

Transformative Rural Land Governance For Gender Empowerment In Ethiopia: The Case Of Amhara Regional State Rural Land Policy

Tadesse Negash Reta

Pan-African University (PAU), Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Governance of resources like land in Ethiopia lacks mainstreaming gender issues. Most of the rural people specially women are affected negatively by access and control over land due to economic, cultural, and other interrelated factors. This study is primarily focused on a gender-based analysis of the rural land policy of the Amhara regional state, Ethiopia. Specifically, this research identifies how the right to access and control land is stated in the policy document, the productive and reproductive roles of women stated in the regional rural land policy, gender stereotypes, norms, and judgments that exist about access and control over land and the social norms (about inheritance, marriage, and divorce) affecting the regional land policy in terms of access and control of land. In this study, a qualitative research methodology is applied. Secondary data sources are used for the analysis. Gender-aware policy appraisal as a tool for the analysis of the rural land policy of Amhara regional state is used.

This study concludes that several gaps, contradictions, and ambiguities exist in the rural land laws of the Amhara regional state. In particular, gaps in regulations related to inheritance, donation, rent in relation to women's land right are visible. Both in the federal and regional land policy document no provision gives attention and provides guidelines to ensure how stakeholders' coordination minimizes the implementation problems. Women also face the conditions of losing ownership rights due to administrative bias. As a recommendation, the law needs revision in a way that primarily focuses on gender differences and collaborative work for an efficient land administration system. In terms of access and control of land in the Amhara regional state land policy; priority should be given to rural women who are economically poor and culturally affected.

Keywords: Gender equality, Land governance, Empowerment, Land policy

INTRODUCTION

Majority of developing countries' livelihood is dependent on agrarian economy (Doss et al., 2014). Land is the primary means of production, and it is the backbone of the rural economy. Land is not only an economic asset but also has cultural value. The development of the agrarian economy that is primarily based on agriculture, including the cultivation of crops and the raising of livestock, is largely determined by the efficiency and effectiveness of the policies and geographic and socio-cultural factors (Agarwal, 1998). Access and control of resources in the agrarian economy are characterized by gender disparity. Men predominantly own and inherit agricultural land, while women often lack legal documentation and control over property. Women have limited access to credit, extension services, and farming inputs compared to men. Traditional norms also restrict women's participation in decision-making regarding resource use and management in rural areas.

Land in India for example is not proportionally distributed in rural households. The findings of gender perspective study on land and livelihood by Agarwal (1998) indicated that in the rural areas of the 470 women in sample states only 13 percent inherited land from their fathers. Over time, there has been a growing interest in land resources of developing countries around the globe. Land grabs and land dispositions aggravated the gender disparity in land access and control. Around 50 million hectares of land right in developing countries was given to government and private companies from South Korea, China, India, the United Arab Emirates,

Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. From these, most of the lands are from Africa, the Philippines Cambodia, Indonesia, and India (Doss et al., 2014).

Reviewing land policy in developing countries is crucial, for the overall development policy that governments need to consider for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. There is wide recognition regarding the importance of revising land policy for agrarian development to improve agricultural productivity and considering equity issues (Odeny, 2013). Land holding policies may also vary within a country since there may be regional variation in historical factors, farming systems, physical landscape among others (Nega et al, 2003). Also, in Ethiopia, there is a growing need for better policies by the governments to promote equal access of property rights by men and women, including the right to secure economic and social benefits. The socio-cultural construct of gender has an effect on effectiveness and efficiency of policies, programs and projects (Ambaye, 2012). His findings revealed that it has been more than two decades since the rural land laws were promulgated at the Federal and the Amhara Regional state levels. However, the efficiency of these laws and the overall impact of their implementation have not been assessed in a comprehensive manner in the Region. There is a renewed interest in whether reforms like land reform can contribute to development and empowerment of poor women (Mequanint, 2018; World Bank, 2016). To control, regulate and ensure equity among the different groups and individuals within a society as well as to shape the history of the society as formal rule of the game analysis of a policy via gender lens is vital.

This paper is based on literature review on areas of land, gender, land policy and women empowerment for analyzing the Amhara regional state land policy in relation to gender. To substantiate the findings this paper focused in a constructivist paradigm. This approach states that things are socially constructed, intangible and have multiple forms. Gender is socially constructed and analysis of land policy through gender lens therefore widen the understanding of concepts since this approach can lead us to observe and analyze evidences from different perspective with different backgrounds and cultures, as well as to use diversified epistemological idea of the unique behavior of researchers. It is known that the choice of methods is situationally determined by the nature of questions and realities under investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In order to answer the research questions of this paper I applied literature review as a research methodology.

The paper draws upon secondary data, which are collected through review of relevant literature. Text search is used to find relevant literatures. Academic literatures from web of science, policy documents such as Federal and regional land policies of Ethiopia, studies that are based on qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods are used in this paper to increase the validity of the research findings and to address the issue from different perspectives. A review of government land policy is undertaken to analyse the extent to which the rural land policy of Amhara regional state addressed gender issues. Both the national and regional land policies are reviewed. The analysis framework used in this paper is gender analysis. Evaluating rural land policies through gender lens for agrarian communities is one of the crosscutting agenda that needs attention for integration and mainstreaming of gender in development process. In order to shape policies towards gender equality gender analysis including analysis of socially constructed divisions, sex disaggregated data and the underlying causes associated with the difference is vital. (Doss et al., 2014).

Gender is a socio-economic variable which has potential to either accelerate or undermine development. In focusing on gender-based roles, responsibilities, capabilities and entitlements, gender analysis is applied to a study of the division of labour, access to and control over production resources (such as skills, technologies and inputs) and access to and control over benefits.

This paper covers the analysis of rural land policy through gender lens. As a socio-economic variable gender can promote or undermine development. In gender analysis gender-based differences in role and responsibilities, ownerships, access and control over resource and benefits are included (Nakhone & Kabuta, 1998). In doing so the gender analysis tool used in this research is Gender aware policy appraisal. Gender aware policy appraisal is a tool that particularly used on assessing government funded projects and programs. The framework is designed to analyse gender inequalities in relation to the effect of the a specific policy (Judd, 2002).

Overview of the rural land policy of Ethiopia

The Federal democratic republic of Ethiopia constitution declared that, land both rural and urban land, is the common property of both the state and the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. As stated in Article 40 (3), 2005 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) the right to ownership of land belongs exclusively in the state and in the peoples of Ethiopia. In addition to this the constitution further allocates powers and responsibilities between the Federal Government and regional states in line with the federal land rules and legislation for land and land related issues. Enacting law for utilization of and conservation of land related issues is the power and responsibility of house of people's representatives. On the same way the regional states also have power and responsibility for administering land and other natural resources in line with federal laws (Arts 51 (5) and Art 52 (2) (d) of the constitution (FDRE, 2005).

The rural land proclamation of the 2005 Amhara regional land proclamation was also used to establish an information data base that enables identifying the size, location and use rights of the different types of landholdings in the country. The purpose here was to create a conducive system of rural land administration. Among the specific objectives providing rural land dispute resolution and settlement mechanisms, promoting conservation and management of natural resources, and encouraging investment and other development activities were the major ones.

Despite of the federal proclamation on the general legal framework in respect of rural land administration and land use all over the country, the Amhara regional state also issued its own specific and detailed rural land administration and land use laws. But still the implementation had to be in line with the Federal Constitution and in this proclamation as stated in the federal constitution (Art.52.2. d of FDRE

Constitution; Art. 17 of Proclamation No. 456/2005). Therefore, based on this proclamation each regional state can establish its own institutions and strengthen the already established ones at all levels that would be responsible for the implementation of federal and regional rural land administration and land use laws (Art.17.2 of Proclamation No. 456/2005).

Situation of gender inequalities and rural land access and control of women within the policy

As discussed in the first part of this article rural land has economic, social and cultural value for the rural people. The life of rural people including women and other vulnerable sections of the rural society's is connected with land. Therefore, the right to have access and control over the land is critical for women, the disadvantaged and the rural poor in general. the right to have access and control over land in rural societies can determine the sustainability of their livelihood through ensuring food security, economic empowerment and main agenda of struggle for their equality and equity (Carpano, 2010). In addition to this since land has also social value in the rural society it can also contribute to promote the dignity and social inclusion of the disadvantaged women as well as reduce their vulnerability, poverty and social and economic marginalization associated with gender.

As a result of the above major reasons mainstreaming gender specially in agriculture sector was one of the focuses of Ethiopian government. Sustainable agricultural production became one of Ethiopian national policy priorities. But implementing agricultural policies related to gender equality were not set out as national policy priority (Tsige et al., 2020).

The Federal as well as the Amhara Regional State rural land administration and use laws of Ethiopia have proclaimed specific rights women that apply to land. In these specific laws, specific proclamations related to acquisition, transfer and use of rural land for women and other disadvantaged groups are included. For instance, Art 5 (2) of the Amhara Region's Proclamation No.133/2006 specifies that "Any farmer residing in the region shall despite gender or any other reasons of difference have equal rights to get land in holding", and also sub (6) states that priority to women, the disabled and orphan children shall be executed during the time of land distribution.

There are also specific legislations that give priority to women, the disabled, and orphaned children. For instance, Art 9 (2) of the Amhara regional land policy provides that "priority shall be given to orphan children,

the disabled, women and youngsters who join the new life of independence in cases where the land to be distributed is not sufficient to all petitioners with equal magnitude of land holding problem”. On the same way, Art 24 (2) of the Amhara regional land policy provides that a piece of land is a holding of both husband and wife in common, and the holding certificate shall be prepared in the names of both spouses.

Theoretically in the land policy document women are treated as disadvantaged groups and they need special attention through affirmative action. There is recognition of giving priority for women in the land policy. Legal recognition of rights of women and other vulnerable groups was included in federal as well as in the Amhara regional state land policy. However, the special recognition of women with respect to rural land access failed to achieve the intended objective. For instance, an empirical study shows the implementation failure of new land registration system in Amhara Region. The study by Moges (2020) revealed that the new land registration system in Amhara region faced implementation problems. The primary reason for this failure according to the study was resource wastage. Resources allocated for implementation of the policy were easily lost and wasted by the lower level decision makers (Moges, 2020).

Research findings have shown that the historically actual enjoyment of women's rights in this regard was far behind that of men's (Almaz, 2007). This problem also continued even after the enforcement of the new federal and regional land policies. The study by Assefa (2014) confirmed that the commitment to implement gender related land policies at policy level and its practical implementation on the ground are very different. There is huge gap in implementing the policies related to women and land ownership at the community level. The implementation is constrained by traditional norms and belief systems of the rural people.

Another study by Bishaw (2015) revealed that frameworks and legislation for gender mainstreaming in economic and social sectors of the Amhara regional state are adequately included in the over all development policy including in the rural land policy of the region. However, according to the study when the achievements of these gender policies and frameworks were measured there is no significant change on the ground. Despite of the sound legal intervention on land rights of women on the Amhara region's land policy its implementation has been questionable. The major reasons for this according to the study are related to insufficient budgets, poor networking, weak monitoring and evaluation systems and weakness in mainstreaming specific policies related to gender at community level (Bishaw, 2015).

Women and land legislations

In relation to land holding as it is stated in Art 5(6) of the Amhara regional land Art 9(2) and Art 24(2) of the federal land policies women are put as the priority to give attention despite of the implementation problem at community level.

Based on land proclamations articles and legislations related to women it is possible to conclude that the FDRE government tried to include women's right on the right to use and control over land. Women and other vulnerable groups are given adequate legal protection. However, the prevailing practice is that laws are not respected, which is often at the detriment of women and vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. Women's land is illegally taken by neighboring male farmers; male farmers who rented women's land refused to return it on time or return it at all upon expiry of the lease agreement; those who rented land from women (relatives and non-relatives) tried to transfer the holding right in collaboration with local corrupt officers and by organizing false and fabricated witnesses; and the like are the most common scenarios. Another problem emanates from cultural backwardness that denies women from fully enjoying their rights. In many areas, widowed, divorced and single headed women are facing unbearable challenges from the community because of oppressive traditions and religious beliefs. Even though there are different organs at regional and woreda levels (women's association; women, youth and children's bureau; public prosecutor office) that assist women, there is no coordination or systematic workflow to accomplish this task, and as a result, significant number of the region's women could not fight for their right in court of law that requires sufficient knowledge of the law, time and money.

Article 40 (4) states that peasants have the right to obtain land without payment and the protection against eviction from their possession. However, no priority was given for women in some specific proclamations. For

instance, women who were culturally discriminated should get priority. It is known that women are more vulnerable to lose their holding due to the cultural marriage system, favoring men in the divorce process, and other traditional practices in rural areas (Ayano, 2018).

Impact of current policy on gender inequalities

As discussed, on in the general overview and situation of land right section of the paper, the federal and regional land use policy of Ethiopia tied to answer the concern of women. For instance, both the Federal and the Regional State of rural land administration and use laws of Ethiopia have proclaimed specific rights women that apply to land. Despite of the priority given for women in the Amhara regional land use proclamation to tackle the historical inequality and discrimination the effort didn't come up with change. Previous studies confirmed that women while they have equal contribution with men in the process of agricultural production, they are not benefiting equally on the final outcome since traditionally every product of land area was controlled by men. The study by Nakhone & Kabuta (1998, p 26) on review of gender disaggregated data on agricultural production in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda stated the difference in roles between female and male in agricultural production.

Table 1: Agricultural role distribution between male and female

Activity	Women(percentag e)	Men(percentag e)
Land Preparatio n	60	40
Planting	50	50
Weeding	50	50
Harvestin g	50	50
Marketing	30	70
Access to extension services	20	80

Source (Nakhone & Kabuta, 1998)

From the above table it is visible that there is a proportionate role between men and women in the farming process. However, in the marketing and access to extension services their participation widely varies. This kind of role differences add to gender inequality since marketing and access to information greatly affects the economic and social capacity of women.

Another study also showed that women and vulnerable groups were not included as members of land administration committee during the time of land redistribution and registration (Berhanu & Fayera, 2005). The situation remains the same even after the new rural land legislation that foresee access and control right for women (Ayano, 2018). In obtaining access to and control over land, women and vulnerable groups still suffer from the same challenges due to many interlinked factors. The recognition of some of the customary practice in the context of legal pluralism by the Amhara regional state also created problems in some way on single women, elderly women, people with disabilities and orphaned children. This is because they were highly

exposed to different violations of rights and different forms of abuses under their right to access and control rural land.

The recognition of the customary practices in land dispute resolution in the revised Amhara regional state land policy is stated in the following way.

“Any civil dispute that may arise in connection to land holding or using right shall priorly be seen and resolved in arbitration; The selection of arbitrators and the process of the resolution agreement may be executed by the agreement of the parties based on the customary procedures of each surrounding (FDRE, 2006, p. 31)”.

The practice particularly in the place where I live is that it is not mandatory for people to go first to the customary procedure usually called the Shengos, who are elected by the rural communities. However, most of the time when people who have land related issues go to judges they led them to go back to the Shengos first to try their case by through customary practice. In this case the Shengo first hears the case and the decision is binding if the parties agreed on this process. The Shengos members are very respected people in the community and about half of the land conflicts are resolved before reaching regular courts. However, since most of the the Shengo members have no formal education, they lack legal and procedural knowledge of the law. Therefore, in the process there are cases of corruption and bias against women.

Among the challenges faced by women include the inability to cultivate land holdings by their own, illegal acts and violence, partiality and corruption, problems related with the justice system, problems related with the land administration system, lack of sufficient knowledge regarding rural land laws by women and vulnerable groups, and cultural factors (Zelalem, 2013).

Both the regional and the federal land policies didn't consider the variation in ability between women. But women are not homogenous groups. For instance, there may be difference in decision making participation between married and divorced women, between women in male headed households and women in female headed households (Rozel, 2010) . Most of the time women in male headed households have limited power to undertake decisions over the use of resources like land. But in both the federal and regional land policy are not specifically addressing women issue despite of the theoretical legislation that says women have the right to access and control over the resources. Land belongs to the government and peoples of Ethiopia and it is not possible to sell or buy a land. This legislation also may have negative impact for women. Because historically women were marginalized from getting land due to cultural norms and traditions and now, they can't even buy because of the economic problems (Tsige et al., 2020).

The Amhara regional land policy has no specific policy of addressing the issue of polygamous marriages which is the tradition and culture of Muslim communities in Ethiopia. On top of other problems created because of polygamous marriage, the rural land law does not entertain anything on how land holdings can be divided among different wives. There is no clear rule or legislation about this. Women are denied equal share of their land during dissolution of marriage by divorce and the death of husband. They do not have equal right in administering their marital property including land, which generally requires more awareness and public education programs to rectify (Daniel, 2011).

Nothing is said both in the Federal and the Region's laws about women in polygamous marriages. Women who are in polygamous marriage are still suffering, disadvantageous and discriminated in many ways. The household head usually the husband controls everything including land. The ownership right is in the husband's name and in case of divorce the husband controls everything of the product of the land as well as the land use right itself.

Constraints to implement Gender responsive policies

Implementation of gender responsive policies in rural areas of developing countries is very challenging. One of the reasons behind this is the domination of informal and customary rules on land rights as well as other property rights for rural women in developing countries. The study by Pillas (2011) revealed that in addition to cultural influence social and economic factors were also contributed the failure of gender responsive policies. Another study by Flintan (2010) highlighted that traditional land customs were obstacles in

implementing gender responsive policies because the customary rights undermine women's rights to access and control land, and encourage wasteful land use. The traditional customs and traditional practices are prevalent in rural land use systems in the Amhara region that hinder the implementation of gender responsive land policies (Ayano, 2018).

The other challenge in implementing gender responsive policies is the embedded nature of rural land regimes in social relations and the mixed nature of land resource governance (both the formal and the customary rules) (Reda, 2014). In Ethiopia particularly in Amhara region the household head (usually the husband); male household members and sometimes both parents may decide not to share landholdings for women. This is the result of low interest in the rural communities which is the challenging factor in implementing gender responsive policies in different place including Amhara region (Tsige et al., 2020).

According to Reda (2014) women's participation in land related decisions was low. This makes gender responsive policies very challenging. According to his study among the reasons that limit women's participation as well as implementation of gender responsive policies were included cultural barriers (negative attitudes or reactions towards women who attend meetings, even by fellow women themselves), limited agricultural land in the rural communities, low decision making role of women in the household and lack of gender disaggregated data to implement to identify the target groups and to improve their role in the production process (Reda, 2014). Due to these factors' women continue to be discriminated and inequalities in access and control over resource between men and women persists. It challenged transformational changes of gender responsive policies and become barrier for gender responsive policies (Gordon et al., 2021).

Conditions of losing land holding right (as constraints to implement gender responsive policies)

Described in the table below there are situations in which the land owner may lose the holding right. These conditions may create negative influence for gender responsive policies. For instance, applying the gender responsive policy such as creating a permanent job, engaging women in work other than agricultural activity will lead the women to lose their limited land. This is because according to the Art.14(1) of Reg. 51/2007 women who have land holding and participate in activities other than agricultural practice such as this kind of gender responsive policy will immediately lead them to lose their existing land holding.

Based on the indicated conditions women and the other disadvantaged groups can lose their land holding easily, especially in situations in which a farmer gets income from non-agricultural activities. As described in the table below the law states that a land holder who starts to receive a minimum government salary or has an income for which tax is payable will immediately lose his/her land (FDRE, 2007). This practice may have several unintended problems: first, the law does not give the land holder a choice of either keeping or losing the land. Once it is known that the farmer has got a government job or starts to earn income, he/she would instantly lose the land. Secondly, this creates fear among the agrarian society and prevents them from engaging in other non-farming activities and thereby supporting the family by doing overtime work or moving to urban areas. The implication is that the rural land policy needs to encourage the prosperity of the rural population especially the women and the disadvantages groups in the society.

Here, it is also important to consider the amount of land holding that women have. For instance, the conditions of losing land holding right is the same for those who have 2 hectares of land holding right and those who have more than two who are equally penalized in case of breaching one or all of the following conditions.

Gaps and strength of the rural land policy of Ethiopia

In the rural land policy of Ethiopia ownership of rural land is vested in the state and the peoples of Ethiopia. However, in practice exercising this full holding right is not possible. There are restriction in using the full holding right. Both under federal and regional land policies of Ethiopia there is no detail and clear position that indicate land belongs to both the state and the people of Ethiopia. The type, extent and nature of right that the land holders may have over land are not provided in specific detail under the federal and regional constitutions. Only few general provisions are indicated in the regional proclamations related to right to acquisition and protection of rural land, and restrictions on the exercise of land rights. It seems rather the ownership of the land

is exclusively vested on the state. As provided under Art 40 (4) of the FDRE Constitution, Ethiopian farmers have right to obtain land without payment and they are guaranteed to protection against eviction from their possession. However, the usual practice still oppresses women and vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

Constitutionally federal and regional laws and customary practices make the regulation of how rural people acquire land and related issues such as the right to hold and use rural land, the right to transfer use rural land. The problem here is most of the time the customary practices are against women interests. Therefore, first and foremost a legislative intervention is necessary to address land related problems. It is necessary to clearly articulate how land can be transferred through inheritance, through a will and without a will.

The rental rule in Amhara region also differs from that of the Federal one in that it does not observe the mandatory rule of renting only a certain amount. The federal rule in this regard provides the size to be rented as one that would not displace the farmer. While almost all regions interpreted this as ‘half of the landholding’, the Amhara region took it to be the entire land (FDRE, 2007). In regard to rent, women and vulnerable groups often lost their landholdings through different deceptive mechanisms such as, refusal to relinquish the land after expiry of lease period; transfer of holding rights to one self or third parties through corruption dealing with kebele land administration committees, kebele Shengos, and others; and informal sale or exchange with third parties by the lessees without informing the landowner (Tura, 2014).

This rule therefore needs to be in line with the federal law. This of course is also the will of the people as voiced in the study. It is also tough to introduce a new rule concerning land belonging to women, children, elderly people and physically impaired people who perceived by the community as they cannot cultivate the land by themselves. While the Federal Proclamation No. 456/2005 limits the right to rent land generally to about half of the total, the case in Amhara regional state rural land proclamation is neutral on the land size to be rented. It is the power of regional states to give certificate of registration, approve and evaluate the amount of land given for investors (Wabelo, 2020). While the federal law allows inheritance of land to family members, the Amhara rural land proclamation on the other hand allows inheritance and donation to any person who is interested in farming. This indicates that the regional and federal land policy laws are not well coordinated.

Farmers who operate small business for which tax is paid or who are paid a minimum government salary would immediately lose their landholdings. This has become unpopular and ridiculous in that the rule hinders farmers from supporting their families in the face of high cost of living and growing scarcity of land (FDRE, 2007).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

CONCLUSION

Ensuring food security and sustainable development for a given nation is difficult without ascertaining the rights to access and control of land and other property rights for women and the disadvantaged groups. As stated in the Amhara rural land policy document women have full right in accessing and using land in the region, but as many sources indicated such rights are being violated during implementation. There is a positive step of recognizing women the overall policy document. However, there is limited understanding of the rights and responsibilities by landholders of the rural communities. In the Amhara regional state land policy there is no direct discrimination by sex and other conditions in accessing agricultural land for rural women. However, these group of people often do not have the economic capacity to afford the required agricultural inputs. Most of gender issues in the policy document failed to practically solve women’s problem due to economic, cultural and social factors.

Theoretically both in the federal and Amhara regional state land policy, equality and special attention is provided to women and the vulnerable groups by law. However, practically these groups are not fully benefiting from their legal rights due to the deep-rooted traditions and patriarchal culture of the society. Women and other vulnerable groups are the primary members of the society who have become victims of administrative negligence, corruption, backward tradition and intentional social subjugation.

There are also cultural biases towards women and other vulnerable groups which lead them losing their land rights. There is widespread abuse of women's land right by adjacent landholders. In a patriarchal culture, men are assumed to be superior to women, and it is assumed that men deserve priorities and privileges. Because of physical, economic or cultural factors, single women, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups do not often cultivate their land on their own.

Efforts by the government in creating awareness through different stakeholders is very limited. There is also still lack of willingness and resistance to change the cultural barriers on part of the women and vulnerable groups in particular. This is the result of influences from husbands, family members and the community at large that discourage women's participation in community meetings.

Proper implementation of rural land policy and laws, and sustainable, effective and efficient rural land policy is the product of collaborative work among the various stakeholders. Stakeholders involved in addressing different rural land related problems and issues would be able to perform their mandates and work towards realization of proper rural land policy only if they are working in coordination. However, there is no provision both in the regional and Federal land policy that provide guidelines to ensure how this coordination should be done.

Policy implications

There is a need to revisit the regional rural legislation to amend some of the legal gaps and inconsistencies which this study identifies and which are causing problems during implementation. The Amhara regional state land policy document should include substantial and practical way of granting women with the full right access and control over land. Special emphasis should be given to those rules related to intestate succession and attempt should be made to give equal chance to all children to inherit, irrespective of their age and gender difference. Considering the multiple roles of women, a more inclusive and instrumental way which is beyond the social equity and justice is needed. Women needs special attention to protect their land rights for those who have access to and control over their land rights. The law should be reframed in such a way that it encourages farmers to diversify their income without, of course, affecting their land holding right. Government sectors, NGOs and other civil organizations should work for the achievement of this goal. Institutions that are established to resolve disputes and manage conflicts should attain legitimacy as the appropriate bodies to mediate and should be accessible to all.

The Amhara regional rural land policy land policy should be restructured considering gender inequality and discrimination in the country with respect to property inheritance. The rural land legislations and proclamations should stress the recognition and enforce the implementation of the principle of gender equality with respect to land holding. Raise gender awareness in the community to help achieve equity in the in the rural communities. There is need for both men and women to be involved in decision making within the household, and for the females to have access to agricultural technology. The efficient and effective implementation of these federal and regional laws in the Region requires their proper understanding by all stakeholders. The realization of all the important ideals embedded in the Federal and Regional rural land administration and land use laws depends on the establishment and proper functioning of government institutions at all levels and on the meaningful participation of the general public and civil society organizations in the Region. Finally, it is highly recommended for further research with both primary and secondary data. This study only uses secondary information for the analysis of the Amhara regional rural land policy and therefore it is open for further research to with first-hand information.

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