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*“The Africa We Want: Achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth.”*



**WOMEN’S RIGHT TO LAND: THE CASE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH MALE  
MIGRANTS IN KANKICHO KEBELE, DUNA WOREDA, HADIYA ZONE-SNNPRS,  
ETHIOPIA**

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## **Abstract**

*The study was conducted at Kankicho Kebele, Duna woreda with the general objective of assessing women's right to access and control land and the effects of husband's migration on women. Specifically, the study aims to examine the effects of husband's migration on women's land rights, and proposes recommendations for securing women's land rights in the absence of husbands due to migration in the study area.*

*The issues are empirically investigated based on primary household data from a survey, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The survey covers 30 households from Kankicho Kebele, where male members of the households have migrated. These households are selected using the snowball sampling method. Key informants are selected from Kebele women affairs, Kebele land administrators, Woreda office of Social Protection Unit, and the elders of the community. Four focus group discussions were conducted with six to eight members in each group. Primary data was complemented by secondary data garnered from various policy documents and related research publications. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were applied to empirically determine changes in women's right to access and control land in the absence of their husbands due to migration.*

*According to the study result indications, almost all women whose husbands have migrated do not have registered land by their names but only indirect user right. The direct right to access and control land belongs to the father in law or the mother in law in the study area. Regarding the effects of migration, husband's migration has some effects on women's land right. It has serious implications on women's social, psychological, and biological wellbeing as well as their economic empowerment. Husband's migration further undermines women's ability and possibility to access to and control over land.*

*The study shows that women's right to access and control over land will be achieved if the following actions are realized: the government and concerned stakeholders need to create awareness on the importance of securing women's land rights in accordance with the land proclamation and legislations by expediting its implementation to ensure the benefits accrue at the grass root level. Establishing actions are needed to bring about attitudinal or behavioural changes by sensitizing the community through trainings in order to secure women's land right and to reduce migration flow. It is important to work on developing self-employment opportunities, small scale agro-industries, and creating markets access. Government also needs to prioritize its development efforts towards improving the standards of living and working conditions for rural communities.*

*Generally, women's right to access to and control over land has been highly affected by existing socio-cultural barriers, informal institutions, and migration constraints in the society. Strengthening women's land right, fostering social acceptance and working for attitudinal change in social norms and practices through social psychology is very important need.*

*Key Words: Women, Land rights, Migration, Kankicho Kebele, Duna Woreda, Hadiya Zone, SNNPRS, Ethiopia*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the Study

Land is a significant natural resource. It is the source of livelihood, property, and power for human beings. Therefore, equitable control and proper use of land has extensive effects on how a society is organized and productions of exchanges are regulated. Control of the land is a higher priority in most societies rendering the land question quiet controversial in most societies of the world (Mania, 2007). In Ethiopia, while land vests in the State, access to agricultural land is a constitutional right of its citizens. The current federal and regional land proclamation reforms aimed to increase land tenure security by ensuring sustainable use of land resources by strengthening women's right to land (Holden and Tefera, 2008). Equal rights of men and women for land has been supported by rural land administration and utilization proclamations of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 456 (FDRE, 2005) and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, (SNNPR, 110/2007). However, women did not enjoy equal rights and opportunities as men in practice (Woldetensaye, 2007).

Like land issue, migration has been one of the crucial contentious and complex phenomena in human history. Migration has been long accepted critical issue in human society. It occurs as the dilemma of both national and international communities. Migration is one of the significant and demanding challenges in many of contemporary societies in the world. Studies and statistics show that the number of international migrants living in another country has reached 244 million in 2015, a 41% increase compared to the number of year 2000, according to new data presented by the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UN DESA) and indicated that international migrants has grown faster than the world's population rate (UN DESA, 2015).

Outbound international migration from Ethiopia is relatively a recent occurrence, which has increased significantly since late 1970's due to political instability and other different human and natural causes (Getachew & Maigenet, 1991; Markos, 2001). Migration from Ethiopia to other countries beyond the Horn of Africa (HOA) began following the 1974 revolution in the country. Today, many skilled and unskilled Ethiopians are migrating to different countries through both legal and illegal means, looking for a better social civilization and economic opportunities outside their country (Dejene, 2005). The post-1991 period has been marked as a growing era of labour migration in Ethiopia, particularly to the Middle East and the Republic of South Africa (Teshome et al., 2013). According to the International Labour Organization, (ILO, 2011:58) report, almost all (95 percent) of the Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zone migrants are travelling to the Republic of South Africa and Middle East through illegal means.

It is hardly possible to speak about Sustainable development goal without the full participation of women and reasonable stability of people in one's country. Therefore, this study specifically focuses on women's land right and migration challenges at Kankicho *Kebele* (lowest administrative unit), Duna Woreda (district) in Hadiya Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia, where awareness regarding women's right to access and control land is very poor, other women social services are limited, work on attitudinal change is very limited, and population density is very high. Hadiya Zone is a key source of migration and migrants. Therefore, the current study focuses on women's right to access to and control over land in the absence of their husbands due to migration with focus on combating women's land rights and reducing husband's migration.

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

In Ethiopia, though the government dictated the equal rights for both genders, the anguish of many women for the bundles of rights have remained a challenge in many parts of the country, particularly in the rural areas. Long aged patriarchal beliefs and practices in many societies have deprived the women of social, economic, psychological, and political spheres. Inheritance norms and practices often favour sons over daughters. The land right and its control falls mainly under the male dominance (Hussein, 2014).

In Ethiopia, the land tenure system reforms have tried to secure land right for women though that of 1974 has failed to do so due to numerous reforms it has passed over the centuries and socio-cultural barriers and practices (Teshome, 2015). In the “Derg” Regime women are unable to benefit equally from the land allocation system because the land women’s land right were highly subjected due to birth or nuptial families (Birtukan A. 2016). The Ethiopian Constitution of 1995 granted women to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer and inherit land (FDRE, 1995).

Many scholars have studied the implications of migration and land right matters in different regions including the SNNPR. Sosina Bezu and Stein T. Holden (2013) study on Land Access and Youth Livelihood Opportunities in Southern Ethiopia. (Abinet, 2011) examined the role of remittance and return migrants on urban growth and rural urban linkage: Another case study by Dr. Hosanna. (Habte, 2015) assessed socio-economic impacts of migration of Ethiopians to the Republic of South Africa and its implications for Ethio-RSA relations: while the case of Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zones. (Assefa, 2016) studied the patterns and impacts of migration to the RSA on social and economic aspects of source community (Case of Duna Woreda, Hadiya Zone, and SNNPRS-Ethiopia). None of these studies focused on the women’s right to access and control over land and the effects of husband’s migration on women in the study area. Thus, the study aimed to suggest to the concerned bodies to improve women’s access to and control over land right through actions like, awareness creation, promoting social acceptance, bringing attitudinal changes, economic empowerment, and through involvement of government and concerned stakeholders.

This Study attempts to address the some of the gap in existing literature. It will assess women’s right to access and control land in the absence of their husbands due to migration and propose recommendations for strengthening women’s right to land and mitigating the effects of migration on women’s rights to land. Ultimately, this paper attempts to answer the questions and suggest the policy makers to look for actions needed to secure women’s rights to access to and control over land by reducing migration in the study area.

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

### **1.3.1. General Objective:**

The general objective of the study is to assess women’s right to access and control land in the absence of their husbands due to outbound migration from the study area of Kankicho Kebele, Dun Woreda, Hadiya Zone-SNNPRS, Ethiopia.

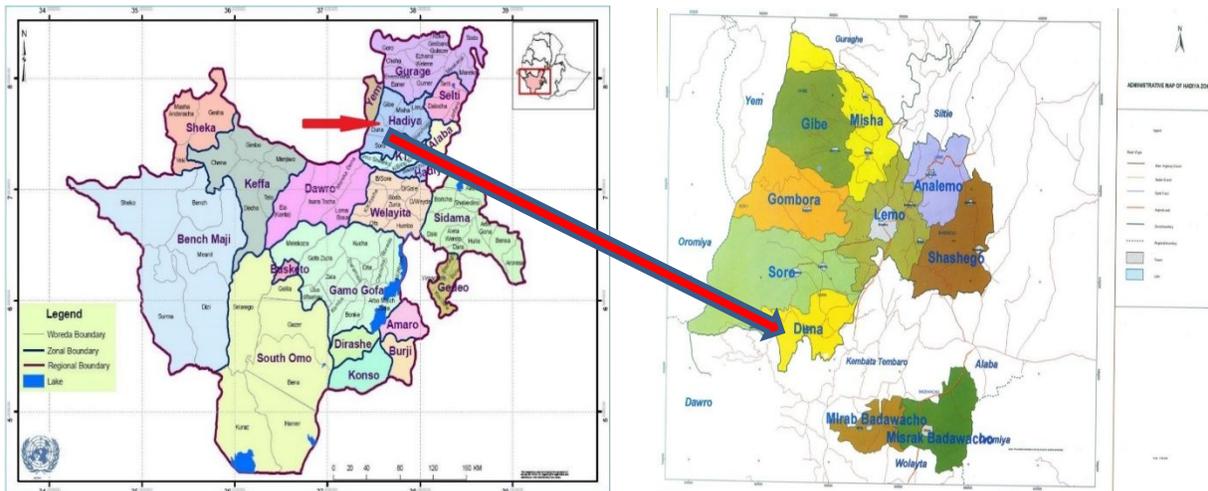
### 1.3.2. Specific Objectives

- ❖ To assess women's right to access to and control over land
- ❖ To examine the effects of husband's migration on land accessibility for women
- ❖ To propose recommendations for securing women's land right in the absence of husbands due to migration

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

### 2.1. Background of the Study Area

Duna Woreda, located in the /SNNPR/, Ethiopia at a distance of 277 km from Addis Ababa, 211 km from Hawassa, 42km from Hosanna. Duna is 1 among 11 Woredas found in Hadiya Zone, was established in 2002 E.C., Ansho is the Woreda town, with 32 Kebeles, 1 urban, Ansho town and 31 rural. According to SNNPRS, Hadya Zonal Statistical Abstract, 2014-2015, total populations of Duna Woreda is 157936 of which 78755, or 49.87% are male and 79181 or 50.13% are female, 149125 or 94.42% live in rural and 8811 or 5.58% are living in urban settings The majority of the people in the Woreda are speakers of Hadiyisa language.



**Figure 1:** Map of SNNPR, Hawassa Zuria District and administrative Map of Hadiya Zone, Duna Woreda. Sources: <http://www.ethiodemographyandhealth.org/SNNPR.html> and SNNPRFEDB.

The total area of Duna woreda land is estimated to 43,104 hectare (222.5 square kilometers). Altitude ranging from 2001 to 3000 meters above the sea level. An average annual rain fall ranges from 1001mm to 1400mm. The economic activities largely dominated by subsistence traditional agriculture farming system, (85%) of the people are mainly depend on mixed agriculture (both crops and livestock productions) Next to agriculture, petty trade is also a common income source for the people in the Woreda. In Sub-Saharan Africa, married women have better access to their husbands' land and property through marriage. Security of marriage is considered as security of tenure (Davison, 1988). Similarly, in Rural Ethiopia, due to patriarchal orientation of inheritance, socio-cultural barrier, social norms related to ancestry, and marriage practice has significantly affected women's right to access to and control over land. As Tekilu and Verma noted, women's equality has not been achieved to effectually participate in public affairs (Teklu, 2005) cited in (Teshome Y., 2015). In the study area, land tenure system has been

practiced in patrilineal system of inheritance in which women are excluded except through the marriage to man.

## **2.2.Data Collection Method**

### **2.2.1. Survey Questionnaires**

The questionnaires seek to provide information on questions of demographic variables, and other quantitative data relevant for this study. The empirical work for this study consisted of a survey of structured and semi-structured questions which were administered altogether with 30 respondents. During the data collection, the researcher was assisted by two field workers. The recruitment of field workers was based on their experiences, understanding about the issues and fluency of the local language (Hadiyisa) as well as translation skills of English version to the local languages.

### **2.2.2. Key Informant Interview**

Key informants were selected for interview as an appropriate tool for this study. Key informants were selected based on their experience, knowledge to the issue, and willingness, which enables the researcher to authenticate the findings of the study at places of origin and on the basis of expertise knowledge, closeness and insights about issues at hand. Seven Key informants were selected from different sectors of the society; out of which five were women among whom three were experienced on women's affairs. The composition was like: two from Kebele Women Affairs office, two from Kebele Land Administrators, one from Woreda Social protection Unit office and two women community elders at the study location.

### **2.2.3. Focus Group Discussions**

Total of four FGDs were conducted with six to eight members of persons in each group, group of women with homogeneity of being husband migrated households, parents of migrants, group of officials, group of women elders. All the discussions were formulated with the help of guidelines for facilitating discussions. The important issues rose during the group discussions include: women's right to access and control land in the absence of husbands due to migration, socio-cultural and institutional constraints related with women's access right to land, on the causes and effects of migration in relation to women's land right interview of providing action needed to minimize in the locality.

## **2.3.Sampling Techniques and Sample size determination**

### **2.3.1. Purposive and Availability Sampling Techniques**

Both, purposive and availability sampling techniques were employed to identify those who are affected by the issues in the study area. The researcher relied on his/her own judgments to select sample group members. Though it has adverse effects like, it may be associated with a very high level of subjectivity by the researcher and limited representation of wider population, the researcher used this sampling technics for selections based on the highest number of migrants in the Kebele. Snowball sampling technique was employed to select the Kebele and the households (N=30). In this case one sample Kebele, Kankicho was purposefully selected based on the large number of female headed households due to migration of their husbands.

- Duna Woreda was purposively selected

- Kankicho Kebele was purposively selected among the four Kebeles with highest and lowest migrant numbers (N=X)
- Married women members were taken from husband migrated households (n=30)

## 2.4. Data Analysis Methods

The qualitative and quantitative data collected were first carefully checked for existence of incomplete questionnaire and possible no responses. The quantitative data was analyzed by using relevant descriptive statistics, which was based on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Finally, the result was presented by using table, frequency, and percentage. Thus, the collected qualitative data from key informants' interview and focus group discussions were analyzed manually through careful interpretation of meanings and contents, organizing and summarizing in accordance with the problem under consideration. Quantitative was transcribed, classified, grouped, coded, and categorized to generate descriptive statistics and qualitative used narrative type of analysis from various informants and integrated into the paper.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1. Women's Right to Access to and Control over Land

According to the research indications in the study area, majority (90%) of the respondents does not have access and control land (table 1). The study survey on women stated that of the respondents said that they do not have access and control over land. In line with this study, (Teshome, 2015) stated that customary patriarchal system not only imposed unnecessary attitudes on women but also hindered them from using the constitutional right of access to land and other public affairs, equally for both genders. Hereby, the husband's migration has increased the sphere of the problem in the study area.

Table 1. Husband migrated women's right to access to and control over land

Measurement	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	10.0
No	27	90.0
Total	30	100

Source: Own survey data Kankicho Kebele, Duna Woreda August 30, 2017

Women's access to and control over land is not common in the study area. The study revealed that though women are member of the households, due to existing socio-cultural, informal institutional, and the women are feeling ashamed to ask for land right has hampered the promotion of women's right. Rather the women have accepted the long aged patriarchal land tenure system as it is predetermined by the culture of the society. The absence of male due to migration has further disadvantaged women from having user right of inherited land from the husband's family. Instead the women have indirect user right to inherited land that belongs to the husband, which has been controlled by husband's family, particularly father or mother in law. This indicates that women's land right is not secured. In the FGDs, of Kankicho Kebele has showed that:

*One of the discussants said, when she was talking about exercising of the land right, that in our culture, she said, women cannot access and control over land in the presence of male. Even in husband migrated household cases, she underlined, women*

*have only indirect use right while the land remains in the hands of husband's family when seen from the practice on the ground. One of the male elder in the discussion said to the researcher, exclaiming, did you come to complicate our culture? He spoke that they are not interested even to hear about this issue because it provokes the women to claim for having land to be registered in both names jointly. The reason behind the issue was more related to fear and societal attitude, which has been long accepted by the culture and by the women themselves. The researcher faced rejection by the elders and some male community members. In this area, the women's lack of land access has been practiced as long accepted and existing trend in the culture due to weak implementation of land administrative laws. According to the belief of study area, the fear created in daughter's family that the other family may claim for inheritance of the land if the land is given to women line. Many respondents agreed that they have indirect user right only with little co-management system. As frequently raised during the focus group discussions; these problem can be solved through trainings of awareness creation on attitude or behavior changes on patriarchal culture and of the women by developing social acceptance of women's land right. Government involvement in securing women's access to and control over land is needed. (FGD participant at Duna Woreda - Hadiya Zone, August 30, 2017).*

Similar studies on women's right in the past, like the International laws, Conventions, Declarations of Human Rights (UDHR 1948), and International women's conferences held consecutively, have outlined the gender equality as part of global concern on human rights together with freedoms for women's social, economic and political rights. All these forbid any discrepancy, segregation or restriction on gender basis or what invalidates women's rights and fundamental freedom enjoyments (UN CEDAW, 1979:3). In spite of all these, the improvement and the equality of women with men never enjoyed its goal to access land and other useful resources. Whereby, many other related issues have remained inactive in many circumstances. Rather social relations of productivity have been determined by traditional customary norms of patriarchal line (Davison, 1988, World Bank, 2001).

### **3.2. Actions needed to Secure Women's Land Rights**

Out of the total respondents more than half, (53.0%) revealed that awareness creation and promoting social acceptance is very important for securing women's land ownership while (30.0%) said that in addition to awareness creation and promoting social acceptance, economic empowerment is necessary in order to enable women to achieve the goal of the land rights. The rest (17.0%) respondents in addition to the abovementioned action agreed that government involvement is needed.

Table 2. Action needed to secure women's land ownership right

Action needed	Frequency	Percent
awareness creation and promoting social acceptance	16	53.3
awareness creation, economic empowerment, and promoting social acceptance	9	30.0
awareness creation, promoting social acceptance, and government involvement is needed	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0

Source: Own survey data Kankicho Kebele, Duna Woreda August 30, 2017

### 3.3. The Causes and Effects of Migration

The survey and the group discussion results confirmed that husband migrated women household showed that 56.7% of the respondents affirmed about the major causes of migration has resulted from lack of land, looking for additional income, and poor economic conditions. In addition to above mentioned causes, 33.3% of the respondents revealed that low agricultural productivity is also among the major causes for migration in the study area. Similar studies indicated that long held traditional practices on women have a serious effects on women's land right. There are masses of theoretical as well as empirical studies concerned to reduce migration in the past (Massey et al, 1993:432). But all the same and like women's land right, it remained a challenge of the society.

Table 3. Causes of migration

Major Causes of migration	Frequency	Percent
lack of land	1	3.3
lack of land, low agricultural productivity, and poor economic condition	2	6.7
lack of land, low agricultural productivity, for additional income, and poor economic condition	10	33.3
lack of land, for additional income, and poor economic condition	17	56.7
Total	30	100.0

Source: Own survey data Kankicho Kebele, Duna Woreda August 30, 2017

#### 3.3.1. Trends of Migration in the study area

Here below, the tabular illustrations of six consecutive years of migration trends in the area are given to have an overall view. Accordingly, the researcher took four Kebeles which are ranked according to the number of migrants.

Table 4. The total number of migrants per Kebeles

		Migrants from the following Kebeles (M= Male, F= Female)								
		Kankicho		Dabiyago		Letebo		Zal-dama		Total
No.	Year	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1.	2004 E.C.	357	3	185	-	120	-	50	-	715
2.	2005 E.C.	420	-	165	-	95	-	45	-	725
3.	2006 E.C.	400	-	158	-	75	-	36	-	669
4.	2007 E.C.	420	-	120	-	65	-	28	-	633
5.	2008 E.C. <sup>1</sup>	150	-	80	-	58	-	20	-	308
6.	2009 E.C.	15	2	20	3	15	-	6	1	62
Total		1762	5	728	3	428	0	179	1	3112

Source: Statistical data of Social protection Unit in Duna Woreda August 30, 2017

According to the statistics of the year 2005 E.C., which was taken as a sample due to the highest number of migrants, the total population of Kankicho Kebele was 5634 out of which 2836 were male and 2778 female. In the same year, 725 persons have migrated from the Kebele, which is 12.9% of the total population of the Kebele. As it was explained, using the purposive sampling and depending on the highest number of migrants in Kankicho Kebele, the study of data analysis was employed.

### 3.3.2. Effect of Migration on Women's Land Right

Out of the total respondents, (56.7%) revealed that husband migration does not have any effect on women's land right. while (33.3%) said that husband migration has totally blocked even the little possibility of women's land right. The rest (10.0%) of respondents do not have knowledge about the effects of husband migration on women's land right.

Table 5. Effect of migration on women's land right

Effect of migration	Frequency	Percent
No effect	17	56.7
Totally blocked the little possibility of women's land right	10	33.3
I don't know	3	10.0
Total	30	100

### 3.3.3. Challenges Faced by Husband Migrated Women

Though at times, migration enhanced income, on the contrary, it negatively affects the economy of the women. During the key informant interviews, one participant stated that migration has facilitated an economic inequality in the society. Especially, between the women who receives

<sup>1</sup> Includes data till 30/08/17

income and who do not from the migrant husbands. During KII's, a woman from the Kebele Women Affairs office has narrated about her friend who does not receive income from her migrated husband that her friend told:

*She went to a Sunday afternoon market in Kankicho Kebele, about 7years back to buy eggs in which she said, the price was agreed through price negotiating with the seller. But now she said, all the same she goes to the same market where she found the prices of eggs have highly increased and became unaffordable by the women who do not receive income from migrant husband. Now the seller in the market never bargain the price due to income receiving women, who have developed a new marketing system in the area which says, “Cigir Yelem, Yihun Amitawu” which means, “No problem, Let the price be and give it to me”. It brought about the birth of “Yihun Amitawu or Let it be market system” in the study area. This has highly diversified the market price that brought about different crisis that affected economic, social, psychological, and land access possibilities. This has brought about class stratification, conflicts, and economic differences among the women. (KII's at Duna Woreda - Hadiya Zone, August 30, 2017)*

According to the study in the table below, out of the total respondents more than half, (63.4%) revealed that social, psychological, biological<sup>2</sup> needs or drives are the challenges faced by husbands' migrated women. (20.0%) respondents have added economic challenges to the abovementioned challenges of the study area.

Table 6. Challenges faced by husband migrated women

Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Economic	1	3.3
social and psychological, biological needs of drives	19	63.4
social, economic, psychological, and biologic need crisis	4	13.3
social, economic, and psychological	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

### 3.4. Actions Needed to Reduce Husband's Migration

Establishing self-employment accesses, attitudinal or behavioural change, developing small scale agro-industry, and creating markets accesses are among the mentioned actions needed by the respondents in the study area in order to reduce husbands from migration. All the women in the survey have agreed (100%) that if the abovementioned actions work well, then the migration will be reduced. Similar studies in the field like, Land Policy Initiatives (LPI), Alfred Bizoza, an Agricultural Economist from the University of Rwanda who presented on “Population growth and land scarcity: the other side of the coin” for the “Land Policy Initiative Conference held on 12-14 November 2014” in the bulletin by Didier Habimana”, insisted that if “Africa wants to

<sup>2</sup> Here, biological need crisis indicates the challenges of sexual drive and child bearing

achieve what she wants, needs to focus and give much attention on “Non-farm sectors need for Africa’s development”.

Table 7. Action needed to reduce Migration

Action needed	Frequency	Percent
self-employment access, attitudinal or behavioural change, developing small scale agro-industry, and creating access to market	30	100.0

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this research was to assess women’s right to access to and control over land, to examine the effects of husband’s migration on land accessibility for women, and to propose recommendations for securing women’s land right in the absence of husbands due to migration. Women’s land right has been highly affected by existing socio-cultural barriers, biased customs, insufficient enforcements of land proclamations and land administration legislations, women’s limited awareness and reluctance to claim for rights, women’s holding secondary positions in the society, and to some extent by effects of husbands’ migration. The study emphasized on actions needed for promoting gender sensitization.

Though, the study indicates that there are relatively decreasing statistical flow of migration, underneath, there is a significant and increasing migration rate in the future to happen in search of a better life due to land scarcity that has adverse implications for women’s rights to land. Therefore, it is important to better understand the dynamics around women’s land rights and migration with the aim of addressing the challenges and solutions to mitigating the negative implication. Furthermore as in many countries, Ethiopia needs to promote behavioral change to translate progressive laws and policies into enforceable land rights and to reduce migration. Without behavioral change in society, sustainable development goal and transformation plans remain a challenge. Strengthening women’s land right, fostering social acceptance and working with special attentions for behavioral change in social norms of grass root levels are of the importance for achieving land policy initiatives and socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by women and reducing migration practices through social psychology is a very important need.

Policy makers, non-governmental organizations, religious denominations, economists, journalists and other key stakeholder should advocate for mitigating migration and women’s land right. Targeting implementation of awareness on gender sensitization, address existing socio-cultural constraints of migration and land rights, engaging, empowering, and enabling women in shared responsibility of land administration affairs in the target communities are of importance. Government needs to prioritize and practically address in conferences for improving of women’s land rights and reducing migration with better standards of living and working conditions in rural communities. Finally, the questions of women’s right to access and control over land in relation to migration require a considerable further researches.

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