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**WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION AT LOCAL  
LEVEL IN THE ETHIOPIAN FEDERATION: THE CASE OF ANKESHA WOREDA,  
AWI ZONE, AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE**

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## **Declaration**

I, *AsresZelegeKassa*, declare that this research is the result of my own study and finding. Any source of information used for this study other than mine have been acknowledged. This work has not been previously submitted to any other University for the award of any type of academic degree and diploma.

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This thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor of the candidate.

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Mohammed Dejen (PhD)

June 2020

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this research to my beloved wife *EmamaTamir*, my sons *H/Mariam* and *Dawit* and my daughters *EleneandTigst*, who encouraged my effort and advise me to be strong with education, to my dad *Zelege* and mam *Atalelech* and my brothers *Alemayehu*, and *Simeneh* and my sister *Detayie* who are assisting me to overcome the challenges.

I gave glory to God for giving me everything, this thesis is dedicated.

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*Asres Zeleke*

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## ACRONYMS

AMSEO – *Ankesha* Micro and Small Enterprise Office

ANRS – *Amhara* National Regional State

ANRSBOFED – *Amhara* National Regional State Bureau of Finance and Economic Development

ANRSWCYAO -- *Amhara* National Regional State Women Child and Youth Affairs Office

BOFED -- Bureau of Finance and Economic Development

BPA – Beijing Platform for Action

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

CPRW – Convention on the Political Rights of Women

EPRDF – Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front

FDRE – Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

IDC – International Development Centre

IDRC – International Development Research Centre

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

NCTPE – National Committee for Traditional Practices Eradication

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

NPEW – National Policy on Ethiopian Women

OECD — Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

REWA – Revolutionary Ethiopian Women’s Association

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN – United Nations

UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNEGEEW – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UNFPA -- United Nations Population Fund

WAB – Women Affairs Bureau

WAD --- Women Affairs Department

WAO – Women Affairs Office

WCYAO -- Women Child and Youth Affairs Office

WPE – Workers Party of Ethiopia

## **ABSTRACT**

*Women's political participation and representation at local levels play an important role in the general processes of the overall improvements of women's life and the socio-economic and political developments of a country. The general objective of this study is to assess the political participation and representation of women at local levels and identify factors affecting their participation by taking Ankesha Woreda as a case study. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were followed. The researcher has collected both primary data from both women and men citizens as well as government officials in Ankesha Woreda. Despite the fact that Ethiopian women are granted constitutional rights to take part in any affairs affecting their life, they do not exercise equal rights to participate in the country's politics due to economic, socio-cultural and traditional factors. The study identified that the political participation and representation of women in Ankesha Woreda is low when compared to men except for their equal participation in Woreda council. The study found that women are underrepresented in local government structures, like, in kebele councils and cabinets and Woreda cabinets due to deep-rooted and a longstanding traditional belief. Thus, the government should confirm equal rights of women based on their competency, experience and educational background at different levels of government council particularly, at local level*

**Keywords:** *political participation, representation, women, decision making and Ankesha Woreda*

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Ethiopia has taken a number of steps to reform its legal and institutional framework in order to promote women's greater inclusion in politics and increase their overall political participation and representation at the national and local levels. Ratification of international conventions whose principles reinforce equality of gender such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that protects women's right has been a starting point for guaranteeing women's political rights (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2018). In line to this, the 1993, National Policy on Ethiopian Women (NPEW) and the 1995 FDRE constitution that are aligned with international and regional conventions are benchmarks for the establishment of institutional and legal framework for women participation and representation in Ethiopian Federation (UN, 2014).

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

*[...]women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal right with men. Women have the right to full consultation in the formulation of national development policies, the designing and execution of projects, and particularly in the case of projects affecting the interests of women (FDRE Constitution 1995, Art. 35 sub. Art. 1 & 6 P. 10 & 11)*

In addition to this, the FDRE constituent units which are recognized by article 46 of 1995 constitution formulate women's political right in their entire constitution. Among constituent unit's constitution the ANRS constitution recognizes equality of women with men in overall

political, economic and social aspects. Regarding to this, Article 35 (1) of ANRS constitution ensures constitutional rights of women and full protection of these rights. Particularly sub Article 3 of this constitution read as:

*Taking into account the historical scar suffered by them due to their prolonged treatment with inequality and discrimination, women are in order to have such a scar rectified in their favor, entitled to enjoy additional affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall of course to be provide with special attention to women so as to enable them compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic fields as well as in public and private institutions (ANRS constitution, Article 35 (1) p. 19).*

Amhara National Regional State is one of the nine regional states of FDRE that contains twelve zones and three city administrations of which *Ankesha Woreda* is part of this regional state in *Awi Nationality Administrative Zone*. It shares the boundary with *Banja Woreda* on the North, *Ayehu Guagusa Woreda* on the South, *Guagusa Shikudad Woreda* on the East and *Guangua Woreda* on the West. It is one of the twelve *Woredas* that is found in *Awi Nationality Administrative Zone* which includes sixteen rural and two urban *Kebele* (local administrations). As 2019 *Woreda* Finance and Economic Development Office data the *Woreda* population is estimated to be 108,376 and among this 52,547 (48.5%) men 55,829 (51.5%) women. Thus, from the data we can understand that, more than half of the populations in this study area are women.

In *Ankesha Woreda* even if, number of women exceeds number of men their activity is limited inside their home due to economic and socio-cultural factors. Therefore, freedom of women is restricted and controlled by their counterparts. It is observed that men are given better education to compete. Women have become dependent on men due to lack of resources outside house, and hence, in the social, economic and political activities, men become the basis for power. The role of women in the formation of economic and social policies is insignificant because, women are being away from decision-making and they do not get any chance to raise their perspective or promote their participation in politics that leads men to dominate the system of governance in *Ankesha Woreda* and women's political participation and representation is limited (Kumar, 2017).

Women's political participation and representation is one of the democratic principles that are closely related to their overall empowerment and gender equality. According to Frederiksberg, (2008) political participation and representation of women is defined as, increasing the participation of women in legislative assemblies, their decision power in these assemblies, the ability of women to publicly voice their opinions and to affect the composition of legislative assemblies. In addition to this women's political participation and representation is women's access to formal sector employment, self-employment, borrowing, saving and access to and control of economic empowerment.

According to Foster, (2018) Federal model of governance increases opportunities for women's democratic participation because; it creates multiple access points for women's entrance to reform measures. In line to this, she concludes that, "Women's representation and participation in governance strengthens democracy, reflects population composition and ensures the voices of women are heard"(Foster, 2018 p. 2). But, in Ethiopia, women's representation in different government positions and participation in political decision making is not reached the expected level as they contribute 50% of country's total population even if, they are more willing to support the interests of other sartorial groups, to promote and maintain socio-economic benefits to all women in the country and to hold leaders who support such kinds of policies, rules and regulations.

In line with the above arguments Ethiopia; by adopting international conventions regarding women, by taking policy measures, by ensuring active participation of women in different levels of government and in promoting women in social sectors such as education and health sectors has a good trend to achieve equality of women with men. But, practically, there are many challenges such as low representation in decision making, early marriage, abduction, rape, high level of poverty, women trafficking, etc. that undermine women's political participation and representation in Ethiopian Federation in contradiction with rules and regulations that Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia gave attention to achieve its objectives. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate women's political participation and representational local level in Ethiopian Federation, the mechanisms and extent of their political participation and representation, factors that would inhibit their participation and representation at local level of government particularly in *Ankesha Woreda*.

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

Women in Ethiopia account for 50% of the population but do not equally participate in and benefit from development and progress even if; the country's constitution ensured their right (Bizuneh, 2016). Due to this problem, Ethiopian constitution gives greater emphasis on women's political participation and representation, equality of women with men, protection of fundamental right of peoples. Particularly, Article 25 of the constitution describes that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. Article 34(1) of Ethiopian constitution reads as "men and women, without any distinction as to race, nation, nationality or religions, who have attained marriageable age as defined by law, have the right to marry and found a family. They have equal rights while entering into, during marriage and at the time of divorce".

Moreover, Article 35 (3) of the constitution stipulates that "the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them compete and participate on the bases of equality with men in political, social and economic life as well as in public and private institutions". In addition to this, article 35 as a whole provides detail rights to women.

Despite the positive policy environment created, and progress for women in Ethiopia, their participation in key growth and development programs and sectors and their role in decision-making process at all levels of government are still minimal (UNEGEEW, 2014). This is because "Women experience lower socio-economic status in general and hence is marginalized from making decisions at all levels; Nonetheless; women are poor in terms of access to resources, services and employment" (Shimelis, 2015 p. 2). In line with this, economic significance and benefits as well as, political participation and representation, Ethiopian women are less in accordance with the opportunities that are given by constitution to them and their contribution to country's total population.

Recently, some studies on women empowerment and political participation have been conducted by different researchers at national level; a case in point is the study conducted by Teffera,(2017). He attempted to study on “the nature of women empowerment in Ethiopia in constitutional and policy provisions” and concluded that “the deep rooted traditional attitudes, cultural values in community, low level of literacy, low commitments from concerned government bodies are some of the factors that hinder the full-fledged women’s empowerment.”On the other hand, the study has been conducted by Tekly,(2016) on “the role of women’s empowerment on Growth and Transformational Plan”. He concluded that “even if there are some activities done to change entrenched gender based outlook within the society, they are not reachable to take a part in all parts of the society.”

Similarly, the survey study has also been conducted by Shimelis, (2015) on “Challenges and Opportunities of Women Political Participation in Ethiopia”, and he concluded that, there was a cross section of factors that hinder women’s access to political participation in Ethiopia; however, the government of Ethiopia has declared its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by stipulating the rights of women in its constitution, issuing the women’s policy of the country and National Action Plan for gender equality to put gender mainstreaming into action in Ethiopia and in its regions across various policies. Despite all these, women are still at the subordinate positions in the country and they occupy low status in the society. Thus, in Ethiopia women’s participation in political decision making process and their representation in different levels of government are not yet reached the required level (50%). This overall problem exists in *Amhara* National Regional State in *Awi* Nationality Administrative Zone particularly in *Ankesha Woreda*.

Accordingly, all of the above researchers merely focused on women’s empowerment and political participation at national level. Unlike the above researchers, this study is focused on women’s political participation and representation at local level particularly; at *Ankesha Woreda* and as far as my knowledge concerns there are no any study that has been conducted so far in women’s political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*.As a result, women in *Ankesha Woreda* did not have equal chance to participate

in decision making process in councils and executive levels. This is because; there is lack of implementation of the policies, laws and constitutionally given rights of women

In addition to this, the existing societal practices, which favor men's interests mainly, have a negative impact on initiatives and efforts towards women's political rights in *Ankesha Woreda*. Moreover, the socio-cultural constructions and practices of society, consider women as a subordinate to men and second-class citizens both in the family and in the society. Consequently, this study tries to assess the status of women in Woreda and Kebele councils and cabinets, opportunities and challenge of women's substantive and descriptive political participation and representation in my study area and it tries to address the following research questions and objectives here under.

### **1.3. Research questions**

This study specifically addresses the following questions

1. What are the legal, institutional and social norms that promote women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*?
2. Is there equal political participation and representation at local level in Ethiopian Federation?
3. What are the factors that hinder women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*?
4. What are the efforts and challenges of local government in ensuring equal participation and representation of women in politics in *Ankesha Woreda*?

### **1.4. Objective of the study**

#### **1.4.1. General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to analyze factors that affect women's descriptive and substantive political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*.



### **1.4.2. Specific Objective**

1. To assess the legal, institutional and social norms that promotes women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*
2. To examine the current status of women's political participation and representation at local level in Ethiopian Federation; particularly in *Ankesha Woreda*.
3. To identify the factors that hinder women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*
4. To sketch efforts and challenges of local government in ensuring equal participation and representation of women in politics in *Ankesha Woreda*

### **1.5. Research methodology**

For the successful achievement of the study, the researcher considers the following research approach, samples and sampling technique, data collection method and data analysis.

#### **1.5.1. Research Approach**

Methodologically, this study is used a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed approach is preferred to describe the nature of the problem under this study that is, problems of women's political participation and representation. Thus, the researcher conducted by using descriptive research methods to collect qualitative and quantitative /mixed/method of data. Qualitative technique helps to analyze primary data and to undertake in-depth study through exploring attitudes, behaviors and experiences by using such instruments as questionnaire, key informants, focus group discussion, document analysis while, quantitative research is used to analyze secondary data collected from different sectors that generates statistical and produces numeric data through survey instruments such as questionnaire. In addition to this, the researcher focus on desk review documents from *woreda* women affairs office, ruling party office, stakeholders' office, and he used books and other media like internet. To this end, both primary and secondary data are gathered using both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments.

### **1.5.2. Target Population**

*Ankesha Woreda* is one of the twelve *Woreda's* in *Amhara* National Regional State in *Aw*i Nationality Administrative Zone where the number of women is exceeding the number of men. As women are contributing more for the number of population their participation in politics is not reached the expected level (equal participation of women with men).

The target population of this study is women representatives, women affairs leaders, ruling party leaders and community members who are believed to have a direct or indirect relationship with women affairs and women's who are members of opposition party.

### **1.5.3. Samples and Sampling Technique**

A sample is a sub-group of a population. It has also been described as a representative “taste” of a group. The sample should be representative, meaning that each sample unit should be represented by the characteristics of a known number of units in the population. To select respondents from total study population the researcher used different systems of sampling methods. Among these; purposive sampling or non-probability sampling is the one that the researcher is used to apply. Because, *Ankesha Woreda* is with the big number of populations, and it is difficult to reach to all population, in this case the researcher decided to use purposive sampling method for the representatives of the community in the study area. According to Kothari, (2004), purposive sampling (deliberately selection of particular units of the universe) is a sampling technic for constituting a sample which represents the universe. It is, therefore, most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection.

The *Woreda* community as a whole may not have the same understanding or knowledge about the research and to answer for the research questions. In order to avoid this problems the researcher prefers to use purposive or deliberate sampling methods depending on the knowledge and understanding of the community to collect necessary information from respondents through, different methods of data collection ways such as questionnaire, interview and focus group discussions to the representative of the target population.

The researcher made distribution of questionnaire, 12 personal interview and 2 focus group discussions (four at each group) to collect necessary data from *Woreda* and *Kebele* women association representatives, *Woreda* and *Kebele* women affairs leaders, *Woreda* and *Kebele* ruling party leaders and member of communities (like farmers, teachers, civil servants and business men) who are living in different rural and urban *Kebeles*. The researcher selects the above target groups because of the relevance of their position and qualification with the research topic that could be conducted in the study area.

#### **1.5.4. Data collection method**

The researcher administers the questionnaire for the primary data collection which has both structured and unstructured questionnaires for 96 selected respondents, uses personal interview with 12 interviewees and two groups of focus group discussants for additional information and clarification of the study. The questionnaire is prepared in Amharic and translated into English. Because: the official language of the *Woreda* community is Amharic. For the secondary data collection the researcher is focused on desk review documents from the *Woreda* women affairs office, ruling party office, education, health offices and *Woreda* Administration office to collect relevant data.

#### **1.5.5. Data Analysis**

According to (Kothari, 2004) analysis refers to calculating a certain measures along with the regular form of relationship that occur among data-groups. In this study the data prepared for analysis in order to summarize information from the questionnaires and interview guides and puts the collected data into form for simple understanding and interpretation. The first data is collected in Amharic, /because; official language of the research area is Amharic/and then translated in to English and paraphrased while maintaining the original details and meaning as correct as possible. The data from interview schedule is coded and recorded for analysis.

### **1.6. Significance of the study**

In Ethiopia, even if the number and scope of studies made on women's political participation and representation is growing, attention given to the influence and role of

democracy for women political participation and representation is very limited. Thus, the finding of this study makes *Ankesha Woreda* administration to give deserved attention to the assessment of women's participation in decision making and their descriptive and substantive representation as well as opportunities and challenges of women's political participation and representation. In addition to this, the study tries to fill the existing research gap in the study area. It also helps to provide some information for women right advocates who are interested to support women in lower levels of administration. Moreover, this study serves as a benchmark for further and in-depth study on the same problem or other similar studies in the future.

### **1.7. Scope of the study**

Women's political participation and representation can take place at different administrative levels: national, regional or local levels. This study however looks into women political participation and representation in the local level. Specifically the study makes an assessment of the opportunities and challenges of women's political participation in executive and legislative bodies and their descriptive and substantive representation in Ethiopian Federation particularly at *Ankesha Woreda*. This *Woreda* includes sixteen rural and two urban a total of eighteen *Kebele* administrations that my study specifically focuses on three rural and one urban *Kebele* administrations based on women's political participation and representation.

The time framework of the study is from the period of the launching of FDRE constitution in Ethiopian Federalism. Thus, the period since 1995 is the central focus of the study. This is because; it is the constitution that gave the full-fledged legal and institutional framework for women's political participation and representation.

### **1.8. Limitation of the study**

In social science studies facing challenges in conducting the research is known. This study also has some limitation in the process of study development. The first limitation of this study is dalliance of questionnaire because of their work burden and negligencerespondents that make data collection difficult from different community and

secondly time and budget limitations are the other main problems of the study. The researcher tried to overcome the dalliance of questionnaire by dissuading respondents that the purpose of the study is for academic use and to benefit women in *Ankesha Woreda*. In addition to this, the researcher tried to solve the time and budget limitations in collecting the data by employing data collectors and using his time and budget wisely.

### **1.9. Ethical Consideration of the study**

Research ethics is the “moral’ principle guiding the researcher from its beginning through the completion and publication of results and beyond. Ethical issues are becoming a crucial element in scientific research (Creswell, 1993). Accordingly, the researcher creates a mutually respectful with the respondents by giving clear information about him and the purpose of the study. After free consent of the respondents, the researcher assures the privacy, the confidentiality of the information given remains and uses for the academic purpose and their participation in this study benefits society.

### **1.10. Organization of the study**

This study contains five chapters. The first chapter contains the introduction part; the second chapter describes the conceptual and theoretical frame work of the study. The third chapter presents an overview of women’s political participation and representation in Ethiopia at national and sub national levels; the fourth chapter describes data presentation, analysis, and interpretation of finding. The last chapter (chapter five) contains the conclusion and recommendation of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1. Introduction

This study is conducted on “women’s political participation and representation at local level in Ethiopian Federation: the case of *Ankesha Woreda, Awi Zone, Amhara National Regional State*”. Under the literature review I tried to include the conceptual, theoretical and relevant empirical studies. In addition to this, I tried to access the opportunities, challenges and obstacles of women in their political participation and representation in relation to my study. Furthermore, the empirical literature provides evidence from the previous studies related to women’s political participation and representation to this study.

#### 2.2. Definition of Political Participation and Representation

**Political participation:** Political participation is generally thought of as any activity under taken by people with the aim of shaping, affecting or involving the political sphere. The United Nations (UN) Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) defines political participation as more than just the electoral process participation, it subsumes freedom of speech, assembly and association, ability to partake in public affair conduct, chance to register as an aspirant or a candidate, opportunity to campaign, opportunity to be elected and to hold office at any government level (Otieno, 2013).

**Political representation:** ensuring equal chance for all human beings without any discrimination in color, race, sex, religion....in political decision making process, on equal terms such as, the right to vote and to be elected in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, to participate in the design and formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government (Nymba, et .al. 2013).

**Descriptive representation:** is the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented and their needs; which may or may not be influenced by gender. For instance descriptive representation of womenis referred to the physical existence of women representatives

in parliaments until their number reflects their proportion in the population. Thus, it is the first step towards supporting a more equitable level of political participation and leadership for women (NDI, 2010)

**Substantive representation:** is a representation of a group for example, women on their interests, gender equality and rational behind their representation. Substantive representation of women deals with values and experiences of women that can serve as input for the political development and completeness unlike the mere physical existence of women in parliaments. Substantive representation of women is the major concept of representation in feminist theory in which the major assertion is that women by reason of their gender and as a second class citizens can better represent women and protect their interests in national decision making. Thus, a core idea in this term is that, there are certain interests and concerns that arise from women's point of view and experience that should be addressed in a politics (Awotash, 2010).

**Democracy:**As Abraham Lincoln's saying, Democracy is popularly defined as "the government of the people, by the people and for the people", in which people play equal role in decision making. The word itself comes from two Greek words, 'demos' which means 'the people and 'kratia' which means 'rule'. Democracy therefore is "rule of the people". But for a long time, those who were counted as 'the people' did not include women (IDRC, 2013). Thus, Democracy is a system of community's government in which by and large the members of the community participate or may participate directly in the making of decisions which affect them all. It is rule by the people, especially as a form of government; either directly or through elected representatives.

**Federalism:** Federalism can be defined as a mode of governance that establishes unity while preserving diversity by constitutionally uniting separate political communities. In federal arrangement, power is constitutionally divided and shared between: a general, national government or state having nation-wide responsibilities and constituent governments or states having broad regional or local responsibilities. It is a system of government in which political power is divided among smaller political units; each one has its own rules, regulations and institutes that function in accordance with their interests and public or group origins (Williams, 2018). Therefore, federalism is a form of governance that combines 'self-rule' of the constituent units and 'shared rule' of the central government.

### **2.3. Democracy and women's political participation and representation**

Democracy is a system of governance that gives citizens equal opportunity to participate in the public decision making process. Empowering women by increasing their political participation and representation in decision making around the world is essential for attaining sustainable development and it is essential for democracy. Accordingly, democracy is a system of community's government in which the individual attains the power to participate in decision making process by means of a competitive struggle for all the people's vote (UN, 2014).

In line to this, *Gberevbie*, (2013; P. 89) states that, "One of the features of democracy that makes it unique on its application is equality of participation in decision making on issues affecting all segments of the society". This indicates that excluding anybody from the political decision making based on gender issue as of autocracy and others is seen as a rejection of the true values of a democratic society as recommended by different authors in different literatures.

According to International Development Research Centre (IDRC), (2013), relative to total numbers, women who are entitled to vote are a potentially strong force. As a group they are quite capable of influencing the outcome of any election or referendum worldwide. The proportion of women in the voting age population i.e. 18 years and over in 1985 was 50.2% compared to 49.8% of males. By 2005, the percentage of women has been estimated to increase to 51.7% while that of males is expected to fall to 48.3% IDRC, (2013). Accordingly, the idea mentioned above clearly indicates that, women from the majorities of the total population and in principle that have the same rights as men to participate in decision making and to be selected in public office are not benefiting from ongoing political, economic and social development programs in Ethiopia.

Democracy recognizes the rights and authorities of women to improve economic and social interactions and to participate in political decision-making that will ensure improvements in basic services such as health and education. According to National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2010) there is strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is an increase in policy making that emphasizes quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities. Women's political participation has profound positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties, citizen's lives and helps to provide



democracy. This indicates that, when women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living and positive developments can be seen in education, health and infrastructure. Thus, concrete steps have been taken to make democracy more effective, but, women who are more than half of the country's population did not benefit from overall developmental programs because, countries failed to democratize governance (NDI, 2010).

According to Elsevier, (2013) the relationship between women's political participation and representation and democracy seems obvious. Since the UN Decade for Women (1975-85) international strategies and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Development Goals, have created a strong directive to ensure that gender equality and women's political participation and representation are an essential component of development and democracy. To empower women in overall activities

*Not only is long-term democracy important for development outcomes but long term participation of historically marginalized groups is also key. The longer women have the right to vote and participate in government, the more time they have to learn how to most effectively promote their well-being (Beer, 2009; P. 15)*

In line to this UN, (2014; P. 25) clearly states that, "Women's representation in politics and decision-making positions has been increasing steadily, at various levels, since Ethiopia embarked on democratic elections in 1994". Even if, there is an increasing participation of women in decision making process in different public and private sectors, they did not join to it as expected by different policies, rules and regulations.

From the above literature it can be understood that, active participation and representation of women equally with men in overall political, economic and social affairs is a fundamental requirement of democracy. Even if, theoretically there is a good relationship between democracy and women's political participation and representation, they did not benefit from political, economic and social affairs in a deserved way. Thus, democracy in empowering women relative to men did not as expected as nationally ratified rules, regulations, policies and internationally agreed conventions and its long experience. This is because, many federations failed to democratize their governance.

## **2.4. Federalism and women's political participation and representation**

Federalism in principle by sharing the government's power and responsibility to the lower level of government accommodates the rights of women and minorities by facilitating preconditions for the participation and representation of them. According to Williams, (2018, p. 6) Political scientists have argued over whether federal systems help or harm women in their pursuit of policies promoting gender equality and women's political participation and representation. The existence of at least two levels of government provides women to benefit from gender equal policies which are formulated by national and sub national units.

In addition to this, the decentralization of power to more local levels also has potential benefits for women to participate in politics at the local level, rather than at higher levels of government. This is due to a matter of logistics (women carry majority of responsibilities for child care and home making) and psychological or motivational issues (women may feel more confident about their ability to understand local issues and be effective leaders at the local level). As to the author, there are clearly structural issues that account for women's greater levels of participation at local levels: even if, they face fewer obstacles in terms of party gatekeepers and campaign funding in local elections. For all of these reasons, women in some countries participate in higher rates at local and state levels than in union-level governments. To the extent that federal systems push policy-making power down to these lower levels, they increase women's access to such power(Williams, 2018).

In addition, the federalist state divides its power among its constituents; it creates a multi-level political system that should allow for greater access and therefore greater equality. Therefore, it is expected that the federalist system of government will produce many opportunities for women at lowest levels of government and fewer further up. This idea can be thought as a funnel, whereby elected officials are given many opportunities at lowest level of government and therefore, have some opportunities to move to higher levels of government. Because of this, it is expected that there will be more women at lowest levels of federal government (Comfort, 2013)

Bringing power down to local level systematically creates an advantage for geographically concentrated groups as opposed to other sorts of groups. Empowering local communities is, of

course, one of the primary reasons for the adoption of federal systems: communities that are minorities at the national level but majorities (at least much more substantial players) in the smaller arena will have more control in a decentralized system. The problem is that women are not a geographically concentrated minority; in most countries, they are a geographically dispersed majority. As a result, their political power is not increased by decentralization. Finally, the existence of multiple sub national units may also create costs for women. The existence of many states making different policy choices means that women in different areas of the country may have very different rights which lead them to human and material costs(Williams, 2018).

According to Foster, (2018, p. 22) a federal model of governance can provide opportunities to advance gender equality and the rights of women. Those opportunities include increased opportunities to sit in public office , multiple access points for women to lobby for reform measures, encouraging policy transfer between deferent regions of a country, protecting women from violence by responding more electively to ethnic diversity and conflict through the provision of autonomy, self-rule and self-determination, and enabling local concerns including the different interests of women to be better represented.

From the above literature it can be understood that, even if, there are scholars such as Foster who argued that expanding advantages of federalism for women's political participation and representation and gender equality, the other scholars such as Williams and Christine M. Comfort did not have a clear cut argument on the advantages and disadvantages of federalism on their political participation and representation. Thus, the general characteristics of federal systems create both opportunities and challenges from the perspective of gender equality and women's political participation and representation. Based on this, it could not be possible to say that federalism in general is either good or bad for women as a group or for the promotion of gender equality and empowering women. Instead, federalism can help or hurt women's political participation and representation depending upon the way that the specific features of the federal system interrelate with the political, social and economic context of the country. Thus, country's political, economic and social relations and conditions matters to maximize advantages and minimize disadvantages that federal system offers towomen.

## **2.5. Political Rights of Women, their Participation and Representation in Federations**

### **2.5.1. Women right is human right**

Women as more than half of human beings; they should be given deserved human right and equality with men. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible UDHR, (1948).It also states that, everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. Thus, women's participation in decision making process and improvement of their social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government, reasonable administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

Human rights require both rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfill human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States should protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfill means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights. At individual level, while we are entitled our human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others (Nigist, 2008).

All States have ratified at least one, and 80% of States have ratified four or more, of the core human rights treaties, reflecting consent of States which creates legal obligations for them and giving concrete expression to universality. Some essential human rights standard enjoys universal protection by customary international law across all boundaries and civilizations. However, its implementation is very low(Nigist, 2008).

### **2.5.2. Women's Participation and Representation in Federations**

Women, who are considered to be the cornerstone of society in the modern period, are representing the politics of most federations. To protect women's political right and to participate them in political decision making federations are formulating different declarations and

conventions. These declarations and conventions provide clear provisions for women’s political right and their political participation and representation (Kumar, 2017). In line to this, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on article 3 clarifies that:

*States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men (CEDAW, Art.3 P. 2).*

In general, there has been progress in taking action to address inequalities in women’s political participation and representation. Many federations have adopted temporary special measures, defined in Article 4 of CEDAW as measures intended to “accelerate de facto equality between men and women”. In 2004, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committee established to oversee the convention clarified the meaning of temporary special measures by way of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23 on political and public life and General Recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of CEDAW, on temporary special measures. At times, non-identical treatment of women and men is required in order to address the differences between women and men and to pursue the goal of substantive equality, including equitable access of women and men to all spheres of life. General Recommendation No. 25 makes clear the need to address the underlying causes of discrimination against women within each country’s context. It sees temporary special measures as “part of a necessary strategy by State parties towards achieving de facto or substantive equality of women with men in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms(OSCE, 2016).

Table 1 Women in national parliaments in different federations

Country	Year	Total seats in both house	Seats held by women	% of women
Belgium	2014	210	87	41.42%
Canada	2015	435	131	30.11%
India	2016	786	91	11.58%
Nigeria	2015	468	27	5.77%
Spain	2016	616	238	38.64%
South Africa	2014	449	185	41.20%
USA	2016	533	105	19.70%

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**Source-** Kumar, (2017) cited in <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> (accessed 11th Nov 2017)

From the table above it could be understood that, women's representation in parliaments in different federations now stands at an average of 26.92%, and there is a wide variation among the federal states, from a higher participation of 41.42% in 2014 election in Belgium federation to a lower participation of 5.77% in 2015 election in Nigeria federation. On the other hand, out of the total 533 seats in both houses in USA in 2016 election women got 19.70% of the seats which is insignificant for USA federation as it has long practice in democratization. In Nigeria women's involvement in politics is not equal to being understood and in this country their representation seems to be locked which leads us almost to say that, there is no political and social status of women. Thus, there is no doubt that in Nigeria; the worst situation is the case of women's representation in which women got 5.77% seats in 2015 election.

In line to this, women's descriptive and substantive representation in national parliaments of different federal countries is relatively better in Belgium, South Africa, Spain and Canada, even if, it did not achieve the deserved position (50%) as expected by different international, regional and national conventions, rules and laws. Accordingly, the political rights of women and their participation and representation in different federations are not appropriate with their contribution to the total population of each federation and still their representation is very low. The persistent under representation of women in political life and decision-making process was a "democratic deficit" and the discrimination they faced in federations which hindered them from unleashing their full potential, excluding them from benefiting equally from development-related services is unfair with regard to international conventions and national policies as well as their contribution to the total population of each federation (Nigist, 2008).

Despite the efforts and commitments taken by international conventions and declarations along with nationally formulated policies, rules and regulations on women's political participation and representation as well as on their equality in decision-making as that of men over the last 20 years, progress has been unsatisfactory. By considering different features of women's political participation and a bit progress in descriptive representation, substantive representation of women seeks to motivate greater efforts to put into action these international obligations and commitments throughout the entire federations (OSCE, 2016).

## **2.6. Opportunities and Challenges on Women's Political Participation and Representation in Ethiopia**

### **2.6.1. Opportunities of Women's Political Participation and Representation in Ethiopia**

In post-1995 women in Ethiopia are coming with good opportunities to participate in political decision making. To overcome women from patriarchic, monarchic and autocratic system the country has prioritized the advancement of gender equality through the development and implementation of several national plans and frameworks which include the first National Policy on Women in 1993 followed by the promulgation of Constitution in 1995 that calls for equal rights of women, including Affirmative Action to connect existing gaps. In line with this, Ethiopia has revised discriminatory legal provisions in the Family Law and Penal Code, showing a firm of political commitment to gender equality and the improvement of women. Among the strategies applied to translate policies and legal provisions into actions is the setting up of institutional mechanism for the advancement of women ranging from the national to regional, extending to the local administrative units (UN, 2014).

Thus, the opportunity available for women's political participation and representation in FDRE starts with the establishment of national Gender Policy frame work and ratification of constitution to provide a frame work to all government structures and development partners to include women's issue in their general or specific objectives. It is also an opportunity to have not only legislative support and policy frame work but also institutional arrangements that enables mainstreaming of gender and gender issues in all programs and activities of government as it was recommended by international conventions for the advancement of women (Nigist, 2008).

In addition to this, the constitutional grantee for freedom of associations, multi-party politics and electoral system, establishment of women's policy in 1993 and decentralized system of government can be considered major institutional opportunities for women's political participation and representation. Particularly, the FDRE constitution has made a great contribution in recognizing women's right and their active participation in decision making process in country's law and politics. In addition to this, establishment of institutions (such as women affairs ministry, bureaus and offices) specifically responsible for women's issue both at

national and sub-national levels, creation of various women's and other civic organizations which in one or another way advocates for the protection and promotion of women's right and their full-fledged equality with men are important opportunities (Frew, 2010).

The other opportunity include the institutionalization of an affirmative action which appreciates women leaders to develop their political and leadership skills and experience in decentralized local government that seeks elected office at higher levels of government. Thus, Women leaders in local governments build experience in managing public affairs and in running a campaign. Hence they acquire skills and authority that can assist when running for higher office at local or federal levels. This process can also expand the range of choices for the countries to deepen the democratization process (Frew, 2010).

In general, the creation of independent machinery, starting from federal to local government, which specifically deals with the various issues of women and the formulation and implementation of different policies including FDRE constitution throughout the country to conduct investigations upon receiving complaint of violation of the rights of women and to ensure women's political participation is an essential opportunity to them. Despite these opportunities mentioned above, the proportion of women representation both in local councils and executive offices is insufficient as compared to the percentage share of women in the total population.

### **2.6.2.Challenges on Women's political participation and Representation in Ethiopia**

In Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia women's political participation and representation has made some progress in undertaking women's oppression. However, it is disproportional to their contribution to the total number of population. Though it is impossible to ensure their equality and to overcome challenges regarding women's lives with in short period of time and it is believed that revising the previous approaches and overcoming the weakness significantly by increasing women's political participation and representation in Ethiopia (Frew, 2010). In this regard, some of the challenges facing women in Ethiopia are stated as follows

#### **2.6.2.1. Economic issue on Women's political participation and Representation**

Women's historical experience of discrimination is highly related with lack of their economic resources and economic status of women to a greater extent plays a significant role in enhancing



their participation and representation in political decision making process. Thus, women in Ethiopia have restricted access to productive financial resources and tend to have less financial means and independence compared to men. This is largely due to the remaining discriminatory provisions in matters of personal status which often limit their ability to participate in the workforce and for most women who do work, in some cases; their salaries are sent to their husbands. Moreover, there is a societal expectation that women are the primary caretakers of children and family. The pressure for women to mainly devote their time to family and household duties can limit their ability to undertake activity outside of their home (OECD, 2018),

To overcome this problem, Ethiopian government formulated Economic Reform and Policy in 1993 that aims to promote economic development and improve the living standard of the most vulnerable sections of the society, particularly women, but still in most Ethiopian society women have no right to decide on their own property in the house hold because the household head is always the father which can control every asset and property of the family. Due to this facts women always needs to get permission of the father to buy some consumption materials and other resources of the household. Even if women are salaried, most of the time their income is controlled by men and sometimes if father and mother have their own income independently, women cover household expenses while men enjoy outside home like hotels and bars. So women are always dependent on men economically which is the main cause for their low participation to politics of the country (Shimelis, 2015).

#### **2.6.2.2. Socio-Cultural values on women's political participation and representation**

In many countries, traditions continue to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and housewives and to restrict them to those roles. According to Otieno, (2013) traditionally politics has always been male dominated, a structure which is both hostile and unwelcoming to women. In general many societies are patriarchal and undermine women who try to change the exiting situation. Women also have to deal with physical barriers like lack of financial resources, relatively lower levels of education, marginal access to information and more family responsibilities. But, cultural foundations of role expectations, patriarchy, and social norms that allocate females to domestic life are some of the backward practice for women's low participation in political decision making. In addition to this, traditional beliefs and inadequate educational and occupational predictions prevent women from attaining skills needed to compete for public office

successfully. Moreover women lack support from interest groups and government leaders to actively participate in decision making. Thus, without doubt, most power agents are men who are economically powerful and unlikely to support women from the beginning (Otieno, 2013))

Now a day there is a system that ensures women's right and their full-fledged equality, in our country that refuses the prevalence of male dominance in political decision making. Thus, encouraging environment that ensures women to participate and represent equally with men in political and socio-economic activities, is in the process of being created now; however; gender inequality that has various expressions, is still an obstacle to women's political rights. As it is a deep rooted problem, it is not possible to eradicate it within a short period of time. This is established by the attitude that refuses to accept the truth that women should be equal to men and demonstrated by claiming to accept that women should be equal to men but failing to practice it and rejecting to be ready to work towards guaranteeing women's equality at all (Shemelis, 2015).

Accordingly, the problem exists at different levels of government structure, starting from their own family and the community at large. It is clear that, this situation has made a significant contribution to hindering women from equally participating in and benefiting from our country's overall development, democratization and peace. Allowing women to participate in any decision making positions that are compatible with their capacity, knowledge and experience, increasing their income and improving their lives is a real challenge as there are circumstances where they are denied the opportunity through various backward, traditional and cultural beliefs. Thus, special attention should be given to solve these backward, traditional and cultural beliefs among societies and women's strong and continuous struggle is almost important.

### **2.6.2.3. Low conscious on political participation and representation of women**

In Ethiopia women's exclusion from decision making positions is highly related with traditional and cultural beliefs. Thus, in many societies women are described as weak and incapable of making smart decisions. From ancient time's Ethiopian society described women as unimportant part of community in political decision making and totally incompetent and less intelligent to it. This was projected and reinforced through the years that male-dominated institution and patriarchal society which adopted the idea that woman is subordinate to man. With the constant strengthening of the idea that women are inferior in every aspect to men, it became hard for

women to follow their political rights as an active participant. For a woman to enter politics, such patriarchal attitudes make it even harder. The truth is that such attitudes are not a thing of the past. Such attitudes towards women still exist in societies all over the world today – in both developed and developing countries (Shemelis, 2015).

From this it could be understood that, women's problems can be solved primarily through their own active participation in decision making process, leadership positions and committed struggle to ensure their equality with men. By women's active political participation is meant that all women are aware of the fact that the challenges that face them can only be solved through their own consciousness, their capacity and their active participation in political decision making. After ensuring this, women must advance to the implementation process and ensure their effectiveness, in practically, by developing their own capacity. But, developing and advancing such kind of competitive capacity to women in our country is very difficult because, women associations and concerned organizations to women's right and their equality with men are not well developed and it is impossible to change women's proportion in the near future.

To overcome this problem, there should be correct policies and strategies that address the economic, socio-political and cultural challenges that face women which, need to be part of the overall struggle of the whole society and government. Thus, women's issue cannot be addressed in isolation of the overall economic, social and political struggle of the whole society. However, the role of women is below the expected level when it comes to their participation in political decision making process at the local councils. This leads their position to house hold activities, while leaving out the political decision making positions to men, who are clearly holding it as a monopoly for a long period of time. But, democracy provides equal opportunities for both women and men to participate and represent in the management of political, economic and societal affairs. Therefore, it can be assumed that decision-making will be severely hindered when women are not elected or appointed to the local councils. Political Participation and representation of women in local governance provides them with opportunities to contribute to national and local development initiatives in addition to the space it provides for them to adapt policies to grasp their local desires and opportunities (Rameez, 2018).

Furthermore, the attention given by the political leaders to the quest of women's equality is not reached the desired positions at all levels of the government. The problem starts when women are

prevented from having sufficient participation in decision making and leadership positions in different government structures, particularly at local levels. Satisfactory work has not been done to build the political capacity of women as to enable them to be active participants in political decision making. Due to lack of accurate and strategic responses for women's right and their equality fluctuating activities have been performed and women are still subordinates of the society. Women's underrepresentation which is negatively impacted by implementation problems of the developmental policies, strategies and good governance programs that harm women's consistent advantages. Despite the political commitment, legal support and institutional arrangement the bureaucratic resistance at different levels of government structure is another problem that makes women's participation in decision making process more difficult to perform effectively because of traditional set up of society and thinking (Rameez, 2018)

## **2.7. Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament**

In our countrywomen find themselves as subordinates of their counterparts and they are far removed from decision-making positions. According to IDEA, (2005) women who want to enter politics find that the political, public, cultural and social environment is often unfriendly or even hostile to them. Even a quick glance about the current composition of political decision makers in any region provides evidence that women still face numerous obstacles in articulating and shaping their own interests. When international IDEA clarifies the right of women:

*In theory, the right to stand for election, to become a candidate and to get elected is based on the right to vote. The reality is, however, that women's right to vote remains restricted, principally because the candidates are mostly male. This is true not only for partial and developing democracies, but for established democracies as well(IDEA, (2005 p. 34).*

Thus, the low level of women's representation in decision making process should be considered as violation of women's fundamental democratic right and, as such, a violation of their basic human rights. This unequal rate of representation in legislative and executive bodies signifies that women's representation, rather than being a consequence of democratization, is more a reflection of a current situation (IDEA, 2005).

Moreover, socio-economic conditions play a significant role in the recruitment of women to higher leadership positions in both experienced and new democracies. The social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. With regard to this, RaziaFaiz, former member of parliaments in Bangladesh clarified the socio-economic obstacles for women's political participation and representation in such a way that:

*The two most overwhelming obstacles for women in entering parliament are lack of constituents and lack of financial resources. Women move from their father's home to their husband's home . . . They are like refugees. They have no base from which to develop contacts with the people or to build knowledge and experience about the issues. Furthermore, they have no money of their own; the money belongs to their fathers, their husbands or their in-laws. Given the rising cost of running an effective campaign, this poses another serious hurdle for women in the developing world(IDEA, 2005 P. 41).*

In addition to this, Gojjam,(2015) in her study "Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Leadership and management" described the influence of traditional and cultural beliefs on women's political participation. As her justification, in many federations, traditions continue to underline women's primary roles as mothers and housewives and to restrict them to those roles. A traditional strong, patriarchal value system favors sexually separated roles, 'traditional and cultural values' militate against the improvement, progress and participation of women in any political process. With regard to this, Ethiopia, regardless of the government's policy of equal opportunity for both men and women to participate in the democratization of the country, women have not been adequately represented at all levels of decision-making positions due to deep-rooted traditional and cultural beliefs(Gojjam, 2015).

Historically Ethiopian patriots and contemporary government elites defend the country and its citizens from colonialism and foreign oppression; even if they did not keep equality of women with men in the country. According to Shimelis, (2015) Ethiopia is a patriarchal society that keeps women at a subordinate position, using religion and culture as an excuse. These excuses have for many years, supported by laws and legislation that uphold patriarchy and women's subordination. This has brought about and maintained disparities between men and women, in division of labor,

share of benefits, in law and state, in how households are organized, and how these are interrelated.

Accordingly, the study conducted by (UNFPA, 2005 P. 16 cited in Hirut, 2004) clearly describes that, “there is a belief that women are docile Submissive, patient, and tolerant of monotonous work and violence, for which culture is used as a justification. The socialization process, which determines gender roles, is partly responsible for the subjugation of women in the country”. Thus, Ethiopian society is socialized in such a way that girls are held inferior to boys. In the process of upbringing, boys are expected to learn and become self-reliant, major bread winners, and responsible in different activities, while girls are brought up to conform, be obedient and dependent, and specialize in indoor activities like cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, caring for children, etc. (UNFPA, 2005) which is discriminatory trend of child rearing tradition, that makes women to accept patriarchy from the beginning. With regard to this (UNFPA, 2005 cited in Hirut, 2004) described that:

*...this is because of the differences in which individuals are treated through the socialization process, due mainly to their sex status, which leads to the development of real psychological and personality differences between males and females. For instance, a female informant in Arsi stated that “a man is a big person who has higher social position and knowledge, who can govern others and think in wider perspectives; while a woman is a person who can serve a man, who is like the husband’s object transferred through marriage, and to whom he can do anything he wishes to do” (UNFPA, 2005 P. 16).*

Thus, lacks of economic resources, the deep-rooted traditional and cultural as well as backward practice facing women are the vital obstacles that hinder them to participate in decision making positions. As a result women develop lack of confidence and perceive themselves as subordinate creatures of the society and it was appreciated by their counterparts (men) and the existing government of the time. Even if, the supremacy of men was high influence on women at previous time, it did not leave its influence on contemporary women

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN ETHIOPIA**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the general perspective of women's political participation and representation in Ethiopian federation and particularly the *Amhara* National Regional State, *Awi* Nationality Administrative Zone, *Ankesha Woreda* women's status in political decision making process and their representation. The data from *Amhara* National Regional State Council and Women Child and Youth Affairs Bureau, *Awi* Nationality Administrative Zone Council and Women Child and Youth Affairs Department and *Ankesha Woreda* Council are used to illustrate women's participation at each level of government. Finally, the researcher tried to relate the data found at each level of government with previous literatures to generalize this study in the next chapter.

#### **3.2. Historical Overview of Women's Political Participation**

Historically women in Ethiopia print their contribution in political decision making process even if, patriarchy dominates them to go more. Mignot Mesfin in her study on "The Role of Women in decision-making process in Federal Ethiopia"(2017) made historical and contemporary perspective of women's political participation in pre-1991. In her study Ethiopian women were forced to play a unique role during civil war, starting from previous regimes as well as during famine, displacement and drought conditions. Accordingly, her justification tries to describe the motivation towards giving special attention to women, and the provided opportunity to actively participate in the national development, and to guarantee women their right to enjoy fruits of their labor. In Ethiopia, during the period of monarchy women participation in decision making both in parliament and other Public offices is simply provided to the family of kings and rulers even if, patriarchal society keeps them in a subordinate position (Mignot, 2017).

Women contributed a decisive role in Ethiopian politics even if, they are few in number. Thus, women who were the wives of the rulers and those who have blood relationship; either directly or indirectly with royal families participated in politics. Among these Meskelkibra (Wife of king

Lalibela), Mintewab(Wife of Bakfa), Batti Dill Wonbera (wife of *Gragn* Ahmed) and most of all Taitu(wife of MenelikII) and empress Zewdituare some of them who participated in political decision making(Mignot, 2017).

In line to this Mentiwab Zelalem, (2005) also justified the role of Ethiopian women in political decision making. According to Mentiwab women have played important political and leadership roles in the history of Ethiopia despite, few of them are visible in existing literatures. For instance, Taitu was acting as the chief advisor of Emperor with particular influence in the area of foreign relations. She holds high profile in the history for patriotism and uncompromisingly pursuing Ethiopia's independence. While probing the Hailesillase's regime, it was the revised constitution of 1955 that initiated the first merely female parliamentarian. As a result, two women in 1965 and five in 1969 had joined the emperor's parliament (Mentewab, 2005).

Moreover, Mignot assessed the role of women activists and establishment of women's organization to confined their right and equality. As her justification, the first nation-wide organization was the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association, set up in 1935. The Association was founded under the suzerainty of Empress Menen with membership drawn mainly from upper level of urban society in Addis Ababa. Its activities were limited mainly to raising funds and subsidizing projects for urban women. It was an organization of elites and similar to the formal women's organizations sometimes referred to as 'first lady' organizations found elsewhere in Africa(Mignot, 2017).In addition to this, in *Derg's* regime the 1987 constitution and the subsequently proclaimed electoral law had guaranteed the equality of citizens and hence women were entitled to elect and be elected. The regime had also realized the establishment of the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA) on July 17, 1980. It was a large state organization having almost 5 million members on paper (Mignot, 2017).

Thus, Women during monarchic and autocratic period had little or no impact on government policies, laws and regulations to ensure their right and equality as well as their organizations are nominations to prop the contemporary governments of Emperor's and Workers Party of Ethiopia.

### **3.3. Women's Political Participation and Representation in Ethiopia Federalism**

Ethiopia as a member of global community has allowed to agreements and normative frameworks which protect and promote the rights of women and gender equality. It has ratified the



Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) in 1953, and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, and has made the provisions of these conventions an integral part of the law (UN, 2014). In addition to this, Ethiopia adopted the principles of 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) as well as the political declaration and outcome document post Beijing +5, in 2000. The country has further endorsed the Millennium Development Goals of 2000. The MDGs outlines gender sensitive commitments with specific objectives. These commitments include ensuring the access and quality of universal primary education for both boys and girls as well as urban and rural community, elimination of gender disparity at all levels of education; and reducing maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015 (UN, 2014).

In terms of regional conventions, Ethiopia has ratified the African Charter on Human and People's rights, in 1998. It is, however, yet to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Rights of Women in Africa. Ethiopia, having adopted these international legal and policy instruments, the Government of Ethiopia has progressed in domesticating these frameworks, implement and issues periodic progress reports for the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW (UN, 2014). In line to this, the African Charter on Human and People Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Ethiopian constitution guarantees the rights of women as equal to those of men in all spheres including equality in marriage, the right to equal employment, and rights to maternity leave with pay, the right to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer property, with emphasis on land and inheritance issues and the right to access family planning and education. Ethiopia is therefore making several efforts to strengthen national structures for achieving gender equality(Shimelis, 2015)

At the national level, the National Policy on Women, formulated in 1993, was a milestone for development as it was the first policy formulated on women. The policy encourages equal participation of women in the political, social and economic spheres of life in the country and subsequently institutionalized the rights of women by creating the appropriate institutional mechanisms within government institutions to ensure gender sensitivity of public regulations and interventions. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which is aligned with international legal instruments, guarantees the rights of women and equality with men (UN, 2014). Particularly Article 38 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian

Constitution provides equal rights for all citizens to participate in public and political affairs. Accordingly sub Art. 1 of this constitution read as:

*Every Ethiopian national, without any discrimination based on colour, race, nation, nationality, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion or other status, has the following rights: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely chosen representatives; (b) On the attainment of 18 years of age, to vote in accordance with law; (c) To vote and to be elected at periodic elections to any office at any level of government; elections shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors (FDRE constitution Art. 38 (1)).*

Moreover, Article 38 (2) of this constitution recognizes Ethiopian citizens to organize themselves in political and public organizations and professional associations based on their free interest and it reads as: “The right of everyone to be a member of his own will in a political organization, labour union, trade organization, or employers’ or professional association shall be respected if he or she meets the special and general requirements stipulated by such organization.” From this, women as part of more than half of the population in the country will be benefited.

Consequently, women’s representation in politics and decision-making positions has been increasing steadily, at various levels, since Ethiopia embarked on democratic elections and promulgations of FDRE constitution. Thus, the level of women’s representation in the FDRE House of People’s Representatives grew from 21.4% in 2005 to 27.9% in 2010. This is a significant increase from the 1995 elections, where women held 2.83%, (13 out of 547 seats), and the 2000 election in which women held 7.7%, (42 out of 547 seats) (UN, 2014).

There is also a slight increase in the number of women’s representation in the executive branch. While women’s representation in the last executive body, in 2005, was 13% with an increase to 16.5% in 2014. In 2005 women made for 7% in Cabinet with an increase to 13% in 2014. Out of the 16 standing committees at the Federal Parliament, women lead five of them and lead another five as deputy chair. The Deputy Speaker of the House is also a woman (2010-2015). The number of women holding seats in the House of Federation in 2009 was 18.75%. Moreover, in 2010, women constituted 14.88% (8 women, 44 men) of State Ministers, 20% (1 woman, 4 men) of

Commissioners, 11.33% (6 women, 47 men) of Ambassadors. The recent appointment of a woman in April 2014 as a Deputy Prime Minister is a milestone in women's advancement on the leadership ladder (UN, 2014).

Accordingly, as the number of women legislators has increased over the course of past elections, their capacity to influence policies and decision-making at national level has also improved due to various training programs carried out for women parliamentarians by different actors. The Women's Standing Committee in Parliament is playing a central role in creating gender awareness and building the capacity of women parliamentarians. Institutionally, the Women's Affairs Directorates are accountable to the Women's Standing Committee and the Committee receives quarterly reports from WADs and meets them once a year (UN, 2014).

Regardless of the progress made in women's representation, majority of them have limited access to training and education in leadership capacity and still they continue to face discrimination with regard to conventional attitudes towards women's decision making. Moreover, women face economic and socio-cultural burdens to participate equally in decision-making and leadership positions as their counterparts (UN, 2014). Women have little or no power of making decisions on matters related to their own households. Their decision making power is limited regarding land use in rural areas and even on sexual interactions (UNFP, 2005). In the study conducted by (UNFP, 2005 cited in Haregewoin and Emebet, 2003), less than 25% of women are able to decide by themselves on contraceptive use. Mostly women in Ethiopia have the power to make decisions on issues related to the daily life of their family, but decisions about large household purchases, degree of participation of a woman in economic, socio-political activities, and reproductive health issues are dominated by their counterparts (men).

Even if, encouraging results have already been achieved in women's political participation in decision making process and in their descriptive representation in Ethiopia as mentioned above, there are still several manifold problems of women due to the country's overall economic and political conditions as well as the deep rooted traditional, cultural and backward practice, that need to be addressed with persistent and focused attention. Thus, government with concerned bodies should facilitate and strengthen women's participation in decision making and their descriptive and substantive representations a major issue in its development programs. This is

because, political and socio-economic development of the country cannot be fully achieved without active involvements of women in decision making positions in overall activities.

### **3.4. Overview of Women’s Political Participation and Representation at Sub-national Levels of Government**

#### **3.4. 1. Women’s Political Participation and Representation in ANRS**

*Amhara* National Regional State is one of the nine regional states established under Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Next to *Oromia*, it is the second largest region, in terms of population and geography, among the nine regional states of Ethiopian federation. The total population in the region is estimated to be 20,558,851 with about 10,409,569 (50.63%) women and 10,149,282 (49.37%) are men (BOFED, 2018). Approximately 85% of the people in the region are engaged in agriculture. The area coverage is 170,752, sq.km, and located in the north central and North West part of Ethiopia. As the data of ANRS BOFED, (2018) the number of women is greater than the number of men, but their political participation and representation is insignificant with regards to their contribution to the total population of the region. With regard to women empowerment *Amhara* National Regional State has a number of good policies, laws and guidelines, including regional constitution.

In line to this, the revised constitution of *Amhara* National Regional State Article 35 (1) provides equal right and opportunity for women to participate in the decision making process with men and it clearly states that “women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this constitution, have equal right with men”. The historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in *Amhara* national regional state taken into account, women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures. Thus, Article 35 (3) of the regional constitution stipulates:

*Taking into account the historical scar suffered by them due to their prolonged treatment with inequality and discrimination, women are in order to have such a scar rectified in their favor entitled to enjoy additional affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall of course to be provide with special attention to women so as to enable them compete and participate on the basis of equality with*

*men in political, social and economic fields as well as in public and private institutions (Revised Constitution of ANRS, 2001).*

But, due to lack of capacity both at regional and local levels, the implementation is not as expected by policies, laws, guide lines and regional constitution.

**Table 2 Members of councils and different standing committees in ANRS**

Year of Representation	Hierarchy of Representation					
	Members of Regional council			Regional standing committee		
	M	F	Percentage of women's	M	F	percentage women's
2000---2005	285	9	3.06	--	--	---
2005---2010	271	23	7.8	33	3	8.3
2010—2015	202	92	31.3	30	6	16.7
2015—2020	155	139	47.3	24	12	33.3

**Source:** ANRS Council Office, (March, 2020) *Bahir Dar*

Accordingly, from the above table it could be understood that, in *Amhara* National Regional State Women's representation in councils and political decision-making positions has been increasing gradually, from 2000 up to 2015 election times. As illustrated in table 2 above, the level of women's representation in the regional legislative body grew from 31.3% in 2010 to 47.3% in 2015. This is a significant increase from the 2000 elections, where women held 3.06%, (9 out of 294 seats), or the 2005 election in which women held 7.8%, (23 out of 294 seats) in *Amhara* National Regional State Council (ANRS Council Office, 2020). In 2015, out of the 6 different standing committees at the regional council, women lead two of them and lead another three as deputy chair. Currently both Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the regional council are also women (ANRS Council Office, 2020).

Women's representation and political participation in decision-making process at different levels of the government councils particularly, at local level of the government is not only advantageous for women themselves, but for development and democracy in general. Thus, Women's equal participation in local government plays an essential role in the general processes of the advancement of women. Therefore, without the active participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making positions, the goals of equality,

development and peace cannot be achieved, and that women’s equal participation in councils is a necessary condition for women’s and girls’ interests to be taken into account and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning (*Bizuneh*, 2016).

**Table 3 Leadership positions in ANRS at different levels of government**

year	Regional bureau level						Zonal department level						Woredaoffice level					
	Head office			Deputy head office			Head office			Deputy head office			Head office			Deputy head office		
	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%
2020	53	7	11.7	70	10	12.5	382	89	18.9	132	41	23.7	5118	1081	17.4	1694	710	29.5
2019	58	7	10.7	66	6	8.3	364	66	15.3	109	38	25.9	4767	894	15.8	1228	556	31.2
2018	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2017	35	5	12.5	54	5	8.5	389	37	8.7	361	155	30.0	4702	742	13.6	1596	774	32.7
2016	27	3	10	33	3	8.3	356	43	10.8	105	39	27.1	4781	874	15.5	1566	677	30.2
2015	19	3	13.6	30	2	6.3	368	36	8.9	103	28	21.4	3926	707	15.3	1230	574	31.8
2014	42	4	8.6	60	5	7.7	306	18	5.6	99	11	10.0	3314	370	10.0	1521	482	24.1

**Source:** *Amhara* National Regional State WCYAO:(March, 2020)*Bahar Dar*

In spite of the government policy of equal opportunity for women and men to participate in the democratization process of the region, women have not been adequately represented at all levels of decision-making positions in *Amhara* National Regional state. As indicated in table 3 above, the maximum representation of women in leadership positions throughout the region constituted 13.64% (3 women, 19 men) as Bureau head office in 2015, 12.5% (10 women, 70 men) as deputy Bureau head office in 2020, 18.89% (89 women, 382 men) as Zonal Department head office in 2020, 30.04% (155 women, 361 men) as Zonal Department deputy head office in 2017, 17.44% (1081 women, 5118 men) as *Woreda* head office in 2020, 32.70% (774 women, 1596 men) as *Woreda* deputy head office in 2017. The rest representation of women in leadership positions is below this percentage (ANRS WCYAO, 2020).

The data from Women, Child and Youth Affairs Bureau indicates us; in *Amhara* Regional State women’s political participation and representation in decision making process on the lower level of government as *Woreda* head office and deputy head office is increased from 14.98% in the 2014 to 20.18% in 2020. But, at higher levels of government the number and percentage of women’s political participation and representations increased from 8.1% in 2014 to 12.14% in 2020 at regional level as Bureau head office and deputy head office and from 6.68% in 2014 to 20.18% in 2020 at Zonal level as Zone Department head office and deputy head office. Thus, in seven years (from 2014---2020) women’s descriptive representation is increased by 4.04% at

Regional level 13.5% at Zonal level and 5.2% at *Woreda* level throughout the region (ANRS WCYAO, 2020).

The number of women cabinets has increased over the course of past elections, while at the same time their capacity to influence policies and decision-making at regional level has improved also due to various training programs carried out for women council members by different actors. The Women's Standing Committee in council is playing a central role in creating gender awareness and building the capacity of women councilors. Institutionally, the Women's Affairs Department (WAD) heads are accountable to the Women's Standing Committee and the Committee receives quarterly reports from WADs and meets them once a year (ANRS WCYAO, 2020). Gender awareness creation and capacity building of women representatives primarily performed by women's standing committee have its positive value on the attitude of women and men throughout the regional state.

In this regard, the attitude of Women and their supporting family members, as well as the community in *Amhara* National Regional State has gradually changing and, some men have come to respect women and even assist them at home, and in community and public fields. This is demonstrated by the fact that, the gender-based division of labor is gradually being reduced. Currently women and men share ideas about shifting gender roles, in that some men showed that they are willing to perform tasks traditionally undertaken by women, such as baking *injera*; preparing coffee; looking after children, cleaning the home, washing clothes and household apparatuses; fetching water from streams; and so on. Thus, the participating men and women that it is possible to talk about generally 'taboo' types of work to be undertaken by men and that it is possible to express ideas that move beyond gender categorizing (Belete, 2016). Due to women's engagement in the empowerment programs in their localities there has been a gradual change in their socio-economic status which is a good start to scaling it up.

A typical example for this is the *Awramba* community who are found in this Regional State in South *Gonder* Administrative Zone that did not discriminate the political and socio-economic activities based on gender. In this community the political, economic and social activities are all entitled to both women and men equally without any discrimination. Currently, the *Amhara* Regional State Women, Child and Youth Affairs Bureau with its stake holders is working to scale up the *Awramba* communities practices throughout the region to benefit women and to overcome

the patriarchy despite, the coordination and collaboration problems of the Regional Bureaus and the stake holders throughout the region (ANRS WCYAO, 2020).

From the above critical example it could be understood that, without active political participation and representation of women in legislative and executive positions as well as in the judiciary throughout the region, it is difficult to achieve participatory, accountable, and transparent governance which can ensure political, cultural, social and economic priority goals of the wider society. Besides, every human being has the right to participate in decision making process that defines her or his life. This right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. This right argues that, since women know their situation best, they should participate equally with men to have their perspective effectively incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the regional levels of the government.

### **3.4.2. Women's Political Participation and Representation in Awi Nationality Zone**

*Awi Nationality Administrative Zone* is one of the twelve zones of Amhara National Regional State found at 124 kilometers south west of *Bahir Dar* (the capital city of Amhara National Regional State). The Amhara National Regional State provided for the establishment of nationality zones and *Awi Nationality Zone* was established in 1996 in accordance with the revised constitution of 2001 and it says that “there is here by established a nationality administration in those geographical areas of the national regional state inhabited by the *Himra*, *Awi*, and Oromo peoples, pursuant the provisions of Art, 39 sub-art. 6 and Art, 45 sub-article 2 of this constitution hereof” (revised constitution of ANRS 2001, Art. 73 (1))

The Nationality Zone is divided into nine *Woreda* and three city administrations with considerable decision making power in *Awi Nationality* affairs and this power and function of the Nationality Administrative Zone is stipulated in regional constitution Article 74 sub-Article 2 and reads as

*“Without prejudice to the powers and duties vested in the Federal Houses of the People's Representatives and the federation as well as the regional council pursuant to both the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and this constitution hereof, the Nationality Councils are the bearers of supreme*



*political authority on behalf of their respective nationalities.” (Revised constitution of ANRS 2001, Art. 74 (2) P. 53)*

According to the central statistics authority, (2007) the total population of the Nationality Zone was 2,049,331, among this male constitute 1,024,356 (49.98%) and the rest 1,024,975 (50.02%) are female. As their contribution to the population women’s political participation and representation in members of councils in the Nationality Zone is low compared to men except their equal participation during election. Currently women members of councils in *Awi Nationality Zone* are less than women members of councils in *Amhara National Regional State*.

In *Awi Nationality Zone* women are granted constitutional rights (as indicated by FDRE constitution article 34 and 35 and revised constitution of ANRS Article 35) to take part in any affairs affecting their life. However, as that of Federal and Regional levels, women in *Awi Nationality Zone* are not equally participating in politics and their roles are closely tied to their reproductive and house hold activities whereas, politics and socio-economic affairs are seen as unsuitable for them due to a combination of various factors. Thus, the majority of women in Nationality Zone, like other women in ANRS, occupy lower position in the society. They do not have equal access to education, politics and employment as they are playing critical role for the wellbeing of the society, but their role in politics is very limited in Nationality Zone.

**Table 4 Members of Council and different Standing Committees in *Awi Nationality Zone***

Year of Representation	Hierarchy of Representation					
	Members of Nationality Zone council			Nationality Zone council standing committee		
	M	F	Percentage of women’s	M	F	Percentage of women’s
2003--2008	57	23	28.75	----	---	-----
2013--2020	55	25	31.25	12	6	37.5

**Source:** *Awi Nationality Council Office: (March, 2020) Injibara*

The full-fledged right and equal participation of both women and men in political decision making provides a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society in Nationality Zone, and may as such enhance the legitimacy of political representations by making them more democratic and responsive to the concerns and perspectives of all segments of society. In addition to this, increasing women’s representation and participation in the political and public decision-making positions is a question of democracy, democratic process, and equality as well as a

question of political and civil rights that has been guaranteed by the international organizations' (UN) agreements, treaties, covenants and conventions. Moreover without greater representation of women in legislative and executive positions as well as in the judiciary, it is difficult to achieve participatory, accountable, and transparent governance which can ensure political, cultural, social and economic priority goals of the wider society (Shimelis, 2015).

Accordingly, the data presented in table 4 above indicates that, women only constitute 28.75% (23 women, 57 men) and 31.25% (25 women, 55 men) in *Awi* Nationality Council from (2003--2008) and from (2013---2020) respectively. Currently, this representation is below the percentage representation of women in *Amhara* National Regional State in regional council (47.3%). In addition to this, women's political participation and representation in Nationality Zone at different council's standing committee is 33.3% (6 women, 18 men) which is equal in percentage to the regional representation 33.3% (12 women, 24 men). Thus, women's political participation and representation in Nationality Zone is denied the deserved attention from the existing government.

Given the provisions in constitution Article 35 of *Amhara* National Regional State, personal observation shows that women's right is not protected as it was meant in this constitution and other legal and policy provisions. This is because of the dominant role of government in the implementation of these provisions while undermining the role of other NGOs and community based organizations. Moreover, absence of strong women's organizations and women's networks partly challenging the implementation of constitutional provisions (*Bizuneh*, 2016).

**Table 5 Leadership positions in *Awi* Nationality Zone at different levels of government**

Year	Zonal department level						Woreda office level					
	Head office			Deputy head office			Head office			Deputy head office		
	M	F	% of Women	M	F	% of Women	M	F	% of women	M	F	% of women
2020	21	9	30.0	19	5	20.8	200	64	24.2	110	36	24.7
2019	21	9	30.0	19	5	20.8	236	64	21.3	105	30	22.2
2018	33	5	13.1	7	2	22.2	366	37	9.2	120	24	16.6
2017	51	8	13.6	10	3	23.1	341	42	10.9	125	26	17.2
2016	32	3	8.6	10	3	23.1	332	38	10.3	125	22	14.9

**Source:** *Awi* Nationality Zone WCYAO: (March, 2020) *Injibara*

As illustrated in table 5, important progress has been made in the representation of executive body in the Nationality Zone, where women's representation was increased from 8.6% (3women, 32

men) to 30% (9 women, 21 men) in Zone Department head office, from 10.3% (38 women, 332 men) to 24.2% (64 women, 200 men) in *Woreda* head office and from 14.9% (22 women, 125 men) to 24.7% (36 women, 110 men) in *Woreda* deputy head office but, the representation of women as Zone Department deputy head office is decreased from 23.1% (3 women, 10 men) to 20.8% (5 women, 19 men) from 2016 to 2020 (*Awii Nationality Zone WCYAO, 2020*).

Despite, the percentage of women's representation in Nationality Zone is lower than their counterparts (men), on average their representation as head Department office (19.3%) and deputy head office (21.9%) is greater than the *ANRS* women representation as Bureau head office (11.1%) and deputy head office (9.4%). In addition to this, the average Nationality Zone women representation as head office (19.3%) and deputy head office (21.95%) is better than the average representation of women from other Zones throughout the Regional State as Zonal Department head office (12.25%) and deputy head office (20%) and its average representation throughout the Nationality Zone *Woreda* administrations as head office (16.7%) is also better than women's representation throughout the Regional State as *Woreda* head office (13.7%). But, the representation of women throughout the Nationality Zone as *Woreda* deputy head office (24.8%) is lower than the *ANRS* women's average representation throughout the region as *Woreda* deputy head office (28.4%).

Thus, women's participation in councils and executive bodies of the government at every level is increasing their political participation and representation is lower than the expected level as compared to their contribution to the regional, zonal and *Woreda* population at regional, nationality zone and *Woreda* legislative and executive bodies. In addition to this, their representation is not uniform and varies from time to time, from one administrative zone to other and from one *Woreda* to another *woreda* due to lack of political commitment from the existing government despite, the *Amhara* National Regional state Constitution recognizes women's equal rights with men in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres

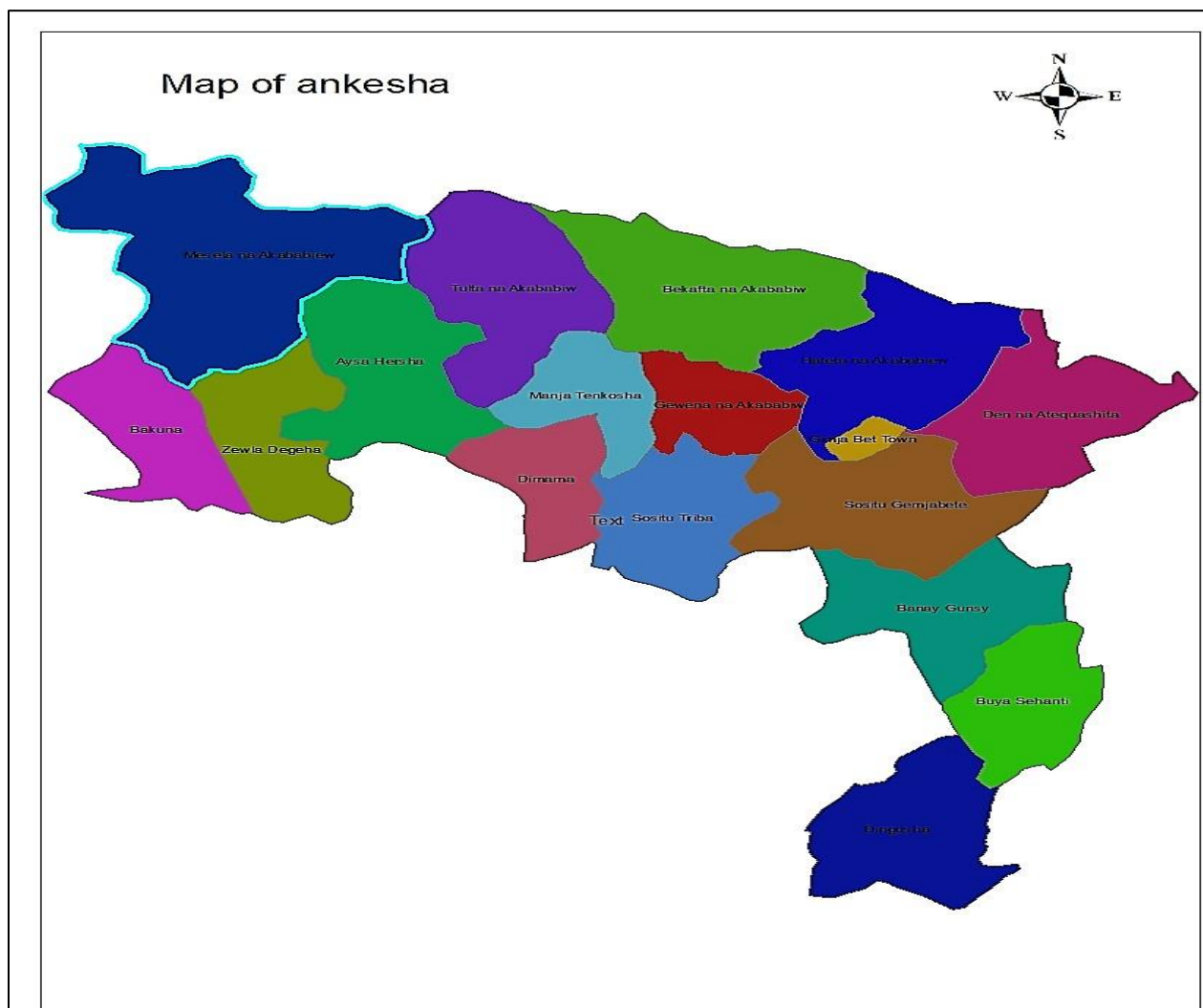
### **3.4.3. Women's Political Participation and Representation at Local Level *Ankesha Woreda***

*Ankesha* is one of the twelve *Woreda*'s found in *Awii Nationality Administrative Zone* at 14 kilometers south of *Injibara* (the capital city of *Awii Nationality Administrative Zone*). It is established based on *Amhara National Regional State constitution Article 45* which

explains administrative hierarchies of the regional state. Accordingly, Article 45 (1) of this constitution specifies:

*“The Regional State is hierarchically structured in such a way as to comprise the Regional, Woreda and Kebele administrative units. The regional council may, However, establish other administrative hierarchies and thereby determine by law their respective power and duties, as may find it necessary” (revised constitution of ANRS 2001 P. 30)*

**Figure 1 Map of Ankesha Woreda**



**Source:** Ankesha Woreda Administrative Office, (May, 2020) Gimjabet

In *Ankessa Woreda* women's representation in politics and decision-making positions has been increasing steadily, at various levels, from 2011-2020. As described in table 6 below the level of women's representation in *Woreda* Council is increased from 47.2% in 2011 to 50% in 2020 and in *Kebele* councils is increased from 17.1% in 2011 to 23.2% in 2020. This is a significant increase from the 2011 *Woreda* and *Kebele* council members, where women held 47.2%, (34 out of 72 members) in the *Woreda* Council and 15.2% (1425 out of 3585 members) in the *Kebele* council. There is also a slight increase in the number of women's representation in the executive branch in the *Woreda*. While women's representation in executive body, in 2011, was 8.9% (4 out of 45) and it increased to 26.7% (12 out of 45) in 2020.

In line to this women's representation in *Woreda* council standing committee was increased from 22.2% (4 out of 18) in 2011 to 33.3% (6 out of 18) in 2020. On the other hand women's representation and participation in *Kebele's* council, *Kebele* council standing committee and *Kebele's* executive is 17.1% (1555 out of 9082), 16.7% (99 out of 594) and 25.8% (68 out of 264) in 2020 respectively. Even if there is a slight increase in women's representation and participation in *Kebele's* council (from 15.2% in 2011 to 17.1% in 2020) and *Kebele* executive (from 20% in 2011 to 25.8% in 2020), it is relatively lower than *Woreda's* representation and participation based on ten years data.

Table 6 Political participation of women in *Ankessa woreda* /2011--2020/

Year	Hierarchy of responsibility in <i>Ankessa Woreda</i>																	
	<i>Woreda</i> council members			<i>Woreda</i> council committee			<i>Woreda</i> executive			<i>Kebele</i> council members			<i>Kebele</i> council committee			<i>Kebele</i> executive		
	M	F	% women	M	F	% women	M	F	% women	M	F	% women	M	F	% women	M	F	% women
2011	38	34	47.2	14	4	22.2	41	4	8.9	7975	1425	15.2	495	99	16.7	132	33	20
2012	38	34	47.2	14	4	22.2	39	6	13.3	7975	1425	15.2	495	99	16.7	132	33	20
2013	38	34	47.2	14	4	22.2	35	8	17.8	7975	1425	15.2	495	99	16.7	132	33	20
2014	38	34	47.2	14	4	22.2	35	9	20.5	7975	1425	15.2	495	99	16.7	132	33	20
2015	36	36	50	14	6	33.3	35	9	20.5	7975	1425	15.2	495	99	16.7	132	33	20
2016	36	36	50	14	6	33.3	35	9	20.5	7975	1425	15.2	495	99	16.7	196	68	25.8
2017	36	36	50	12	6	33.3	35	10	22.2	7527	1555	17.1	495	99	16.7	196	68	25.8
2018	36	36	50	12	6	33.3	36	9	20	7527	1555	17.1	495	99	16.7	196	68	25.8
2019	36	36	50	12	6	33.3	33	12	26.7	7527	1555	17.1	495	99	16.7	196	68	25.8
2020	36	36	50	12	6	33.3	33	12	26.7	7527	1555	17.1	495	99	16.7	196	68	25.8

Source: *Ankessa woreda* council office (March 2020)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research data; interpret the results and analyze the findings from the respondents. A detailed presentation of the findings of the study, with supporting data in the form of tables together with a justification of results, is the next step in writing the main body of the report. This generally comprises the main body of the report, extending over previous chapters. The result section of the report contains statistical summaries of the data to understand women's political participation and representation by analyzing the data's which are obtained from the primary and secondary sources in *Ankesha Woreda*

#### 4.2. Rate of Response

As illustrated in table 7 below, there was 100 questionnaires administered for the respondents and among 100 questionnaires 96% were responded and 4% were not responded. This is sufficient number for my research. The respondent's rate is shown in table 7 below

**Table 7 respondent rate**

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	96	96
Not returned	4	4
Total	100	100

**Source:**Filed survey 2020

#### 4.3. Demographic Profile of Participants: General Background

As to the demographic profile of the respondents, data were collected on the respondents' Gender, Age, marital status, Educational back ground and professional categories of each respondent is described as below.

#### 4.3.1. Gender Profiles of respondents

**Table 8 Gender profile of respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Men	43	44.79
Women	53	55.21
Total	96	100

**Source:**Filed survey 2020

The above table (table 8) indicates that from the total number of 96 respondents 44.79% respondents were men and 55.21% of total respondents were women. The numbers of women respondents are relatively higher than their counterparts (men) and this is a good opportunity for the researcher to observe the detailed issues of women and the challenges that is facing them throughout *Woreda*.

#### 4.3.2. Age profile of respondents

**Table 9 Age profile of respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20—29	19	19.79
30—39	42	43.75
41—49	26	27.08
50---59	9	9.38
60 and above	-----	-----
Total	96	100

**Source:**Filed survey 2020

The above table (table 9) illustrates that from the total number of 96 respondents, 19.79% respondents were from age 20--29, 43.75% respondents were from age 30--39, 27.08% respondents were from 41--49 and 9.38% respondents were from age 51--59. Identifying the respondents by age helps for the researcher to understand the perception of respondents, and the age of respondents is one of the most important characteristics in understanding their views about the particular problems and also indicates level of maturity of individuals, in that sense age becomes more important to examine the problem.

### 4.3.3. Marital status of respondents

**Table 10 Age profile of respondents**

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	79	82.29
Single	12	12.50
Divorced	5	5.21
Total	96	100

**Source: Filed survey 2020**

According to survey data (in table 10) 82.29% of the respondents are married having 1 to 6 children 12.5% are single (not married) while the remaining 5.21% are either divorced or widowed. As the data in table 10 illustrates, majority of the respondents are married. Most of the time, in relation with these women is responsible for domestic tasks such as household activity and family responsibilities at home. While it is not possible to argue that a woman's engagement in marriage does not necessarily imply a challenge for all women.

### 4.3.4. Educational background of respondents

**Table 11 Educational background of respondents**

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	3	3.13
Secondary	21	21.87
Diploma	18	18.75
First Degree	49	51.04
Second Degree	5	5.21
Third degree	----	-----
Total	96	100

**Source: Filed survey 2020**

Data were collected to understand the educational levels of the respondents. Accordingly, table 11 shows that from the total number of 96 respondents, 3.13% respondents were primary school level 21.87% respondents were secondary school level and 18.75% respondents are Diploma graduates 51.04% respondents are first Degree graduates and 5.21% respondents are second Degree graduates. From the above figure, the educational backgrounds of the first degree respondents were relatively higher than others; this is because, the researcher deliberately selected the respondents who can best express women's political participation and representation and the



challenges facing women from the community and government structures. Identifying the respondents by educational background can help the researcher to get reliable information depending to their understanding about the research topic.

#### 4.3.5. Respondents identification by profession

**Table 12 Professional Status of Respondents**

Respondents		Frequency	Percentage
Community members	Women association representatives	14	14.58
	Women, child and youth affairs leaders	11	11.46
	Farmers	15	15.62
	Teachers	16	16.67
	Civil servants	25	26.04
	Business men	11	11.46
	Ruling party leaders	4	4.17
Total		96	100

**Source:**Filed survey 2020

The above table (table 12) indicates that from the total number of 96 respondents selected from community members who are living in one urban and three rural Kebeles that include,14.58% respondents were women’s association representatives,11.46%, respondents were women, child and youth affairs leaders,15.62%Farmers who are living in three rural *kebeles*, 16.62%Teachers, 26.04%Civil Servants,11.46%Business men who are living in one urban *kebele*and4.17%, respondents were ruling party leaders who are working in different *Woreda* and *Kebele* positions. Identifying the respondents by professions helps the researcher to know their understanding about the political participation and representation of women in *Ankesha Woreda* and the challenges that face women in the research area.

#### 4.4. Legal Institutions and Social norms to Promote Women’s Political Participation and Representation in Ankesha Woreda

To promote women’s political participation and representation at all levels of government structures, the FDRE and ANRS constitutions recognize women’s equal rights with men in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres. With regard to this, respondents were asked to describe the legal institutions and social norms valid in *Ankesha Woreda* to promote women’s political participation and representation. Accordingly, among 96 respondents all of them mentioned the existence of legal institutions and social norms to promote women empowerment.

As to the respondents, even if all governmental institutions are obliged to incorporate women's issue in their day to day activities and in their overall plan, there are legal institutions such as Women, Child and Youth Affairs, Women's forum and Women association institutions that are responsible for the implementation of women's constitutional decrees and rights on behalf of women throughout the country.

Consequently, one of the informants in *Anksha Woreda* Women, Child and Youth Affairs office clearly described as:

*Woreda women, child and youth affairs office as an institution promote women's political participation by making capacity building through training, facilitating short term training and awareness creation with regard to the rights and responsibilities of women, indicating loan opportunities and saving systems for those women who are responsible for job creation, organizing women to benefit from their constitutional rights, improving women's involvement in educational and health sectors are some of the vital responsibilities for this institution (a key informant from, Civil servants 2020).*

According to these respondents Women's associations is an institution established based on free consent of women to promote their free movement in political, economic and social activities, to facilitate a favorable condition for women's political participation and representation and to respect the constitutional rights and full-fledged equality of women with men. Further, the respondents said that, although, women's association and women forum are not governmental organizations, they are well organized and recognized institutions from federal up to *Kebele* government structures to protect the disadvantaged women in overall political, economic and social affairs.

Besides this, the respondents mentioned the vital importance of non-governmental organization to empower women in economic and social activities. As to their saying, there are many non-governmental organizations who are working with respective Women, Child and Youth Affairs and Women association offices from federal to *Woreda* to empower women particularly in economic and social activities. Most of the time in *Anksha Woreda* these organizations: promote women's capacity building through training and education; by providing short term training

schedule for women's job creation opportunities, facilitate saving and credit utilization systems, engage in improving the health and sanitation programs of mothers and so on. In doing all this, these organizations contribute to women to participate in public and social activities which lead them to political decision making process.

On the other hand, the social norms existing in community with regard to women reveals that, women relative to men are industrious servant, submissive, lawful, respectful, community members. All of these characteristics are expected from women in our locality and a woman who passes away these characteristics would be isolated from the community. These believed qualities of women are assumed to be traditional norms that would benefit the whole community and this traditional norm makes women better loyal than men in their disciplines.

With regard to this, one of the informants from *Buya Kebele* (one of the target rural *Kebele*) described that:

*If we compare and contrast a man and a woman who are appointed as chief executive officer in higher economic organization, a woman is better in exposing corrupted system relative to a man. In addition to this, if we compare and contrast a police man and a police woman in regulating the rule and law a police woman is better relative to a police man for her discipline. Women's commitment for their discipline is inherent traditional norm that ensures the openness (transparency), real fight against misrules, and accountability of women in their community. Thus, the society and government itself will be benefited as women's political participation and representation increases in existing government structures at all levels (a key informant from BuyaKebele, 2020)*

Accordingly, the existence of such legal institutions and social norms make women: to ensure their democratic rights and to take part in the conduct of public and social affairs, to participate in political decision making process directly and through their elected representatives, to vote and to be voted to any level of government organizations and to be a member of any political organization or professional associations and co-operative organizations based on their own willingness. As a result, the number of women in decision making and leadership positions is

increasing significantly even if; their participation in positions of political leadership is very low as compared to their counterparts (men).

#### 4.5. Perception of Respondents about the Status of Women’s Political Participation in *Ankesha Woreda*

**Table 13 Women’s status, effectiveness of legal provisions and communities perception in their political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda***

Indicators	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage
How do you observe the status of women’s political participation and decision making process in <i>Ankesha Woreda</i> ?	Very high	-----	-----
	High	2	2.08
	Low	81	84.38
	Very low	13	13.54
	Total	96	100
What is the achievement of country’s legal provisions of women to empower them in <i>Ankesha Woreda</i> ?	Very high	5	5.21
	High	10	10.42
	Low	62	64.58
	Very low	19	19.79
	Total	96	100
To what extent is community appreciating women’s political participation and representation and their equality with men in <i>Ankesha Woreda</i> ?	Very high	---	---
	High	----	---
	Low	81	84.38
	Very low	15	15.62
	Total	96	100

**Source: Filed survey 2020**

As pointed out in table 13 for this research the respondents were asked regarding “the status of women’s political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* at *Woreda* and *Kebele* levels”. Among 96 respondents 2.08% of the respondents said “high”, 84.38% of the respondents said “low” and 13.54% of the respondents said “very low”. Those respondents who said the status of women’s political participation in decision making process in *Ankesha Woreda* is “high” justify their answer by indicating the positions given to women at recent times. As to these respondents the number of women in member of councils and in executive bodies at *Woreda* and *Kebele* level is increasing from time to time.

According to these respondents “women’s political participation and representation is progressing in *Ankesha Woreda* because of their descriptive representation in *Kebele* and *Woreda* councils and executive body is increasing. In addition to this, these respondents mentioned their answer

in such a way that “the existing government by formulating the rules and regulations including the federal and regional constitutions and by adopting international and regional conventions and covenants is improving women’s representation and participation in decision making process.” Moreover, these respondents added that “at each sector (office) throughout the *Woreda* there is a focal person who follows the issue of women that indicates the attention given by the existing government to keep the rights of women and their equality with men”

In line to this, secondary data found in *Ankessa Woreda* Administrative Council Office (table 6) reveals that women’s representation in *Woreda* Council is increased from 47.2% in 2011 to 50% in 2020 and in *Kebele* Councils it is increased from 15.2% in 2011 to 17.1% in 2020. Moreover, their representation and participation in executive body is increased from 8.9% in 2011 to 26.7% in 2020 and from 20% in 2011 to 25.8% in 2020 at *Woreda* and *Kebele* levels respectively.

On the other hand, 84.38% and 13.54% of respondents said that “the status of women’s political participation and representation in *Ankessa Woreda* is Low and Very low” respectively. According to these respondents “even if, descriptive representation of women is increasing, it is still low as compared to the representation of men and the represented women did not decide on behalf of their voters particularly women. Thus, women’s political participation and representation in existing government is cosmetics.” The selection and recruitment of women representatives is not based on the educational background, job performance and competency of the women but, their selection and recruitment is based on the loyalty to the ruling party.

Women’s political participation and representation shows a bit progress since the promulgation of FDRE constitution in 1995 in *Ankessa Woreda* even if, their representation is very low as compared to the representation of men and their contribution to *Woreda* population. In line to this, Tefra (2017) on his journal “Nature of Women Empowerment in Ethiopia: Constitutional and Policy Provisions” indicated the progress of women’s representation. According to him,

*...there are significant improvements in numerical representation of women in all spheres because of formulation and implementation of the National Policy and some of the constitutional provisions. Despite improvement in numerical (descriptive) representation, substantive representation and their decision making power is still facing critical challenges (Tefra, 2017 p. 9)*

From this it can be concluded that, even if there is an increase in women's political participation and representation, the number of women leaders and decision makers at various level of the local government structure (particularly at *Woreda* and *Kebele* structures) is still very low

In addition to this, one of the informants from *Gimjabet 01* (one of the target urban *Kebele*) briefly acknowledged the status of women in *Ankesha Woreda* in such a way that:

*Even if women's right as that of the right of men is protected by the rules and regulations particularly by the FDRE and ANRS constitutions their participation in political decision making process and representation as member of council's and executive bodies is not as expected by the rules and regulations. This is because, the existing women representatives are hearers of the Agenda formulated by higher government elites and they did not struggle to keep the right of other women who vote them and their representation, recruitment and selection is not based on the job performance, competency and educational background but, on the loyalty of the existing ruling party particularly, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF) (a key informant from business man, 2020)*

Therefore, it is possible to say that, the descriptive representation of women in *Ankesha Woreda* is improving from one election season to the other. But this argument does not mean that numerically a bit progress in women's representation is a guarantee for equal participation of women in the decision making positions of the local government, not only that the proportional seats held by women representatives in the *Kebele* council's is not equivalent with the desired and the total female population in the *Kebele* throughout the *Woreda*. This indicates that, the status of women in political decision making process and their representation as member of council and executive body in *Ankesha Woreda* did not have its deserved positions (50%) and they are still largely underrepresented in public and social affairs at all levels except their representation in *Woreda* council.

To overcome the problem of women's representation in political decision making process, the ruling party leaders, women's association representatives and women, child and youth affairs leaders together with non-governmental organizations should collaborate and safeguard for

women's right and equality with men and attention must be given for women's descriptive and substantive representation and participation in decision making in *Ankesha Woreda* particularly at executive levels.

Respondents were asked for the achievement of the country's legal provisions of women to empower them in *Ankesha Woreda*. Among 96 respondents 5.21% of them were said "Very high", 10.42% of them were said "High," 64.58% of them were said "low" and 19.79% of them were said "very low."

The reason for the respondents who said the achievement of the country's legal provisions of women in *Ankesha Woreda* is "very high" revealed in such a way that: "policies, rules and regulations emanated from the federal and regional constitutions make *Ankesha Woreda* women to establish their institutional setup and to safeguard their rights". Particularly, these respondents said that: "the affirmative action given to women from the two constitutions make them to participate and involve in economic and social activities throughout the *Woreda*". As the respondents saying "practically, women's involvement in economic and social sectors by organizing themselves as private and group enterprises from small and micro-enterprise office and their fast progress in gross enrollment of the primary and secondary education is a good trend that lead them to participate in political decision making process in the near future".

The justification, for those respondents who answered the achievement of the country's legal provisions of women for *Ankesha Woreda* women are "high" is described as follows. "Implementation of policies, rules and regulations emanated from the constitution reduce the burden of women in *Ankesha Woreda* by making them free from their patriarchal and previously autocratic government. In this regard women's attention to political participation and their involvement through public and social affairs and their representation in *Woreda* and *Kebele* council is increased". As to these respondents, "these increased involvement of women in political, social and public affairs throughout the *Woreda* is a fruitful result of the country's legal provisions including the two constitutions that appreciate women for political participation and decision making process". However, an increase in number of women in *Woreda* council may not necessarily reflect the same success in cabinet positions and their participation is very low.

On the other hand, among 96 respondents 64.58% of them answered the achievement of the country's legal provisions of women for *Ankesha Woreda* women is "low". The reason for these respondents is "most women lack an adequate governmental policies, strategies and laws that address the negative customs and practices, which protect women's marginalization and their under representation in political leadership positions throughout the *Woreda* particularly at executive levels". In addition to this, the respondents said that "there is no awareness creation with regard to nationally and regionally formulated policies, strategies and laws, to safeguard women's right and to keep their full-fledged equality with men by *Woreda* and *Kebele* political leaders". From this one can understand that awareness creation by political leaders on policies, strategies and laws aimed at changing the public misperceptions towards women's political participations in decision making process are the best mechanisms to empower women.

In line to this, from the 96 respondents, 19.79% of the respondents answered that, the achievement of the country's legal provisions of women for *Ankesha Woreda* women is "very low". As to these respondents, "even if there is a better legal provision at federal and regional level the number of women in political leadership and in decision making process in existing government at local level particularly in *Ankesha Woreda* is insignificant. Women lack an adequate governmental position with regard to political leadership and decision making. According to these respondents, "Women in *Ankesha Woreda* were not given the opportunity to participate in decision making processes despite, countrywide policies, rules and regulations including Federal and Regional constitutions which provide equal right and opportunity to participate in overall political activities throughout the country motivates to participate".

With regard to this, Mignot, (2017) on her study "the Role of Women in decision-making process in Federal Ethiopia" clarifies the effectiveness of countrywide policies, in such a way that:

*However, the government of Ethiopia has declared its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by stipulating the rights of women in its constitution, issuing the women's policy of the country and National Action Plan for gender equality to put gender mainstreaming into action in Ethiopia and in its regions across the various policies. Despite all these, women are still at the subordinate position and women in the country occupy low status in the society (Mignot, 2017, P. 55)*



Therefore from the respondents view and previous literature, it is possible to say that, the achievement of country's legal provisions (formulated policies, strategies and laws) is low due to the implementation problem of the local government. These implementation problems indicates us whatever best policies, strategies and laws will be formulated at national or regional level, its achievement is dependent on the performance and strength of the local government.

Respondents were asked their comment for the question, to what extent is community appreciating women's political participation and representation and equality with men in *Ankesha Woreda*. Among 96 respondents none of them were agreed to the answer "very high" and "high" instead 84.38% of respondents were said "Low" and 15.62% of respondents were said "Very low"

The respondents who said the extent of the communities appreciation for women's political participation and representation and their equality with men in *Ankesha Woreda* is "low" "reason out their comments in such a way that: "it is very difficult to take part women in political decision making process due to the burden they face around their home. Their participation and representation does not bring any change at government decisions". As to these respondents "there is clear division of labor since ancient times from our ancestors that limit women in household activities and permit men for any outdoor decision making activities". Moreover, as respondents "most community in *Ankesha Woreda*, particularly rural areas community, assumes those women who are actively participating in political decision making and involving for their substantive representation as crude and disrespectful women".

This reveals that, there is Lack of awareness creation based on gender issue or the gender's concept by a cross section of the population throughout the *Woreda* due to insufficient attention given by the ruling party leaders in increasing the representation of women in local government by changing the attitude of the community throughout the study area.

In connection to this, one informant from *Zewla Kebele* (the target rural *Kebele* from the study area) briefly gave communities perception on women as:

*Our community emphasizes the superiority of men and the subordination of women. This is because, most of the time women cannot decide on political, economic and social activities unless they are told to do so by their counterparts (men). For example, if there is a meeting in our Kebele concerning any political,*

*economic and social issues, most chairmen did not invite women. If the meeting happens coincidentally in the church (where both of them (men and women) went to pray) women did not give opinion, suggestions and recommendations about the issue, instead they would simply take away from the meeting. In addition to this, most of the time, women who represented (voted) by the community are single or divorced. If a married woman is voted by the community she must have permission from her husband; unless her marriage is in danger, but a man can decide about any issue without consulting his wife. In some villages in our Kebele, not only on political, economic and social affairs, but also, in a day to day household activities a married woman cannot manage herself without the instruction of her husband (a key informant from farmers, 2020).*

Accordingly, Shimelis, (2015 P. 6) on his journal “*Challenges and Opportunities of Women Political Participation in Ethiopia*” described the perception of society with respect to women’s political participation and decision making. As to him, “culturally, there is a belief that women are supposed to be led but not to lead. In fact stereotyped notions about women constitute major barriers; societal perception about leadership ability of women, women’s lack of confidence is some barriers that hinder the participation of women”. In addition to this, UNFPA, (2005 cited in Hirut, 2004) on “*Gender Inequality and Empowerment*” clearly describes that, “there is a belief that women are docile Submissive, patient, and tolerant of monotonous work and violence, for which culture is used as a justification. The socialization process, which determines gender roles, is partly responsible for the subjugation of women in the country.”

From the view of respondents and previous literature one can reveal that, the perception of society particularly, the community in this study area is low to motivate women’s political participation in decision making and their representation in legislative and executive organs of the government; rather the community denigrates their participation and representation through cultural and traditional beliefs. In addition to this, cultural ideas about women can affect women’s levels of representation throughout the political process, from an individual woman’s decision to enter politics. Most importantly in this *Woreda* Women are considered as a subordinate to men and seen as second class members both in their family and in the society especially in most parts of rural areas. The subordination of women is supported by religion and culture as an excuse. These

excuses have for many years, supported by laws and legislation that uphold patriarchy and women's subordination.

#### **4.6. Role of Federalism for women's political participation and representation**

Asked about the contribution of Federalism for women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*, the respondents answered in the following ways. Accordingly, among the 96 respondents 78.13% of them answered that, Federalism in principle by dividing power and responsibility to the lower levels of government creates a good opportunity for women's political participation and representation. Following this, women in *Ankesha Woreda* have a chance to participate equally as a member of *Woreda* council in such a way that, among the 72 members of council's 36 (50%) of members are women. As to these respondents, even if Federal democratic system allows women's equal representation and participation in political decision making process as in the members of *Woreda* council in this study area, their participation at executive positions at *Woreda* cabinets is very low compared to their counterparts. On the other hand, women's political participation and representation as members' of council and executive bodies at *Kebele* level is lower than the contribution of women's population offered to those *Kebeles*, even if, Federal system allows them to participate equally with men.

According to these respondents, the Federal system in this *Woreda* by making women to get the right to land ownership equally with men, by creating educational access equally for rural and urban, male and female students and by addressing improved health facilities particularly for fertile mothers orientate women to participate in public and social affairs, which leads them to political participation

On the other hand, (21.87%) of respondents said that, Federalism do not contributed for women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*. The reason for these respondents is stated as follows. Without equal and proportional representation of women as a member of council and as executive bodies at *Kebele* and *Woreda* levels, the contribution of Federalism is insignificant. Recently, as many women are claiming with existing government to protect their right and equality with men, the contribution of Federalism is insignificant.

From this it can be revealed that, Federalism by decentralizing power and responsibility to the lower level of government gave more opportunity for women's political participation in decision

making process and potentially widen their representation. Even if, there is an increasing political participation of women in this study area, their representation is insufficient and disproportional with regard to the population that they contribute to *Woreda* society and the position taken by their counterpart (men) except their representation in members of councils in *Ankesha Woreda* in which 50% men and 50% women are represented.

As clearly stated in FDRE and ANRS constitutions, the highest political power of the government is vested in legislative bodies (councils). The councils at each levels of government are the highest political organs of the government which decide over all activities. According to survey data taken from regional to local council's women's representation is reached 47.3% in ANRS council, 31.25% in *Awi Nationality Administrative Zone* council, 50% in *Ankesha Woreda* council and 17.1% in *Kebele* councils. This political representation of women did not coincide with the idea of Susan H. Williams. Williams, (2018) in his journal "*Federalism and Gender Equality*" showed the advantages of Federalism. According to him,

*....the decentralization of power to more local levels has potential benefits for women to participate in politics at the local level, rather than at higher levels of government. This is due to a matter of logistics (women carry majority of responsibilities for child care and home making) and psychological or motivational issues (women may feel more confident about their ability to understand local issues and be effective leaders at the local level)(Williams, 2018 P. 6).*

With regard to the above idea one informant among *Woreda* ruling party members briefly informed that:

*Federalism widely contributes for women's political participation but women's under representation at woreda and kebele level is the problem of low commitment on the executive bodies of the existing government to implement the rules and regulations which allow equal political participation and representation of women with men, low exploration of women to take responsibility, low training to improve the capacity of women, traditional influence on women from their family and community and low experience to ride the responsibility (a key informant from political party leaders, 2020).*

From this one can be revealed that, federalism did contribute a lot for women's political participation and representation by sharing power and autonomy to the lower level of the government despite the problems facing in implementation and thus, the S. Williams's justification is acceptable as its role is described by *Woreda* ruling party leader

#### **4.7. Factors that hinder women's political participation and representation**

Respondents were asked questions concerning factors that hinder women's political participation and representation in *Ankessa Woreda*. Accordingly, among 96 respondents almost all of them are pointed out one dominant factor; i.e. the perception of community on women in our local area is a critical problem that hinders women's political participation. Thus, all of the respondents said that: "our community perceives women as weak, inefficient and incapable part of the society". Continuing this the respondents confirmed that, the reason for it is not the real weakness, inefficiency and incapability of the women but, it is traditional belief that came from our parents, grandparents and ancestors that might be avoided previously through training, awareness creation and mainstreaming of the gender issues for the community by concerned bodies.

The traditional belief existed for a long period of time in *Ankessa Woreda*, defined the division of tasks in such a way that, women are made to take care of children and do kitchen works than participating outdoor activities. Hence, these divisions of tasks between men and women, which belongs indoor activities to women and outside home activities to men make women overburdened with different household activities like cooking, take caring kids, washing and so on. These all activities make women busy in the household and hinder their involvement in the political activities.

Instead of coming with appropriate solutions for the problems by preparing sustained and continuous awareness creation and capacity building throughout the *Woreda*, the executive bodies of the existing government are reading and writing these problems. In addition to this, those women who traditionally believe themselves as subordinates of men contribute to domination of men for a long period of time and serve as a source of doctrine that the Orthodox Church contributed a lot for the establishment of long traditional and cultural beliefs.

With regard to this, one of the informants in *Bekafta* (one of the target rural *Kebele*) briefly acknowledges that:

*Orthodox religion is one of the obsolete cultural beliefs in our communities from ancient times that exclude women from the leadership positions and to participate in public and social affairs. As the belief of orthodox religion, power and authority is divinely given to men by suppressing women. Thus, women are encouraged to play subsidiary roles since their place is in the kitchen as hearers of every decision and men are the decision makers for everything. Thus, traditionally religion has long been used to exclude women to participate in social, political and economic life in our local area, despite the influence of these traditional beliefs are decreasing in recent times (a key informant from Bekafta Kebele, 2020).*

This reveals that, a rational breakthrough should be come over socio-cultural values and traditional beliefs of the society through awareness creation and capacity building which, highly contributes women to play a significant role in improving their participation and representation in political decision making

In addition to this, among 96 respondents 81.25% of them confirmed the influence of educational status of women in such a way that: “the other social factor that hinders women’s political participation and representation is educational status of women”. In fact education is one of the main factors determining individual’s ability to exercise opportunities and to overcome challenges for both men and women. But, as to these respondents “most of the adult women did not have an access to education which prevents them to think ideas critically and rationally”. This implies that, “uneducated society particularly uneducated women did not have access to maintain their personal and collective rights and to surmount the prospected responsibilities”. Thus, “there were problems to get a woman representative from the community who can read or write”.

Accordingly, one of the informants from *Woreda* education office (informant among the community members) clearly said that:

*“...before 1995 females did not go to school, instead they oblige to marry unknown male and their life would be restricted in serving around household activities and in childcare. Due to this reason, there was a great problem to get*

*one woman who tries to read and to write to make as women's representative in our community. Despite these problems after 1995 women's educational enrollment is increased through committed measures taken by federal and regional governments. Thus, in recent times female student's enrollment at primary and secondary schools is almost equal to male students and it is simple to get women representatives with college and secondary education graduates at kebele level and first degree graduates at Woreda level" (a key informant from community, 2020)*

From this one can understand that, the effect of education on women's political participation is very important in such a way that: educational access facilitates more changes, and gave the way for more spaces to women; calls for the efficient, maximum and equitable utilization of human, financial, material and information resources by all human beings.

Besides this, among 96 respondents 77.08% of them described economic issues as factors that hinder women's political participation and representation. Thus, "an economic issue is one of the most dominant factors that prevent women from political participation and representation". In fact women's participation in political life depends mostly on their access to active engagement on the ownership of resources which gives them greater self-confidence for the involvement of day to day public and social activities. According to this respondents, "from the beginning when marriage establishes male and female contribute (share) equal amount of asset for their future life with the help of their parents and at that moment the husband got the right to manage the common property and his wife and the wife is considered to be a good servant and loyal for her husband and house hold activities by traditional marriage arbiters. Moreover, if a wife is acting beyond the instructions of her husband their marriage will be in danger. This condition makes women to be reluctant in actively participating on social and public affairs which leads under representation in political leadership positions."

In line to this, Shimelis, (2015) on his journal "Challenges and Opportunities of Women Political Participation in Ethiopia" showed the influence of economic ownership on women's political participation and representation. According to him,

*.....in most Ethiopian society women have no right to decide on one's own property in the house hold because the household head is always the father which can*

*control every asset and property of the family. Due to this facts women always needs to get permission of the father to buy some consumption materials and other resources of the household. Even if women are salaried, most of the time their income is controlled by men and sometimes if father and mother have their own income independently, women cover household expenses while men enjoy outside home like hotels and bars. So women are always dependent on men economically which is the main cause for their low participation to politics of the country(Shimelis, 2015 P. 4).*

From the above discussions one can understand that, women's participation and access to formal political leadership structures were facing several obstacles. Among these the long lived cultural and traditional beliefs especially associated with religion and low status of educational background on women were some of the dominant and influential issues in women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* even if, its influence is highly decreasing in contemporary government's continuous and sustained committed actions in taking awareness creation and widening access to education. Despite wide coverage of education in recent times, lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards political positions are obstacles for women political participation. Moreover, having attained political positions, women may need additional skills, knowledge and self-confidence to perform their jobs effectively. Thus, training and education are basic elements to develop women's self-confidence.

The other factor that hinders women's political participation and representation is their decision-less ownership of economic issues. As clearly stated by respondents above, women in our locality did not decide on their own assets equally as their respective husbands. In most rural areas in *Ankesha Woreda* to mobilize their own asset, women should get the full permission from their husbands. In addition to this, women lack financial support from governmental and non-governmental organizations and they also lack the sustained and continuous contact and cooperation with each other and other public organizations such as trade (labor) unions to be economically powerful and competent to their counterparts (men). In line to this, RaziaFaiz, former member of parliaments in Bangladesh clarified the socio-economic obstacles for women's political participation and representation in such a way that:



*The two most overwhelming obstacles for women in entering parliament are lack of constituents and lack of financial resources. Women move from their father's home to their husband's home . . . They are like refugees. They have no base from which to develop contacts with the people or to build knowledge and experience about the issues. Furthermore, they have no money of their own; the money belongs to their fathers, their husbands or their in-laws. Given the rising cost of running an effective campaign, this poses another serious hurdle for women in the developing world (IDEA, 2005 P. 41).*

On the other hand, women's perception for themselves makes them to accept the patriarchal system and to build lack of confidence on their participation in public and social activities. In fact, lack of confidence is one of the main reasons for women's under-representation in formal political institutions, whether as a member of councils, part of cabinets or higher positions as political party leaders in our local area. With confidence and determination women can reach the highest levels in the political process, if they enlarge the perception of "we can" in their psychological mindset and with regard to this, the existing government elites, women representatives and governmental and non-governmental organizations should come together to enhance this self confidence in women's mindset.

#### **4.8. Women's Political Participation and Representation in Ankesha Woreda in post 1995**

Respondents were asked whether there is a progress or not on women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* since 1995. Among 96 respondents, 94.79% of them respond that, there is a progress in political participation and representation in *Anksha Woreda*. The rest 5.21% of the respondents said that there is no progress in women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*.

As to those respondents who said that, the political participation and representation of women is progressing, due to the Federal and regional constitutions and constitutional decrees promulgated since 1995 safeguard the democratic rights of women and their full-fledged equality with their counterparts (men). Besides this, these respondents mentioned the basic rights of women, such as; the right to organize and to safeguard their collective and personal rights through this organization, the right to own natural and material resources equally with men, the right to

ownership of land and to decide on properties established during marriage equally with their husbands, the right to assemble and express ideas freely, the right to move freely throughout the country to employ, the right to vote and to be elected, the right to affirmative action for historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by them and so on are important rights that the constitution and constitutional decrees recognized for them since 1995.

As to these respondents, “after the promulgation of constitution and constitutional decrees at federal and regional levels not only political participation of women but also their participation and representation in social and economic aspects are progressing”. Having this, “women’s political participation and their seats in legislative and executive bodies from federal to unit *Kebele* level are increased from time to time”.

With regard to this, the survey data found from *Ankesha Woreda* council’s office (table 6) revealed that, women’s political participation and their representation at *Woreda* level is increased from 47.2% in 2011 to 50% in 2020 as members of council, from 22.2% in 2011 to 33.3% in 2020 at councils of different standing committee and from 8.9% in 2011 to 26.7% in 2020 at executive bodies. In addition to this, efforts were undertaken practically to increase the representation of women in social sectors in *Ankesha Woreda*. Additionally, the survey data (Annex 1 and 3) found in *Ankesha Woreda* educational office describes that, the percentage of female students in primary and secondary schools is increased from 48.22% in 2011 to 50.92% in 2020 and from 34.14% in 2011 to 51.50% in 2020 respectively and the percentage of employed teachers (Annex 2 and 4) in primary and secondary schools is similarly increased from 33.85% in 2011 to 43.59% in 2020 and 14.41% in 2011 to 21.07% in 2020 and this increased achievement in educational status of women helps them to actively participate in political decision making process in the near future.

In addition to this, these respondents mentioned that, cultural and traditional beliefs of the society which understate women’s competency in overall political, social and economic activities are highly decreased due to the committed measures taken by existing government which indicates the results, found from the constitution and constitutional decrees. Recently cultural and traditional beliefs which restrict, women to take care of children and in doing household activities than participating outside home activities are minimized. This is because, men who are sharing the idea with their corresponding wives about their economic issues before deciding alone and

those who are sharing certain house hold activities are increasing periodically. Thus, despite its rate of progress, women's political participation in decision making process and their involvement in public and social affairs are increasing. Thus, an overall increasing participation of women is an appreciable phenomenon of the existing government which makes women to overcome the burden and influence of longstanding cultural and traditional beliefs.

As to these respondents, movement of governmental and non-governmental organizations such as Women, Child and Youth Affairs Office, Women's associations and Women's forum established from unit *Kebele* up to federal level makes them strong enough to safeguard their right and equality with men. In *Anksha Woreda* these organizations worked together for the rights and benefits of women who are disadvantaged and neglected their right of land ownership during divorce, inheritance and endowment.

With regard to this, the survey data found (Annex 7) in *Anksha Woreda* Women, Child and Youth Affairs Office revealed that, there were 149 economical, 6 social and 22 physical requests of women registered throughout the *Woreda* from 2011 to 2020. Economic requests were belonging to the problems of land ownership, inheritance and endowment, social requests were belonging to those women facing favor and seclusion from community and physical requests were belonging to the problem of beating from their husbands and relatives, rape and early marriage. Among these problems 144 economic, 6 social and 19 physical requests were solved with the help of these organizations. But 5 economic and 3 physical requests seek further focus, attention and intervention of the existing government political elites.

In line to this, the respondents described women's benefit from *Woreda* job creation opportunity and credit and saving institutions. As to them, women through their organization and as personal entity are benefitting from employment opportunities created by *Woreda* government in facilitating the loans from *Amhara* Credit and Savings institutions as the initial capital needed for these organizations and personal entities which initiates women to active engagement in economic issue and leads them to participate in political decision making. Accordingly, as indicated in Annex 6 *Anksha Woreda* Micro and Small Enterprise Office registered a total of 41,650 unemployed youth of which 27,164 (65.22%) were male and 14,486 (34.78%) were female. Among these unemployed permanent job were created for 16,455 (66.24%) males and 8,387 (33.76%) females totally 24,842 youths and temporary job were created for 7,492 (64.71%)

males and 4087 (35.29%) females. For this a total of 712,000.00 birr is facilitated for job creation by *Woreda* government from *Amhara Credit* and Savings institution *Ankesha* branch for females.

On the other hand those respondents who said, there is no progress in women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* since 1995 reason out their comments in such a way that: "women who are participating in political decision making process are insignificant compared to the total number that women contribute to *Woreda* population and as far as there are many disadvantaged women in this *Woreda*, it is impossible to talk about the progress of women's political participation and representation". With regard to this a key informant in opposition party (from member of community) specified that:

*To tell the truth there is no equal political participation of women indecision making in Ankesha Woreda since 1995. No one is hearing the disadvantaged women in this Woreda. Even if, there is 50% of seat for women in Woreda Council, they did not decide on women's issue and the voted women in councils are hearers of the ruling party Agenda and decisions. Moreover, there are many disadvantaged women who are crying due to unequal treatment and biased decisions to their counterparts. Thus, it is really possible to say there is no progress in women's political participation and representation in Ankesha Woreda since 1995 (a key informant from opposition party, 2020)*

From the above discussion one can understand that, women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* is increasing since 1995. For this the promulgation of FDRE constitution played a vital role for the implementation of democratic rights of women generally throughout the country and particularly in *Ankesha Woreda*. Based on this, the influence and burden of perception from longstanding cultural and traditional beliefs of the community showing the domination of men and subordination of women is decreasing from time to time and their political participation and representation in *Kebele* and *Woreda* legislative and executive bodies are increasing. In addition to this, female students gross enrollment in primary and secondary schools, women's total participation in education sector to develop their competency, their participation in micro and small enterprise to strengthen economic power and claiming to their representatives when they disadvantaged are all appreciable involvements of women which lead them to actively participate in political decision making process in the near future.

#### **4.9. What are the efforts of woreda Administration to empower women in political, economic and social activities?**

Respondents were asked for the efforts of *Ankesha Woreda* administration to empower women in political, economic and social activities. Accordingly, among 96 respondents 92.71% of them answered that the *Woreda* administration's effort to promote women's political participation and representation is increasing even if; women's status at leadership positions is low as compared to the political participation and representation of men. On the other hand, 7.29% of the respondents were answered "the effort of *Woreda* administration to promote women's political participation and representation is insignificant unless they are talking and reading its benefit to the society".

According to respondents who said *Woreda* administration's effort to promote women's political participation and representation is increasing; "*Woreda* administration tries to promote women's political participation and representation in many aspects. Primarily *Woreda* administration gave attention and focus for descriptive representation of women at legislative level and make their representation equal to the representation of men (i.e. among 72 members in *Ankesha Woreda* council 36 or 50% of them are women since 2015 election period)". In addition to this, the administration increased accessibility of educational and health institutions around rural and urban *Kebele*'s to enlarge access and to improve quality of education and health to *Woreda* population. These social activities are basic requirements to produce rational, effective and healthy citizens throughout the *Woreda* who contribute for rational, effective and strong interaction, participation and representation of community in political, economic and social activities in their locality. As rational, effective strong interaction and participation of the community increases rational thinking, strong interaction and participation of women will increase, because women are parts of the community and they will get access to participate in social and economic issues.

With regard to this, the survey data found (Annex 2, 4 and 5) from *Woreda* education and health offices showed that, the number of primary and secondary schools are increased from 44 in 2011 to 53 in 2020 and from 2 in 2011 to 5 in 2020 respectively and number of health centers are increased from 1 in 2011 to 4 in 2020. In addition to this, health posts were established with full health extension workers since 2006 and one hospital was established since 2017 in this *Woreda*

to give better service. More over *Woreda* administration took budget for ambulance fuel consumption to reduce fertile mother's death and to this significant progress has been recorded.

In line to this, the respondents confirmed the effort of *Woreda* administration to promote women's political participation and representation in economic aspects. The administration invited women to use different improved technological operations to enhance their product and productivity and to save their time, material and human resource. In doing so, women's economic competency and their preference to enlarge financial resources through facilitated job opportunity in local government is showing progress which leads them to participate actively in public and social affairs. Moreover, *Woreda* administration goes farther to scale up the best practice of spearhead women's performance in economic and social aspects to those women who are not effective in their day to day activities and award these spearhead women to enhance their future performance as per existing situations. By using the spearhead women as a benchmark, most of the women in this *Woreda* are involving in widespread economic and social activities even if, there are many issues to be addressed in the future.

On contrary to this, 7.29% of the respondents said that "the effort of *Woreda* administration to promote women in political participation and representation is insignificant". The reason for these respondents is: "*Woreda* administration does not respond for equal participation and representation of women rather talking and reading the guidelines sent from higher authority". Thus, women in *Ankesha Woreda* are highly underrepresented in political decision making process at *Woreda* and *Kebele* levels. Moreover, there are women who are suffering from bias and seclusion from their community and who lose their land by bouncy men particularly their husbands and relatives. There is also early marriage in this *Woreda* which makes primary and secondary students to dropout from their regular education.

The researcher investigates the efforts of *Woreda* administration to promote women's political participation and representation in such a way that: *Ankesha Woreda* administration is venting its contribution to participate women in political decision making. Due to *Woreda* Administration's contribution, there are significant changes in promoting women's political participation in decision making starting from equal participation of women in *Woreda* council and relatively some amount of percentage changes in *Woreda* cabinet, *Woreda* council standing committee and *Kebele* cabinets. Moreover, the accessibility of social institutions assist women in their awareness

creation, capacity building and in improving health situation. Additionally new technological inputs and operations offered to women help them to improve their economic system and transferring the best practice of the models (spearhead women's) to others to make most women to be powerful in material and financial resources.

#### **4.10. Solutions to enhance women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda***

The respondents were asked about their personal view regarding to an overall solutions to enhance women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*. Accordingly, almost all respondents answered that, "an increased commitment from the existing government is required to induce women with sufficient political knowledge and awareness about their representation and participation in political decision making process". Thus, the active participation of women and incorporation of their perspective at all levels of decision making, helps government to achieve descriptive and substantive equality of women with men. Unless local government confirms equal representation of women in members of councils and in executive positions, it is difficult to realize participatory, accountable, and transparent governance which can ensure political, cultural, social and economic goals of the whole society.

Moreover, women by themselves should participate equally with men to ensure constitutionally provided rights to them and to have their perspective effectively incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the global. In this respect, women's equal participation in political life as specified in national constitution and in international conventions plays a pivotal role in the general process of political, economic and social development and their advancement.

In line to this, the respondents comment to enhance women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* is: increasing women's involvement in policy formulation and decision making processes, strengthen women's right to vote and to be elected to any level of government offices and to be a member of any political organization, inviting women who have more competency and job experience than others for political leadership, taking committed measures to reduce the deep-rooted traditional and cultural beliefs which sermons subordination of women and domination of men, providing continuous and sustained awareness creation for

community on gender and gender issues, providing full protection of constitutional rights for the disadvantaged women in economic and social aspects, widening accessibility of educational and health institutions to enhance women's participation in education and to improve their health particularly to reduce maternal death, providing access to improved new and contemporary technological operations which saves time, force and budget for women, increasing women's participation in higher education, removing conservative and patriarchal (religious) perceptions of community on women's inferiority to men and which exclude women from political, economic and social aspects, un pegging financial dependency of women from their husbands and relatives, improving local governments commitment for the implementation of policies rules and regulations regarding women are some of the best solutions to enhance women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda*.

As depicted by survey conducted from *Amhara* National Regional State council up to *Ankesha Woreda* council offices and as indicated by different respondent's women's participation and representation in political decision making process is very low as compared to their counterparts (men). particularly, as *Ankesha Woreda* Finance and Economic Development Office data women make up to about 51.5% of the population but, recently they represent 50% in *Woreda* council 33.3% in *Woreda* council different standing committee 26.7% in *Woreda* cabinet 17.1% in *Kebele* council 16.7% in *Kebele* council different standing committee and 25.8% in *Kebele* cabinet. Thus, women's representation and their participation in political decision making are very low as compared to the population that they contribute to *Woreda*.

To enhance women's participation as recognized in Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and *Amhara* National Regional State Constitutions as well as regional and international covenants and conventions, local government should confirm their full right and equality with men in political, social, economic and cultural spheres. In line to this, women themselves have the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely elected representatives.

#### **4.11. The findings on focus group discussion**

Eight discussants in two groups of focus group discussion described that, women's political participation and representation in my study area is lower as compared to the contribution of women to *Woreda* population and political participation of their counterparts. As to these



discussants the reason for this inequality is the deep rooted traditional beliefs in *Anksha Woreda* that perceive women as weak, inefficient, incompetent and incapable of making smart decisions. As to the case of this *Woreda*, women's status in the political and public sector and their descriptive and substantive representation is still very low. Thus, they are still largely underrepresented in decision-making positions at *Woreda* and *Kebele* levels. Even if, they have equal descriptive representation in members of *Woreda* council; they did not made major progress in attaining political power in *Woreda* executives and in *Kebele* councils and executives.

Thus, the number of elected women representatives is still lower as compared to men. With the constant strengthening of the idea that women are subordinate to men in every aspects, it becomes hard for women to follow their political rights and benefits as an active participant. For a woman to enter in to politics, such patriarchal attitudes make it even harder. The truth is that such attitudes are not past events; such attitudes towards women still exist in communities, including women themselves throughout the *Woreda*. With regard to this, International *IDEA*, (2005) described the political status of women and their disadvantage worldwide when their right did not protected. According to *IDEA*:

*In most Federations the right to stand for election, to become a candidate and to get elected is based on the right to vote. The reality is, however, that women's right to vote remains restricted, principally because the candidates are mostly male. This is true not only for partial and developing democracies, but for established democracies as well. The low level of women's representation in most federal parliaments should be considered a violation of women's fundamental democratic right and, as such, a violation of their basic human rights (International IDEA, 2005 P. 32).*

All of the discussants agreed on factors that hinder women's political participation in *Anksha Woreda*; even if *Woreda* administration tried its commitment to gender equality and women's political participation and representations recognized in Federal and regional constitutions and as issued by Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia women's policy to put gender issues into action in its locality across the various policies provided from higher levels of government. Despite all these, women are still at the subordinate position and they occupy low status in *Anksha Woreda*. Their contribution in policy formulation and decision making processes has been minimal. This

indicates us a political situation that did not incorporate the view and perception of about half of the population (women) has not a guarantee for the principles of democracy. As democratic principles were far away from the society men's domination and women's subordination will be increased which leads women to economic and social disadvantage.

Accordingly Shimelis, (2015) on his journal "*Challenges and Opportunities of Women Political Participation in Ethiopia*" described that, economic and social status of women highly influences the political status of them. As to him,

*....social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. In other words Lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics in greater numbers. Women's participation in political life depends largely on their access to employment which gives them not only material independence, but also certain professional skills and grater self-confidence. So that access to means of production and finances has a direct relationship and influence on the participation of women in political institutions(Shimelis, 2015 p.6)*

Besides, these discussants confirmed that, women's representation and equal participation in political life plays an essential role in the general process of women's contribution in overall activities. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a request for descriptive representation with men but can also be seen as a necessary condition for their overall benefits to be taken into account. In addition to this, women did unlimited contributions in both indoor and outdoor activities especially their active participation in rural area in agriculture and commercial as well as in undertaking reproduction and social responsibilities. However, their bad lucks of living in the shadow of men have hidden from view of such highly remarkable performances. Therefore, without the active participation of women in political decision making process and the incorporation of their perspective at all levels of decision making, political and socio-economic development cannot be achieved.

Moreover, women are not only reserved away from higher leadership positions, but also from access to higher education which makes them to develop skills, and capable them with managerial decision making techniques, help them develop confidence in holding leadership positions. The

majority of respondents and discussants confirmed that, “if favorable conditions are facilitated to women and if they are provided the positions to lead, they can achieve their duty and responsibility effectively and successfully as or more than that of their male counterparts.” This indicates that there is some encouraging but needing strengthen attitudinal changes among the role of women in regional and local governments towards leadership and decision making. Most women in *Amhara* National Regional State particularly in *Ankesha Woreda* lack an adequate governmental policies, strategies and laws that address the negative perceptions and practices, which appreciate women’s marginalization and unfavorable political situation.

Most of the discussants confirmed that, in *Ankesha Woreda* women’s participation in a five year election as elector is more than their counterparts (men). But, their participation as candidate from ruling and opposition party is insignificant. Thus, the data collected from regional to local government administrative institutions revealed that women political participation is not consistent. For example, their participation as a member of councils is 47.3%, 31.25%, 50%, and 17.1% at Regional, Zonal, *Woreda* and *Kebele* government levels respectively. While a majority of them do participate in election as a voter, women’s participation in decision making is very low. The discussants reason out that, women’s participation on election was not mainly to exercise their political right and to promote good governance but, it is to free from a fear of local government cadres.

On the other hand, one of the ruling party leaders from this study area said that greater women participation on election were not due to fear, but because of the reinforcement of the government to exercise political right. Additionally, the attitudinal change coming to women through awareness creation and capacity building given to them by responsible government body make women to see the right to vote and to be elected as constitutional, international and legal rights of all society including men and moved them to participate in political decision making.

To enhance women’s political participation and representation discussants referred to government to facilitate conducive environment to speed up equality between men and women so that women can participate in political, social and economic life of their community on equal terms with men and ensuring that their right to own property as well as their human rights are respected and that they are not excluded from fruitful results of democracy and they could be a good decision maker. Additionally, government should fulfill the necessary conditions whereby rural women can have

access to basic social services, such as access to small and medium transportation, access to educational and health institutions as well as access to modern technological operations and inputs which are ways and means of lightening their work load. Moreover, eliminating step by step, gender bias as well as deep rooted traditional and cultural practices that are based on the idea of male supremacy and which are not enabling women to hold public office and to participate in the decision making process at all levels of government.

In addition to this, discussants mentioned that, women by themselves must realize their human and democratic rights by forming and joining various organizations such as Women's association and Women's forum which facilitates conditions for its members to have access to various socio-economic activities that are productive and beneficiary for them. These associations also look for source of funds and projects that improve the lives of its members and satisfy their basic necessities.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendation based on the research findings which was presented and discussed above. The conclusions drawn on the basis of the findings and recommendations that are considered to be useful to assess Women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Worda* for local government and for those who has interest for further study is listed below.

### **5.2. Conclusion**

The main purpose of this study was to find out the status of women's political participation and their descriptive and substantive representations well as factors affecting their decision making. Thus, the study distinguished that, the status of women's political participation and representation in *Ankesha Woreda* accounted for 50% in *Woreda* council, 26.7% in *Worda* cabinets, 17.1% in *kebele* council and 25.8% in *Kebele* cabinets in recent times. Women in political decision making process and their representation as member of council and executive bodies did not equal to their counterparts (men) except in member of *Woreda* council, even if, it shows some general progress periodically. Despite improvements in women's descriptive representation, the substantive

representation and their decision making power is still facing critical challenges and they are still largely underrepresented in political, public and social affairs. Even if women's descriptive representation is improving from time to time in *Ankesha Woreda*, it does not a guarantee for substantive representation and equal participation of women in the decision making.

Accordingly, the number of women leaders and decision makers in *Ankesha Woreda* is still very low. This is because; there are different obstacles in implementing constitutional provisions and the Policies provided by federal and regional government to promote equality of women in this *Woreda*. Among this, economic and social status of women in society has a direct influence on their representation and participation in decision-making process. In other words Lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics in greater numbers. In addition to economic obstacles to women's political participation, social burdens; such as historically deep rooted gender based division of labor, traditional attitudes associated with religion, cultural values in community which perceives women as weak, inefficient, incompetent and incapable of making smart decisions, low level of literacy are some of the factors that hinder women's equality and their participation in decision making in *Ankesha Woreda* even if, its influence is highly decreasing due to government's continuous and sustained actions in taking awareness creation and widening access to education.

To promote women's political participation and representation at all levels of government structures, collaboration of legal institutional arrangements such as Women, Child and Youth Affairs, Women's forum and Women's association and non-governmental organizations those who are responsible for the implementation of women's constitutional decrees and rights on behalf of women throughout the *Woreda* is very important. In addition to this, there are traditionally inherited and socially accepted norms of women such as submissiveness, lawfulness, respectfulness, openness (transparency) to real fight against misrules, and accountability to their discipline in their community which makes them to be good candidates in political leadership positions.

The existence of such legal institutions and social norms make women: to ensure their democratic rights and to take part in the conduct of public and social affairs, to participate in political decision making process directly and through their elected representatives, to vote and to be voted to any level of government organizations and to be a member of any political organization or

professional associations and co-operative organizations based on their own willingness. As a result, the number of women in decision making and leadership positions is increasing significantly even if; their participation is very low as compared to their counterparts (men).

Currently, *Ankesha Woreda* administration is giving its attention to women to participate in political decision making. Due to its contribution, there are significant changes in promoting women's political participation in decision making starting from equal participation of women in *Woreda* council even if, their political participation and representation at *Woreda* cabinet, *Woreda* council standing committee, *kebele* council and cabinet is very low. Moreover, the accessibility of social institutions such as educational and health institutions helped women in their awareness creation, capacity building and in improving health situations. Additionally new technological inputs and operations offered to women gave a relief in saving resources and in improving their economic system. Beside to this, transferring the best practice of the models (spearhead women's) to others to make most women to be powerful in material and financial resources are some of the contribution of *Ankesha Woreda* to promote women in decision making

Furthermore, meaningful action from the ruling party leaders, existing government and non-government organizations is very important to promote political participation and representation of women in *Ankesha Woreda*. To enhance women's political participation and representation; increasing women's involvement in policy formulation and decision making processes, strengthen women's right to vote and to be elected to any level of government offices and to be a member of any political organization, inviting women who have more competency and job experience than others for political leadership, taking committed measures to reduce deep rooted traditional and cultural beliefs which sermons subordination of women and domination of men, giving continuous and sustained awareness creation on gender and gender issues, providing full protection of constitutional rights for the disadvantaged women in economic and social aspects are basic requirements for better participation of women in political leadership in *Ankesha Woreda*

In general, political participation and representation, which is a vital expression of democracy and allows for diversity of opinion and equality of both men and women, cannot be successful by excluding women that constitute half of the *Woreda's* population. Without equal participation of women to political process, democracy and democratization is nonrealistic. Thus, the democratic

process is able to grow and develop effectively when all people (men and women) are given equal chance to exercise their democratic rights, and when women can experience benefits equally with their counter parts. Additionally the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at local levels of government in decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development and practice of strong democracy. In addition to this, including women's perspective and their experience in decision-making processes can result to find out the solutions (that satisfy larger number of the society, which have social benefits, better and more appropriate social, political, legal, and economic solutions) for their problems

## **5.2. Recommendation**

Basically women's political, participation and representation is a concern of the whole society and should not be left for women alone even if, women's struggle for their right and full-fledged equality would play an important role. In the absence of women's active political participation and their representation, it is impossible to expect real democratization process. In order to increase women's descriptive and substantive representation and meaningful involvement in decision making, the researcher recommends the following suggestions to be implemented with careful attention and focus of concerned bodies in *Ankesha Woreda*.

The constitutional rights of women should be respected in such a way that the concerned government bodies shall perform their duties in an integrated manner with regard to protecting women's right and equality with men. Thus, the existing government should confirm equal rights of women based on their competency, experience and educational background at different levels of government council particularly, in *Woreda* cabinets, *Kebele* councils and cabinets in *Ankesha Woreda*. For this, widening women's leadership positions by taking affirmative measures for women such as, designing a quota system with clear guidelines for implementation in local councils is very important. Moreover, incessant measures to increase descriptive representation of women need to be followed by measures to improve their substantive representation by creating various opportunities, such as, education and training in leadership for them.

Women should be organized to develop their competitive capacity, to solve their own problems and to make adequate preparation for the implementation of their objectives. Priority should be given to create opportunities for women to build their collective assets and establish their own

impartial and institutionally capable organizations to help them to clear on their demands and bring pressure on the state and the concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations to create a situation in which women associations plan their activities to benefit women. The major point is not only establishing the associations, but also strengthening them to be able to participate in decision making process that address women's real issues.

Concerned government bodies (legislative, executive and judiciary) in collaboration with *Woreda* community should increase educational and health institution to enlarge access and to improve quality of education and health for women. With regard to this, women politicians and public officials in the lower level of government have to create awareness among young girls in schools through Civic and Ethical Education about the importance of women's political participation and representation, which enables them to have a good background and to develop mechanisms to resist the obstacles that hinder women's political participation.

Local government should facilitate an extensive and regular training to unemployed women whose educational qualification is rather low and whose immediate employment in practice is problematic. They will be offered short term and non-formal training and simple tasks which would be identified and integrated into income generating activities such as urban agriculture, handicraft and petty trading for women living in both rural and urban areas to increase their income through value adding activities and to ensure their economic independence and helps them to take part in work that creates job opportunities for others.

Empowering women to fight trends that hinder their ability to participate in political decision making process and social activities and make them effective in promoting women's right. With regard to this local government should facilitate opportunities for educated and experienced women to participate in all fields of work and develop their capacities to become effective in their jobs and continuous support should be given to them to make a sense of ownership among themselves and a real contribution through their professions and knowledge to solve problems that face women.

Women must be encouraged to play a frontline role in the struggle against the deep rooted cultural and traditional practices that influence women's pursuit for equality. Thus, the deserved efforts should be expected from governmental and nongovernmental organizations to ensure rural



and urban communities to aware the problems that women face due to backward and harmful cultural and traditional practices and to commit them to eradicate these practices. In addition to this local government should promote and scale up the best experiences in the regions like in *Awramba* community by using different structures and religious leaders to eradicate those harmful practices.

Local government with concerned organizations like, civil society in general, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women's groups, should play their role in promoting women's legal institutions such as Women, Child and Youth Affairs, Women association and Women forum and longstanding and accepted traditional norms that were developed on women's cast of mind like, submissiveness, lawfulness, respectfulness, openness (transparency) to real fight against misrules, and accountability to their discipline in their community which leads women in moving forward for future political participation and representation and to progress democratization.

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## Questionnaires

### Dear Respondents,

I am AsresZelegeKassa a student at Addis Ababa University, in Master's program in Federalism and Governance Study for the year 2019 and 2020. I am carrying out a research on "Women's Political Participation and Representation at Local Level in the Ethiopian Federation: The case of AnkeshaWoreda, Awi Zone, Amhara National Regional State". You have been selected to participate in this research because the researcher wishes to know your role in clarifying women's participation and benefit in AnkeshaWoreda. It will be supportive if willingly you assist by answering the following questionnaire. Information gained will help me to elaborate a report which is a requirement for the award of a Master's Degree in Federalism and Governance Study.

All information will be treated in secret. Please try to fill the questionnaire and return it to me in three days, because I want to accomplish my research on time.

Thank you so much.

### Requests:

Fill the information in the spaces provided

Feel free to give your views.

Where answers are given, tick (✓) against one of the choices that you fill is the most appropriate.

First read all proposed answers before choosing the answer.

### Do not write your name

Please assist me by giving the following information adequately.

### Personal information

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 20 -29 years  30- 39 years  40-49  50 and above
3. Marital status      married       single       divorced 
  - 3.1. If you are married, how many son/daughter do you have -----?
4. Educational status: primary:  2<sup>nd</sup>ry Di<sup>g</sup>ree:      1<sup>st</sup>egree;      2<sup>nd</sup>egree
5. Address: Woreda -----Kebele-----

6. Profession: -----

**Section 1**

1. What is the status of women in Ankeshaworeda political, economic and social activities?

Very high:  High:  Low:  Very low

Please, give a brief description for your choice -----  
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2. What are the key instruments to ensure women’s political participation and representation?

A. education background B. economic background C. emancipating from traditional influence

Please, give a brief description for your choice -----  
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3. Do you think that Democracy and Federalism contribute women to participate and benefit in Ankeshaworeda development programs? A. Yes  B. NO

A. If you say “Yes”, how could you explain? -----  
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B .If you say “NO”, why?

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4. What are the factors and challenges that hinder women’s representation and participation in political, economic and social activities in AnkeshaWoreda? Please explain it briefly -----

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5. How effective are legal provisions of women to empower them in AnkeshaWoreda?

Very high:  High:  Low  Very low

What is the reason for your answer? -----

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6. To what extent is community appreciating women’s participation, representation and equally with men in political, economic and social activities in Ankeshaworeda?

Very high:  High  low  very low

Please, explain the reasons -----

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7. Is there any improvement in women representation and participation in post—1995 in AnkeshaWoreda? A  B

A. if your answer is “Yes” describe the improved activities and the reasons for improvement-----

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B if your answer is “NO” why not?-----

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8. What are the efforts of woreda Administration to empower women in political, economic and social activities? Please, briefly explain it -----

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9. What is the contribution of advancement of infrastructures like, road, electric power, educational institutions and others for women’s political participation and representation in AnkeshaWoreda? -----

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10. What do you recommend for successful and equal political participation and representation of women in AnkeshaWoreda? -----

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11. Please if you have any additional contribution about the role of Democracy and Federalism in empowering women in AnkeshaWoreda? Briefly give your comments -----

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**Annex**

**Annex 1: Ankeshaworeda Education Office General Primary Students (1--8) Data (2011---2020)**

Year	Number of students			Drop Out			Complete			Female coverage	Female drop rate
	M	F	% of women	M	F	% of women	M	F	% of women		
2011	24920	23203	48.22	1862	1596	46.15	23058	21607	48.38	95.16	7.19
2012	25440	24313	48.87	1842	1572	46.05	23598	22741	49.05	96.78	6.86
2013	24480	24137	49.68	1822	1566	46.22	22626	22571	49.94	93.51	6.97
2014	25343	25280	49.94	3706	2540	40.67	21637	22744	51.24	95.32	12.34
2015	24314	25253	50.95	3561	2552	41.75	20753	22701	52.24	104.19	12.33
2016	24503	25353	50.85	2306	1896	45.12	22197	23457	51.38	107.57	8.43
2017	24856	25827	50.96	1717	1325	43.56	23139	24502	51.43	101.93	6.00
2018	25938	26600	50.63	1707	1316	43.53	24231	25284	51.06	102.42	5.75
2019	26731	27094	50.34	549	716	56.60	26545	26015	49.50	91.36	2.35
2020	26844	27479	50.92	500	494	49.70	26979	25990	49.07	88.60	1.84

**Source:** Ankeshaworeda Education Office (March, 2020)

**Annex 2: Ankeshaworeda Education Office General Primary Teacher's (1---8) data (2011—2020)**

Year		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of teachers	M	514	621	562	714	616	633	652	717	710	796
	F	262	409	402	433	404	435	497	566	573	615
	% of women	33.85	39.71	41.70	37.75	39.61	40.73	43.26	44.12	44.66	43.59
No. schools		44	44	47	47	47	50	50	51	53	53

**Source:** Ankeshaworeda Education Office (March, 2020)

**Annex 3: Ankeshaworeda Education Office Senior Secondary Student's (9---12) Data (2011---2020)**

Year	Number of students			Drop Out			Complete			Female coverage	Female drop rate
	M	F	Female coverage	M	F	Female coverage	M	F	Female coverage		
2011	3432	1779	34.14	396	229	36.64	3036	1550	33.80	97.85	11.99
2012	3432	2434	41.54	374	198	34.62	3051	2236	42.29	100.18	9.76
2013	3040	2246	42.49	333	109	24.66	2707	2137	44.12	89.51	8.36
2014	2606	2136	45.06	224	147	39.62	2380	1989	45.53	99.43	7.83
2015	2195	1838	45.57	420	269	39.04	1775	1569	46.92	90.79	17.08
2016	2353	2405	50.55	203	205	50.25	2150	2200	50.57	92.42	8.58
2017	2682	3062	53.31	189	115	37.83	2493	2947	54.17	94.39	5.29
2018	2835	3216	53.15	199	108	35.18	2636	3108	54.11	84.48	5.07
2019	3401	3690	52.04	207	116	35.91	3194	3574	52.81	104.72	4.56
2020	3805	4041	51.50	53	42	44.21	3752	3999	51.59	95.43	1.21

**Source:** Ankeshaworeda Education Office (March, 2020)

**Annex 4: Ankeshaworeda Education Office Senior Secondary Teacher's (9---12) data (2011--2020)**

Year		2011	2012	20113	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of teachers	M	101	94	122	159	139	144	183	210	214	251
	F	17	27	20	25	23	26	30	37	41	67
	% of women	14.41	22.31	14.08	13.59	14.20	15.29	14.08	14.98	16.08	21.07
No. schools		2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5

**Source:** Ankeshaworeda Education Office (March, 2020)

**Annex 5: Anksha Woreda Health Office Maternal health service delivery /2011--2020/**

Year	Number of institutions		Contraceptive users	Anti natal service	Skilled delivery	Home delivery	Maternal mortality	Examination taken on HIV		positiveamongtr eated		HIV prevalence	
	Health center	Hospital						M	F	M	F	M	F
2011	1	-	4003	510	118	324	4	12466	8896	167	222	1.34	2.5
2012	2	-	13521	561	202	268	2	7016	6244	95	127	1.35	2.03
2013	2	-	22498	823	421	281	1	13352	18122	82	214	0.61	1.18
2014	2	-	28658	1458	482	249	3	14695	19675	64	97	0.44	0.49
2015	2	-	34525	1654	689	153	2	18932	20792	41	85	0.22	0.41
2016	3	-	34432	2405	946	147	2	15471	19032	34	58	0.22	0.30
2017	3	1	33713	2711	1573	101	1	7095	10269	30	34	0.42	0.33
2018	3	1	17336	2940	2081	164	2	4113	9621	6	32	0.15	0.33
2019	4	1	22860	3214	2743	97	2	1778	8470	9	12	0.51	0.14
2020	4	1	25901	3726	3221	63	3	2047	11426	5	15	0.24	0.13
Total	4	1	237447	2002	12476	1847	22	96965	132547	533	896	0.55	0.68

**Source:** Anksha Woreda Health Office, (March, 2020)

**Annex 6: Job creation opportunity in AnkeshaWoreda (2011----2020)**

Year	Total unemployed			Created job opportunity						Places prepared for job creation			Amount of loan facilitated for females	
	M	F		% of women	Permanent			Temporary			M	F	% of women	No. of debtors
			M		F	% of women	M	F	% of women					
2011	980	450	31.47	195	30	13.33	32	10	23.81	98	80		4	24,000
2012	1214	608	33.37	362	183	33.58	166	58	25.89	94	72		3	18,000
2013	1213	609	33.42	492	288	36.92	160	57	26.27	106	66		7	42,000
2014	922	485	34.47	413	294	41.58	201	83	29.23	109	56		11	77,000
2015	736	595	44.70	536	414	43.58	200	181	47.51	6	-		9	54,000
2016	1473	1007	40.60	650	575	46.94	665	401	37.62	6	-		13	91,000
2017	3846	1789	31.75	1979	686	25.74	1867	1103	37.14	23	43		17	119,000
2018	7191	2783	27.90	4582	2227	32.71	2524	484	16.09	642	642		12	84,000
2019	5078	3151	38.29	3993	1934	32.63	699	863	55.25	503	176		14	98,000
2020	4511	3009	40.01	3253	1766	35.19	1258	922	42.29	278	281		15	105,000
Total	27164	14486	34.78	16455	8387	33.77	7492	4087	35.29	1859	1416		105	712,000

**Source:** AnkeshaWoreda technic vocational and enterprise office, (March, 2020)

**Annex 7: Women petition ill-treatment recorded in ten years in Ankesha Woreda (2011----2020)**

Year	Economical petition			Social petition			Physical petition		
	Given	Solved	unsolved	Given	Solved	Unsolved	Given	Solved	Unsolved
2011	14	14	---	----	---	---	1	1	---
2012	15	15	---	---	---	---	1	---	1
2013	22	22	---	---	---	---	2	1	1
2014	12	12	---	---	---	---	5	4	1
2015	27	27	---	1	1	---	6	6	---
2016	19	18	1	---	---	---	---	---	---
2017	9	9	---	---	---	---	2	2	---
2018	18	15	3	2	2	---	2	2	---
2019	5	4	1	1	1	---	2	2	---
2020	8	8	---	2	2	---	1	1	---

**Source:** Ankesha Woreda Women, Child and Youth Affairs office (March, 2020)