in response to environmental changes and socio-economic challenges (Gadgil & Guha, 1992).

In general, integrating theoretical perspectives such as structural functionalism, feminism, and cultural ecology with ethnographic research provides a comprehensive understanding of women's socio-economic status within diverse cultural contexts. By critically examining the social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape women's experiences, ethnographers can contribute to addressing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment. Moving forward, it is essential for researchers to adopt a context-specific approach and engage with local

communities to ensure culturally sensitive and ethically sound research practices in studying women's lives and livelihoods.

### **2.3. Empirical Review of Craft Workers**

Research examining the socio-economic status of women involved in pottery making provides valuable insights into their economic and social status, access to resources, and economic opportunities. Studies conducted in various regions have found that women pottery makers often face socio-economic challenges, including limited access to markets, financial resources, and formal education (Davies, 2017). Socio-economic factors such as household composition, marital status, and educational attainment influence women's economic participation and empowerment within the pottery making industry. Additionally, studies have highlighted the role of pottery cooperatives and microenterprises in enhancing women's socio-economic status by providing training, access to markets, and collective bargaining power (Lemma et al., 2019). Empirical research on the impact of pottery making on women's livelihoods has documented both positive and negative effects on their economic well-being. Studies have found that pottery making can provide women with a source of income, economic independence, and opportunities for skill development (Johnson et al., 2020).

Additionally, pottery production contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship, enhancing women's sense of identity and pride in their work. However, the economic viability of pottery making is often influenced by factors such as market demand, competition from mass-produced pottery, and access to resources (Beaudry, 2006). Women pottery makers may face challenges such as irregular income, lack of access to credit, and limited market opportunities, which impact their livelihood security and economic resilience. Research on the health implications of pottery making for women artisans highlights occupational hazards and health risks associated with this craft. Studies conducted in pottery-making communities have identified respiratory problems, musculoskeletal disorders, and skin ailments as common health concerns among women pottery makers (Dufour et al., 2018).

Factors such as exposure to dust, smoke from kilns, and repetitive movements during pottery production contribute to these health risks. Additionally, women pottery makers may face challenges accessing healthcare services and occupational safety measures, exacerbating their

vulnerability to work related health issues. Efforts to improve occupational health and safety practices, such as providing protective gear, ventilation systems, and ergonomic training, are essential for safeguarding the health and well-being of women artisans in the pottery-making industry. By synthesizing empirical findings on the socio-economic status, impact on livelihoods, and health implications of pottery making for women, this review contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by women artisans in this traditional craft. It highlights the importance of addressing socio-economic disparities, promoting economic empowerment, and ensuring occupational health and safety measures to support the well-being and resilience of women pottery makers. In-depth case studies of women pottery makers in different contexts can offer nuanced insights into their socio-economic experiences and livelihood strategies. Comparative analyses of pottery-making communities across regions or countries can highlight variations in socio-economic status and the factors driving them (UNESCO, 2005).

There is different perception of discrimination or marginalization about craft workers in Ethiopia in particular and Africa in general done by scholars in the previous time. The social status of the craft workers varies tremendously throughout Africa, and has been the subject of much debate. In the Sudanic belt of West Africa and in the Manderla Mountain area of north Cameroon and northeast Nigeria metalwork is carried out by marginalized minority groups. However, in equatorial Africa and the interlocutrice area of Rwanda, Burundi and northwest Tanzania metalwork is carried out by certain smithing clans who marry freely with other farming clans, and further south in the savannah areas of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Northern Angola, metalwork can be learnt by any man and it is often said that the king himself is a smith. The symbolist argument, based on the process of ironworking, tells us little about why there should be such differences (Freeman, 2016).

The symbolist approach has sought to explain the marginalization of West African smiths by reference to beliefs about the magical powers inherent in their transformative craft. For example, Kongo smiths, are attributed great powers and they are thought to ‘mediate between the two divisions of Kongo cosmology, on the one hand intimately joined to the world of women’s activities, river waters, healing and fertility and on the other hand to men’s affairs, fire and destruction’ And yet this power is not rendered ‘unsavory’ (Freeman, 2016).

In order to understand the marginalization of smiths in some parts of Africa, a focus on technology and symbolism is little use, because similar symbolic elaborations are found in cases where the social organization is dramatically different. The radical difference in the status of the respected non-polluters and the dangerous polluters can be explained only by the different historical processes by which they came to be smiths, and not by their craft, so the different statuses of smiths elsewhere in Africa ultimately can only be explained by a consideration of historical process. Such a scenario would help explain why these groups are marginalized and distanced from political power, and would also offer insight into the radical differences between these marginalized groups and any of the smith groups in southern Ethiopia who came to their present situation through rather different historical processes (Freeman, 2016).

Freeman also states that, the same argument applies to other craft workers. It is no use looking at the symbolism of craftwork to explain the status of the craft worker. Instead, it is necessary to consider the politico-ritual importance of the craft products they produce, and the historical processes by which these people came to be potters or tanners. The particular importance of iron is likely to make the stories of the smiths rather different from those of the other craft workers, as shown in some detail in the Ethiopian cases, but it is in the realm of political history, in processes such as the overwhelming of hunter-gatherers by agriculturalists, in the conquering of autochthone populations by foreign migrants, and in the development of kingship, rather than in esoteric symbolism, that the continuities and discontinuities between their experiences are to be found (Freeman, 2016).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods utilized in this study, covering various aspects such as the study area and the people, research approach, research design, study population and sampling techniques, data sources, data collection methods (including participant observation, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions), data analysis, and ethical considerations. These components are essential for understanding how the research was conducted and ensuring the integrity and reliability of the findings.

#### **3.2. Description of the Study Area and People**

Gullele Sub-City is located in the northern part of Addis Ababa near Mount Entoto and Entoto Natural Park. The sub city has 10 districts or Woredas. It is bordered in the south Yeka sub-city, in the north Entoto natural park, in the east Arada sub-city and in the west Sululta. The landscape of Gullele sub-city is highland plateau. According to the 2011 census, it has a total population 284,865 of whom 137,690 are Male and 147,175 are female. The weather condition of the sub-city is categorized into Woyna Dega.

From these ten districts, Ensira Pottery Center is found in Wereda 04. According to Wereda 04 office, the construction of the Center's facilities takes 16 million Birr. The workspace of Ensira Pottery Center can be accommodated 1,000 potters at a particular time. The number of women potters working at the center is 410 of three hundred ninety-seven are Orthodox Christians, ten women are Muslim and three women are Protestant Christian. All these women are engaged in making pottery at the Center. Ensira Pottery Center serves as a focal point for pottery production, primarily involving women artisans. Situated within an urban setting, the Center offers a vital platform for these women to practice their craft and earn a living (Woreda 04, 2023).

The study conducted at the center provides the researcher with valuable insights into various aspects such as the socio-economic status, health conditions, aspirations, and challenges faced by these women within the urban context of Addis Ababa. Furthermore, understanding the status of



the pottery center has broader implications, providing insights for policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders interested in supporting and empowering women artisans in urban areas of Ethiopia.

### **3.3. Research Approach**

In social anthropology, qualitative research approach involves the researcher making close observations of the group's daily activities. It entails carefully examining, describing, and interpreting the behaviors, values, and interactions of the group members. Additionally, it requires participation and extended observation of the group being studied, including their social interactions and behaviors, as well as the analysis of the gathered data. Qualitative research seeks to provide a detailed insight into human behavior and experiences by gathering information through participant observation and interviews. In its specific contexts, it also reveals crucial information and offers a detailed picture of social phenomena (Mohajan, 2018). This study employed a qualitative research approach. I used this research approach because it enables me to provide a detailed and in-depth description of women potters and their change in terms of socio-economic status at Ensira Pottery Center.

### **3.4. Research Design**

An ethnographic research design has been employed to conduct this study because ethnographic studies are qualitative procedures utilized to describe, analyze, and interpret a characteristic of a culture and a culture-sharing group (Mohajan, 2018). Ethnographic methods derive from the discipline of sociocultural anthropology and are used when a researcher wants to study a group of people to gain a larger understanding of their lives or specific aspects of their lives.

Critical ethnography research has been used in this study because it focuses on socially underprivileged groups and individuals, such as craft workers like women potters who are marginalized in Ethiopian culture (Mohajan, 2018). The researcher should pretend to be a member of the target group or population and spend months or even years with them to gain insights into their lives and experiences. Ethnography research uses qualitative information, such as dense, detailed descriptions, and in-depth inquiries, founded on an inductive methodology (Sharma and Sarkar, 2019). Therefore, an ethnographic approach was employed in this study to

provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic status of women pottery makers at the Ensira Pottery Center.

### **3.5. Method of Data Collection**

To gather relevant data for this study, both primary and secondary data collection methods were applied. Primary data collection techniques included participant observation, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Each of these methods was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic status of women pottery makers at the Ensira Pottery Center in Addis Ababa. The following sections describe the above-mentioned primary data collection method, secondary data source and sampling methods that would be employed in the proposed study.

#### **3.5.1. Primary Data Collection Method**

##### **3.5.1.1. Participant Observation**

Participant observation, a foundational method in ethnographic research, has been extensively utilized by sociologists and anthropologists since the 1940s. This approach involves immersing oneself in the social context under study, actively participating in activities, observing interactions, and documenting findings. Early anthropologists, notably Malinowski in the 1920s, employed participant observation to study various societies, such as the Trobriand Islanders, providing detailed insights into cultural practices and social dynamics. Malinowski outlines three key stages of participant observation: participation, observation, and questioning (Kawulich, 2016).

By engaging in daily activities and observing social interactions, I gained deep understanding of potters who engaged at the Center. Participant observation allows me to grasp the intricacies of social phenomena by experiencing them firsthand. This method enables me to document behaviors, norms, and values within a specific cultural context. In the context of the study on women potters at the Ensira Pottery Center, participant observation offers a valuable approach to understanding their socio-economic status and aspirations. By actively participating in pottery-making activities and observing interactions within the center, I can gain insights into the daily lives, challenges, and aspirations of the women potters. Overall, participant observation serves as a powerful tool for generating rich qualitative data and gaining an in-depth understanding of

social phenomena within their natural context. By combining observation with active participation, I can uncover valuable insights that may not be apparent through other research methods. I was a pottery-making trainee and also researcher or ethnographer at the place from March 3 to June 25. When I stayed there for three months, I saw their everyday lives, social interactions, and economic activity. I chose the research field site because I see potters on a daily basis in my neighborhood and I find myself thinking about them. As an ethnographer, my role was to gather data from their daily activities and doing what they do as a participant observer.

### **3.5.1.2. Key Informant Interview**

Key informant interviews are a valuable methodological approach employed in anthropological and social science research to gather thick and rich data from individuals who hold significant knowledge and positions within a culture or community. These informants possess a deep understanding of their surroundings, enabling them to provide comprehensive insights into various aspects of social life (Marshall, 1996). For this study, key informant interviews were chosen to explore the social, economic, and other relevant concerns of women potters at the Ensira Pottery Center. The selection of key informants was based on their age, gender, degree of involvement, and level of responsibility within the center. At the Ensira Pottery Center, the marketing and registration office, five committees, and fifteen general assemblies (*Teqlala gubaye*) were selected for KII. The fifteen general assemblies, or *Teqlala gubaye*, are women potters in the center who are tasked with a variety of duties and responsibilities, including problem-solving, communicating with the relevant bodies such as Woreda or Kebele, making decisions regarding the purchase of goods outside the center used in pottery-making, and planning social gathering and events.

Key informants were chosen from these associations and committees to ensure diverse representation and comprehensive coverage of perspectives. Nine individuals were interviewed using the key informant interview method, including representatives from the marketing and registration office one woman was selected, all five committees, three individuals from the general assemblies were selected. During the interviews, notes were taken, audio recordings were made, and active listening techniques were employed to capture and document the rich insights shared by the informants based on their consent.

Key informant interviews offer an opportunity to delve deeply into the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals directly involved in the Ensira Pottery Center. By engaging with key informants, this research aims to uncover relevant understandings of the social and economic statuses within the pottery-making community. This approach enriches the qualitative data collected for the study, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis of the women potters' socio-economic status and aspirations.

### 3.5.1.3. In-depth Interview

In qualitative research, in-depth interviews serve as a distinct method for obtaining detailed knowledge from a select group of participants within a target population. In-depth interviews are conducted with careful consideration of the research design, aimed at maximizing credible and analyzable outcomes. During in-depth interviews, various data collection techniques such as note-taking, audio recording, photography, and active listening were employed to capture comprehensive information. The researcher acts as a facilitator, guiding participants through an extended discussion to explore their perspectives on specific issues.

Semi-structured questions were commonly used to direct the interview, because it allowing participants the flexibility to provide detailed responses based on their experiences and insights. The researcher actively engages with participants, encouraging them to share their stories through reflective listening, follow-up questions, and probes. A total of nineteen female potters from the Ensira Pottery Center participated in this data collection approach. Their age varies from thirty to fifty age of difference because they have different experience and understanding about the center.

Table 1. Age categories of IDI participants

No of participant	2	1	2	5	1	1	1	1
Age	55	48	59	45	41	38	35	30

In-depth interviews ultimately aim to enhance understanding of the target population's lives and experiences, contributing valuable insights to related contexts (Roller, 2020). This approach allows researchers to investigate deeply into specific issues and gather nuanced perspectives from participants (Brouneus, 2011).

#### **3.5.1.4. Focus Group Discussion**

Focus group discussions were utilized as a method to collect data from participants representing various demographics, including sex, age, marital status, educational level, membership status in the pottery center, and individuals outside the center, including husbands of women potters. Alongside my research assistant, Mr. Bony Tesfaye, I documented the discussions using notes, photographs, and audio recordings.

The selection process for participants considered similarities in backgrounds among female potters to address specific topics of interest were discussed in the same group. Additionally, groups were formed to include individuals and ensuring a broad range of viewpoints on relevant issues. Participants were chosen purposely to include those who could offer multiple perspectives or unique insights. Efforts were made to seek perspectives from individuals outside the pottery center to understand whether women potters were marginalized. Four focus group sessions were conducted; each group has different number of participants. Totally there are 24 individuals included in four FGDs. For example: FGD1 includes four participants, among the four participants all were women pottery makers from the Ensira center and their age is greater than forty. FGD2 includes seven participants, all of whom are female pottery makers from the Ensira center, ranging in age from 46 to 50. FGD3 has seven participants; all of them are female pottery makers from the Ensira center, ranging in age from 46 to 49. The informants in FGD4 are husbands of women potters who work at the center; they are from outside the center. They range in age from 65 to 73 and total six. They are not members of the community of artisans. I selected them purposely to understand the perception of the society who is not artisans. Since they believe getting married to an artisan is unlucky in their community's perception, they did not consent to having their names and photos taken. I didn't take pictures of them and put their names on this thesis because of this reason. Separate focus group discussions were conducted for women and men to facilitate open dialogue within each group.

#### **3.6. Secondary Data Collection Method**

Secondary data were collected from a written material, encompassing books, articles, and journals. Additionally, books written by various authors, handbooks, and other published sources of information would be used. By drawing upon this variety of sources, the study aims to access comprehensive and diverse perspectives relevant to the topic.

### **3.7. Sampling Technique**

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a method used to select research subjects based on the criteria established by the study's objectives (Tuckett, 2004). Ethnographic researchers, after extensive fieldwork, consider all cases within the community or group under study to possess unique and special characteristics. Therefore, purposeful sampling is commonly employed, whereby all samples were deliberately selected based on specific attributes.

At Ensira Pottery Center, a total of 410 individuals were employed, all of whom are female potters. Given this unique characteristic of the population, purposive sampling was used to select study participants engaged in in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Therefore, a total of 52 individuals were interviewed: 19 participated in in-depth interviews, 9 in key informant interviews, and 24 in focus group discussions.

### **3.8. Method of Data Analysis**

I spent in the field for the total of beyond three months. I had done a lot of tasks and roles when I stayed at the field. The data collected through the various methods mentioned earlier were analyzed employing qualitative data analysis techniques. This analysis involved organizing and presenting the data using words, narration, and comprehensive descriptions. These techniques were particularly suited for capturing the depth of qualitative data and providing insights into the experiences and perspectives of the participants. The collected data were organized systematically, ensuring that all relevant information is appropriately recorded and categorized. The data were coded to identify recurring themes, patterns, and concepts. This process involves systematically labeling and categorizing segments of data based on their content. This was followed by the interpretation for the coded data and identified themes to draw meaningful conclusions. The tasks also involve examining the relationships between different themes and considering their implications within the context of the research objectives.

### **3.9. Ethical Consideration**

Wester (2011) emphasizes the necessity of informed consent, particularly in qualitative research studies that rely on observation. This requirement emerged from historical cases where research participants were unaware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and alternative

treatments. Kamal (2021) similarly emphasizes the importance of ethical awareness in qualitative research, highlighting the ethical considerations arising from interactions between researchers and participants. In line with these principles, all participants in the current study were provided with comprehensive information at the outset of the data collection process. This information covered essential aspects such as the study's purpose, data collection procedures, data management protocols, and participants' rights to withdraw their participation at any time. Additionally, participants were assured that their provided data would remain private and confidential, with no mention of their names in the research report.

Furthermore, participants were encouraged to freely express their feelings and opinions on the research topic and were given the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. This approach aligns with ethical guidelines in qualitative research, prioritizing transparency, respect for participant autonomy, and the protection of participant confidentiality and privacy throughout the research process (Wester, 2011 and Kamal, 2021). Due to this reason, I started by obtaining the ethical support letter from Addis Ababa University Department of Social Anthropology. I was informed and given verbal consent regarding the method for gathering the data for the concerned body.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter undertakes the analysis of data collected from diverse sources using qualitative data analysis techniques. The field data, acquired through participant observation, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews was presented in the form of narratives and verbatim quotations, allowing the study participants' voices to be directly represented. Following the presentation of these narratives and quotations, comprehensive descriptions and analyses of the data were provided, organized into distinct sections of the chapter. The data gathered from participants from the center was translated from Amharic into English.

Data gathering and analysis occurred concurrently, ensuring a detailed approach. I organized the data into folders for each file, further refining them into appropriate text units. Initial data analysis activities commenced at the outset of the data collection process, with codes crafted to systematically categorize the texts. To construct comprehensive themes, I classified, characterized, and analyzed the meanings attributed to social circumstances by the participants.

Each theme's categories were identified and grouped in alignment with the study objectives, facilitating a systematic organization of the data. By focusing on significant events within the pottery center and presenting the diverse viewpoints of study participants, this analysis endeavors to provide a deep understanding of the socioeconomic status of women potters at Ensira. The insights offered are grounded in the voices and experiences of the participants, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the subject matter.

#### **4.2. Historical Background of Ensira Pottery Center**

The Ensira Pottery Center is located in the Chelot Medhaniyalem neighborhood near the Nigerian Embassy in Gullele Sub-City, Addis Ababa. It was established in 2018 by the former mayor of Addis Ababa, Mr. Takele Uma. The center serves as a focal point for pottery production and employment opportunities for women in the community. A total of 410 women are employed



at the center, with 110 individuals working as daily laborers performing tasks such as softening, preparing, and drying clay and pots. The remaining 300 women are members of various groups within the center, including pottery craftsmen and full-time potters who participate in committees and general assemblies. The potters at the Ensira Pottery Center began their pottery making activity approximately four years ago. Before joining the center, these women were associated with different groups or associations, including Yewelajoch Tesfa, Fiqir ena Selam, Behayil Ras-Agez, Kindie, Andinet, Family (Amtatie Chaka), Addis Hiwot, Habesha, and Kechene.

The establishment of the Pottery Center was encouraged by the displacement of potters from their former working place in the Kechene area due to development activities. The former Mayor engineer Takele Uma initiated the idea after visiting the potters in Kechene and witnessing their challenging living and working conditions firsthand. Observing that the potters' homes and workplaces were often the same and filled with smoke, he recognized the need for improved facilities and support for these pottery maker women's. As a result, he supported the establishment of the Ensira Pottery Center to provide a better working environment and opportunities for the women potters. Ensira Pottery Center is committed to providing women with training and employment opportunities, focusing on both traditional pottery techniques and modern design and marketing skills. This comprehensive approach aims to empower women to produce high-quality, marketable products. In addition to its training and employment initiatives, Ensira Pottery Center emphasizes sustainability and social responsibility. By using locally-sourced and eco-friendly materials in its production processes, the center minimizes its environmental impact. Furthermore, it fosters a safe and supportive working environment for its employees.

Based on the informants, Ensira Pottery Center plays a crucial role in preserving Ethiopia's pottery traditions, empowering women, and fostering sustainable economic development within the local community. As one of the women potters at the center, founding members during KII noted, the center's early days were marked by a strong commitment to these principles.

*I played a key role as a co-founder during the establishment of the Ensira Pottery Center. Prior to this, I was a member of another association called Behayil Ras-Agez. It's worth noting that I was the first woman to be contacted by phone to join the Ensira Pottery Center. Upon witnessing the potential and opportunities here, we took the initiative to clean the forest and sought the expertise of an engineer. Following the engineer's advice, we gathered the women and relocated to this*

*place, where we have been residing for almost three years. During our time here, we initially had five unions. Unfortunately, two of them separated, while three transitioned to this center. This decision was made to encourage a rotation of participants. When the former mayor, Engineer Takle Umma, generously provided this space, members from a total of 15 associations became part of the Ensira Pottery Center community (AB, March, 2023).*

Her narrative focuses on the proactive approach taken by the women involved, from cleaning the forest area to engaging with local authorities and former mayor to secure a suitable location for their activities. The above informant mention of the former mayor, Engineer Takle Uma, indicates the importance of governmental support and collaboration in facilitating the establishment of the pottery center. The reference to the consolidation of multiple associations into the Ensira Pottery Center reflects the collective effort and solidarity among women artisans in pooling their resources and expertise to create a shared space for pottery production. The decision for some associations to merge into Ensira Pottery Center suggests the recognition of the benefits of centralized operations and coordination. Overall, her evidence highlights the agency and resilience of women in initiating and sustaining community-based initiatives like the Ensira Pottery Center, demonstrating their capacity for collective action and empowerment in pursuing their economic and social interests.

The Ensira Pottery Center was closely designed to accommodate both workplaces and a pottery products' shop. It features two parallel houses on the right and left sides, with a shop situated in the center. Additionally, the center claims facilities such as a café, nursery, maternity unit, product display space, and a pottery kiln (burning house). Furthermore, it includes mud houses and production centers or workplaces. Various raw materials essential for pottery making are readily available at the center, including red soil (borebor), white clay soil (denbaqie), mud, cow dung, logs of wood, and eucalyptus branches and leaves. These materials play a crucial role in the pottery production process. Moreover, the potters at the center utilize a diverse array of tools and materials to create pottery goods. These include iron for pot (taba) decoration, rubber tires, jeans cloth, sandstones sourced from river banks for smoothing, Alolo for water softening, pieces of shoes, oil, gas, charcoal, largo, rolling iron (bonda), rubber, and net (madagosha). Looking ahead, the center has plans to provide training in design, further enhancing the skills and capabilities of its members.

According to my observation, at Ensira Pottery Center, a lot of things are needed to make pottery, for example: the ingredients that the potters use to make the pottery come from different places for example; a red soil (borebor) comes from Menz, a white clay soil (denbaqie) from fiche, mud from Maryam River, broken piece from Merkato, Mekthaya and Fitché. 1 kilo broken pieces flour is bought for 50 Birr. While the source of the tiny sand stones is come from the outskirts of Kechene.

The pottery production process at Ensira Pottery Center involves several stages. The first stage is preparation of clay which includes the following activities. The broken pieces are mixed and improved together with mud and clay soil and also the soil is mixed with water and broken pieces flour. The first stage involves preparing the clay by mixing it with water to make it pliable for shaping. In the past, they used to make pottery only with broken pieces. The advantage is that it softens and hardens the clay that is made. The broken pieces are particularly from the traditional bread, Injera, baking plate. The clay ferments for a day or two, but it ferments as it sits a lot. The red soil is brought from Menz field by truck. The mud that is made is bought by the weight of a kilo. If the soil is not well drained, the clay will break. It is carefully kept dry in the sun. And also, they know the opening, and when the body merges, the hand must be released; otherwise it will not be convenient to work.

The second step is shaping: Once the clay is prepared, it is shaped by hand using various techniques such as coiling, or throwing on a potter's wheel. to decor their pottery, they used different shapes like: zigzag line, straight line, cress-cross, tear, flower, leaf on the neck of the pot or at the middle part. Drying: After shaping, the pottery products are left to dry slowly in a cool and dry place to avoid cracking. Once the pottery products are completely dry, they are fired in a kiln at a low temperature to harden the clay and prepare it for glazing (madagos). Glazing: The pottery products are then coated with lead-free glazes using various techniques such as dipping, pouring, or brushing. Glaze firing: After glazing, the pottery products are fired in the kiln at a high temperature to melt the glaze and create a durable and glossy finish shining. Finishing: Once the pottery products have been fired, they are inspected for quality.

### **4.3. Socio-Economic Background of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

#### **4.3.1. Occupational Background**

The Ensira Pottery Center addresses multifaceted challenges faced by women in Ethiopia, particularly concerning education and employment opportunities. Many of the women working at the center hail from low-income households with limited access to education and job prospects. To confront these challenges head-on, the Ensira Pottery Center offers targeted trainings and employment initiatives tailored specifically for women. Through these programs, women acquire new skills in pottery making, marketing, and entrepreneurship, which empower them to generate sustainable income and provide for their families. Moreover, the center fosters a nurturing and secure working environment, essential for women navigating potential gender-based violence and discrimination.

By empowering women economically and providing them with training opportunities, the Ensira Pottery Center not only enhances the economic well-being of its members and their families but also fosters gender equality and women's empowerment. This empowerment has far-reaching positive impacts on the overall socio-economic development of the community. In addition to promoting gender equality and economic development, the Ensira Pottery Center plays a vital role in safeguarding traditional Ethiopian pottery practices. By utilizing locally sourced materials and blending traditional techniques with modern design elements, the center produces high-quality, distinctive pottery products that contribute to preserving Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage. This preservation effort also has positive implications for tourism, cultural exchange, and national pride. Furthermore, the center facilitates intergenerational transmission of pottery-making skills, ensuring the continuity of Ethiopia's artistic heritage.

Many women potters at Ensira Pottery Center learned the craft from their families during childhood, observing and assisting their mothers and relatives in small pottery tasks. This hands-on learning approach, combined with formal training and mentorship provided by experienced pottery professionals, enables women to improve their skills and carry on the tradition from one generation to the next. Most of the potters working in the Center acquired the pottery skills from

their parents and relatives while some others learned the skills from their neighbors. For example, one of the members of the Center reported the following:

*My mother deceased when I was young, so I learnt the pottery activity from my neighbor. Their families used to make pottery, so I got the experience from them. When we used to grind, offer and use clay for our neighbors making big vessel (gan) and Ensira (SY, May, 2023).*

Another member of the Center supposed the idea quoted above.

*I did not learn pottery making from my family. The reason is that I started making clay when my husband died, but I could not do it before. When my neighbor was making pottery, I used to sit and watch how she was doing. I used to do what she did (WT, March, 2023).*

Both informants' stories highlight the importance of community support and resourcefulness in preserving and passing down indigenous knowledge and skills. Whether through direct instruction or observational learning, individuals like SY and WT contribute to the continuity of Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage in pottery making. However, as noted above, most potters acquired the potter skills directly from their parents. The above data supported by Mulu (2007), stated that, by continuing on the craft, the sons and daughters of those who produce handicrafts are the successors to the artistic heritage. By virtue of their ties to the family and their apprentice, they acquire their skills from their parents. It's a small-scale, home-based production sector that needs facilities training, and/or suitable but minimal finance. The production activity makes use of locally resources at hand and pre-existing skills and the procedure is easily adaptable.

#### **4.4. Change in the Socio-Economic Status of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

##### **4.4.1. The Economic Status of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

The member of Ensira Pottery Center emphasized several key factors driving change in the economic status of women potters. Firstly, increased access to education for women in the area has played a significant role. In the past, cultural and economic barriers prevented many girls from attending school, limiting their opportunities to acquire new skills. However, efforts to improve access to education have empowered women to gain new knowledge and skills, Furthermore; the growth of the pottery industry itself has contributed to the change in the

socioeconomic status of women potters. With an increasing demand for pottery both locally and internationally, there has been a need for more skilled workers in this pottery making activity.

The establishment of the Ensira Pottery Center approximately three years ago provided these women with an opportunity to work together in a supportive environment, fostering their growth and development in the pottery industry. The term "Ensira" has dual significance for the members of the Ensira Pottery Center. Firstly, it refers to the traditional object made from clay soil used for storing liquids, such as water. Secondly, it denotes teamwork or collective effort. One of the study participants said the following during an in-depth interview.

*Different associations of pottery maker were established at different places of Kechene. Potters obliged to leave at the former places where they lived for over five years. The former mayor of Addis Ababa, Mr. Takele Uma, came to Kechene and saw the house of one of the mothers. Her house and work place were the same and it was full of smoke. The mayor said: 'Why do these mothers live like this and do this kind of pearl work, and they should come out with this much knowledge'. Finally, they gave us a center. About 300 women were gathered to be members of Ensira (AE, March, 2023).*

As a result of the mayor's intervention, the pottery makers were allocated a dedicated center, providing them with a space specifically designed for their craft. This center, known as Ensira, served as a center for approximately 300 women who became members, offering them a supportive environment where they could practice their craft in improved conditions. The establishment of Ensira represents a significant step forward in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by pottery makers in Kechene and demonstrates the potential for positive change through collaborative efforts between government officials and grassroots communities. According to women potters at Ensira, they benefited a lot after becoming members of the Center. In terms of socio-economic status most women potters are benefited because of joining Ensira Pottery Center. For example, pottery is hard to burn, so when they burn it, they do it together; they learned how to have a social life. They have also been given material assistance, for example: the government has given a "wheel" called a bottom spinning wheel to women who cannot afford to purchase it without the government support.

Ensira Pottery Center has helped them to increase their profit. The selling price of pottery products was very low in the past. The prices are increasing after the establishment of Ensira. This is because the quality of the pottery products is getting better. Moreover, the marketing

activities are also changing because Marcato merchants find the potters together at the center, which improves the interaction between the potters and the merchant who purchase pottery products. In addition to this, the production capacity of the potters increased after they come together under the Ensira pottery Center.

Before joining at the center, women who work at Ensira Pottery Center initially lacked sufficient economic capacity to afford their day-to-day lives. However, based on my observation, after joining Ensira Pottery Center, their socio-economic status has improved compared to their previous association.

Based on my observation there has been a noticeable change in their economic situation since they began working at the center. When I stayed at the center, I observed different things like their dressing, feeding household materials like TV, sofa, locker, refrigerator and living condition. They talk about each other about their house and their activities in their house. Most of the potters live in their own house. I was feeding with potters during lunch time and I observed that they prepare very expensive food like, egg, meat and so on. In this case they believe that “good feeding is living good and keeping health”. In addition to this their dress is expensive and what the society dresses on the holiday except on their work place. During in-depth interview an informant supposed that:

*First, I came from Gwa-tseon to care for my son. I started to doing various activities when I came first here to get money, including buying mud and selling it for a profit. I've cleaned the house, washed clothing, and seen a number of difficulties. I had no prior experience until they taught it to me. The prior work place was questioned me why you don't make pottery? After that, I made a lot of different kinds of pottery without any assistance. Here at the Ensira Pottery Center, I have also completed training and this pottery making activity is good for me because I bought a house two years ago in Sululta (ST, March, 2023).*

## **4.5. Changes and Challenges in Terms of Production Ability**

### **4.5.1. Changes in Terms of Production Ability**

The positive changes catalyzed by the evolving perceptions towards female potters at Ensira Pottery Center have been observed across multiple domains, extending beyond just the pottery industry. These improvements have encompassed increases in income, enhanced efficiency and productivity, improvements in product quality, and better working conditions for the women involved. Due to this reason, positive changes have been observed across various sides,

encompassing income level, efficiency, product quality, working conditions, and additional enhancements such as training initiatives. For example:

**Increased Efficiency:** The introduction of modern machinery, such as molds, has enhanced the efficiency of pottery production at Ensira Pottery Center. This technological advancement allows for the production of new products in less time and with reduced labor requirements.

The other positive change is related to training and skills development activities of the Center. Training or skills development opportunities at the Center supported pottery makers to improve their craft and adapt to changing market trends. Without access to ongoing training programs or mentorship opportunities, pottery makers may struggle to enhance their skills and remain competitive in the industry. Training and skills development activities played an important role in improved the quality of pottery products. Through training programs, women potters have improved the quality of pottery produced at the center. This improvement is evident in the consistency of shapes and sizes, as well as smoother and more uniform finishes.

These positive changes indicate the progress and development of Ensira Pottery Center, positioning it as a more competitive and sustainable enterprise in the pottery industry. For example, an informant said the following during an IDI that:

*In my home, I often delay making pottery and find it challenging to commit to doing it later. This time, my production capacity has significantly increased; previously, I could make only 20 or 30 pottery pieces per day. But now, since joining this center, I can produce 40 or 50 with in a day. Working here has positively impacted my productivity because interacting with people excites me, unlike at home, where I get distracted by household tasks. Being at the center helps me clear my mind by interacting with other women. Moreover, working here has eliminated issues like dirt, mud, smoke, and dust that I faced when working at home. My approach to pottery-making has also changed since joining this center; previously, at the Behayl Ras-Aagez organization, I didn't focus on producing aesthetically pleasing pottery due to a lack of skill (SS, March 2023).*

Diversification of products is another positive change reported by study participants. The Ensira Pottery Center has diversified its product offerings to encompass a broader array of pottery items, including decorative pieces and cookware. This expansion has broadened the center's customer base and increased its revenue, consequently increasing the income of the women employed there. The center has expanded its product range, offering a wider variety of pottery



items compared to previous associations. This diversification allows for better catering to the diverse needs and preferences of customers.

The overall developments at the Center, including diversification of products, increased employment opportunities. The increased efficiency and expansion of product offerings have created employment opportunities for women potters at Ensira Pottery Center, contributing to their socio-economic empowerment. The expansion of pottery production has opened up new job prospects within the local community, particularly benefiting women. This development has positively impacted the local economy by providing opportunities for income generation and economic empowerment.

Before joining the center, the women had to manually collect soil from *Maryam Mazoriya*. However, they no longer engage in this practice, which has helped them save time and energy. Further investigation is warranted to ascertain the source of their soil and the transportation methods now employed. Working at the center differs significantly from working at home. Here, women experience higher quality workmanship, benefit from peer learning opportunities, and have the capacity to craft specialized pottery items such as clay buffets and campfires. Additionally, they enjoy the friendship and social interactions fostered by working collectively. According to my observation, there is a tangible sense of productivity among the women, with everyone fully engaged in various tasks. Moreover, beyond the improvements in working conditions and income, the center has fostered a supportive social environment.

Women working together provide mutual support during challenging times such as illness or grief, creating a sense of solidarity and community among them. The following quotation from a woman working at the Center shows how women support one another. The informant, she is 45 years old pottery maker women at the center during IDI said that:

*When there is economic hardship in the country or we face challenges, we come together in prayer. If necessary, we even visit a monastery for solace and encouragement. Our center is a place filled with love and solidarity. During Easter, despite taking a break for five days, we continue to work and sustain ourselves, with our products being exported. We extend support and care to those who are sick or in their final moments. In times of disagreement, we resolve conflicts amicably, and individuals causing disruptions may face a suspension of one month"(WD, March, 2023).*

Additionally, there has been a positive change in their social lives, as they now have their own network. Moreover, their interactions with merchants have improved, possibly due to enhanced market connections facilitated by the center. Previously, social gatherings such as memorial ceremonies might have been attended individually or postponed, but now, all the women from the center participate together, strengthening their sense of community and social cohesion.

#### **4.5.2. Challenges Related with Production Ability**

The challenges in terms of production ability at Ensira Pottery Center encompass several challenges that can have significant implications for the overall socio-economic status of women pottery makers at the Center and its surrounding communities.

**Working Environment:** Ensira Pottery Center is a better working environment compared to the former working association, but still there are challenges at the center such as inadequate ventilation, discomfort due to heat and smoke, and safety concerns related to the handling of materials and equipment. These factors can affect the productivity and wellbeing of the pottery makers, potentially leading to decreased efficiency of work.

**Access to Resources:** Limited access to resources related with the price of products such as raw materials, tools, and equipment can hinder the production process. If pottery makers face difficulties in acquiring necessary materials or if they lack access to modern tools and equipment, it can hinder their ability to produce pottery efficiently and competitively.

**Market Challenges:** According to the field data, potters working at the Center face challenges related to getting market for their pottery products. One of the challenges is fluctuations in market demand for pottery products. Difficulties in reaching target customers are the other problems mentioned by study participants. Ensira Pottery Center has been struggling to address these and related problems. One of the leaders of the Center reported the following regarding market-related challenges:

*The price of the products is not constant that means the pottery materials we bought is expensive and we sell them at the same price because we are tired of needing them for daily expenses and we will not wait for the market. For example, we sell 1 coffee pot for 40 to 50 birrs, but the raw material we use is very expensive. Merchants sell 1 coffee pot up to 200 Birr. In addition to this the merchants buy our products in a cheaper way but they sell that product beyond that bought before (SS, March, 2023).*

Based on my observation the Ensira Pottery Center has emerged as a transformative center that supports women potters in a multitude of ways, reaching far beyond the limits of their artistic pursuits. The center's holistic approach encompasses not just the technical and creative aspects of pottery-making, but also the social, economic, cultural, and even spiritual dimensions of the women's lives.

In terms of the religious and spiritual realm, the center has fostered a sense of community and collective well-being. It is common practice for the women potters to gather together and engage in prayer rituals before their midday meal, creating a space for spiritual nourishment and the cultivation of a shared sense of purpose. From a socio-economic perspective, the center has been instrumental in empowering the women, both individually and collectively. By providing steady income opportunities, access to resources and platforms for showcasing their talents, the center has helped to elevate the women's financial security and social standing within their communities. This, in turn, has had a wave effect, enabling the women to assert greater agency over their lives and invest in the well-being of their families and communities.

However, the center has also confronted some of the significant challenges that the women potters face, particularly in the realm of health and safety. The smoke and fumes emanating from the kiln houses, for instance, have posed persistent concerns, posing risks to the respiratory health of the women. The center has recognized the urgency of addressing these issues and has taken proactive steps to mitigate the environmental hazards, such as exploring cleaner firing technologies and implementing better ventilation systems.

#### **4.6. Change in the Social Status of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

Various scholars have broadly examined the socio-economic status of handicraft societies, including potters, tanners, ironsmiths, and weavers, within different social groups in Ethiopia. The consensus among these scholars is that handicraft societies are marginalized and disadvantaged groups, facing exclusion in social, economic, and political spheres. Researchers such as Getachew (2001), Pankhurst (2001), Nahu senay (2001), Wolde-Sellasié (2001), Arthur (2002), Mulu (2007), Wayessa (2008, 2009, 2010), Peters (2016), Kefale (2018), Mohammed and Desta (2019), and Samuel and Tamiru (2019) have investigated into the lives and status of craft workers in various cultural contexts.

For instance, according to Kefale (2018), in the Amhara region, particularly in Demebecha *woreda*, artisans are subjected to derogatory names and titles, reflecting their lower societal status. Weavers are critically referred to as *kutit betash* (thread breaker), tanners as *faqi* (scratcher), blacksmiths as *ketkachi* (continuous biter), and potters as *deben ansa* (taker of fertile soil). These terms not only signify their marginalized status but also perpetuate a sense of superiority among dominant groups. However, the situation in the context of the Ensira Pottery Center and its surrounding community presents a departure from the rural settings prevalent in the country. Study participants from the Ensira Center show this reality. While acknowledging occasional mistreatment from the broader community, they also report instances of positive interactions and changing attitudes towards potters. Artisans living and working in other parts of the city may sometimes face discrimination. Despite this, however, there is a growing appreciation for their craft in communities neighboring the Ensira Center. Non-craft society members often express curiosity and admiration for pottery making activities, fostering positive relationships. Moreover, artisans and non-artisans engage in mutually beneficial economic exchanges, with the latter supporting the livelihoods of the former by purchasing their products.

Based on the interview, the relationship between artisans and non-artisans in communities surrounding the Ensira Pottery Center is characterized by mutual respect, appreciation, and collaboration, contributing to the socioeconomic well-being of both groups compared to before.

This interaction underscores the potential for positive societal change through the recognition and celebration of traditional crafts and artisans' contributions. During IDI, the informant mentioned a book titled "Tifroye" by Tekleselassie Wegderes, which is related to the subject of pottery. The informant she is 45 years old pottery maker woman also discussed remarks made by Dr. Hirut, the Minister of Tourism, during the book's launch.

*Everyone has a hand, but how can we all be called a handyman"? I will say that it is very exhausting and demoralizing, so if they come, we will serve them Enjera in a traditional way, not in a piece, but in a big plate (tri), this is the difference. Many of our sisters are able to work, but they are persecuted for doing pottery because they are afraid of this name. A man should not be afraid of his identity (handcraft). In the past, marriage was not allowed because the culture did not allow it, but now, although it is not completely avoided, the young man can marry whomever he likes (WD March, 2023).*

During key informant interview another informant who is 40 years old and one of the committees of the center said that:

*People have given us the name that kechene peoples are evil eyes (buda). But now, a book has been published that contains our old culture of the Kechene man named 'Tifroye'. At the book launch where artists and officials present, pottery was well described in the form of poetry. Guest Handyman, who was invited to the launch of the 'Tifroye' book, said that we all have hands that we can't use then properly, but these people should be called wise, not handy. We are also very happy and have been introduced to the media. The attitude of the community is a little better now, they come here and they are coming to us by renting a house, but before, when they saw us carrying pottery and going to Mercato, they would run and take their children away and enter the house and close their yard. There is no such a thing now. Now they have a good attitude towards our work. Some of them have marriage relationship with us (AB, March, 2023).*

As the following quotation from an informant participated in an in-depth interview shows, potters working at the Center still refrain from declaring their identity in public because of fear of discrimination against their family members. A potter woman working at the Center shared her view related to the issue as follows:

*In our neighborhood we live in peace with other people because they are close to us, our social life is good and we have marriage relationships, but the majority society has a different attitude towards pottery. In fact, I don't volunteer to capture photos when the media comes because my daughter lives in the city center so I don't want her to be ostracized with my work because if the society knows I'm a pottery, my daughter may divorce. In addition to this, we are afraid; we don't say that our neighborhood is Kechene to someone who lives far away. But we eat white teff, we don't eat people. But now it is not like before (NZ, March, 2023).*

The aforementioned quote from the center's female informant potter highlights the social challenges and stigma faced by individuals engaged in pottery making within their community. There is a significant disparity in societal attitudes towards pottery. The informant's unwillingness to allow photos or videos of her workspace stems from a fear of societal judgment and potential consequences, particularly concerning her daughter's status. This fear reflects the deep-rooted prejudices and societal norms against pottery making, which may lead to social ostracism or marital discord for individuals associated with this craft. Additionally, the informant's decision not to disclose their neighborhood's identity to outsiders indicates a sense of apprehension and fear of discrimination from those unfamiliar with their community's cultural context. Overall, the informant's narrative portrays on the complexities and challenges faced by

pottery makers in navigating societal perceptions and prejudices. It emphasizes the importance of fostering greater acceptance and understanding of this craft within broader society to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals involved in pottery making. During the IDI, an informant who is 49 years old and divorced from her husband years ago and, shared her experience, stating:

*My mother was born in a society that believes that a potter is an evil eye (Buda), as a result; she lives apart from her relatives. My grandmother, who cooked traditional food for others, gave birth to my mother when she was married to someone else. My mother was afraid of this and did not want me to make pottery. My mother recommends me to stay close to our relatives, but it's hard to match with them. I regret being separated from my relatives. Separating from the family is not easy. When I go there, they say that you made pottery and got insulted our race, so I won't go because they are harassing me. They have forgotten me. My house is in a village where we have the same working conditions, so we live together with the neighbors in a social life. But if you are a little far away, it will be said that the other people will hide a child. But I'm always happy. I speak without fear of my neighborhood, but sometimes I do not do that for the sake of my son's safety. I think it will be solved in the future by seeing the community, but I don't think it will be solved by teaching (ET, March, 2023).*

The above informant in an in-depth interview, shares her experience as a potter in a society that stigmatizes her profession. Her mother's separation from relatives due to the belief in the evil eye associated with pottery shaped her childhood. She regrets being distant from her family, facing insults and accusations when visiting them. In her village which is Kechene, she finds support among neighbors in a similar working environment. She also believes community understanding is key to resolving these issues, rather than solely relying on teaching. Another informant who is 35 years old women during potter at the center during IDI expressed her perspective:

*We are God's creatures; our mothers spin cotton and work with cloth, and people who don't know how to do any work are getting used to it. They say they are worried about their work, but what harm will it do to them if they don't buy it? They say we have a 'tail' (Jirat), but they see me working, not my 'tail'. Once upon a time, my brother married a wife from another place (from a non-craft family). I told him not to bring his wife here. We don't want to marry such a person because their thoughts are always negative about us. Eventually, they were separated (TA, April 2023).*

Her statement highlights the struggles and prejudices faced by craft workers in society. Her questions are why people who do not appreciate or understand the effort put into these crafts still benefit from them. The mention of the term 'tail' (Jirat) refers to the derogatory label associated

with craft workers. She asserts that their worth should not be judged by this label but by the work they do and the skills they possess. She also touches upon the issue of inter marriage, specifically their brother's marriage to someone from a non-craft family. She also expresses worry about individuals from different societal backgrounds having negative perceptions and attitudes towards craftworkers. They believe that marrying someone with such negative views can be detrimental and may lead to separation, as experienced in her brother's case. Overall, her statement focuses on the discrimination faced by craft workers and the impact it has on their personal lives. She also emphasizes the need for society to recognize the value and hard work of craft workers beyond societal labels and preconceptions.

The above discussion supported by Tilahun (2016) who noted that culturally, smiths and potters belong to the same social category. They are referred to as "Buda" (evil eye), which refers to people believed to have power to injure or harm others. Artisans group are labeled as low status people in local communities. It is said that the artisans possess an evil power that passes through their family. In most cases, members of the non-artisan groups of people do not practice in artisan activities such as pottery because these craftworks have been associated with low status and marginalized groups of people. Members of the mainstream communities have a different perspective toward persons involved in the craftworks. According to the expression of the mainstream societies, people looked the crafts down because of their evil spirit through which they caused others to be sick and dead. However, now a day some people from the mainstream society do not accept the belief that artisans are evil eye and that they harm other people. During IDI, a potter woman at the center and who is 45 years old informant expressed:

*It is a thought, but a human being cannot eat others because it is not the behavior of a human being. We used to buy broken pans from around the neighborhood because of this; these (non-craft) people say that evil eyes were spitting at us and closing the door. Even if they spat at us, we would cry because 'ye enjera guday silhone,' literally meaning it is the issue of livelihoods, and we would go to their door and buy the broken pans. It's all trinity, but I don't know why they call us that. They were cursing us as we took the ark out of the epiphany celebration area (jan-meda), but now we pass it all that. But now there is some change about the attitude because they are married and living together with us, but there is still something unclear. I have never been embarrassed because I am not ashamed of who I am, even if people have influenced me to think like this (MA, April 2023).*

The above quotation reveals the reflection of the study participant on the unjust beliefs held by non-craft individuals towards crafts people, rejecting the notion that humans would resort to

flesh-eating. Despite facing discrimination and derogatory treatment, the above informant (a female potter) and the potters' community in general resiliently continue their economic activities. They express confusion regarding the derogatory term used to label them and recall instances of being cursed during cultural celebrations. Despite these challenges, she maintains pride in their identity and refuses to be ashamed of who they are, emphasizing self-acceptance and resilience in the face of societal prejudice. Another informant who is 30 years old women potter at the center and participated during IDI shared her view as follows:

*I was making pottery when I was in Shawarobit [a town located about 218 kms in northern Shewa]. When someone asked me, 'you are like a hyena, aren't you?' I said, 'No, I am not. Kill me if I am changed into a hyena.' People used to carry leaves and donkey dung to shield them when they came to the store for buying a pottery from my grandmother. The non-craft society say[believe] that potters are evil eyes and (baleji) literally means handymen. Like that, we (potters) give names for non-craft society are 'rega weym gebes nachew,' which means making pottery for non-crafts society is unable to understanding the issue or rega are those people whose ancestry is nisu atint or 'clean bone,' unblemished by social stigma or bodily catastrophe such as leprosy. Before, when people asked us about our village, we do not mention Kechene because it is a village where potters and weavers live; it is also known as 'the evil eye village' or Yebuda Sefer. Kechene man [a man from the artisan's village] does not marry a wife from another part of the city and live with her in love. There is a saying that when the hyena screams at night; the artisans would be changed into a hyena., and those who know our neighborhood will die at night. This is what indicates the problem of mindset because if you do not know my village, you do not get sick (SY, April 2023).*

The informant quoted above shared her experiences as a potter and the discrimination potters faced from non-craft individuals. She also described the negative attitudes towards their village, Kechene, where potters and weavers live. She explained how the village was known as the "evil eye village" and how potters were reluctant to marry someone from other parts of the city. Despite these challenges, she expressed resilience and determination of the artisans to continue with their craftwork. She shared their belief that the notion of the "evil eye human" (Yesew Buda) is unfounded, attributing supernatural occurrences to evil spirits rather than human beings. She recounted a story where a righteous man baptizing a woman believed to be possessed by a ghost-like entity, rejecting the idea of humans possessing such powers. She expressed skepticism towards traditional practices like adding pepper, hyena dung, and donkey dung to cure illnesses,



considering them ineffective. She asserted that pottery is an art form inherited from birth and does not inherently makes someone evil, likening it to blaming the creator for human flaws. She emphasized the need to challenge and overcome such generational mindsets perpetuated by superstition. During KII, the Chairperson of the center and also, she is a potter at the center. Who is 41 years old women express the following observations:

*The attitude of the society is still the same, but it has changed a bit. There is almost a marriage, one weaver marries another, but it is not clear, even if the husband and wife agree, the person behind the spouses will inevitably talk, so there will be quarrels. Even if your own child is sick, they may think a potter 'eats' him/her. They ask where your village is, and when you tell them it is Kechene, they would say, Oh! 'The Buda village.' Before all these problems arise, it is better here if a person marries his equal [from the same social group]. Children are not educated and employed because the society perceives that they may harm someone else (GA, April, 2023).*

The Chairman of the center shared several observations regarding societal attitudes towards their community. Inter-marriage between members of their community, such as weavers and potters occur, but is often accompanied by social stigma and gossip, leading to conflicts. There is a pervasive belief that individuals from their community may engage in harmful supernatural practices, even suspecting them of causing illness in children. The stigma attached to their village, referred to as "Buda village," exacerbates these issues. The Chairman highlighted the importance of marrying within their community to avoid societal prejudice. Additionally, she noted the challenges faced by their children in accessing education and employment due to societal perceptions.

According to Birhanie (2010), there is currently a decline in many aspects of marginalization. Official marginalization does not exist. The increase in craft workers is indicative of the transformation. Involvement in a range of social and communal organizations, regular interaction and mingling in funeral credit associations, and dining at the same table as non-craftspeople in particular, older people's memories of economic estrangement are rapidly fading. As a result, craft workers' socioeconomic situation has improved.

There is a leading factor to a shift in cultural attitudes towards women in the pottery making activity. This change in attitude has resulted in women being recognized for their valuable contributions to the hand craft sector, leading to more opportunities for them to showcase their

skills and talents. Consequently, there has been a rise in the number of women potters, with women gaining more agency and control over their work.

According to my informants at the center, the change in the social standing of female potters at Ensira Pottery Center has precipitated a comprehensive shift in cultural perspectives towards women engaging in pottery making. This evolving mindset has brought about a newfound appreciation for the significant role women play in the handcraft sector, thereby opening up avenues for them to exhibit their proficiencies and artistic abilities. As a result, there has been a notable surge in the participation of women in pottery, empowering them with increased autonomy and authority over their craft.

The societal change catalyzed by the changing perceptions towards female potters at Ensira Pottery Center is a multifaceted and far-reaching phenomenon. It represents a profound reckoning with long-entrenched gender norms and power structures that have systematically marginalized women's contributions across diverse realms. At the heart of this shift is a growing recognition of women's inherent capabilities, talents and right to self-determination. The newfound appreciation for female potters has served as a powerful symbol, inspiring a critical re-evaluation of gender-based biases and assumptions that have historically relegated women to narrowly defined roles and denied them access to positions of influence and authority. As women have been empowered to showcase their proficiencies and artistic abilities in the pottery sector, it has sparked a current effect across other industries and spheres of cultural production.

Women are now asserting their rightful place as equal partners, leaders and innovators, shattering glass ceilings and redefining societal expectations. This change carries profound implications, not just for the handcraft industry, but for the very fabric of social, economic and political structures. By dismantling patriarchal hierarchies and expanding opportunities for women, this evolving mindset holds the potential to catalyze a more equitable redistribution of power, resources and decision-making authority. Importantly, this shift represents a broader reckoning with intersecting systems of oppression that have compounded the marginalization of women, particularly those from marginalized racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. As women gain increased visibility and agency, there is a growing imperative to address the multifaceted axes of discrimination and work towards a more inclusive and just society. Ultimately, the

transformation ignited by the changing perceptions towards female potters at Ensira represents an essential moment in the ongoing struggle for gender equality. It signals a collective aspiration to redefine gender roles, challenge traditional power structures, and foster a future where women's contributions are celebrated, their rights are protected, and their leadership is central to the shaping of more equitable and sustainable societies.

#### **4.7. Market Opportunity Before and After Joining at Ensira Pottery Center**

Bula (2010) asserts that, in Ethiopia potters primarily create pottery for sale in the overall marketplace. While pottery sales may not be highly profitable, potters often engage in full-time pottery production, especially in rural areas where pottery sales serve to supplement farmers' incomes. Despite being the main sellers of their products at markets, there are occasional intermarket merchants who purchase pottery from potters and redistribute them for resale within the local market or elsewhere. According to Mulu (2007), potters in Kechene do not maintain separate expenditure and income accounts for their pottery business, integrating it with their family finances. Their approach to production activities is not focused on accurate net profit calculations but rather on sustaining their daily livelihoods. Despite receiving short-term training in bookkeeping and market assessment through the Kechene Women Potters Cooperative, potters still struggle to separate their business finances from their family expenditures. This is a problem of understanding of costing and pricing poses a significant weakness in their pottery price settings.

Moreover, the Kechene potters are not the primary sellers of their products. Instead, various types of customers engage in trading Kechene pottery. This includes pottery intermediary traders who collect pots from potters and supply them to other traders, as well as traders who operate sales shops. Intermediary traders play a crucial role in facilitating inter-market trade, supplying pottery to shops and traders in Addis Ababa and provincial towns without maintaining their own retail facilities. These traders typically inquire about pottery availability from potters on specific market days, such as Fridays and occasionally Tuesdays, in preparation for the Saturday and Wednesday markets (Mulu, 2007).

According to my informants, in recent times manufacturers of mass-produced plastic, aluminum, or metallic objects have been actively promoting their products as substitutes for pottery items.

These products are marketed as cheaper, lighter, stronger, and trendier alternatives to traditional pottery. Women potters at Ensira Pottery Center acknowledge the impact of domestic and imported plastic and metallic utensils on the demand and pricing of pottery kitchenware. The fragility of pottery compared to plastic and metallic alternatives affects its price and demand, prompting potters to sell their products at lower prices to sustain their livelihoods. Despite the challenges posed by imported materials, women pottery makers at Ensira Center are committed to promoting indigenous pottery art over foreign alternatives. They strive to enhance the quality and appeal of their pottery products to compete with plastic and metallic kitchenware. However, the market for their cooking pots and serving dishes could have been better if plastic materials were not imported in such quantities. According to women informants at Ensira Center, the establishment has provided new market opportunities compared to the former association. They now have access to a broader custom, including merchants, and benefit from improved market connections.

The center's presence has led to an increase in profits as a result of better access to market opportunities. For example, the Center sells its pottery with higher prices facilitated by easier access for Mercato agents. Customers also place orders pottery products directly communicating with Ensira Center. The Center also focuses on improving product design, customization options, accountability, honesty, and direct client delivery. It advertised the pottery products at local bazaars, and its address or business card makes it easily accessible to customers. Prices may vary slightly depending on whether there is a single purchaser or a transaction involving multiple merchants. Additionally, there is a shop at the Center where pottery products are sold, further enhancing accessibility and sales opportunities.

Despite this, there exists a distinct set of concerns among the women potters at Ensira Pottery Center regarding several factors that have adverse impacts on their work. These concerns include the rising prices of raw materials essential for pottery production, the escalating market prices for various goods and services, the disparity between market prices and the prices of pottery products, transportation challenges, and other related factors. According to the data gathered from study participants, the main challenge is the fluctuating prices of raw materials required for pottery making, the rising price of clay and other essential supplies directly affects the overall production expenses, which reduces the profitability of pottery business. This inconsistency

poses significant financial challenges for the women potters, as they struggle to maintain profitability amidst mounting production costs.

Transportation logistics present another obstacle for the women potters working at the Center. They encounter difficulties in transporting their pottery products to various markets and customers, which results in additional expenses related to fuel, transportation fees, and other requirements. These transportation-related costs further contribute to the overall financial strain experienced by the potters. In addition to these challenges, factors such as competition from mass-produced alternatives and shifting consumer preferences also impact the viability of the pottery business. These factors collectively underscore the adverse impacts experienced by the women potters at Ensira Pottery Center in their daily work. It also indicates the need for strategic interventions to address these challenges and support their continued success. For instance, during an IDI, one informant she is 30 years old women potter at the center and stated that:

*We sell one coffee pot for 40 to 50 birrs, but the raw material we use is very expensive. We need it for daily use, so we will sell it right away, but I know that I will exchange it if we keep it or sell some of it, but we need to have some money for daily expenses, and we have to hand it over to a merchant. The price of the clay we make and sell here and the goods sold in the market are very different and as a result, we are not beneficiaries but we are victims. But if the government gives us a market connection, we will use it (SS, March, 2023).*

The informant quoted above shared her perspective on the pottery business and the challenges the potters face in terms of pricing and profitability during an interview. Despite the need to sell their pottery quickly for daily expenses, they are aware that if they keep it or sell it elsewhere, they may get a higher price.

According to the informants at Ensira Pottery Center, market opportunity for women potters at Ensira Pottery Center in Ethiopia's Gullele sub-city could depend on various factors such as the local demand for pottery products, the number of other pottery centers in the area, the availability of raw materials, and the level of competition. However, the Ensira Pottery Center has a unique advantage as it focuses on training and employing women potters, which can create a niche market for their products. Additionally, the center's location in the Gullele sub-city of Addis Ababa, which is the capital city of Ethiopia, could provide good access to potential customers and markets.

## **4.8. The Impact of Pottery Making Activity on the Health of Women Pottery Makers and Aspiration Related to the Future Lives**

### **4.8.1. The Impact of Pottery Making Activity on the Health of Women Pottery Makers**

According to my informants at the Ensira Pottery Center, Pottery making has significant implications for the health and well-being of women involved in the craft. On one hand, it offers various positive and negative effects, such as physical activity, mental health. Engaging in pottery making requires physical exertion, which can contribute to improve cardiovascular. However, the pottery making activity also presents negative impacts on the health of women potters, primarily related to exposure to toxins, respiratory problems, and repetitive stress injuries. The materials used to make pottery, such as clay and glazes, may contain harmful toxins like lead and cadmium, posing health risks if proper protective measures are not implemented. Moreover, the repetitive motions involved in pottery making can lead to injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis, particularly without adequate protections.

One of the main problems related to health is the smoke generated during the pottery burning and drying process, along with traditional firing methods in open-air kilns, can result in respiratory issues such as asthma and bronchitis. Long-term exposure to smoke from kilns can further increase the risk of chronic diseases like lung cancer and emphysema. To mitigate these negative impacts, the Ensira Pottery Center has taken proactive measures, including the use of improved kiln technology to reduce smoke emissions and the provision of training on safe kiln use and proper ventilation practices. Moreover, the center promotes the adoption of alternative energy sources to minimize the need for firewood and associated smoke emissions, thereby creating a safer and healthier working environment for women pottery makers. These initiatives aim to address health risks associated with pottery making activity and ensure the well-being of individuals engaged in the craft. During IDI an informant she is women potter at the center said that:

*The smoke makes us faint ourselves, so we go outside to get fresh air. It's hard when all the 14 ovens are ready to burn. Fresh air enters through windows, roofs but it is not enough. It was smoke detector but the power didn't work, but a smoke*

*detector that looked like a firecracker was installed. It worked once, but it was very noisy (MB, March, 2023).*

The in-depth interview informants highlighted the challenges they face due to smoke inhalation during their pottery making activities. According to informant MB, the smoke generated from the ovens can cause individuals to feel faint, prompting them to seek fresh air outside. Despite attempts to ventilate the workspace through windows and roofs, the influx of fresh air is often insufficient to mitigate the effects of the smoke. Additionally, while efforts were made to install a smoke detector for safety purposes, technical issues such as power failure and noise levels posed challenges. Although the smoke detector functioned once, its noisy operation may have been disruptive to the pottery makers.

Overall, she accounts underscores the health and safety concerns associated with smoke exposure in pottery making environments and highlights the need for effective ventilation and safety measures to protect the well-being of individuals engaged in the craft. The smoke is so dense that it becomes difficult to tolerate, to the extent that after the burning process, the women resort to drinking milk or yogurt to alleviate its effects. However, the situation has become terrible, causing some to lose consciousness. At the Ensira Pottery Center, there is only one kitchen, or combustion house, where 300 women work with 14 stoves. Despite an NGO conducting research for over six months and installing a smoke detector, it proved ineffective and even exacerbated their health issues, leading to illness. Consequently, they prioritize addressing the smoke over concerns about dust, as it has resulted in cases of asthma and even fatalities among women. Despite the visible impact of the smoke, no viable solution has been found thus far. During FGD1 the informant stated that:

*There is nothing we can do to prevent the smoke. When there is dust, we fix our stuff and clean it in a way that does not harm our health, but the issue of smoke is still difficult and causes of illness like heart disease, eye disease, cancer and some people died because of the smoke. Although no action was taken to reduce the smoke, nothing could be prevented or reduced; a woman who burns her pottery, she has a feeling of fatigue, swelling of the eyes, swelling of the face, difficulty in swallowing food. To burn on Wednesday and Thursday the kitchen will be busy, because there are only 14 ovens and it will be heated. Summer [the rainy season] is a tough season for clay because of the rain is an obstacle to dry our clay soil and pottery and also the kitchen is not enough for all 300 women potters” (FGD1 participants, March, 2023).*

The participants emphasized the challenges posed by the smoke generated during pottery burning. Despite efforts to address dust-related issues by cleaning and maintaining their equipment to prevent health hazards, the smoke remains a persistent and significant problem. Informants highlighted various health issues associated with exposure to the smoke, including heart disease, eye disease, and cancer, which have tragically led to fatalities among community members. Women who are engaged in pottery burning are experienced symptoms such as fatigue, eye swelling, facial swelling, and difficulty swallowing food, indicating the severe health consequences of smoke exposure. Additionally, the limited availability of ovens intensifies the problem, particularly during peak burning days like Wednesday and Thursday, exacerbating health risks for workers. Moreover, the challenges posed by the summer season further compound the difficulties faced by pottery makers due to the adverse effects of the kitchen environment on clay processing. Overall, the informants expressed a sense of helplessness in addressing the persistent issue of smoke exposure, underscoring the urgent need for effective interventions to safeguard the health and well-being of pottery makers.

Generally, the Ensira Pottery Center represents an attempt to modernize and professionalize the local pottery industry, which has historically been an important economic activity for them. Compared to the previous, more informal and decentralized system of pottery production, the new center provides potters with access to better equipment, training, and marketing support. This has helped to improve the quality and consistency of the pottery being produced, and has enabled the potters to earn higher and more stable incomes. However, the change to the new center model has not been without its challenges. One persistent issue is the ongoing problems with the kiln house facilities. The kilns used to fire the pottery still generate significant amounts of smoke and dust, which can be hazardous to the respiratory health of the predominantly female pottery workforce. Proper ventilation and emission control systems have not been fully implemented, exposing the women to poor air quality for extended periods. Additionally, the layout and infrastructure of the kiln house area has not been optimized, leading to inefficiencies in the production process. This can create additional stresses and strain on the potters as they try to meet quality and delivery targets.



#### **4.8.2. Aspiration Related to the Future Lives of Women Pottery Makers**

The data collected from women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center, most of the potters aspire to take on leadership roles within their community, contributing to decision-making processes and advocating for their rights and interests. This involves participating in local organizations or community initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of women and marginalized groups. Empowerment and independence are likely key aspirations for women pottery makers at Center. They may aspire to gain financial independence and assert greater control over their lives and futures such as acquiring new skills, accessing education and resources, and breaking free from traditional gender roles and constraints. In addition, women potters aspire to foster a sense of pride and accomplishment in their craft, contributing to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and artistic traditions.

Overall, the aspirations of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center are multifaceted and reflect their desires for personal and professional growth, economic stability, and social empowerment. By pursuing these aspirations, they can work towards creating brighter and more fulfilling futures for themselves and their communities. An informant said the following during a KII:

*To work in a better way in the future, to replace those who come from outside with those who work in traditional ways and to teach my children; I did not give up but to share my knowledge. I don't have anything else as an additional work, I will make pottery for my daily life (AB, March, 2023).*

The above informant she is a responsible person at the center, one of the three committees and expressed her determination to continue pottery making in traditional ways and to pass down her knowledge to future generations. Despite the challenges faced, including competition from those who employ non-traditional methods and the influx of outsiders into the industry, the informant remains committed to preserving traditional techniques. She emphasized the importance of teaching her children and others in the community to ensure the continuation of pottery making in the future. Despite not having any additional plans beyond pottery making for her daily livelihood, the informant's dedication to their craft and the transmission of knowledge underscores her commitment to preserving cultural heritage and traditional practices. Another informant engaged in an in-depth interview reflected a similar view:

*I have no intention of changing my job because it is a required to preserve our culture. I will not change my work in the future, but I will improve the quality and design of this work. Even if they open a shop and give me, I don't work. (ST, March 23, 2023).*

The above informant is one of the members of Ensira Pottery Center, expressed a strong commitment to preserving her cultural heritage through her work. She stated that she has no intention of changing her occupation, as it is essential for safeguarding her culture. Despite potential offers to work elsewhere, including the prospect of opening a shop, the informant remains steadfast in her dedication to the craft. Instead of seeking alternative employment opportunities, she expressed a desire to focus on enhancing the quality and design of her work, thereby contributing to the continued preservation and advancement of her cultural traditions.

There is another idea in the future aspiration of women potters at Ensira Pottery Center for example during IDI the informants said that:

*If God wills, I would like to change this work to business. Since it is a permanent job that we have inherited from our family and ancestors since we were born, we are not inclined towards pottery, but I know that if I do something else, it will make me a difference (BA, March 14, 2023).*

The above informant is a 40 years old women potter at the center. She expressed that while potters currently rely on pottery making as their primary source of income and livelihood, they remain open to the possibility of exploring other job opportunities if they were to find a better option. Despite this openness to change, she also emphasized the importance of her pottery work in sustaining her livelihoods; she has an idea to change this pottery making activity by another job. But the other informants during IDI said that:

*Since we have nowhere to go, I plan to improve the design in the future, but since I don't have a lot of money and it takes time. If the government and wereda collaborates and supports the center in terms of finance, I would improve my work. (MB, March, 2023).*

The above informant expressed that; she has a desire to enhance her work's design in the future. However, she also acknowledged financial constraints and time limitations as significant hurdles to achieving this goal independently. The informant indicated that government assistance in the form of financial support would be instrumental in improving their craft. If the pottery produced by women at Ensira Pottery Center is exported directly in the future, several positive outcomes will anticipate. Firstly, their capital will increase due to the profits generated from international

sales. This increase in capital can lead to an overall improvement in their quality of life, including better access to resources and opportunities. Additionally, the government is also expected to benefit from this export activity through increased revenue, tax, dollar and other economic growth. During in IDI the informant supposed that:

*In the future, I envision transforming our traditional kitchen into a clay firing machine. If we manage to achieve this improvement, it would significantly reduce the smoke emitted during the pottery-making process. Collaboration with scholars, religious leaders, business owners and respected professionals would be crucial in realizing this vision. While I am committed to enhancing our work, my passion for our craft remains unwavering. Looking ahead, I aspire for Ensira Pottery Center to grow into a prominent international institution, fostering unity and ambition while creating job opportunities. Ultimately, I hope to see the establishment of additional centers, such as Ensira Pottery Center number 2, to further expand our impact (SY, April 2023).*

She expressed her vision of transforming the Ensira Pottery Center into an advanced pottery business center. She also expressed her commitment to enhancing the center's work and their aspiration for it to become a prominent international institution, creating job opportunities and fostering unity. She ultimately hopes to establish additional centers. The other informant, a women potter, and members at the center stated the following during an in-depth interview:

*In the future, my aim is to make meaningful contributions to society. During times of conflict, I actively supported our defense forces by providing essential supplies like hay, bread, and barley. Moving forward, I aspire to share my expertise in pottery-making by teaching others, thereby contributing to both the government and the community. By imparting my knowledge to others and helping them thrive in this craft, I hope to extend assistance to the less fortunate. Teaching pottery to others is a way for me to give back to my country and its people, fostering empowerment and skill development (AE, March 2023).*

On the other hand, informant AE shared her aim of making contributions to the society. She recounted her past support for defense forces during conflicts and expressed her desire to share her expertise in pottery-making by teaching others. She also sees teaching pottery as a way to contribute to both the government and the community, empowering individuals and fostering skill development as a means of giving back to her country and its people.

Generally, comparing the socio-economic status of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center with findings from other empirical studies reveals both similarities and unique challenges. While Desai and Bhatt (2020) highlight the prevalence of economic vulnerability among women engaged in informal economic activities, such as pottery making, the specific context of Ensira

Pottery Center may introduce additional complexities. For example, research by Gupta et al. (2019) emphasizes the role of cultural norms and market structures in shaping women's access to economic opportunities in artisanal industries. Understanding these contextual shades is crucial for developing targeted interventions to address socio-economic disparities effectively.

The examination of health impacts among women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center, when compared with studies from diverse geographical regions, underscores the universal nature of occupational health risks in artisanal industries. While Rani and colleagues (While Rani et al. (2021) identifies similar health hazards faced by pottery workers globally, distinctions in environmental conditions and cultural practices may exacerbate these risks in specific contexts. For instance, research by Li et al. (2020) highlights the role of traditional firing techniques and exposure to hazardous materials in contributing to respiratory problems among pottery workers. Understanding these context-specific factors is essential for implementing tailored interventions to promote occupational health and safety.

Exploring the aspirations of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center in comparison to findings from other studies focuses on both common goals and unique cultural aspirations. While Akter et al. (2020) emphasizes women's aspirations for economic independence and community development, studies by Kaur and Singh (2018) reveal the significance of cultural preservation and artistic expression as drivers of empowerment among women artisans. Recognizing and respecting these cultural aspirations is essential for designing interventions that resonate with the values and aspirations of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center, empowering them to achieve their full potential.

When comparing the impact of collective endeavors, such as joining Ensira Pottery Center, with findings from other studies, insights emerge regarding the role of collective action in promoting social inclusion and economic empowerment. While Agarwal and Majumdar (2019) highlight the positive impact of collective economic endeavors on marginalized groups' livelihoods, studies by Chaudhary et al. (2020) underscore the importance of inclusive decision-making processes and community participation in sustaining collective initiatives. Understanding these mechanisms of collective action and social inclusion is vital for fostering sustainable empowerment among women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center and similar artisanal collectives. The socio-economic status of women pottery makers at the Ensira Pottery Center is shaped by various

factors, including their background, participation in collective economic activities, health impacts of their work, and aspirations for the future. By addressing these factors through targeted interventions informed by empirical studies, policymakers and stakeholders can promote the well-being and socio-economic empowerment of women pottery makers in pottery making communities like Ensira pottery center.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Conclusion

The study on the socio-economic status of women pottery makers in Addis Ababa, particularly, focusing on Ensira Pottery Center, highlights the intricate relationship between pottery making, health, aspirations, and socio-economic factors. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the following key findings emerged: Positive Impact: Pottery making provides women with opportunities for physical activity, creative expression, and a sense of community, contributing positively to their overall well-being. The activity fosters a supportive environment where women can share experiences and support one another.

*Health Challenges:* Despite the positive aspects, women pottery makers face significant health risks, including exposure to toxins, respiratory problems, and repetitive stress injuries. The traditional methods of pottery making, such as firing in open-air kilns, contribute to environmental pollution and health threats.

*Cultural Significance:* Pottery making holds cultural significance for the women involved, often representing a heritage passed down through generations. This cultural connection motivates many women to continue practicing pottery despite the challenges they face. Aspirations: Women pottery makers express diverse aspirations for the future, including improving their skills, increasing their income, and contributing to their communities. Some aspire to entrepreneurship or leadership roles, while others prioritize preserving traditional practices.

The establishment of the Ensira Pottery Center has brought about significant changes in the socio-economic status of women potters, impacting various aspects of their lives. Through an analysis of field data and participant insights, several key findings emerge regarding the transformational effects of the center on women's livelihoods and well-being:

*Income Generation and Economic Empowerment:* Women potters who joined the Ensira Center have experienced a noticeable increase in their income levels. By accessing new market opportunities facilitated by the center, such as direct orders from merchants and participation in

local and international trade fairs, women have diversified their revenue streams and improved their financial stability. This enhanced economic agency has enabled them to better support their families, invest in education and healthcare, and enhance their overall quality of life.

*Improvements in Living Conditions:* The additional income generated through pottery making at the Ensira Center has translated into tangible improvements in women potters' living conditions. Many have been able to afford better housing, access basic amenities such as clean water and electricity, and purchase essential household items to enhance their comfort and well-being. These improvements signify a positive change in the material circumstances of women and their families, contributing to greater social and economic resilience.

*Enhanced Social Acceptance and Recognition:* Joining the Ensira Pottery Center has led to a shift in societal attitudes towards women potters, fostering greater social acceptance and recognition of their craft and contributions. Through active participation in community events, exhibitions, and cultural festivals organized by the center, women have gained visibility and respect within their communities. This newfound recognition not only bolsters their self-esteem and confidence but also challenges existing stereotypes and gender norms associated with traditional crafts.

*Health and Well-being Benefits:* The improved working conditions and supportive environment provided by the Ensira Center have had positive implications for women potters' health and well-being. Compared to traditional pottery-making practices characterized by manual labor and exposure to harmful substances, the center offers safer and more ergonomic workspaces equipped with modern tools and equipment. This transition has reduced the risk of occupational hazards and musculoskeletal injuries among women, promoting their physical health and productivity.

Generally, women's participation in pottery making often reflects broader gender dynamics within society. Historically, pottery production has been associated with women in many cultures, including Ethiopia. Understanding the socio-cultural norms and gender roles that shape women's engagement in pottery making is essential for contextualizing their socio-economic status. Pottery making serves as a significant economic activity for women artisans, providing them with opportunities for income generation and livelihood enhancement. The sale of pottery

products contributes to household incomes, sustains families, and supports community development initiatives.

Women pottery makers encounter various challenges, including limited access to markets, inadequate infrastructure, and fluctuating demand for pottery products. However, they also benefit from supportive networks, cooperative arrangements, and initiatives aimed at promoting their craft and empowering women artisans. Participation in pottery cooperatives and membership in pottery centers empower women artisans by fostering solidarity, skill development, and collective decision-making. Through these platforms, women assert agency, challenge traditional gender norms, and advocate for their rights and interests.

The occupational risks associated with pottery making, such as exposure to clay dust, ergonomic strains, and repetitive motion injuries, pose health risks to women artisans. Addressing these occupational health challenges requires interventions to improve workplace safety standards, provide protective equipment, and raise awareness about health risks. Women pottery makers demonstrate resilience and adaptability in navigating socio-economic challenges, such as market fluctuations and environmental changes. Their socio-economic mobility is influenced by factors such as access to education, training opportunities, and support networks.

Policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders play a crucial role in supporting women pottery makers and promoting their socio-economic well-being. Policies that enhance market access, provide infrastructure support, and ensure occupational health and safety standards are essential for empowering women artisans and fostering inclusive economic development. By examining these conceptual dimensions, researchers can gain a holistic understanding of the socio-economic status of women pottery makers at Ensira Pottery Center and develop targeted interventions to address their needs and aspirations.

The Ensira Pottery Center has emerged as a transformative force in the lives of women potters, empowering them economically, socially, and physically. By harnessing their creativity, skills, and cultural heritage, women have not only improved their own socio-economic status but also enriched their communities and preserved indigenous knowledge for future generations. Moving forward, sustained investment and support for initiatives like the Ensira Center are crucial to ensuring continued progress and prosperity for women artisans in Ethiopia.



## **5.2. Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations have been provided to policy makers both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Policymakers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governmental institutions can all benefit greatly from the insights gained from this study.

Firstly, prioritizing health and safety measures is essential for them. Implementing comprehensive protocols at Ensira Pottery Center can effectively mitigate health risks inherent in pottery making. This entails providing protective gear, enhancing ventilation systems, and advocating for safer kiln technologies.

Secondly, fostering skill development among women artisans is essential. By offering tailored training programs and workshops, their pottery-making expertise can be honed, with a focus on minimizing exposure to toxins and preventing repetitive stress injuries.

Thirdly, promoting economic empowerment emerges as a pivotal approach. Supporting artisans in accessing markets, securing fair compensation, and diversifying income sources can foster resilience within artisanal communities. This could involve facilitating market connections, delivering financial literacy training, and fostering entrepreneurial initiatives.

Fourthly, embracing environmental sustainability practices is crucial. Encouraging eco-friendly techniques within the pottery-making process, such as cleaner kiln technologies and sustainable sourcing of raw materials, can mitigate environmental pollution and health risks.

Lastly, building robust community support is key. Collaborating among stakeholders, including governmental agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, and community leaders, is vital to address the socio-economic needs of women pottery makers. This collaborative effort can advocate for policy changes, provide social support services, and streamline access to resources. By adhering to these recommendations, stakeholders can collectively uplift the socio-economic status and overall well-being of women pottery makers in Addis Ababa, fostering a sustainable and inclusive future for this indispensable artisanal community.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix 1:

### Map of the Study Area

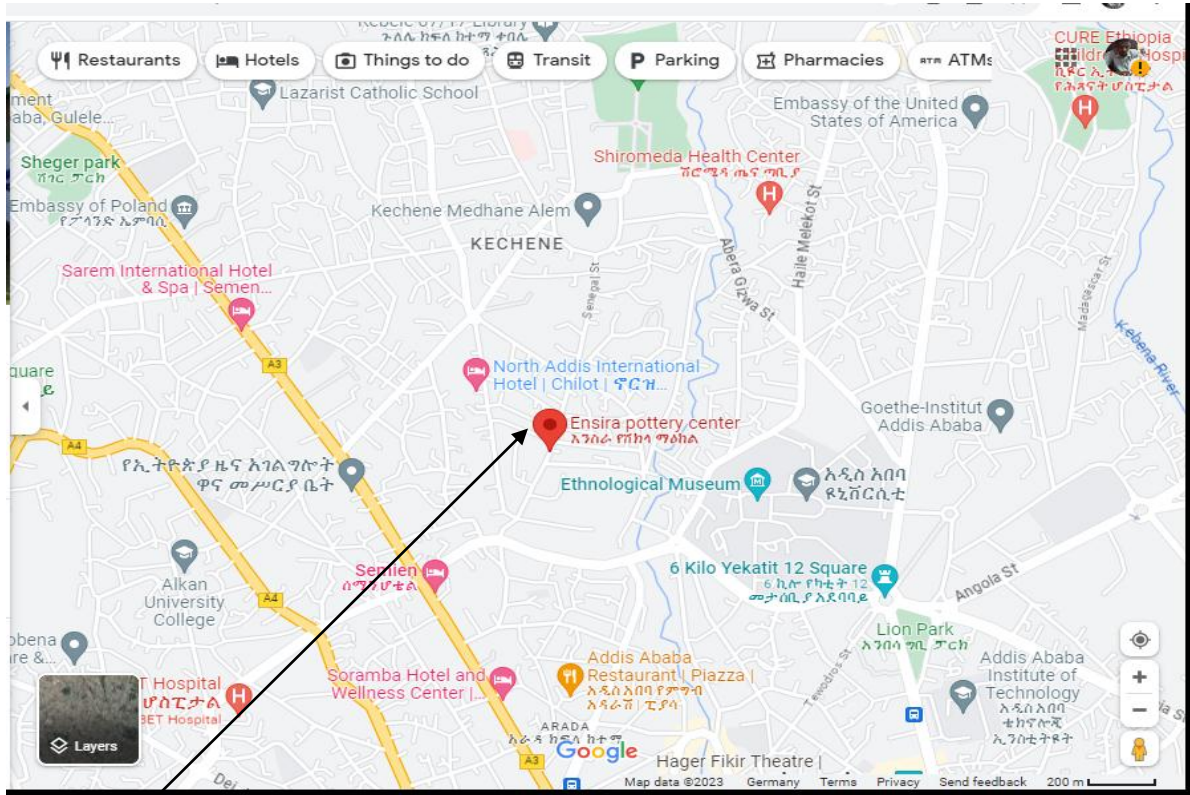


Figure 1 Map of Ensira Pottery Center



## Appendix 2

### Photo from the Study Area



Figure 2: Photo by Melkam Mengistie, the main gate of Ensira Pottery Center



Figure 3: Photo by Melkam Mengistie during IDI with pottery maker women



Figure 4: Photo by assistant researcher during FGD with pottery maker women



Figure 5: Photo by assistant researcher during FGD with pottery maker women





Figure 6: Photo by assistant researcher during FGD with pottery maker women



Figure 7: Photo by Melkam Mengistie during the time of pray





Figure 8: Photo by Melkam Mengistie the process of drying and burning



Figure 9: Photo by Melkam Mengistie the product of pots from the beginning up to end

**Appendix 3**

**Raw Materials Used for Making Pottery**



Figure 10: white clay, Alolo, Borebor and Mud respectively used to make pottery

## Appendix 4

### Profile of the Informants

Table 2: List of Informants during In-Depth Interview

No	Name of informants	Age	House No	Address	Marital status	Date of Interview
1	Bizunesh Abera	40	-	Kechene	Married	14/03/2023
2	Alemitu Mengesha	55	-	Kechene	Widowed	14/03/2023
3	Degitu Abeje	40	-	Kechene	Married	15/03/2023
4	Worqnesh Desta	45	-	Kechene	Married	20/03/2023
5	Aregnesh Endalamaw	40	-	Kechene	Married	15/03/2023
6	Mamitu Belachew	45	-	Kechene	Married	17/03/2023
7	Sinqie Shewa	30	-	Kechene	Married	17/03/2023
8	Ayelech bewketu	40	-	Kechene	Married	17/03/2023
9	Wubanch Tayelgn	55	-	Kechene	Widowed	23/03/2023
10	Shega tadesse	48	-	Sululta	Married	23/03/2023
11	Nibrete Zenebe	49	-	Kechene	Divorced	30/03/2023
12	Etalemaw Tadele	49	-	Kechene	Divorced	31/03/2023
13	Tirsit Asegid	35	-	Kechene	Married	03/04/2023
14	Likalesh Kokob	38	-	Kechene	Married	03/04/2023
15	Mesrach Abebaw	45	-	Kechene	Married	04/04/2023
16	Shibanchi Yigermal	40	-	Kechene	Married	10/04/2023
17	Genet Asefa	41	-	Sululta	Married	25/04/2023
18	Ameleworq Mekonen	45	-	Kechene	Married	02/05/2023
19	Tsion Kasahun	45	-	Kechene	Married	03/05/2023

Table 3: List of Informants during Key Informant Interview

No	Name of informants	Age	Sex	Duration of time at the center	Responsibility	Date of interview
1	Genet Assefa	41	Female	3 years	chairperson	25/04/2023
2	Amelework Mekonen	40	Female	3 years	Vice Chairman	02/05/2023
3	Aynalem Beyene	40	Female	3 years	Coordinator	17/03/2023
4	Tsigie Kasaye	45	Female	3 years	Coordinator	03/05/2023
5	Misraq Belachew	46	Female	3 years	Coordinator	03/05/2023
6	Thtna Alemu	43	Female	3 years	Marketing/Registration	03/05/2023
7	Kidst Abebe	44	Female	3 years	Store	03/02/2023
8	Yirgalem Asfaw	47	Female	3 years	Store	05/05/20203
9	Abebech Melkamu	48	Female	3 years	Store	15/05/2023

Table 4: List of Informants during Focus Group Discussion in Group 1

No	Name of informants	Age	House No	Address	Marital status	Date of interview
1	Genet Abiye	48	-	Kechene	Married	15/05/2023
2	Asegedech nigusie	47	-	Kechene	divorced	15/05/2023
3	Demequ Tsega	46	-	Kechene	Married	15/05/2023
4	Meseret Snshaw	49	-	Kechene	Married	15/05/2023
5	Amsal Abebe	48	-	Kechene	Married	15/05/2023
6	Mitike Awoke	52	-	Kechene	Married	15/05/2023
7	Blaynesh Yeshewa	51	-	Kechene	Married	15/05/2023

Table 5: List of Informants during Focus Group Discussion in Group 2

No	Name of informants	Age	House No	Address	Marital status	Date of interview
1	Fantanesh Mekasha	46	-	Kechene	Divorced	17/05/2023
2	Mamush Mola	51	-	Kechene	Married	17/05/2023
3	Etabez Tilahun	47	-	Kechene	Divorced	17/05/2023
4	Enatye Mekasha	49	-	Kechene	Divorced	17/05/2023
5	Shibrie Mola	48	-	Kechene	Married	17/05/2023
6	Nanush Besahawred	48	-	Kechene	Divorced	17/05/2023
7	Meseret Amtataw	50	-	Kechene	Divorced	17/05/2023

Table 6: List of Informants during Focus Group Discussion in Group 3

No	Name of informants	Age	House No	Address	Marital status	Date of interview
1	Gebeyanesh Minda	46	-	Kechene	Married	20/05/2023
2	Bizuwork Besuye	45	-	Kechene	Married	20/05/2023
3	Rahel Asalfew	47	-	Kechene	Married	20/05/2023
4	Beza Hayilu	49	-	Kechene	Married	20/05/2023

## **Appendix 5**

**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Social Science**

**Department of Social Anthropology**

Change in the Socio-Economic Status of Women Pottery Makers in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, The Case of Ensira Pottery Center.

### **Interview Guide Probe Questions**

My name is Melkam Mengistie.

I came from Addis Ababa University and I'm a master's student in department of Social Anthropology College of Social Sciences. I will collect data from you to do a master's thesis.

The topic of my thesis is: *Change in the Socio-Economic Status of Women Pottery Makers in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, The Case of Ensira Pottery Center*. I will conduct my research data based on the following interview guide questions.

After you have verbally given your consent, I record our interview. The interview may last from 30 minutes to 1 hour. I will keep the information you give me confidential and will not pass your information on to any 3rd party; I will not list your name in my research.

**I. Personal information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

House No \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study.

## **II. Questions For an In-Depth Interview**

### **1. Socio-Economic Background of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 1.1. Please tell me when you started making pottery?
- 1.2. How did you start?
- 1.3. Who taught you?
- 1.4. How do you pass on your knowledge?
- 1.5. How would you describe your relationship with non-potter societies in your community?
- 1.6. Do other people admire you for making pottery?
- 1.7. How would you describe marriage relationship between potters and non-potters?
- 1.8. What is needed to make pottery?

### **2. Socio-Economic Change of Women Potters After Joining at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 2.1. When did you join at Ensira Pottery Centre?
- 2.2. Who gave you training about making pottery?
- 2.3. What benefits do you get from the centre?
- 2.4. Who or what inspired you to join Ensira Pottery Center?
- 2.5. What other skills (training, production equipment, etc.) will you receive from the center?
- 2.6. Does the Center provide you with the right environment to generate more profits?
- 2.7. Does the center help you maximize the value of your assets (such as your home, utilities, skills and savings)?
- 2.8. How can improving production and production methods help increase profits?
- 2.9. What are the advantages of working in a pottery center compared to using houses as a production unit?
- 2.10. How does Ensira Pottery Center compete in the market?
- 2.11. How does your productivity differ before and after joining at the center?
- 2.12. How would you describe your change after joining Ensira Pottery Centre?
- 2.13. Could you please tell me about your economic and social changes since you joined the Ensira Pottery Center till now?



### **3. The Effect of Pottery on Women's Health at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 3.1. How can you protect yourself from dust?
- 3.2. Do you believe that lung problems can be caused by dust? If yes, what did you do?
- 3.3. How to get fresh and clean air inside and outside the center?

### **4. The Future of The Women Who Work Ensira Pottery Center**

- 4.1. Will you do this pottery in the future or will you replace it with another job?
- 4.2. If you say yes, why do you change it, and if you say no, why don't you change it?
- 4.3. What is the benefit of pottery for your future social and economic capital?
- 4.4. What help would you like to receive from other non-craft workers and government agencies for your future improvements?
- 4.5. What will you contribute to the development of yourself, the public, and the center in the future?

## **III. Questions For Key Informant Interview**

### **1. Socio-Economic Background of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 1.1. How do you describe the economic and social status of women potters before and after entering the center?
- 1.2. Who gave them pottery training?
- 1.3. Do you volunteer to train pottery making for the next generation of young people?
- 1.4. What do you think about their social status, are they marginalized or not?
- 1.5. What are their relationships and friendships with other craft and non-craft societies?

### **2. Socio-Economic Change of Women Potters After Joining the Ensira Pottery Center**

- 2.1. Are there facilities in this center that help in the production of pottery such as special input (such as kiln, modern technology material)?
- 2.2. What is the change in the social and economic life of the women who work in Ensira Pottery Center?

### **3. The Effect of Pottery on Women's Health at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 3.1. What are the mechanisms behind the center's effectiveness in reducing health problems?
- 3.2. Is there any modern method used by the government or non-governmental organization to clean the center from dust?
- 3.3. Are there women working in the center with pneumoconiosis?

### **4. The Future of The Women Who Work Ensira Pottery Center**

- 4.1. What is planned for the future for these women in terms of change?
- 4.2. What will they contribute to the development of themselves, the public, and the center in the future?
- 4.3. What are your hopes for the future of this effort?

## **IV. Questions For Focus Group Discussion**

### **1. Socio-Economic Background of Women Potters at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 1.1. What is the socio-economic status of the women working in this center?
- 1.2. How would you describe marriage between a potter and a non-potter?
- 1.3. Some women's say pottery is better than homemade, can it be a career like other jobs or not?

### **2. Socio-Economic Change of Women Potters After Joining the Ensira Pottery Center**

- 2.1. What is the difference between production and production methods after joining at Ensira pottery centre and before joining at this centre?
- 2.2. What makes the women who work at this center different from other women potters?
- 2.3. What is the change of joining at this center?
- 2.4. How did the economic difference between you come about?
- 2.5. There are women for who joining at the center has made a difference and for whom it has not. How did this difference come about?

### **3. The Effect of Pottery on Women's Health at Ensira Pottery Center**

- 3.1. What impact has working at this center had on your health?
- 3.2. Since you started at the center, how has your health been?

3.3. There are those who say that your joining in the center is more difficult than before, and there are those who say that it has changed. What do you say?

#### **4. The Future of The Women Who Work at Ensira Pottery Center**

4.1. In the future, there are women who want to change this pottery and there are women who don't. How did this difference come?

4.2. What is the benefit of working at this center for your future life?

4.3. How does pottery contribute to your future capital growth?

**Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this study and for your time and information!!**