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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### CHALLENGES OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SELF-EMPLOYED JOBS IN SODO TOWN, WOLAITA ZONE, SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

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#### ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the challenges and opportunities of women in self-employed jobs. A qualitative, descriptive study was employed by randomly selecting 97 women and three key informants from the three kifle-ketemas of Sodo Town. A survey questionnaire and checklists were used for sample respondents and focus group discussions, respectively. To analyze the quantitative data that was gathered through a questionnaire, descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentages were used. The qualitative data was analyzed through case analysis and content analysis. The results indicate that the great number of respondents had middle age; demographic and socio-economic characteristics limit women's economy in self-employed jobs and women begin their job for various reasons. Challenges, such as socio-cultural constraints, lack of enough capital for the job, shortage of working place, regular increment of rental house, lack of market information and market access, lack of saving habit, problem of benefit or wage, lack of business skill and lack of entrepreneurship training are the major challenges that affect self-employed women's job. Therefore the concerned bodies should give attention to solve the challenges that affect women's participation in self-employed jobs in the area.

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## INTRODUCTION

The long-standing inequalities in the gender distribution of economic and financial resources have placed women at a disadvantage relative to men in their capability to participate, contribute to and benefit from broader processes of development (World Survey, 2009). Women started questioning their roles in the society and the discrimination they face in labor markets, political and economic areas (Gashaw, 2015). Due to this, the centrality of gender equality, women's empowerment and the realization of women's rights in achieving sustainable development have been increasingly recognized in recent decades. This recognition is evident in a number of international norms and agreements, including principle 20 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted in 1992, in its statement regarding the full participation of women being essential to achieving sustainable development (World Survey, 2014).

In Ethiopia, Women occupy a very significant and decisive place in the social, cultural, economic and political life within the country. Their importance is evident both in modern and traditional sectors, not only as housewives and mothers in the society but also by their contribution to the quality of day-to-day life. This point is briefly supported by statistical research done by Ahmed, Angeli, Alemtsehay and Salvini (2001) and expressed as "Ethiopian women are actively involved in all aspects of their society's life. The fact that women are both producers and procreators, as well as an active participants in the social, political, and cultural activities of their communities which has enabled them to play an all-rounded role". Despite women's increased participation in the labor market, there has been no significant increase in the sharing of unpaid work, which affects women's economic development, employment choices at home, including care giving, between women and men. Different studies indicated the low status of women in developing countries in general and in Ethiopia in particular (Almaz, 1991; Hirut, 2004; Mukuria *et al.*, 2005). Though women are actively involved in all aspects of a society's life, they still bear a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty mainly because of lack of access to and control over resources (Helen, 2004).

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Such a gender gap between men and women in socio-economic indicators has a negative impact on the overall development of the country in general and on demographic, economic and health outcomes of women in particular. Moreover, women's subordination is seen as having its roots in their exclusion from the market sphere and their limited access to and control over resources. Currently, the large numbers of women are successful in politics, technology and business, and working as lawyers, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, secretaries, managers, officers. There is no profession today where women are not employed. However, the majority of women still face discrimination and gender bias. Thus, it is true that workers have faced problems by virtue of their sex (Mukuria *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, this study focused on the existing challenges and available opportunities for women participation in self-employed jobs in the study area.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Description of the Study Area:** Wolaita Zone is one of the 14 Zones in the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. It is roughly located at  $6.4^{\circ} - 7^{\circ} \text{N}$  and  $37.4^{\circ} - 38.2^{\circ} \text{E}$ . The boundary areas are Kambata Tambaro in the north, Sidama Zone in the East, GamoGofa Zone in the South, Dawro Zone in the West. The Zone has a total population of 1,691,867 (CSA, 2000). There are three agro-ecological zones, out of which high land accounts 9%, midland 56% and low land 35%. The average maximum and minimum land holding are 0.5 and 0.125 hectares, respectively. The zone has a social service of health: 3 hospitals, 65 health centers, and 329 health posts. Education sector; 421 primary schools, 23 secondary schools, 7 preparatory, two ATVET and one University. According to the census result of 2007, there are 294 rural Kebeles and 48 reform town Kebeles. The number of municipal towns in the zone is 22 (*ibid*). The study was conducted in Sodo town (referred on the map below) one of the three city administrations of Wolaita zone. In Sodo town, there are 3 sub-cities (Merkato, Mehal and Arada). The total population of the town is 681,884(male 359,633; female 322,251).

**Sample Size and Sampling Techniques:** The sampling frame of this study included target members who have participated as Women in Self-employed jobs with the experience of two years and above in three Kifle Ketemas of Sodo Town. The survey covered three sub-cities (KifleKetemas) in WolaitaSodo town, namely: Merkato, Mehal and Arada. The total number of self-employed women in small business sectors from all kebeles was 1358. It is from these women the subjects of the study were selected.

To determine the sample size, Taro Yamane (1970) sample size formula was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where, N is the total self-employed women= 1358, n= sample size, confidence level= 90%, and the error term= 0.1. Finally, adding 4 respondents to compensate for dropout and make the sample more representatives. Hence, 97 is the total sample size. A simple random sampling technique and probability proportional to size (PPS) were used to select the respondents.

**Data Types and Sources:** For the purpose of this study, both qualitative and quantitative data types were collected from primary and secondary sources.

The primary data was collected from sample respondents, focus group discussions and key informant interviews using survey questionnaires and checklists. The secondary data were collected by reviewing different documents.

**Methods of Data Collection:** A structured survey questionnaire was used to collect the information concerned with the challenges that hinder women's participation in self-employed jobs and the available opportunities for self-employed women. Checklists were used for key informant interviews and focus group discussions in generating qualitative data.

**Methods of Data Analysis:** To analyze the quantitative data that was gathered through the questionnaire, descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentages were used. The qualitative data gathered through focus group discussions and key informant interview were analyzed through the case analysis and content analysis. Because content analysis is the procedure for the categorization of verbal data for the purpose of classification, summarization, and interpretation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents:** As it can be seen from the respondents' profile in table 1 below, the survey data revealed that the greater proportion of the age category is 26-45 years, which is 71 (73.1%) of the sampled respondents. This implies that the great number of the respondents had at middle agein this survey and work as effectively as possible if they get a favorable opportunity. Regarding the marital status of the respondents, 43 (44.32%) of the respondents were single. With regard to the family size, most of them, 43 (41.71%) of the respondents have a family size of four and above. All the respondents are able to read and write.

Concerning the family members seek support from the respondents,45 (46.39%) of the respondents have family members supported by them are four and above. The last profile in the table is about the respondents' type of job they engaged in. Thus, respondents engaged in small businesses are 15 (15.46%), in restaurants 33 (34.02%) and that of the shop is 49 (50.51%). This, in general, implies how the demographic and socio-economic characteristics can vary from one person to another and how they limit women's economy in self-employed jobs.

**Challenges of women in self-employed jobs:** As indicated in table 2, 19 (18.43%) of the respondents replied that different socio-cultural problems are the major challenges for women in self-employed jobs due to household responsibilities that they waste their work hours. This indicates that women in the study area are more likely to devote their time in domestic responsibilities like household chores, social ceremonies (wedding, funeral, etc) and different holidays, and to have disrupted jobs, which create conflict between work and family responsibility. This implies that women business owners have to balance work and family commitments. In attempting to deal with both commercial and domestic work, self-employed women experience 'time poverty', which leads to greater stress and difficulty. Moreover, this may lead to time fragmentation, less chance of entrepreneurial success and career progress in general.

**Table1. Age, Marital status, Family size, Level of education, Members seek support in the family and Type of job**

No.	Characteristics	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	Age	18-25	13	13.40
		26-45	71	73.19
		>45	13	13.40
		Total	97	100
2	Marital Status	Married	24	24.74
		Single	43	44.32
		Divorced	21	21.64
		Widowed	9	9.27
		Total	97	100
3	Family size	1	21	20.37
		2	14	13.58
		3	19	18.43
		4 and above	43	41.71
		Total	97	100
4	Level of Education	Unable to read and write	0	0
		Able to read and write	5	5.15
		1-4	16	16.49
		5-10	36	37.11
		Certificate	10	10.3
		Diploma	21	21.64
		Degree	9	9.27
		Total	97	100
5	Members seek support in the family	0	0	0
		1	0	0
		2	13	13.4
		3	39	40.2
		4 and above	45	46.39
6	Types of job engaged in	Total	97	100
		Small business	15	15.46
		Restaurant	33	34.02
		Shop	49	50.51
		Total	97	100

Source: Survey Result, 2018

**Table 2. Challenges of women participation in self-employed jobs**

Challenges	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Socio-cultural constraints	19	18.43	1
Lack of enough capital for the job	16	15.52	2
Shortage of working place	14	13.58	3
Regular increment of rental houses	13	12.61	4
Lack of market information and access	11	10.67	5
Lack of entrepreneurship training	7	6.79	6
Lack of saving habit	6	5.82	7
The problem of low benefits	5	4.85	8
Risk fearing	4	3.88	9
Lack of business skills	2	1.94	10
Total	97	100	

Source: Survey Result, 2018

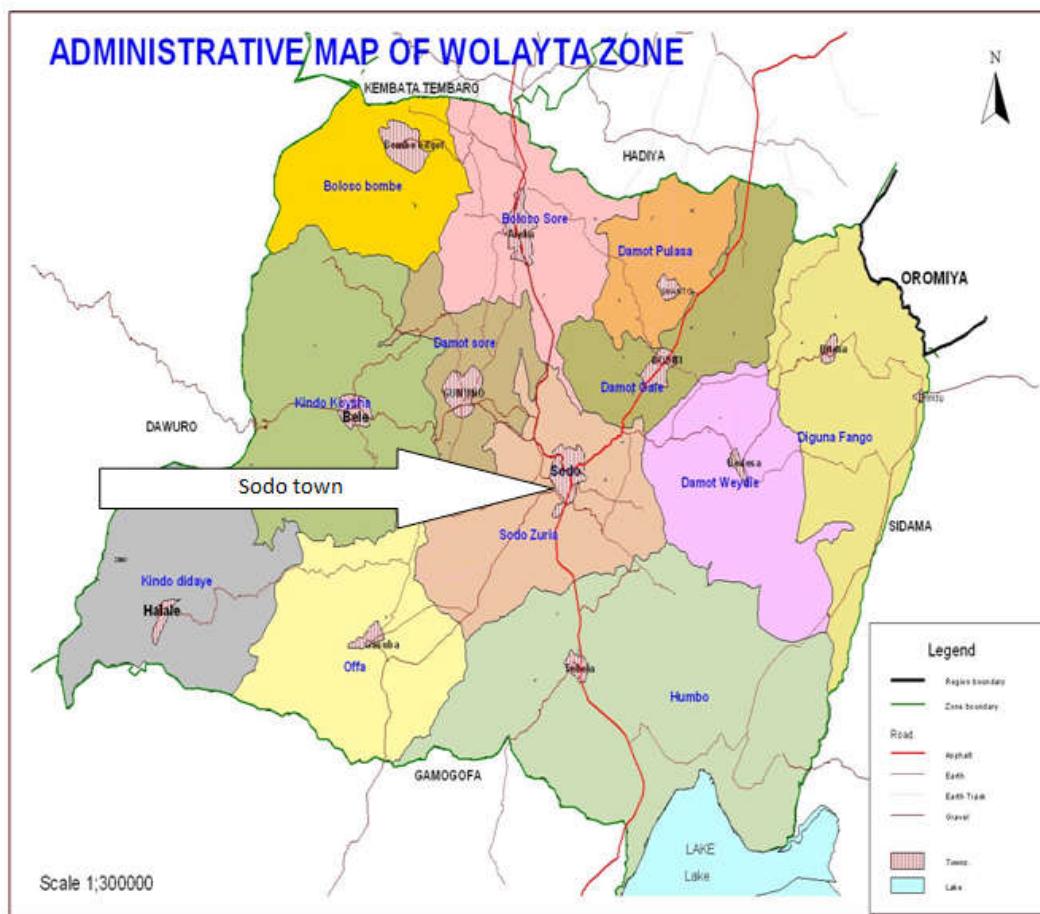
**Table 3. Opportunities for self-employed women**

No	Opportunities	Frequency	Percent	Rank
1	Availability of Local and International NGOs	34	32.98	1
2	Government policy that encourage unions/cooperatives	23	22.31	2
3	Local availability of goods	21	20.37	3
4	Availability of Microfinance institutions	19	18.43	4
	Total	97	100	

Source: survey result, 2018

The result is in agreement with the study result of Butler (2003) referred to women entrepreneurs, which found out that many of the respondents considered that there was a 'distinct' conflict between their roles as wives, mothers, and businesswomen. And also this idea is supported by different researches done at different times as a woman who is going out to work is often considered by others as the man is unable to provide for his family, making men reluctant and thus limiting women's engagement in paid work through violence or the threat of violence (UNFPA, 2012).

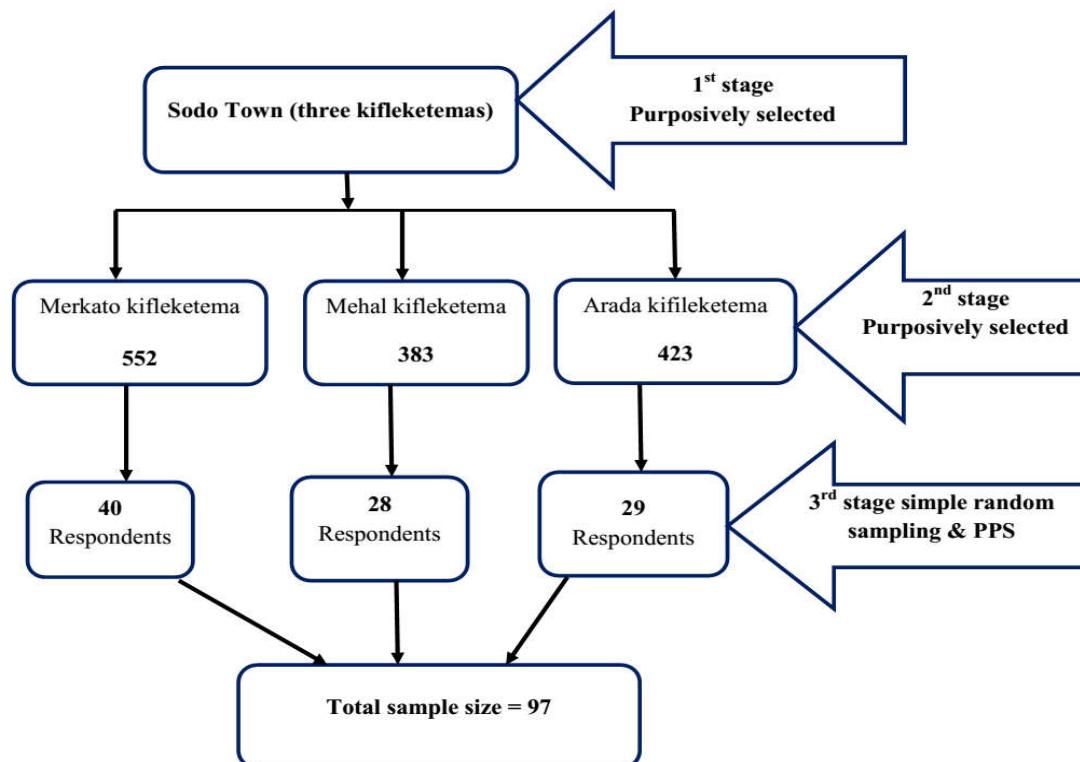
Furthermore, the fact sheet adds that these differences in social contact are based on the view that women's primary role is to care for children and the household, including cooking, cleaning, and care of clothing and other possessions. In addition to this, cultural aspects among people also affect women in self-employed jobs. Due to this, people see women still working in a society that often does not accept them as powerful and influential business leaders. Relationships in many societies are structured hierarchically, with women subordinate to men, and having less power, opportunity, and



Source: Ethiopia Map Agency, 2011

**Figure 1. The map of the study area**

#### Sampling Procedure



**Fig 2. Sampling Procedure**

access to resources (Crampton and Mishra, 1999). The next 15.52% of the respondents' result refers to the challenges related to a shortage of capital to run the job. This is highlighted next to that of the socio-cultural challenges. Lack of access to funds (capital) is another major challenge for women in self-employed jobs. A number of studies elaborate on the problems involved (table 2). The authors of Women and Community Economic Development (CED) in Canada: A Research Report elaborates on the challenges (2004). They note that lack of access is due primarily to "the systematic barriers in access to capital and credit among mainstream institutions". They also note that self-employed women who own micro-businesses are especially disadvantaged. These women need capital to maintain their businesses, but they "have no credit history and/or no assets to use as collateral for the loan". These women soon ascertain that monetary institutions display "little creativity and innovation" in helping women to overcome the problem of attaining adequate funds.

The other 13.58% of the respondents raised a shortage of working place and this related to rental increment 12.61% of the respondents show the challenge clearly. Lack of market information and access (10.67%) and lack of entrepreneurship training (6.79%) are other challenges raised by respondents that affect their business and the profit they obtain from their job. In line with this, the issue of training is significant, since it determines the kinds of work available to women, the levels of women's incomes, and women's access to information technologies (table 2). Next, the issue of training and how it affects women, in general, is described below by the support of the study done by Geddes, *et al.* (2004). More specifically it urges that "skills opportunities for women be enhanced through research and by developing an innovative approach encompassing existing educational facilities fostering skills, knowledge, and training".

Generally, Socio-cultural problems, shortage of capital, shortage of working area and increment of rental houses seriously affect women in self-employed jobs. However, the lack of business skills is reported as the least challenge for women in self-employed jobs in the study area.

**Available opportunities for self-employed women:** As it is indicated in table 3, 34(32.98%) of the respondents rank in the first place availability of local and international NGOs in the town as the best opportunity. Because those NGOs will give different trainings and support to women in self-employed jobs. Whereas 23 (22.31%) of the respondents rank in second place the government policy that encourages unions/cooperatives as a best opportunity, and the rest of respondents have not benefited so this implies that the process to get the chance is not that much easy.

Respondents rank in third and fourth place local availability of different goods and Microfinance institutions, respectively. Nevertheless, some of the respondents reported that even if there are different microfinance institutions in the town, the criteria and requirements under the institutions are very difficult to get the services. Generally, the result implies that the majority of respondents had limited opportunity for getting service from microfinance institutions and many of the respondents show that the local and international NGOs gave continuous business skill training but not applicable.

**Results from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** The qualitative study was carried out through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Based on the checklists that was developed to guide the discussion, relevant information was obtained. The participants freely and effectively expressed their ideas about the issues.

**Case1:** In this case, FGD participants gave a reply to the type of job they were running and the reason to begin the job. Because of this, respondents mentioned the common self-employed jobs that they were participating in such as petty trade, restaurant, and shop. In addition to this, respondents raised different reasons to begin their job. Some of these reasons are to get support, change their life, create one's job and educate their children. This implies that participants engaged in petty trade had a lack of enough capital to run other large businesses.

**Case2:** Here, the focus group discussion result concerning the source of income to begin women's jobs is described. To begin with, for the source of income to begin the job, women provided various responses. The majority of the respondents replied that the government is the major source of income. Some respondents replied that parents and NGOs are a source of income to begin the job. When the adequacy of the source of income was asked, respondents replied that the income was not enough to run a business effectively and efficiently. However, they try to work with the income they have at hand. So that the job needs an adequate budget or capital to monitor one's life and participate in society at large to contribute to economic development.

**Case3:** When respondents were asked for the duration they have been in the self-employed jobs, they provide different answers, the majority of the respondents stayed in the job for two years, the rest stayed between ten months to eighteen months. When the benefit they have got from the job was asked. Respondents answered differently, some of them replied that their income was increased; some others said that they have saved some amount of money from the job, and the rest replied that they benefited the profit for expending their business. This implies that respondents benefited from the job at different angles.

**Case4:** For the questions related to major challenges in starting and running the business and ways to overcome those challenges, respondents discussed as follows. The major challenges that were raised by participants were such as socio-cultural constraints, shortage of capital, working place and income to cover house expenses and the inability of saving are stated briefly by women. When ways to solve these challenges were asked, points such as enough credit services are needed from the government as well as other supporters or organizations and concerned bodies help is needed for the knowledge gap in women's saving.

*One of the FGD participants from Aradakifleketema said that "I have my own min shop in Aradakifleketema the great challenge for my work is to get additional capital to expand the business but to get credit the institution put many criteria and it is impossible to get. The other obstacle in my work is a narrow place and it is not in the market area to change it in the appropriate market center the shop rent is expensive not only that to get shop given by the government is very challenging*

*and has need long process so this leads me to lose benefit from the job."*

**Case 5:** When respondents in the focus group discussion were asked to tell the opportunities they have got from various sources and the use of those opportunities, responses such as although the government provides opportunities for getting credit and place for work, there is still a high shortage of these opportunities for running the business successfully.

*"I stayed in a self-employed job for almost two years but still I have not enough workplace. For instance, I sell fast food in small shop but to prepare or cook the food we have no kitchen for that we use another place to cook and this consumes our time, make our work complex and we lost our customer to stop this always applied to get place in all my work time but still the same. So, the concerning bodies with the collaboration of government and non-government organizations should open opportunities to women practically and not in workplace only in credit services also the same make an easy way to women to get it and train well to support their effectiveness and success(one of FGD participant from merkatokikleketema).*

#### Key Informant Interview Results

During the interview session, the key informants in this study were the kifileketema officials who were directly concerned with women in self-employed jobs. They were interviewed about the study under the challenges of women in self-employed jobs using checklists and the interview result is discussed briefly below. For the interview made with officials in the study area, their responses were identified and analyzed qualitatively by dividing the interview's responses into different parts: responsibilities that the government and other concerned bodies have to fulfill for women in self-employed jobs, policy issues, the status of women, appropriate market area and their benefit in self-employed jobs, major challenges women face in self-employed jobs and techniques for solving the challenges. Next, the official's responses are analyzed according to the order in which they are stated above.

Issues concerned with the government and officials, respondents were asked various questions. These interview questions were analyzed based on respondents' responses. For the interview question whether the office provides adequate training for women in self-employed jobs, responses were given in a negative direction. This implies that no adequate training has been given, especially for self-employed women. This is because most training is prepared for both men and women. Despite training, women have not received it adequately and in general, they had no awareness of how to run and control their job effectively. In addition to this, questions related to whether awareness-raising programs on issues linked with credit, repayment, and saving were done, respondents agreed on the support made by the concerned bodies. However, they added that the support given was not strong enough. Furthermore, although the financial services, such as loans, saving and insurance were facilitated by the office and other concerned bodies; it is difficult to say women have received adequate services. This is due to the less practical encouragement made by the government. This implies that further support; follow up and evaluation of the result are needed to make women effective. For the interview question on the provision of adequate right and legal entitlement that strengthen women's participation in self-employed jobs, even

though the right and legal entitlement were set at a policy level, due to women's knowledge gap, it is difficult to say women are using their rights effectively. This affects the contribution of women in self-employed jobs have for their economic development. Due to this, women have not much contributed to their economic development as they are expected. When situations are improved, the contribution can be increased. Appropriate and enough market area is another key issue for women in self-employed jobs. When respondents asked for it, they replied that though they have made different efforts to create appropriate situations, it is difficult to say that the area is appropriate and enough for all members of the self-employed jobs. Therefore, it is concluded that not all women are benefited from the right the government set for them.

When respondents were asked for the major challenges that hinder women's success in self-employed jobs, factors, such as lack of awareness, high participation in social life activities, low self-confidence and societal attitude towards women were commonly mentioned. Finally, ways to solve the stated challenges were raised. Some of the ways include to provide continuous training on how to manage their work and save or spend their money; control and support women in their jobs; fulfill things necessary for their work and encourage them regularly are among the solutions raised by respondents so as to help women in maximizing their role and minimizing the challenges they face in self-employed jobs.

#### Conclusion and Recommendation

The study was conducted in Sodo Town, which is one of the three city administrations of Wolaita Zone. The study was carried out with the objectives of assessing the challenges that hinder women's participation in self-employed jobs and the available opportunities for self-employed women in the study area. Different challenges were identified that affect women's participation in self-employed jobs in the study area. These includesocio-cultural constraints, lack of enough capital for the job, shortage of working place, a regular increment of a rental house, lack of market information and access, lack of saving habit, the problem of benefit, lack of business skill and lack of entrepreneurship training are the major challenges that affect self-employed women's job. However, all are not equally affecting women's work; among those, the socio-cultural constraints are the major challenges that highly affect women in self-employed jobs and women experience 'time poverty' which leads to greater stress and difficulty.

The interview made with the officials provided similar results implying that conditions, such as training, awareness-raising programs on loan, saving and insurance, provision of adequate rights and legal entitlement is not convenient for women in self-employed jobs. Finally, the finding from the FGD was in support of the above findings. The participants of FGD stated that though they have different reasons, membership duration and source of income to begin their job, they were struggling to live a better life and be successful. However, they mentioned different problems that hinder their success, such as lack of getting access to loans, working areas, goods and services, support and training to run their jobs effectively. Based on the findings, the following points are forwarded as recommendations and policy implication: Women should get additional support and employment opportunity to be independent and learn more as effectively as possible to be independent in every aspect of life to sustain the job they

involved; credit giving institutions should provide enough credit that helps to run big businesses and made easy the way to get credit; educate women use and save the money in secured areas in order not spend the money they got on something not very important, and the concerned bodies should provide women with appropriate working area to provide equal benefit for all women.

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