

**INDIGENOUS HANDCRAFT AS LIVELIHOOD OPTION: WEAVERS IN THE CASE  
OF LIMMU OROMO OF EASTERN WOLLEGA ZONE, ETHIOPIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper explored the economy of weavers among Limmu Oromo of East Wollega Zone. The study identified the economy weavers. In this research, data were gathered through qualitative data gathering techniques like interview and observation. The Weavers produce cloth from locally available resources, the skill and knowledge they obtained from their fathers and relatives. They support themselves, their family by the income they get from their products. They also serve the local communities through their skills. Non-weavers also participate in this activity by providing raw materials. Thus, weaving plays a great role in job creation. In addition to this, tools which weavers use to produce are locally available and affordable in terms of price. These tools are part of Oromo material culture and play great role in socio-economic development, preservation of material cultures and tourist attraction.

**Key words: weavers, economy, handicraft, Limmu Oromo**

**1. Introduction**

Weaving is one of the ancient methods of making cloths by hand which exemplifies the creativity of human beings. It provides employment opportunities to millions of people in the rural and sub-urban belts of many countries (Annual Report Ministry of Textile, 2010-11). Weaving is one of the major economic activities in India which employs more than 1.89 lakh weavers household and 3.19 lakh weavers. In rural Brazil, for example, 21.8 percent of the

working population engages in rural industries as a primary source of employment. When counting those who work in rural industries as a secondary occupation, this number increases to at least 40 percent (Ferreira, 2001). Similarly, in the rural Polikastro-Peonia region of Greece, 52 percent of the population is involved in some form of small scale industries (Kalantardis, 1999). In India, a conservative estimate of 23 million Indians are considered “craftspeople,” which makes it the second largest source of employment in the country (Sood, 2002).

According to Bezabih (2009), Reardon and Taylor (1996), traditional handicrafts are also playing a positive role in African societies. They generate income for rural and urban dwellers and serve as alternative sources of employment. It requires low start-up costs; tap into skills already possessed by rural society, and can serve as supplementary work for those working in the agricultural sector or pastoralists. In addition, it plays key roles in tourism development.

Similarly, in Ethiopia, scholars like Dubois (1996:6), discussed the importance of indigenous handicrafts. Handicrafts are part of tangible heritage of specific ethnic group where they are produced. They supply agricultural utilities such as ploughshares and accessories, cotton dresses of all sorts, and leather utilities (dresses, grain container and sleeping mats). The blacksmiths produce jewelries with traditional designs from gold, silver, brass, nickel and copper, both for religious and other purpose (Mohamed, 1990; Bula, 2006 and Negaso, 1984). However, their research is more general and did not provide detail explanation on economy of Oromo indigenous handicraft work in general and weavers in particular. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill the existing research gap by focusing on economy of weavers among Limmu Oromo of Eastern Wollega Zone, in Western Ethiopia.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Brief description of Indigenous Handicraft**

Handicraft is an ancient practice which is as old as human civilization. What archaeologists over the years have excavated and discovered in different parts of the world is the remnants of handmade objects of earliest people. These materials reflect culture, tradition and history of user

and place which lived long after the culture has undergone modern transformations (Luque, 2006).

According to Robertson (1961), historically, the earliest stage of every creation was a piece of handicraft since every object was made with hands, using physical or human skills. This is due to the absence of automation or technology available to make anything mechanically. The writer argues that, after development of technology handicrafts improved and adapted according to environmental conditions, eventually becoming customary and accepted as an art that reflects the artistic sense, feelings and cultural characteristics of a society.

Originally, craft was an art that began out of need and necessity of man for his own use (Robertson 1961; 29). But steadily, it evolved into a decorative art. According to this writer, the transformation was introduced due to industrial revolution in the nineteenth century fulfilled the functional and utilitarian needs of man. On the other hand, Kumar (2010) discussed that people pursue handicraft as a hobby and as a form of art to please their senses and as an expression of their creative facilities.

For World Intellectual Property Organization (2003), handicrafts are products which encompass a vast variety of goods made of diverse materials. This diversity makes it incredibly difficult to give a satisfactory definition of the material content, technique of production and functional use of craft products. For Barber and Marina (2006), traditional handicrafts are products significant to the country where they are made, due to skill, tradition, culture, and local materials are used at that particular environment. This indicates that handicraft is evocative and gets acceptance among producers and users who share one culture. These materials indicate identity and creative skill of one ethnic group.

As UNESCO (1997), discussed, the definition and significance of handicrafts are different from country to country. This is due to raw material and cultural variations that exist from one place to another. Their special nature originate from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, cultural value, decorative, ethical and symbolic implication.

## **2.2. Handicraft as Cultural and Socio-economic Development**

Handicrafts play important role in representing and preserving culture and traditions of a country or region. According to Muller (2011), indigenous handicrafts are substantial medium to preserve traditional art, heritage and culture, traditional skills and talents which are associated with people's lifestyle and history. According to this explanation, handicrafts are unique expressions and preserver of both tangible and intangible cultural heritages.

According to UNESCO (2007), handicrafts are part of the culture of a nation or ethnic group and represent a key component of socio-economic life. According to this account, beyond their aesthetic and cultural dimensions, handicrafts present several interesting socio-economic characteristics. In addition, UNESCO explained that indigenous handicrafts are used to reflect basic ideas, mental images and culturally prescribed ways of doing things. Similarly, regular occurring patterns of different items represent ethnic groups. The representation forms the interpretative basis for assigning meaning to material culture and archaeological record.

Handicraft work is an ideal employment option in the rural and urban area. For Rachael (1999), indigenous handicraft work is small scale and is most often home-based job. In addition, the writer discussed that the raw materials used to produce handicrafts are usually found locally and the methods of production are often simple. Thus, it is ultimate for entrepreneurs who lack start-up capital for other occupation. Similarly, Erande (2007) supports the above idea, similarly he stated indigenous handicrafts do not require huge amount of money to start the work, since most of the work relies on human skills and a basic set of tools. The low capital investment requirement of this work presents a very attractive proposition to the developing economies. On the other hand, Sadykova (2012), discussed that indigenous handicraft is more important activity in rural societies especially for poor.

In addition to this the writer explained the role of handicraft work in sustainability of socio-economic development. Income generation through producing handicrafts does not disturb the cultural and social balance of the home or the community as well as biodiversity. By their very

basic virtue, the traditional crafts industry has a high demand of labor, thus contributing to a high employment. This may be a very important factor to consider, especially in developing countries with high unemployment rates. The potential for high employment of traditional crafts not only helps in reducing unemployment, but also helps to reduce the mass migration to urban areas by creating sustainable jobs in the rural areas (Erande, 2007).

According to Erande (2007), the indigenous handicrafts not only have low initial investment requirements, but they also have the potential of high returns. Furthermore, he explains the role of handicraft in tourist attraction, and via the potential for export to other countries. However, according to Sood (2006), the traditional values inherited in artisan work is neither properly appreciated by policy makers in the social and economic development process nor by craft producers in developing countries. Likewise, Sadykova (2012) discussed that indigenous handicrafts pose a great development potential, the true value has not been fully exploited. Instead, it has been lost due to expansion and promotion of the modern industrial goods.

### **2.3. Weaving as sources of livelihood**

Weaving is the oldest known form of making cloth by hand (Muller (2011). It represents a very early stage of cloth production. Weaving is the source of livelihood to several millions of artisans and their families all over the world (Ferreira, 2001). In the third world nations, few countries still proudly keep on the ancient tradition of hand weaving side by side with power looms as the symbols of cultural legacies. Even during the present days, when man is trying to win the space, people still look at the handloom as symbol of the glorious past of the entire human race (Tripathy, 2009: 54). In the rural belts of different African countries, weaving is the simple industry which is capable of creating more employment. By encouraging the poor weavers after creating confidence in them, this industry can be expanded with the stepping up of the qualitative production of cloth in the country. This can be done successfully if only the industry is helped to overcome the difficulty in obtaining the raw materials regularly and in adequate quantities at reasonably steady prices. With minimum capital investment, handloom is capable of creating more employment in the rural areas (Tripathy, 2009:55).

The organized sector has an edge in many respects over the handlooms weaving. But, it is needless to mention that in one respect the handloom weaving can score over the organized sector - that is in the field of intricate and attractive or designs and colors. This has to be exploited to the fullest extent by the handloom sector to produce a vast variety of varied designs and textures in attractive shades and colors quickly offering each time a new range of products to suit the need of the consumers. It is in this context that product development becomes not only important but even necessary for handloom sector. The handloom industry is thriving owing to its interest potentialities and skill while the mills find it hard to imitate the intricate handloom designs and tie-ups in mass production of cloth. In fact, it is the beauty and fineness of handloom products that qualify the attention and patronage of the housewife but not in her sentiment. But, this idea also has become old and legendary taking to the present days into (Shankar 2009).

Even though agriculture remains the main source of income and employment in most rural areas in developing countries, the rural non-farm sector has gained increasing importance over the past decades. At the start of the new millennium, roughly 25 percent of rural full-time employment and 35-40 percent of rural income is attributed to the rural non-farm economy in developing countries (Annual Report Ministry of Textile, 2010). Many smallholder farm households complement their farm income with income from non-farm sources. This strategy has several advantages, especially for poorer households. Their agricultural resources are often too limited to allow efficient use of all household labor, and non-farm activities can offer an alternative remunerative allocation, especially during the lean season. Moreover, income from agriculture is subject to high risk due to climatic factors, price fluctuations, pests and diseases. Earnings from non-farm employment may help to buffer the resulting income fluctuations and improving household. These advantages for the rural poor do not necessarily imply that this group benefits most from a growing non-farm economy. In much of Africa, the share of non-farm income in total income is higher for wealthy households than for the poor due to entry barriers (Lanjouw1995).

In line with this, Berg and Kumbi (2006), explains that weaving and other non-farm activity play important role to alleviate rural poverty in Ethiopia. Hence, the promotion of non-farm activities

in addition to farm activities seems indispensable. However, empirical evidence from various parts of Africa indicates that often only the relatively well-off households are able to engage in the non-farm economy, such that non-farm development increases inequality and has only a limited impact on poverty. As Ayalew (2002), and Tablino (1999) discussed, the products of handicrafts are used in everyday life such as *haaduu* (knife), *waraana* (spears), cloths etc are the products of artisans. These products are used in cattle or herd management, watering, etc. Individuals from these groups show outstanding achievements or for example may accumulate wealth. According to Bula (2006), the indigenous handicrafts work is a home-based industry, which requires minimum expenditure and infrastructure to establish. He added that jobs need minimal cost and the producer uses existing skills and locally available raw materials.

On the other hand, Tripathy (2009) made an attempt to study the problems and perspectives of weaving industry. It was opined in the study that in decentralized weaving industry, there are many problems due to illiteracy of the weavers', inadequate finance and vested interests, procurement of raw-materials, product developments, quality control, cost control, unable to fix a stable price due to fluctuation in yarn price etc. The industry goes into the grip of stock accumulation and financial difficulty which faces the industry to reduce its capacity drastically whenever the prices of yarn and dyes shoot up without any corresponding increase in the demand of the finished products. Such unhealthy accumulation also invariably leads to cut throat competition on account of proliferation of weak producers in the sector. The study suggested that handloom products marketer should understand the customer preferences about design and color combination in selection of Handloom products and they should consider product development as an essential exercise for successful marketing of handloom products.

### **3. Material and Methods**

The study principally focused on qualitative research method. For this, different kind of qualitative data collection techniques were used. These include, interview, observation, and personal profile. Key informants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling. In this research, both unstructured and semi-structured interview were used. Through unstructured interview, different informants who know about the topic were interviewed at

market place, public meeting, work place, drinking house and different ritual place. Through this technique, information about economy of weavers was collected.

The other interview type used in this research was semi-structured interview. It was conducted by taking into consideration different criteria such as Artisan who are engaged in the work and non-artisan. From artisan side, information related to their skill, economy, challenges they face at their workshop is collected. During this semi-structured interview, fifteen key informants were selected from three different kebeles of the district. Among these, ten of them were Weavers and the remaining five are non-weavers those benefited from weaver's products and women who prepare raw materials for weavers.

In addition to interview, the researcher observed the process and procedures of producing the cloth and its design. Likewise, the researcher observed different materials that weavers used to make cloth. In addition, the researcher observed issues like type of the cloth they produce, how they prepare the raw materials, type of persons who engage in the work and their workshop. This was done while weavers were producing material at work place. The researcher obtained detail information on design and sources of raw materials. During session of observation, researcher took photo of what he observed.

#### **4. Results**

This section presents major findings and discussions regarding economy of weavers among Limmu Oromo of East Wollega. Most of these findings are facts that are prevailing in Oromo society but previously viewed as passing remark. The findings emphasize economy, challenges and working environment of weavers among Oromo in the research area.

##### **4.1. Economy of the weavers**

The weavers among Oromo in Limmu describe that weaving is the source of their livelihood beside agriculture and animal husbandry. They said that they do not have to look for others favor, since they are able to earn their living from handcrafts. They are able to feed, clothe and educate themselves and their children by income they earn from their products. In addition, they



tell that they are able to pay government revenue and fee of agrochemical they use for crop cultivation beside handcraft by income they get from their products. One of the weavers who engaged in agriculture and weaving said,

*“I have never sold cattle or domestic animals or crop for any fee. Instead, I buy cattle, sheep and goat; formerly I was poor; I did not have oxen for plough and cow for milk, but now by this work, I improved my life; I bought cow for milk and oxen for plough. I feed my children and educate them by the income I get from the work”.*

Among Limmu Oromo weavers are either full-time or part-time workers. Part-time weavers weave cloth as additional work during their free time. Such weavers weave cloth for local people as per their order. Local customers bring every important materials to the local weavers and the weavers weave cloths for the owner by taking their labor fee locally known as *gatii harkaa* (labor fee). The cloth belongs to the customer. The cloth can be for personal use or sell. The weaving fee depends on the type of cloth and the skill of weavers themselves.

The fulltime weavers informed the researcher/s that they benefit a lot from their products and this fact has resulted in a progressive change in their lives. One fulltime weavers said *“I earn 4000 to 5000 Ethiopian birr per month. I sell one bulukkoo<sup>1</sup> by five hundred to six hundred Ethiopian birr which takes only two days to complete; Bale<sup>2</sup> is sold between 190 to 200 birr which takes one day to complete. If everyone learns the skill, it benefits them.”* The next table provides summary of clothes, expenditure cost, profit and time spend on one cloth.

Type of cloth	Time take	expenditure	Market cost	profit
Bullukkoo /men cloth	Two to three days	90-100 Birr	500-600 birr	390-400
Balee /women’s cloth	One day	40 -50	190-200	140-150
Sabbata /women belt	3 to 4 hour	15-20	35-40	15-20
Wandaboo/women dress	Two days	70-80	390-400	215-220

Table.4.1.Summary of weaver’s production and their cost taken from weaver man

<sup>1</sup> Men cloth used at rituals and other social activity

<sup>2</sup> Women cloth worn at rituals and other social activity

Full time weaving is always practiced by those who have enough labor force since all raw materials are prepared by weaver themselves. Wrapping, spinning, bowing and other pre-weaving activities need human power. Thus, the weavers need support of non-weavers. Some informants said that they do both their own and for local people. One of the interviewed weaver man engaging in such activity has economic advantage for weavers. When they finish their own, they do what local people bring to them. Thus, they do not interrupt and do for twelve hours and sell their products to market or local people at workshop. In this way, the weaver benefits themselves on one hand and create job for non-weavers on other hand.



Picture (1) yarn (raw materials)



picture (2) colored yarn



picture (3) weavers weaving cloth



Picture (4, 5 and 6) cloth ready for market

According to my informants, weavers sell their products either at their workshop or at local market. Sometimes, local people come and buy the product of weavers at their workshop. For such customers, they reduce the price to ten to fifteen Ethiopian Birr. On the other hand, weavers themselves take their products to local market weekly and sell. As weavers stated, besides getting high income, direct market is important to promote the production further and to get new customer.

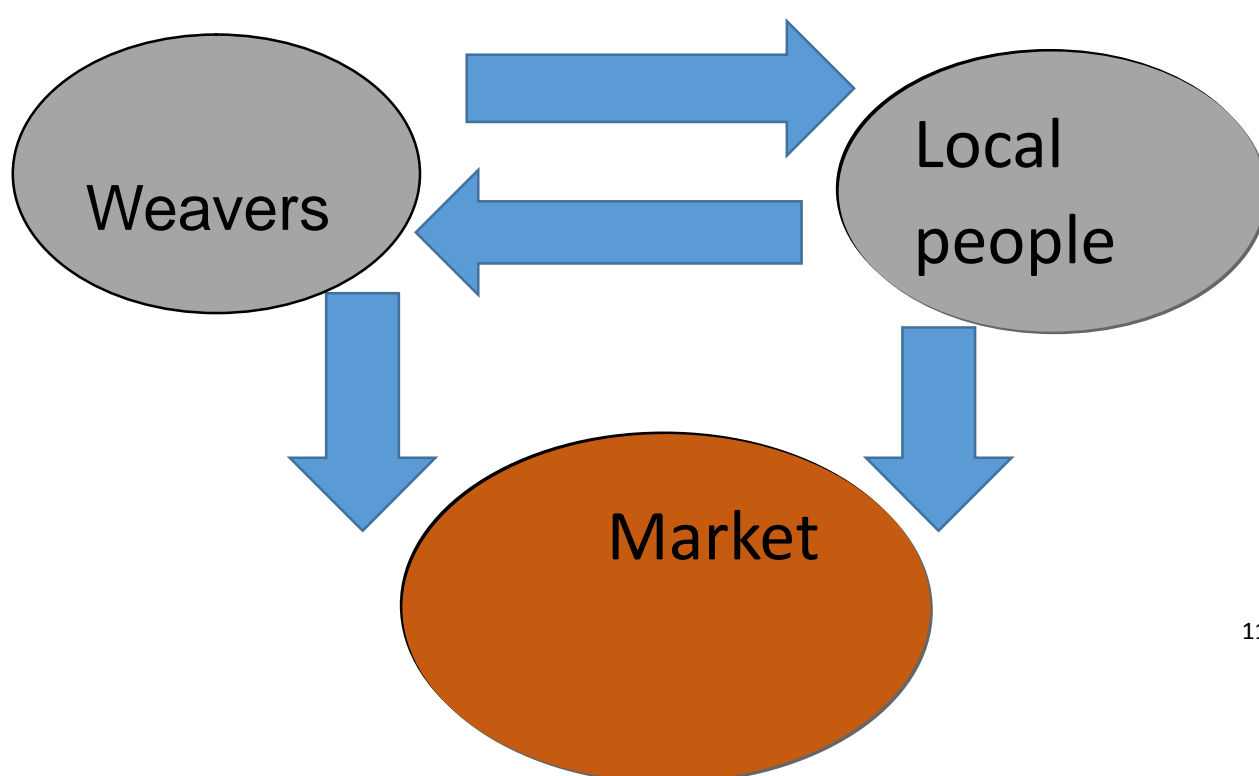


Diagram 4.1 Diagram showing markets structure of full time weavers.

The above diagram shows market structure of full time weavers. Full time weavers weave both their own and what local people bring to them. They weave what local people bring to them and give back to the owner by taking their labor fee. The owner takes to local market and sells the product by getting extra profit or use for home consumption. On the other hand, the diagram shows that the weavers weave for themselves and sell their product directly to the market. In this way, the weavers among Limmu Oromo serve themselves and local people by their skill.

On the other hand, the part time weavers describe that part time weaving is economically not fruitful for weavers. Instead, it benefits local people who prepare raw materials and bring to weavers. They reported that they are more benefited if they do their own and directly sell to market. At market place, weavers can sell their products in competition

From part time weavers, one of my informants said” this type of work benefits local people a lot than weaver, since they pay for us little money for our labor force. Labor fee ranges from 50 to 100 birr based on the type of cloth. For example, we do one *bullukkoo* (men cloth) with 90 to 100 birr if they bring every raw material; in turn they sell it 500 to 600 birr to market, and it is a source of livelihood for numbers of widows “the variation in labor fee due to its size. The fee of big size cloth is bigger than small size.

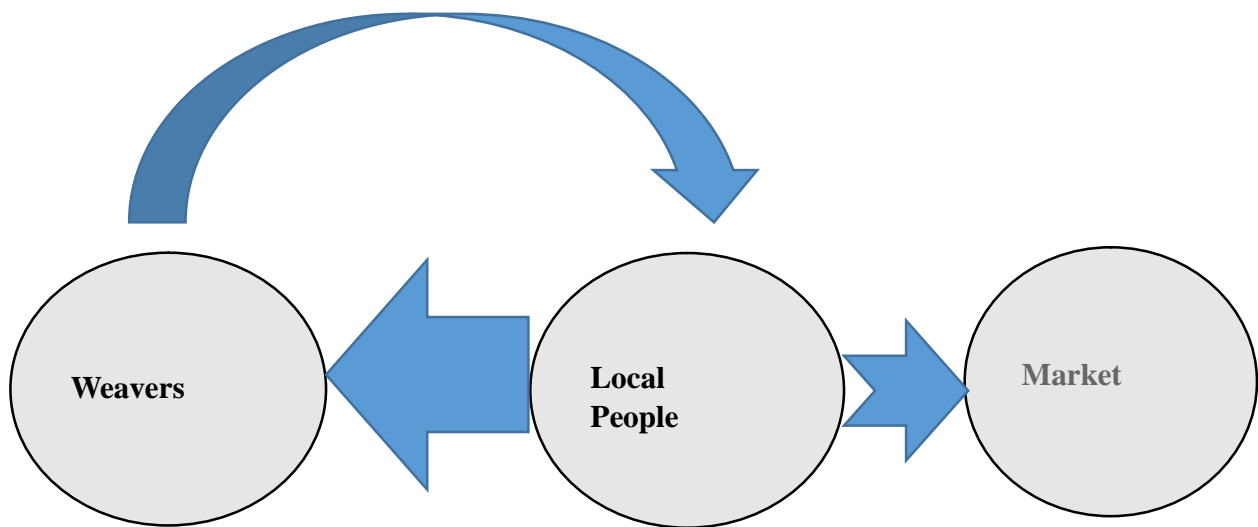


Diagram 4.2, Part time Weavers' Market structure

The above diagram shows the market structure of part time weavers. Local people bring all important raw materials to the weavers and the weavers weave the cloth and give back to the owners by charging their labor services. The local people in turn take the cloth to market and sell at some profit.

Whether it is full or part time work, the weavers among Limmu Oromo stated that currently weaving is the major source of income. Community prefers and likes the locally produced cloth (cloth produced by weavers). It is linked with culture and ritual activity of their daily lives. The fact that the weavers are relatively well-off can be understood from the following geerarsa in which they state that the business is more lucrative.

Afaan Oromo	English
<i>Ani yooman se'eree</i>	I did not expect
<i>Akka arbiin arba caaluu</i>	That the looming machine is more important than bearing the trophy of an elephant.
<i>Akka ittiin ganna baanu</i>	That we pass through the cold rainy seasons with it
<i>Kolloo koo yaa walaasee</i>	hoo my beautiful <i>kollo</i> ( <i>shuttle</i> )
<i>Siti birrii naa badhaasee</i>	you earned me money...

The above oral literature shows the economic significance of weaving for the weavers. It clearly indicates being a weaver yields more respect than bearing a trophy. They can survive when agricultural productivity is predicted to be low due to shortage or excessive rain since they have other alternative source of income. Thus weavers and community, depends on their traditional craft skills as an alternative source of income in times of drought or lean harvests.

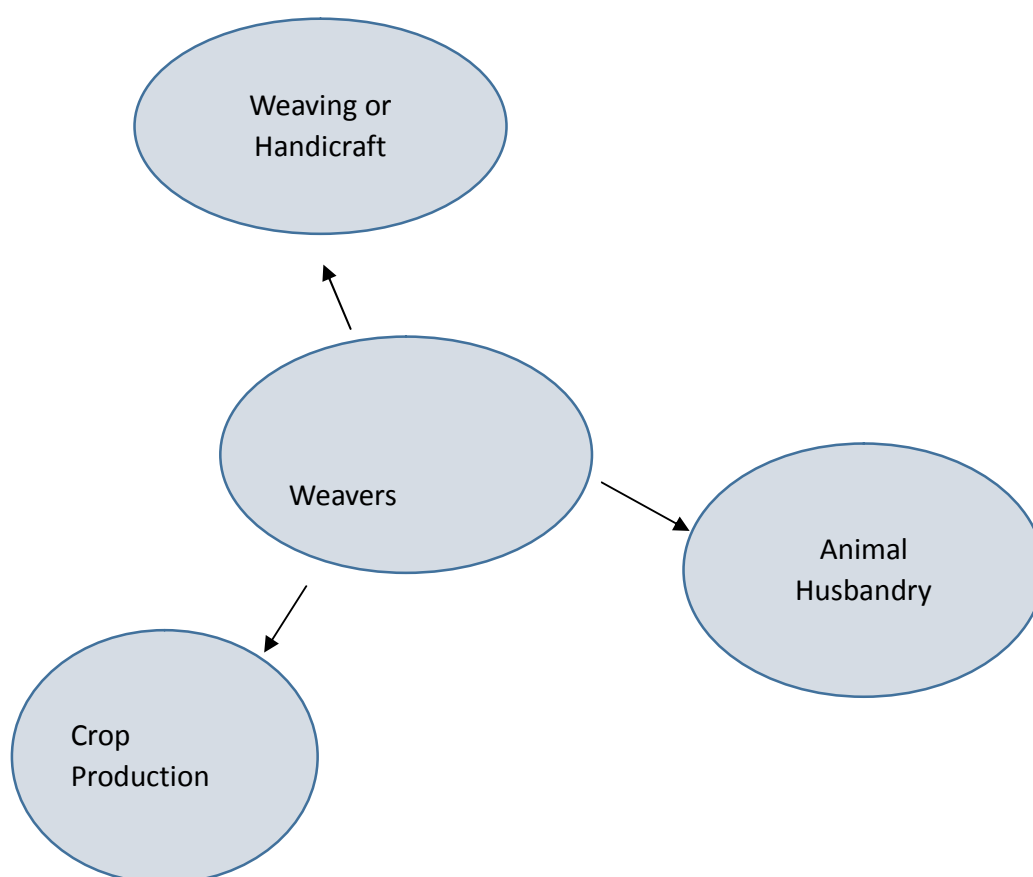


Diagram 4.3; Economic activity of Weavers

#### **4.2. Challenges of Weavers among Limmu Oromo**

During this field observation, the researcher observed their workshop. The weavers among Limmu Oromo do not have appropriate workshop. They weave clothes in the field, under tree or next to their houses. Their machines (*arbi*<sup>3</sup>) are very old and are not supported by modern technology. On the other hand, each weaver in the study area engages in work individually.

Currently, weavers in Limmu Oromo face various challenges. Among these challenges insufficiencies of some raw materials, lack of cooperation, weak network and poor technological upgrade are the major. Weaver does not get raw material like yarn at right time and in right quantity. Such materials are bought from local shops; sometimes they do not bring in sufficient quantity and quality. Thus, the weavers do not get as much as they want. On the other hand, since it is operated by private merchant, sometimes, there is price fluctuation.

Likewise, government agency and non-governmental organization should support them. These supports can be either financial, or technological in designing product and marketing them. So that weavers can benefit a lot from the activity. Weaving is household activity. They perform individually without the support of the other. Thus, they do not share experiences with one another. But, they borrow materials from each other. On the other hand, weaving is labor and time consuming. Weaving is the oldest form of making cloth by indigenous knowledge. With little modification, the practice is still going on. They produce as their fathers did and by their fathers' materials. There is no technological upgradation on the design and material used for weaving cloth.

#### **5. Discussion**

Weaving involves particular kind of learning process that is characterized by a number of factors. The acquiring of the skill is long and gradual process that is traditionally drawn from over several years. It involves the grasping of tradition that has been in place before individual creativity came. The acquisition of the skills concerned involve implicit knowledge and are generally 'taught' right on the spot in the workshop through observation, demonstration and

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<sup>3</sup> Traditional machine used to weave cloth

participation rather than verbal explanations. The passing on of this skill involves close personal relations and acquaintances

Although Bartles (1983) says that weaving is clan-based activity, the findings of this study indicate that the activity is not necessarily clan-based as has been previously thought. Among Limmu Oromo, out of the weavers' clan, there are peoples who are engaged in the business and support themselves. Due to its economic significance, there are also other groups of people who join the weavers to win their daily bread.

As the present study indicates, indigenous handicraft among the Oromo in general and weaving in Limmu Oromo in particular is household activity and it is easy to commence the project since low capital is needed, and local materials are available at their reach. This finding supports the works of (Erande, 2007; Mulu, 2007 and Dibous, 1996), which indicate that indigenous handicraft is home-based industry which requires minimum expenditure and infrastructure to start. In addition, , the present study confirms the works of the above scholars which indicated that handicraft needs low cost, local skill and uses locally available raw material.

This study shows socio-cultural significance of handicraft among the Oromo in general and weavers in particular. Oromo Artisans (potters, tanners and blacksmiths) and weavers among Limmu Oromo play indispensable role in rituals like *Buttaa*, *Gumaa*, *waaqefannaa* and other socio-cultural activities. They provide ritual materials for performers and complement the event. This finding supports the works of (Bula, 2006; Ayalew,2002 and Tablino ,1999), which showed the role of handcrafts in various social activities like house building, farming, harvesting, birth rites, funerals and weddings. On funeral and wedding ceremonies, their special activities include singing the traditional song, dancing, playing horns and digging graves.

Weavers supply cultural cloth which has great meaning and symbolism in economic, social, political and religious activity of Oromo society in general and Limmu Oromo community in particular. The particular design is deep rooted and associated with culture. The design marks and defines its members' behaviors and perceptions. It can be a source of tourism attraction for



Oromo society at zonal, regional, or national level. The costumes produced by weavers are also used as input for museum and provided for exhibition. In this way, it plays basic role in museum development which can be a source of income for the country in general and Limmu district in particular. As other sources indicated, it is also confirmed in this research that weavers are preservers of cultural tradition and contribute in the maintenance of identity specific social group. In the third world nations, a few countries still proudly keep on the ancient tradition of hand weaving looms as the symbols of cultural legacies and glories of past of the human race.

Even though weaving is done by skillful person, preparing raw materials like wrapping, spinning, removing seeds from cotton, bowing selling the final products by taking to market needs extra labor. Thus, some of the weavers among the Limmu Oromo employed a numbers of people (nonweavers) who prepare raw materials for them. When their husbands weave cloth, wives support their husbands. In this way, numbers of non-weavers earn their life by engaging on preparation of raw materials for weavers. This idea confirms the findings of Tripathy (2009; 54) which indicates weaving is the source of livelihood to several millions of Artisans and their families all over the world.

On the other hand, there are a number of non-weavers who survive by engaging in the buying and selling of products of weavers. Such people buy clothes from weavers at the workshop and sell them. The weavers reduce the price of the clothes up to fifteen Ethiopian birr for such traders. So, the traders sell the cloth at local market by gaining profit.

However, the weavers among Limmu Oromo tell that they have problems like, inadequate finance and vested interests, procurement of raw-materials, product developments, quality control, price control, unable to fix a stable price due to fluctuation in yarn price and so on This concept is similar with the findings of (Tripathy, 2009; 55 and Shankar, 2009) which shows that weaving is capable of creating more employment in the rural areas. In the rural belts of different African countries, weaving is the simple industry which is capable of creating more employment.

Weavers among Limmu Oromo engage in handicraft, crop cultivation and animals rearing. They are economically more advantageous than non-weavers who involve in only cultivation and animal rearing or either of the two. One can infer this from the fact that some weavers of the study area earn income to supplement what they earn from other source of income. That means they had three income generating sources, and when agricultural productivity is predicted to be low due to shortage or excessive rain, they give more attention to crafts works. The community thus, depends on their traditional skills as an alternative source of income in times of drought or lean harvests.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research was conducted by focusing on the economy of weavers among the Limmu Oromo of Eastern Wollega zone. The study came-up with various concepts concerning economy of weavers among Limmu Oromo in particular. Accordingly, weaving is the oldest known form of making cloth by hand. Since ancient time, weavers have been producing cloth and supplying for local people. On the other hand, local people use the product of weavers in their daily lives either in secular or spiritual activity.

But, currently it is not transferring in appropriate ways due to Oromo social transformation and lack of motivations from young generation. The children follow formal school by separating from their parent. In addition to that they devote their time by visiting film and other recreational activity.

Weaver produces cloths by local machine called ‘arbi’. Arbi and part of arbi are made from local trees. Thus, the materials are easily accessible for poor who lack capital cost and services as source of employments. However, the study identified that their machine is old; there is no innovation and change in their machine. The tools and equipment are also based on very old technique which requires hard labor and is time consuming.

They make different ornaments and ritual materials that Limmu Oromo society use in their daily lives. Weaving products are unique in designs, color and shape and they are highly linked with

daily lives of Limmu Oromo community. Thus, they play basic role in maintaining Oromo material culture in general and Limmu Oromo in particular.

Weaving is the source of employment in the study area. Even though weaving is performed by few elders preparing raw materials like wrapping, spinning, bowing etc for them needs huge labor force. These input materials are mainly prepared by women mainly by wives of weavers and other widows. On the other hand, some widow and poor women earn income by trading cultural clothes. Such people prepare all important raw materials and bring to weavers. The weavers engage on production of cloths as per their order and take their labor fee and give the cloth to these people who brought to them. In this way, the weaving also creates employment opportunity for non-weavers, especially for poor and widow women. Thus it play great role in job creation for urban and rural areas

Another issue observed in this research is about working environment. Weavers exchange information about market and raw materials where they see each other. They do not engage in weaving activities in group. There is no network among weavers at their workshop; they do not share their experiences concerning their skills and design. Due to this, weaver does particular cloths for long time without diversification of production both in terms of types and designs.

## **7. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions above. The study shows that the weavers among Limmu Oromo do not get any technical support from government and non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, they do not have appropriate workshop. The government and any other concerned body should assist the weavers by providing them with the materials they need and also provide financial and/or technical supports.

It has been understood that in few of the cases, the raw materials for weaving is not locally available. Weavers buy raw materials like yarn from local merchants. Sometimes, they do not obtain when they want. In addition to this, there is some price fluctuation. It will be minimizing this challenge if raw materials center is established and provided for Weavers by government in

such circumstance the state governments may supply raw material like yarn and cotton at cheaper rates which helps become incentive for the weaver. Supplying standard raw materials to Weavers in appropriate quantity and quality at reasonable rates is important to improve the productions.

The tools and equipments are based on very old technique which is labor and time consuming. Design development production of new items and improvements of traditional tools and age old techniques need to be attempted in such items where the originality of the designs is retained. Introduction of new items with improved models may be designed continuously to attract new customers and explore new markets by the present design and training institutes. Therefore, it has been recommended that National Regional Government of Oromia should organize regular seminars to upgrade the technology and production of techniques.

It is known that weaving is a household activity. There is no networking between weavers. If they do in clustering, they can share experiences concerning the products and become greater beneficiary from their products. Thus, the concerned body should form clustering among weavers.

In order to sustain this long-lasting traditions and experiences, it is advisable to incorporate the skills into school curriculum so that the young generation could acquire the skill. Together with this, professionals should be trained at college levels and do their best to ensure the continuity of the knowledge and experiences of weaving.

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