

EFFECTS OF GENDER DISPARITY ON THE LIVES OF  
WOMEN: THE CASE OF KIBET TOWN OF SILTI  
WOREDA IN SNNPR

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## **Abstract**

*The paper is aimed to study the effects of gender disparity on the lives of women in Kibet town of Silti woreda. The paper has tried to assess the living condition of women, their contribution in the household, their legal rights and their general socio-economic situation.*

*Survey is the method used to generate data from sample respondents. In support of the primary data, available literature was reviewed. The survey result indicated that due to the socially constructed gender disparity women are deprived of their basic rights and over burdened with domestic tasks. They are also made to hold subordinate position in the household. The secondary position of women in the household affected the exercise of their legal rights.*

*They are excluded from control and ownership of resources, access to education, credit services and other basic services. The low access to education resulted in low employment opportunities. In addition, lack of control and ownership over productive resources impede their decision-making power in both the household and the community. Due to all these factors, they are limited to the tedious and routine household tasks. With a little help from children, they perform all these activities from early in the morning to mid night.*

# **1. Effects of Gender Disparity on the Lives of Women: The Case of Kibet Town of Silti Woreda in SNNPR**

## ***1.1 Introduction***

Women are over half of the world's population and carry out two third of its work and in many cases are not entitled to property right. Culturally women are considered inferior to men. In all societies culture plays a crucial role in shaping individual and community life as a system of knowledge, values and beliefs. The women of Africa are recognized as the prime guardian of cultural values. People obtain competence that is considered appropriate for their sex through the socialization process. In African societies allocation of roles and specializations with in the family and community is achieved informally based on social and cultural traditions (Janet, 1991).

Men and women have differential roles and responsibilities most of which are socially constructed. Women's numerous responsibilities ranging from house management to productive activities to child care is still giving hard time to women in the rest of their life time. Such a burden limits their acquisition and full implementation of new knowledge, hampers the education of their children, limits their income, and affects their health and their participation in the socio-economic development and political activities (Ibid).

In the vast society of Ethiopia, women constitute half of the whole population. Women do all the work of subsistence activities. Though women put in many more hours of work than men, they were not considered important economically only because their production is hardly marketable. Since their work is not expressed in monetary terms their contribution is not taken in to account.

The role played by women and their contribution in many societies is not recognized or neglected by the larger society. Many researchers pay no attention to their views and obtain information about them from men. Due to this, the role women are playing in the development process of a nation is not well understood.

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

Women have always been seriously deprived of basic human rights. They are denied of equality, liberty and dignity for different reasons. They also suffer from direct violations and exploitation. Women are considered weak and dependent on men for their survival. However they were exhausted by long time work on household activities and they are unable to resist pressure from their husbands. It is obvious that the majority of women are suffering from poverty. The opportunity to get out of the vicious circle of poverty has become difficult.. But in order to be self reliant and get out of poverty, opportunities should be equal both for men and women. But the existing gender discrimination hinders women to have equal access and enjoyment of social services (Mitike, ).

In developing countries women do not have equal chance with men to go to school. Due to this illiteracy is greater in women than in men. The participation of women is limited to household activities and economic activities in the informal sector (Janet, 1991). A very large number of women are engaged in the informal sector such as gathering and selling fuel wood, selling local drink, petty trade as house maids and in prostitution (Desalegn, 1989). On top of that most of the work on our peasant farms and the major household responsibilities including child bearing and rearing are carried out by women.

Ethiopian women are actively involved in all aspects of the society's life. However the discriminatory cultural, economic, and social rules and regulations prevailing in the society have prevented women from enjoying equality (Julia, 1993). They are deprived of equal opportunities and hence are made to lag behind men in all fields of self improvement.

In the rural areas women work more than 12 hours a day and are responsible for all the house work, for taking care of children and are also expected to participate in all types of economic and social activities. Women in the rural areas work from early in the morning until mid night throughout the year. However the reward to their commitment and hard work is very discouraging (Dejene, 1989).

Women are very hard working and their contribution to their family and the society is enormous. There is no work as such that women do not involve in. Despite hard working, due to social and cultural factors women hold a secondary status and subordinated position to men. The less regard to women's labor in domestic chores and contribution in income earning activities is also a contributing factor to the secondary position of women.

The key role women play in finding different means to respond to economic crisis in the household shows their being important source of livelihood. Their involvement in the economic activity has a due contribution to sustain family members. They have remained active and have continued to support their families looking for different means of livelihood (Zewdie, 1990).

The woman is responsible for feeding the extended family, care the education and clothing of the children, care of the sick and the aged as well as the day to day activities

of the home. Simultaneously the woman assumes most of production activities including producing and processing food for home and outside consumption. Home making activities and transmitting cultural and social norms and expectations to her children is also the role of the woman (Janet, 1991).

With in the home the woman provides sexual services to her husband even without her will. She bears children to whom she provides care, love and nurturing and discipline. The culture and husband puts pressure on the wife to have as many children as possible. They are denied of reproductive health rights to regulate fertility. As a result women tend to continue bearing children during most of their reproductive years. This will affect their health and general well being (Sirkantan, 1993).

The lack of recognition by the society to alleviate the plight of women is the major problem to equality. For instance women have to shoulder the burden to compete in income generating activities at the same time be responsible for child bearing and nurturing activities. They are expected to combine and play both productive and reproductive roles (Janet, 1991). The woman is the sole responsible for rearing her children. She is responsible for their welfare physically, psychologically and morally particularly before teenage.

The determination of the status of woman is based on the ability to work hard and give total obedience to her husband. In some societies, the inferior position of women to their husbands is shown in various ways. Kneeling before them while giving food, giving them priority during feeding and choose the best out of it and looking some other place rather than directly at them in the course of talking to each other are considered as respect to husbands and signify their low status.



Young girls are expected to help their mothers after school hours but boys are not expected to do so. Socially all people are not regarded as truly of equal social worth. The result of socially constructed female subordination has negatively affected the images of women in the society. This makes their vital contribution to be invisible and their work as of low value.

Despite all their responsibilities in the family, women are denied of the right to own land or any other asset the result of the unequal position of men and women. Hence, their subordinate position made them shoulder the work load and denied of basic human rights. In view of this reality, it will be hardly possible to attain the millennium development goal that aims gender equality.

### ***1.3 Gender and the Division of Labor***

#### ***1.3.1 Gender***

In many instances, it is observed that there is confusion in differentiating between the terms sex and gender. Sex denotes the biological differences between males and females. It is a physical distinction. On the other hand, gender refers to the socio-culturally constructed issues attached to each sex (Julia, 1993:11).

The term gender is used to make division of labor between men and women where both sexes specialize in different activities. These activities will be devised by the community based on the reproductive functions of the sexes. (Barbara, 1980:13)

#### ***1.3.2 Division of Labor***

Division of labor implies the gender roles played by men and women which is the result of cultural and social factors in a given society. All human behavior is learned through the socialization process that begins from early childhood throughout the rest of our life

time (Joyce, 1990:7). Culture is the very influential factor in shaping the roles assigned to men and women. These roles can be classified under economic, social, political and religious activities where both complement each other and contribute to the sustenance of the family (Nancy, 1998: 4).

In assigning different roles to men and women, culture benefits one and suppresses the other. This is the point where gender inequality comes in to existence which has a big impact on the lives of men and women. The disparity due to the division of labor, especially affects the lives of women in many directions as we shall discuss in the following sections.

## ***1.4 Denial of Rights***

### ***1.4.1 Access to and control over resources***

Women are given the right to own resources. But accessing credit facilities, inheritance rights and land tenure are governed by cultural traditions limiting the full enjoyment of women in obtaining and owning resources (Anastasia, 1994:37).

In patriarchal societies, the right to control resources is vested primarily on men. Women are denied the right to control resources (Julia, 1993:57). Women are expected to undertake domestic activities and provide service to the household members. Any kind of resource that symbolizes wealth is under the exclusive control of men (Nancy, 1998:93).

In sub Saharan Africa, men are given the right to control resources since they are considered the heads of household. Women are dependent on their husbands in order to use resources for family purposes (Anastasia, 1994:39).

### **1.4.2 Ownership of Asset**

In Many societies the position of women and men in the community is determined by their ownership of assets that makes up wealth. This means the status of an individual is an effect of control over fixed asset (Tangka et.al, 2000:43, Nancy, 1998:37). But the gender division of labor benefited men to have control over assets and enjoy high status in the community than women. Due to this women are identified by the name of their husbands. The exclusion of women from ownership of asset resulted in low status and prevented them from playing prestigious and influential roles. Due to this women held secondary position (Nancy, 1998:93).

Control and use of assets was divided between men and women. But this division could no longer be exercised and it is transferred totally to men because land and livestock ownership belongs to men (Ibid:36).

In case of livestock ownership, the domain of women is caring for livestock and attending to their products. In relation to this, women clean barns every morning, and make manure out of it. In the household with cow/s, women primarily do the milking job.

### **1.4.3 Access to and Control over Land**

Land is a very important resource needed for the subsistence of a given household (Julia, 1993:56). A person without access to land will become dependent on others for his/her survival. Women are the major victims of access to and control of land in many parts of rural areas (Barbara, 1980:125). Women do not have the right to inherit land as inheritance is through patrilineal line in many societies. Even where inheritance is through matrilineal line in very few societies, ownership of land is restricted to men (Anastasia, 1994:50).

Most legislation enacted by governments has not promoted women's legal ownership and inheritance rights over land. Since men are considered the heads of households and land is registered in their name, the right of women to control the land is restricted. and have at time undermined women's traditional use right under customary land tenure systems by registering land in the name of a husband.

In many parts of sub Saharan Africa, individuals wealth is measured by a plot of land that person owns. That means land has a very big value in the lives of these people. It is taken as the major productive resource. The livelihood of most of the people in this region depends on land (Barbara, 1980:122).

The big value given to land emanates from the benefits gained out of it. This means when people own land, they can have access to different inputs. Credit facilities are available and the right to join cooperatives is respected. This implies that land tenure is the determining factor for men and women in ensuring personal status and economic independence. It also affects the income of people.

In Africa, in the colonial periods, ownership of land took the tradition of European countries where land titles and ownership are given to male considering them as a head of a household (Julia, 1993:57). The person might not work on the land or use it. But he is the one to decide over that particular piece of land. In this regard, women were left aside from owning and using the land independent of their husbands (Anastasia, 1994:49).

Even when the distribution of land addresses both men and women, the amount of land allotted to women is very much small and its fertility is lower than that of men. This

shows there is a considerable difference between the sexes in the allocation of land which makes women disadvantaged and suppressed (Ibid: 51).

#### **1.4.4 Access to Credit Services**

In order to participate in the economic activities and enhance their income source, people have to have the starting capital or money. In case they lack the capital, there should be an access to credit facility and there should be an equal access to it for all members of the society. However, the traditional laws governing most of the rural communities undermined the rights of women to have equal access to credit like men. On the other hand, women's lack of control over and ownership of resources limits their access to credit (Tiruwork, 1998:51, F.K. Tangka et.al, 2000:29).

The gender disparity which restricts women in the household activities and be far from information, and the lack of collateral are the major factors that constrain women from accessing credit services ( F.K. Tangka et.al, 2000:29, Anastasia/Wamucii, 1994:54).

#### **1.4.5 Fertility Control**

In societies where patriarchal structure is dominant, the sexual behavior including child bearing capacity of women is determined and controlled by men. Women and earth are seen as sharing the same feature. As the earth is planted to give a yield, a woman also gives birth from the seed she got from a man. Since a person has a right to plough the land, he also enjoys the same right over his wife's sexuality. He can have sexual intercourse whenever he wants as he ploughs his land any time. Women are expected to produce children as far as a seed is planted in them (Julia, 1993:54). However their

reproductive work is given a very low status by the assumption that the major input is that of the male in giving birth to a child (Anastasia, 1994:33).

In most of sub Saharan Africa, the right of women in the wedlock to control their fertility behavior is taken over by their husbands (Julia, 1993:54). Fertility refers to the actual birth performance of a population or the birth factor in population changes. Every person has the right to practice safe sex and control one's own fertility. Controlling fertility means deciding freely the number, timing and spacing of children by making use of the different methods of birth control (Ellen and Melese, 2001:9-10).

If we want to reduce population growth there is a need to empower women to have the ability to decide over their fertility behavior. But in many of the less developed countries, especially Africa, men and women do not have equal say in regulating fertility. Husbands want to bear more children even without the consent of wives (Anastasia, 1994:36).

Research conducted in Ghana indicates that fertility behavior is determined by husbands who have the decision making power. This finding proves the statement that contraceptive use and limiting fertility is decided by husbands. In this study, it is found that wives have no say with regard to fertility control and can not influence their husbands to use family planning methods (Ibid:31-32).

In many parts of less developed countries, women on average give birth for more than six children in their reproductive age 15-49. In these parts it is common to see a woman being pregnant or having a baby at her back (Julia, 1993: 33). Repetitive pregnancies affect the health of women in many ways. Many women die from the complexities of pregnancies and illegal abortion. As women's decision making power

over their fertility behavior is restricted, deaths related to pregnancy is very common (Ibid:34).

#### ***1.4.6 The Right to Education***

Education is a fundamental factor and has a immense contribution to the socio-economic and cultural developments of a given country. Education plays a very important role in improving and capacitating members of the society and its social economical, scientific and technological institutions. Technological and economic advancement can only be achieved through education. It also enables people to be responsible and productive citizens of a nation.

According to the universal declaration of human rights adopted in 1948, everyone has the right to get education to improve himself or herself. All people irrespective of their social, economic and political differences have the right to education. But, the unequal treatment of women and men in the socio-cultural and economic system discriminates women from education. Due to this, they couldn't benefit from education for personal development and to participate in developmental activities of a nation.

Due to cultural barriers, women are confined to and are responsible for domestic activities, and deprived of attending education. The expectation that girls should support their mothers in domestic tasks disadvantaged them from enjoying formal education. Due to this their education level became low preventing them from exercising legal rights (Julia, 1993: 24). The low participation of women in formal education is associated to cultural, social and economic factors.

1. The cultural influence on members of the community is one of the reasons for not sending girls to education. This means if people prefer to send their daughters to school, there is a big danger of being discriminated.
2. The dowry parents get from the marriage has made people to weigh daughter's marriage heavier than their education.
3. The attitude that women do not succeed in life even if they learnt in formal schools is the other reason.
4. Some parents do not send their daughters to a distant school because of fear of rape and abduction.
5. Daughters are also expected to assist their mothers in domestic activities rather than going to school and "waste time" (Genet, 1991).

Gender role which dictates women to stay in the household and men to go outside of home and participate in socio-economic and political activities hinders the interest of women to get education and strive for change and growth. The lack of access to education and training limits their capacity to actively involve in different activities outside home.

#### ***1.4.7 Decision making right***

The decision making powers of men and women varies across culture and from one society to the other. In many traditional societies, women in the wedlock are under the control of both her husband and her husband's father. Men are given decision making powers on their own and their wives right. This shows that men are powerful and influential in matters affecting their wives' lives (Anastasia, 1993:30).



## **1.5 Workload**

Different studies show that women work for more than 17 hours a day (Julia, 1993:33).

From very early in the morning to mid night, women accomplish different productive and reproductive activities. Feeding the family members and taking care of children are their major tasks (Tangka, 2000:31, Barbara, 1980:155).

In some areas of India, women work 14-16 hours daily. Women work longer hours than men when domestic and economic work are added together.(Anastasia, 1994:25) In many societies they carry out labor- intensive jobs in which they exert great energy. Women almost do double that of men while the men are confined to very limited activities (Julia, 1993:30).

### **1.5.1 Household Activities**

In many cultures women are assigned the primary responsibility to undertake all the domestic activities (Julia, 1993: 33). Household chores according to the division of labor are assigned to girls in their early years than boys. This is because the culture dictates women to work in the household while men to perform activities outside of their residence. Hence, girls help their mothers in accomplishing tasks labeled as household activities. Therefore, for women work in the household, is an important part of their gender role whereby they invest great energy and commitment (Barbara, 1980:12, Anastasia, 1994:30).

Women themselves feel that they are primarily responsible for the overall management of their homes. All family care activities and rearing of children is carried out by women by the money support coming from husbands. In case both partners are working in the formal sector, all household activities still are carried out by women (Julia, 1993:35).

The household economy is heavily depended on women who are the major participants in sustaining the family (Desalegn, 1989:33). Without the active participation of women in the household activities, the continuity of a family will be in danger. Their contribution is so immense and vital (Ibid: 39).

The major household activities of women include, fetching water, collecting firewood, preparing and processing food, washing clothes, cleaning their compound, rearing children and many other (Julia, 1993:30, Nancy 1998:4).

The water needed to prepare food and wash materials is brought by women from long distance. It consumes much of their time and labor and impacts other productive and reproductive activities. On average African women spend 2 hours to fetch water (Barbara, 1980:153).

In areas of high population growth, forests have been cleared to expand agricultural activities. This will put pressure on women to travel long distance to collect fuel wood needed for food preparation. It adds additional time and requires more energy to bring home from distant areas (Ibid: 154).

Food processing and preparation also takes much amount of time and labor of women. One can imagine the exhaustion women feel in processing food after traveling long distance to fetch water and collect firewood (Ibid). Most of the works of women are time consuming and are performed with in the home setting (Nancy, 1998: 37).

Their role in the household production is also undervalued and neglected. Thus, due to these factors, women are separated from their reproductive activity which is child bearing and productive activity especially in the household. The output of both activities goes to only one person who has full control over it-men (Julia, 1993:54).

Here it will be appropriate to ask the question why only women shoulder all these activities for common interest. The work load is intolerable and it shows the strength of women to carry out the tasks (Barbara, 1998:155).

### **1.5.2 Women in the Informal Sector**

Besides household tasks, due to the low resource base, women in rural parts of Ethiopia participate in the informal sector of the economy including small scale trades. This is mainly to diversify the income source of the family (Desalegn, 1989:32-33). This sector in most cases exploits their labor but the reward is very insignificant (Julia, 1993: 70).

The imbalance of division of labor between men and women hindered women to take part in the formal sector jobs. The requirement of much time to accomplish domestic activities is the major reason that exerts pressure on women to be limited in the household.

This sector is used by women as one strategy to address the problems caused by economic and social issues (Desalegn, 1989:37). The activities of this sector in which women involve in as income generating activities include animal husbandry, vegetable gardening, petty trade, making pottery and handicrafts, selling local drinks and food (Anastasia, 1994:19, Julia, 1993: 28).

The income brought by them to the household is used to complement and cover the total family cost. In contrary, even though men earn higher incomes than women, they tend to use their incomes for various individualistic purposes. They can decide when, where and how to spend their incomes. Whereas women are constrained in this regard by cultural values associated with motherhood to give priority for household expenditure (Julia, 1993: 28-29).

## **1.6 Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study is to investigate the effects of gender disparity on the lives of women of the study area.

### ***Specific Objectives***

- To study the current socio-economic status of women in the specific town
- To study the participation of women in decision making activities pertaining their lives
- To look in to the different roles played by women as compared to men
- To forward recommendations to improve the status of women

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to contribute to understand the situation in which women of the study area are living in. It feeds information to any attempt intended to enhance and improve the socio-economic status of women in the study area. In addition, the results will help planners and development workers who were discouraged by the absence of data and information regarding gender disparity. It will also help in initiating and implementing gender sensitive projects in the area.

## **1.8 Scope of the study**

The study focuses mainly on married women living with their husbands in Kibet town. This is because gender disparity is mainly manifested on people who are in the wedlock. Fertility issues, access and control of resources and decision making issues in context of study women were explored.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be addressed in this specific study:

1. How is access to and ownership of resources determined?
2. What is the status of women in socio-economic activities of the study area?
3. What are the contributing factors for gender inequality?
4. How do women perceive their subordination to men?
5. In what economic activities do women participate?
6. To what extent are the rights of women respected and exercised?
7. What does the living condition of women look like?
8. Do women take part in decision making activities of a household?

## **2. Methods**

### ***2.1 Source and Method of Data Collection***

In this specific study, both primary and secondary sources of data are employed. The primary source employed survey or quantitative data collection method. Questionnaire for an in-depth interview was prepared and employed to generate primary data. Women who have completed high school and are familiar with the culture of the specific area have participated in administering the questionnaire. They were oriented about the purpose of the study and discussions were made on each question. A half-day orientation was provided by the researcher including how to administer the questionnaire. To support the primary data, secondary sources like books, journals, articles and available literature on the socio-economic issues of women is reviewed. Information on population, physical and socio-economic situations of the area was collected from annual reports and documents of the woreda Finance and Economic Development Office.

### ***2.2 Sampling Procedure***

The survey town is selected because of the researcher's familiarity with the area, the culture and the people. The population of the study is the population of Kibet town where there is only one kebele. The total household size of the town is 662. One hundred thirty one of the households are found to be female-headed households due to death of husband or separation. The list of households was obtained from Kebele administration and the samples were drawn randomly by means of lottery to establish ten percent representation. Hence, 50 households were taken as a sample population.

### ***2.3 Pilot Study***

The purpose of pilot study was to pre-test the relevance of the instruments designed to collect data for the study. The aim was also to find out ambiguities, omissions and misunderstandings of each item. Copies of the instruments were given to the study/thesis advisor and two graduate students of the school of social work. They were asked to give their reaction on each item of the instrument. Using the relevant comments and suggestions from the professionals, some corrections were made. After the refinements of the instruments and the completion of translations from English to Amharic, the pilot study was conducted. Five women have participated in the pilot study. Based on the pilot study results and the professionals' feedbacks, the content of the instrument was checked as follows.

- the items were thoroughly inspected
- The content of the instrument, the order of the questions, omissions, vague items and terminologies were improved.

### ***2.4 Procedure of data collection***

The data collection was carried out by the researcher and two female assistants from the study area. The assistants were briefed about the objective of the study. In addition, thorough discussion was made on each of the questions to avoid ambiguity. The steps they have to follow and the approaches they have to use while conducting the study was clearly communicated to them. The actual data collection was started by introducing the purpose of the research to the respondents and by asking their willingness to allocate some time for the discussion. By doing so, we tried to establish an appropriate rapport with the respondents as well as obtained their informed consent to participate in the study.

Since the assistants are from that locality, based on their families' experience, they scheduled the time that is appropriate or conducive for the respondents. Due to this, we did not encounter any problem with regard to time adjustment. The main activities of the assistants was to schedule the survey time, identify the selected households and administering questions which are culturally difficult to be administered by the researcher.

All the survey questions were administered by the researcher and assistants as the respondents were unable to fill by themselves. This is a good opportunity for the study in that it gives chance for the data collectors to explain and clarify the questions.

### ***2.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation***

The data secured from the survey was analyzed and interpreted using quantitative statistical tool SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Frequencies and percentages were used for each question under the major variables. The views, options, observation and related opinions to facts were used in the open-ended questions. In the result section, responses from all respondents were analyzed on each research question.



## **3. Findings and Discussion**

### **3.1 Background of the Study Area**

#### **3.1.1 Location**

Silti woreda is one of the woredas of Silti zone of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. It is located 147 kms southwest of Addis Ababa on the main road to Hosaena through Butajira. It is 12 kms far from Butajira town. The woreda comprises of forty-two administrative kebeles among which Kibet town is the one. The town is considered as one kebele and has no sub divisions.

#### **3.1.2. Population**

Silti woreda has a total population of 159,987 of which 5.6% live in urban area i.e in Kibet town (the study area), while 94.4% live in rural areas of the woreda. From the total population of the woreda, female comprise 48.5% while male population is 51.5%.

The woreda is mainly inhabited by one ethnic group, silti. This ethnic group comprises 98% of the population in the woreda. The town of silti is not different from the woreda's figure. There are also small numbers of Gurage, Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups residing in the town.

#### **3.1.3 Topography**

It has wide-ranging topographic features dominated by flat terrain (10%), rolling lands (40%), hilly slopes (35%) and mountains (15%). There are three different soil types in the woreda. These are sand (35%), clay (55%) and loam (10%).

The altitude of the woreda ranges from 1650-3001 meters above sea level. There are two agro-ecological zones in the woreda. These are Dega (20.3%) and Weina Dega

(79.7%). The mean annual temperature is 12.5 degree centigrade and the annual rainfall ranges from 875-1215 millimeters.

### ***3.1.4 Economic Activity***

Agriculture is the major occupation of the population in the woreda. The woreda practices subsistence mixed farming including cereal, root crops (such as enset) and livestock production. Cash crop production, such as chat, is also produced to some extent. The dwellers of the town are engaged in small-scale trade, daily labor and formal employment. Most of the people are dependant on petty trade as their main source of livelihood. Some will generate income from selling vegetables grown in their gardens. Some women complement the income of the family by selling fuel wood brought from surrounding areas.

### ***3.1.5 Religion***

About 96% of the population living in the study area is Muslim. The rest are Christians of different denominations. The predominant settlers in the area are Muslims.

## ***3.2 Women of the study area***

According to the woreda finance and economic development office, women comprise of 48.5% of the total population in the woreda. The demographic feature of the study area (Kibet town) is not different from the woreda. The women in the town are characterized by low literacy rate. Due to the low level of education, they lack the necessary skill and knowledge to engage in formal employment.

The participation of women in decision-making activities like women in other parts of the country is very much limited to simple cases. Most of the decisions even

pertaining their lives are passed by men. Women of the study area are engaged in almost all kinds of activities. These activities range from household task, caring for children, petty trade, agriculture, and daily labor.

The whole activity in the household including fetching water and collecting fuel wood are the sole responsibility of women. In addition, they are also engaged in sideline income generating activities to sustain everyday life of the family. Some of the common sideline activities that the women are engaged in are selling fuel-wood, local drink (tella and Areke) and petty trade, which includes selling Injera, bread, shiro and berbere. The participation of women in these activities is to supplement the family consumption expenditure. Activities related to food preparation for household consumption are performed by women. These activities are performed side by side with other domestic chores.

### ***3.3 Features of sampled Households***

As mentioned in the first chapter, since the study mainly focuses on women in the household all the respondents for the structured questionnaire were females. The respondents were homemakers who belonged to male-headed households in the town. The women studied were siltis and other Ethiopian nationals who speak silti and Amharic.

The age distribution of respondents in the town as shown (Table 1) below is skewed towards the middle age. All of the respondents are living with their husbands. Most of them are illiterate and some can read and write.

Table 1 Age of respondents

Age	Number of respondents	Percent
15-25	5	10
25-35	28	56
35-45	11	22
45-55	4	8
>55	2	4
Total	50	100

*Age of respondents at first marriage*

Like many other parts of Ethiopia, early and arranged marriage is common in silti town.

The chance of women to enter into marriage is determined by the parents. The interest and will of women is not considered while arranging marriage. They have to accept the decision of their parents. The age of respondents at first marriage is shown in the following table.

Table 2 Age of respondents at first marriage

Age	Number of respondents	Percent
13-15	30	60
16-18	12	24
18-20	4	8
>20	4	8
Total	50	100

As it is indicated in the table sixty percent of respondents have married at their early ages (13-15). It is below the age acceptable by law in the past (15) and the present (18). This practice is mainly influenced by the culture of the community. The practice of early marriage leads to many problems. The first one is the complication during pregnancy and delivery, which leads to the problem of fistula. The second problem is during this early ages they are not matured enough to manage all household activities. Thirdly, they will not have the chance to continue education since they will start giving birth after birth.

### ***Occupation of Respondents***

The occupation of respondents varies from homemaker to petty trade, servant and daily labor. No one of the respondents is engaged in formal activity. Sixty four percent of the respondents are homemakers. This means they are exclusively responsible for domestic activities. Those who participate in the informal sector or petty trade (24%), servants (10%) and daily laborers (2%) are responsible for both domestic tasks and the activity they are engaged in. Here they play dual role: administering the house and generating income to supplement the family earnings.

### ***Religion of respondents***

The majority of the respondents are Muslims with ethnic background of silti. There are also minor other ethnic groups living in the area. From the survey result, it can be seen that the people living in the town are homogenous with the same religion and ethnicity. However, this homogeneity does not forbid the immersion of other religions and people from different ethnic background.

Table 3 Religious and ethnic group of respondents

Ethnic group	Religion				Number of respondents
	Muslim	Orthodox	Protestant	Other	
Silti	43	3	-	-	46
Amhara	-	1	-	-	1
Gurage	-	2	-	-	2
Oromo	-	1	-	-	1
Total	43	7	-	-	50

***Participation of Women in Income Generating Activities***

In most of the respondents' households, it is revealed that the income generated is very small and cannot feed members of the household.

Table 4 Monthly income of respondents' family

Monthly income range	Number of respondents	Percent
<150	4	8
151-200	20	40
201-250	14	28
>250	12	24
Total	50	100

The monthly income of 48% of the surveyed households is not sufficient to secure their household food consumption. Hence, there is a need for additional income to supplement the household earnings. In this case, women are expected to participate in various income generating activities. Alongside the tedious and routine domestic tasks, they are engaged in such activities as petty trading.

Out of the households whose monthly income is not sufficient to feed the household, 34% of women are engaged in income generating activities. This shows the other burden women have to shoulder to sustain their families.

On the other hand, those women whose monthly income is lower and want to engage in business activities could not participate in income generating activities due to various reasons. These reasons are attributed to the male dominance in the household. This means, as men are the owners of fixed assets and heads of the household, they control almost everything and decide on behalf of their wives. Hence, they can allow women to be engaged in some activities and they can deter them from other activities. The participation of women in income generating activities is shown below.

Table 5 Respondents engagement in income generating activities

Respondents' participation in income generating activities	Number of respondents	Percent
Participate in income generating activities	17	34.0
Do not participate in income generating activities	33	66.0
Total	50	100.0

As discussed above, women who are engaged in income generating activities are those whose monthly income is lower as compared to the other respondents. These people constitute 34%. The majority of women do not take part in any kind of income generating activity. The major reasons as reported by the respondents are lack of time because of the over burdening of domestic chores (51.5%), lack of good will from husband side (27.3%), lack of money (15.2%), lack of business skill (3%) and satisfied with what they have (3%).

Since there is no one to share the domestic chores, it is true that women cannot perform any task outside home. One respondent said “my husband do not allow me to go outside and engage in business activities due to the fear of getting bankrupt”. Others also reported that the domestic tasks would not be properly managed if they have to work outside. Due to this, they stay at home and perform the domestic chores including caring for children and the sick.



Women respondents who said they lack money do not know the available credit institutions or they do not have the collateral to benefit from credit services. It is reported that there are both governmental and non-governmental organizations providing credit services.

Table 6 The different types of income generating activities respondents are engaged in

Type of activity	Number of respondents	Percent
Petty trade	14	28.0
Servant/daily labor	2	4.0
Restaurant	1	2.0
Total	17	34.0

***Access to and control of Land and Ownership of Asset***

Despite the legal provision of access to land for every citizen, in most parts of the country women are deprived of this right. As it is indicated in the survey, 98% of respondents do not have land by their name. The reason 68% of them gave is they live under the control of their husbands. This implies that since men are the heads of the household, it is only them that can have land and other properties. The other reason given by 32% of the respondents is women cannot inherit land from their parents. Lack of access to land in turn limits the decision-making capacity in the household affairs.

Moreover, the lack of ownership of the productive asset could further have implication on the decision power of an individual in the household. This seriously undermines women’s ability to strengthen the necessary income for the livelihood of household.

### *Ownership of Livestock*

Livestock is another resource of many of the households in rural parts of the country. Like other household property, ownership of livestock is limited to men. Sixty eight percent of respondents reported that the family has one or more household animals (ox, cow, goat, sheep and chicken). The remaining 32% of respondents said that they do not have any kind of livestock.

Table 7 Decision-making pattern whether to sell or consume household animals

Decision-maker	Number of respondents	Percent
Husband	24	70.6
Wife	6	17.7
Both husband and wife	4	11.7
Total	34	100

From those families who have household animals, 70.6% of respondents said that it is the sole responsibility of men to decide whether to sell or consume those animals. Respondents who reported that both wife and husband have equal say to decide whether to sell or consume these animals are 11.7%. The remaining 17.7% responded that it is the sole responsibility of women to decide to sell or consume the animals. Here the figure is a bit higher because the animal that these families have is chicken. Since the value of chicken is smaller as compared to other animals, women are entitled to own chicken.

The above fact shows that most of the women are not owners of household animals. Their subordinate position in the household is also manifested on the ownership of livestock.

### *Ownership of Asset*

Ownership of asset is the indication of wealth of individuals, their status in the community and decision-making power in a household. Like our previous discussion, the ownership of asset belongs to the head of household usually men. The study area women are not owners of the asset the household owns for the reasons associated with the cultural construct. If we take the houses they are living in, it is registered in the name of men. The following table shows the ownership of the house (one of the household asset) respondents are living in.

Table 8 Ownership of the house respondents live in

Owner of the house	Number of respondents	Percent
Husband	34	68
Wife	2	4
Both husband and wife	8	16
Rented	6	12
Total	50	100

In the above table, it is clearly indicated that the houses in which respondents are living in belongs to their husbands. This indicates that the decision-making power in the household rests upon the husband. Women cannot claim the house as their own. This implies if the husband want to sell it, the consent of the wife will not be considered. If women want to benefit from credit facilities, they cannot use the house as collateral unless and otherwise the husband is willing.

### ***Women in Household Activities***

In the surveyed community, the work that only women can be engaged in is clearly specified. However, it is reported that most of the works that are categorized as men's duty could also be done by women in the absence of men. They participate both in productive and reproductive activities. The survey result shows that 92% of the respondents responded that all the domestic tasks are the sole responsibility of women. Six percent of respondents reported that the household activity is mainly carried out by daughters. The remaining 2% said it is the responsibility of both women and daughters to accomplish the domestic tasks.

The study result revealed that women have a very tight schedule. With this tight schedule, they perform many activities and the load they shouldered is very heavy. The most common and routine activities of women according to the respondents are;

1. Prepare breakfast
2. Feed children
3. Clean the home
4. Prepare lunch and dinner for the family
5. Fetch water
6. Collect fuel wood
7. Wash household utensils
8. Care for children
9. Participating in different social activities
10. Washing clothes

There are also occasional activities, which are carried out by women once or twice a week. These include:

1. Marketing
2. Grinding
3. Attending funerals and wedding ceremonies
4. Enset processing
5. Care for the sick

All of these activities involve smaller other duties. According to the respondents, the time spent to accomplish all the daily tasks ranges from 14-16 hours. Besides the overall home management, they also engage in income generating activities outside the home.

On the other hand, the families of 62% of the respondents have vegetable garden around their homestead. According to the respondents, both men and women take part in growing the vegetables. This task gives another hard time for women in addition to the domestic chores. Moreover, they are the one's to take the grown vegetables to the market for sale.

In those households who rear domestic animals, the major caretakers are women. They are responsible for raising and caring especially for poultry and cows. Some of the activities that involve taking care of household animals are feeding, milking, cleaning the barn and putting the cattle in the field.

Grinding is the other activity that is carried out by women. The existence of electric power in the town seems to ease the labor of women. However, going to the grinding mill, which takes some time affects the time spent on the other household tasks. In some instances, even though mill service is available; women are dependent on the

traditional grinding stone, which is labor intensive. This might be due to the lack of money to cover the cost of milling and there are foods, which can only be processed by the traditional grinding stone. Since the traditional grinding stone is laborious and time taking, it shows that the pressure women have resisted is very high.

In addition to the responsibilities mentioned above, enset processing is the other duty of women. The production is usually carried out by men. Here, there is clear division of labor based on gender differences. Even if the production is assumed the responsibility of men, manuring and weeding are performed by women. The energy input to process enset like the traditional grinding stone is much higher. All these activities involve the labor and time of women. This implies the assignment of roles based on gender lines disfavors women.

### ***Fuel Wood Collection***

Like other parts of rural Ethiopia, fuel wood is the only source of energy they use for cooking. All the respondents reported that fuel wood is the major source of energy. Twenty five percent of the households supplement this single source of energy with cow dung. Respondents source of fuel wood are forest and the market. The following table shows the sources of fuel wood for the respondents' household.

Table 9 Respondents' source of fuel wood

Source of fuel wood	Number of respondents	Percent
Forest	18	36
Market	31	62
Own compound	1	2
Total	50	100

This figure shows that source of fuel wood for most of the sampled household is the market. On the other hand, a considerable number of respondents said that they collect fuel wood from the forest. Fuel wood collection from the forest demands much time, strength and traveling longer distance.

According to the respondents, only women and female children are involved in gathering fuel wood from the forest. Men do not involve in any kind of fuel wood collection. Forty eight percent of those women who used to collect fuel wood from the forest use either for household consumption or for sale. This means they frequently go to the forest. The strength they have in this regard is very much appreciated. This entire burden emanates from the culturally constructed gender disparity has put pressure on women to carry out much of the tasks. The frequency of going to the field to collect firewood varies from household to household.

Table 10 Frequency of collecting fuel wood

Frequency of fuel wood collection in a week	Number of respondents	Percent
Three days	10	55.6
Two days	5	27.8
One day	3	16.6
Total	18	100

The survey result shows that 55.6% of the respondents gather fuel wood three days in a week. The frequency is higher for this group of people because they collect fuel wood for both market and household consumption. Twenty seven percent of them used to

collect fuel wood two days in a week whereas the other 16% collect once in a week.

These groups of people supplement cow dung for the required energy in their homes.

Relatively they are less burdened than the others are.

The reason for many of the respondents to gather fuel wood frequently for household consumption is that their use of improved energy saving technology is very low or none at all. They all use the local three stone open fires to cook their meals. The non-use of energy saving technology is lack of information and money to buy it. As we can see from the table below, the use of traditional cooking device increased the burden of women who collect fuel wood from the forest.

Table 11 Cooking device used by respondents

Cooking device	Number of households	Percent
3-stone fire	46	92.0
Ordinary charcoal stove	1	2.0
improved cooking device	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

The time spent to gather fuel wood ranges from 1-3 hours. This time increases at times of fuel shortage where they are forced to travel longer distance for the same reason. The load increases when they face with fuel shortage. All household activities will wait for them until they come back.

### ***Fetching water***

As part of the household activity, the other duty of women is fetching water. In this regard, Silti women are lucky. There is communal piped water in the town. Some of the



households have piped water in their compound. However, the majority of them use from commonplace known as (Bono) water. These water points are located in different places of the town so that they can serve in a short distance. Due to this, on average the women walk 400 meters from home.

Table 12 Frequency of water collection, type of container to fetch water and size of container

<b>Frequency of water collection in a day</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Once	4	8
Twice	15	30
Three times	18	36
As required	13	26
<b>Type of container used to fetch water</b>		
Plastic container	41	82
Pot	9	18
<b>Size of container used to fetch water</b>		
10-15 liters	24	48
15-20 liters	13	26
20-25 liters	9	18
>25 liters	4	8

From the sampled households, 82% of the respondents use plastic container to fetch water. The other 18% use pots made from clay. Forty eight percent of the respondents use 10-15 liters sized container while fetching water. The other 26% use 15-

20 liters sized container. On the other hand, 48% of the respondents fetch water in one container at a time. The remaining 52% fetch in two containers at a time. Those who fetch in two containers put one at their back and the other with their hand. This is to reduce the time spent in waiting for their turn since the water point is common for many people.

Here even if they do not waste much time in traveling longer distance to fetch water, but they spent a considerable amount of time in waiting for their turn. The time that can be used for other purposes is killed in water points, as there is no one to share the other domestic tasks. The following table shows the frequency of fetching water in a day.

Most of the respondents fetch water twice and three times in a day. This is because the water points give service three times in one day i.e. morning, noon and sun set. Those who responded as required are twenty-six percent. These women have individual pipe water in their compound.

### ***The participation of women in community activities***

As part of their social life, women involve in various activities of the community they are living in. Visiting the sick, relatives, the sad and women who delivered, assisting work in a wedding ceremony, participating in 'Idir' and mahiber (local community organizations) and 'Iqub' traditional saving institution are the major community activities that women actively participate in addition to the other domestic tasks.

Without their husband's permission, they can schedule their time to participate in these social activities. They have full authority to decide on these activities. This is because unless they take part in the community activities, it is difficult to consider

oneself as part of that community. In addition, they cannot expect any kind of mutual support from members of the community.

Table 13 Participation of women in some of the community organizations

Community organizations	Number of respondents	Percent
Idir	47	94
Iqub	17	34
Mahiber	28	56

As we can see from the table, the majority of women are members of Idir. This is because Idir is an institution, which is highly respected and important especially in times of death. Women who do not participate in Idirs might not afford the monthly contribution or their husbands are members of one of the Idirs. It is observed that women highly take part in this particular institution.

Iqub participants are those who are engaged in some kind of income generating activities. This institution helped them to boost their business activity. Since regular saving is the basis, women with no income source cannot benefit from this institution. Iqub is widely practiced in most of the rural parts of Ethiopia including the major cities.

In addition to the above two institutions, the sampled respondents reported that women have their own associations whereby they help each other and discuss some issues pertaining their lives. One of such institutions is Mahiber. Through this association, they support one another in times of death, marriage and delivery. Membership of the association is limited to women.

### *Women and credit facilities*

Credit services help people who want to engage in business but lack the capital or money to start up and run that business. Every one in principle is equal to benefit from credit services if there are credit-providing organizations. This means men and women regardless of their sex have equal right as far as they meet the requirements of credit giving organizations.

Here, we can raise different issues with respect to women's access to credit services. The first one is due to male dominance and control of all productive resources in the household; women cannot meet the necessary requirements to get credit. This means they do not have the collateral to benefit from credit services. Secondly, due to the low level of education, their business skill is very much limited and will not have the initiation to get credit and engage in business activities. Thirdly, where the productive activities are owned jointly with their husbands (rare situations), men do not agree with their wives listing different reasons. They say household tasks will not be properly managed and the domain for women is home activity. Fourthly, women, even if they have the skill in running business activities, they are afraid of getting bankrupt. Lastly, as a main agent in house management, they do not have the time to work other duties other than domestic chores.

Table 14 Respondents benefiting from credit facilities

Benefit from credit services	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes	9	18
No	41	82
Total	50	100

There are only 18% of the respondents benefiting from the existing credit services. The majority have no access for one or more reasons. As reported by the respondents, out of nine beneficiaries, 22.2% get credit from individual lenders, 22.2% from non-governmental organizations and 55.6% from governmental organization. The reason to choose the private lenders is the absence of bureaucratic structure i.e. they can get loan at any time without any process.

Table 15 Respondents' reason for not benefiting from credit facilities

Reasons	Number of respondents	Percent
Lack of collateral	13	31.7
Fear of getting bankrupt	28	68.3
Total	41	100

Most of the respondents said that they are afraid of getting bankrupt and might fail to pay back if they start business by taking credit from institutions. This might emanate from lack of business skill and encouragement from the other side (husbands). Still considerable number of respondents reported that they could not fulfill the necessary requirements to get credit, as they do not have asset or collateral. In most cases, all resources belong to their husbands and women cannot claim as their own.

***Women in decision-making activities***

In many parts of the world where women stand next to men, most of the decisions related to household affairs are passed by men. This is also true in our country Ethiopia. Due to their secondary position in the household, women are denied of the right to decide even over issues that affect their own lives.

In the survey area too, most women are not the decision-makers in their household. With regard to the family income, most respondents said that they do not have the right to decide over it. How, where, when and on what to spend the income is the responsibility of their male partners. This is because men are the breadwinners in most of the households. This is the reason forwarded by the respondents for not having the right to decide on the income brought by somebody else. This indicates the subordinate position of women. It also puts the saying that husband and wife are one under question mark. The right given by law to both parties in this regard is not respected and practiced.

On the other hand, the income brought by women is inspected by men and women are not the one to decide on it. This shows that men totally control their wives in every direction. Sixty nine percent of the respondents said that their husbands take the income earned by them and use it for different personal purposes. Thirty one percent of them said they spend the income they earn on household consumption. There are some husbands, who do not work in general but engaged in chewing chat every day. The income source for these people is not work but their wives. It is also noted that even when the source of household income is both or only women, the decision- maker is men.

Table 16 Major decision-maker over respondents' family income

Decision-maker	Number of respondents	Percent
Husband	39	78
Wife	6	12
Both	5	10
Total	50	100

### *Access to education*

Education is a process through which people acquire different skills and knowledge to carry out their personal career. It is also a way to personal and national progress and development. It is expected that it serve all people equally without discrimination. This means all people benefit from it on equal ground.

In many of the developing countries, due to economic constraint, educational service is not widely distributed to ensure the participation of all people. Even the existing educational facilities do not equally benefit both sexes for various reasons. Firstly, the low access to education due to lack of schools in the nearby place especially for rural parts hampered the equal participation of men and women. Secondly, the cultural (negative) attitude of parents towards the education of women is the major factor contributing to the unequal participation of men and women.

In the study area, the educational level of women is low. The reason associated with the low educational level of women is the negative attitude of parents to women's education. Rather than sending their girls to school, they prefer to let them get married at their early ages. The assumption that women are inferior to men has affected women negatively from attending education. Respondents said that even if they want to attend education and score good result, they were all forced to enter into marriage.

Table 17 Respondents who have attended formal education

I have attended formal education	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes	29	58
No	21	42
Total	50	100

As it is indicated in the table, among the surveyed women, 58% have attended formal education. However, 42% of them did not have the chance to go to school for one or more of the reasons mentioned above. Most of those who have attended formal education did not pass primary level. This is because they have got married at early ages. Due to this, they could not make longer their educational level.

Table 18 Last grade attended by respondents

Grade level	Number of respondents	Percent
1-3	12	41.4
3-5	10	34.5
5-7	6	20.7
>7	1	3.4
Total	29	100

The majority of the respondents who reported that they passed through formal education are in the grade level 1-3. The last grade others attended is also in the range of primary education. It is only one person who has reached grade eight. This shows that all



the reasons for not sending girls to school are really practiced in this area. Especially early marriage without the consent of the girl is the major contributing factor to the low level of women's education in the surveyed area.

***Fertility control***

Like other rights, women have the right to control their fertility behavior. This is because high fertility rate negatively affects their lives. It has both psychological, economic and health impacts. Even if the side effect of high fertility weighs more, the culture of many developing countries dictate women to bear as many children as they can. It means they cannot regulate their fertility by their own. This is especially the common feature of rural parts of the developing countries where the culture in these areas is resistant to change.

On the other hand, with the expansion of education and the development of technology in urban areas, women are enjoying their rights with regard to fertility control.

In the study area, respondents were asked the number of children they have and the number of children they want to have. The following table shows the number of children they have currently.

Table 19 The number of children respondents have

Number of children	Number of respondents	Percent
1-4	14	28
5-8	28	56
>8	8	16
Total	50	100

As it is indicated in the table, most of the respondents have five to eight children. Some have more than eight children, which is a very big number. Though contraceptive services are available in the study area, the high fertility rate can be because of the cultural impact. That means the low educational level of women, male dominance, the value given to children and the pressure from families on women to bear many children can explain the high fertility rate. On the other hand, respondents with small number of children (one to four) relative to others are those in the lower ages and can bear more children in the future. They are in the early reproductive age group.

Table 20 Respondents' desired number of children is presented in the following table.

Desired number of children	Number of respondents	Percent
1-4	1	2
5-8	30	60
>8	19	38
Total	50	100

As shown above, 98% of the respondents want to have children more than five. It is only one person who responded that her desire is to have only one to four children. Many of those, whose actual number of children is one to four in the previous table, indicated their high desire for more children. This table clearly shows the impact of culture on the fertility behavior of women.

Respondents were also asked about their children's sex preference. This question is to look into their perceived attitude towards the sex of children.

Table 21 Respondents sex preference of their children

Preference of sex of children	Number of respondents	Percent
More boys	20	40
More girls	9	18
Equal number of both sexes	21	42
Total	50	100

The table illustrates that 40% of the respondents want to have more boys over girls. This might be due to the high respect given to men culturally. From another angle, it can be said that since they are not living a better life, they do not want to have more girls who will face their life experience.

Respondents who are interested in having more girls might be because of the work burden they are shouldering in their homes. The girls are expected to share the responsibilities of women starting from childhood. This indicates that still there is the assumption that household task is the duty of females. What is surprising is that women themselves have accepted and internalized all household activities as the sole responsibility of women.

Respondents were also asked about the decision-maker with regard to the number of children couples want to have.

Table 22 Decision-maker over the number of children a household will have

Decision-maker	Number of respondents	Percent
Husband	16	32
Wife	4	8
Both husband and wife	28	56
God	2	4
Total	50	100

Fifty six percent of respondents reported that the couples have equal say with regard to the decision on the size of children they want to have. However, even if, they said that women could also decide on the number of children, they either have more than five or want to have more than five. If they have to bear such big size, the role of women in decision-making is not clear. In other words, it is only if they can keep the number of children small that one can say they can decide to regulate fertility. This implies that they are not conscious about which number of children is a big and small size.

On the other hand, a considerable number of respondents said that their husband decides on the number of children they should have. This means the wife will give birth after birth whether or not it affects her health condition. Such a behavior definitely contributes to the increase in the national fertility rate, which is much higher than the economic growth rate.

Four respondents reported that they are the ones to decide on the size of the children they will bear. This group of people might be those who are using contraceptives

to limit their children due to various reasons. However, as we discussed earlier, the finding shows their desire to have more than five children. Here, too, the point of deciding to regulate fertility is not clear.

Two of the respondents mentioned that it is the will of God to limit or have more number of children. These persons might be religious people or do not have the idea on how to regulate fertility. These people did not take into account the effects of bearing many children on their lives.

Respondents were asked if they use of contraceptives to regulate fertility. Firstly, they were asked whether they know about contraceptives, its purpose and the availability in their locality. All of them responded that they are well aware about contraceptives and its availability in their town. Based on this, they were asked whether they use it or not.

Table 23 Respondents using contraceptive

Currently use contraceptives	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes	24	48
No	26	52
Total	50	100

The table shows that 48% of the respondents currently use contraceptives. The remaining percent of respondents do not use contraceptives. This question is related to the above discussions on the actual number, desired number and decision-maker on the number of children they want to have. Here it is indicated that many respondents are currently using contraceptives. However, the number of children they have or want to

have is more than five. Hence, the purpose of using contraceptives is vague if it is not to limit the number to smaller.

The reasons for using contraceptives as replied by the users of contraceptives are to space between children and to stop giving birth. Among the users, 87.5% said they use contraceptives for spacing between children. Whereas 12.5% reported that, they use contraceptives not to have more children.

As mentioned above, the justification for using contraceptives by the majority of respondents is to space between children. That means they will bear children up to the level they desire to have with spacing. Still they are practicing only one purpose of contraception. The other important purpose i.e. limiting the number of children is not given due attention for one or more reasons. Spacing is one purpose, which has to be encouraged as it positively affects the lives of women. The other purpose, which is ignored, has to get attention since most of the respondents' income is lower to raise properly big size of children.

Respondents were also asked if their husbands know of using contraceptives. From the responses, it is observed that 87.5% of them have discussed with husbands to use contraceptives. Whereas 12.5% do not tell their husbands and they are using it secretly. This implies that there is a pressure from husbands on women to bear many children. If husbands come to know this secret, the measure will be strong. Women cannot convince their husbands, as there is no discussion on such matters.

On the other hand, those who do not use contraceptives have mentioned why they do not use contraceptives.

Table 24 Respondents reason for not using contraceptives

Reason for not using contraceptives	Number of respondents	Percent
To have more children	14	53.9
Husband do not allow	3	11.5
No information about contraceptives	2	7.7
Not allowed by religion	2	7.7
Stopped giving birth	5	19.2
Total	26	100

The justification for the majority of respondents (53.9%) who said that they do not use contraceptives is to have more children. The reason to have more children as explained is children are considered as an asset. The value given to children weighs more than the side effects of having more children. Even though there is incompatibility between income and number of children, they are in need of more children.

Three of the respondents replied that their husbands do not allow them to use contraceptives even if they want to do so. This shows the real subordinate position of women. If they cannot exercise their own wills, it will be difficult to say men and women are equal. Lack of awareness about the availability of contraceptives is also indicated as one reason. This might be associated with the low level of education and access to media.

With regard to husbands use of contraceptives, all of the respondents reported that their husbands do not use contraceptives either for spacing or to limit fertility. Most of

the respondents were surprised when this question is forwarded to them. They all asked, “is there a contraceptive that a man can use”. This clearly shows that contraceptive of women is the widely known, available and promoted through the media and other means.

The knowledge about contraceptives is also taken as only women’s duty. This emanates from the poor communication while promoting contraceptives. The negative attitude towards the use of condom might also have an effect for not using it with wife. This might also be the reflection of gender disparity i.e. men are superior they can do whatever whereas women are inferior they are the only ones to use contraceptives.



## 4. Conclusion

Kibet town is one of the kebeles in Silti woreda, which is found in Silti zone of Southern Nations and Nationalities People Regional State. It is marked by wide-ranging topography. It exhibits two climatic conditions i.e. Dega and Weina Dega. The total household size of the town is 892 of which 10% are female-headed household.

Women comprise 48.5% of the total population of the study area. They participate in a number of activities especially in the household maintenance, which includes processing and provision of food to the family.

In all societies, men and women are assigned activities and responsibilities according to their sex. The gender division of labor varies from one culture to the other. It also changes with time and external condition. Gender power relations in most societies are in favor of men. The value given to the tasks of men and women is also different. A high value is ascribed to men's activities and lower value to the tasks carried out by women. Results of this specific research also show the above fact.

With regard to access to and control over resources, the study result reveals that men and women are regarded differently. In many societies, it is assumed that the control of resources is the right of men. Though women play a crucial role in producing and providing food to sustain the livelihood of the family, they have limited access to and control over different resources. Their control over land, income, and decision in the household is very much limited.

Women are not entitled to the use right of most of the productive resources. Land, which is the major productive resource, is controlled by men. Men are also the owners of household animals. From the household animals, only cows and chickens are owned by

women. Even if women own these animals, men have also the right to claim as their own and can decide whether to sell or consume. Women are limited to the taking care of livestock.

Despite the constitutional right to control land, women of the study area are not treated equally as men counterparts. Almost no woman who is living with her husband has land by her name.

Very few women own asset of the household. Most of the houses are owned by men. The cultural assumption that men are heads of household made women to stay behind. Despite their significant role, the participation of the study area women in the use and control over resources is low. Asset ownership is the manifestation of the above reality. Lack of ownership of asset negatively affected their decision-making power in household affairs, status in the community and individual development and prosperity.

However, with regard to garden crops both men and women have access and control over its products as long as they participate in the plantation. But as mentioned in the previous chapter, women were the ones fully engaged in garden cropping and who had the major say as to what to grow, consume and how much to sell.

Silti women perform a limitless activity in the household from early in the morning to mid night. They participate in both productive and reproductive work of a household. They are engaged in household activities, income-generating activities and other community activities. All these activities involve smaller many activities.

The household activities are routine and tedious. They prepare food for all of the household members. They prepare meals daily with little or no assistance. They perform tasks related to processing and preparation of enset, which is a very tiresome activity and

has an impact on the general health condition of women. Caring for and feeding children is taken as the responsibility of women. Side by side, while performing the various household chores, they also take care of the sick and older people.

Fetching water and fuel wood collection either from market or from the forest is the other duty that women have shouldered. Even though the water source is found in the nearby areas, the time spent to wait for their turns elongates their working time until mid night. They also exert great energy and spend much time to collect fuel wood especially from the forest.

The livelihood of many of the respondents is dependent on small-scale trading, agriculture and daily labor. However, the income earned from these activities does not meet the annual requirement of the household. Hence, in addition to household tasks, Silti women participate in income generating activities to complement the income of the household. In some instances, their participation in income generating activities is not to complement rather to sustain the family. The reason is in some cases men do not involve in any kind of productive activities but chew chat the whole day and the responsibility rests on women.

The types of activities women involve in generating income for their households include petty trade (selling injera, Areke, fuel wood) and daily labor. None of the respondents is employed in formal activities. The major areas of employment are the informal sector. Others could not even work in the informal sector due to various reasons. They are simply homemakers and responsible for the domestic chores. Lack of money and business skill and the overburdening of household tasks are mentioned as the major obstacles to engage in profit making activities or get employment in the informal sector.

Even though there are credit-providing institutions in the study area, small number of respondents has access to the services. The majority do not benefit from credit services due to lack of collateral, the unwillingness of the husbands, lack of business skill, and fear of getting bankrupt.

Decision-making power of Silti women is limited to minor activities. They can decide over the schedule of the tasks they have to accomplish in the household. They can also decide over what kind of meal to serve based on the money they get from their husband. Decisions on the degree of participation in community activities are in their domain. Major decisions related to how and on what to spend the income of the family and sell of the big assets is the sole responsibility of men.

Women of the study area are also denied of the right to education. The reason for the low employment in the formal sector is associated with the low level of education. Few respondents have attended primary level education. However, they could not extend their education to secondary and tertiary level due to the practice of early marriage.

The actual fertility behavior of the study area is found to be high. They are still in need of big size of children. Despite contraceptive services in the area, many of the respondents do not use contraceptives to limit the size of their children. Surprisingly, the number of children of contraceptive user respondents is more than five or wants to have more than that. This shows that they are not controlling their fertility behavior.

In general, the study has established that women play a crucial role in sustaining the household. Their immense participation and contribution to the smooth functioning of the household is not given due attention. In contrary, they were denied of their basic rights and made to play triple role i.e. productive, reproductive and community activities.

## ***4.1 Recommendations***

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made by the researcher.

1. Encourage religious leaders and influential persons to participate actively in the promotion and implementation of gender equality.
2. Educate women and encourage them to communicate, discuss and to decide on family issues equally and jointly with spouses.
3. Encourage and educate males to get involved in the household activities to ease the burden of women.
4. In addition to the formulated laws, the state should take tangible measures to ensure women's access and control over resources.
5. Effective and consecutive education about the use and purpose of family planning must be given to the couples targeting on both the wife and the husband that are found within reproductive age group to enable them form a small family size.
6. Follow up the law enacted against early marriage that will impede the personal development of women.
7. Educate males to support their wives and encourage their participation in family planning program to use the available modern contraceptive method.
8. Avail the opportunities and enhance the participation of women in education to avoid early marriage and the norm of large family size
9. Interventions that enhance employment opportunities for women should be undertaken. This action would promote and enhance the capacity of women.

10. Non-formal or adult education services should be available for women who have not attended formal education.
11. The state should be practically committed to the availability of adequate research work on the lives of women for further intervention.

## **Declaration**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Tena Yigezu

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Place: Addis Ababa University

Date: June 2006

The thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor.

Sandhya Joshi

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## Annexes

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## **Annex 2 Survey Questionnaire**

The objective of the questionnaire is to gather information on the effects of gender disparity on the lives of women the case of Kibet town in Silti woreda. The data will be used to write Master of Social Work thesis. Therefore, for the realization this purpose, your objective, accurate and reliable information is highly required.

### **Socio-demographic background**

1. Age:
2. Ethnicity:
3. Religion:
4. Main Occupation:
5. How many children did your parents bear including yourself?
6. How many years have you passed through marriage?
7. What was your age during your first marriage?
8. What was your age during your first childbirth?

### **Economic situations**

1. What is the major occupation of the household?

---

---

2. What is/are your household income source?

---

---

3. How much is the household income per month?

4. Who is the main economic provider to the household?

- a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Both                      d. Children                      e. Other

### **Ownership of Asset**

1. What kinds of household animals do your household have?

- |          |            |
|----------|------------|
| a. cows  | e. goats   |
| b. mules | f. chicken |
| c. oxen  | g. other   |
| d. sheep |            |

2. Who owns the house you are living in?  
a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Both                      d. Other
3. Who decides to sell the house for some reason?  
a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Both

**Access to and control of Land**

1. Do you have land by your name?  
a. Yes                      b. No
2. If no, what is the reason?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Who has the use right over the land your house is built on?  
a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Both
4. Do the household have vegetable garden?  
a. Yes                      b. No
5. If yes, who will grow vegetables in the garden?  
a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Family                      d. Other
6. For what purpose do you use vegetables grown in your garden?  
a. For consumption                      b. For sale                      c. Both
7. Who benefits from the vegetables grown?  
a. Family                      b. Husband                      c. Wife                      d. Other
8. Do you have use right over the vegetable garden?  
a. Yes                      b. No

**Access to Credit services**

1. Are there credit facilities in your town?  
a. Yes                      b. No
2. If yes, what are the different sources of credit services?  
1. private      2. NGO      3. GO      4. Other
3. Do you benefit from the service?  
a. Yes                      b. No

4. If yes from which source do you get credit?

1. private    2. NGO    3. GO    4. Other

5. What is the interest rate?

---

6. Why do you choose the source you are now using?

---

7. For what purpose do you take credit?

---

8. What are the pre conditions you have to fulfill to get credit?

---

9. If your answer to question number three is no, what is the reason?

---

### **Fertility control**

1. How many children do you have?

2. How many children do you desire to have?

- a. Male\_\_ b. Female\_\_ c. Total\_\_

3. How is your preference in terms of the sex of your children?

- a. More boys b. More girls c. Equal number of both sexes

4. Who has the upper hand on the decision-making about the desired number of children?

- a. Husband b. Wife

5. If the number of your children is not according to your desire, what is the main reason contributing for the variation?

---

---

6. Did you ever practice modern contraceptives?

- a. Yes b. No

7. If yes, do you practice contraceptives currently?

- a. Yes b. No

8. If yes, what is the main reason for you to use modern contraceptives?

---

9. Do your spouse know that you are using contraceptives?

- a. Yes                      b. No

10. If no, why do you want to make it secret?

---

11. If no to question number five, what is the reason for you not to use contraceptives?

---

12. Do your husband practice contraceptive?

1. Yes                      2. No

13. If no, what is the reason?

---

**Access to education**

1. Have you attended formal education?

- a. Yes                      b. No

2. If yes, what is the last grade you attended?

---

3. If no, why did not you attend education?

---

4. Do you send your children to education?

- a. Yes                      b. No

5. If yes, do you give them enough time to study?

- a. Yes                      b. No

6. If you do not give them enough time what is the reason?

---

7. To what level or grade will they attend education?

---

8. If you do not send them, what is the reason?

---

---

**Decision making right**

1. Who in the household makes the major decision on the family income?  
a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Both
2. Who in the household makes the major decision regarding consumption?  
a. Husband                      b. Wife                      c. Both
3. Who makes the major decision to sell or to consume those animals and their products listed below?

Animals and their products	Decision-maker		
	Husband	Wife	Both
Ox			
Cow			
Goat			
Sheep			
Chicken			
Egg			
Milk			
Butter			

4. What are the activities you have an exclusive right to decide on?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are the activities your husband has an exclusive right to decide on?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you are not a decision-maker in the household, for what cases do you need the permission of your husband?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. When you earn income outside the domestic sphere, how do you spend it?  
a. Use for household consumption                      b. Give to husband                      c. Other

**Women's work in Household Activities**

1. Who does the domestic work?
  - a. Wife/you
  - b. Girls
  - c. Other
2. If it is you, please list the activities you perform in a day from morning to evening.

Activities performed	Who does the work	How many times per day	How many hours spent at a time

3. Does your husband or children share some of the household activities?

1. Yes
2. No

4. If yes, in which activities do they involve.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. If no, what is the reason?

\_\_\_\_\_.

6. What type of source of energy do you use in the household for cooking?

- a. wood
- b. animal dung
- c. crop residue
- d. other



7. Where do you get your source of energy?
- a. forest
  - b. market
  - c. own plantation
  - d. other
8. If you collect fuel from the forest for what purpose, do you gather?
- a. for sale
  - b. for household consumption
  - c. both a and b
  - d. other
9. How much time do you spend to reach forest for the collection of fuel wood?
- 

10. How frequent do you collect fuel for household use?
- a. Once in a week
  - b. Twice in a week
  - c. Three times in a week
  - d. Other
11. Is there shortage of firewood in your kebele?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
12. If yes, have you ever faced fuel shortage?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
13. If yes, how serious was the shortage?
- 

14. How did you cope with the fuel shortage?
- a. travel longer distance to other villages
  - b. serve uncooked meal
  - c. other
15. What device do you use for cooking in the household?
- a. 3-stone fire
  - b. ordinary charcoal stove
  - c. improved cooking device
  - d. other
16. What is your source of water supply?
- a. spring
  - b. communal pipe water
  - c. pond
  - d. well
  - e. river
  - f. other
17. For what purpose do you use the water?
- 1. Drinking
  - 2. Cooking
  - 3. Washing
  - 4. Bathing
  - 5. Other
18. How far is your source of water?
-



3) Does any member of the household other than you engage in the informal sector?  
a. Yes                      b. No

4) If yes, identify the persons involved.

---

5) What are the major constraints that you faced in generating income to the household?

---

**Women's community responsibility**

1) What are your responsibilities outside home?

---

2) Do you involve in Idir or other community based organizations?

1. Yes                      2. No

3) If yes, what roles do you play?

---

4) If no, what is the reason for not participating?