

# **Slum Housing and Income Generation: Women's Role in Obtaining Public Housing in Ethiopia with Particular Emphasis of Arada Sub-City, Kebele 03 in Addis Ababa**

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## **Abstract**

The study has three objectives. The first one is to enable to understand the living situations of poor female headed households living in kebele houses, while the second one is to use the outcome of the study as an impute for future intervention, and the third one is to contribute for further research. To realize these objectives, semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 100 female-headed households living in kebele houses in 'Gedam Sefer', Addis Ababa. Furthermore, observations and individual discussions were carried out while, conducting the interview. Data outputs and analysis were produced using SPSS.

The result indicated that, female-headed households are living with large family size characterized by extended family culture. Skill inventory analysis of respondents shows that individuals have been endowed with varieties of individual skills most of which are not utilized well by the individuals to lead their life properly. Further analysis of the respondents way of life indicated that majority of them are engaged in intermittent business out of which they earn minimal monthly income to meet basic needs of household members. The result of community skills show that heads of female-headed household are engaged more in religious and culture related community affiliations. Individuals show different perceptions towards specific skills. Some skills are high valued where as others are not considered as skills, however they contribute important means of living. The respondents understand housing as a place where they spent the night and where they work. The level of security to live in a kebele house is highly degraded due to fear of eviction as the result of local developmental and renovation program.

It is highly recommended that to understand the whole life of 'Gedam Sefer community, it is important to undertake an investigation of the indigenous knowledge, situation of their social networks and poverty coping mechanisms. The problems of 'Gedam Sefer' community are two fold reflected by their poor economic status as well as poor housing conditions. Therefore, local development actors should provide emphasis to the deep-rooted economic and social problems of this community who are living in the historic place of Addis Ababa.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Conceptual understanding**

The role of women to play in the household income generating activities is significant since ancient times. Women of both rural and urban communities have a lot to do with family life

improvement through their active participation in income generation, child up bringing, elder care and even to the extent of housing construction and management in some cultural contexts.

Women of developing countries have less power to control their own resources although the roles they play to support the family is paramount. One of the issues that seek continuous dialogue and research is women's role in obtaining and managing basic resources such as means of production, housing, and control over family income. The focus of this research is therefore on the role of women in obtaining public housing and income generation in Ethiopia.

A house is different from that of home for a number of reasons. "Although a house is an object, a part of the environment, home is best conceived of as a kind of relationship between people and their environment. It is an emotionally based and meaningful relationships between dwellers and their dwelling places", (Kimberly D., 1985: 34). As the focus of this research is on housing and income generating activities of individual female-headed households, the interaction of members of the households to the larger environment is not the attention of this study. Main emphasis is given to the role the women play to obtain public housing and in income generating activities.

Public housing in Ethiopia is divided into two major categories. The first category includes those houses administered by a special agency called Agency for Administration of Rented Houses (AARH). The AARH administers those houses with a monthly rent of Birr beyond 100 (Tarekegn A., 2002: 14). The second category of public houses is administered by Kebeles (the lowest unit of government administration). Kebeles administer those public houses with monthly rent of 100 Birr or less. In most cases, houses administered by AARH are well constructed and are found in good physical shapes. On the other hand those houses administered by Kebeles are found in a poor physical condition and are mostly dwelled by low-income groups. The research deals with female-headed households who live in Kebele houses.

### **Issues Related to Housing and Income Generation**

A house and a place for income generation are one and the same for poor people. The house is a place where they live and a space where they produce their means of subsistence. "A [house] not only provides a shelter and food but also is a place from which, in which one claims an identity.... A human organism intact with the building, the objects it contains, and its settings" (Nel N., (2002: 444). In addition to become identity to members of the household, a house to the poor community in general and poor females in particular is a place where they use as a space for production.

### **The Study Area**

The study area is traditionally called 'Gedam Sefer' (village of monastery). The area is located in Arada Sub-City, Kebele 03 in Addis Ababa. The population of Kebele 03 is estimated 22, 000 with a total of 2,400 households (Arada Eco-City Project Office, 2004). In this same Kebele female population accounted for 54.6%. The master list of households available in Kebele 03 indicated that the total female-headed households who owned Kebele houses account for 798.

Itinerant trading and daily labor are common sources of income generating and means of livelihood for most residents, especially women headed households (Arada Eco-City Project Office, 2004). Majority of the residents of the Kebele used to run their business where they are living. This is more common to those residents who own Kebele houses.

## **2. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESSES**

### **2.1 Scope and significance**

The study has covered one Kebele in Arada Sub-City in the city of Addis Ababa. Target population for the study was female-headed households living in Kebele houses. The main focuses of the study include: understanding individual skills of various types, community participation, roles of women in income generation and the concept of housing. The study was expected to meet the following objectives; 1) enable to understand the living situations of poor female headed households living in kebele houses, 2) to use the out put of the study as an impute for future intervention, and 3) to contribute for further research

### **2.2 Research Design, Methods and Process**

#### **2.2.1 Design and Methods**

A total of 100 female-headed households were drawn as the sample of the study. The sample was drawn from a total of 798 female-headed households living in kebele houses in Kebele 03 of Arada Sub-City in Addis Ababa. A systematic random sampling technique was used to draw sample elements. This research was facilitated by Kebele 03 administration in Arada Sub-City, who previously facilitated a student-led community assessment process.<sup>1</sup> An Individual Skills Inventory<sup>2</sup> was administered and a database developed. Qualitative and quantitative interviews were focused on 1) the meaning of house and home; 2) individual skills inventory, and 3) the income-generating role of household women.

Criteria for selection of sample elements from the population list include the following:

- They have to be registered and indicated in the master list as residences of that particular Kebele where renovation or total demolition will take place.
- They have to have possessed Kebele<sup>3</sup> houses previously.
- They have to be heads of female-headed households

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<sup>1</sup> Kebede, W., Gessese, A., et al. (2004, October). Community Assessment on Slum Upgrading Program: The Case of *Gedam Sefer*. Community. School of Social Work: Addis Ababa University.

<sup>2</sup> Kretzmnn, J.P., & McKnight, J.J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

<sup>3</sup> The *kebele* is the smallest unit of city government. Subsidized housing is managed at the kebele level.

### **2.2.2 Research Processes**

Professor Alice K. Johnson who had taught a community assessment course in September 2004 for graduate students of Social Work in Addis Ababa University developed the interest for this research. Based on her interest to undertake the research, two Masters students of Social Work from Addis Ababa University and who undertook a preliminary community assessment on Slum Upgrading Program research in Gedam Sefer area with other students were recruited by the professor to involve as assistant researchers of the project.

Based on the advice from the Professor, preliminary contact was made with Kebele 03 officials by the assistant researchers and confirmation for the research was obtained from the Kebele Administration. On the basis of the approval by the Kebele to undertake the research, Professor Alice K. Johnson had developed the research proposal and has got approval from Illinois and Addis Ababa universities. Professor Alice developed the research questionnaires and necessary inputs from the assistant researchers were made to make sure specific issues to Ethiopian context were included.

In June 2005, two formal meetings were held among Kebele 03 officials, the principal investigator and assistant researchers. Important technical issues were discussed and reached into consensus. Data collection was started in the presence of the principal investigator. Based on few pilot interviews, important adjustments were made to the questionnaires and the way the interview should be proceed. The assistant researchers did the whole interviews with a help of a guide contacted in Kebele 03 and who had traced each sample households. Professor Alice Johnson covered most portion of the research cost from her own pocket.

A SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) was used to enter and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to make the information ready for report writing. The assistant researchers did the data entry and analysis and draft report writing. The principal researcher commented the draft report and finalizing the research work.

## **3. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **3.1 Personal Information**

#### **3.1.1 General**

The research was conducted on one hundred female-headed households. Interviews were held with heads of the households whose ages range from 20 years to over 60 years. The research outcomes indicated that majority of the respondents fall within the age range of 41-50 years, which accounted for 29% of the total respondents. The second highest age range is between 51 to 60 years, which accounted for 21% of the total respondents. The least age range falls in over 60 years, which accounted for 13%.

Since the focus of the research was female-headed households, the analysis excluded married Kebele house occupants. According to the outcomes of this research 35% of the respondents were widowed, 26% single, 23% separated and the rest 16% were divorced.

Regarding education status of the respondents, the research findings indicated that illiterate women (who are unable to read and write) accounted for 28%. This was preceded by elementary class attendants (grade 1-6), which accounted for 37% of the total respondents. Moreover, 16% of the respondents were found to be educated in the grades 7 to 10. The rest 11%, 2%, and 6% were reached to grades 11 and 12, vocational and some college trainings respectively. The following table illustrates education category of the research respondents.

**Table1: Education status of respondents**

Education level	Respondents	Percent
Non/illiterate/	28	28.0
Grade 1-6	37	37.0
Grade 7-10	16	16.0
Grade 11-12	11	11.0
Vocation	2	2.0
Some colleges	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0

The size of households of the respondents was another focus of interest. Accordingly, the research outcomes indicated that family members in each household ranges from one person in a household to over eight persons in another household. The finding indicated that majority of the respondents (28%) have family members ranging from 6-8 persons. On the other hand some 22% of the respondents have 5 members in their houses. Those respondents with one family member accounted only for 4%. On the other hand, two groups of 13% respondents have 2 and 3 persons as family members in their households. Similarly, 12% and 8% of the respondents confirmed that they have 4 persons and over 8 persons in the household respectively. The average family size in rural and urban Ethiopia is 4.9 and 4.2 persons respectively (The World Bank, et al, 2004).

### 3.1.2 Nature of family relationship

Having some understanding on the size of a family in a given household, to know the nature and type of relationship (*a relationship between the respondent and the rest of family members*) was another interest of the research. **Nature of the relationship** is explained in terms of blood and cultural ties that exist between the respondent and other family members. The **type of relationship**, on the other hand, is described by conditions of living together on a permanent or temporary basis in a given household. The outcomes of the study indicated that a total of 51 respondents have adult daughters living together. From these respondents, 28 of them have one adult daughter. Similarly, 14 respondents have two daughters, other 7 respondents have 3 daughters and the rest two respondents have over three daughters.

On the other hand, the research outcomes tell us that 39 respondents have adult sons living together. Out of these 39 respondents, 19 of them (or 19% of the total respondents) have one adult son living together. Moreover, the rest 13, 6 and 1 respondents have two, three and over three sons living with them respectively. Further, the research outcomes show that seven respondents support their natural mothers and other eight respondents support their natural fathers.

A detail investigation was made to understand the situation of relationships that exist between head of households and other family members apart from daughters, sons and natural parents. As the result, 37 respondents have other extended family members living in the households on a permanent basis. Such extended family members include immediate relatives (brothers and sisters) and non-immediate relatives distant by three to four generation lines. More specifically, 21 respondents support one extended family member, whereas, nine, three and four respondents support two, three and over three extended family members respectively. The research further understands that respondents are also supporting non-relative adults with whom they know each other through different conditions. Out of the total respondents, 13 of them are living with one or more non-relative adults.

With regard to the number and relationship of children who live in the respondents' households, the research was focusing on the number of birth children, children from extended families or not related by blood, magnitude of orphan children and the ages of the child population living in the respondents' houses. The outcome in this regard indicated that 41 individual respondents are taking care of their own children. Other 23 respondents support children from extended families. In addition, 11 respondents are caring for their grand children. Moreover, nine respondents are supporting children not related by blood.

When we look at the age ranges of children supported by research subjects, 29 respondents support children of ages from less than one year to five years. Other 35 respondents are caring for children of ages six to ten years. Similarly, number of respondents who care for ages of children from 11 to 15 years are 41.

The size of orphan child population was significant in this research outcome. Some 32 respondents are supporting orphan children. From these 32 respondents, 8 of them support one orphan child. Moreover, 16 and 7 respondents care for two and three orphan children respectively. Only one respondent cares for over three orphans. When we look at the number of years that respondents care for orphan children, majority of them have been caring for over six years.

The number of respondents who are taking care of older children whose age ranges from 16 to 18 years are less compared to those respondents who are taking care of children in other age groups. Twenty-two respondents care for one child in this age category and only four respondents care for two children under the same age group. This classification does not mean that a respondent who is caring for a child in one age category is not taking care of another child in another age category. Moreover, those who support their birth children can also care for those who are from extended family or unrelated ones.

The number of children in each household varies from one child to over three children in a given family. In specific terms, 25 respondents care for one child, whereas, 23 respondents care for two children. Furthermore, 16 and 7 respondents care for three and over three children respectively. The size of children in a household is summarized in the following table.

**Table2: Total number of children in a household**

Number of children in a household	Households	Percent
Have no any child	29	29.0
1 child	25	25.0
2 children	23	23.0
3 children	15	15.0
Over 3 children	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0

### **3.1.3 Sources and amount of income**

The finding has indicated that respondents of this research have different sources of income. A total of eight types of income sources were identified. Many of the respondents have single source of income. From those respondents with single source of income, majority of them depend on their own trade. This category accounted for 31% of the total respondents. Other 18% of the respondents live on monthly salary they earn from employment either in private sectors or in government offices. The rest 47% of respondents live on different sources of income than mentioned above. Such sources of income include; support from relatives, adult children, pension, support from extended family members or unrelated individuals. Only 4% of the respondents refused to cite their source of monthly income.

The amount of monthly income of respondents was another area of interest in this research. Accordingly, majority of the respondents fall within a monthly income of two broad categories that range from Ethiopian Birr 101-200 and 201-400, which accounted for 30% each. Those respondents who earn between Ethiopian Birr 401 – 600 accounted for 17%. Only 4% of the respondents earn Ethiopian Birr 600 and over. The least range of earning is Ethiopian Birr 50 and less per month, which accounted for 6% of the total respondents. Moreover, those respondents who receive a monthly income of Birr 51 to 100 accounted for 9%. Only 4% the respondents were missing to tell their monthly income. The average expenditure of a household in Ethiopia is estimated to be 440 Birr per month (The World Bank, et al, 2004).

### **3.1.4 Relationships of variables**

The research has emphasized to understand the relationships that exist among different variables. In other words the nature of relationships (positive and negative influences) among the situation of marital status, educational level, family size, type of family relationship, size of children and source and amount of income were analyzed to understand their influential factors one among the other. To understand such kinds of relationships, a cross tabulation analysis was made. Accordingly, the following results were obtained

#### **a) Family relationship versus age of respondents**

Depending on the age of respondents, different family situations and support systems were observed. Family size is high between the ages of 40 to 50 years, which is 6 to 8 person per household. This is over the average family size in the country. The old age group of respondents,

which is over 60 years in most cases, is single headed households. A Very insignificant number of this group has one or two members in the households.

The relationship among head of households and the rest of the family indicated that many respondents are living with two or more adult sons than adult daughters. This situation is in contrary to the usual practice in Ethiopia that adult sons leave home early compared to adult daughters. The reason why adult sons remain at home while adult daughters left at early age is not clear for this research. This situation needs further investigation. The young age group of respondents (20-30 years) cares for many extended members compared to other age groups of respondents.

Significant number of respondents have no their own birth children. Most of those respondents who have their birth children have only one child. Respondents within the age category of 40-50 years have more than one birth children compared to other age groups. This same group has also cared for more orphan children than other age groups. When we look at the number of children in a household majority of the households have only one child.

In relation to caring for orphan children, those respondents within the age bracket of 40-50 years care for more orphan children compared to other age groups of respondents. On the other hand, those respondents whose age is over 60 years have also taking care of significant number of orphan children. The reason for such unusual significant representation could be an indication that orphan-hood could be associated with HIV/AIDS where young parents died leaving children with their grant parents. This hypothesis should be tested through an organized research work.

#### **b) Marital status and orphan children**

Marital status of respondents in this research was categorized as widowed, separated, divorced and single women. Out of those house heads who have orphan children or who cares for an orphan child, widowed respondents have taken the lion share for taking care of orphan children. The reason why this group of women are caring for many orphan children is not clear and can be a subject of study in the future. It is also these widowed women who have the largest number of orphans in their houses. Similarly, many widowed women are caring for their own children. Single mothers take the least percentage in caring for orphan children

#### **c) Education versus family size and relationship**

According to the findings of this research educational status and family size is inversely related. Non-literates and those who attended only primary education have large family size than those respondents who have high school education and above. When the level of education increases, the size of the family decreases. By the same token, the number of extended or unrelated family members decreased as the level of education of the respondents increased. This shows that the concept of nuclear family is significant when respondents have better educational level.

#### **d) Level of Education versus marital status**

The findings of the research indicated that large numbers of widowed respondents are non-literate. Many non-married (single) women are found in junior and high school levels of



education. The patterns of separated and divorced females have similar distribution at all levels of education. This distribution is skewed more at vocational and college levels of education

**e) Education status and source of income**

Across all grade levels, source of income for majority of the respondents is from own trade. Compared to other groups, many respondents who are in the middle grade levels (grade 7-10) lead their lives based on their own salary. Many non-literate respondents of the research live on support from own adult children and pension. From those respondents who are at college level of education, many of them are living on their own salary. Details of education status vis-à-vis source of income are depicted in the following table.

**Table3 Sources of income Versus Educational status of respondents**

	Educational status of respondents							Total
		Non/illiterate/	Grade 1-6	Grade 7-10	Grade 11-12	Vocation	Some college	
<b>Sources of income</b>	Own salary	3	5	4	3		3	18
	Own trade	7	13	7	4		1	32
	Pension	5	3	1				9
	support from adult children	6	3	2	2			13
	support from extended family	2	3					5
	support from unrelated people		3			1	1	5
	own income and support from children or other people	3	7	2	2	1	1	16
	Missing	2						2
<b>Total</b>		28	37	16	11	2	6	100

**f) Age and source of income**

According to the findings of the research, living on salary decrease as the age of respondents increase. On the other hand, when the age of responds increase, the numbers of individuals who live on their own trade also increase. The more the age of the respondents become younger, the more they live on salary. Inversely, the older the age of respondents the more they live on trade. This finding is also directly related to age and level of education. The education status of respondents is regressively related to their age. The older the age of respondents is the lesser in their educational status.

**g) Source and amount of income**

Majority of those respondents who live on their own salary and combination of more than one means of income have got better income compared to others living on other single means. It is observed that among each means of livelihood, those who earns salary get Birr 100 and above

per month. On the other hand those who live on their own trade their income ranges from less than 50 Birr to over 600 Birr per month. Majority of this group falls within the income range of 100 to 200 Birr per month. Pensioners have got from 100 to 200 Birr per month.

## **3.2 Skill analysis and findings**

### **3.2.1: Individual Skills Analyses and findings**

The individual skills analyses explain varieties of practical knowledge acquired by individual respondents. The extent to which each respondent has knowledge on different types of skills and the level that the skills help respondents to lead way of life are described in the following parts.

#### **3.2.1.1 Health care skills**

The research findings show that the respondent women have health care skills of different types. Over 90% of the respondents confirmed that they have more than one form of health care skills. Over 85% of the respondents have skills of caring for elders, for the sick and pregnant women. The least number of respondents (47%) have skills caring for the mentally ill. Those who confirm they have skills to care individuals living with HIV/AIDS are 65% of the total respondents.

The kind of supports that the respondents render to the needy is another area where the research has emphasized. Majority of them (96%) provide feeding support. Next to feeding, the main supports that respondents give were explained as preparation of special diet (84%) and bathing and clothing supports (75%) respectively. The least supports given to the needy were stated as financial support (38%) followed by midwifery support (20%).

Respondents who have skills to provide health care were categorized in terms of their age, level of monthly income and education status. Accordingly, the following results were found. Those respondents whose ages are between 40-50 years provide maximum health care to the needy. Majority of respondents who provide different forms of health care, their income ranges between 200 and 400 Birr per month. Those respondents whose monthly income ranges from 100 to 200 Birr per month follow this. Those respondents whose monthly income is greater than 400 Birr are the least supporters. Regarding educational status of respondents in relation to practical experience in providing health care, those who are found in the primary education level are the most health care providers. Non-literate respondents follow this group.

#### **3.2.1.2 Office Related Skills**

A list of office related skills were described for the respondents to tell in which types of skill they are well experienced. Although it is not necessarily considered as office skills majority of the respondents (71%) stated that they have a skill of taking telephone message. This is followed by a skill of receiving phone orders (64%) and skill of reception (43%) respectively. The least office related skill that respondents know is computer skill, which is known only by 6% of the respondents.

In order to understand whether the types of skills that the respondents know are influenced by level of education and age, a cross tabulation analysis was done. Accordingly, most of the non-literate respondents know how to take phone calls and receive calls and operating switchboard. On the other hand, typing, filing and working with computers are exercised by those whose education level is at least grade ten. Most of the young respondents (20-30 years of age) are not engaged in many office related skills. Those whose age ranges from 30-40 are engaged in skills related to working with computers, typing, and operating adding machines. On the other hand those respondents under the age range of 40 to 50 years have experiences in filling, taking phone message and receiving telephone calls which do not require better educational standard compared to other types of office related practices.

### **3.2.1.3 Construction and Repairing Skills**

Thirty types of construction and repairing skills were listed for the respondents to mention any of the skills that they have some knowledge and practice. Majority of the respondents (81%) know the skill of kitchen modernization. Next to kitchen modernization, the other top five skills most respondents know include furniture repairs, bathroom modernization, building room additions, repairing chimney and chimney sweep. All the five skills mentioned here are known by over 50% of the respondents. In contrast, the five skills known by the least respondents include building garages, installing drywall & taping, cabinetmaking, and soldering & welding and concrete work. Ten or less percent of the respondents know these skills

The research was interested to know the relationship between the top and least skills mentioned above with that of education status of respondents. Accordingly, the following results were found. From the top six skills known by many respondents, majority of the respondents who know these skills are found in the primary education level. Non-literate respondents who know the top six skills follow this group of respondents. These two categories become influential because majority of the respondents involved in the interview were found to be in the primary level of education. Moreover the skills do not require better education than the grade levels mentioned here.

Respondents with the skills of soldering & welding and concrete work (which are the least mentioned skills) are also with less education levels. Those respondents who know cabinet making, installing dry wall & taping are found in the secondary and high school levels. The respondents who have the skills in how to build garages are distributed equally across all grade levels.

The interesting finding in this research is identified in relation to the skill of carpentry, roof repair and roof installation. In many cultures in Ethiopia, especially in the urban context, these skills are assumed to be particular professions to males. But, in the research findings, 13% of the respondents were found to have skills of carpentry. Similarly, 41% and 40% of the respondents were found to have skills of roof repair and roof installation respectively. This finding negates the deep-rooted cultural beliefs, which conclude women are not able to engage in male dominated jobs.

### **3.2.1.4 Maintenance Skills**

Compared to the skills of construction and repair, many respondents have skills of maintenance. Thirteen types of maintenance skills were listed for respondents to explain whether they have skills of any kind. The least response obtained was on skills of wood stripping/refreshing, which only 15% of the respondents stated they have a skill in these areas. The highest specific skills in maintenance was obtained in relation to window washing and floor waxing or mopping which 90% of respondents claimed they have skills of both types.

Traditionally, people associate many of the maintenance skills to a group of individuals with low economic status and lesser education levels. To understand whether such social attachment is true or not, a cross checking analysis was done on maintenance skills against income level and education status of respondents. Accordingly, the following results were obtained.

From the income ranges specified in the research, most of the maintenance skills are attached to a middle-income group, ranging from 200-400 Birr per month. For example, the skill of using a hand truck in a business, which was experienced by the least respondents (15%) according to the research outcome, is a skill practiced by a better of income group whose monthly income ranges from 400-600 Birr. This does not exactly tell that maintenance skills listed in the questionnaire are associated with low-income group. From the observation made during the research interview, most of the skills seem associated with housing condition and physical environment where respondents are living. However, this needs a systematic investigation.

The test for the relationship between maintenance skills and education status of respondents show that level of education does not necessarily influence skill of maintenance. According to the out come of this research, the social attachment which assumes the kind of maintenance skills listed in the questionnaire as associated with low level of education doesn't hold true.

### **3.2.1.5 Skills in relation to food preparation**

Among all types of skill categories included in the research, food preparation related skills found to be the most obvious and widely exercised skills by many respondents. Except the skills related to operating commercial food preparation equipment, bartending and preparation of Italian food, which were experienced by 67%, 28%, and 2% of respondents respectively, all the other skills are experienced by, over 95% the respondents.

To understand as to why majority of the respondents have better experience in skills of food preparation compared to other skill categories, a correlation analysis was done between types of food preparation related skills and sources of income. Accordingly, the following results were obtained.

Most respondents who have skills in food preparation and related activities are leading their life through their own trades of different types. This result could tell us that most of the respondents involved in the research are possibly leading their life through trade. Moreover, the out come of the research in this regard is an indication that skills of women have direct relation with means of livelihood.

### **3.2.1.6 Caring for babies**

One of the skills that respondent women do know most is caring for children of different categories. Accordingly, majority of the respondents, which accounted for 97%, have skills to care for babies of less than one year and for children of 1-6 years and 7-13 years. This skill is dramatically dropped to 36% when it comes to caring for children with disabilities. This dramatic drop in skills of caring for disabled children can be attributed for two reasons. One is due to actual absence of children with disabilities in the households for which the respondents might not have practical experience in caring for children with disabilities. The second reason could be due to cultural influence. Although there is practical experience in caring for children with disabilities, respondents might not tell the truth due to wrong perception about unnecessary judgment. This assumption requires further investigation. Only 66% of the respondents have experience in their life to take children to field trips.

To understand the sources from where the respondents have got the skills for taking care of children, a correlation analysis was done between the existence of children in the household and the type of skills that respondents know in relation to childcare. The result of the analysis indicates that about 70% of the respondents have children in their own home, and their skill of caring for a child comes through direct practice. The rest 30% associate their skills of caring for children either to the past experience or some exposure to the environment where children grow.

### **3.2.1.7 Skills in Transportation**

A range of questions from simple knowledge/skill in how to drive a car to driving a high/heavy truck was asked. Very insignificant number of respondents has skills in one or another type of transportation. The highest response was a skill related to hauling (24%). Only 7%, 1% and other 1% respondents know the types of skills in driving a care, driving a bus, driving an ambulance, respectively. The low range of respondents who operate means of transportation is a reflection of access to such means of transportations. Most respondents are from the poor economic sections of the society. As the result, many of them do not use vehicles as means of transpiration, leave alone to operate the machines.

### **3.2.1.8 Skills in Operating Equipments & Repairing Machinery**

Respondents were asked to what extent they know in how to operate as well as repair equipments such as radio, tape recorders elevators crane etc. The analysis of the response given shows the following result.

From the total list of 18 questions asked in relation to skills of operating equipments & repairing machinery, majority of the respondents say “yes” only for seven questions, related to operating radio, television, tape recorder and repairing radio, small appliances, fixing washers and assembling items. The largest percentage was found in skills of operating radio, which is accounted for 11% of the respondents.

The responses given in relation to the questions asked to understand skills of operating equipments and repairing machinery were the indications that, the target group of this research have no access to basic household items as radio, tape recorder and television, etc, leave alone access to refrigerator, automobile, etc which are considered to be luxurious goods in Ethiopian context. If exhaustive asset inventory were conducted, one can assume that the level of skills related to operating or repairing of equipments as listed in the research questionnaire could be the reflection of the availability or absence of such items in the household.

### **3.2.1.9 Skills in supervision**

Respondents were asked to tell their skills in relation to writing reports, filling out forms, making a budget, interviewing people, etc. The level of skills the respondents have in relation to this list of questions would be the reflection of their level of interaction with the larger community. The analysis indicated the following result.

The findings indicated that, although the members of the target group of the research come from the low socio-economic group, their skills in the above listed supervisory related activities show that many respondents have significant skills of various types. The skill of directing the work of others is known by 70% of respondents. As the research group understands what the respondents mean by skills in directing the work of others, it was found out that it does not mean in an organizational setting. When respondents say they have skills of directing the work of others it means at household or small group settings.

Apart from the skills of directing the work of others, a high proportion of responders stated that they have skills of making a budget and planning work for other people. The skills known by the least number of respondents were the skill of leading meetings and conferences.

### **3.2.1.10 Sales Skills**

Respondents were asked if they know sales related skills. Accordingly, 16% of the respondents told that they know how to operate a cash register, and other 7% of the respondents know a skill of wholesaling. Among those who have skills of wholesale, majority of them know how to sale food items in a wholesale. On the other hand 39% of the respondents have skills related to retail selling. Out of the total respondents who have skills of retail selling, 28% of them have specific skill in sale of food items.

The other question asked in relation to selling skills was about sale of services. Accordingly, 38% of the respondents have a skill of selling services. Skills of service provision listed by the respondents include, cleaning, childcare, sale of drinks and food items and parking service. Among the skills related to service provision, which the respondents know, childcare takes the lead followed by sale of drinks and cleaning services respectively.

The places where services are sold include; at home, door to door and in a store/shop settings. Selling at home takes the first priority whereas, a door to door and store/shop based sale took the second priority at equal basis.

### **3.2.1.11 Skills in Music**

Research respondents were asked to tell about their knowledge/skill in relation to music. Specific skills informed by the respondents include skills of singing, playing an instrument and types of instrument they play, types of traditional or ethnic dancing and ability in poem writing.

Over half of the total respondents (55%) have a skill of singing of traditional songs in one-way or another. The skill of playing an instrument was asked and those who responded “yes,” (48%) stated that they know how to play a traditional drum called ‘Kebero’. Those respondents who confirmed they know an ethnic/traditional dance, majority of them (64%) stated that, they know Amharic dance. Very small proportion of respondents stated that they know a traditional dancing from Gurage, Oromo and Tigrigna ethnic groups. A significant number of respondents (14%) said that they have traditional dancing skills from more than one ethnic or traditional groups. Those who are with a skill of poem writing are only 11% of the total respondents.

An interest was developed by the researchers to understand if there is any relationship between the ages of respondents with that of singing and related skills. According to the outcomes of the research, both singing, playing instruments and ethnic/traditional dance are well known by the group of respondents whose age range from 40-50 years. The next group of respondents in terms of age range who have better skills is those who are in the age range of 20-30 years. Skills in specific traditional dancing are well known by those respondents whose age is between 50 – 60 years. Poem writing is found to be a skill of those respondents in the younger and older ages (20-30 and 50-60 years).

One can ask why those respondents in the age range of 30-40 years are not active in singing related skills compared to the middle age 40-50 and the younger age 20-40 years. The assumption here could be that those in the young age (20-30) years are not in the position to think more about family life and they strive to satisfy their cultural and psychological needs. Similarly, those who are at the age range of 40-50 years, most of them, could have settled their family life and have to sometimes deal with their psychic and cultural issues. This scholastic assumption needs to be supported by detail investigation.

### **3.2.1.12 Skills in working as security**

Many respondents have skills in guarding residential property. This accounts for 56% of the total respondents. The other significant skill was observed in guarding commercial property that accounted for 23% of the total respondents. Other forms of guarding skills included in the questionnaires were those of guarding of industrial property, armed guard, crowd control, ushering at major events, etc. But, none of such skills were experienced by majority of the respondents. The largest response in this category of guarding skills was found in armed guard, which accounted for 6% of the total respondents.

Majority of the respondents who have skills of guarding residential property are under the age category of 40-50 years. According to the respondents’ expression, they found such skills during the Socialist Regime when both men and women were forced to exercise all activities

irrespective of their sex. During that time women were expected to perform a guarding job like men under a special mission called “guarding squads.”

### **3.2.1.13 Other Individual Skills**

A number of other skills that individual respondents would own were asked by this research. Most of these skills were home-based skills, which are related to the respondents’ day-to-day life. Some of the skills asked include knitting, embroidery, hairdressing, jewelry making, weaving, plate making out of grasses, traditional thread making, etc. Most of the respondents (86%) have a skill of moving furniture or equipments to different property locations. The second household skill known by many respondents (79%) is a skill of how to manage property. In contrast to this the least skill known by insignificant number of respondent is weaving and wood carving. Only 3% of the respondents know how to weave and carve wood.

People of the lower social strata such as weavers are expected to perform weaving. One of the surprising body language observed during the interviews was when respondents were asked about the skill of weaving. Almost every respondent was not at ease when they were asked about the skill of weaving. Even though many of the respondents were economically poor they do not consider weaving as a skill that anyone can know and earn some income out of the sale of this skill. Paradoxically, the skill of traditional thread making, which is known as the skill that produces threads used as inputs for weavers, were known by 63% of the respondents. This controversial attitude and knowledge among respondents regarding the skill of weaving and thread making needs to be studied further.

### **3.2.1.14 Priority Skills**

After having some understanding on the skills that individual respondents know the next issue was about understanding the perception of respondents towards the skills they have known or how they use these skills. Other similar issues were also raised to the respondents. Discussion of the findings reveal the following results.

#### **a) Three priority skills respondents know**

Respondents were asked to list three skills they know best with a rank of first, second and third priority. Respondents who gave answers to the open-ended question “*When you think about your skills, what three things do you think you do best*”, listed fourteen types of skills as first priority? Among 97 individuals who gave responses to the question, 34 of them choose food preparation as their best skill. Next to food preparation was traditional thread making, which 15 respondents stated they do best. The third best skills known by two groups of 7 respondents each are house keeping & management and preparation of local drink. Other small proportion of respondents chose other types of skills as their priority area where they do best.

Among the total of 97 respondents who answered to the question mentioned above 17 of them stated that they do best in housekeeping & management. This was followed by skill of preparation of local drinks, which was mentioned by 13 respondents. Similarly, 11 respondents indicated that thread making is their best second skill of choice.



When we look at the third priority best skills that respondents know, the skill of housekeeping & management took the first rank stated by 13 respondents. This was followed by a skill of food preparation mentioned by 11 respondents. The third rank in this third priority was childcare as a skill indicated by nine respondents. A number of other lists of skills were mentioned by small group of respondents as their third best priority skills.

#### **b) Three saleable skills**

Once there was an understanding on the three best skills that respondents know, the next issue discussed was about to tell three saleable skills that respondents have which are good enough other people would hire them. In other words, *“What three skills do you have to sale so that you can earn some income out of them”* was the type of question asked. A total 27 respondents stated that food preparation is their first choice of saleable skills. Other 12 respondents stated that thread making is their first choice of saleable skills. There are other 11 types of skills chosen by small groups of respondents as their first priority saleable skills. Some of these skills include preparation of local drinks, sewing, knitting & embroidery, hairdressing, etc.

The second saleable skills mentioned by majority of the respondents are food preparation, chosen by 12 respondents and a skill of catering, which nine respondents stated. In this category of choice, the respondents mentioned some twelve lists of saleable skills as their second level of preference.

Respondents were also asked to tell their third priority saleable skills. Very few of the respondents had given answer to the question. Among those few respondents who have indicated their third priority saleable skills, majority of them choose thread making as their choice followed by skills of food preparation. In this category 97 respondents did not able to decide as they have third alternative skills to sale. In other words majority of individual respondents have two choices of saleable skills

#### **c) Three types of skills that respondents can teach**

It was not only the skills they know, or the skills they sale, but the skills that respondents can teach was also the focus of the research. Accordingly respondents were asked to mention three skills that they can teach to others in order of priority/choice to teach.

The findings of the research indicated that 92 respondents gave response regarding their first choice of skills that they can teach. Out of these respondents 47% of them prefer how to teach preparation of foodstuff. In the same category, 10% of the respondents chose to teach housekeeping and management as their first choice of teaching. There are a number of first choices mentioned by many small groups of respondents to teach for other individuals.

In the second category of teaching skills, 18% and 16% of respondents chose to teach in how to make foodstuff and housekeeping & management respectively. In this second choice of teaching other 10 types of skills were mentioned by groups of respondents as their preference to others. Majority of the respondents did not mention third alternatives of skills to teach others. Among those few respondents who choose a third type of skills to teach others, many of them mentioned

to teach in how to make local drinks. Some 75% of the respondents did not able to decide if they have a third choice of skills to teach others.

#### **d) Skills that respondents would like to learn**

Respondents have listed thirteen types of skills, as their first priority to learn. Majority of the respondents would like to learn modern food preparation as their first choice followed by seeking to learn computer skills. Other skills that respondents would like to learn as their first priority skills include; business, sewing, child or elder care, general management, mechanic, hairdressing, knitting & embroidery, etc. To understand the relationship between the need to learn and age and educational status of respondents, a cross tabulation analysis was done. Accordingly, the following results were obtained.

Majority of the respondents who would like to learn new skills at all priority levels (first, second and third) were those whose education level was in primary classes (grade 1-6). Those respondents whose education level is between grade 7 and 10 follow this. In terms of age, majority of the respondents who require new skill training are those whose age ranges from 20-30 years

### **3.2.2 Community Skills**

This part of the research focuses on understanding respondents' capacity/skills to perform different community related activities. Such community related activities include social skills or engagements in parent-teacher association, sport team, community-based institutions such as Edir<sup>4</sup>, Equib<sup>5</sup>, etc. Details of each type of community based skill analysis are presented as follows.

#### **3.2.2.1 Participation in Boy/Girl Scouts and Church Fund Raising**

Boy/girl scouts are not common practices in Ethiopian cultures. As the result only 2% of the respondents stated that they have ever been participated in boy/girl scouts. Those individuals who used to involve/participate in scouts are in the age ranges of 40-50 and 51-60 years. This tells something about the history of scouts in Ethiopia. Most young people, who had close relation with American Pease Corps in Ethiopia during 1950s and 1960s, had participated in scouts in the last era of Emperor Haileselassie. The two individuals who responded as they have skills of boy/girl scouts could be members of the Peace Corps scout group during their teen/young age in the late 1960s

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4 Edir is a community-based institution established on mutual interest of members and its primary objective is to support members during the time of crises such as death of family members.

5 Equib is a traditional money collecting system among a group of individuals who have common interest and trust of each other. The purpose of collecting money is to draw a lump sum of money for members on a turn basis so that individual members can have enough amount to perform a special business otherwise they cannot do so by their regular income.

In contrast to the number of respondents who have participated in scout, those who were involved in church fund raising accounted for 40% of the total respondents. However the research question was designed asking for participation in church fund raising, which is purely Christian oriented, during the process of data collection, Muslim respondents were asked if they were involved in religious related fund raising events. Therefore, the percent of respondents mentioned above include both Christian and Muslim individuals who involved in religious related fund raising activities.

### **3.2.2.2 Participation in Bingo and Parents-Teachers Association**

Like that of participation in scouts, only 2% of the respondents stated that they have participated in Bingo. No many respondents were also participated in parents-teachers association. Those individuals who have ever been participated in parents-teachers association accounted for only 7% of the total respondents.

### **3.2.2.3 Sport Teams and Camp Trips for Kids**

Majority of the respondents did not practice in sport teams and camp trips for kids. Only 3% and 4% of the total respondents involved in the sport team and camp trips for kids respectively. These results indicate that many of the community groups where this research was undertaken may be devoid of basic social activities such as sports and trips, which are important both for social life and individual health. In addition, parents are not developed habit to take their kids to picnics, which is an important aspect of child socialization.

### **3.2.2.4 Field Trips and Political Campaign**

Compared to taking children to a camp trip or going out as member of a sport team, respondents show better experience in going out for field trips themselves. Some 21% of the total respondents experienced field trips in one-way or another. From the qualitative information gathered during data collection, majority of the respondents who experienced field trip have practiced going to visit monasteries and other historical places in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, involvement of women (the respondents) in a political campaign is minimal. Only 7% of the respondents experienced involving in political campaign. This is an indication that women in Ethiopia are not involved much in the country's political affairs. In other words, politics in Ethiopia are yet the game of men not women. The reason why women are not actively involved in political life of the country could be an area of interest for further research. Those individuals who have been involved in political campaign are drawn from all age ranges across 20 to 60 years. Similarly, except non-literate respondents, other individuals ranging from primary education to college levels are involved in political campaign.

### **3.2.2.5 Leadership and Membership in Edir and other Social Groupings**

A number of social groupings such as being a leader or member of Edir, Mahber<sup>6</sup>, Equib, neighborhood associations and coffee groups are discussed in the research. The engagement of respondents in each type of social grouping varies depending on the nature and advantage of the association that it gives to the members.

The extent of involvement in being a leader of an Edir, Mahber or Equib is much lesser than being a member in any of the three social gatherings. For instance those respondents who have experienced leadership in edir are only 12% of the total respondents. Their leadership in mahber and equib is much lesser, which accounted only 2% and 1% of the respondents respectively.

In contrast to the leadership role the respondents play in edir, mahber and equib, majority of them are engaged in both community based institutions as members. Surprisingly enough, all women who responded, as they are members of women's edir are also members of men's edir. The respondents were asked, being women why do they engage in men's edir. They explained that men's edirs are responsible for major tasks in times of crises such as death of a person in a household which carry out all funeral related activities. Therefore, every female-headed household is expected to be a member of men's edir to get better support during death crises. Some 72% of the respondents are members of both men's and women's edir.

The respondents are also engaged in other social safety nets, which include mahber, equib, neighborhood association and coffee groups. Mahber takes the lead in bringing women together next to that of edir. Out of the total respondents, 42% are engaged in mahber of different forms. Neighborhood association has encompassed some 26% of the respondents. Neighborhood associations take a form of friends group, work colleagues group or neighbors/residents group. The purpose of the neighbors association has some similarities with the purpose of edir, mahber or equib. Equib is purely an economic oriented gathering where members come together to solicit money from members to support each other through round terms. Among the respondents of the research, 19% of them are engaged in equib during the period of the interview. To involve in equib one has to have permanent monthly income so that payment will be regular.

Coffee groups which have long history in Ethiopia, due to the country being the Home of different varieties of coffee, seems at the verge of degeneration due to a number of reasons. Only 19% of the respondents stated that they drink coffee with their neighbors. Those who do not engaged in coffee groups have reasoned out that for them not to engage in this social network is due to economic problem and development of unhealthy behavior by some neighbors due to urbanization, which leads to individualism. Moreover, unfamiliar neighbors who have nothing in common to establish coffee groups start to live as neighborhood. The respondents believe that coffee grouping was one of the best means to find solutions for many social problems in old days.

### **3.2.2.6 Future plan to continue in Social Groups**

Respondents were selective answering their future plan to continue engaging in any of community associations. Majority of the respondents (84%) show interest to continue in some of

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6 Mahber is a form of gathering by friends or relatives once in a month, which has some spiritual characteristics and ritualized after the name of some Saints such as Saint Mary, George, Michael, etc.

social gatherings. Some 65% of the total 94% respondents stated that they want to continue as members of edir. The next largest group of respondents, (17%) of the total respondents, need to continue as members of mahber. The other two social groups in which very insignificant numbers of respondents need to continue are neighborhood association and equib, which accounted only 6% and 1% of the total respondents respectively. Other 5% of the total respondents need to continue as members of two or more of the social groupings mentioned above.

Analysis was done to understand the relationship between some type of social grouping and respondent's age, economic and educational characteristics. As the analysis outcomes indicate respondents are members of edir irrespective of their age category with some pick at the age range of 40-50 years. Those who are at elementary level of education (grades 1-6) are engaged more in edir compared to other respondents with different education level. Non-literate individuals are those who engaged more in edir next to those at the elementary education level. Those respondents whose income ranges from 201-400 Birr per month are engaged more in edir than other income groups, which is followed by those with income range of 101-200 Birr per month.

The analysis for the relationships between Mahber as a social group and age, education and level of income as characteristics of individual respondents, indicate that, individuals become members of a 'mahber' irrespective of their age with some pick at the age range of 40-50 years. For the same social grouping, those individuals who have an elementary education are engaged more in Mahber compared to other education groups, which is followed by non-literate respondents. On the same token, those respondents with income level of Birr 201-400 are more in Mahber compared to other income groups, which is followed by the income group of Birr 101-200.

### **3.2.3 Enterprising Interests and Experience**

#### **3.2.3.1 Business Activities**

In relation to enterprise interests and experience, different issues such as modes of earning, types of services which respondents sale, kind of customers, forms of engagement (on private or micro enterprise forms), and conditions of working capital were discussed. From the total respondents, 51% stated that they earn their means of living (income) through sale of services. There are seven types of services that respondents used to sale. Out of these seven types of services, production and sale of local drinks takes the lead. Eighteen of the 51 respondents who are living through sale of services are engaged in the production and sale of local drinks<sup>7</sup>. Sale of local drinks is followed by preparation and sale of foodstuff. The least type of service that individuals engaged in is traditional thread making.

Majority of respondents who lead their life through sale of services stated that they do not have special group of people whom they consider as their customers. This accounted for 45 of the total 51 respondents. The means of service delivery system which respondents use to reach their

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<sup>7</sup> Local drinks include 'Tela' (home made beer) liquor, 'bordie' (non alcoholic home made beer)

customers includes; customers visit producers' shops (19 respondents), customers visit producers' homes (18 respondents), and producers visit customers residence (9 respondents).

The mechanism through which service producers use to improve their business was another area of interest for discussion. Accordingly, 34 respondents stated that it is through their own personal effort that they try to improve their business. Other very small proportion of the respondents stated that they improve their business through production of quality goods (9 respondents) and through training (only 4 respondents).

From the overall respondents who stated that they engaged in service giving activities, only ten of the 51 respondents are engaged in micro-business enterprises. All of those who engaged in micro-business are organized through Kebele<sup>8</sup>. The start up capital of those who engaged in micro-business is drawn from own contribution and support from government (6 out of 10 respondents), own contribution only (3 out of 10 respondents) and loan from government (1 out of ten respondent). The lowest start up capital for those respondents who engaged in micro-business enterprise was mentioned as ranging from 4,000.00 to 10,000.00 Birr. The highest start up capital was mentioned as between 20,000.00 to 30,000.00 Birr. The minimum number of members in a given micro-business enterprise was mentioned as six individuals where as the maximum number of members could reach to 17 individuals. One micro-business enterprise is less than one year since its establishment. Other three micro-business enterprises are between 1 and 2 years since they were established. Moreover, other two enterprises are over two years since they were established.

### **3.2.3.2 Business Interest**

About half of the respondents who participated in the interview indicated that they were not involved in any kind of business. Once we have some understanding regarding the status of actual involvement in business, it sounds ideal to ask respondents about their future plan of involvement in some kind of business. Hence, the following results were found from the analysis of data generated during the research.

From the total 100 respondents, 65% of them have thought to start business. These respondents are interested to start their business in different field of activities. Majority of them (39%), have plans to engage in different retailing trades. The second majority of respondents who need to start business (18%) want to work on preparation and sale of foodstuff. The third and fourth choices of respondents for future business engagement are preparation of local drinks and masonry works respectively. As indicated in the other section of this paper, majority of those respondents who are already engaged in some sort of business are operating their business by their own. Similarly, out of those respondents who want to establish their business in the future, majority of them (57 out of 65 respondents) need to start alone. Of these respondents, 55 have a plan to operate at their homes compound.

Respondents provided different reasons that hinder them to start business. Many respondents stated that financial problem and lack of appropriate working space prohibited them from realizing their plan. This accounted for 27 of the 65 respondents who need to start business. Pure

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<sup>8</sup> Kebele is the lower government administrative structure

financial problem is the obstacle for 26 respondents. On the other hand nine respondents stated that both financial, space and skill problems are the reasons behind for not to start their business. An individual respondent stated that her health problem is the only main reason for not starting business.

### **3.3. Understanding Socio - Economic Situation**

#### **3.3.1 Perception to indigenous skills**

Respondents have their own preference or choice of indigenous skills. Most of them did not appreciate their skills as important due to a number of reasons. When they were asked about their skills of food preparation, preparation of local drinks, childcare, involvement in community affairs, etc, they did not acknowledge that these lists are considered as skills. At the same time, even though they are living on the income they generate using such indigenous skills most of them do not recognize the skills they use for their day-to-day life are “real” skills. They wondered how food preparation or caring for a child is considered as skills.

Another interesting issue in relation to perception of skills is that some skills are marginalized by culture for which respondents were not even comfortable to be asked. The amusing cases in point are skills of pottery and weaving. When they were asked about pottery and weaving, many respondents attempted to retreat to stay with the interviewers to complete the rest of questions. This has indicated that, although there are a number of skills such as pottery, weaving, blacksmith, tannery and the like, due to cultural influence, interviewees might not responded properly. Therefore, a study of existing indigenous knowledge of the group using appropriate data collection methods could be an area of research topic.

Although many respondents confirmed that they know different skills, due to change in culture and attitude most of them are not currently using such skills. For example those who know how to make traditional thread making, traditional plate making out of grasses, and making of wood carves, they are not currently doing their business well due to cultural sanctions by modernization and replacement of products produced through such traditional kills by other modern mode of production and quality products with cheap price.

High valued skills in the study community are preparation and sale of foodstuff and local drinks, retail trade and office related skills. Skills of childcare and health care are not considered as skills to be learned. These skills are considered as gifts by God as obligations for every woman to carry out her special tasks of caring for children, the sick and the elderly. Such perception of considering some skills as unwanted and others as an obligation by God might hinder individuals to promote their skills and use for income generating activities.

There are also other activities considered by respondents, as they are skills, but which are probably not. For example some old women who engaged in begging consider their activities as special skill they possess begging might have some social and spiritual positive values, but to consider such activity as a skill might be a misleading concept. This could need an independent study to understand how society understands begging. To understand to what extent the community in the research area accepts begging and related activities, there is a need to understand the *modes of social network, communication and poverty coping mechanism* exercised in that particular community.

### 3.3.2 Social welfare, network and support systems (social capital)

'Gedam Sefer' community members in general and female-headed households in particular are some of the poor segments of communities living in Addis Ababa. Majority of the respondents are out of the formal sector economic system where individuals could earn their income from trade or employment. Majority of them are engaged either in intermittent trade or a socially unacceptable or less recognized income generating activities such as prostitution or begging.

Due to less secure economic base of the community, the social network system is stronger than the legal or formal support system. Many of the old women who are living based on their irregular and intangible incomes have no either pension or formal support from legal institutions. Majority of them are either supported by, their neighbors, adult children (if they have any at all), or distant extended families. The support by neighbors, children or distant relatives range from simple economic support such as provision of some food, to a range of social support as healthcare, housing maintenance, and sharing of a house. The *webs* of social networks these groups of women have exercised, needs to be investigated in detail.

The role of Edir and Mahber as part of social support system is very prominent. Almost every household head, irrespective of her economic or financial status is member of Edir not only female's Edir but also men's Edir. Edir provides social security for its members and other dependents in the household not only during life but also at the time of death.

Old women in 'Gedam Sefer' have wider network with rural community out side Addis Ababa, as most of them are migrants themselves or have relatives of their parents who migrated to Addis Ababa. Due to such wider network, many of them are living through economic support from their relatives living in rural areas. These old women are supported not in terms of money but in kind. Like that of their social network, coping mechanism they adopted to challenge their poverty living situation looks beyond imagination from the out set. Therefore, the *links* that exist among the respondent women's *indigenous knowledge, social networks & communication and poverty coping mechanisms* should be well examined to have better understanding on the living style of this particular group.

In 'Gedam Sefer' neighbors are found to be supportive. Because of poor and congested nature of the village, economic activities of most residents, specially the poorest section of the community are self contend. This means the members of community mostly consume their products since communities of other areas of the city are not much interested to visit the area for a number of reasons.

To prevent their neighbors from bankruptcy, members of the villages are willing to buy the products although they have the choice to get better products in other areas of the city. The case in point could be the example of Tela<sup>9</sup> and liquor sellers. When a neighbor is producing the local drinks, others are expected to buy and drink not only to satisfy their thirst or the need for drink

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<sup>9</sup> Tela is one of the local drinks (local Beer) made of barely or wheat and sorghum plus a special leaf used to ferment the mixture.



but also to make sure their neighbor is successful in selling of the foodstuff prepared so that next day that individual is not turning to socially unaccepted activities. The survival mechanism of 'Gedam Sefer' community in the absence of formal support based on indigenous knowledge, social network and communications systems is a lesson for change agents to start development from the skill and experience that the community have already owned.

### **3.3.3 Meaning and perception to housing function**

The meaning of housing is relative depending on the contexts we are talking about. For 'Gedam Sefer' community, especially to those female-headed households who are living in Kebele houses, housing is nothing but just a room where they are able to spend the night, protect themselves and their household members from rain and sun, cold and other hazards. Quality and standard have no place in the minds of 'Gedam Sefer' community to define and understand what a house is to mean.

Most of the houses observed during the interviews were as old as one generation. Over (70%) of the houses are single roomed with mud floors and sack ceilings. As it is indicated in the other section of this paper, the average family size in the household is over five people. On the other hand, the size of majority of the houses is about 4m<sup>2</sup>. Many houses are again with old roofs and leaking during rainy seasons. Easy access is difficult to many houses not only for vehicles but also for walking due to narrow pavements.

One of the strategies that households accommodate all family members with such narrow single roomed houses is by using the room during the day as a working, dining and resting room and during the night as a sleeping space. Another alternative that was observed how people with narrow room houses try to accommodate shortage of space was through building double beds where some household members sleep at the bottom and the rest members sleep at the top. During daytime these beds use to store household goods including foodstuff and other moveable furniture.

With the above general observation, respondents were asked about their feeling on the concept and meaning of a home. The first question was about the actual purpose of the home. From the total respondents 79% of them stated that they use their homes for living. The rest 19% stated that they use both for living and business. Although some respondents stated that they also use their home to run business, about 88% of the total respondents explained that they prefer to use their homes for living than doing any thing else.

Respondents were asked how they feel living in kebele houses. Four different responses were observed among the respondents regarding their feeling of living in kebele houses. Some 32% of the respondents said they feel secure living in kebele houses. Other 27% stated that they feel insecure. Still other 22% explained that they are more secure. Whereas, the remaining 15% stated that they are not secure at all. Only 2% claimed that they are extremely secure.

To understand the contributing factors, which enforce behind respondents' response on level of security for living in a kebele house, a correlation between purpose of the house and age and income level of respondents were explored. According to the outcome of the analysis of

respondents' age against actual purpose of the home, those respondents whose age ranges over 60 years use their home for living purpose only compared to other age groups. This could be because; women in old age group are not capable of running business so that they cannot use their home to run businesses. For those respondents whose age ranges from 40-50 years the important purpose of their home is for living. Young respondents (age 20-30 years) are less secure living in kebele houses. When we look at the relationship between level of income and actual purpose of the houses, those respondents whose income level ranges between 200 and 400 Birr, feel that the house is more purposeful for living. Regarding level of security, those respondents whose income is at the top of the other respondents (400-600) Birr per month, feel that they are more secure living in kebele houses.

Respondents were also asked to tell their future plan of using their houses. About 81% of the respondents stated that they want to use their houses for living only. Other 17% of the respondents have a plan to use their house both for living and to run a business. Only 2% stated that, they have a plan to use their house where they are living to run business. In doing so, they have a plan to change their living quarters.

### **3.3.4 Sources of income and livelihood situation**

It is uncommon not to see an old woman in 'Gedam Sefer' at the age of 60s or 70s working on preparation of local drinks or thread making which are burdensome jobs. Majority of the female-headed households who participated in the research interviews were involved in the intermittent and informal income generating activities. Life is below the hand-to-mouth situation for 'Gedam Sefer' poor female-headed women.

When respondents were asked to tell their monthly income, they did not exactly know how much money they count during the month. The simplest thing they can tell is the daily income they get out of their intermittent trade or the major expense they spent for purchase of food ration on daily basis, house rent, water and electric bills. To tell exactly their profit and lose is unthinkable for most respondents.

Own trade takes the lead as source of income for majority of the respondents to other varieties of income sources. The meaning of trade for the poor community like those in 'Gedam Sefer' is so vague. Many of the respondents are engaged in household trade as sale of food items, local drinks and other packed foodstuff. But observations were made during the interviews that there are other means of earning income, which are not socially acceptable but still considered as trade by the actors. Such socially unacceptable engagement include renting of a corner of a house or a bed for mobile prostitutes who entertains their customers and pay for the time they stay for a while. To understand the extent of such hidden life engagement is beyond the scope of this research and needs further investigation. Renting of beds for the night for transitory rural urban passengers is another means of income generation especially for those old women who cannot engage in other business activities due to old age and health problems.

Generally speaking, life for 'Gedam Sefer' women is unpleasant and sad. Most of them are leading lives, which for others could be unbelievable. One can imagine how women in the 60s and 70s with a monthly income of less than 100 Birr could survive.

The issue of health problem was another situation, which had stricken researchers during interviews. A significant number of women were bed ridden during the interviews although to investigate reason of their sickness was still beyond the scope of this research. But, from their way of life and physical conditions of those sick women, one can suggest an educative guess that in most cases the causes of their sickness could be poor economic condition, which leads for many infectious diseases that include HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and lack of proper diet. This area also calls for researchers to do detail investigation.

## **4. DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1 General information**

The larger proportion of respondents being widowed and supporting over 5 individuals in their household is an indication that, female-headed households of the poor economic group are leading difficult life situation. Like in other community groups in Ethiopia, majority of the research subjects are deprived of basic rights, which include education. This is testified by the fact that majority of the respondents remain in primary education level as the result of which, none of them are able to compete to get better job.

However ‘Gedam Sefer’ is found in the heart of the city of Addis Ababa, the way of life people are leading is not much different from the rural community in Ethiopia. Majority of the households included in this research were found to be non-nuclear. There are a large number of families that support extended family members and non-blood relatives. These households do support their extended members or non-blood relatives not because they are rich and be able to support others but it is the result of the long existing tradition in Ethiopia, which influenced the individuals to make others to live with them. The households who are helping non-nuclear family members are found to be the bridge between rural and urban migration. Most of the extended or non-relative members supported by the households are either recent or distant times migrants from rural areas particularly from birth places of the respondents themselves. The support given by the research respondents to orphan children is a clear indication that traditional support system to orphan children is still working properly among the poor sections of the community.

The research subjects were engaged in non-formal income generating activities. Such income generating activities include intermittent trade, pension, and alms from relatives or non-relatives. Research observations indicated that many respondents who do a household trade such as sell of local drinks and foodstuff also engaged in renting of corner of their house to transients of rural urban migrants and to mobile or temporarily sheltered prostitutes. The amount of monthly Income of the respondents was not clearly known therefore proxy estimation by calculating their major daily and monthly expenses were done to estimate their income. In most cases, monthly income of many respondents falls between Birr 100 to 400. However, when we look at their estimated monthly income and the number of members in the household, it seems a miracle to expect how a household with 100 Birr can really survive for a month by covering basic expenses such as food, water and electric bills and the like. Although individual respondents were not able to inform their exact monthly income for they are not able to remember their income or they were not interested to tell, the outcome of this research finding in relation to income levels of

respondents has certain doubt to conclude about the level of income and living situation of the respondents. In some cases when we look at the physical conditions of houses of some respondents and available households assets against the information regarding their monthly income, they are mismatching.

Basic biographical variables are interweaving each other and one becomes dependant on the other in one way or another. The number of orphan children in a household is directly related to the marital status of respondents. Widowed respondents care for more orphans than other groups. This relationship tells that to become head of female-headed household, in most cases, is also to mean caring for orphans. This research tells us that traditional family caring system is more experienced among the non-literate groups of respondents and among those with low level of education. This is an indication that erosion of traditional values of mutual support is the consequence of education and modernization.

The advantage of education becomes clearer by young age groups of respondents. The outcome of the research in the earlier sections indicated that young respondents have better education level. The interest of young and educated respondents is to participate in formal economic sector whereas the non-literate and those with less education level are engaged in irregular trade. This is an indicator that to bring those non-literate and others with less education level into the formal sector of economy make access this section of the community to education becomes the first job to be done.

An interesting finding in this study is the strong symptom of rural culture in relation to leaving of home by adult offspring. In most rural Ethiopia, adult sons remain within their parents premises while; adult daughters leave at earlier age due to marriage or other reasons. Similar to this general truth, in the research conducted at the heart of Addis Ababa, it was found out that in most respondents' households, adult daughters leave early while adult sons remain with their parents. The reason for most cases was identified that adult sons remain at home to support their old parents, while adult daughters leave home for search of job in other small towns where they can be involved in irregular if not informal trade.

## **4.2 Individual skills**

Dozens of individual skills' related issues were discussed and the findings of the responses are explained in the third section of this report. In this part of the report, we will discuss the general issues identified from the research.

Respondents have more than one type of practical skills in rendering health care. The expertise in health care provision has direct relationship with culture. Many of them have culturally accepted health care skills such as caring for the elderly and the sick. Among the least health care skills that respondents know or have experienced, caring for the disabled takes the lead. The response in relation to health care skills of disabled people has two possible interpretations. The first could be that respondents do not genuinely know or have never provided any health care to disabled individuals due to lack of exposure to individuals with disability problems. The second possibility could be that, however respondents know how to care for individuals with disabilities, due to culture influence, they don't want to frankly tell their knowledge and skill in relation to caring for individuals with disabilities.

Similar to the experience they have in provision of health care, the specific type of care that respondents provide to the needy have a direct relationship with cultural values and also religious believes. Feeding support to the hungry and the sick is a must in most Ethiopian tradition and is a religious obligation. This is what respondents do practically. Midwifery and financial supports take the least type of care that respondents provide to the needy. In addition to cultural influence, the lesser practice in terms of financial support has to do something with the low-income level of individual respondents.

Health care support is also associated with certain age and education categories. The respondents' age groups who have adequate health care related knowledge and who provide maximum care are those respondents within the age range of 40-50 years. Similarly those who provide maximum health care support are those individual respondents with income bracket of 200-400 Birr. Moreover, respondents with primarily level of education take the lead followed by non-literate respondents. These descriptions of health care skills and practices related to the variables mentioned here has something in common with culture and religion.

People after the age of 40 in most cultures of Ethiopia give attention to their spiritual life. One of the obligations to such spiritual life is helping the poor and the needy. Furthermore, the monthly income that respondents who confirmed they have health care skills earn is not sufficient to support others when one looks at from monetary perspective. But, due to moral obligation, the respondents are obliged to help the sick and the needy from the small amount of income they earn. By the same token, non-literate and primary educated respondents show high practice in supporting the sick and the needy. This again, tells us that health care skills and practice among the poor members of the community are directly related to cultural and religious obligation not to the level of knowledge, which influences individuals to support others. At least to the scope of this research, those respondents with a better of income, level of education and younger age are with less health care skills and limited health care support/practice.

Level of education and the type of office related skills have direct relationships. Many of the non-literate or those in the lower level of education have skills of handling labor-intensive office related skills such as receiving telephone calls and taking phone orders. However majority of the respondents know taking and receiving calls and other office related activities, many of them confirmed that they have never engaged in office related activities. On the other hand those respondents with a better education level have skills in relation to working with computers, filing and typing. Similarly the young group of respondents has better education levels and has skills in working with computers, typing and filing. This is a clear indication that the type of office related skills that the respondents know are directly related with the level of education. The conclusion to this outcome is that, if women of low economic status are expected to secure better job, access to education becomes an important issue to be dealt first.

Majority of the respondents know maintenance skills than construction skills. These maintenance skills are directly related to household activities such as; house-cleaning, kitchen maintenance or modernization, sweeping of chimney and the like. Non-literate respondents and those who are at the lower education level know home-based construction and maintenance skills. Those skills such as working in garages and welding, which require employment outside of the home are well

practiced by educationally a better of group of respondents. The skills of construction and maintenance by the respondents of this research are the direct reflection of the nature of job engagement of Ethiopian women. Majority of urban dweller women in Ethiopia are either engaged in a non-pay job at the household level or are simply categorized as housemothers. Their skills are directly related to their household level day-to-day activities. An interested finding in relation to construction and maintenance skills was the skills of carpentry and roof maintenance and installation. A significant number of respondents expressed that they know carpentry works and maintenance and installation of roof. As these women are female-headed ones, they have direct experience in carpentry and roof maintenance and installation. The general category of division of labor in Ethiopia assigns men to be responsible for carpentry, maintenance and installation of roofs except in few nomadic and semi nomadic communities. What does this finding tell us? This tells us that division of labor or skills of doing things, which are important to life, are the reflection of the individual's way of life although some cultural influence in deciding what to do or what not to do has some roles to play.

Maintenance skills of respondents are directly related to their housing physical conditions and the general environment where they are living. Most respondents are living in a congested village where individual household has no its own compound. As the result, majority of the respondents do not have skills of wood stripping or mowing of grasses. On the other hand many respondents commonly know house sweeping, fixing leaky faucets and the like. These skills come to be known by many respondents as the result of direct exposure to poor drainage and poor housing condition. Many of the respondents come to know these skills not by learning but by practice.

Among the many categories of individual skills asked, skills related to food preparation are the most known types of individual skills by majority of the respondents. As it is indicated in section three of this report, majority of the individuals included in the interview lead their life through own trade. Majority of those engaged in their own trade are involved in food preparation and related activities. Therefore, the skills related to food preparation are the direct means of livelihood to the respondents. During discussion held with the respondents it was known that, individuals do know skills of food preparation and related activities not only because they are leading their life through activities related to food preparation, but also for Ethiopian women, knowledge and skills of food preparation and related activities are means of evaluation to be considered as a complete lady. This has a number of implications for the woman's life that includes marriage, respect by peers and the like. Women know more household level activities than activities related to public environment such as bartending. This is an indication that the exposure of women, who participated in this research, to public services such as working in hotels and restaurants, is very minimal.

Childcare is a special gift and obligation not only for Ethiopian women but women of all societies in the world. This is associated with natural gifts of women in birth giving and breast-feeding. The level of response in relation to skills of caring for children is a direct reflection of this general truth. Majority of the respondents know how to care children through direct practice when they were taking care of their own children. Respondents have high level of unanimous skills in caring of different age categories of children. But the response in relation to the skills in taking care of children with disabilities is less. It was clear during interview that many

respondents were less interested to talk about skills related to caring for children with disabilities for the reason that either they were afraid of cultural sanctions or they had a fear that if the researchers know that they have skills of this kind, they could be labeled as if they have children in their houses who is living with certain disabilities. This perception of respondents has something to tell about the level of our society in relation to the interest and readiness of caring of disadvantaged children irrespective of their problems.

The level of skills in relation to operating machines and maintenance of small household items and appliances are the outcomes of respondents' economic status. Most of the respondents did not have radios in their houses leave alone other luxurious items as tape recorders, refrigerators, etc in Ethiopian context. According to the feelings expressed by the respondents during the interviews, asking about the knowledge and skills of driving a car, operating televisions or refrigerators, or maintenance of such similar equipments was a jock or misunderstanding of their life situation. One cannot imagine women who lead her life through begging or renting of a corner of her single roomed house to transient migrants or mobile sex workers can afford to have such household equipments such as radio or television. However, one may ask that although the respondents do not have the equipments they may at least know how to operate such equipments as radio. But, the actual practice indicated that knowledge and skills of the respondent women are directly related with what they have in their household or what they are practically exercising.

Majority of the respondents know skills of retail trade dominated by sale of food items and different services. This skill is a reflection of the respondents' means of livelihood. Majority of the respondents are engaged in sale of local drinks and food items. When the skill of such retail trade is analyzed in terms of age those whose age ranges from 30-50 are engaged more compared to other age groups. This indicates that skills of retail trade are more diversified across different age ranges.

As the research finding indicated, the younger age respondents are not interested to learn traditional dancing This is an evidence that alien culture is strongly penetrating to the minds of the young generation and probably playing of traditional musical instruments as "Kebero" will be limited to the religious centers if other cultural occasions are going to be invaded by penetration of non traditional instruments. Traditional dancing is found to be specific to older group of respondents (age of 40-60 years). This is again the sign of the extinction of traditional dancing culture especially in urban settings after the old group of people who migrated from rural areas going to die.

Among the recipes of other skills asked, respondents were not comfortable to provide response on the question related to the skills of weaving and pot making. This was so because; the women involved in the research were so traditional in terms of labeling those special skills like weaving and pot making. Skills related to weaving and pot making are ascribed to special group of low caste people in Ethiopia called weavers. The women who involved in this research assumed themselves as members of the "pure" people and they did not feel weaving and pot making as important skills to them.

Majority of the respondents need to remain in traditional food preparation and thread making as the best skills out of which they can draw a living. Many of them do not choose skills like working in garages, or other professional skills as their priority. This is an indication that due to lack of exposure to different types of job opportunities added with their lower level of education, the horizon of their thinking to go beyond the current practice they have to test a new way of life is not yet filtered into the mind of many of the respondents. Majority of the respondents like to improve their skills of food preparation. The reasons they give to this is that since they have already engaged in preparing and sale of local drinks and foodstuff they do not want to divert to a new type of skill since most of them are close to older age. Those respondents who would like to involve in a new type of skill are those who seek to get computer training. These are respondent at younger age and with better of education status. This is a clue that when individuals get access to education, they develop diversified thinking and the temptation to exercise a new way of life also increases.

### **4.3 Community Skills**

Community skills refer to the engagement of respondents in a group or community based activities. Majority of the individuals have skills or practices of community affairs that relate to either religious issues or socio-cultural affairs. Compared to participation in political campaign or field trips of children or boy/girl scout, the high proportion of respondents engaged in church fund raising or edir and mahber. This indicates that the community where this research was conducted is a traditional community where, the interest of individuals is to stay within the traditional values that have strong attachment with religion and traditional culture.

Participation of respondent women in community related activities becomes a good indicator how free practices of women in social skills even though they are heads of their own households are still under the domination of men. For instance about 76% of the respondents were found to be members of men's Edir. This is because, men's edir are resourceful and powerful for which women are obliged to go beyond their gender territory and become members so that they will have access to such resources as tents or labor during funerals, both of which are limited or lack among women's Edir.

Women's engagement in political affairs is only 7% of the total respondents. This is another area where men's domination is significant. When women were asked during the interviews about their political engagement, many of them were indifferent to answer a 'yes' or 'no' response. This was because, for many of them the issue of politics was out of their daily agenda for two reasons. The first is due to poor economic status for which most of their time is spent in search of daily income out of which they cover their major household expenses. And secondly, they do not have appetite for politics since majority of women in Ethiopia are not significantly involved in politics. These women are also part of the larger women society in the country.

When one thinks of the issue of coffee grouping, it seems that Ethiopian community has a culture of drinking coffee together with neighborhood members. But the out come of this research tell us the opposite. Majority of respondents stopped to drink coffee for a number of reasons. This is really a bad news about Ethiopia tradition, which keeps community members to remain with a cohesive and strong bondage. In most cases community skills seem depend on obligation than free will. Many of the respondents, for example prefer to continue being



members of Edir or mahber both of which have either cultural or religious obligations. These two social groupings are also a substitution of legal services absent in the city of Addis Ababa. The objectives of Edir in most cases and mahber rarely are to provide support for households during death crises such as taking care of funeral activities, which would have been the main responsibility of municipality services. For example, if municipality starts to give funeral services, which can be affordable by the poor segments of the community, the possibility for the Edir to continue functioning is under question.

#### **4.4 Enterprising Interest and experience**

Heads of households who engaged in this research have no special costumers who buy their services. This shows that their means of living (in mast cases sale of local drinks and foodstuff) are not produced for specified group. The guarantee to sale the products are minimal, as it was understood during discussion. Some of the respondents stated that, sometimes to protect them from bankruptcy, villages take the drinks to their house on a credit basis to pay back later. This however affected their working capital, which is reflected by either interruption of regular and continuous preparation of the drinks and foodstuff for sale, or reduces quality of the products. When production becomes irregular or the quality gets poor, the unspecified customers who used to buy their products cancel visiting their houses, which doubled the problem to stay in the business.

Many respondents explained that they operate their business in individual basis accompanied only by their family members. The small number of respondents who engaged in group/micro business stated that they were not organized by their free will. The organizer was the kebele administration, which came with its own set of criteria. Majority of those who involved in a group business have got high amount of loan from government. Their activities as the research group observed is money intensive in which case they felt that they would be in trouble to pay back the loans they took from the government.

Out of those individual respondents who do not yet start any business, majority of them show interest to engage in some kind of income generating activities. However, many of them have difficulties in securing working capital and space. This indicates that if this group of people has favorable ground such as access to finance, working space and the like, they are in a position to support them. On the other hand, those who wanted to start business like to perform alone rather than in a group form. The reason they gave for not wanting to work with others was that, working with others has many problems, which they cannot able to spell out clearly. These people did not see the advantage of group work. Educating people about the advantage of communal work is one of the areas where development actors and social workers should emphasis.

#### **4.5 Understanding Socio – Economic Situations**

Perception is the first critical issue one has to understand before talking about community skills and practice. This is to say; we should first understand how community perceives regarding their skills of different kind before we try to understand how the community members use the skills. In ‘Gedam Sefer’ community, individual members have different perceptions on the skills they own. Some skills are considered as natural gifts given by God and there is no point to talk about

such skills. For instance caring for babies and the sick are assumed to be universal responsibilities of women to carry out. Therefore these two skills are considered as naturally learned and no woman can be exempted from the ability and obligation to care for babies and for the sick.

On the other hand, some important skills, which provide the daily bread for many households, are not recognized and acknowledged by the individuals who own the skills. For example when respondents were asked about the skills in food preparation household management, etc, they were surprised why they are asked about such issues. They assumed that to prepare foodstuff or to manage houses are nothing but just routine activities. They did not see the commercial nature of the skills even though most of them generate income through the sale of skills of food and drink preparation and to some extent housekeeping and management, and the like.

Some important skills are getting marginalized and are at a verge of dying. The skills of thread making and plate making out of grasses which were the two most special skills to evaluate a woman as a complete lady in most highland cultures of Ethiopia, today are not considered as skills to be necessarily known by the young generation. Thread making for example, in addition to its function as a social evaluation criteria for ladies, used to contribute for traditional weaving industry for centuries. Today due to development of textiles and cheap imported clothes, the art of thread making is about vanished especially in urban areas like in ‘Gedam Sefer’.

Few individuals of the total respondent women have also misconceptions on the identification of skill-related activities from that of non-skill-related activities both of which could of course generate income. The case in point here is begging. Few women who have directly engaged in begging and earn some income out of it consider begging as a skill. Their argument is that “As far as we get income out of it, it is a skill.” They added, “Every body cannot beg. Begging has its own art and skills to win the spiritual will of people to give alms.” From the individual beggars point of view it could be true that begging has some technique to follow. But, how far the society approves begging as a skill is not clear at list to this research.

Most of the community members in ‘Gedam Sefer’ are not engaged in formal sector economy to earn their income. The social network system that supports the informal engagement of members in the economic activities is strong. Community members have strong bondage to assist each other as the result the community looks like self contend in most of its social and economic lives. However, one can see a stretched social network among the old group of respondents towards the rural areas where they were born. The researchers were informed by the respondents that they have still strong relationship with their relatives in rural Ethiopia from where they get assistance in kind. In response to such assistance from their relatives, these old women are hosts to new migrants who either want to settle in the city or travel to other regions for temporary job or permanent settlement. This indicates how mutual social support between the urban and rural poor is well established.

The meaning given to housing by community members in ‘Gedam Sefer’ is amusing. Significant number of residents live in a “house” where the walls are almost fallen, the roofs are not exactly made of metal sheet but are hodgepodge of pieces of materials as plastic sheet,

cartoons, etc, and the difference between the inside of the house and the outside is not clear. Yet respondents consider they are living in a house.

These people are afraid that they will be evicted from these “houses” by the government for the purpose of renovation of the locality. They expressed their concern that if they are evicted from the area they will lose many things specially their social bondages with their neighbors, which give them more economic, and social security at the moment. In addition the respondents have a fear that since they have no economic capacity to afford the payment for the new condominium houses, which the government is constructing to allocate to those who will be displaced due to local renovation, through installation payment, they will be homeless in the coming near future. Among the respondents, those whose monthly income is over 400 Birr are more confident to live in kebele houses and are ready for the relocation than those with monthly income of less than 400 Birr. This is an indication that the amount of income is source of confidence to take any action.

## **5. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The role of women in supporting household members is significant in many societies. In the absence of male partners, females as heads of households play great roles in managing their households and generating income.

In Ethiopian urban settings most female headed households own houses rented from either Kebele administration or Agency for Administration for Rented Houses (AARH). This research was focused on female-headed households who own Kebele houses in Addis Ababa in a locality called ‘Gedam Sefer’ (Kebele 03 in Arada Sub-City). A house for the poor sectors of the community in general and for poor female-headed households in particular function both for living as well as a space for working.

In this research, both primary and secondary methods of data collection were employed. In addition quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were utilized to gather appropriate information. The process of this study have gone through: identification of the research topic, connection with kebele 03 administration, and undertaking the actual research, which in turn goes through a number of steps. Special computer software called SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was employed to enter data and analyze computed outputs.

Majority of the research subjects were found widowed and primary level educated female household heads. The family sizes of most households were registered as the highest from the country<sup>10</sup> standard, which consisted of 6-8 individuals.

The nature of relationship that exist among household members show that a household consisted of members related both by blood (\*close or distant) and non-blood relatives. Specific to the situation of child population in households, many of the households are taking care of both birth children, children from extended families and those children who have no any blood relationship with heads of the households. The number of children in a household varies from none to over three children in a given household. Significant number of households is also found taking care

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<sup>10</sup> The average family size in Ethiopia is 4.8 persons in a household.

of orphan children. The age range of respondents who care for their own children was found to be between 40 and 50 years. At the same time respondents of this age group were found to be taking care for more orphan children compared to other groups of respondents.

Many respondents were found living on their own trade/business of different type. Majority of them have more than one sources of income. Compared to other urban dwellers, the monthly income of the research subject households was found minimum. The number of family size in a household is inversely related with education status of heads of the households.

Respondents in the adulthood age have better healthcare skills and practices compared to young and old age groups. Similarly, those respondents who have an average income level within the group practiced well to provide health care than those with low or high-income levels.

The type of office related skills are closely related with age and education statuses of respondents. Respondents with better education level have office related skills that require basic technical knowledge. The young age group of respondents knows some skills that need better technical know-how and physical fitness. Many of the respondents know simple construction and repair skills such as kitchen modernization and furniture repair. Other construction and repair skills such as cabinet making and installing dry wall, which demand better technical knowledge, are not well experienced by many respondents.

Compared to construction and repair skills, many respondents know maintenance skills. The traditional believe in Ethiopia which says maintenance of certain kinds of items as listed in the questionnaire designed for this research are expected to be performed by low-income group, was disqualified by the findings of this research. According to the outcomes of this research, maintenance skills are particularly related to housing conditions and the situation of other physical environment that surrounds the households.

Skills of food preparation and related activities are the most widely practiced kinds of skills by the group than other forms of skills. Skills of food preparation are the best match skill to the day today activities of the community. Like that of food preparation, caring for children is the most widely exercised skill by heads of female-headed households. The skill for caring children with disabilities is minimum compared to caring for other groups of children. The skills for caring for children by most respondents are acquired through practice than training. The research subject confirmed that they learn childcare when they themselves taking care of their own children or children of their families.

Skills related to transportation are the least known skills by majority of the respondents. Lack of skills in how to operate transportation devices, is the direct reflection of living standards of the respondents. Respondents are also less equipped with the skills of operating equipments and repairing machinery.

Retail selling in general and sales of services at household level in particular take the lead where majority of the research subjects have practiced. Such services selling include: preparation and sale of local drinks, foodstuff, caring for babies and park services.

The age group of respondents who perform well traditional dancing and playing of instruments is those with the age range of 40-50 years. Many of the respondents know traditional dancing of one ethnic group (Amhara) and playing of one traditional instrument called 'Kebero.'

The skill of food preparation is found to be the best skill that majority of the respondents know best compared to other forms of skills. Similarly a significant number of respondents stated that they earn income by either directly engaging in preparing and selling of foodstuff or selling of their skill of food preparation to others who involved in the business of food preparation. In the same token, many respondents like to teach others in how to prepare food items. Yet the same group wants to learn more on preparation of food in a modern way.

Social skills of respondents indicated that many of them have involvements and experiences in religious or cultural related activities linked to fund raising and mutual support parties such as Edir, Mahber and Equib compared to other social affiliations. Particular to their affiliation to Edir as a social gathering, female headed households are also members of male lead Edirs to get access for some services provided only by the male Edirs. Edirs are the dominant social organizations in which majority of the respondents want to continue in the future. Respondents at old age and those with less educational level have shown high interest to continue in Edir than any other social groupings.

Coffee groups are found to be one of the long-standing gathering existed in most Ethiopian communities. But respondents of this research revealed that the old tradition of drinking coffee together is at the verge of obliteration.

However respondents have different sources of income, majority of them lead their life from the income generated through own business/trade. High proportions of those who run business are engaged in "alone business" occupations. Group business is not well practiced by the members of community in 'Gedam Sefer'. Most of the participants of this research are not interested to join group business. Those who have plans to started business in the future are interested to initiate their business on a private basis. Retail trade was identified as first priority of future business engagement for majority of those who have not currently involved in any business but who need to start some in the future. The two major factors that hinder those who need to initiate business by their own include lack of finance and working space.

The perception of respondents towards indigenous skills is divergent. Some respondents do not consider specific skills such childcare or healthcare skills as talent that individual woman should learn. They believe that the skill to take care of a child, for example, is given by God for females. Therefore females should not acquire such skills through training. There are also other skills, which are already marginalized by the society for which respondents were not interested even to be asked about such skills. The case in point is the skill of weaving. On the other hand, there are other activities such as begging, which is considered by some respondent as special skills .In reality begging cannot be a special skill that people have to learn to make money out of it. Other skills such as thread and plate making out of grasses are about an end due to economic and social sanctions. These two skills are considered as outdated activities and are now not able to get social and economic support.

Social network is found to be strong among the ‘Gedam Sefer’ community members. Members support each other through their networks. Some aspects of the social network go beyond the geographic territories of ‘Gedam Sefer’ to original places of most residents involved in the research where they were born and grown. The role of social support and networking among community members in ‘Gedam Sefer’ is evaluated through specific support rendered in terms of economic assistance, communication and poverty coping mechanisms.

The definition and meaning of housing given by ‘Gedam Sefer’ community is not that much complicated. They simply said, “A house is where we live and we work.” There is no any other meaning given to a house by the respondents. Quality, size and location of the houses where they live have no significance importance to many of ‘Gedam Sefer’ community members. In relation to housing, many of the respondents did not feel secured by living in Kebele houses. Their sense of insecurity is associated with the town plan of local renovation through demolition of old houses and transferring the residents into condominium houses through payment of construction and other related costs in a form of installment. Since they are not able to afford the estimated cost of condominium rooms they fear that they will be evicted and become homeless.

This research recommends the following to be done.

- There is a need to undertake further research to investigate and understand indigenous knowledge, social networks & communication and poverty coping mechanisms of ‘Gedam Sefer’ community.
- The research has revealed that female-headed households are with serious economic and housing problems. Development actors are expected to intervene in ‘Gedam Sefer’ community so as to change their housing conditions and income levels.
- Health conditions of significant heads of the households covered in this research were in a serious condition. Causes of health related problems need to be studied to device appropriate intervention strategies.

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