

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING: THE CASE OF BASKETO SPECIAL WOREDA SECTOR OFFICES, ETHIOPIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess the level of practices and determine institutional factors affecting gender mainstreaming practices (GMSP) in Basketo Special Woreda, Southern Ethiopia. The study adopted a mixed research approach. Quantitative data are collected through cross-sectional descriptive survey with the help of structured questionnaire, whereas interview and focus group discussion are used to collect qualitative data. A total of 119 respondents participated in the study. A sample of 16 respondents are used for 2 FGDs each comprising 8 participants. Six leaders from different government offices are interviewed, and 1 proper person from SNNPRs Women, Youth and Children Affairs Bureau is also interviewed. Furthermore, 96 randomly selected officers from government institutions of Basketo Special Woreda filled the structured questionnaire. Quantitative data are presented and analyzed by using STATA version 14 software. OLRA is employed to determine the significant factors affecting GMSP in the study area, while qualitative data are analyzed thematically. The results indicated that absence of private offices for GM officers, non-proportional inclusiveness of women in leadership position, lack of awareness of leaders about GM, unfair distribution of responsibility between both sexes, and limited budget allocation for gender related issues significantly affected GMP in the study area. To alleviate these problems, concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations should work together to raise leaders' awareness regarding gender mainstreaming and women empowerment in leadership positions. Also, gender officers should be assigned, made to act independently, and provided with their own offices. Moreover, mechanisms should be considered to promote women's potential.

Keywords: government sector offices, gender mainstreaming, Basketo Special Woreda, ordinal logistic regression, women empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is the social design of a biological sex determined by the conception of tasks, functions, and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life (UNDP, 2007). Gender mainstreaming is as a new concept that appeared for the first time in international texts after the United Nations Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985), in relation to the debate within the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the role of women in development.

As stated in African Development Bank (2004), from the total number of the labor force employed in the civil service, the number of women is estimated to be about 40%; of these, 71 % of are employed in lower-level position earning very low monthly salary.

Though the issue of gender is the current global agenda worldwide and in Ethiopia. Specifically, to what extent gender activities fight for the disadvantaged and discriminated group working for their welfare is under question in government organizations. This is very important question that need further investigation through research. In this regard, it is crucial to investigate the challenges for gender mainstreaming in the public sector of Basketo Special *Woreda*. Thus, the aim of this study was to assess and examine the existing gender mainstreaming practice in public sectors and explore the significant factors that affect gender mainstreaming practices in the study area.

The concept of gender mainstreaming is described by different institutions and scholars. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (1997) expressed the concept of gender mainstreaming as the process of appraising the implications for women and men in several status quo regardless of time and space. Furthermore, it is the strategy and program for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences are integral dimension of the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres to challenge inequality. Furthermore, UNDP (2007) declared that gender mainstreaming means that gender equality becomes a full part of common policies.

A government might take a decision saying that equality is to be integrated in all policies and may do nothing more about it or only superficially support gender mainstreaming initiatives. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (2012), the contribution of women in the

economic, social, political, and cultural spheres of the society is quite immense. Major challenges encountered in the implementation of gender mainstreaming are lack of monitoring and evaluation, lack of resources, and absence of commitment and political will of those who are in the decision-making position (Rippenaar, 2009).

There are studies conducted on gender mainstreaming in Ethiopia. From these, the report of Emebet (n.d) revealed that lack of capacity of Women Affairs Department (WAD) and absence of connection of Women Affairs Office (WAO) with *Woreda* offices and lack of financial support are major challenges for mainstreaming gender in selected ministries or agencies. Another research done by Biresawu in 2007 on opportunities and challenges of gender mainstreaming in selected Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BOFED), Women's Affairs Office (WAO), and Education Bureau (BOE) of Addis Ababa found that women are highly underrepresented in the two sector bureaus (BOFED & BOE) in managerial positions. However, these studies have limitations. On the one hand, both studies focused only on few government institutions which cannot represent the situation adequately. On the other hand, the scope and set up of their study area are completely different from this study area (Basketo special *Woreda*). Moreover, still there is no previous research conducted in the study area on the topic raised. Hence, the generalization of the results may not represent the selected public sector bureaus in the study area. Keeping those gaps in mind, this study incorporated all offices in Basketo Special *Woreda* and variables which played essential role in gender mainstreaming practices. Therefore, filling the identified gap by assessing challenges of gender mainstreaming in the public sector offices of Basketo Special *Woreda* is identified as the intention of the study. The general objective of this study is, thus, to assess the institutional factors that significantly affect gender mainstreaming practices in public sectors of Basketo Special *Woreda*. The study also has the following specific objectives: to explore the extent of gender mainstreaming practice in public sectors of Basketo Special *Woreda*; and to investigate the institutional factors that challenge gender mainstreaming in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Description of the Study Area & Research Methods

Basketo Special *Woreda* is one of the few administrative units in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional States (SNNPRs) that were structured as a special status in the organization of the regional state. Basketo Special *Woreda* is located 583 km to the south-west of Addis Ababa. The *Woreda* has common boundaries with Semen Ari *Woreda* in the south and Geze Gofa *Woreda* in the East, Melekosa *Woreda* in the North, and Salamago *Woreda* in the West. (Basketo Special *Woreda* Administration Office, 2008). The estimated total land area of Basketo Special *Woreda* is 1,116 km². 17% of the geographic land area is cultivated land, while 9% constitutes grazing land and 33% is uncultivable, about 26% of the total land area is woodland. Bush/shrub and forest constitute about 15%. The estimated population of the Special *Woreda* was 65,386 (Basketo Special *Woreda* Agriculture Office, 2007).

The research design that the researchers used was cross-sectional descriptive survey. It incorporated pragmatism (mixed) research method. The primary data were collected by using tools such as interview, FGD and questionnaire; and secondary data was also used. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed to identify respondents included in the study. The total number of government offices in the *Woreda* is 32, with a total of 2,239 civil servants. All 32 of them were considered in the study. From all public sectors, 96 respondents were selected for questionnaire.

The total number of the respondents was 119. Among the target group, 96 of them were selected to respond to a structured questionnaire. All these respondents were selected from public sectors of the *Woreda*. Furthermore, six respondents were interviewed. More specifically, four of them were sector office heads (*Woreda* administrators: - *Woreda* Women and Children Office Head, *Woreda* Health Office Head, and *Woreda* Labor and Social Affairs Office Head). The remaining two respondents were from *Woreda* Finance Planner (Development Plan Team Leader) and *Woreda* Administrator Executive Secretary. Two FGD (8 respondents in each) were also conducted to undertake deep discussion with respondents on the issue under consideration. Finally, one relevant person of SNNPRs Women, Youth and Children Affairs Bureau was also involved in the study.

After collecting data in the field, the collected data was edited and then, qualitative data was analyzed and interpreted using content and thematic analysis. Quantitative data was presented and analyzed by using STATA version 14 software. Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis was employed to determine the significant factors affecting gender mainstreaming practices.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Employees that were available during the time of data collection were included in the study, and those who relatively have longer and better work experiences in office were considered. Government employees that were already selected and responded one of the tools were excluded, to avoid data replications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic variables that were addressed in the study include: sex, age, educational status, and work experience of the respondents.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents based on Age, Sex, and Educational Status

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Respondents' sex	Male	59	62.1%
	Female	37	38.94%
Respondents' Age	18-25	34	35.8%
	26-35	36	37.9%
	36-45	17	17.9%
	46 & above	9	9.4%
Respondents' Educational Level	Primary Edu. & Lower	3	3.12%
	Secondary education	7	7.3%
	Certificate/Diploma	39	40.62%
	Degree & above	47	48.9%
Respondents' Work Experience	1 year	8	8.33%
	2 years	14	14.58%
	3 years	15	15.62%
	4 years & above	59	61.5%

Source: Current study, February 2018

The results found in Table 1 have exhibited that 62.1% of respondents were male; whereas 38.94% of them were female. Regarding the age of the respondents, 35.8% are between the age range of 18-25. On the other hand, 37.9%, of the respondents are between the age range of 26-35. In addition, the respondents categorized between the age range of 36-45 and 46 and above were 17.9% and 9.4% respectively. One can understand from these descriptions that the age of the most respondents does not exceed the productive age level and they were in the proper age to learn new ideas and practices. Considering the respondents' educational level, nearly half of them (48.9%) were first degree & above holders, and 40.62% of the respondents were certificate and diploma holders. From the total respondents, 7.3% and 3.3% were categorized as those who completed secondary education and under primary education and lower respectively. Hence, it can be observed that the educational status of the respondents was substandard because more than half of the respondents were still categorized as less than first degree. This might, to some extent, influence the effectiveness of the government work and policies implemented in the *Woreda* level.

Regarding the work experience of the respondents, majority (61.5%) of the respondents were listed under the categories of 4 and above years' work experience. This leads to the conclusion that majority of the respondents were experienced in office work and can safely be assumed as familiar with office works.

Institutional Factors

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents based on current position of the respondents

Characteristics		Frequen cy	Percentage (%)
Respondents' Current Position	Non-leading	64	66.67%
	Leading	32	33.33%

Source: Current study, February 2018

Table 2 shows the position of respondents. From the total respondents more than half (66.67%) were in non-leading position i.e., not found in head, deputy head, coordinator and/or member of management. But, the remaining respondents (33.33%) were in the leading position including office

management membership. Different manuals and working guidelines were most of the time provided only to the leaders. Cognizant with this many of the respondents might not be aware of manuals and directives unless leaders inform them. Moreover, different trainings delivered by concerned bodies was provided only to head of the office, and they may or may not pass on what they have learned after returning from the trainings. According to African Development Bank (2009), women are the marginalized ones in offices and were unable to hold decision making positions. In addition, women working in government sectors are employed in lower positions which are not part of decision-making.

Table 3 below shows that the total employees in the *Woreda* are 2239 (excluding the judiciary branch). Totally, about 62 head and deputy office head positions are found. From this number, the offices that are headed by women (in head or deputy head position) were 14.51% while the remaining 85.48% were held by men. In the *Woreda* public sectors, the positions that were member of office management held by women were very small (25.33%), whereas 74.66% of the management members were men. Regarding the educational qualification, as elucidated in the table 3, women are very low in their educational level compared to their men counterparts. This educational disparity contributed to the low participation of women in leadership positions in the study area.

Table 3

Distribution of Employees based on their position in the study area

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total government employees in the Woreda (excluding judiciary)	Male	1555	69.45 %
	Female	684	30.54 %
	Total	2239	100 %
Head position/office head and deputy head position	Male	53	85.48 %
	Female	9	14.51 %
	Total	62	100 %
Team leader/ Coordinator (Management member)	Male	165	74.66%
	Female	56	25.33%
	Total	221	100%
Gender concerned body	Gender focal persons	26	81.25%
	Gender officers	6	18.75%
	Total	32	100%
Respondents' Educational Level	Primary Edu. & Less	M - F 3	- 3.12%
	Secondary educ.	M 3 F 4	3.12% 4.18%
	Certificate/Diploma	M 21 F 18	21.8% 18.75%
	Degree & above	M 31 F 16	32.36% 16.7%

Sources: Basketo Women, Children and Youth Office, April 2017 and Current study, February 2018

In line with the above inference, Das Pradhan (2004) argues that implications of the lack of women as decision-makers in the resource pool of specialists are the practical challenges for gender mainstreaming in governance offices. This is because decision-making takes place by the leaders in the offices of the government. There are proportionately fewer women in senior decision-making positions in both developed countries and developing countries. Consulting firms thus have great difficulty in putting together a gender-balanced team. According to African Development Bank (2009), among all government employees, more than half are constituted from men while very small number are held by women. Table 3 also shows that from the total gender concerned body, only 18.25% were gender officers who work solely on gender concerned issues. But 81.75% of them were

assigned as gender focal persons but perform gender issues as their additional not as their main duty. This implies that the issues of gender are not performed by responsible bodies like gender officers but by double-tasked officers. This finding was supported by the finding of Biresaw (2007) that emphasized gender focal persons work their duty as extra and were simply delegated to cover the vacant place in bureau level.

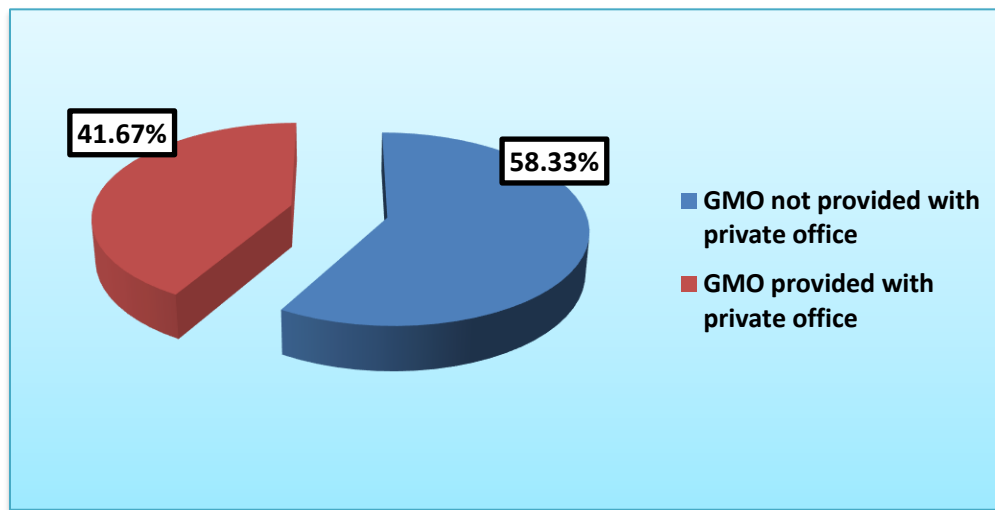


Figure 2: Distribution of responses on office provision

From Figure 2 above, it can be observed that more than half (58.33%) of respondents indicated that gender focal persons or officers had not been provided with private offices, whereas 41.67% of them witnessed that gender focal persons or officers had been provided with private offices. Even those who had been provided with offices were expected to share the office with others who have different lines of work. The finding revealed that gender focal persons were unable to work their duty properly because documents and files could be more vulnerable in shared offices. In support with this, the officers that participated in the FGD agreed that they have no office at all for the gender focal persons except for very few officers. Moreover, they do not give any emphasis for the gender issue except simply for adding value in their CV for the promotion. Moreover, an interviewee (Woreda administrator) admitted that there are some problems in the implementation of gender mainstreaming starting from resources allocation like providing individual office to unwillingness of the male leaders to pave way for the participation of women.

Table 4

Description of responses on awareness of leaders on Gender Mainstreaming

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Leaders are well aware about gender mainstreaming	Strongly disagreed	17	17.7%
	Disagreed	24	25.0%
	No opinion	16	16.7%
	Agreed	25	26.0%
	Strongly agreed	14	14.6%
Equal sharing of responsibilities of both sex categories	Strongly disagreed	20	20.8%
	Disagreed	24	25.0%
	No opinion	14	14.6%
	Agreed	27	28.1%
	Strongly agreed	11	11.5%

Source: Current study, February 2018

The finding on table 4 above reveals that from the total respondents 17.7% respondents strongly disagreed on “leaders are well aware about gender mainstreaming”. Whereas, 40.6% agreed that leaders are well aware about gender mainstreaming. This reveals that leaders have better awareness on gender mainstreaming in their office.

From all participants, 45.8% of respondents disagreed about whether there was an equal sharing of responsibilities between both sexes in the institutions. In the FGD discussion, almost all discussants understood gender in a very general sense i.e., gender means women and equality of women. The Woreda Women, Children and Youth Office head declared that particular male leaders/decision makers are not willing to know and implement gender issues in practice except simply planning and leaving it on the shelf. This is because of socio-cultural attitude towards women in the area. Prior to any other inferential analysis, the reliability of the data measures on the level of gender mainstreaming practices was checked with Cronbach’s α (0.726), which implied that there were no problems of data reliability.

Table 5

Level of Gender Mainstreaming Practice in the office

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	40	41.67
Medium	36	37.50
High	20	20.83
Total	96	100.00

Source: Current study, February 2018

Table 5 clearly indicates the level of gender mainstreaming practice in the study area's offices. Based on the finding, 41.67% of the respondents confirmed that the practice of gender mainstreaming was low. On the other hand, 37.50% agreed that gender mainstreaming practice in the offices was medium. In contrast to low level of practice, still there were respondents who confirm that gender mainstreaming practice was high in percent 20.83%. The above finding implies that in the study area, gender mainstreaming practice was still not properly practiced.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

Both univariate analysis and ordered logistic regression analysis were conducted to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 6

Ordered Logistic Regression Model for Institutional Factors

Ordered logistic regression				Number of obs	=	96
				LR chi2(5)	=	55.72
				Prob > chi2	=	0.0000
Log likelihood = -73.840747				Pseudo R2	=	0.2739
levelofgmsp	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
currentpos~n	1.410791	.4798043	2.94	0.003	.4703914	2.35119
providedby~e	1.024988	.4747142	2.16	0.031	.0945652	1.955411
involveinp~g	1.479408	.4808655	3.08	0.002	.5369286	2.421887
leadersare~m	.5032376	.1923107	2.62	0.009	.1263156	.8801597
equalshari~e	.5175084	.1821923	2.84	0.005	.1604181	.8745988
/cut1	4.174673	.8384016			2.531436	5.81791
/cut2	6.832903	1.049869			4.775199	8.890608

Source: Current study, February 2018

Table 6 showed that *current position of the respondents, GMO provided with a private office, GMO involves in planning about issues related to gender mainstreaming and gender equality, leaders are well aware about gender mainstreaming and there is an equal sharing of responsibilities between both sexes* were statistically significantly related with *the level of gender mainstreaming practice*.

The link test of model specification for the ordered logistic regression model of the institutional factors indicates that there was no problem of model specifications. And also, the parallel line test of proportional odds assumption for the ordered logistic regression model of the institutional factors indicated that the assumption “the parameters were the same for all categories of levels of GMP is reasonable” will not be rejected ($p\text{-value}=0.958$).

Table 7

Marginal Effects of Ordered Logistic Regression Model for Institutional Factors

Institutional Factors	ME for low level of GMSP	ME for medium level of GMSP	ME for high level of GMSP
Leaders	-0.309**	0.157*	0.152*
GMO provided a private office	-0.235*	0.135*	0.099
GMO involve in planning	-0.339**	0.202**	0.137**
Leaders are well aware of GM	-0.120*	0.075*	0.045*
Equal sharing of responsibility	-0.123**	0.077*	0.046*
Dependent Variable: Level of GMSP; *5% level of significance and **1% level of significance			

Source: Current study, February 2018

From Table 7, one can easily see that leaders were 30.9% less likely to believe that there is a low level of gender mainstreaming practice. In an institution where gender focal persons or officers are provided with an independent office, the probability of being in low level of gender mainstreaming practice will be 23.5% less likely; the probability of being in medium level gender mainstreaming practice will be 13.5% more likely; and the probability of being in high level of practice of gender mainstreaming in the office will be 9.9% more likely. Based on the above finding, the researchers concluded that the level of the GM practices is determined by presence or absence of the independent offices for the focal persons or gender officers of the organizations. Therefore, in order to maximize gender mainstreaming practice, providing offices for the purpose of gender mainstreaming will be crucial.

Similarly, an organization where gender officers or gender focal persons participate in the planning of the office, the probability of low level of gender mainstreaming practice will be 33.9% less likely, whereas, the probability of being in medium level and high level of gender mainstreaming practice will be 20.2% more likely and 13.7% more likely, respectively. This implies that the improvement of the gender mainstreaming practices in the office is defined based on the inclusion of gender focal persons or gender officers during the preparation of the organization's annual plan. Institution where there was an increase in the awareness of their leaders about gender mainstreaming by using different training and/or workshops were significantly associated with 12.0% less likely, 7.5% more likely and 4.5% more likely to be in low, medium and high level of gender mainstreaming practice, respectively.

From these findings, the researchers concluded that in order to increase the practice of gender mainstreaming in the office leaders should be well aware about gender mainstreaming to have good gender mainstreaming practice. Also, Institutions in which there is an increase of equal sharing of responsibility between both sexual categories were significantly related with 12.3% less likely, 7.7% more likely and 4.6% more likely to be in low, medium and high level of gender mainstreaming practice, respectively.

Table 8

Predicted Probabilities of Ordered Logistic Regression of Institutional Factors

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
P1	96	.4358504	.3042041	.0130384	.9590632
P2	96	.3677613	.1687849	.0379548	.5813816
P3	96	.1963884	.2300771	.0029821	.8413764

Source: Current study, February 2018

From table 8, the mean predicted probability of being in low level is 43.6%, medium level 36.8%, and high level of gender mainstreaming practice were 19.6%. It can be implied that institutions with largest average predicted probability (43.6%) were in low level of gender mainstreaming practices and the significant institutional factors were; current position of the respondents, GM officers provided with a private office, GM officers involves in planning about issues related to gender

mainstreaming and gender equality, leaders are well aware about gender mainstreaming and there is an equal sharing of responsibilities between both sex categories.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In our country, Ethiopia, different activities have been undertaken committedly in order to stimulate gender equality. Among these ratifications, various international instruments as well as introduction of supportive national legal instruments are the major ones. In addition, the national gender mechanism (inclusion of gender issue in different structure) has been placed based on their hierarchies from the federal down to *kebele* level. However, there is strong evidence that the structure is not working properly as stated in the mandate.

In the study area, according to the findings, there were several challenging situations acknowledged. A total of 32 public sectors were addressed. There were big differences between both sexes working in these offices. That is, the numbers of women employees were less than one third of the total employees which implies that there had been poor progress of gender mainstreaming in the study area. Regarding the leadership positions (office head and deputy head) totally 62 positions were available. Among these, only 9 (14.5%) leadership positions were held by women. Further, on the team leader/coordination positions, out of 221 only 56 (25.3%) positions were held by women employees. This implies that there were still barriers in gender mainstreaming practices in the study area.

According to the office structure of civil services, in any government office; office management has power to pass any decision concerning how the office should work. Therefore, being a member of office management has its own critical role whether to promote and/or delay gender mainstreaming practice. Moreover, diversification of office management membership with both sexes will create the situation more suitable for gender mainstreaming. However, in the study area, office management members were dominated by men i.e., the voice of women would be highly disregarded. Due to this, the researchers came up with the conclusion that decisions made at the office level would lack proportionality and may affect women's needs. Furthermore, it may hinder gender mainstreaming practices and finally shake gender equality policy underlined by the government of Ethiopia.

Moreover, the limited number of women in headship positions still disturbs the potential of women and their competences in the practices of gender mainstreaming.

From the factors identified in the objectives of the study concerning educational status of women in the study area, from total women government employees more than half were subordinate staffs. This is because their educational status does not allow them to hold positions.

As it was observed from the findings, gender focal persons haven't been properly performing their duty as per the strategic plan due to several reasons like unclear mandate, lack of clear job description, and absence of follow-up which encourages them to work exhaustively to their ability. Furthermore, they had limitation on know-how to perform it, how to plan, what issues to address, and how to overcome challenges. Therefore, the researchers came up with a conclusion that the office structure that was created regarding gender mainstreaming was one of the unnecessary challenging factors.

The finding, on the other extreme, also asserted that the leaders have no problem of awareness on the gender issues, but the problem was their level of commitment to smooth gender mainstreaming practice in their particular offices. In addition, no problem of annexation of gender matter at least in their report was there, but what practically took place was very far from their reports.

In the study area, there were no serious problem of inclusion of gender issues in the annual plans of the offices and there are good strategies designed to foster gender mainstreaming. However, most of the informants and discussants strongly questioned the practical considerable implementation of the budget and other resources as planned. Moreover, the implementation gaps were reflected by the respondents predominantly in applying what is actually planned. In addition, there weren't much problem in budget allocation for gender mainstreaming purpose, but the problem was that exact budgeting was not directly to the gender issues.

Recommendations

As the study was meant to come up with practical ideas for local intervention, the recommendations of the study were organized towards developing GMSP in government offices of the study area.

- There was gender gap in employment, and decision-making positions. Therefore, to reduce already existing gender gaps, implementing effective gender mainstreaming practice strategies should be very essential.
- Necessary attention should be given to establish proper structure with essential resources for the gender officers and to let them perform their activity independently.
- What were planned had been remaining on the shelf without properly touching the ground, so stakeholders should monitor the implementation frequently. Moreover, gender officers should be given conformation about the proper implementation and accuracy of the report in the offices.
- Resources planned and allocated budgets for gender issues should be transferred to the gender offices rather than being controlled by others/heads.
- Apposite and consistent awareness creation trainings should be delivered to all stakeholders.

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