

Women's Membership in Agricultural Cooperatives in Gog District, Gambella, Ethiopia

Ochan Dorgi (MA)*

Assistant Professor, Department of Cooperative Business Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Gambella University, Ethiopia

Amanga Okello

Lecturer and Director, Gender, HIV/AIDS and Special Needs Directorate, Gambella University, Gambella, Ethiopia

Abstract

Women in Ethiopia are disadvantageous in all aspects of life despite the efforts made by government. Gender-based inequalities constrain women's leadership ability to participate in agricultural cooperatives. To study the status of women, this research designed with the objectives to assess the current status of women membership in specific agricultural cooperatives. To address the objective of the study, quantitative method was used. Quantitative data collected from primary sources through questionnaires. Gog was selected purposively due to inadequate studies conducted on women's status in the agricultural cooperatives. To select the sample size, 12 cooperatives with both men and women members were selected purposively and 127 respondents were selected by using simple random sampling techniques based on the probability proportionate to size. To analyze the data, simple descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. Concerning the status of women members in agricultural cooperatives established in Gog district, the results show up and down in their growth for the last twelve years. Women represent only 21.3% in both management and control committees of all agricultural cooperatives which is below the number stated in article 34(7) of cooperative societies' proclamation no.985/2016. Except for the year 2009, 2013 and 2017, the numbers of women joined agricultural cooperatives every year since 2006 were less than ten. Women represent 31.7%, 16.7% and 25% in the management committees, control committees and chairpersons respectively. The women elected as chairpersons were from cooperative whose members were only women. Therefore, over findings of the study can be concluded that the status of women is very less compared to men in all agricultural cooperatives organized in the district.

Keywords: Agriculture; Cooperative; Membership; Status and women.



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1. Introduction

Agriculture being the backbone of Africa's economy is the main source of employment and income in rural areas where most of the world's poor and hungry people live ([African Development Bank, 2015](#)). To support these agricultural producers and marginalized groups such as women and young people, agricultural cooperatives played a significant role by empowering their women members economically and socially ([IYC, 2012](#)). Women in the agricultural economy make two-third of agricultural labor force and produce the majority of food in Africa. However, they have less access to essential inputs – land, credit, fertilizers, new technologies and extension services that resulted in lower yields than that of men's ([FAO, 2011](#)).

In Ethiopia, female farmers produce 26% and hold low status in the society. Increasing women's participation in cooperatives cannot be realized if they do not fully engage in the leadership of agricultural cooperative activities and decision making ([Chiyoge, 2013](#)). Women have been denied equal access to education, training and gainful employment opportunities and their involvement in policy formulation and decision making process ([African Development Bank, 2015](#)). According to [Alebachew \(2011\)](#), rural women, and specifically female household heads are identified as the most disadvantaged groups in highland farming communities where gender disparity in access to and over productive resources is dominant. Eliminating the barriers to women's to become more efficient could help more women find route out of poverty ([African Development Bank, 2015](#)).

Governments in many developing countries are promoting the use of cooperatives as organizations that could help enhance the development of small-scale farmers. African women produce up to 80% of the food in the continent ([Develtere et al., 2008](#)). Yet, women's share in agricultural inputs and services is meager. They receive only 7% of agricultural extension services, less than 10% of the credit offered to small-scale farmers, and own only 1% of the land. Joining forces in small-scale cooperatives can provide women with the economic and social leverage they need.

In Gambella region of Ethiopia, the overall statistics of women membership in all cooperatives was 43.45% ([Federal Cooperative Agency, 2013](#)). According to [Federal Cooperative Agency \(2016\)](#), 747 primary cooperatives were registered in Gambella region with 15,522 members of whom 37.5% (5,829) are females. The average number of women members in every cooperative is only 7.8. The study conducted by [Dorgi and Gala \(2016\)](#) revealed that women represent only 16.5% in fishery cooperatives organized in the region.

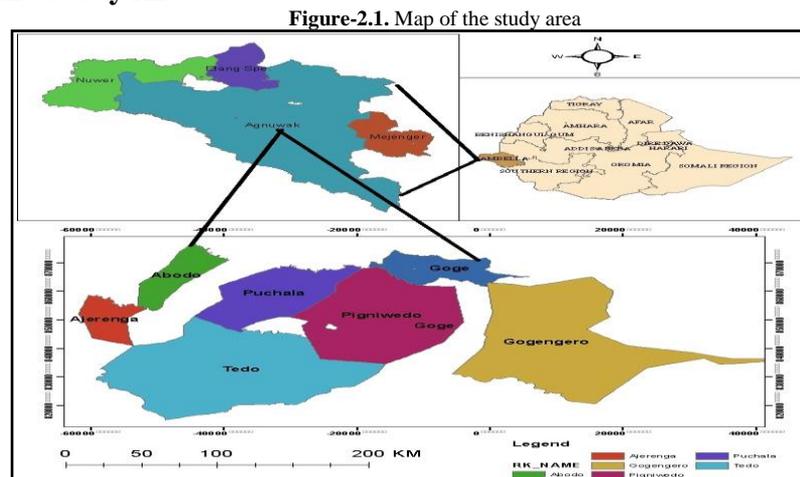
What made women's representation in cooperatives to be poor was not known due to inadequate empirical studies published on women's performance in agricultural cooperatives. Therefore, this study designed with the objective to assess the current status of women in the agricultural cooperatives organized in Gog district of Gambella Regional State, Ethiopia.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Description of the Study Area

Gog is one of the administrative districts of Anywaa Zone, which is located in the south part of the region at about 111km from Gambella town. The total area of the district estimated as 9,626.73km² of the 34,063km² total area of the region (Gardb, 2010). The inhabitants of the area are mostly the Anywaa ethnic group and others with an estimated total population of 23,891, which accounts for 11,107 males and 12,784 females (CSA, 2013). From 23,891 total populations, only 670 (392 males and 278 females) organized themselves in to 27 agricultural cooperatives (Gog District Agriculture and Natural Resource Office, 2017).

2.1.1. Map of the Study Area



2.2. Sample Size Determination

According to Gog District Agriculture and Natural Resource Office (2017), there were 27 agricultural cooperatives that were functioning. For the purpose of this study, Gog district was selected purposively due to inadequate studies conducted on women's membership in agricultural cooperative and then 12 cooperatives with both male and female members were selected. To select the individual respondents from 359 members of the 12 agricultural cooperatives, simple random sampling technique was used based on the probability proportionate to size by applying Kothari (2003) that gave 127.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot P \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 (N-1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

$$n = \frac{2.005^2 \times 0.02 \times 0.98 \times 359}{0.02^2 (358-1) + 2.005^2 \times 0.02 \times 0.98} = 127$$

2.3. Types, Sources & Data Analysis Methods

Depending on the nature of this study, the researchers employed quantitative data. Based on the research designed, the data were obtained through primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through structured questionnaires from 127 respondents. On the other hand, the secondary data were collected from the available documents of cooperatives and review of relevant literatures such as published journals and internet websites. To analyze the data, descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Socio-Demographic Factors

Table-3.1. Marital status and sex of the respondents

Marital Status	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Single	5(3.94%)	6(4.72%)	11(8.66%)
Married	22(17.32%)	76(59.85%)	98(77.17%)
Divorced	0(0%)	11(8.66%)	11(8.66%)
Widowed/Widow	0(0%)	7(5.51%)	7(5.51%)
Total	27 (21.26%)	100 (78.74%)	127(100%)

Source: Field survey data (2017)

Marital status refers to the fact of married or not: the fact of somebody's being unmarried, married or formerly married. In this study it categorized as single, married, divorced and widow/widowed. According to the above table 3.1, the results of the survey show that 77.17% (59.85% females and 17.32% males) of the respondents were married followed by 8.66% (4.72% females and 3.94% males) of those who were single and divorced. The remaining 5.51% of them were respondents who had lost their spouse.

Table-3.2. Distribution of respondents based on their age

Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-25	46	36.2%	36.2%
26-33	41	32.3%	68.5%
34-41	30	23.6%	92.1%
>=42	10	7.9%	100%
Total	127	100%	-
Descriptive statistics: Min=18, Max=47, Mean=28.9 and Std. Deviation=7.670			

Source: Field survey data (2017)

Age is the length of time that somebody or something has existed, usually expressed in years. For the purpose of this study it refers to the number of years the respondent has lived at the time of conducting the study. It determines the physical capability of individual member to engage in different activities including their agricultural cooperatives. As presented in the table 3.2 above, 36.2% of the respondents were found within the age ranging from 18-25 followed by 32.3% within the range age of 26-33. The remaining 23.6% and 7.9% of the respondents were found within the age ranging from 34-41 and >=42 respectively. Descriptively, the average age of the respondents was 28.9 years with the standard deviation of 7.67 and minimum and maximum of 18 and 47 years respectively.

Table-3.3. Educational level of the respondents

Educational level	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Grade 1-4	1(3.94%)	8(4.72%)	11(8.66%)
Grade 5-8	15(17.32%)	43(59.85%)	58(77.17%)
Grade 9-10	10(0%)	42(8.66%)	52(8.66%)
Certificate & above	1(0%)	7(5.51%)	8(5.51%)
Total	27 (21.26%)	100 (78.74%)	127(100%)
Descriptive statistics: Min=3, Max=13, Mean=8.39 and Std. Deviation=2.200			

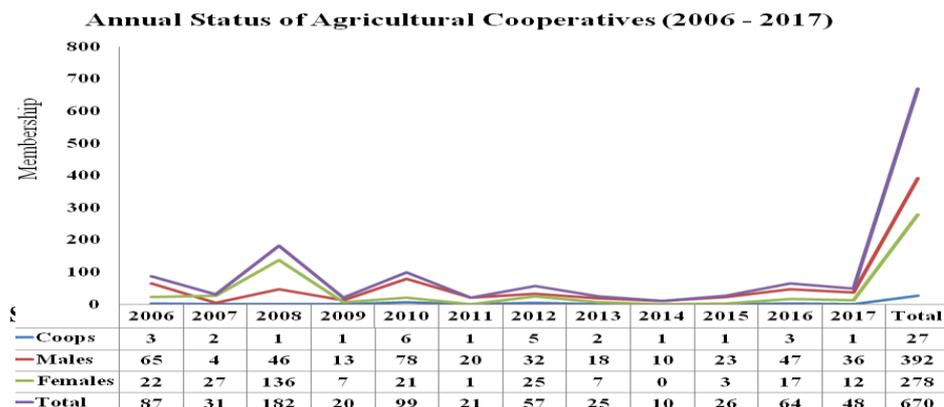
Source: Field survey data (2017)

Education is one of the principles of cooperative defined as the process of imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at a school or similar institution. In this study it operationalized as the level of formal years of schooling that the respondent has completed. As presented in the table 3.3 above, the results reveal that 45.7% and 40.9% of the respondents were found within the ranges of 5-8 and 9-10. The remaining 7.1% and 6.3% of the respondents were found in the ranges of 1-4 and certificate and above respectively. Descriptive statistics results of the survey data for educational level show that the average level of education of the respondents was 8.39 with the standard deviation of 2.2 and minimum and maximum of 3 and 13(10+3) respectively.

3.2. The Status of Women and Agricultural Cooperatives

3.2.1. The Overall Status of Members and Agricultural Cooperatives

Figure-3.1. The Overall Status of Members

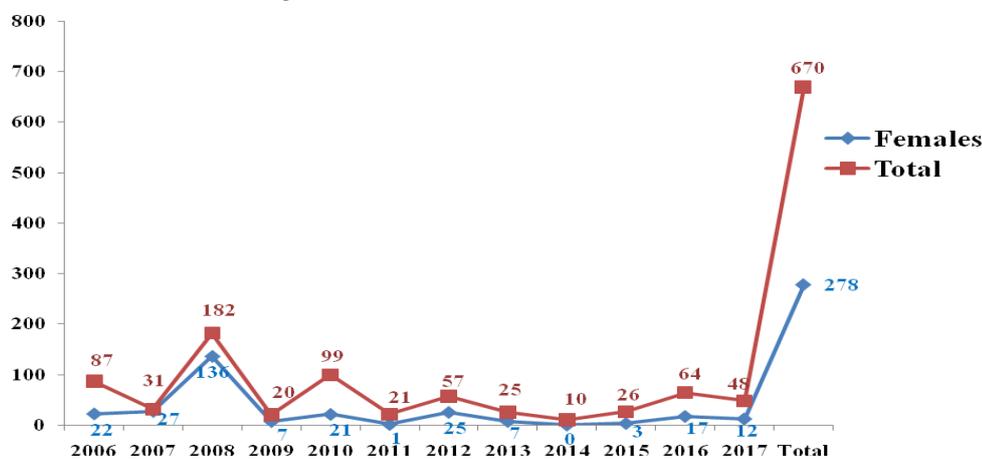


Line charts are used to display trends over time period. For the purpose of this study, chart used in order to show the overall status of member (both men and women) and agricultural cooperatives established in Gog district of Gambella for the last twelve years since 2006.

As presented in the figure 3.1 above, the result of membership and agricultural cooperatives in Gog district shows up and down in their growth for the last twelve years. In 2006, only 3 agricultural cooperatives were established with total members of 87 (65 men and 22 women). In 2007, the number of new members joined 2 new cooperatives decreased to 31. It was in 2008 that the highest number of 182 members (46 men and 136 women) established 1 agricultural cooperative in 12 years followed by the year 2010 when 99 new members joined 6 agricultural cooperatives. The overall status of members and agricultural cooperatives in Gog district were 670 (392 men and 278 women) members and 27 agricultural cooperative societies.

3.2.2. The Overall Status of Women Members in Agricultural Cooperatives

Figure-3.2. Overall Status of Women Members

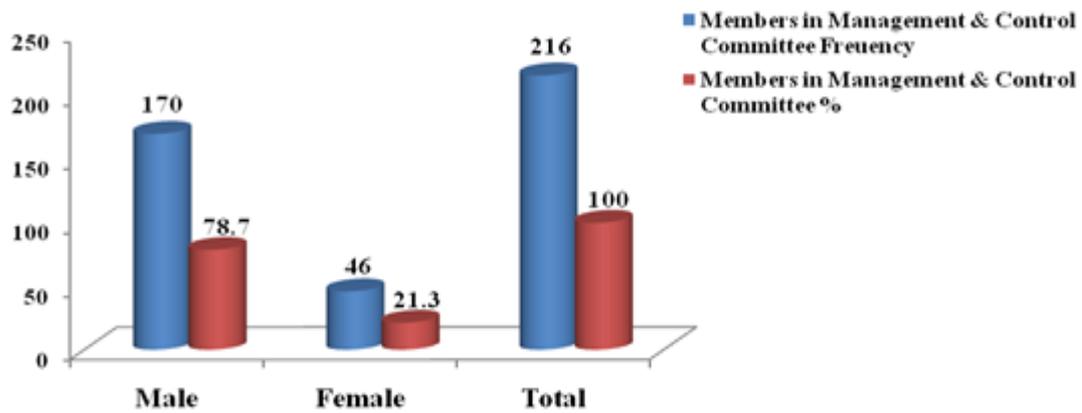


Source: Gog District Agriculture and Natural Resource Office (2017)

As it indicated in the figure 3.2 above, results of the surveyed data show an increase in the membership of women for the first three years starting from 2006 until 2008. Then after 2008, results of the same figure show ups and downs in the growth of annual women membership in agricultural cooperatives organized and registered in Gog district. And the overall status of women members in agricultural cooperative societies is only 278 compared to 392 men members.

3.2.3. Women in the Committees of Agricultural Cooperatives

Figure-3. Women in the Committees of Cooperatives



Source: Gog District Agriculture and Natural Resource Office (2017)

Committee is a body elected by the General Assembly for the purpose of overseeing the day-to-day operation of any cooperative societies.

According to Cooperative Societies Proclamation No.985/2016, Article 34(1), it written as “Any cooperative society shall have a management committee which are loyal and respectful and also can overcome their responsibility and accountable to the general assembly and whose members and manner of election to be determined in the byelaws of the cooperative society” and Article 34(7), “Where there is possible number of female at least 30% of any cooperative society management committee shall be held by female members”.

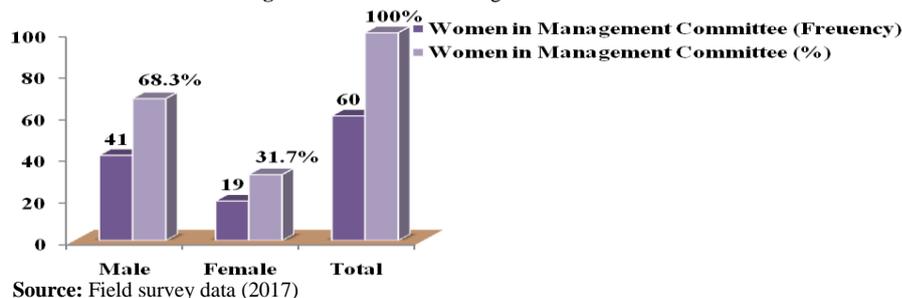
As presented in the figure 3.3 above, 78.7% of the members in management committees of the 27 agricultural cooperatives were males and the remaining 21.3% of management committees were female members. So, it can be concluded that, the percentage of female members of the management and control committees were below what is written in the proclamation No.985/2016.

3.3. Women in the Leadership of Selected Agricultural Cooperatives

The results show that 100% of the respondents said that there were women elected in the leadership of the selected agricultural cooperative societies. From the same table, more than 77% of the respondents said that there were women elected as chairpersons, management committees and control committees. Around 22% said that there were no women elected as chairpersons, management committees and control committees in their respected agricultural cooperatives.

3.3.1. Women in Management Committees

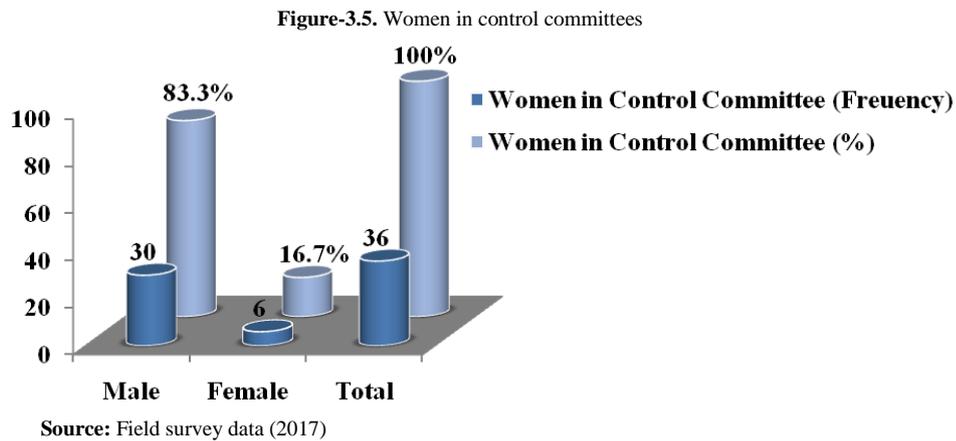
Figure-3.4. Women in management committees



Source: Field survey data (2017)

Management Committee is a body elected by the general assembly for the purpose of overseeing the day-to-day operation of any cooperative societies. As presented in the figure 3.4 above, 68.3% of the members in management committees of the selected twelve agricultural cooperatives were men and the remaining 31.7% of them were women members. Even though it satisfies the minimum requirement stated in proclamation No.985/2016, more than 80% of women in the management committees were cashiers.

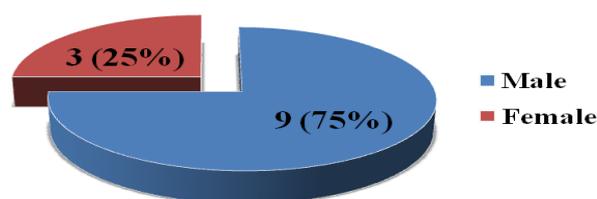
3.3.2. Women in Control Committees



Control committee is a committee elected by the General Assembly for the purpose of controlling the day-to-day operation of any cooperative societies including the activities of the management committee that shall not have less than three committee members which is accountable to the general assembly and the number and manner of election of which shall be specified by the by-laws of the society (Article 36[1] of cooperative societies Proclamation No.985/2016). As presented in the [figure 3.5](#) above, the results show that 83.3% of the members in control committees of the selected twelve agricultural cooperatives were men and only 16.7% of them were women.

3.3.3. Women Elected as Chairpersons in Their Cooperatives

Figure-3.6. Women in elected as chairpersons



As presented in the [figure 3.6](#) above, results of the survey data reveals that from the twelve agricultural cooperatives selected for this study, only 25% of the chairpersons were women and the remaining 75% of them were men.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This is a survey research conducted on women's membership in agricultural cooperatives in Gog District with the objective to assess the current status of women and their in agricultural cooperatives. Both quantitative and qualitative data utilized from primary sources (structured questionnaires and focus group discussion) and secondary sources (review of relevant literatures and documents of cooperatives). Gog was selected purposively due to inadequate empirical studies published earlier and cooperatives that have both men and women members. Then, 127 respondents were selected from 12 agricultural cooperatives.

For the analysis of the data, simple descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for quantitative data. The overall status of women is less compared to men members in all agricultural cooperatives established in the district.

The results showed up and down in their growth for the last twelve years. The same was true for the status of agricultural cooperatives in which only six cooperative societies were organized in 2010. Women represent only 21.3% in both management and control committees of all agricultural cooperatives which are below the number stated in article 34(7) cooperative societies' proclamation no.985/201. Except for the year 2009, 2013 and 2017, the numbers of women joined agricultural cooperatives every year since 2006 were less than ten. Women represent 31.7%, 16.7% and 25% in the management committees, control committees and chairpersons respectively. The overall finding of this study can be concluded that the membership of women is very less compared to men in all agricultural cooperatives organized in the district.

Thus, the researchers forwarded the following specific recommendations to encourage women members to participate in the leadership of agricultural cooperative societies established in the study area:

- ⌀ Women should be encouraged to be able to make their own decision on the activities of their cooperative works.
- ⌀ For women voice to be heard, they should represent at least 30% in the management committee of every specific cooperative as stated in article 34(7) of the cooperative society's proclamation no. 985/2016.

- ☞ Women should be given special attention to get agricultural extension services in order to empower them in their agricultural cooperatives.

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