

**LECTURE NOTES**

# *Introduction to Sociology*

*For Health Extension Workers*



**Ethiopia Public Health  
Training Initiative**

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In collaboration with the Ethiopia Public Health Training Initiative, The Carter Center,  
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*This material is intended for educational use only by practicing health care workers or students and faculty in a health care field.*

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## Introduction

This lecture note is an introduction to sociology for Health Extension Workers in Ethiopia. The subject sociology touches upon all aspects of society. Thus, this note provides the trainees with basic knowledge concerning society. Health extension workers who are engaged in mobilizing the community are expected to understand the various aspects of community. This includes, among others, the individual and society, social inequality and social institutions. The concepts discussed in this lecture note, to the writer's understanding, suit the needs and the standards of the trainee. In addition, the examples and the exercises are, more or less, related to the Ethiopian context.

Thus, at the end of the course, the trainee will register behavioral and or attitudinal changes. This is crucial, particularly for health workers who are assigned among the community.

## UNIT ONE

### The Sociological Perspectives

#### Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, the student will be able to discuss:

- The concept of sociology.
- The study of sociology.
- The relation between sociology and social sciences.
- Sociology and common sense.
- Historical development of sociology.

#### Topic One: The Nature of Sociology

##### 1.1.1 Sociology Defined.

Sociology can be defined as *the systematic study of human social interaction*. Sociology focuses on the influence of social relationship upon people's attitudes and behavior.

##### 1.1.2 The Study of Sociology.

Sociology aims at the understanding of social life and human interaction. Social life is complex. Look at the following:

- Some people do care about their health. Consequently, they use preventive method. However, others don't worry about their health. They go to health centers after they are sick.
- The number of HIV carriers in Ethiopian is greater than many African countries.
- Some people give high priority to education while others don't.
- Why do some people act/ behave differently from others?

Facts and question such as these are numerous. The study of sociology not only broadens our view but also helps us to answer different question such as these.

### **1.1.3 Sociology and Social Sciences.**

All Social sciences are interested in patterned regularity in human beings' social behavior. However, each field of social science has its own specific interest. For example, economics study human production, distribution and consumption. Political science focuses on government and power. Psychology studies the sciences of mind. History deals with past events.

Sociology is one of the social sciences studying human social interaction. This means human interaction in all areas: interaction in production center, in political parties, in the family, in schools etc. Thus, sociology touches upon nearly

all social science fields. In this respect, sociology is one of the broadest fields of study.

#### **1.1.4 Sociology and Common Sense**

Sociology is a science. This is because that it follows systematic procedures in studying society. Part of the knowledge that we get through common sense is not considered as scientific. Therefore, sociology doesn't consider common sense as a source of fact. The knowledge that we get through common sense must be recorded, tested and analyzed. Then, we can take them as one of the sources of facts.

##### **Example:**

- Common sense tells us that the expansion of health centers is the only solution to make society healthy. This common sense is only partially true. According to researchers, to make society healthy, the first and the best way is to make an effort on preventive measures than on curatives; i.e. not treatment after being sick.
- Common sense may tell us that people in the countryside are against modern way of thinking. This common sense is misleading; because as the experiences of many countries indicate, village men accept new idea as long as they acquire proper information.

**Exercise:** List down four common senses which cannot be the sources of facts.

### **1.1.5 Historical Development of Sociology.**

There are two significant social events that helped the emergence of sociology: The French revolution and The Industrial Revolution.

#### **◆ The French Revolution**

The French Revolution was the bloodiest social movement that took the life of thousands of people. It avoided the old political, social and economic order through a lot of riots, and killings. The revolution, therefore, pushed many social scientists to think about society. This includes analyzing social behavior, the cause and results of revolution, alternative ways of social change and stability etc.

#### **◆ The Industrial Revolution**

The discovery of electricity, telephone and the steam engine had brought rapid social and economic change. It also resulted in a lot of social problems. Peasants for examples lost their land and migrated to towns. Few became rich but the majority remained poor. Thus, many intellectuals determined to develop the scientific study of society.

### The Founders of Sociology

- ◆ **August Comte (1798-1857)**. He was the French philosopher who used the word sociology for the first time. He is called the father of sociology.
- ◆ **Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)**. British philosopher. According to him understanding and explaining society should be the aim of sociology.
- ◆ **Emil Durkheim (1859-1917)**. He was from Jewish family. Most of his works in sociology focused on understanding the stability of society.
- ◆ **Max Weber (1864-1920)**. He was a German philosopher. He wrote books about religion and social change.
- ◆ **Karl Marx (1818-1883)**. He was a Jewish origin, but born in Germany. Basically, he was different from the other philosophers. According to him, society is based mainly on economic relation. Thus, there is always conflict. Understanding conflict in all aspect of social life, therefore, should be the core element.

## Topic Two: The Sociological Approach.

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to explain:

- The major theoretical perspectives in society.
- The use of sociology in the formation of social policy.

#### 1.2.1 Major Theoretical Perspectives.

There are three important sociological approaches in sociology.

##### ♦ **Structural Functional Theory**

Emil Durkheim and Herbert Spencer are the most influential persons in this theory. The theory focuses on the structure of the society. Moreover, it emphasizes how the structure functions. To put it in an example, when a researcher studies the family the focus would be on the structure of the family. Then, the function and the effect of the structure is analyzed.

##### ♦ **Conflict Theory**

Karl Marx is the most known person in this theory. The key idea of the theory is conflict. According to Marx, conflict always exists among society, among the family, between friends, workmates and between workers and factory

owners, etc. The most important source of conflict is economic. It is common, particularly, between the rich and the poor (the workers and the capitalist). In other words, conflict exists between different social groups. According to Marx, the solution for such conflict is revolution.

- ♦ **Symbolic Interaction Theory.**

According to this theory, the study of society should focus on everyday aspects of social life. Particularly, inter personal relation in small groups of people help us to understand the larger society. Social order is kept by the day-to-day interaction and the shared behavior of groups of people.

### **1.2.2 Sociology and Social Policy**

The study of sociology and social policy are highly interrelated. Decision makers need social problems that are investigated scientifically. Thus, researches conducted by sociologists are the key inputs for designing social policy. For example, before starting a health extension program, the role of sociologists is crucial. The norms, the values and the cultural practices of the community must be studied.

**Exercise:** The government wanted to draft a policy which is aimed at helping HIV positive people. Discusses the role of sociologists.



## UNIT TWO

### The Individual And The Society

#### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to examine:

- Culture and society.
- Development of culture.
- Elements of culture.
- Culture integration and variation
- Culture and the dominant ideology.

#### Topic One: Culture

##### 2.1.1 Culture and Society

It is very difficult to totally separate culture from society. This is because that in the absence of society there is no culture. And without culture there is no society. However, culture and society are not the same or identical. *Society* is a large number of *people who share similar culture* and live in a certain territory. *Culture* is the *behavior of society*, it is learned and transmitted. Thus, culture and society are two different phenomena but strongly interconnected

### 2.1.2 Development of Culture.

The process of the development of culture begins when mankind began to use stone tools. Human beings started art, paintings, ceremonies such as birth and wedding 35,000 years ago.

One form of the Development of culture is *innovation*. That is, creating or finding new things such as electricity. The other form is *adoption*. It is taking and using norms, ideas, and materials etc. from other cultures. The process is called *culture diffusion*. Trade, war, mass media are some of the means that facilitate diffusion.

**Example:** The introduction of coffee from Ethiopia to the rest the world and firearms/guns from Europe to Ethiopia are good examples for culture diffusion.

#### Exercise:

- A) Mention three discoveries and innovations that contribute to the development of culture.
- B) Identify three culture diffusions that contribute to the development of Ethiopian culture.

### 2.1.3 Elements of Culture.

Culture is a very wide concept. The good way to understand culture is to see the elements of culture. In this lesson we

will see only some of the elements, *Ideology, folklore, values and norms.*

- ◆ **Ideology** It is a doctrine that justifies a course of action. For example, the feudal ideology reflects the feudal culture. The capitalist ideology shapes the capitalist social system. Competition, for example, is the ideology of capitalism. Thus, competition is the basic cultural value of the society in capitalist countries.
- ◆ **Folklore** is the traditions, stories, myth, customs, etc. of a community, or the study of these aspects. Understanding the folklore of a certain society tells us much about the people's culture; In other words, folklore reflects the basic cultural practices.
- ◆ **Values** are shared ideas of different communities about desirable goals.

**For example:**

- Patriotism among all nationalities of Ethiopia.
- Competition among all communities of America.
- Hard working among all communities of China are strong values (shared ideas).

- ◆ **Norms:** To achieve a certain value different societies follow different means; that is what we call norms. In other words, norms are shared rules of conduct that a society follows to achieve common goals (values).

**Example:** Ethiopian parents and /or society socialize children to be bald. This means children are not expected to fear, or avoid fighting. The development of this norm helps children to achieve the society's value- in our case patriotism.

Generally speaking there are two types of norms: *folkways* and *mores*.

**Folkways:** are simple, normal and habitual practices of a society.

- Ways of dressing or dancing.
- Food choices (such as eating injera).
- Ways of thanks giving are examples of folkways.

When persons act against folkways society may not take it seriously. This is because that they are simple types of norms.

**Mores** are strong norms of society.

**Example:** In Ethiopia dogs are not eaten; or like some Europeans same sexes do not get marry. When persons eat dog (like some societies) or when same sexes get married (like

Europeans) it is against the mores. Thus, for the Ethiopians it is serious; because it is immoral. The society punishes such persons in different ways for example by isolation.

**Exercise:**

- A. Mention three violations of folkways and five mores related with health.
- B. In some communities, feces defecation in front of people is normal. However, in others it is the violation of mores: Do you agree? Discuss.

**2.1.4 Culture Variation and Integration.**

**Culture variation**

All societies in our world do not have identical cultural practices. This means, each culture has its own unique characters. This implies culture variation. Thus, it is expected that values and norms conflict each other.

**Culture integration**

Different societies with different cultures live together peacefully. Why? It is because that they are able to create different mechanisms. One way is the *willingness* of the different societies. They accept their difference and live in harmony and/or peace. The other is by *enforcement*. The dominant cultures integrate minority groups without

their consent. However, the introduction of technology greatly facilitated the integration of different cultures of the world. These days, all cultures are attracted toward the Western culture.

**Exercise:**

- A) To what extent do you think that different communities in Ethiopia are integrated?
- B) To what extent do you think that Ethiopians are integrated with European culture?

**2.1.5 Culture and Dominant Ideology.**

Dominant ideology maintains powerful social, economic and political interest. According to some scholars, dominant ideology is a mechanism of culture integration. It also stabilizes different societies to live together in harmony. According to conflict theory, dominant ideology serves only one powerful section of society; and it is a source of conflict. Ethnic and race conflict are good examples that arise as the result of dominant ideology.

**Example:** These days, capitalism is the dominant ideology across the world. It serves as a mechanism of culture integration. Culture diffusion, changing view of young people, and globalization are bringing different cultures in to one “melting pot”.

## Topic two: Socialization

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of this topic the trainee will be able to describe:

- The concept of socialization.
- The role of socialization.
- The self and socialization.

#### 2.2.1 Socialization Defined.

The process of learning which includes values, attitudes, knowledge, skill etc. that we learn beginning from childhood is called *socialization*. Children learn socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviors from their family. The socialization process doesn't stop after childhood, but it continuous until we pass away.

#### 2.2.2 The Role of Socialization

Little children, though not conscious, are highly self-centered. They assume that everything around them exist only to serve them. It is through socialization that they learn the opposite. And as time goes, they learn their limits. In schools and in peer groups, children learn the sense of friendship, competition etc. Thus, the role of socialization is to help people conform to the established cultural practices. It is through socialization that individuals become members of a society.

### 2.2.3 The Self and Socialization.

Any person is different from others. In other words, an individual is unique. The feeling (perception) that an individual has about her/himself is termed as *the self*. The feeling that we have about ourselves depends upon the process of socialization. This means, the way we consider ourselves could also come from how others perceive us.

**Example:** The self-perception of a child can be influenced by others perception. This means, if we understand a child positively, then, she/he could feel positive about her/him self. According to sociology, therefore, the perception of the self is mainly based on socialization which influences our *self image*.

**Exercise:**

- A) How do you perceive a peasant? Careless about personal hygiene? Illiterate? Difficult to teach? Hard worker? Or What? Discuss by giving reasons.
- B) How do your friends perceive you? Brilliant or dull? Hard worker or lazy? Trust worthy or un trustworthy? Or what?
- C) Does this perception influence the way you think about yourself? How? Discuss.



#### 2.2.4 Socialization and the Life Cycle.

Socialization begins immediately after birth. And it is a life long transformation. Socialization takes place at the family level, at the school, at work place, and at old age. At each stage, the content and intensity of the socialization differ. This means, the norms and values that we learn in the family and in the school is different. So is in the work place and at old age.

**Exercise:** Give Examples concerning the kind of socialization that is practiced in *the family, the schools, the work place and at old age.*

#### 2.2.5 Agents of Socialization.

The socialization process takes places formally and informally by different institutes. The task of socialization is carried out by *agents of socialization*. Among others, the family, the school and peer group are the most important agents of socializations.

**The family:** It is the basic agents of socialization. The family socializes children:

- Manner of eating and drinking.
- Toilet training.
- Adapting sleeping time.
- Developing the sense of self.

- Race and gender deference.
- Determine basic behavior such as affection and/or hatreds.

**School:** The school has a strong influence in socializing pupils. In schools, girls and boys are socialized to:

- Conform the values and cultural practices of the society.
- Modify the old self image and develop new ones.
- Acquire new skills and to have new worldview.

**Peer Groups:**-It is a group of young girls and/or boys of the same age. For young people, peer group is the most significant than the family. Peer groups socialize the young to:

- Practice independence.
- Carry adult hood responsibilities.
- Emotional intimacy.
- Group loyalty etc.

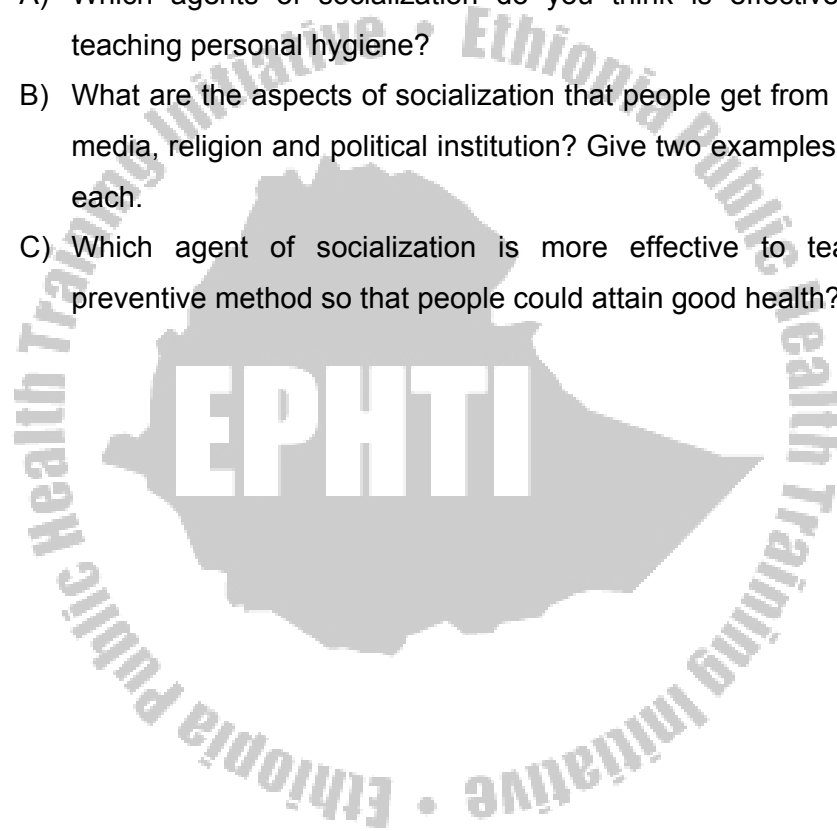
**Work place:**-After child hood, young women /men enter in to occupation. Then, the process of socialization takes place in the work area. The work place socialize the young to:

- Conform to the adult status.
- Vocational/occupational training.
- Carry out new responsibilities.

**Note:** Religious and political institutions, the media, among others, are also agents of socializations.

**Exercise:**

- A) Which agents of socialization do you think is effective in teaching personal hygiene?
- B) What are the aspects of socialization that people get from the media, religion and political institution? Give two examples for each.
- C) Which agent of socialization is more effective to teach preventive method so that people could attain good health?



## Topic Three: Social Groups and Organizations

### 2.3.1 Understanding Groups

No individual is an island. We spend much of our time within groups: with family, neighbors, friends, workmates, and travelers (in a bus, taxi etc). Thus, understanding groups helps us in determining our ideas, views and behaviors. A number of people with similar norms, values and expectations who regularly and consciously interact are called groups.

#### Types of groups

There are two types of groups: *primary and secondary* groups. Examples of primary groups are the family, best friends, gang members. Secondary groups include classmates, club/ association members.

#### Characteristics of primary and secondary groups.

| Primary                    | Secondary                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ● Small in number.         | ● Large in number.        |
| ● Cooperative, friendly.   | ● Superficial             |
| ● Strong sense of loyalty. | ● Based on self interest. |

**Exercise:-** Identify five primary and five secondary groups in which you are a member.

### 2.3.2 Studying Small Groups

Studying small groups is very important. This is because that their influence on our view and behavior is so strong. Large groups on the other hand have little effect on our lives. In Small groups, individuals could play unique role. However, as group members increase in number, the role that a person plays become lesser and insignificant.

#### **Exercise:**

Consider the groups you mentioned in the previous exercise and answer the following.

- A) What are your roles in each group?
- B) In which group do you feel that you play strong role?
- C) Do you think that the role you play affect your behavior?

### 2.3.3 Understanding Organizations

As discussed earlier understanding groups is very important. Similarly, studying organizations has an equal importance. This is because that organizations such as health centers, schools, churches /mosques, production centers, etc. directly or indirectly affect our lives.

### 2.3.4 Formal Organizations and Bureaucracies

**Formal organization:** It is a group designed for large-scale operation to achieve maximum efficiency. Formal organization

includes schools, health centers, the courts, the police and other institutes. Such organizations strongly shape our behavior and affect our lives.

**Example:**

- The quality of school curriculum.
- The efficiency of health centers.
- The democratic nature of the courts and the policy of the parliament have significant impact on our behaviors and lives.

**Bureaucracy**

Bureaucracy is an element of formal organization in which rules and hierarchical authority structure is used to achieve efficiency.

**Characteristics of Bureaucracy**

- **Division of labor:** All workers are given specific duties such as job titles and job descriptions.
- **Hierarchy of authority:** There is a chain of command. Each position is under the control/ supervision of higher position.
- **Rules and regulations:** All activities are governed by rules and regulations. In other words, personal feelings have no place. Avoiding personal feeling helps to follow the set rules and regulations.

- **Technical qualifications:** Workers hold position based on their qualifications. This includes educational background and work experience etc.

**Note:** -All formal organizations do not strictly follow the above criteria.

### 2.3.5 Voluntary Association.

Voluntary associations are organizations that are established on the basic common interest of the members. Such associations are usually non-profit organizations. People join voluntary associations due to different personal objectives. The following are, among others, examples.

- For philanthropic/charity purpose.
- To help various sectors such as the health, the educational, and the religious.

#### **Exercise:**

- A) Mention some local voluntary associations that you know. What are their objectives?
- B) Do you think that it is possible to organize voluntary association aimed at preventive health program in the countryside? If yes, explain how it is possible. If no, what are the problems that you may face?

## Topic four: Deviance and Social Control

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to discuss the concepts:

- Conformity and obedience
- Informal and formal social control
- Law and society.
- Deviance and crime

### 2.4.1 Social Control

Most of us conform or accept the norms and values of our respective society. For example we respect elders, ask excuse for our wrong doings, condole mourners. Social control guides us to do such things. Social control is the force and process that encourage us to conform the norms and values of the society. Social control has three levels:

- ◆ **Self-control:** It refers to our self-concept. In other words, we don't act against our norms because it doesn't come to our mind.
- ◆ **Informal control:** some times due to fear or shame, we restrain our selves from unacceptable behavior. This is termed as informal control.



- ◆ **Formal social control:** Formal rules, such as laws, restrict us from violating unacceptable norms. For example, we don't steal or kill people. This may be because of fear of the law.

### **Conformity and obedience**

As discussed above, self-control, informal and formal social controls are mechanisms that help us to behave according to the norms and values of our society.

- If we act or behave due to self-control and informal control it is *conformity*
- If we act or behave due to formal control it is *obedience*.

**Example:** A health extension worker conforms to the behavior of the people in the countryside. However, she is obedient to the head of the health extension workers.

**Exercise:** Is it possible to create a new *preventive norm* (rather than cure) so that society would conform to it? How?

### **2.4.2 Law and Society**

Law and society are interrelated. Laws are formal social control of society. Some violation of norms and values are dangerous to the society or to the interest of the authorities. Thus, they are included into laws. Laws are rules made by a government,

interpreted by the court and backed by the power of the state. Theft, murder, rape, coup'detat, tax evasion, etc are serious and are unacceptable norms and values. Thus, society treats such behaviors by formal laws.

### 2.4.3 The Concept of Deviance

Deviance is a behavior against the standards of conduct or expectation of a group/ society. It refers to both formal and informal social control.

#### Example:

- Cheating in an exam is a deviance, but simple violation of school norms.
- Prescribing wrong medicine purposely for a patient is a serious deviance.

Note that deviance must be treated only with in its social context, time and place. Look at the following examples.

- Finding feces here and there are a serious deviance in some communities. However, it is normal and acceptable in some other.
- Walking with naked breast is acceptable for women in some southern parts of Ethiopia. However, it is a serious deviance in Northern Ethiopia.
- Walking naked (but wearing pants) is quite normal around swimming pool. However, it is shocking in the street.

#### 2.4.4 Crime

Crime is a violation of norms and values set by the formal social control. Crime (like deviance) should be seen within the social context.

#### Exercise:

- A) Mention five examples that are considered as crime in your home area.
- B) Mention three examples that are considered as crime in one area/ time but not in another.

#### Types of crime

There are four categories of crime.

**Professional crime:** - It is committed by professional criminals. For example, some thieves are engaged only in pick pocketing. In other words, they master the technique of stealing money from peoples' pocket.

**Organized crime:** It is a crime run by organized groups. Particularly it is found in the developed countries. Organized criminals are involved in drug business, gambling, and prostitution, etc.

**White-collar crime:** A crime committed by responsible people of high social status is termed as white color crime. Head of states, ministers,

managers, and association leaders are some of the social groups who are involved in white color crime.

**Victimless crime:** Behaviors such as smoking drugs and gambling that are exchanged between willing persons is called victimless crime. Gambling, for example, is crime. However, no one of the players is a victim of the crime. This is because that the participants are willing to play the game.



## UNIT THREE

### Social Inequality

#### Topic One: Social Stratification and Social Mobility

##### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to discuss:

- Systems of stratification.
- Perspectives on stratification
- Stratification by social class
- Social mobility

##### 3.1.1 Understanding Stratification

Society is divided in many ways: Some are rich others are poor; some are young others are old; some are from the dominant group while others are from minority. Stratification is an expression of inequality. Thus, when inequality is based on a hierarchal of social groups it is referred as stratification. Sociology tries to explain the reason behind these stratifications/divisions. Thus, understanding social stratification is one of the core issues in sociology.

**Exercise:** Mention five different social stratifications in the countryside.

**Systems of Stratification.**

Stratification is universal. Every society has its own ways of stratification based on inequality. Stratification has different forms: System of slavery, estate, cast and class.

**A) Slavery:** It is a system where society is divided into slave owner and slaves. Slavery is one of the worst forms of stratification.

**B) Estate:** It is a system where society is divided into land lords and peasants. Ethiopia in the feudal era is a good example of estate system.

**C) Cast System:** It is a hereditary oriented rank system. In cast system, stratification is based on parents' position.

A good example of cast system is practiced in India. The cast called "untouchables" are not allowed access to social, economic and political position. In some parts of our country potters and blacksmiths are considered as cast.

**Exercise:**

- Do we find some other casts in Ethiopia and particularly in the countryside?
- What are the problems they face?
- How can we solve their problems?

**D) Class Systems:** Generally speaking, the present Ethiopia is in the class system. This system is also dominant through out the world. It is very difficult to put clear division in class system. Hard work, talent and chance, among others, determine the social category of persons. In class system, there are two ways that influence the social category: ascribed status, and achieved status.

**Ascribed Status:** It is a social position assigned to a person without the person's unique character or talent. Gender, age, race could also be the source of ascribed status. By virtue of being female, or disabled a person can occupy lower status.

**Example:**

- Children of a prime minister most likely inherit prestige and wealth.
- A blind with a good talent may occupy a lower status.

**Achieved Status:** It is a social position that people attain through their own talent or effort. The Ethiopia Mother Teresa, Abebech Gobena, Molla Maru and, Bekele Molla are good examples of achieved status. All of them had lower status, however, by their personal effort they were/are able to occupy higher status.

**Exercise:**

- Mention individuals who came from a peasant family but reached higher status.

**Perspective on Social Stratifications**

There are many theories concerning social stratification. However, we will discuss only two of them: the Functionalist and the Conflicts view.

**Conflict theory:** According to Marx, the reason for the existence of social classes is, basically, economic. Society is mainly divided in to exploiters and exploited. Thus, the two classes have different culture. The solution for such inequality is social revolution.

**Functionalist:** According to Max Weber, *class, status and power* are the components of stratification.

- Class refers to economic i.e. people with similar income.
- Status refers to position regardless of income or prestige.
- Power comes from the opportunity of holding position in the bureaucracy or political party etc.

**Examples:**

- Coffee producer peasant may earn much. However she/he has lower status than a health extension worker who earns relatively little.



- A minister may earn relatively little but has higher power. On the other hand, a specialist doctor may get a better income but less power than the minister.

### 3.1.2 Stratification by Social Class.

Sociologists measure stratification from the angle of social classes. This means, individuals are assigned to social class based on different criteria. This includes *education, occupation and income*. Education can give us high prestige. Many known intellectuals are good examples. Occupation and income are also the other factors.

**Example:** By virtue of occupation an engineer or a lecturer may have higher prestige. However, a merchant with similar educational background may have lesser prestige than the engineer or the lecturer.

### 3.1.3 Social Mobility

The movement of an individual/groups from one social status (power, prestige, wealth) to another is termed as social mobility.

Is it always possible to shift from one status to another? Do all people get equal chance for social mobility? These are important questions to understand the concept of social mobility. In a society where there is relatively static social and political system, there will be little chance for social mobility. This is also

true if the social mobility requires ascribed status. Such system is referred as closed class system.

In some societies, relatively, there is a continuous social and economic dynamism. This means, there is wide construction of infrastructures and rapid movement of capital etc. In such situation, social mobility is rapid and satisfying. This is also true if the social mobility requires achieved status. Such system is referred as *open class system*.

**Exercise:** Is Ethiopia closed or open class system? Give example.

**Types of social mobility.**

There are two types of social mobility.

**Horizontal mobility:** This refers to the movement of a person/group from one social position to another of the same rank.

**Example:** A health extension worker may become an elementary school teacher. This is a relatively similar social position. Thus, it is a horizontal mobility.

**Vertical mobility:** It implies a shift from one social position to a better or higher rank/position. Vertical mobility indicates an upward movement in the social stratification.

**Example:** When a health assistant becomes a nurse it is a vertical mobility.

## Topic two: Stratification by Gender.

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to discuss the concepts on:

- Gender and gender roles.
- The influence of gender on women.
- Aging and society, locally and globally.
- Role transition in later life.

### 3.2.1 Gender Identity and Gender Role.

The difference between women and men can be seen from two angles. The first is biological: their significance difference is the chromosomes, reproductive capacity and sexual organs.

Second, culturally women and men have different social roles: women are responsible for household affair and child care while men are income earners.

The term *sex* refers to male and female that is directly related to the *biological differentiation*. The concept *gender* on the other hand implies the *cultural behavior* that both sexes show.

### 3.2.2 Gender role socialization

The family socializes girls and boys differently. In most societies girls are socialized to act softly. On the other hand, boys are expected to be tough and act daringly. This process is decisive in fixing gender

roles. While other institutions also re-inference this mode of socialization, educational institutions try to reverse the situation.

**Exercise:**

- Mention other institutions/organizations that strengthen gender difference. Note that gender role socialization vary note only across culture but over time. In other words, gender in equality is socio cultural not biological/natural.

**Example:** Among Afar of Ethiopia women are breadwinners. The fieldwork including the household chores is the responsibility of the women. In New Guinea, men are socialized to be passive and emotional like most women in Ethiopia.

**Exercise:** Do you think that a change in socialization improves the situation of Ethiopia women? How? Discuss.

**3.2.2 Women as Oppressed Majority**

In general and across the world, women are victims of oppression. Although the number of women is significantly big, they play little role in decision-making. For example, the number of women in the higher ranks is very small.

The population of Ethiopia is about 70 million.

- How many women ministers do we have?
- How many women generals?

- How many women specialists?
- How many women engineers?

These and other similar facts force us to ask ourselves the reasons that lie behind gender inequality.



### **Topic Three: Social Stratification by Age**

At the end of the topic the trainee will be able to explain:

- Aging and society
- Aging locally and globally
- Role transition in later life

#### **3.3.1 Aging and Society.**

Aging is an aspect of socialization; moreover age stratification is the other aspect of inequality. This means, like other stratifications there is also age stratification that affects the elderly. Many societies highly respect old people. However, the aged are among the disadvantaged groups and are victims of inequality.

Aging is a relative matter. Aging depends not on our physical/ mental deterioration; but also on how the society perceives. Age limit, particularly in the modern world, is institutionalized. According to a common consensus old age begins at 65. People may be strong and efficient but could be retired. Thus age related roles are socially constructed and rearranged.

#### **3.3.2 Aging Locally and Globally**

According to a research, nearly 7% of the world population is over 65 years old. Of this large number, the elderly who are living under the care of their children/ grand children is

decreasing. Two reasons can be mentioned: The view that adults have no obligation to care old parents. And the second is the emerging of organizations that carry the responsibility of caring the aged.

These days the situation of the elderly is becoming very difficult.

- All over the world, the leadership role of the elderly is becoming the past history.
- They get little treatment in the health centers and less attention in the media, and labor force.

Like many societies, Ethiopians give high value and respect to the elderly. However, due to poverty, hunger and famine many elderly people have been neglected. The situations look like the following:

Many of them are not healthy and are homeless.

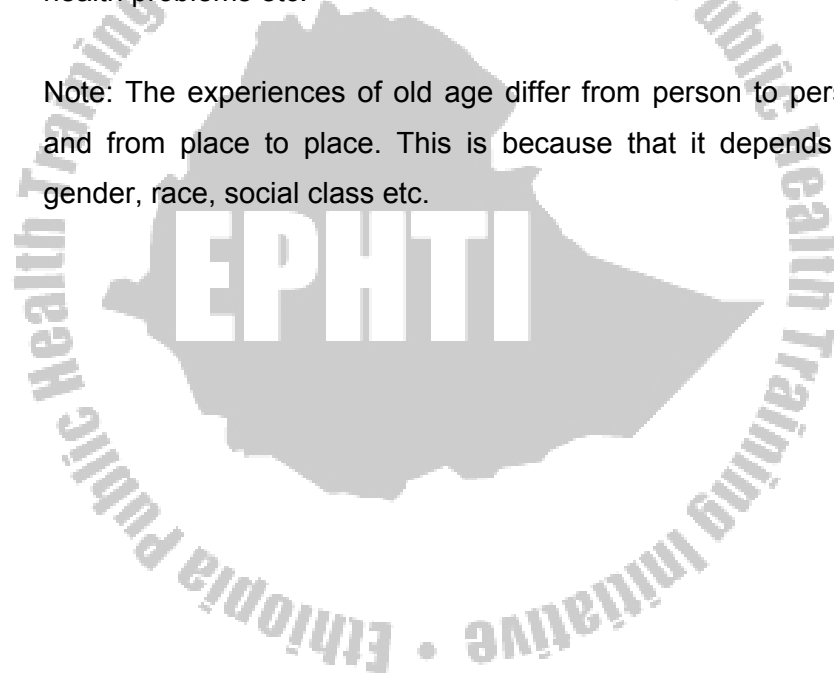
Engaged in works that do not match with their age.

- Due to HIV/AIDS some of them are responsible for caring their grand children. On other hand, some elderly are left alone as their children pass away due to HIV/AIDS.
- Many rural elderly parents are left alone. The reason is, adults are increasingly migrate to the town
- The situation of elderly women is worst particularly in the countryside.

### 3.3.3 Role Transition in Later Life

The common aspect of the elderly is the difficulties they face when they change their roles. Old age requires new form of role adjustment. Moreover, old people receive new form of responses from children, the young and the adult. All these are the result of entering a new phase. This new experience again results in dependency, loneliness, biological and psychological health problems etc.

Note: The experiences of old age differ from person to person and from place to place. This is because that it depends on gender, race, social class etc.





## Topic Four: Race and Ethnicity.

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to explain:

- Minority, race and ethnical groups
- Race and ethnicity.
- Prejudice and inter group relations.

### 3.4.1 Minority, Racial and Ethnic Groups.

The concept minority group, for sociologists, is beyond number. It is highly related with in-equality. People who have less influence and power over their lives (compared to the majority) are termed as minority group.

#### Features of minority group.

- Membership in minority group is by birth.
- Members are significantly similar in race, religion, ethnicity and language etc.
- Minority groups, in many societies, are victims of social inequality or discrimination.

**Example:**

- African Americans are minority groups.
- The Felasha community in Ethiopia are/were minority groups.

**Exercise:**

- Identify other minority groups in Ethiopia.
- Do they face discrimination? How?

### 3.4.2 Studying Race and Ethnicity.

A *race* is a category of distinct people on account of physical characteristics that have social importance. An *ethnic group* is a category of people who share important elements of a common culture. Both race and Ethnicity are bounded to us from our parents. However, race refers to the genetic transmission of physical characteristics where as, ethnicity refers to socialization in to cultural characteristics. Although a physical difference exists among races, the differences that count are those with social not physical importance. In other words, race difference has no relation with intelligence. Seeing race as biological category should not lead to claim the superiority of one race over the other.

Human beings are of the same origin –homosapiens. There is a genetic variability among humans. Interestingly, the variability among the same race is greater than the variability between two different races. Note that:

- Different races could form one ethnic group.
- One racial group may be from one ethnic group.
- One racial group may be given to different ethnic groups.

Particularly this time, ethnic difference is becoming blurred. This is due to a growing interaction of different ethnic groups. The diffusion

of norms/values, the interaction of races/ ethnic groups is becoming un-avoidable phenomena. Race and ethnicity, however, are still the expression of social inequality.

**Exercise:**

- Where do we find more ethnic interactions, in the countryside or in the town? Explain why it is so.

**3.4.3 Prejudice and Discrimination.**

Prejudice and discrimination go hand in hand. *Prejudice* is a negative attitude toward an entire category of people (the worst form of prejudice is racism). The source of prejudice is the belief that one's cultural value, religion, language etc is superior to others. Prejudice is commonly practiced among literates and illiterates. It results in discrimination.

Discrimination is denying equal rights and opportunities to individuals/ groups based on prejudice. When prejudice and discrimination are institutionalized the consequence is destructive.

- Example:**
- The former apartheid (South Africa).
  - The case of the Hutu and the Tutsi.

**3.4.4 Patterns of Inter Group Relation.**

There are three forms of inter groups relations.

- ◆ **Amalgamation:** It arises due to intermarriages of different races and ethnic groups. Amalgamation results in the formation of new unique racial group with new values and cultural practice.
- ◆ **Assimilation:** It is a relation created when a certain group of people surrender its culture /identity to another different culture. Those who are assimilated take new religion, cultural practice, personal names etc.
- ◆ **Pluralism:** It refers to co-existence based on mutual respect between/among different groups. In this pattern racial/ethnic groups sustain their respective value and language etc. This helps them to live together peacefully.

## UNIT FOUR

### Social Institutions

#### Topic One: The Family

#### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to discuss:

- The concept of the family.
- The function of the family.
- Marriage and the family.
- Factors associated with divorce.

#### 4.1.1 The Concept of the Family.

The family is a relatively permanent group of persons. They are linked in social roles by ties of blood, marriage or adoption. Members are living together; they cooperate economically and in the rearing of children. Broadly speaking there are two forms of families. The *nuclear and the extended*:

A family that contains of the husband, the wife and their children is termed as *nuclear family*.

In addition to the husband the wife and their children a family may consists relatives such as the in-laws. This kind of family is termed as *extended family*.

Many families in Ethiopia in general and particularly in the countryside are extended families.

#### **4.1.2 The Function of the Family.**

The most important of all institution is the family. The socialization of children (by the family) is so significant in the future life. The most important functions of the family includes:

- Reproduction, for the continuation of generation.
- Protection of children such as caring, affection etc.
- Socializing values, norms belief system etc.
- Regulation of sexual behavior.
- Providing social status: provide ascribed status such as race, ethnicity, language etc.

#### **4.1.3 Marriage and the Family.**

Marriage and the family are strongly related. Marriage and the family are common to all human societies; and it is part of human culture. Marriage is the means by which a man and a women form a union for the purpose of reproduction. In all societies, marriage is legalized but in different forms. Each partner has to perform specific duties. Broadly speaking.

There are two forms of marriage:

**Monogamous:** Marriage between two persons only.

**Polygamous:** Either the husband or the wife (in some communities) has more than one spouse.

#### 4.1.4 Factors Associated with Divorce.

Divorce results in the end of marriage and the separation of family. A factor associated with divorce varies across culture and time. In some societies it involves legal process. In others it is both formal and informal. Divorce is complex and culture specific. In many countries including Ethiopia divorce result in the suffering of women. After divorce, the burden of caring for children becomes more difficult for women.

Particularly in Ethiopia there are different factors associated with divorce.

- Adultery and unfaithfulness.
- When one of the spouses is infertile.
- Marriage which involve under ages (particularly the women).
- Extreme poverty/resources scarcity.

**Exercise :** Identify other factors that contribute for divorce in your area. What do you suggest to solve the problem?

## Topic Two: Religion

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to explain:

- Sociological approach to religion.
- The function of religion.
- The dimension of religion.

#### 4.2.1 Sociological Approach to Religion

Religion can be defined as *the system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things that unites believers in to a moral community.*

Religions are equal and neither is superior to others. Religion is cultural but universal among human beings. No society exists without one or another form of belief system. The interest of sociologists is to see religion from two angles: from the angle/ feeling/ of the believers and from the perspective of the function of religion.

#### 4.2.2 The Function of Religion.

- **Integrative:** Religion integrates people. It brings the believers together and creates the sense of oneness and cooperation.
- **Social control:** Religion server to promote stability, peace and order.



- **Social Support:** Religion develops the sense of hope or comfort. For instance illness, life hardship and misfortune etc.

#### 4.2.3 Dimension of Religion.

The function of religion in all societies is nearly the same. There are two concepts that help us see the dimension of religion: *belief and ritual*.

**Belief:** Each religion has its own belief system. It can be explained in two forms.

- A) The way/view that the society perceives (understands) the entire universe (cosmology). For example how God, god/gods created the universe.
- B) The cultural practice/value that results from the religious faith.

**Rituals:** It is the means that help reach/ communicate the Divine. Rituals can be expressed in the form of ceremonial process. To celebrate events such as births or deaths. For example the birth or death of Christ, Mohammed the Prophet or other god/gods, saints and persons etc.

## Topic Three: Health and Medicine.

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the trainee will be able to describe:

- The perspective on health and illness.
- Social epidemiology and health.
- Role of physicians, nurses and patients.
- Alternatives to the present health care system.

#### 4.3.1 Anthropological Perspective on Health and Illness

Health cannot be seen in isolation from culture. Health, illness, or disorders are shaped by social context. Health disorders have a biological as well as a socio-cultural aspect.

*Disease* is viewed as a *biological* disturbance in the body. And *illness* refers to the *cultural* and social meaning to disorder.

Health is also part of the worldview. This means it involves God, gods, spirits, ancestors' soul, devil, the stars, the moon, etc. Thus, the cause and the cure for sickness are related to these things.

**Example:** For many people the source of some illness is the curse of God.

Some times it is the work of devil (such as “Megagna”)

And still others believe that sorcery or magic can cause illness.

Following this, the cure for such illness includes: prayer, holy water, unknown herbs or roots of plants etc. This indicates that health, healing, illness, or disorders are shaped by social context. In this respect *knowing the culture of the people is fundamental*. Particularly, it is so important, for health workers in Ethiopia.

**Example:** In some communities the growth of tapeworm in human body is good and necessary; because they believe that tapeworm kills various bacteria found in the intestine.

Currently in Ethiopia, it is estimated that not less than 80% of the people and 90% of the domestic animals are treated by the traditional centers.

The traditional health sector is divided in to two: Naturalistic and Magico- religions.

**Naturalistic:** refers to natural way of treatment. For example the treatment of “wegeshas” and mid wives are under this category.

**Magico-religious:** refers to magical and religious ways of treatment. The treatment of witches, priests/ pastors, sheiks, are some of the examples.

### **Healing process in the traditional sector.**

In the traditional sector, *doctors* are termed as *healers* and the process of *curing* is called *healing*

Healers in the traditional sectors considered as persons with divine powers, not as ordinary people. To heal patients, they use herbs, roots of plants or “invisible energy”.

The patients who visit the traditional sector include: seriously ill people, unable to be cured in the modern sector; mostly women; poor people, uneducated and superstitious.

There is a shared understanding between the healer and the patient. Both of them seem very close. Thus, the patients feel as if she/ he are treated humanly. Healers usually look confident. The patient, therefore, develops healing confidence.

#### **Exercise:**

- A) Compare and contrast the treatment between the traditional sector and the modern sector.
- B) What are the strong and the weak sides of both sectors?

### **4.3.2 Social Epidemiology and Health**

Epidemiology is the scientific study of the distribution of disease and general health status across a population. In studying epidemiology the important concepts are: incidence, prevalence, morbidity and

mortality. They are so important particularly for health workers who conduct survey/ research.

**Incidence:** It is the number of new occurrences of disease/ illness with in a given population during a year /specific time.

**Prevalence:** The total number of cases of specific disorders that existed at a given time.

**Morbidity:** When incidents (occurrence of disease/illness) explained as rate, per 100,000 people, it refers to morbidity.

**Mortality:** The incidence of death prevalent as rate in a particular situation.

#### **4.3.3 Factors that affect the distribution of disease/illness.**

The distribution of disease/illness is affected by a number of factors, among others, gender, social class and ethnicity are significant

##### **Gender**

In general women suffer from a number of disease/illness. However, there is lower mortality rate among women. One of the reasons is that men suffer from serious disease that could shorten their life. Some of the causes include taking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and working in difficult environment.

### **Social Class**

Disease occur more among the poor than among the rich/wealthy people. This is because that lower class people:

- don't adequately use preventive method
- are more exposed to contamination, stress, and lack of nutritious food.
- get little opportunity to health centers.

Thus, teaching the poor about preventive method is one of the best ways to decrease the distribution of disease.

### **Race and Ethnicity.**

In a society where there is ethnic and race discrimination, the distribution of health/illness could vary significantly. Social values and norms of a certain racial or ethnic group could also affect or cause to vary social epidemiology. According to researchers, change of behavior in choice of food, personal hygiene and avoiding harmful practice could be part of the solution.

**Exercise:** By taking the Ethiopian context:

- A) Mention causes of health problems that are frequent among women.
- B) Identify different disease found among the poor in the countryside.
- C) Identify three sources of cultural practices that affect health problems.

## UNIT FIVE

### Social Research and Methodology: Anthropological Approach

#### Learning Objectives:

After the end of the lesson, the trainee will be able to discuss:

- The goals of research
- The steps in conducting research
- Types of data collection

#### Topic One: Concepts in Social Research

##### Definition of Social Research

Social research is the systematic examination of (re examination) of empirical data, collected by someone first hand, concerning the social or psychological forces operating in a situation.

**5.1.2 The Goals of Social Research:** There are four goals in social research.

**A. Descriptive research:** Discovers facts or reality. Descriptive research answers questions such as the following: How many people have access to health centers? How wide spread is tapeworm among children?

- B. Predictive research:** Guessing what will happen in the future. Based on earlier or current situation (facts, realities and statistics) one can predict what will happen. For example, you can predict the number of children who could be attacked by malaria after two years. The source of the data can be previous statistics. This includes: the number of household and children, the number of victims of malaria, rate of birth per household etc.
- C. Explanatory research:** It tells us why or how something occurred. The objective of explanatory research is to answer the question “why?”. For example, why do people prefer to listen information about the opening of new clinics to preventive health program?
- D. Evaluation research:** It serves us to know how effectively programs achieve their goals. It also gives information about the negative (un-intended) result of a certain program. For example, of the 100 women who learnt about family planning how many of them made it practical? How many failed?

### 5.1.3 Steps in Conducting Research

The first two important steps in conducting research are formulation of problems and research design.

- ◆ **Problem formulation** If there is no problem, no need of research. Problems are everywhere, particularly in the



country like Ethiopia. Thus, finding problems is very simple. What is difficult is to decide on a workable problem. In all social research identifying a problem is the first step.

Don't select a problem which is very wide and ambiguous such as the following:

- ◆ “Women and children in village A.” or “ Health in village B”

These two problems are too broad, and in fact not clear. The two problems must be specific and /or narrow. Look at the following examples.

- Malaria among women and children in village A.
- Division of labor between women and children in village A.
- Cause of diarrhea in village B.
- Health problems due to circumcision in village B.
- ◆ **Social Research Design:** It is a detailed plan. After identifying a researchable problem, we must develop research design. It focuses on the following and other related points:
  - Which social group of people will be studied?
  - What information is needed?
  - When, where and how is the information collected?

Answering these types of questions would lead us to a good research design.

## Topic Two: Research Methodology

**5.2 Data collection:** There are different types of data collection techniques. For our purpose we will deal on the following only: *survey method, observation and participant observation.*

**5.2.1 Survey:** It is a collection of data by asking individuals/groups of people. There are two ways of techniques in survey method. *Questionnaire and interview*

**A. Questionnaire** is a written question that people respond on the paper without the help of the researcher. Writing good questionnaire leads to collect reliable data. Look at the following points.

- ◆ A written question must be very clear, short and to the point
  - ◆ Closed ended questions (mostly important for extension workers) such, as sex, age and marital status of the respondents must appear on the paper
  - ◆ For open-ended questions (opinion or views) allow enough space on the questionnaire.
  - ◆ The questions and the cultural behavior of the respondents must go hand in hand. In other words, be aware of sensitive questions and taboo words.

- ♦ Write questions in their proper order. Interesting and opinion questions should come first. It is preferable to put personal information (closed indeed questions) such as age, sex etc at the end.

**B. Interview** refers to oral question/ by reading/ and receiving answer from the respondent. You can interview people by reading your questions and record the response on a tape.

- ♦ Accept the respondent's choice of place and time for the interview.
- ♦ Be aware that some people want to be interviewed alone. But there are times where the type of the research requires you to conduct group interview.
- ♦ Unless you are forced by a situation conclude your interview on the same day.
- ♦ Consider the respondents' age, sex, status, and religious background etc.
- ♦ Explain the objective and the beneficiaries of the interview. If possible, inform the total time that the interview would take.
- ♦ Inform the respondent the confidentiality of the interview.
- ♦ Learn how to take short notes quickly but efficiently.
- ♦ Use tape recorder, if available. However, some respondents may reject to be recorded. Don't ask a respondent whether

she/he is willing to be recorded or not. Let she/he take the initiative and say-no.

- ◆ Make the interview lively. Start with something that could make the respondent relax
- ◆ Your voice must be audible and the questions understandable.

### 5.2.2 Observation

Observation is a data collection through *direct visual or auditory experience* of behavior. In other words the researcher collects data by watching/ seeing and listening the people studied. A researcher can observe in two ways: By informing the studied people about the observation; or observing without the awareness of the studied person/ group. The two ways have their own advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, the kind of data (research objective) determines which method to use. Observation in places such as markets, churches/mosques, hotels/ bars and other similar areas involve many people. Therefore, informing the observed people is not necessary. This may include in homes where the researcher has close relationship.

Mastering the technique of observation needs a lot of experience. Look at the following points.

- ◆ If available use camera/video camera.
- ◆ As much as possible take detailed notes.

- ◆ Some times it may be impossible to use tape recorder/video and note taking. Thus, good concentration and the ability to remember are essential. After the observation, take note immediate.
- ◆ Choose a good position and place for observation.
- ◆ Avoid bias, as much as possible. This is one of the good qualities of a researcher.

### 5.2.3 Participant Observation

It is a particular feature of anthropological study. It is a method of data collection in which the researcher is part of, and participates in, the activities of the people who are studied. In participant observation the researcher immerse her/himself in the daily activities of the people. Moreover the researcher eats, drinks, chats and enjoys with the studied people. Thus, it is possible to get the real feeling of the people. This is the advantage that we don't get from questionnaire, interview and may be from observation. In participant observation data is collected not only from what people say but what actually they feel (their real behavior).

**Example:** In an interview/questionnaire people may say that they don't support girls' circumcison. However, in participant observation they may be found circumcising their own daughters.

Like observation, the status of the research may be known or not known by the people studied. (Refer the previous page on observation concerning this point.)

Participant observation requires dedication, and the ability to face problems. Moreover, to be a good participant a lot of experience is needed. Look at the following points.

- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the community. In other words, consider their norms, values and other sensitive cultural practices.
- ◆ If available use camera/video camera.
- ◆ As much as possible take detailed note.
- ◆ Some times it may be impossible to use tape recorder/video and note taking. Thus, good concentration and the ability to remember are essential. After the observation, take note immediately.
- ◆ The behavior of the people (data) must be recorded correctly. Time, place, events and the general context should be recorded along with the actual data.
- ◆ Avoid bias, as much as possible.
- ◆ The Researcher's personal feeling (liking or disliking) must be recorded separate from the actual data. This helps to treat bias separate from the real data.

### 5.3 Research and Health Extension Workers

Health extension workers are usually engaged in human service practices. In other words, they are interventionists. This status would allow them to come closer to the community. This in turn gives them good opportunity to observe human behavior. Moreover, they have more chance to participate in the day-to-day activities of the people. Thus, a health extension worker possibly collects more and accurate data than other researchers.

#### **The following points could help to conduct a research.**

- ◆ Respect the belief system of the community.
- ◆ Respect the important values and other cultural practices of the people you are studying.
- ◆ Identify harmful practices associated with health problems. Remember that some belief systems and other values/ norms can be the source of health problems.
- ◆ Show the community the best alternative to harmful practices. Support it with living examples.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to inform the community that some harmful practices such as genital mutilation are against the law and human rights, not only health problem.
- ◆ Develop the habit of writing personal diary. It is one of the qualities of health extension workers. Who knows! It could be a raw data for a research, or a good novel in the future.

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