INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU), ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Traditional Practices that Affect Women in Gumuz Community and Efforts Made in Mitigating Them in Dibate Woreda, Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State.

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By: Selamu Mishebo

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Dissertation entitled: TRADITIONAL PRACTICES THAT AFFECT STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY AND EFFORTS MADE IN REDUCING THEM IN BENISHANGUL GUMUZ NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE "THE CASE OF DIBATE WOREDA" submitted by me for the partial fulfillment of the M.A in Rural Development to Indira Gandhi National Open University, (IGNOU) New Delhi is my own original work and has not been submitted earlier either IGNOU or to any other institution for the fulfillment of the requirement for any course of study. I also declare that no chapter of this manuscript in whole or in part is lifted and incorporated in this report from any earlier work done by me or others.

Place: IGNOU Coordination office, Addis Ababa   **Signature**: _____

Date: May 17, 2015   **Enrolment No**. ID1220117

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mr. Selamu Mishebo student of M.A. (RD) from Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi was working under my supervision and guidance for his Project Work for the Course MRDP-001. His Project Work entitled: TRADITIONAL PRACTICES THAT AFFECT STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY AND EFFORTS MADE IN REDUCING THEM IN BENISHANGUL GUMUZ NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE "THE CASE OF DIBATE WOREDA" which he is submitting, is his genuine and original work.

Place: IGNOU Coordination office, Addis Ababa   **Signature**: _____

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Acknowledgment

Abstract

This study assesses traditional practices (HTPs) that affect women in Gumuz community of the Dibate Woreda of Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State. In order to have a clear understanding of this issue, the researcher focused on how these HTPs in these communities were deep-rooted in terms of their culture and beliefs, as they probably are the major causes for subordinate position of women population in the area. This being the case the general objective of the study is to assess major traditional practices that affect status of women/girls and partners effort in alleviating the problem in the study area.

In order to achieve this objective descriptive statistics such as tables, percentages, etc were used to investigate the problem. Both primary and secondary data were used along with key information obtained from local authorities through key informant interview and focus group discussions. Out 12 Gumuz kebeles in the Woreda, four were purposely selected due to access problem. In this study process men & women farmers, community elders and NGO & Government officials were involved in in-depth interview and focus group discussion so as to ensure diversity in the content of information. Based on this about 55 women and 36 men were randomly selected from four sample kebeles for in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

The result of the study revealed that there are different traditional practices that contribute for subordinate position of women in the Gumuz community. Some of the major once are exchange marriage, abduction, pride wealth price marriage, polygamy, menstruation taboo, birth giving outside the home, food taboo, rape, early marriage, etc. There are also other practices like son preferences at birth, domestic violence, lack of awareness about girls' education, lack of women's right to inherit property and insignificant decision making power of women at both household & community level, which could indirectly affecting status of women through exposing women/girls' under threat in many aspects of life.

Moreover, different organizations (NGO & GO) have been putting their efforts toward reducing these problems in Gumuz community through creating community awareness and providing social services in order to bring social change.

On the other hand, the findings revealed that there are also some beneficial practices like absence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), conflict resolution, respecting elders and working together ("Debo") are some of the major positive practices identified in Gumuz community.

In conclusion, harmful traditional practices (HTPs) are largely contributed for lower status of women/girls in the Gumuz community by putting them under discrimination. Despite partners (GO & NGO) effort toward mitigating the problem, these practices are still persisting in the community and needs further interventions.

Table of contents

Appendix

List of Tables   **Page**

List of Acronyms

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

DA: Development Agent

DF: Development Facilitator

DFID: Department for International Development

CSA: Central Statistical Agency

CRDA: Christian Relief and Development Association

CPAR: Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief

CEDAW: Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women

ECSC: Ethiopian Civil Service Commission.

EFY: Ethiopian fiscal year

EM: Early marriage

KA: Kebele Administration

KII: key informant interview

FAL: Functional Adult Literacy

FGM: Female genital mutilation

FGD: Focus group discussion

FHH: Female headed household

GAD: Gender and Development

GO: Government organization

GSI/AWPS: Gender Status Index and African Women Progress Board

HTTP: Harmful traditional practices

HIV: Human Immune Virus

IAC: Inter African Committee

MHH: Male headed household

MoWA: Ministry of Women's Affair

MoFED: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

MoE: Ministry Of Education.

NCTPE: National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia

NAP-GE: National Action Plan on Gender Equality

NGO: Non Government organizations

PASDEP: Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty.

PFA: Platform for Action

SCN-E: Save the Children Norway-Ethiopia

UN: United Nation

UNFPA: United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNU/INTECH: United Nations University Institutes for New Technology

WID: Women in Development

WCYAO: Women, children and youth Affair Office.

WHO: World Health Organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Traditional and cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations (Halima, et al., 1988). Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group, such as women. These Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); forced feeding of women; early marriage; the various taboos or practices which prevent women from controlling their own fertility; nutritional taboos and traditional birth practices; son preference and its implications for the status of the girl child; female infanticide; early pregnancy; and dowry price. Despite their harmful nature and their violation of international human rights laws, such practices persist because they are not questioned and take on an aura of morality in the eyes of those practicing them. The international community has become aware of the need to achieve equality between the sexes and of the fact that an equitable society cannot be attained if fundamental human rights of half of human society, i.e. women, continue to be denied and violated.

Several reasons are given for the persistence of traditional practices detrimental to the health and status of women including the fact that, in the past, neither the Governments concerned nor the international community challenged the sinister implications of such practices, which violate the rights to health, life, dignity and personal integrity. The international community remained wary about treating these issues as a deserving subject for international and national scrutiny and action. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation were considered sensitive cultural issues falling within the spheres of women and the family. For a long time, Governments and the international community had not expressed sympathy and understanding for women who, due to ignorance or unawareness of their rights, endured pain, suffering and even death inflicted on themselves and their female children. Despite the apparent slowness of action to challenge and eliminate harmful traditional practices, the activities of human rights bodies in this field have, in recent years, resulted in noticeable progress. Traditional practices have become a recognized issue concerning the status and human rights of women and female children. The slogan "Women's Rights are Human Rights", adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in the same year, captured the reality of the

status accorded to women. These issues have been further emphasized in the reports of the Special Rapporteur on harmful traditional practices (IBID).

Despite these, Women are the majority of the World's poor; the economic and social gap between men and women remains unequal. Among, 1.3 billion living in poverty in the World 70% are women (UNHCHR, 1997). Worldwide, women do not equally own, inhibit or control property, land and wealth. They have limited ownership of income, property and credit. The existing poverty gap has been directly linked to the existence of different stereotypes, traditions and cultural practices exercised in the World. Low percentages of women are found in the formal sector and they are highly concentrated in low paid production jobs. Women remain under represented in the highest paid, highest prestige sectors of the career ladders. Worldwide women hold only 10% to 20% of managerial and administrative jobs, less than 20% of jobs in manufacturing, only 10% of parliamentary seats and less than 5% of the world's heads of states (UNHCHR, 1997).

Thanks to the 1972 UN conference where women's issue was made an agenda. The UN Decade for women (1976-1985) has played a crucial part in highlighting and publicizing the important role of women in the economic development of their countries and the 'plight' of low-income women in the developing countries' economies. As member of UN through its arm in Africa, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Ethiopia has signed a number of conventions to attain gender equity and equality although the implementations of the gender equality strategies are still demanding great effort from the Government and NGOs and individual practitioners.

African women are directly or indirectly involved in all sectors. Especially, women contribute enormously in the economic development of a household and further the nation. In their reproductive roles they economically contribute to the human development capital by raising and educating their children. They are also actively involved in the productive and community management roles directly or indirectly (Boserup, 1970). However, their contributions in the household as well as the nation are made invisible and unrewarding. They are counted as mere consumers rather than producers.

Ethiopia is a country of famous and long-standing history. It is also a country with many useful and promotional traditions such as postnatal care, social gathering such as "Edir" "Ekub" etc., caring for the aged, the disabled and others within the family circle. On the other hand Ethiopia

is a country where harmful traditional practices continue to devastate, especially the health and social condition of mothers and children. It is evident that established systems and traditional values change with emerging challenges and the introduction of new ideas. Following intensive campaigns by non-governmental organizations the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination recommended the setting up of a Working Group to study the problem of harmful traditional practices (Dawit, et al., 2005).

In most societies, women education is considered as no value that they prefer men education. The cultural patterns and customs are the major obstacles to women literacy (Ballara, 1992). As Ballara (1992) says "Parents believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girls education; instead they invest time and money to educate boys."

In Ethiopia, it is obvious that there are diverse cultural and traditional practices that contribute for the lower status of women. Currently these traditional practices are concentrated in the peripheral areas of the country where there is limited access to information and infrastructure. Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State is one of the marginal regions where most of the traditional practices persist especially in Gumuz community. However, the effects of these traditional practices are minimized in most central highland areas as a result of better intervention regarding access to information and infrastructure. Some of the major traditional practices that aggravate the subordinate position of women especially within the Gumuz ethnic groups are: Exchange marriage, abduction, rape, polygamy, huge dowry, wife inheritance, extravagancy; and birth giving outside the home and isolation of women during menstruation.

Despite different interventions (intentional targeting, awareness creation trainings, supports, etc) by Government and other partner organizations operating in the Woreda, the problem exists still in the community as most of those practices are longstanding and deep-rooted within Gumuz ethnic groups. Therefore, identifying the maj0or traditional practices that aggravate the subordinate position of women is an issue that is going to be addressed in this study.

1.2 Problem statement

There are about 28 national committees in 28 African countries to follow up the issue of FGM and other HTPs under the umbrella of Inter African Committee (SCN-Ethiopia, 2011). Globally, the prevalence of several harmful traditional practices is mainly concentrated in African countries and to some extent in Asia and among immigrants of Africa in the West and European countries. Harmful traditional practices are the most humiliating and degrading

experiences to girls and women. In Africa Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other priority Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) like early marriage, abduction, skin cutting do occur at different degree in different countries. Women and children who are the vast majority of the population suffer from harmful traditional practices, work stereotypes and gender distribution of labor.

Ethiopia has over 80 ethnic groups whose cultures are rich and varied as their compositions. The country has beneficial traditional practices such as breast feeding, settling quarrels, social gathering and others that can be examples for the external world. On the other hand, there are harmful traditional practices that affect the health and social well-being of women and children in the country. Some of these practices include female genital mutilation, early marriage, abduction, milk teeth extraction, uvulectomy, bloodletting and others that seriously affect the health of children and contribute for the transmission of HIV/AIDS (NCTPE, 1998).

Education is a tool to enable both women and men to make all rounded participation in development process by acquiring knowledge, skill and attitudinal change. According to Tiker and Baramsen (1976: V), "in all countries women are increasingly impatient to widen the options for realizing their potential and to participate on equal basis with men in productive and creative achievements, as well as in the rewards' systems of their societies". But they do not participate fully in what gets done in society due to lack of education. In order to play the critical role appropriately, women need education.

Women are underrepresented in the formal sector of employment. The survey conducted by the Central Statistical Authority (CSA, 2004) showed that women account for less than half (43%) of the total employees in the country. Considering the percentage of female employees from the total number of employees by employment type, the highest was in domestic activities (78%) and followed by unpaid activities (59.3%). In other types of formal employment (e.g. government, NGOs, private organizations), the percentage of female workers is less than 35%. On the other hand, the survey showed overrepresentation of female workers in the informal sector. About 58% of working women work in the informal sector whereas the percentage of working men in the informal sector was 37.7 % (ibid).

Violence against women is also deep rooted in Ethiopian society and one of subordinating factor of women. Women and young girls experience forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence that affects their health situation (WAO, 2005).

The major problems related to the prevalence of traditional practices that affect status of women/girls among Gumuz communities in the study area (Dibate Woreda), in Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State are: *exchange marriage, early marriage, birth giving outside the home, isolation of women during menstruation, abduction, rape, polygamy, huge dowry, wife inheritance, extravagancy, extraction of milk teeth and others.* These problems are mainly affecting women/girls in Gumuz ethnic group because almost all of the Gumuz communities are illiterate and marginalized from any current information updates because most of them live in inaccessible areas around forest without basic infrastructures as compared to other ethnic groups. In addition, they have low awareness level and highly conservative to their long-standing traditional practices. This and other related factors contribute a great role for lower status of the Gumuz community in general and Gumuz women in particular in the study area.

Finally, there are different practices affecting women and gender equity in Gumuz community. The main ones are: abduction, polygamy; and early, exchange & inheritance marriages; Gumuz women are compelled to leave their home during delivery and stay at a certain distance away and deliver without any one's assistance which is disastrous consequences; they are not allowed to stay at home during menstruation.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to assess major traditional practices that affect status of women/girls & partners effort in alleviating the problem in the study area

1.3.2 Specific objectives are:

1. To identify major harmful traditional practices that affect women/girls in the study area.

2. To assess the attitude of the community toward different traditional practices.

3. To examine the participation of women in the decision making at both family and community level.

4. To explore the status of women in accessing and control over economic resources.

5. To examine the attitude of the community toward girls' education

6. To explore the main actors and their contribution in reducing the problem in the study area.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Traditional values and practices are a root causes for discrimination and violence against women/girls. Despite their 50% coverage in the study areas as well as our countries population, this value based discrimination is being one of the major problems and it is being even a universal problem in women's life. As a result women face more constraints than men; they tend to be poorer and at lower status quo as does the world as a whole. So, addressing these constraints would help to reduce the root causes of poverty and vulnerability and contribute to sustainable, pro-poor growth. To this effort, major traditional practices that affect the women's status at household as well as community level were identified so as to bring social transformation that treats the women in equal basis as men. Thus:

1. This study will provide a feedback for any partners operating in the study area so as to shape their development approach for the changing of the cultural role of women.

2. The recommendations will help the local government as well as policy makers to address these issues so as to tackle these traditional practices that contribute for lower status of women in the society.

3. It would help to conduct further study.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

It is difficult to conduct research in the whole Metekel zone of Benishangul Gumuz regional state due to shortage of resources (financial, human, material & time). Therefore, the study was limited to Debate Woreda of Metekel zone with special focus on traditional practices that affect status of women in Gumuz communities. Despite the findings of this study can be used as a benchmark to culminate the traditional practices that contribute for subordinate position of women in Gumuz communities. It also helps local authorities and policy makers to design appropriate interventions to mitigate the problem.

2. REVIEW OF LITRATURE

2.1. Conceptual Frameworks

Tradition represents the sum total of all behaviors that are learned, shared by a group of people and transmitted from generation to generation. It includes language, religion, types of food eaten, and methods of their preparation, childrearing practices and all other values that hold people together and give them a sense of identity and distinguish them from other groups. To evaluate a traditional practice as harmful/beneficial we might use the objective instruments based on the knowledge gained from social and natural sciences. Today we have ample knowledge about the physical nature of man, his physical anatomy and social life. It is therefore possible to objectively assess whether a specific traditional practice is harmful to the physical nature of a human being, his psychology and social needs and development, and therefore incompatible with scientific theory and practice (Dawit, et al., 2005).

Every culture consists of a set of patterns of behaviors that are contained in its social institution and within the personalities of individual. Culture is a social construction that provides guidelines for appropriate behaviors, social norms including those related to gender. Culture determines gender relations within a society, influencing roles and activities carried out by men and women. It also determines women's and men's access to and control over economic resources, and their ability to make decision at the family and community levels. Culture plays a significance role in the construction of gender inequality in which men have dominant power over different sphere of activity than women. Culturally, males are expected to be bread winner, aggressive, assertive, independent and competitive. On the other hand females are expected to be care giver, dependent, submissive, shy, calm, sensitive, quite and polite (Lindsey, 2005).

In Ethiopia culture influences the education of women that it result in gender division of labor where women are denied of important opportunities like educational access and burdened by heavy works which is hardly acknowledged (Emebet, 1998; Kalkidan, 2007). The other health problem related to the low socio-economic and cultural status of women, are among others, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), rape, abduction, etc. In Ethiopia, 80% of women (and in some parts of the country up to 100%) are mutilated, as a means of women's loyalty to culture and faith (Haregewoin and Emebet, 2003).

The vast majorities of Ethiopian women live in rural areas, and disproportionally share the burden of poverty. Women have less access and control over productive resources such as land and credit. Agricultural census study 2003 showed only 18.6% of the land holders are women. Agricultural census survey data of 2001 also showed only 9% of women's had access to agricultural extension service and only 12% of women had access to credit from the agricultural center (WAO, 2005). High proportion of which is 65% of women in Ethiopia are concentrated in the informal sector and 26% of small scale manufacturing enterprises with low earning capacity (CSA, 2003).

Sweet-man (1995:8) stressed: "Culture and Gender are intertwined interdependent and mutually defining to a certain extent". Socialization is a lifelong process that transmits essential cultural elements to the next generation. It begins in early childhood in which boys and girls learn the appropriate behavior of their sex. Socialization shapes individuals patterns of behavior and moulds one's personality ranging from tone of voice to physical chastisement. Through socialization an individual develops personalities, beliefs and cultural behavior of femininity and masculinity (Walby, 1990). Family is the primary and most significance agent of socialization in which children develop what is expected of their sex. It is central to women's lives and determinative of gender inequality. Family is responsible in molding a child's behavior, personality, identity and attitudes about gender. Beginning in infancy parents socialize their sons and daughters differently. Boys are more oriented towards what they should not do rather what they should do (don't be sissy, don't cry etc.) and raised to be more independent. On the other hand girls are often told to be good mothers and wives (Lindsey, 2005).

2.2. Review of Related Literature

2.2.1. Role of Culture on Gender Segregation

It is widely accepted that culture is a means through which guidelines for appropriate behaviors, social norms including those related to gender are reflected. It is through one's culture that gender relation within the society and activities carried out by men and women are determined. That is, it plays a significant role in the construction of gender. Researches indicate that there is close relationship between culture and gender. According to Sweetman (1995), for example, "culture and gender are entwined, interdependent and mutually defining to a certain extent."

For Coplan (1996), culture and gender are not only related but they have a strong relationship that gender is a "cultural construct."

Culture, among other factors, plays a vital role in shaping the lives of men and women. Cultural values, beliefs, and traditions significantly affect family life. Children from their childhood are brought up by their families according to the culture and customs in the area. Our country, Ethiopia, is a culture-oriented country that fathers and mothers are responsible in passing on what is appropriate to their children. Accordingly, as to Tefera, girls learn cultural roles from their mothers and boys do from their fathers. Particularly, after age nine or ten, more attention is paid to training the daughters in not only domestic arts but also the art of womanhood. These gender cultural divisions of labor at home make the girl or later a woman overburdened by routine house works which leave them little time for other tasks outside the house and force them to believe that other tasks are inappropriate for them that they will refrain from participating in such activities including education (Terera, 1994).

In Ethiopia cultural-social norms and traditions influence the education of women that it result in gender division of labor where women are denied of important opportunities like educational access and burdened by heavy works which is hardly acknowledged (Emebet, 1998; Kalkidan, 2007). In most societies, women education is considered as of no value that they prefer men education. Regarding this, Ballara (1992) stressing the cultural patterns and customs as one of the obstacles to women literacy, said, "Parents believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girl's education; instead they invest time and money to educate boys." In showing in which members of the society this negative attitude towards women is prevalent, Ballara wrote that husbands, fathers and men in general have such attitudes towards women education mainly because they are afraid that it may reverse the traditional women roles by providing them with new roles.

Gender refers to the socially and culturally determined relationships between men and women. These relationships differ according to different societies. It should be distinguished from sex which is connected with the biological make-up of men and women. Gender differences are not determined by nature but by society, e.g. "women can cook food", while sex differences (which are biological) are natural, e.g. "only women breast-feed". In other words, gender is a "culturally

constructed" meaning attached to sexes (Coplan, 1996). It is the extension of biological sexuality into products of human activity. It is the means through which an individual is viewed as masculine or feminine. Based on sex, there are behaviors and roles expected from an individual called gender roles. Gender role is a set of perceived behavioral norms associated with males and females (Sweetman, 1995). Gender roles are not determined biologically rather they are constructed socially. People, beginning from their childhood, learn what is regarded in their cultural context as appropriate for their sex.

Socialization process, which determines gender roles, is partly responsible for the subjugation of women in the country. Ethiopian society is socialized in such a way that girls are held inferior to boys. In the process of upbringing, boys are expected to learn and become self-reliant, major bread winners, and responsible in different activities, while girls are brought up to conform, be obedient and dependent, and specialize in indoor activities like cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, caring for children, etc. (Haregewoin and Emebet, 2003; Hirut, 2004).

The differences in the ways in which individuals are treated through the socialization process, due mainly to their sex status, leads to the development of real psychological and personality differences between males and females (Almaz, 1991). A man is a big person who has higher social position and knowledge, who can govern others and think in wider perspectives; while a woman is a person who can serve a man, who is like the husband's object transferred through marriage, and to whom he can do anything he wishes to do (Hirut, 2004).

Educating women is assumed not only inappropriate but is also worthless. With regard to this, different researchers cited in Karlekar reported that sending women to school which doesn't have any visible benefits, is often regarded as a waste of time for culturally, they are viewed as 'natural care givers' (Amin, Bhatty, Dumra, Khan, King and Hill and Sinha in Karlekar, 2000:90).

2.2.2. Sexual Division of Labor

Family also critical for the analysis of gender roles and relations and is the focal point of the sexual division of labor. Gender division of roles is assigned by each society in which women are engaged in reproductive activities in the private sphere whereas men are engaged in productive activities in the public sphere. According to liberal feminist analysis, sexual division of labor is not natural; it is the result of gender socialization process. Through social interaction

one develops beliefs, values, customs and cultural behaviors of femininity and masculinity. In all societies certain tasks are predominantly or exclusively to women, others to men, while some may be done by both men and women. This culturally constructed division of women's role as mother and primary child care givers is a subordinating factor, as it confines their work into the domestic sphere limiting their potential for self development and self realization. Because the natures of these activities of women work is socially undervalued and sharply restrict women's ability to participate in cash earning activities (Weedon, 1997).

Reproductive Role

The culturally ascribed role of women as mothers and wives includes not only reproductive work of child bearing and rearing responsibilities but also, the daily of the labor force such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, firewood collection and so on. In most societies reproductive activities are placed up on the shoulders of women as the domain of domestic life. The relations between men and women in the domestic sphere are different and fundamental to gender subordination. Whether in nuclear or extended families, there are hierarchical relations characterized by men dominance and limit women to domestic lives. Though women spend considerable amounts of time and energy working on reproductive activities, much of the household based activities are considered as natural for women and remained to be financially unrewarding and unrecognized. This lack of recognition for women's domestic work leads to dependency, less access to external sources of income and being dependent on household income (Cullagh et al., 1981). As (Walby, 1990:66) cited:

Reproduction is the basis of women's subordination by men. The biological hazards surrounding reproduction such as pregnancy, menstruation, child birth, breastfeeding and child rearing make women vulnerable and dependant on men.

Productive Role

When women work outside of home they rarely have the same payment and recognition as men. Throughout the world the notion of women's work raises implications of low wages or non-wages associated with secondary status. Productive activities whether it is wage or non-wage women always get meager share of the benefits. They are engaged in productive work often as secondary income earners. Particularly in rural areas this usually takes the form or agricultural work. Feminist analysts argues that women are the invisible farmers but yet make

up three quarter of African agricultural labor force and half of the world's food produced by women (Ollenburger and Moor, 1998).

For instance women in Ethiopia are involved in a wide variety of economic activities and contribute a considerable share to the country's economy as whole and agricultural products in particular. Eighty seven (87%) of women in Ethiopia are involved in agriculture and contributing about 50% of agricultural income. Rural women participate in every aspects of farm production including land cultivation, weeding, harvesting crops, storing and marketing grains. But little attention has been given to their contribution to enable them to benefit. This is also true in the case of urban women (Porter et al., 1999).

In urban areas women are frequently work in the informal sector which is lower paid, more insecure and less likely to bring promotion than men in the labor market. Women are concentrated in particular work at particular levels which are systematically subjected to a poor pay and working conditions than men. In most cases women are concentrated in jobs like cleaning, nursing, typing, maids, sewing, textile workers, service rendering etc. The division between men and women in the sphere of wage work is central to women's subordination. Women wage labor is not only characterized by low pay it is also the most exploited work of all. Women are considered as naturally responsive and more obedient and willing to accept tough work, disciplined and naturally more suited to tiresome, repetitious and boring work. This is mainly due to their domestic and natural capacity to bear children (Barrett, 1988).

It is not rare for women to be treated unfairly and getting undervalued given the same qualification and similar or comparable jobs as men. The participation of women in the formal sector is characterized by minimal and low paying jobs. For instance, in Ethiopia the number of female permanent employees for both Federal government and the regions was 32.2% and for men 67.8% (ECSC, 2002). Women are highly concentrated in routine type and low paying clerical and fiscal jobs 60%, custodial and manual 42%, only 23.3% of administrative and 10.2% of the position in professional and science posts were held by women (ECSC, 2004).

Community Role

In all known societies community functions are designed differently for women and men. Though both men and women are involved in community work, the visibility and rewards often favored men. Women's contribution associated with care taking and volunteer works to keep people and society alive and well functioning include such ceremonies as involving celebrations

of birth, marriage, spiritual and socio-cultural happenings and mobilization of local resources, whereas men's participation in community involve taking positions as leaders, chairmen and representatives with the possibility of promotion in economical, political, social and religious arena (Moser, 1993).

Women are seen as volunteering more than men and their community work is considered as given and natural. Though women contribute a lot in community work for the sustainability of cultural events, arrangements and service in communities their contribution remain subsumed in the gender role and are unvalued. It is estimated that volunteer work contributes many billions of dollars per year in monetary worth. For example in 1983 the estimate was over 60 billion dollars (Berk, 1988).

2.2.3 Culture and Violence

Violence and abuse against women is part of culture and tradition in which women are socialized to be tolerant victims. Culture supports men's control of women in economic, political and all forms of social aspects. It also systematically damages women's health and strength to make them subordinate to men. Women's subordination is maintained through patterns of interpersonal interaction prescribed by culture and social structure. In patriarchal society male supremacy is institutionalized and mistreatment of woman is considered as natural. Women are socialized to accept violence as a social norm and natural consequence for their own mistake. In most cases violence against women is kept silent (Walby, 1990).

Violence is a means of maintaining power that ensures the privilege of men domination over women. In a patriarchal system the ultimate guaranty for power is mainly through the control of women's sexuality and labor, excluding her from sharing of resources and state power. Women are the worst victims of violence at every social level, starting from the family to the public level (Eshetu, 2000). It is true that in any society with unequal distribution of political and economic power, the dominant groups are favored in operating and controlling of any privileges. While the degree and extent of power varies in the societies, the general pattern among women is that they are always subordinate to men.

Control of women's sexuality is a part of a culture and means of social domination that perpetuate male dominance. Feminist analysts identify that sexual violence against women is an extension of normative male behavior that defines the traditional male sex role. Many men feel

that it is necessary to commit a sexually aggressive behavior to ensure their dominance and keep women under their control (Bart and Moran, 1993).

2.2.4 Son Preference as a Tradition

In many societies the birth of a baby boy is received with great joy. The rituals are more elaborate with the mother receiving compliments for producing a male child. The father enjoys great pride with the assurance of continuity of the family line and the protection of his property. The birth of a girl however is less rituals with reduced value attributed to the mother. The reception ceremony is minimal and less colorful. In some societies particularly in Asia sever son preference leads to malnutrition of the girls with deprivation in treatment. In some cities in Asia female infanticide has become a practice to kill the girls soon after or before they are born. Clinics in India and china are cited as practicing early sex detection to get rid of a baby girl (UNICEF Innocent Research Centre Florence, Italy, 25-28 September 2006).

2.2.5 Property Ownership

Property ownership is a base for power in a society that plays important roles in distinguishing members of a society in the process of policy and decision making. Property ownership determines the social relations between men and women. Based on the Marxists argument, the extent of access to and control over resources within a society determines the sources of power. Having the means of production is the source of all forms of power that provides economic, socio-cultural and political status and prestige. The social inequality between men and women mainly arises from unequal access to means of production such as land and credit. Women's relation to property and land is socially constructed and is discriminated on the basis of sex in which men have greater access to property than women (Shortall, 1999).

Globally women are hold limited property as compared to men. UN forth Conference Beijing, 1995 stated that women own less than 1% of world's property. This lack of property ownership among women restricts their opportunity to get loans and other means of production. Women's lacks of property and land title continue to lag behind men and put women in higher risk of poverty than do men. Land registration system, application for mortgage loans and credit, requires proof of a husband's authorization to acquire a title independently of the husband. It is harder to get loans for single women and single-parent women outside of marriage or without the support of their husband or male relations (Heyzer and Wee, 1995).

The patriarchal system wherever in the world, particularly in Africa restricts women access to productive resources such as land and credit. Women's and men's relation to land is regulated by customary cultural practices in which family structures, marriage and inheritance are the most influential factors on how land is allocated and transferred among households in a community. Both in patrilineal and matrilineal customary tenure system the power to allocate and control of land remained on the hands of men. Most Sub-Sahara Africa customary culture and kinship ideologies of land play a key role in constructing men and women differently, while men seen as natural recipient. Women are not given access to land in their own right. The main routes of access to land for women are through marriage. It is very rarely that women along with their brother inherit land. Women are more dependent on their husbands and their own families for land (Zenabaworke, 2003).

There is nothing "natural" about a system of land transfer between father and son. On the contrary it is a clear example between of a discriminatory social practice that fundamentally distinguishes between men and women (Shortall, 1999:44).

Land reform proclamation whether it is massive land redistribution or cropping programs affects negatively many African countries. For instance in Ethiopia, though the land reform proclamation stated that land shall be allocated equally to both men and women, in most cases the practices are discriminatory towards women. Prior to 1991 land distribution to peasants, who organized themselves in peasant association and as head of households, were discriminatory to women. Usually land is registered in the name of men and assuming the household is uniform and stable. Such practices limit women's right to land. For instance, women lose this share of land when they marry outside of their community and in case of divorce in which they left their marital household. This situation became worse for women who were in polygamous marriage as men register just one wife (Zenabaworke, 2003).

In the new constitution, Article 9 emphasizes the equality of women with respect to access, use, administration and inheritance of property. However, the implementation is still challenging. Studies indicate that the great majority of women in rural Ethiopia do not have access to and control over productive land. Basic productive resources are held more by men than women (Habtamu et al., 2004).

Women's access to and control over land is very critical as land is a major resource in women's livelihood. However, women are discriminated against in terms of realizing their rights to land.

Over the past three decades women's issues and more recently gender issues have gained prominence on the development platform. International women's conferences held consecutively; in Mexico City in 1975, in Nairobi in1985 and in Beijing in 1995 were measures towards realizing women's political, social and economic equality with men (UN Action for Women, 2003). Many gender issues which are very important to well-being of millions of women and girls around the world got public attention after these conferences.

Despite this progress women have remained disadvantaged in many ways. Gender equality has not been achieved and women do not enjoy equal rights with men in accessing and having control over land and other productive resources. Access to and control over resources and benefits is determined by socio-cultural norms which have significant impacts on gender relations. Social relations of production and consumption (access to and control over means and benefits of production) show constraints on women in many communities (Davison, 1988, World Bank, 2004). These inequalities of opportunities in access to and control over resources have made women more vulnerable to poverty than men in many parts of the world.

There is policy move towards provision of gender-equitable land reform in many countries (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1995). Farming systems, customary laws on marital and inheritance rights, gender roles at households and on farms, household assets ownership and control, control over household income and expenditures, access to social resources, etc. have influences on women's access to and control over land. These factors should be seriously considered to enhance formulation of land policies and provision of implementation regulations that could effectively address gender inequalities. Significance of land reform policies depend on ensuring women's rights in practice not only in principle.

Policy makers and implementers should be gender sensitive so that women could benefit from land reform policies. Policy implementers' capacity and commitment to translate policy to reality have significant impact at level of implementation. Women may not benefit even from gender sensitive rural land policies, if policy implementers lack commitment.

2.2.6. Women in Development (WID)

Gender is the sex role identity used to emphasize distinctions between males and females. It refers to behaviors associated with members of a given sex. There are set of attitudes and behaviors developed and perpetuated in society towards people that judge or belittle them on

the basis of their gender (Parpart, 1989). Gender became a critical analytical tool in the discourse of women's rights and entitlements to social and material resources.

Developmental challenges faced by policy makers because of differences between the sexes in roles and statuses that hindered development, initiated upcoming of different policy approaches that link gender issues to development (Parpart, 1989). Women in Development (WID) was the first gender policy approach that focused on fulfilling practical gender needs.

Although the WID approach improved opportunities for women, it failed to address the empowerment aspect, the power sharing. So there was a need for the programs of gender and development to move further. Thus the second policy approach Gender and Development (GAD) emerged. The GAD approach commenced on integration of gender issues into the design and implementation of development programs. The GAD approach was projected towards addressing strategic gender needs2 which can empower women and transform gender relations. The overall goal of the GAD approach is women's empowerment. Empowerment entails increasing women's access to knowledge, resource and decision-making power to change their disadvantaged positions to the level of having control over their own lives (Parpart, 1989). This goal was not easy to achieve and gender inequality still persists. It is reflected in many aspects in women's lives including their acquisition of resources.

Women's struggle emerged to remove these inequalities and to bring change in women's lives hence, feminism was born. Feminism is an organized movement which aims to promote equality between men and women in political, economic and social spheres. Feminism is defined in a number of ways. I prefer this definition of feminism for it covers most of the underlying facts:

Feminism is, "A belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression in all its forms and a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression" (Maguire, 1987: 79 sited on Brayton, 1997).

In the 1970's women started developing theories to explain their oppression and feminism as an ideology emerged. Feminists started to raise different issues and feminism branched out into many theories by the 1980's (Brayton, 1997: 1). Feminist economic theory will be analyzed with respect to women's access to and control over land for the purpose of this study.

Feminist economists concern across the field of economics was based on its relation to gender and on firm rejection of gender marginalization in traditional economic theories. These

feminists developed an economics that serve interests of large and different group of people *(Strassman, 1999)*. Feminist economists contributed new insights to economic thought andwere creative in engaging in economics that resulted in positive difference in people's lives especially on that of women.

Feminist economists argued against traditional economics because traditional economics depicted women as dependent on fathers, husbands or male partners by considering the family as a basic economic unit. They affirmed that this assumption enforces women's dependence on men, women's secondary status within the family, the community and women's exclusion from decision-making.

Feminist economists insisted on economic indicators that measure people's well-being. They argued that economic growth which basically considered the amount of money flow in the country's economy has little concern to social well-being of people. They rationalized that economic growth didn't give emphasis to resource distribution within a country. Feminist economists have also evidenced that economic discourses had perpetuated masculinist biases in theoretical and empirical researches. Gender biased research outcomes create low status, low power and less rewards for women since economic theories and discourses influence political, economic and social policies. Feminist economists had contributed to economic theory and methodology and created alternative models such as the Capability Approach. Feminist economic methodology was categorized in to Domestic systems, Economic success, Human agency, Ethical judgments and Gender, race, class (Power Marilyn, 2004).

Working definitions

Patriarchy: From a gender perspective patriarchy is defined as a set of social relationships which cause domination of men over women. Patriarchy is a social system and societal structure that institutionalize male physical, social and economic power over women. Men are regarded as the authority within the family and the community and power and possessions are passed on from father to son. Feminists define patriarchy as:

"A set of social relations between men which, have a material base and which, though hierarchical establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women"
(Heidi, 2003: 211).

Gender mainstreaming: is defined as:

"…the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (ECOSOC, 1997:3).

Gender mainstreaming is clearly established as global strategy for promoting gender equality through the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995 (UN DES DAW,1995). Reference was made to importance of the mainstreaming strategy for each strategic objective identified in the Beijing Platforms for Action. Systematic consideration of differences between situations and needs of women and men in all community policies and actions were set as basic features and principles in gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming involves restructuring policies, programs and activities to make sure that needs of women and men are equally addressed and both women and men have equal participation and both gain equal benefits. Gender mainstreaming is a process which requires shift in organizational cultures and attitudes. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is achieving women's empowerment and gender equality.

Power in gender relation: Literatures reveal that power has different definitions in social and political theories. Feminists define power in terms of social relations of domination and subordination. Feminists' understand power as power-over which is unjust and oppressive to those over whom it is exercised (Joan, 1979). Gender relation is a way in which, culture in a society prescribes rights, roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in relation to one another. Men hold superior position in households and communities and women are put to inferior position. In women's land rights issues power in gender relation implies men's higher access to and control over land and women's less access and low control over land.

Access to land and other resources: Resources are means and goods including those that are economic like household income, productive like land, equipments, agricultural inputs (including labor) and opportunity to leadership and decision-making, information, organization and time. Access to resource implies to the ability to use resources and/or benefits and to make short-term decisions on these resources (Akuna Beatrice, 2004). Women's access to land

has terms of use rights that imply getting opportunity to use and benefit from land. Access to land is a means to gain control over land.

Control over land and other resources: Control over resources implies the ability to use and even dispose a resource or benefit. Women's control over land means that women can access land (use it), can own land (can be legal title-holders) and can make decisions on selling or leasing out the land (Akuna Beatrice, 2004). Therefore, women's control over land implies that women get access to land and they make major decisions on land. Women's control over land is realizing equality.

Decision-making: In the context of land rights decision-making refers to decision on land use as an agricultural resource and its disposition. Decision-making related to land includes, land use and improvements, control of products harvested from land including incomes earned from sales of products and decisions on land transfer through bequeath, inheritance, sale or rent.

Land rights: Land rights are legally recognized claims on land enforced by legally established institutions. Women's land rights need deep understanding of the relationship between legal and social recognitions as well as the relationship between legal provisions and enforcements. Women's land rights should be recognized in terms of access and control in order to ensure security of rights (Akuna Beatrice, 2004). Women may have land rights recognized by law but such rights are meaningless unless those rights are socially recognized and effectively enforced.

Land rights registration: It is a recording procedure describing a parcel of land and identifying its current owner/holder and the form of ownership she/he or they had. It is a process of recording rights on land which provides safe and certain foundation of acquisition and disposal of rights on land (ELTAP, 2006:165). Landholding registration and issuing certificate to holders is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. Women's land rights registration and titling need to be defined explicitly in order to ensure their equal rights on land.

Tenure system: Is the way in which ownership of land or rights to land is organized. Tenure system may be determined by statute, agreed precedent or by customary practices. Tenure systems represent relations of people as individual and as group in society with respect to their access to and control over land (Moyo, 2002). It is culture-specific and dynamic, changing as social, economic and political situations change. In Ethiopia for example, different regimes followed different tenure systems.

2.2.7. Women's Decision-Making

Women are seen, in most cases, as dependent on men and denied the right to decision-making and leadership. In the existing structure, be it social, cultural, economical and political, men are granted with the authority to make decisions on behalf of women. Several researchers have identified that the level of women's participation in decision-making is insignificant especially in the social and political administrative and managerial positions (Tihitina, 2001; Haregwoin & Emebet, 2002).

Women are marginalized in decision-making and leadership by a variety of processes that begin in infancy. In most societies, women lack experience of decision-making and leadership in the public arena because girls, in contrast to boys, are socialized to play passive roles and given little opportunity to make decisions or develop leadership skills outside the family context. In most traditional societies girls are kept largely within the confines of the household and family where they are protected and taught to accept the decisions that others, parents, teachers, brothers make on their behalf. As a result of this lack of experience in a public context, girls tend to lack self-confidence and skills needed to function effectively in positions of formal leadership. An added handicap for many women is their lack of capacity due to discrimination in access to education and training: in most countries, women have higher levels of illiteracy and fewer years of schooling than men (Corner, 1997).

Women have relatively high decision-making power in the household on the traditionally assigned roles to them. Roles women and men play in the household and the society is assigned to them by their gender rather than by sex. Gender roles, more or less, are familiar all over the world. Women are socialized into lower status roles and dependency due to the differential positions of power either groups hold in society. In most societies, men tend to hold positions of power and to distribute available resources, they frequently have the opportunity to define social roles for both women & men (Gardiner, 2002).

In almost all societies, women take primary responsibility for childrearing and housework, while men are responsible for work outside of home to bring additional income. During industrial revolution (mid 19th century) the recognized productivity of women was replaced by the paid labor of men outside home. Because of this industrialization, women are pushed back home to childrearing and home works (Lloyd, 1996 referred in Giddens, 2001).

Due to the gender division of labor, Ethiopian women have primary responsibilities for household management, child rearing, food preparation, care of the sick and elderly and family health and welfare. According to Dessalegn (2001) in urban Ethiopia, specifically in Addis Ababa the responsibility of the women in the household is preparing food and drinks, preparing coffee, washing and cleaning, childcare, caring for visitors, caring for the sick in the household. In addition to house chores women also participate in income generating activities. In poor households women are not confined at home, rather operate in 'Gulet' or as daily labourer to bring additional income to their households.

The same study found out that the responsibility of the men in the household is they are the head of the household; they are responsible to provide economic support to the family, to build and repair house and fence, and sometimes assist the women in childcare (Dessalegn, 2001). Regarding decision-making at household, it was found out that in Addis Ababa women and men consult each other to reach on consensus agreement to decide in important matters. In less important matters, women decide on all household matters such as buying foodstuffs and furniture. Budgeting the household expense is women's decision. Men leave the less important matters to women and control the most important matters in the community (Dessalegn, 2001).

2.2.8 Marriage as Subordination of Women

Universally marriage is a socially recognized union of a woman and man who are committed themselves to live in one roof with the expectation of stable and lasting intimate relationships. Marriage has various social functions that institute different roles and responsibilities among men and women. Historically the institution of marriage and the role of a wife are intimately connected with the subordination of women in society.

The ground rules of marriage in Victorian culture and described women's subordination in the role of wife. One of the fundamental inequalities of women in the marriage contract is the hard manual and physical work women are engaged in the domestic and private sphere. The rationale behind a husband as head of the household further emphasized the economic dependency of a wife in which women are expected to be obedience, submissive, subordinate and conforms to her husbands' interests. The economic dependency among most women is one of the main subordinating factors that make a wife stay under marriage whether it is satisfactory or not. This is because the economic cost of marital dissolution is greater for

women than men. Thus lifelong fidelity and parenthood remains to be the sole responsibility of a wife and subordinating factor in the marriage contract (Bernard, 1991).

There are several types of marriage reflecting the diversity of the social institution in various parts of the world. Monogamy is a marriage of one man to one woman and the most common form of marriage in any class or society. Mostly such marriage practices occur through religious and the individual preference in engaging. Polygamy is a marriage of more than one spouse and it is illegal in many parts of the world. Such practice occurs in most African states and parts of Asia and the Middle East. Polyandry marriage is a system in which a woman may get married more than one husband, whereas polygamy marriage is sharing of a husband with one or more wives. Polygamy, marriage is advantageous for men in terms of economic, social prestige and political power. In African societies having several wives helps a man to acquire more wealth and social prestige. Most women are high contributor to the production of wealth and income to their family. For instance, in Africa women are engaged in variety of economic activities, including land preparation, sowing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, storing and marketing. The same is true in the case of royal family where multiple marriages can extend political alliances and followers (Hunter, 1995).

Though the degree and extent varies most marriage practices whether it is monogamy or polygamy are subordinating women. Particularly where there are customs such as dowry and bride wealth, women are considered as property. Bride wealth is central to structuring gender relation within marriage. The rationale behind bride wealth payment is social control and the dominating of women through unfair division of labor, unequal access to resources and imbalance decision making power. Once bride wealth is given for women, she is expected to show proper respect, perform whatever task instructed by her husband and remain submissive. This constant rendering of respect reinforces and perpetuates women's subordination and powerlessness in marriage (McCurdy and Hodgson, 2001).

Bride wealth payment is seen as precondition for culmination of marriage process in many developing countries where marriage is an event of deep economic importance. The substantial transfer of assets from the bridegroom to the bride's family restricts women's right of mate selection. Each society has set of prescriptions and constraints governing the selection of mates among its members. Arranged marriage is the dominant practice, particularly in Africa, and in most societies. In most cases men are the one who choose their partner. In Africa marriage

represents not only the relationship between individuals but also between two families and kinship (Hunter, 1995).

In most African societies the father has uncompromised right to select his daughter's future husband. The main reason behind this is the potential ability of the bridegroom to offer bride wealth .Women do not have the choice of whether, when or whom to marry. They are expected to behave in passive ways to submit the judgment of their parents. A girl should respect the wishes of her parents particularly her father's wishes. Refusal of a girl to marry someone who is already assigned and accepted as a suitable husband by her father will lead to continuous mistreatment and being disowned by the whole family. Young women are forced to marry at early age to an old man and who already have several wives (Hunter, 1995).

This is especially true in Ethiopia, while the primary target of parents in the transaction of arranged marriages is to maximize the economic benefit of their daughter and indirectly their own. Most parents looking for a family with better economic status with which they could connect through marriage. This attitudes sometimes creates marriage bond between the two families even from womb. In some parts of Ethiopia girls are promised for marriage at the age of 4-5 years old to ensure the economic stability of the girl (NCTPE, 2003).

Traditionally, marriage is seen as mandatory for women and in most societies a single woman is considered as incomplete and is not socially recognized. It is assumed that the social status and recognition of women can only be achieved through marriage. Most societies feel that marriage is the only means that entitles women to have a home, financial security and the benefit of motherhood. The stigma attached to singleness creates a sense of depression and being unwanted not only by the woman herself but also the members of her family. Women are socialized and are expected to become good wives and good mothers. It is more unaccepted if a woman over matures before marriage (Hunter, 1995).

2.2.9. Marriage Practice in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia society's marriage is the norm that people should perform when they reach a certain age. The Ethiopian civil code recognizes three main categories of marriage such as civil, religious and customary. Religious and customary is the dominant types of marriage practiced in Ethiopia. Except in some ethnic groups marriage is usually arranged by the family that is governed by parental determination, male supremacy and interference of relatives and friends (Eshetu, 2000).

In the diverse cultural and multi confessional mixture of Ethiopia, marriage arrangements vary greatly. Each ethnic group has its own prescription of marriage arrangements. Different marriage arrangements take place in different ethnic groups of Ethiopia. Among the highlanders like the Amhara, Tigray and Oromo ethnic groups' marriage is usually arranged by parents. Marriage by personal choice is a traditional norm in some ethnic group of the South such the Hamer,Tsemako and Karo. Exchange marriage is still practiced in Anyiwak, Gumuz, Mao, Sidama, Welita and some Oromo community. Inheritance marriage also practiced in some Oromo and other ethnic groups. 'Sororate' also a marriage practice in some parts of Oromia particulrly (Arsi) in which a younger sister is given in replacement of a dead sister (NCTPE; 2003).

According to research made by Abeya Iffa in 2001, there are five types of marriage practices identified in the Gumuz community of Dedesa valley. It includes exchange marriage, kidnapping, elopement, inheritance and bride wealth. Exchange marriage is the dominant practice in which fathers or elders play key role in the exchange process. Gumuz society is patrilineal and patrilocal family and power is mainly maintained through the father. A married woman is expected to stay in her husband's residence and carries out a heavy work load not only for her husband but also her mother in law.

In Gumuz society having more than one wife is a traditional norm in which the communities accepted and the wives live in the same area. For example in the year 2000, an extramarital relation among Gumuz was the highest, at 3.7% as compared to other ethnic groups in Ethiopia. As a traditional society, Gumuz girls have no right to choose their partner. There are even cases when girls are forced to abandon their lovers and comply with the interest of the brother (NCTPE, 2003).

Early Marriage

Early marriage is one of the major mechanisms to cope with economic crisis and improving the economic situation of the family's party through the marriage transaction. In many Sub-Saharan countries marriage at a very early age is common. According to early 1990 study made by UN, the occurrence of early marriage in selected countries shows that in Ethiopia 61% of women get married between the age of 15 to 19 years old, while in Mozambique 52%, Senegal 55%, Tanzania 38%, Zambia 32%, Kenya 29% and Zimbabwe 26% (NCTPE, 2003).

Early marriage is also a norm in most communities where virginity is highly required and pre marital sex is a taboo. In most societies, virginity is considered as a sign of purity and honor. A new bride expected to be virgin in her first marriage contract. For example, in most societies of Ethiopia culture dictates that women are expected to be virgins before marriage. Pregnancy before marriage is considered as an offense and a big shame to the family. A single woman who is not virgin on her wedding night may be not only beaten by her husband but also face the risk of being sent back to her family. Then the bride's payment is given back to husband's family. Hence the high value given to virginity exposes girls to marry at an early age, to reduce the threats of loss virginity before marriage and premarital pregnancy (NCTPE, 2003).

Early marriage has numerous side effects on the life of women. It associated with reproductive health problems during pregnancy and delivery time. After a girl has married, her first task as a wife is giving birth. However, giving birth at teenage has risks for both mother and child. Studies indicate that Ethiopia has one of the highest incidences of obstetric fistula in the world. In addition, prolonged labor and death of the child in the uterus, damage to the birth canal and even death of the mother are also some of the consequence of early marriage. More to that girls at this age can not cope with their own and their baby's physiological, emotional and economical needs (NCTPE 2003).

Early marriage also puts teenage girls at high risk of HIV in which marriage arranged by families particularly when a young girl is given to an old man who already had sexual relationship with many other women. In such cases the risk of HIV transmission to the girl is great. This is because of the girl's level of awareness at this age is less, and the age gap between the couple makes sexual negotiation difficult. Furthermore, marriage at an early age, child bearing and the confinement of young girls to the home curtail the opportunities they have for education, employment, personal growth and development (Abebech, 2003).

Child Marriage

According to Article 1 of the Convention on the right of the Child, Child marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old. For this reason, some organizations strongly recommend the use of the term 'child marriage' for any marriage under 18 years old. They also advocate that 'any child marriage constitutes a forced marriage, in recognition that even if a child appears to give their consent, anyone under the age of 18 is not able to make a fully informed choice whether or not to marry.' Child marriages must be viewed within a context of

force and coercion, involving pressure and emotional blackmail and children that lack the choice or capacity to give their full consent. It is estimated that 14 million girls under the age of 18 marry each year and, by 2020, 142 million girls will be married by their 18th birthday, if current trends continue.

However, the term "child marriage" can be seen as confusing. The UN defines a child as anyone under the age of 18, but there is no single definition of the term "child" worldwide, and there can even be variations within countries. For example, across the USA, states have different definitions of "child." According to the culture of many countries, a girl is only a child until she begins menstruation. So, in many countries, "child marriage" can be interpreted as the marriage of a girl who has not yet reached puberty. Because of the different definitions of who is a child, some organizations prefer to use the term "Early and Forced Marriage". A forced marriage is defined as a marriage "conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and is a marriage in which duress - whether physical or emotional - is a factor." According to the international journal of social sciences 28th March 2013.Vol.9 No. 1 **"Globally, child marriage is defined as the marriage of any child under 18. But different societies have different understandings of the age at which a child becomes old enough to marry."**

Marriage by Abduction

Marriage by abduction is one of the female's subordinating cultural practices. It is a forced marriage without the consent of the girl and her parents. Usually abduction takes place when a girl is going to market, school or to visit relatives. The man who abducts the girl will force her into sexual intercourse against her will. The abductor may be someone whom she knows already or totally strange to her. After abduction takes place the abductor in the traditional sense sends elders to the girls' family for reconciliation and recognition of the marriage. Usually the family's consent to the abductor's pleaded for reconciliation and marriage is agreed up on receiving a compensation of bride wealth. It is believed that in a society where virginity is highly valued, a girl who has lost her virginity would be socially unacceptable and discriminated for future marriage to somebody else (WHO, 2007).

Marriage by abduction is a common practice in some African countries. For example in Ethiopia, such practice occurs to varying degrees in almost all ethnic groups. Though abduction

is a criminal offence under Ethiopian law, it is recognized by the society as one of customary marriage, if the marriage is subsequently agreed upon. In such case, the abductor is exempted from his criminal act. According to the 2005 study the occurrence of marriage by abduction of most ethnic groups indicate that in SNNP 92%, Oromia 80% , Benishangul Gumuz 70%, Afar 66%, Harari 43%, Gambella 41%, Tigray 39%, Amhara 33%, Somali 32% and Addis Ababa 18% (NCTPE,2003).

2.2.10 Traditional Delivery Practice

Harmful delivery practices of most traditional societies are also another cultural practice that puts women at high risk of maternal death. According to the World Health Organization, more than half of births in developing nations are attended by traditional birth assistance with little knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Usually traditional birth assistants use harmful treatments during delivery. For example, in case of obstructed labor, they massage the abdomen by pressing to force the baby out. In most societies the delay of delivery is believed to be is a punishment for marital infidelity and put the pregnant woman at high risk of death since she cannot get actual treatment (NCTPE, 2003).

The majority of babies in Ethiopia are delivered at home. According to the Demographic Health Survey of 2000, attended delivery in the hands of health professionals was only 6%, delivery by trained traditional birth attendants was 4%, delivery by traditional birth attendants was 26%, a large majority 58% delivered in the hands of any woman and 6% delivered alone without any assistance (Women Affair Office, 2005).

There are harmful and complicated delivery practices exercised in different ethnic group of Ethiopia. It includes massaging the abdomen before and during delivery, shaking a woman in prolonged labor, isolation during delivery and after delivery, suturing the vagina after delivery, drastic measures to hasten the expulsion of the placenta, inducing sneezing to force out after birth, taking bitter anti-helminthes drug during pregnancy are the main harmful delivery practices exercised in different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Furthermore, considering many children as wealth among most societies in Ethiopia leads repeated pregnancy without child space which puts women at high risk of dying during pregnancy and delivery (Almaz, 1991).

2.2.11 Taboos Practiced in Traditional Societies

Food taboo

Consumption patterns are differing from culture to culture and society to society. Feeding practices are part of the culture of any given society and are related to traditions beliefs and taboos. Its pattern also differs from culture to culture and society to society. Food habits are mainly determined by the availability of indigenous food supply, socio-cultural and educational orientation of food processing and preparation methods. Each culture whether traditional or modern, it has beneficial as well as harmful feeding practices. Most of the time women and children are highly affected by food habits and dietary discrimination (African Center for Women, 1997).

In most traditional society's food taboos are specifically directed toward women. The best and most nutritious part of the food is given to men. The nutritional deficiencies of most women are high particularly among pregnant and lactating women. Pregnant women are restricted from certain food staffs. For example, in the South, South-Western and central part of Ethiopia, pregnant women are forbidden to take all foods which are white in color such as milk products, fatty meat, porridge and potato. Such foods are believed to be plastered on the body of the newly born baby. It is also assumed that the newly born baby and mother will have a bad smell if a pregnant woman eats vegetables. In the northern part of Ethiopia high carbohydrate and fat foods are forbidden for pregnant women with the assumption that it will bring about easier labor and smaller babies (CRDA, 1991).

Nutritional taboos and the restriction of pregnant women from consuming certain kinds of food which is usually rich in the required nutrients leads to the low nutritional status among most women and put them at high risk of material death. Low body weight, iron deficiency and anemia are one of the main causes of death in case of hemorrhage during labor, and it is common among women in developing countries. For example in Ethiopia, the mean height of women is only 156cm, indicating severe past malnutrition, and puts women at high risk in delivery, and 30% of non pregnant women have a body mass index less that 18.5, which indicates serious chronic energy deficiency (NCTPE,2003).

Menstruation taboo

Among the various traditional taboos in African societies, menstruation is one of it. In many traditional societies female blood is treated as impure and considered as pollution which is associated with dirt and danger. Menstruating woman is believed to be contaminated and excluded from the most ordinary life until she became clear. She also sits at some distance far from the village. She is prevented from planting, harvesting, preserving, cooking, serving and enjoying with others. It is believed that menstruating women are causes of economic disaster and it is unlucky when they are near to certain places. As (Delaney et a1. 1988:9) quoted it in the book of a cultural history of menstruation.

Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seed in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees falls off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once, seized by rust and a horrible smell fills the air to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bits with an incurable position. Even that very tiny creature the ant is said to be sensitive to it and throws away grains of corn that taste of it and does not touché them again .

Discrimination against menstruating women in the Jewish and Christian cultures is described in the Leviticus and is still observed among Orthodox Jews. It states menstruating women shall be kept apart for seven days and anyone who touches the woman and her property is considered as unclean. This religious ideology of menstruation keeps women out of their political and economic participation of their time. Hence menstrual taboo remains as one of subordinating factors in the control of women by men. Women are discredited by any behavior which draws attention to menstruation. Women are still considered physically and mentally unreliable workers and unstable human being that cannot fulfill their proper function during their cycle (Delaney et al., 1988).

In most societies of Ethiopia, menstrual blood is considered and associated with pollution. Menstruating women are not allowed to enter the church compound and do not participate in religious festivities. In some ethnic groups in the south and south west of Ethiopia, women in their menstruation time are segregated in a separate hut for the duration of menstruation. They are not allowed to use household tools, shake a male's hand, sleep on bed, wash hands or body in the house, grind grains preparing food and conduct gardening (NCTPE,2003).

2.2.12 Females Education in Ethiopia

Women constitute half of the country's population and are involved in 50-80% of the economic development and social welfare activities. However, they do not benefit from the nation's wealth (MEDaC/WAO, 2001:1). This could possibly be understood if one takes into account the economic and socio-cultural setting in the country vis-à-vis women. Given women's lack of access to economic resources and the various obstacles preventing them from benefiting from the fruits of their labor, it can be estimated that the majority of the people, 27 million living in chronic poverty in Ethiopia are women. In particular the situation of women living in rural area is humiliating (MEDaC/WAO, 2001:2). The fact is that females are underprivileged and underrepresented in development. This raises the issue that the role of education and female participation should be analyzed and studied.

According to Konjit (1995:7), traditional education was controlled by the church in the Christian areas and by the mosque in the Muslim areas. Moreover, the traditional education system was the monopoly of the clergy and the exclusion of women was part of ecclesiastical life of the society.

Furthermore, although modern education was introduced in Ethiopia at the turn of the twentieth century, its development was cautious and gradual, particularly with regard to the education of women. Even though Empress Menen established a school for girls in 1931, the number of students was not more than a token (Seyoum, 1996:3). The country's education policy at no time has made a distinction based on gender; however evidences still confirm the superiority of males in an indirect way. Formal and non-formal curriculum and traditional teaching portray this image (Konjit, 1995:7)

2.2.13 Factors Affecting Girls' Education

Conditions that influence the improvement of girls' education have been discussed in a number of ways. With particular reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, Odaga and Heneveld (1995) discuss factors affecting female education under three categories: socio-economic and socio-cultural, factors related to the school environment, and political and institutional factors. Hyde (1989) summarizes conditions for improving women's education in Sub-Saharan Africa from four perspectives: family level, societal level, school level factors and factors influencing achievement. Njau and Wamahiu (1998) indicate that some of the critical factors in female dropout include pregnancy, psychological cost of pregnancy, direct cost of schooling, societal perceptions, the

labour market, opportunity costs, family poverty, irrelevant curriculum, insecurity, structural attributes and classroom culture. For the sake of convenience this review will summarize the literature under the following categories: economic, cultural, school, societal and other factors.

Economic factors

Together with the fundamental socio-cultural bias in favour of males, the economic factor, especially in terms of grinding poverty and hunger, is probably the most influential in adversely affecting female participation in education, especially in rural areas. In such harsh economic circumstances, both direct and hidden costs to a family of sending daughters to school are perceived by parents to be prohibitive in terms of the provision of books, paper and uniforms/clothing (important for social reasons) as well as the loss of vital help at home and on the land (DFID paper No.09, 1993, 96 P). In addition, the dropout of girls from schooling has been found to have links with socio-economic factors by several studies in Africa South of the Sahara. According to Odaga and Heneveld (1995), and Njau and Wamahiu (1998) the most important of these factors include direct and opportunity costs of schooling, limited employment opportunities, socio-economic status, parental/family investment behavior, the economic value of girls, rural/ urban residence, and the level of parental education. In most cases the contribution of females is unpaid and they may have little or no experience of the handling of money which further reduces their status and power, but increases their vulnerability. Because of the patriarchal and patrilocal predominance, investment in a girl's schooling is wasteful since it benefits the family into which a girl marries rather than her own.

Socio-cultural factors

A major deterrent to female take up and follow through of educational opportunities (even when these are available) is a near universal fundamental cultural bias in favour of males. The widespread operation of patriarchal systems of social organization; of customary early marriage; of the incidence of early pregnancy (in and out of marriage); of heavier domestic and subsistence duties of females (especially in rural areas); a generally lower regard for the value of female life, all combine though differentially in each case, to adversely affect the participation of girls and women in formal education. To this list may be added problems of seclusion and security in some areas. Such long standing constraints result in a dearth of female role models that could challenge the traditional one that is clearly acquired by both sexes at a very early age.

The influence of this factor can only be overcome, inter alia by a profound change of attitude on the part of influential males, and in some countries of traditionally minded powerful females in key family positions (DFID paper No.09, 1993, 96 P).

Socio-cultural beliefs, customs, practices, pregnancy, insecurity, girls' expectations and other traditions play a significant role in decisions to withdraw girls from school and their own decisions to drop-out of school.

Initiation ceremonies still mark the transition from childhood to adulthood among communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence indicates that initiation creates a lot of confusion and dilemmas for girls. Ceremony schedules usually overlap with the school calendar and that leads to absenteeism and dropouts. Although, communities accept the girls as adults, teachers or schools continue to consider them as children. Sometimes they may be punished for not participating in some activities which adults do not normally participate in. Initiated girls may also feel it difficult to continue schooling after passage to adult hood as the next step is expected to be marriage.

Circumcision is another ritual that creates similar dilemmas to those who pass through initiation ceremonies. Circumcised girls not only perceive themselves as adults, but also become negative influences on their uncircumcised peers. They may become rude to teachers. They often reject schools as institutions for "children". Frequent absenteeism and reduced performance leads them to drop out from schools and eventually to marry (Ghicharu, 1993). Together with the payment of bride price and early marriage, circumcision functions to enhance the social status of teenagers and acts as a mechanism for curbing female sexuality and pre-marital pregnancy. Due to emphasis placed on female virginity before marriage, these practices were perceived to increase economic returns to the family through bride wealth (Njau and Wamahiu, 1998).

Security and the needs for physical safety or protection are traditions that often demand special concern for girls' privacy and social reputation (Herz et al., 1991; Njau and Wamahiu, 1998). In cultures where female seclusion is practiced, the impact of that are examples among entrepreneurial Muslim communities, which invest their wealth in the education of their daughters. Christian communities also withdraw their daughters because they fear that formal schooling brings about non-traditional customs to girls. Particularly, the possibility of pregnancy

among teenage girls and the economic responsibility for their adult daughters and grandchildren induces Christian parents to marry off girls rather than keep them in schools.

Girls' expectations of their *school performance* and *career prospects* play significant roles in their persistence at school. Odaga and Heneveld (1995) refer to studies in Malawi, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Kenya, which show that both girls and boys have low expectations of female achievements in school and of career prospects. Studies in Guinea and Zambia show that although primary school pupils showed few gender stereotypes in the first grade, by the fifth grade boys and girls subscribed to gender stereotypes that generally favoured boys, and that girls internalized self-images of inferiority that finally leads to dropouts (Anderson-Levitt and others, 1994). There are now several studies, which show that children in urban areas and

male students articulated a wider range of career choices (including law, engineering and medicine), while children residing in rural areas, and female students, had a more limited range of career aspirations, teaching and nursing being the most popular. Girls tend to aspire to traditional 'female' occupations, particularly teaching and nursing, regardless of place of residence. Studies from Ghana and Malawi indicate lack of interest in school attendance among girls. In Mozambique lack of parental control has been emphasised as a reason for school absenteeism among girls (Odaga and Heneveld, 1995).

Chore time or the amount of time girls spend on chores and other productive activities such as marketing reduces the time and energy they spend in schools, affecting their success and persistence. In Guinea and Niger, girls are prominent in petty trading in border towns and spend much of their time away from schooling (Long and Fofanah, 1990). In Uganda, Nammuddu (1991) argues that poor performance of girls has relations with the greater demand on their time to perform household chores including fetching water and wood, cooking and the care of younger siblings.

Religious factors

Although in general acting indirectly, the religious factor is on balance a positive one, though it is often overcome by the fundamental socio-cultural bias in favour of males. The fact that most religious practitioners and leaders are male makes for a powerful image in favour of that sex, and it would be a very helpful move if religious leaders of all faiths and denominations were to speak out strongly in support of the female cause. Christian missions have, in various areas, had a most positive effect on female education and literacy levels, though some have a legacy of

harsh sanctions in respect of early pregnancy. In Islamic areas the situation is generally not so supportive but a number of positive trends were apparent. The religious significance of sons in the Hindu family, while still operative, no longer seems in itself to disadvantage daughters. Often in contrast to the state system, and especially- at secondary level, denominational schools are well organised and resourced, attracting stable, well qualified staff. This weighs heavily with parents when deciding whether or not to send their daughters to schools, especially since boarding facilities tend to be more favourable and secure (DFID paper No.09, 1993, 96 P).

Educational

The socio-economic development of many countries has been strongly linked with education. No country has scored sound economic growth without sound development in its education (PHRD, 1996:1). Education is the foundation for optimal utilization of resources through development of human capital. Investing in people's education can boost living standards of household by expanding opportunities, raising productivity, attracting capital, investment and increasing earning power (PHRD 1996:1). Education is the ultimate liberator, empowering people to make personal and social choices. It is also ultimate equalizer, particularly in promoting greater equity for women and for the poor and disadvantaged groups (Kane 2004: VII). Basic education especially helps to reduce poverty through its effects on population growth rate, health, and nutrition and by equipping people to participate in the economy and society.

Health

According to DFID paper No.09, 1993, 96 P, the effect of poverty and malnutrition on the health of school age children falls harder on girls than boys. Boys may get preferential feeding, while girls (who have a heavier domestic work load) are more likely to be undernourished. Even if they get to school, this adversely affects their performance and therefore retention rate. Health problems associated with pregnancy, especially for adolescent girls, obviously have a negative effect, as do rising trends of sexual activity in the younger generations where these occur. Problems associated with family size and family planning are widespread in relation to possible participation in education and imply the need for sex/health education at school level. It is clear that the health factor, though partly hidden and indirect in effect is a very significant one in respect of the quality of (young) female participation in education as well as the quantity of it.

Geography

The considerable spatial disparity, and in some cases incompleteness, of institutional provision (even at primary level) relates directly to difficulties of physical access which adversely affect girls more than boys; there is an overall and profound urban/rural dichotomy which favours towns and cities, especially in respect of secondary school (and especially single sex) provision for girls; patterns of transportation and migration affect educational provision and take up, again normally disadvantaging females and in some cases extreme physical difficulties, such as flooding and other hazards act in the same way. The influence of this factor can only be overcome by more sophisticated and multivariate spatial analysis of educational needs and the planning and implementation of integrated development projects as a result. Educational planning on its own would be futile (DFID paper No.09, 1993, 96 P).

Legal

Again this factor acts mainly indirectly. Most countries have now legislated for equal status in respect of sex, but this is usually a recent innovation and traditional sanctions often still operate unchallenged. So there are still important areas where the law could be reformed further to encourage compliance and the system of justice strengthened to ensure that this actually happens. In many rural areas long standing societal rules constraining females are still operative, as is the case with condoning early marriage. The acquisition of minimum legal knowledge and support in such areas as: gaming justice and compensation for assault; understanding letters and contracts; arguing for educational provision according to the law, and challenging disadvantageous pressures in respect of marriage, divorce and inheritance could be very helpful to the female cause. There must be concern over the legality of the employment of (young) children, particularly girls, and the dominance of males in the legal profession. The encouragement and support for more females to seek and develop careers in various areas of this profession could be a very significant development in respect of female participation in education (DFID paper No.09, 1993, 96 P).

2.2.14 Efforts on Women Empowerment

International commitment

The international community has become aware of the need to achieve equality between the sexes and of the fact that an equitable society cannot be attained if fundamental human rights of half of human society, i.e. women, continue to be denied and violated. However, the bleak reality is that the harmful traditional practices focused on in this Fact Sheet have been

performed for male benefit. Female sexual control by men, and the economic and political subordination of women, perpetuate the inferior status of women and inhibit structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate gender inequality. As early as the 1950s, United Nations specialized agencies and human rights bodies began considering the question of harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women, in particular female genital mutilation. But these issues have not received consistent broader consideration, and action to bring about any substantial change has been slow or superficial (Halima, et al., 1988).

A number of reasons are given for the persistence of traditional practices detrimental to the health and status of women, including the fact that, in the past, neither the Governments concerned nor the international community challenged the sinister implications of such practices, which violate the rights to health, life, dignity and personal integrity. The international community remained wary about treating these issues as a deserving subject for international and national scrutiny and action. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation were considered sensitive cultural issues falling within the spheres of women and the family. For a long time, Governments and the international community had not expressed sympathy and understanding for women who, due to ignorance or unawareness of their rights, endured pain, suffering and even death inflicted on themselves and their female children. Despite the apparent slowness of action to challenge and eliminate harmful traditional practices, the activities of human rights bodies in this field have, in recent years, resulted in noticeable progress. Traditional practices have become a recognized issue concerning the status and human rights of women and female children. The slogan "Women's Rights are Human Rights", adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly the same year, captured the reality of the status accorded to women (Halima, et al., 1988).

The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is one of the major conventions regarding the rights of women. CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. CEDAW commits States to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women into their legal systems, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt those that prohibit discrimination against women. The Convention specifically mentions actions to be undertaken

so that women enjoy equal rights in the areas of education, health and employment. Ethiopia ratified CEDAW on 10 September 1981.

Following the requirements of the CEDAW Committee, Ethiopia has been reporting on the progress made in the implementation of CEDAW, though it has not been up to date. The Committee invited Ethiopia to submit its 6th periodic report, which was due in 2002 and its 7th periodic report due in 2006 in a combined report in 2006. Currently, attempts are being made to compile these reports.

The Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) that was adopted in September 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women is the other commitment that Ethiopia has made. The PFA deals with twelve critical areas of concern: poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, the media, the environment, and the girl child. The Beijing+5 review session held in June 2000 in New York reaffirmed the importance of gender mainstreaming in all areas and at all levels. Furthermore, areas that required special actions were identified: education, social service and health, including sexual and reproductive health, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the burden of poverty on women, violence against women and girls, and the development of effective and accessible national machineries for the advancement of women.

Ethiopia has taken its commitment to Beijing PFA seriously. Though the Ethiopian Women's Policy precedes the PFA, the requirement for the national machinery stipulated in the Policy and implemented accordingly is in line with demands of the Beijing PFA. Furthermore, based on its economic and socio-cultural context, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) had chosen seven priority areas among the twelve critical areas of concern and developed its National Action Plan on Gender Equality (NAP-GE) in order to ensure gender-equitable development. These were: Poverty and Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls; Education and Training of Women and Girls; Reproductive Rights, Health and HIV/AIDS; Human Rights and Violence against Women and Girls; Empowering Women in Decision Making; Women and the Environment; and Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women. No budget estimate has been given for the various activities included in the NAP-GE, but the Plan has been integrated into the current poverty reduction strategy paper known as A Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), which is used as a strategic framework

for action in all the development sectors (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), 2006).

National commitment

Currently in Ethiopia the incumbent government is working towards boosting the involvement of women in various development programs. In this regard, in its effort to enhance their involvement, the government and its stakeholders are confronting with deep rooted and unhealthy stereotypes towards women that have been there with the community for centuries. Particularly, since then, women have got to equally exercise in many aspect of development in the country. For instance, inclusion of women has become a vital criterion in the assignment of higher positions like ministers and ambassadors by the government. In addition, beginning from primary to higher education institution, affirmative action was introduced to help women participate in various sectors. In this regard, the incumbent government has shown strong political change and will that has been exhibited to help women involve fully in all development areas.

However, despite the efforts exerted there are still various problems that need serious intervention. In this regard, contemporary literature shows that a number of researches are being conducted on women education focusing on barriers to their attendance and success in their education. But among these researches we came across, we need to emphasize on the women cultural roles and how these in turn affect their participation in education general and Functional Adult (FAL) Literacy programs in particular. Our justification to critically review these issues is that in Ethiopia, as it is true in other developing countries, there is a need on the part of the government to achieve the Millennium Development Goals where achieving basic education is becoming a prior concern and mandatory this time. The government of Ethiopia is paying great attention to adult literacy campaigns to realize these demands. However, it apparently seems difficult to realize these intentions in very short period of time because of the cultural ties which are becoming bottle necks particularly to the education of adult women (The international journal of social sciences 28th March 2013. Vol.9 No.1).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

The study mainly focused on the assessment of traditional practices that contributes for the subordinate position of the Gumuz women/girls in their community. The assessment process in this study was participatory involving partners and key informants for in-depth interview and focus group discussions. A thorough review of literature and referring past studies was conducted. A qualitative research method, one of the most common research methods in social sciences, was used to realize the goal of the study. Under the qualitative approach, in-depth interview of key informants and FGDs were conducted at kebele and woreda level. This method is a suitable method used to listen the sayings of the people for their actual life through closer investigation of the cases: as a matter of fact the potential for listening is a major advantage of the qualitative method over the quantitative one.

I decided to work my Research paper in Dibate Woreda as my research site because I got an opportunity to live and observe various cultures of the Woreda especially Gumuz traditional societies where gender inequality is highly prevalent. In addition, our daily activity is very close and directly related to this disadvantaged group. Moreover, this ethnic group live in a places where they could get little attention from the Government as well as other development partners.

3.2 Sampling

Considering various factors like accessibility, native Gumuz population in the kebeles and stakeholders intervention areas, four kebeles (Goncha, Sirben, Sasmanden and Kidohi) were intentionally selected from 12 Gumuz kebeles in the Woreda . It is because Gumuz peoples are very conservative to their long-established traditional practices (exchange marriage, abduction, rape, etc) that highly affect the status of women. There are a total number of 907 households in four selected kebeles and about 10% of these populations which is 91 households were participated in the study as respondents. From these thirty (30) women and twelve (12) men farmers were participated in the in-depth interview. The more number of women respondents are involved in the research process because the key concern of this study is so as to assess traditional practices that affect status of women hence women will get the core position in this study. In addition, from the remaining 49 sample populations about 8 elders and 41 farmers (25 female) were also involved as members of focus group discussion.

Moreover, 4 kebele level Government leaders, 4 Woreda Government sector experts & officials, 2 NGO officials at woreda level and 4 Development Facilitators deployed at kebele level were also involved as a key informant in order to obtain diverse information so that it helped to meet the goal of the study.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

Both primary and secondary data were employed. Participation observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured & unstructured interviews with key informants were employed to collect primary data. In addition, literature reviews, magazines books and other related researches were also used as a secondary source of data for the study.

Observation

This type of task was carried-out to have an insight on the situation and status of women in the study area. The researcher participated in the usual life and different activities of the local people in the study area since the researcher was living & working for the community being grassroots level. As a result, it was not too difficult to involve & practice their culture, daily activities and the context. There was time the researcher attended coffee ceremonies, markets, funerals, feasts and cultural ceremonies. Participating in social and cultural activities was considered as an important component so as to create familiarity and closeness with community & their actual practices. The researcher as a participant observed and collected field notes on the actual activities of the people like traditional practices, decision making and their way of participating in different cultural ceremonies. Through this method, the researcher was encouraged in more open and informal discussions; and obtained information about the attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts of the society in many aspects of women's life.

In-depth interview

Semi-structured questions were employed to selected households and various government offices such as Woreda Education and Women, children & youths office. Other sectors such as selected NGOs working in the study woreda were interviewed about serious types of HTPs and their contribution towards reducing the situation. In-depth interviews were conducted for both selected men and women households. From the total number of households (907) in the four selected kebeles, thirty (30) women and twelve (12) men farmers were participated in the in-depth interview. The more number of women respondents were involved in the research study since the key concern of this study so as to assess traditional practices that affect status

of women hence women should get the core position in this study. In addition, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were also conducted with key informants to get detailed information about women in the Woreda.

Focus group discussion

Focus group discussions were conducted with elders, farmers (male & female). Accordingly, four focus group discussions were conducted involving 8 elders and 41 farmers (25 female) participant groups because these groups have a great role to contribute in the traditional practices of the community. As this is one of the most common tools used to acquire diverse information concerned to the study and it helped the researcher to compare the information with the data obtained from in-depth interview and key informants.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to organize the primary data, the researcher carefully read the written information obtained from observational notes, interviews, key informants interview, focus group discussion and documents which are useful to get diverse feedback for the study. In analyzing the data, information were grouped into themes based on each specific objectives set for the study. Specific data were analyzed in tabular presentation to make the findings simple and more readable. Descriptive method was used that is narrative explanation, illustration of cases and summarization of the findings. Finally all the data were organized and incorporated in the final research report.

After completing data collection, it will be analyzed, verified and edited arranged serially. Finally, descriptive method of data analysis including tabular presentation, mean average, percentage and interpretations were used to analyze data.

4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Description of the Study Area

Benishangul-Gumuz is one of the 11 National Regional States Administrative Region of Ethiopia. The Region is divided into three zones namely: Metekel, Assosa, and Kamashi. Metekel zone consists of seven Woreda, while Assosa and Kamashi comprise eight and five Woredas, respectively.

Dibate Woreda, the specific study area, is one of the seven Woredas of Metekel Administrative Zone. The Woredas of Mandura in the North West, Bullen in the west, Yaso Woreda of Kamashi zone in the south and Amhara region (Awe zone) in the North East surrounds it. Its capital town, Dibate lies at a distance of 427 and 547 kilometer away from Assosa and Addis Ababa, respectively.

The Woreda is administratively divided into 27 rural and 2 urban Kebeles. According to the current Woreda office of finance and economy, the total population of the Woreda is estimated about 82,009 (48.92% females) with 18,222 households. According to CSA (2006), the average family size of a household is 4.5. The total area of the Woreda is about 368,289 ha and the average land holding size of a household is 2.63 ha (Save the children Canada, July 2011 survey report).

The existing five ethnic groups in the Woreda are Gumuz, Shinasha, Oromo, Amhara, Agew and Tigrie with a composition of 21.4%, 17.5%, 25.5%, 27.7%, 7.8% and 2% respectively. The majority of the population, 67% is Orthodox Christians followed by Muslim, Protestant and Catholic and traditional in decreasing order.

According to the Dibate Woreda Agriculture Office, the total area of the Woreda is estimated at 368,289; out of which, cultivated land 6%, pasture land 11.9%, forest & bush land 75.1%, degraded and rocky land 5%; and settlement or homestead 2%. Geographically, the Woreda capital Dibate is located in North 10046'40.3″ degree and East 036016'14.5″. The Woreda has three distinct agro-ecological zones of highland 6.9%, midland 48.3% and lowland 44.8%. The altitude of the Woreda ranges from 1050 to 2657 meters above sea level and gets 1619.8mm annual rainfall & the rainfall pattern is mono-modal type with extended (six months) wet season i.e from May to October. The average annual maximum and minimum temperature reaches 31 0C and 14 0c respectively.

The district is endowed with a number of potentials that could be used for promoting growth and development in the district but from the total of 44.5% suitable land for cultivation only 36% of the this potential land is under cultivation. Despite the presence of these potentials, however, people in Dibate district general and the Gumuz community in particular find themselves in destitute living condition partially because of inability to put these potentials to productive use.

The livelihood of the community (98%) relies on subsistence agriculture- crop-livestock farming. The major crops grown in the area includes cereal crops such as Millet, Maize, Sorghum and Teff while cash crops are ground nut, Sesame, Haricot bean, and Niger seed. The community is rearing livestock like cattle, sheep, goat, equines and poultry.

The major traditional institutions existing in the Woreda are Edir, Mahiber, Equb, senbetie and others. These institutions are established long ago and are serving the community to strengthen their social bondage and also means of helping each other. These institutions are free from external interferences and have their own purpose.

The main reasons for selecting Dibate Woreda as the area of the study were: (a) rural communities in the Woreda are exposed to a number of cultural and traditional beliefs. As a result, women in the study area prone to harmful traditional practices and related problems; (b) Dibate Woreda has been labeled as one of the Woredas for indigenous Gumuz ethnic group who are one of conservative traditional community in Metekel Zone of Benishangul Gumuz Regional state and (c) The researcher's employer is implementing a community capacity development project in the study area and this all helped the study as well as the researcher in different ways.

4.2 Characteristics of the Respondents

A sample population of 91 (55 women) respondents from Gumuz ethnic group was randomly selected from the four purposely selected kebeles. In order to obtain various information, the researcher also selected 4 kebele level GO leaders, 4 Woreda Government sector experts & officials, 2 NGO officers and officials working at woreda level and 4 Development Facilitators deployed at kebele level as a key informant so that it helped to meet the goal of the study.

Table one: Respondents' background information

No	Item	Respondents		Both sex	Remark
		Male	Female		
	Age				
1.	A. 20-30	5	9	14	
	B. 31-40	8	11	19	
	C. 41-50	8	17	25	
	D. 51-60	6	8	14	
	E. 61-70	6	5	11	
	F. 71-80	3	5	8	
	Total	**36**	**55**	**91**	
	Marital status				
2.	A. Single	2	2	4	
	B. Married	34	45	79	
	C. Widowed	-	8	8	
	D. Divorced	-	-	-	
	E. Others	-	-	-	
	Total	**36**	**50**	**91**	
	Educational status				
3.	A. Illiterate	33	54	87	
	B. Primary	3	1	4	
	C. Secondary	-	-	-	
	D. College	-	-	-	
	E. University	-	-	-	
	Total	**36**	**55**	**91**	
	Religion				
4.	A. Orthodox	21	29	49	
	B. Muslim	1	-	1	
	C. Protestant	3	2	5	
	D. Catholic	-	-	1	
	E. Traditional	7	21	28	
	F. No religion	4	3	7	
	Total	**36**	**55**	**91**	

Among the total 91 selected respondents, the age of youngest respondent was 17 while the oldest was 78. Regarding marital status of the respondents, most of the respondents were married and some were widows but inherited and some others were single. The age of the first marriage differs among the respondents. Based on the respondents' response, most women respondents get married after their first menstruation (at average age of 13 to 15 years) but in the case of men the first marriage is between 17 to 20 years. All the respondents got married through the common marriage culture called exchange marriage contracts. All married women

respondents had only one husband but most of the married men respondents had more than one wife. Concerning the number of children in the households, married women respondents had a minimum of 2 children and a maximum of 13 children.

The main source of income for the households is farming and almost all the respondents has no regular monthly income thus they depended on the amount of grain and agricultural products they sold in markets at their vicinity. Besides agricultural sources, the male sell their labors and the female sell firewood. According to the responses by most of the respondents, both men and women are the main bread winners of the family but the females played a key role in managing all the household tasks in addition other activities common for both.

Regarding the religious situation of the respondents, the majority followed Orthodox Christian religion, some followed their traditional religion, some others have no religion and few of them are Protestants & Muslim. In relation to educational status of respondents, most men and women farmers (92% men and 98% women) were illiterate and the remaining few are at primary education level where the maximum education level is 6. The maximum educational level among the key informants was degree holders and the minimum was grade 7.

4.3 Major Harmful Traditional Practices that Affected Women/Girls in Gumuz Community

The KII, in-depth interview and the FGD participants were asked to identify major harmful traditional practices especially that affect the status of Gumuz women in the study area. According to the results revealed from a thorough discussion with these participants, the most prevalent types of harmful traditional practices contributing for the subordinate position of women/girls in the study area are highlighted below:

- Exchange marriage
- Abduction marriage
- Pride wealth price marriage
- Wife inheritance
- Polygamy
- Menstruation taboo
- Birth giving outside the home
- Food taboo

- Rape

- Early marriage

- Domestic violence /Conflict/

- Old aged man marring young girls (yalachagabecha)

- Marriage decision without the interest of the girl

- Under estimating women

- Memorial festivity for the dead

- Extravagancy

- Witchcraft/magic

- Not willing to sent girls to school

Among the above listed traditional practices that could be directly and indirectly associated with subordinate position of women in Gumuz communities, the different types of marriage practices (Exchange marriage, wife inheritance, Huge dowry/pride wealth, Polygamy, Abduction, Early marriage, etc) and taboos like menstruation taboo, birth giving outside home, food taboo, are the main causes for the existing inequality among men and women. They are also the most common causes for economic and social crisis.

In addition, farmers lose their annual products for different cultural ceremonies such as extended holidays & extended marriage festive after harvest. These are found to be major causes that exposed the community to food shortage in the summer season and intensifies household health and social problems. Moreover, domestic violence /revenge/, witchcraft and alcoholism are also harmful traditional practices that cause for loss of money/asset, conflict and breaking social bondage which in turn contribute for instability in the community.

Some of the major harmful traditional practices which are closely associated with marriage practices and taboos within Gumuz community in Dibate Woreda, are described as follows:

Exchange Marriage

This is the dominant type of marriage and the first top priority HTP within the Gumuz community: in the Gumuz culture a girl can be exchanged for the sake of her brothers', father', uncles', or cousins' marriage. The main feature is that a male chooses the one that he wants to marry and inform the elders to discuss with her family. After full consultation and consensus of both families, marriage takes place through exchange of the bride groom sisters or near

relatives. This is done without the actual desire of both girls, the one who is going to marry and to be exchanged. Girls have no right to choose and say anything about the arrangement. This shows the lowest level of community awareness toward girls' education and it contributes for ignorance for girls' education & dropout. In Gumuz culture, exchange marriages can take place if and only if a man can have a sister or female relatives on his father side. The more sisters a man has, the more wives he can marry. A girl's refusal may lead to constant harassment and physical abuse by her family particularly by her brother and father.

According to KII, these days there is a good start of change in situations because Government, Community leaders and civil society organizations have also engaged in community awareness creation however the practice is still widely practiced within the Gumuz community. It is reported that there is a very less commitment of political leaders towards these traditional practices because sometimes they themselves & their families practice these practices. So it needs political leaders' commitment, especially at woreda level, to get better result from different efforts

Marriage by Abduction

It is also another form of marriage practice in Gumuz community. This is done without the consent of the girl and her family. The abductor first kidnaps the girl that he wants. Usually kidnapping takes place on market days while the girl is going to school or to visit relatives. Such practice is performed by a man if the girl or her family refuses the marriage. Few days later, after abduction takes place, the kidnapper family sends elders and approaches the girl's family for reconciliation. Usually the girl's parents accept the abduction after they receive the compensation of a goat, cattle and one sister of the kidnaper. Some of the harmful effect is obstructed labor, deformation of the body, school dropouts, HIV transmission and others.

Arranged abduction also takes place in Gumuz community. This is mainly done with the consent of the girl but without the knowledge of her parents. This happens when the girl knows her brother wants to marry through her exchange someone else while she has her own lover. The girl and her friends are aware of when and where she is going to be kidnapped. After the abduction takes place, the kidnapper's family sends elders for reconciliation. The girl's family will accept abduction if the kidnapper is from a socially recognized family and has a substitute sister, moreover they will ask for compensation. Sometimes this creates a conflict between the kidnapper and the girl's brother, particularly when the kidnapper has no substitute sister or

female relatives. But if the kidnaper has a substitute sister, the girl's brother can exchange the substitute one for his marriage.

In general, abduction is unlawful and forceful kidnapping or carrying away of a girl/women for marriage. In almost all cases, rape follows abduction since this is a guarantee that the abductor will most likely succeed in marrying the girl after negotiation, and paying some ransom to the parents through local elders. ***Abduction affects the health being a cause HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and in some cases it brings Festula. Lack of heath in turn contributes for low productivity.***

Pride Wealth Price Marriage

This is also another traditional practice which has been practiced in the Gumuz community and it happened in situations where when a man cannot have sisters or female relatives in his kinship. In order to be married he is expected to pay to the girls' family gun, cattle and cash money. The amount of payment expected varies according to his family or relatives wealth and decision is made by the elders. The Gumuz man who does not have a female kin to exchange to a wife most pay 10 cattle, (birr 30,000 if monetized), 10 goats (birr 5,000) and a gift of an estimated birr 2,000 to would be pride's parents.

In addition, Gumuz girl is considered as a means of conflict resolution when there is a loss of life during conflict. When somebody is killed by her family, the girl should be transferred to the families where life is lost. This could be done by traditional elders ("dem adirak shumagilewoch") using their cultural conflict resolution process otherwise revenge would be expected by the lost family and conflict will not be calm. As she would be transferred for them as a substitute of the lost life, they could consider her as a slave & she will face so many difficulties throughout her life so as to resolve the conflict.

Moreover, FGD and in-depth interview result revealed that Gumuz girl could be used as a short term asset or collateral for borrowing money or materials (crop products) from somebody in the time of difficulty. They transfer their girl for relatively better of households and they can borrow whatever. If the borrowed money or material was not returned, the girl would not have the right to go to her family and stayed serving them until their family returns what they borrowed. So, this is one of the factors that highly contributed for subordinate position of girls in Gumuz community.

Wife Inheritance

Marriage through inheritance of widows is one of the common harmful traditional practices among Gumuz community's culture. According to the FGD and KII participants, his brothers are eligible to inherit women when her husband passes away. Even if he does not have a brother, other close relative will marry her. But a widow is not allowed to marry another husband out of her husband's kinship. It is difficult for a widow to refuse a new marriage arrangement in case all the children are females. If widow refuses to subdue for the new marriage arrangements with relatives of the deceased husband and does not have children, her family must return the one that was given in exchange previously, or another of their own daughters. In addition, she subjected to constant moral and physical abuses by the family of her husband and outcast by the community as she is violating cultural values. However if male children have been born a widow can refuse to be inherited, because it is assumed that in the future household properties belong to the son.

From the above description of inheritance marriage we can see that the role and interest of women is always subordinated to the wish and interest of her husband's family. Despite the fact that inheritance marriage seems advantageous for the widow and her children, the reality is the willingness to keep household properties and investments only in the male line. According to the respondents, inheritance marriage implies that women are inferior and weaker and must be protected and ruled by males. According to FGD & in-depth interview participants, the main reasons behind widows' inheritance include:

- To protect the property of the husband within his family circle
- To take care of children by a family rather than by an ordinary stepfather
- To keep the name of the person who has passed away. The children to be named after his name rather than by that of the step father
- Due to high dowry the woman is taken as a commodity or property of the husband, in this case the person who has died. So she is not allowed to marry with other individuals outside the family circle of her husband. This is also a reason for their intention to keep up the high dowry practice in these communities

But it does not always work in this way: in practice the family of the deceased may even give to an old person a young widow or to a young person and old widow, and the future husband may have no interest in the marriage but do so for the sake of holding household property. The

respondents also mentioned that there are some harmful effects associated with this type of marriage include:

- Psychological problem of the women
- HIV Transmission
- This encourages polygamy
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Wives have no right on property and are themselves considered a property of the husbands

Since this issue has not received the necessary attention so far and has been perceived as beneficial by majority of the community members, there is no significant intervention made on widows' inheritance. There are some attempts in connection with HIV information dissemination in the study area. However, there is no behavioral change in connection to widows' inheritance. In fact some community members argue that this is a positive tradition that must be promoted. Some FGD participants suggested that elders, men, women and youth should sit together, discuss on the issue and have to come to a common agreement to stop the practice. At the same encouraging women to own land will minimize the problem.

Polygamy

In general, the marriage system in Gumuz community is polygamous and endogamous. According to the respondents of FGD & in-depth interview, it is also common for a Gumuz woman to share a husband with one or more other wives. This is openly acknowledged, the wives usually live together although sometimes they live separately. Although it is the known culture of the Gumuz community, wife inheritance culture in their community also encourages polygamy since wives are reassigned to his brothers and close relatives when her husband passed away. However, this situation leads to impoverishment and illiteracy among their household members which is due to inability to feed and send their children to school. In addition, it also leads to conflict among the household members.

Polygamy has a negative impact on health and economy of the households' i.e having more than one wife will probably contribute for larger family size. In this case it is difficult for most of the households to meet the basic needs of the family. Besides, polygamy contributes for transmission of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Menstruation Taboo

In Gumuz culture women are separated from their family at times of menstruation. According to the respondents result, menstruating women are considered as impure and are not allowed to enter the house until the period stopped averagely for 6 days. During menstruation period, she can use only separately materials (utensil) just for feeding and drinking purpose. She can't touch any other household utensils and it is not allowed to go to the field & participate in any type of activities. It is believed that menstruated women are capable of contaminating furniture, food, utensils and material in the house. According to most of the respondents, the primary reason for the segregation of women during menstruation period is the prevention of danger by the house sprit. This is because the presence of menstruated women in the house & any blood seen in the house will leads to sickness and death.

In addition, the reason behind prohibiting menstruating women from any agricultural activities is that they perceive as the farm will be damaged and they will face either reduction or total loss in the amount of production. So, according to the findings revealed, the menstruated women should isolate & clean themselves, and keep the blood out of sight. This can clearly show that menstrual taboo in Gumuz community is unfair traditional practice that affected the status of women/girls by creating a sense of social and psychological inferiority among women/girls.

Birth Giving Outside the Home

Surprisingly, Gumuz women are compelled to leave home during delivery in spite of changes in the recent times. Almost all the respondents including women themselves revealed that their delivery practice are outside the home. The reason behind practicing this is the same as menstruation that any blood flown in the house will leads to sickness and death. According to the respondents, if women deliver at home, a known & respected person couldn't enter the home before making reconciliation with the sprit. The reconciliation process is made by slaughtering a goat or chicken, and the sprit will be asked for forgiveness. So, they believed that women should deliver outside the home and all the blood should be left outside. From this one can see that the isolation of women during delivery in Gumuz community is one of discriminatory traditional practices that contribute for subordinate position of women/girls.

Food Taboo

This is also another traditional practice that contributes lower status of women/girls in Gumuz community. According to FGD and in-depth interview result, in this community women can't

use some kind of food types like egg and meat of hunted animals because if they use them, it is assumed that they will be sick. Some respondents also reflected on the issues as: eating egg and meat is also forbidden during pregnancy assuming that the womb became enlarged difficulty will be faced at the time of delivery. During food distribution time within the households, usually priority will be given to male and she will use the leftover foods. This all plays a great role in subordination of women/girls in their society.

Early Marriage

According to the FGD, in-depth interview and KII participants' response, early marriage is reported to occur in all Gumuz communities. The major aggravating factor for early marriage is exchange marriage & abduction due to lack of awareness. This is because the presence of exchange marriage and abduction culture by itself promotes early marriage since both of these marriage systems are arranged without the knowledge of girl to be married. The main reason behind this is that during exchange marriage, families of both partners give less attention for the girls' age but only her physical matters so as to fulfill the needs of their sons. Another reason added by respondents is the excessive dowry to be given for her family in the case of pride wealth marriage system. In this case her families would not bother about her age rather than the amount of resource they will take from. A common age range for the Gumuz girls to be married is 10-15 year.

In general, EM is one of the traditional practices recorded even at national level and is also documented as one of the common practices in the study area especially among Gumuz communities. According to KII response, some of the major risks associated to early marriage are sexual abuse, early pregnancy, early childbearing, risk to the baby and maternal death. One of the major harmful effects of early marriage is fistula due to obstructed labor following early pregnancy and early child bearing. In addition, some of the major social effects of early marriage include broken marriage, school dropouts and rural-urban migration. In general early marriage has devastating effects on the girl child, on the family, and on the community at large. Understanding this harmful effect of early marriage and having the highest popular support for eradication through intensive intervention in the project area with mass education and legal support assist to bring it to an end of early marriage.

Rape

Rape is another traditional practice which happened in almost in all abduction cases which is also one of the most humiliating and degrading experience to girls and women. Nowadays this act is becoming common in all parts of the country. Rape violates women's rights in all aspects of their life. Victims of rape lose their right to life, dignity, privacy, health, education and security. Their reproductive rights and many other rights are violated. They may be exposed to unwanted pregnancy that could lead to illicit abortion, psychological and health problems such as the acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Victims of rape will be hopeless, remain lonely and develop psychological problems. Since abduction also has serious negative effects, it needs serious strategic intervention in the Gumuz community using mass sensitization of the community on the legal framework.

Unequal Marriage "Yalachagabecha" (old man marrying young girls)

According to participants of FGD and in-depth interview result, this is also another type of harmful traditional practices observed in the study area. It is widely practiced in the area because a) it is a common culture husbands to have more than one wife b) the exchange marriage can put pressure to practice this c) Parents of girls can get excessive dowry in the form of gun and cattle when there is no girls to be exchanged in his family.

The process is some extent similar to early marriage where elders are sent to the parents of the girl to ask their consent. Definitely the parents give the consent if the husband can have a girl to be exchanged or afford the required number of cattle and gun without considering the age difference between them. Then the parents give her to the old husband without her consent. This practice has different harmful social crisis including a) there is no love between them b) it is reason for usual conflict c) other associated problems

According KII participants, there are a lot of efforts to alleviate these problems however; there is no big difference from former situation but there is a good start. The FGD participants have witnessed that there is no significant change where serious measures have to be taken to reduce these practices. In the future girls must be encouraged to attend school and a close follow up must be in place to stop the practice.

Memorial Festivity for the Dead

This is other exorbitant traditional practice with a negative implication on the income of a household. Holding a fest for the dead is another exorbitant task with a negative implication on

the income of a household. Preparing a feast for a dead relative is a traditional practice that strains the resource of a Gumuz household. The feast is costly and depletes the meager resource of a husband. Such a feast requires birr 20,000 to 30,000 (slaughter 10 cattle) and preparing local drink (borde) costing around birr 3,000. These excessive amounts of food and drinks are prepared to remember the dead and to pray for him. When any problem arises in the community or in the family of the dead, if they have not done these ceremonies they directly associate it to be the result of not fulfilling the culture.

These practices were reported by discussant of the focus groups as excessive and draining the available resource of not only the households but the clans, and thus exposing the households and the communities at large to food insecurity and poverty.

4.4. Community's Attitude towards Different Traditional Practices

According to results revealed, most of the FGD and in-depth interview participants have no a special outlook for harmful and beneficial traditions existing in their community and they consider all these traditions as beneficial because these traditions are their long-standing cultures and they consider it as a normal condition. There are different awareness creation provisions by Government and NGOs so as to change their attitude and there is good start however these practices are still exist within the community.

Participants of KII, FGD and in-depth interview identified some of the harmful and beneficial traditions existing in the Gumuz community. The beneficial traditions are closely related to the well-being of all the community groups (women/girls, children, elders, men, etc) and they are the best practices from Gumuz community, and it should be promoted and shared to others.

The respondents mentioned the following traditional practices as beneficial:

- The absence of female genital mutilation (FGM) practice within the Gumuz ethnic groups.
- Conflict resolution practices (setting quarrels like "dem adirak shemagilewoch") by using community elders
- Respecting elders
- Working together or in groups, a communal working culture "Debo"
- Brest feeding of their children
- Assisting each other when members face problems
- Assisting families at older age

- o Working together and assisting each other during important social events such as in wedding, funeral and cultural ceremonies.
- o Eating together and sharing what they have
- o Cultural plays

Whereas the major harmful traditional practices existing in the study area are also identified and listed as follows:

- ✓ Exchange marriage
- ✓ Abduction
- ✓ Huge dowry/Pride wealth (price)
- ✓ Wife inheritance
- ✓ Polygamy
- ✓ Menstruation taboo
- ✓ Birth giving outside the home
- ✓ Food taboo
- ✓ Rape
- ✓ Old aged marrying young girls (yalachagabecha)
- ✓ Early marriage
- ✓ Excessive feast
- ✓ Underestimating women
- ✓ Dowry
- ✓ Rape
- ✓ Killing each other
- ✓ Conflict
- ✓ Work load of women

The findings of this study revealed that the attitude of the community members towards these traditional practices differs based on their beliefs and understanding. Some of the community members including some women themselves support the existing tradition as it is their own long-standing culture and they fear deviating from their culture. As some of the major HTPs are deep rooted, it is not easy to convince highly conservative Gumuz community members especially elders, uneducated youngsters, women and men because they relate it with their cultural identity which is got from their ancestors. However, few of them argue about the

negative effect of these traditional practices raising its consequence on the social & economic well being of women/girls.

The research revealed that even if there are some supporters for the continuation of these traditional practices, most of the respondents understands the consequences of these practices and has negative attitudes towards it since it affected the life of women/girls in Gumuz community through discrimination from different social and economic relationships. However, the well understood community members (sometimes political leaders at woreda level) are practicing these due to low commitment and the community cultural influence. In addition, both men and women respondents were asked about some of selected traditional practices especially that affect status of women in their community. Accordingly, all of the men respondents replied openly that it is part of their culture and they have to obey accordingly and women themselves also accepted this attitude as part of their culture.

The choice of a partner is made exclusively by men, mainly by the bridegroom and bride's fathers without consulting the women. A Gumuz woman cannot marry outside the social groups. However, a man can marry a girl that is not originally from Gumuz but such practice happens in rare cases. Like most ethnic group in Ethiopia, Gumuz women have no say in the selection of their spouses and the timing of their marriages. It depends on the wishes of their fathers and brothers as they are considered to be ready to exchange at any time. In Gumuz culture mothers consent is included in the arrangement of the daughter's future but still the decision remains on the hands of father. The main role of the mothers is the preparation of the wedding ceremonies.

Finally, some of the Gumuz community members have better attitude toward negative effect of HTPs but they themselves are not free from practicing these traditions due to cultural pressure. There are also best beneficial practices in Gumuz community that needs to be transferred to other communities.

4.5. Participation of Women in Decision Making at both Family & Community level

Table two: Women's decision making at household level

S/N	Decisions on	Male	Female
1	Allocation of crop products for different purposes	√	-
2	Poultry products (small amount)	-	√
3	Use of forest products (fire wood, charcoal, etc)	√	√
4	Handcrafts	√	√
5	Income generated from petty trade	√	√
6	Income generated from wage	√	√
7	Herd size (no. of animals)	√	-
8	Selling of animals	√	-
9	No. of cattle contribution for different purposes	√	-
10	Type of food served for family	-	√
11	No. of meals per day	-	√
12	Composition of food for the family	-	√

The results of this research revealed that men and women are not perceived as equals; women are considered as weaker than men by nature. Thus men (father, brother, husband) are morally and socially responsible to support and guide women throughout their life to determine the activities they are supposed to engage in and how to manage the income they generate. The women, as reflected in in-depth interview and FGDs fully believe without any hesitation that women are not equal with men and thus should submit to the decisions made by men. Most respondents also associated the subordinate status of women to nature (physical strength) and God's gift.

These results indicated that the household heads (FHHs and MHHs) usually make the key decisions over the allocation of crop products for different purposes: consumption, gifts for relatives, sales or use for seed. Women in MHHs are allowed to decide to sale small quantities of grain, poultry products (if the number is small) to purchase basic households necessities and other small things. Both women and men make decisions over the use of forest products they have collected or gathered, the handcrafts they produced, and the income they generated from petty trade or wages they earn from labour exchange. However, there is still men's influence on the use of women's income in all households.

In addition, the men decide on the herd size and use of these Animals, including selling. For example, the husband decides on the number of cattle contribution for dowry and slaughtering for the memorial of dead kin or other social purposes while women decides on the priority food serving, meal numbers and the composition of food during food preparation for the family.

A delegate of Woreda Women, Youth and Children office said *"educating woman alone is not a remedy to improve their position, unless we include males because the influence is primarily from the husbands. There are also males who are 'Gender Equality Phobic' so to change their mind consistent information for both male and females will be help full"*.

A 30 years old woman described that "if I oppose my husband on buying or selling something, he will not hesitate to do it because he is the head of the house."

Moreover, the research revealed that labor division by sex is also a socially constructed pattern that reflects the type of social interaction in the society. It also reflects the major and specific roles and responsibilities among males and females in the community. As other Ethiopian communities, Gumuz communities also have their own way of labor division by sex. Based on their tradition, most of the workload is concentrated on women. The research result revealed that most of women spent much of their energy and time in domestic and field activities (farming, food preparation, caring babies, fetching water, collecting fire wood, grinding grain, etc) except few activities (hunting & house construction) which are lonely carried out by males. Most of the time agricultural activities are a dual burden for women when we take into consideration the workload from domestic work, harsh climate, poor life conditions and dietary habits. The result showed that men work load is lower than women and men are mainly involved in activities which are seasonal and they spend most of their time smoking, drinking, chatting and visiting friends.

Table three: Women's decision making at community level

S/N	Decisions on	Male	Female
1	Community meetings	√	-
2	Political leadership	√	-
3	Preparing festivals	√	√
4	Attendance of death and marriage ceremonies	√	√
5	Assistance during child delivery	-	√
6	Providing food and beverage for funeral and weddings	-	√
7	Preparation of food and local drink 'borde' for feast ceremonies and social occasions	-	√
8	Taking care of elders and sick people	-	√

The result in the above table revealed that both women and men are involved in community decisions in different ways. It is clearly showed that men's decisions are public world decisions where as women's decisions are mainly associated with private world decisions. Women are involved in deciding on the type of food to be provided for different social ceremonies (like death, marriage, events, etc). This implies that women are mainly involved in community activities which need voluntary decisions in which they are not paid. For example findings of this research indicate that men (especially elders) are the major group required to settle quarrel and passed decisions on the issue. Besides, they are paid by the community for the service they provide when they seat for arbitration and chairing of community affairs.

According to the above descriptions of decision making powers of women both at household and community level, we can see that gender segregation is one of the subordinating factors that aggravate the subordinate status of women. As a matter of fact, women have a high work load for domestic and subsistence labor in the service of their family and they have no time to develop their potential and time to look after other opportunities and self-development.

4.6. Women's Access, Control over and Ownership of Economic Resources
Table four: Access, control over and ownership of property

Property	Access		Control		Ownership	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Farm/arable land	√	√	√	-	-	-
Crop types to be sown	√	√	√	-	-	-
Crop product	√	√	√	√	√	√
Animals	√	√	√	-	-	-
Animal products	√	√	√	√	√	√
Small animals (poultry)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Farming implements	√	√	√	-	-	-
Perennial tree/wood	√	√	√	-	√	-
Household utensils	√	√	√	√	√	√
Money in cash	√	√	√	-	√	-

The findings on the above table can show that both women and men have equal footing to access and use household asset and properties in the family as far as women are married, have children and live peacefully with their husbands. But when we come to control and ownership of property they have limited rights because men have a special right to control and ownership of all the properties within the family. However almost all Gumuz women can have access to agricultural products to meet the household needs, they lack access to incomes earned from the sales of cash crops such sesame, cattle, sheep, goat and honey. They have no right to question the whereabouts of the money generated from sales any kind of household product. During the food shortage seasons, the women need to apply to the men so as to fulfill the food gaps otherwise they fully spend their time searching for wild foods to meet their family needs. This increases the work load of women and girls in the house besides the usual reproductive duties.

On the other hand controlling and decision making over major household properties such as oxen, cow, sheep and equines including type of crop to sow on the plot of land is the domain of men in the household. Women have power for decision and control on minor household properties such as utensils, chickens and chicken products as well as livestock products. In this regard, women in Gumuz communities in particular are devoid of any asset of meaningful value. This in turn makes them highly vulnerable to shocks. As Gumuz women by tradition assume the

responsibility of providing for most needs of the household, this puts enormous burden on them obliging them to work for 16 to 18 hours a day in most cases. The stark reality that Gumuz women are deprived of ownership and use right to most household assets such as livestock makes their situation more precarious. Women are spending long working hours a day against the low working culture of men. Work load and their exposure to a variety of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) significantly affect their health and live.

Findings revealed that women in Gumuz community do not have the right to inherit properties in any case, whether from her family, or from the death of her husband or incase of divorce. In Gumuz culture all properties brought during the time of marriage remains the exclusive property of men. This is due to the society belief that daughters belong to someone else. For instance during the death of a husband, a widow is supposed to be taken care of either by the husband's brother or a near kinship of male line. The new husband has control over all inheritable property: this new husband has every right to inherit not only the household property but also the woman herself and she is also expected to give birth with this new husband. In case a widow refused to be inherited, she can stay with her children particularly if she has a son, because it is assumed that in the future the property belongs to the son. But if all of the children are females a widow is forced to be inherited, if not she will loss any access to her husbands' property including her daughters.

"....a Gumuz women does not own a property of any kind: goats, sheep even a chicken. In fact she does not need to have a property as she can use whatever belongs to the father or the husband as far as there is a peaceful environment."

Description on Access to Major Resources and Benefits

Further findings from focus group discussion showed that access to resource/assets refers to "the right or means to obtain services, products or commodities." Gender equality to access resources is essential for women's development and considered as the first step for empowerment and self-development. The detail description on the findings of this study regarding Gumuz women's access to resources and benefits are shown as follows:

o **Natural Resources**

According to the focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) results, respondents believe that men and women from all Gumuz ethnic groups have access to natural

resource (land, forest products, water, etc) and the farmland belongs to all members of household. The regional land use proclamation also requires the registration of the name of the wife and husband in the title book. Men's and women's access to other natural resources depends on the roles and responsibilities that are traditionally ascribed to men and women. For instance, in the study area Gumuz women and girls are gathering wild fruit, incense, medical plants, water and fire wood for both households consumption and for sale, while male and boys are engaged in hunting and collecting wild honey.

- ○ **Crop Production and Management**

Both men and women in Gumuz communities are taking part in land preparation, hoeing, sowing, weeding, harvesting and grain storing, while transporting the harvested crop to the threshing field and then to the store is the sole responsibility of Gumuz women.

- ○ **Livestock Production and Management**

Men and women in the study area are involved in livestock production and management, and have almost equal access to the benefits thereof. According to the study results poultry production is widely practiced in the study area. Men's involvement is directly related to the size of the production. Men are typically not taking part in small-scale poultry production which gives better access to the proceeds of the sale for women. When production is bigger, men usually have greater access to the sale and subsequent use of the money.

- ○ **Off-farm Activities**

Most indigenous Gumuz people participate in off-farm activities including hand crafts, petty trading of industrial goods, trading of grains, livestock, livestock products, fruits, etc., selling cooked food, fire woods, local drinks such as borde, honey, etc. and other such activities. Gumuz women don't directly access to the money from the sale of commodities with better price.

4.7. Community's Attitude towards Girl's Education

The findings from FGD and KII revealed that the indigenous Gumuz people expect girls to help her mother in domestic chores starting at an early age until the day of their marriage. They are also used in wife exchanges and as replacement/payment in case of human loss during conflicts. Gumuz girls start to help their mothers at the age of 5 in all domestic chores: fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking food, cleaning and washing clothes. On the other hand Gumuz boys are expected to be courageous and active. Respondents revealed that Gumuz boys also help their fathers in hunting and farming in order to prepare them for future adult life. Boys are also encouraged to go to school and play outside the home.

From the above description we can see that the culturally rooted expectation of society towards girls of seeing them mainly as wives and mothers while men as breadwinners and head of the house has negative implication on the future life of women. This is because socialization is fundamental and the social learning which occurs in childhood lays the foundation for future development. Both men and women respondents were asked about their attitudes towards female education. Most of them have less concern about their daughter's education. They feel that sending a girl to school is meaningless. The reason they mentioned was that the girl themselves are not devoted for their study, they repeat one class many times and that is discouraging. The second reason they mentioned was that when girls stay in the school usually they start love affairs without the knowledge of their parents and this arise conflict between the two families. They also mentioned that educating women may lead to denial of their primary role in the household.

According to key informant interview conducted in Dibate Woreda education office with Ato Womber Debelo: he said "... it is reported that girls' participation (especially Gumuz girls') in education is very low as compared to their boy counter parts. However even the numbers of Gumuz boys are still minimal as compared to other ethnic groups (Oromo, Amhara and Shinasha) in the woreda..." The education officer described the issue of less school attendance of Gumuz girls relating with the community belief that she will be out of their control if she join education and left home & stay at school. There is also a fear that menstruation is a cause for girls' school dropout as they don't know how to manage menstruation without leaving the school and their negative view about menstruation. The findings revealed that the main reasons for lower Gumuz girls' enrollment is very low awareness among Gumuz community on girls

education, male preference in case of resource limitation (big family size and poor household), school distance (5-8 grades), marriage related issues (exchange and early marriage, abduction), domestic chores starting at school age. Beside these, absence of educated Gumuz women/girls to follow as a model is another problem that needs to be addressed in the future. Finally, it is not surprising to hear such attitudes from their uneducated parents. As we can see from the above description, Gumuz parents have little awareness about the importance of female education, most respondents do not see the benefits of female education and they feel that maternity and domestic tasks are the best things that female deserve. They depicted females as passive and not competent equally with boys without considering the burden of female at home and the time they spent for domestic chores.

4.8. Major Actors in the Study Area and their Role in Reducing the Problem

In response to these imbalances and the many problems women encounter, the Government of Ethiopia has made a number of efforts to address gender equality issues. These include adopting or ratifying relevant international instruments pertaining to gender; designing national instruments, including the Ethiopian Constitution and various other policies; and establishing the national machinery for addressing gender issues. The constitution has provisions that protect victims of harmful traditional practices, for all its citizens and particularly for Women. Article 35(4) stipulates that the State shall enforce the rights of women and that laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited. Rape, abduction, female genital mutilation and early marriage are some of the main gender based violence perpetrated against women in our society. In addition, the policy creates a conducive environment for different stakeholder to participate and work towards promoting gender equality. Accordingly, the Woreda government has the responsibility to enforce these policies and practices so as to promote gender equality and empower women in the study Woreda including Gumuz communities.

The following discussions made with major partners (Government offices, Agriservice Ethiopia and CEPAR Ethiopia) operating in the study area showed their efforts towards alleviating harmful traditional practices and promoting gender equality & women empowerment in Gumuz communities. In this discussion part, the role and contribution of each partners operating in Gumuz community is described in detail.

4.8.1 Government Efforts

In Ethiopian constitution (Article 35), the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken in to account even at the begging of the EPRDF regime. This constitution gave women an affirmative measures to remedy their lower status due various difficulties in the past. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention for women in order to enable them compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life.

According to KII participants' response, there are also encouraging policies and strategies to address gender related issues through proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the progress toward its goal. Women's demand to participate actively in national development and to exercise their right to enjoy its fruits is now receiving support in government and local communities. Accordingly, as compared to the past situation nowadays there is also good start observed within the Gumuz community however there is still a great gap on the community and lack of practical application of laws due to low commitment of woreda political leaders & lower awareness level of Gumuz communities.

Role of Woreda Women, Youth and Children Office

According to KII with Woreda Women, Youth & Children office delegate (Wr/t Dessie Wanaya) and other two experts (Ato Zelelegn Mekonnen and Wr/t Gete Techane) explained as there are different traditional practices that affect status of women in the Woreda with the worst situation in Gumuz communities. They mentioned so many traditional practices which are usual burdens for women/girls prohibited them from different opportunities. The KII revealed that the office has been working to alleviate these problems by using different strategies and programs as a responsible office. Some of their interventions are described as follows:

- **Community Mass Mobilization**

They said "...gender issues do not only concern women as women's problems cannot be solved by women alone but by the coordinated efforts of the whole segments of the society as well as government, civil societies and other stakeholder." Community mobilization sessions have been conducted by using different events so as to raise the awareness level among community

specially Gumuz community on the negative effects of HTPs. This has been done in collaboration with community & other stakeholders. Besides, officials & experts from various sectors have been conducting a regular monitoring integrating gender with other agendas. The office prepares awareness creations trainings on some HTPs like food utilization, in collaboration with other NGOs, and encouraging the women to eat eggs so that she could be a model for others in her community. The office has been working on awareness creation on managing menstruation and safe delivery practices by going to nearby health centers in the time of delivery. These women who deliver at health center have been taken as model mothers and are used to scale up the best practice throughout their community.

- **Forming Women Associations**

Based on the information obtained from Woreda Women, Youth and Children office, another intervention area of the office is creating a favorable condition for women to form their own associations at their locality. The formation of new and a vibrant women association is to strengthen their economic and social relationship so that it became favorable to link each other on issues common to all of them. In addition, they can benefit from different supports like grain mill when they form association & request for support from different sources. This type of support is mainly given for Gumuz community where the workload of women is very severe. For instance, the two grain mills were supported to Sirben kebele (1 for debeshua got & 1 for dadush got) Gumuz women associations. This grain mill helped the Gumuz women a lot because they are forced to grind by using a local grinding machine (stone) which require much energy and time to grind small amount of grain. The office is also involved in the preparation of bylaws for the association to be ruled according the regulations provided in their bylaws. This all would be expected to contribute for the promotion of gender equality, women empowerment and reducing prevalence of HTPs.

- **Strengthening Existing Women Associations**

This is another activity which has been conducted by the office so as to strengthen the association through constant monitoring and providing additional capacity building activity including necessary advice for them. As a result, the association and individuals would request for any necessary supports from the office regarding their right. In addition, the office has been strengthening the existing women association effort in different ways like providing capacity

building trainings and supporting them with necessary materials. Moreover, the office has been working in collaboration with other legal bodies on behalf of victim women when they faced abuses due to gender imbalance in the households. However, most of the time, this type of cases have been resolved in their home residents with the involvement of community elders.

Finally, in order to fight against HTPs and other related consequences all the segments of the community should participate in the fight process with an active leadership role of committed political leaders.

Role of Woreda Education and Capacity Building Office

According to the KII made with education officer Ato Wonder Debela; "... there are many traditional practices that prohibit girls' from coming to schools." As a responsible office, their office has been using different strategies to promote child enrolment especially Gumuz girls' in the school in the study area. The officer also mentioned some of the office strategies towards child school enrolment are described as follows:

- o Community mobilization: home to home visit at the time of school opening season and by using different community cultural festivals. The objective this is to aware parents to send all school aged children to school with special attention for girls.
- o Provision of school materials for girls' in collaboration with NGOs in the areas where there is a serious case. This is in order to encourage the families as well as the girls to attend school.
- o Showing government workers living in their vicinity (HEWs, DAs, Teachers, etc) as a model
- o Special tutorial provision for Gumuz girls' because they have a serious Amharic language problem and they are highly backward due to their background.
- o Rewarding Gumuz girls' just for completion of the year in school without dropping.
- o Constructing new additional primary schools in their vicinity.

So, these are some of the strategies used to encourage girls' education in Gumuz community. According to the officer's response, there is less commitment by political leaders this in turn may be due to capacity problem to convince the community or problem as a result of negligence.

4.8.2 Agriservice Ethiopia Program Efforts

Agriservice Ethiopia is one of the humanitarian partner organizations operating in the study area (Gumuz community). Gumuz communities are the main beneficiaries of Agriservice Ethiopia, Debate program office where Gumuz population is dominant. These target areas got special attention and selected in collaboration with Woreda government because it is obvious that Gumuz people are the most disadvantaged group of the community and got blameless priority. As a humanitarian organization, ASE has a gender mainstreaming strategy to be enforced at all levels of program interventions.

As Wr/o Semira Umer, ASE CLCD (community learning and capacity development) officer described that Debate program office has been working in gender mainstreaming in all program activities in order to alleviate the negative effect of harmful traditional practices and promote gender equality & women empowerment. The major interventions which has been undertaking by the organization are:

- o Undertaking gender analysis at the inception of the program at all level of program intervention to better understand the root causes of the gender imbalance.
- o Give a special attention to female headed households in all development interventions during target selection for program activities (like capacity building & input provision)
- o Establish and facilitate CoLF (community learning forum) at each kebele level in order to raise awareness on different HTP topics.
- o Creation of access to social services
- o Enhance the capacity of the community (elders, religious leaders, men, women, etc) and concerned local government bodies to bring about attitudinal change.
- o Enhancing the capacity of grassroots women associations, Woreda women's affairs office to promote and implement gender initiatives

The officer also described some of the project interventions areas as follows:

Establish & strengthen CoLF: ASE has its own strategy to create a favorable environment for free community conversation and experience sharing from each other. The issues for these community conversations could be selected by the community themselves. The issues are

mainly on harmful traditional practices that affect the status of the women and the community as a whole. Community learning forum (CoLF) is one of the core program strategy used to deal with the community on the prevailing situation regarding gender and development to bring social outlook towards gender equality. All the CoLF members meet weekly (probably every Sunday) for discussion. The issues for these community conversations could be selected by the community themselves and its topics for discussion are mainly on harmful traditional practices that affect the status of the women and the community as a whole. In addition, ASE Different awareness creation trainings have been provided on various topics to targeted Gumuz communities and at least 50% of the participants should be women in each training sessions. The Agriservise Ethiopia Debate program office CLCD officer explained as *"Gumuz women started eating egg due to discussions on CoLF programs and due to frequent food preparation training programs conducted by the program office, and some attitudinal change towards other serious HTPs is observed though still there a lot to do to ensure gender equality & empower women."*

Regarding gender equality and women empowerment process the officer added that women in Gumuz communities participate equally with men in CoLF meeting programs which is a new trend for Gumuz communities. In some kebeles, women have been participating in CBIs (community based institution) leadership positions. So, this is a great beginning to shift the attitude of Gumuz community through continuous awareness creation.

Local radio programs: Another intervention area of ASE is that they facilitate and buy airtime from Amahara regional states broadcast office for transmitting awareness creation programs on selected topics mainly related to HTPs and gender equality. The program will be transmitted by using Amharic & Gumuzegna languages by using different attractive cases taken (recorded) from Gumuz communities. The program office also facilitates the media to record and prepare a radio program on harmful traditional practices mainly on Gumuz community which is aired on a specific time schedule for different CoLF meeting sessions. The organization provided one radio for each CoLF group and they would listen different cases and other entertainments in a specific time of transmition mainly every Sunday. In addition, the program office is finalizing the construction and equipment purchase for the establishment of new community radio station at the Debate Woreda center getting license from Federal

broadcasting authority. The objective of establishing this station is so as to raise awareness level of the community on every concerned topic.

Access to social services: Based on the results of the study, some of the most common social services among institutions that ASE provides health, water and school are basic and very important in rural community. Most of the Gumuz target communities where this study conducted have no access to potable water supplies and majority of the community gets water for drinking and other domestic use from Open River and unprotected spring. In addition, most water supply or sources are found far from the village and women spent significant part of their productive time to fetch water. Shortage of potable water is one of the major problems in the study area that put women and girls under pressure because they are the only members of household who are responsible to fetch water for household use.

The research result revealed that ASE is involved in construction of different social services in targeted Gumuz communities: new classrooms in two (Sasmandon & Sirben) kebeles and maintenance of existing school in one (Goncha) kebele. This helped to raise the enrolment rate of the Gumuz children especially girls due to these constructed schools at their vicinity. In addition all the three kebeles (Sasmanden, Sirben & Goncha) are benefited from the construction of seed stores so as to collect seeds from all CBI (community based institutions) members in the time of harvesting and redistribute for its members during sowing season by using the established seed distribution modality. Moreover, Goncha kebele is benefited from health post construction where there is no any type of health institutions in the kebele before this intervention by ASE debate program office. Furthermore, Sasmanden kebele is benefited from potable water (hand dug well) where higher number of Gumuz communities live which mainly minimizes the burden of women.

Micro-irrigation scheme: construction of a diversion canal and overnight water harvesting tanker in Sirben kebele benefits 32 targeted Gumuz and other community members to produce different vegetables (tomato, carrot, onion, hot pepper, lettuce, etc) in all the seasons. An intentional attention is given for women during beneficiary identification process and most of households are women (M=13, F=19). These helped women to be engaged and practiced it as an additional income source for their households. It also improves the vegetable consumption

habit of the households as well as the community as whole. Beside the construction of diversion canal and water harvesting structure, the households are provided with different vegetables seeds so as to promote horticulture production through irrigation in Gumuz community. Moreover the Gumuz women were trained on how to produce and consume vegetable foods in order to diversify their food consumption habit. This in turn contributes for women empowerments through giving special attention for women i.e in activity at least 50% of the participants were female.

4.8.3 CPAR Ethiopia Program Efforts

CPAR Ethiopia is one of partner organization operating in Debate Woreda of Benishangul Gumuz regional state. The project is supporting with different interventions for the community with special focus for Gumuz communities where there is severe cases of traditional practices and lack of awareness on different issues. Kidohi & Sasmanden kebeles are some of the CPAR intervention areas in Gumuz communities which are included in sample for this research study. According to KII with Dibate CPAR coordinator Ato Abebe Nigussie, their main gender equality promoting interventions are described as follows:

Establish community conversation groups: This is one of the main gender promotion activities in CPAR where ten community conversations groups, each group containing 40-50 members, are formed in selected communities especially in Gumuz communities. The conversations are made in weekly basis in the areas of major HTP & Gender issues like exchange, early & pride wealth marriages; and food taboos, menstruation taboos, saving, work ethics, etc. According to FGD & KII result, 14 households (10 Gumuz) have brought practical changes in reducing extravagancy by developing saving culture and improving work ethics due to community conversation. As a result they constructed new houses using corrugated iron sheet (CIS) which is a new culture for Gumuz community to build house by using CIS, and they were rewarded with a solar light in recognition of their practical change so as to encourage their effort.

Capacity building through trainings: According to the findings from KII, CPAR has been working on awareness creation of the community so as to empower women through providing intensive trainings and continuous monitoring of the changes brought due to these trainings.

Through these activities communities enhance their all-around knowledge selected training topics like life skill and leadership; saving culture, work ethics and consequences of harmful traditional practices. In addition CPAR has established school clubs in order to address gender issues and negative impact of HTPs. This in turn contributed for promotion of girls' education.

Direct supports: Findings revealed that women associations are formed and they were supported with grain grinding mills so as to reduce the work load of women especially Gumuz women in some of the Gumuz communities including Sasmanden and Kidoh kebeles. In addition in Gumuz community small animals like poultries are managed mostly by women. Accordingly, they were supported with poultries after intensive trainings on poultry management so as to diversify the income sources. They are supported with goats in their names different times in order to create household assets. Moreover, they are also provided with plough ox so as to reduce the additional burden of women on agriculture field because it is rare case to see Gumuz farmers using plough ox for tillage rather they use manpower and zero tillage for cultivation. This culture is highly affecting women in their community putting additional burden on them. So, this all supports played a great role in creating feeling of ownership and exercising decisions on these household assets besides minimizing workload of the women.

Regarding gender issues there are progresses and results observed in most of the disadvantaged section of the community (women) as a result of CPAR interventions. Women have got priority in each intervention and at least 50% of every beneficiary is women. In addition to that the project has provided so many awareness creation sessions for the community in order to raise awareness regarding Gender equality and women empowerment especially in Gumuz communities where there is very low awareness level as compared to other community parts. The community is demonstrating greater confidence in women as leaders and decision makers. Women continue to excel in managing production and collective marketing endeavors. "CPAR goes where the need is. We work with community members to provide access to life's most basic needs despite challenges that might be posed by the environment or infrastructure."

5. CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study reflected that there are both harmful and beneficial traditional practices in Gumuz community. Some of the beneficial traditional practices: such as absence of FGM, conflict resolution, working together or in group, assisting families at older age, assisting each other in the time of problem and others. On the other hand, there are harmful traditional practices (HTPs) that affect the status of women in Gumuz community. The most humiliating and degrading HTPs in the study community are: exchange marriage, polygamy, wife inheritance, abduction, huge dowry (pride wealth/price) and different forms of taboos.

Respondents have different views towards existence of these practices i.e some of them including women respondents some of the major HTPs are deep rooted where the community are not convinced easily to stop the practice. It is their long-established culture and some of them want to be accepted by all their community members. Most of the aged member of the community are highly conservative towards their culture and have a positive attitude towards existence of these long-established cultures. However, the others argue about the negative effect of these traditional practices raising its consequence on the social & economic well being of women.

Exchange marriage is a type of marriage and the first top priority HTP within the Gumuz community where girls have no right to choose and say anything about their marriage arrangement. In addition, polygamy is also one of the HTPs prevalent in the study community which can be arranged by parents without the agreement of women.

Moreover, marriage through inheritance of widow is also another marriage type where a widow is not allowed to marry another husband out of her husbands' kinship. This plays a great role in subordination of women.

Furthermore, huge dowry /pride wealth price marriage/ is a type of HTP which took place when a man cannot have sisters or female relatives. In this case he is expected to pay to the girls' family cattle, cash money and guns so as to be married. This excess dowry contributes for the married girl to be put under slavery.

Surprisingly, Gumuz women are compelled to leave home during delivery and also separated from the family at times of menstruation. They are also restricted from taking nutritious food because of the belief that the size of the kid will be enlarged in the womb.

The study result also revealed that Gumuz women and men are not perceived as equals; women are considered as weaker than men by nature. The women themselves in some FGDs fully believed without any hesitation that women are not equal with men and thus submit to the decisions made by men. They have relatively high decision-making power in the household on traditionally assigned roles to them like child care, food preparation, household management and related activities.

The study revealed that Gumuz customs and traditions affect women's access to and control over property and resources in the study area. Gumuz women do not have the right to inherit properties from their family or from their husband's however their access to resource and properties is mainly through their husbands' and sons'. This denial of women's right to own property and resources is another subordinating factor that makes women totally dependent on marriage and other relationships with men in order to get access and means to live. Women right to control and administer limited to stored grains.

This study shows that Gumuz people expect girls to help in domestic chores and they are used in wife exchanges. In addition they are also used for replacement/payment in case of human loss during conflict. Gumuz girls start helping their mothers at the age of 5 in domestic chores like collecting firewood, fetching water, cleaning and washing clothes.

The major Government sector offices where their activities are directly or indirectly related with Gender issues are Women, youth & children affair office, Culture & tourism office, and Education office. They are involved in different activities towards ensuring gender equality in the study area. This is because their work is either directly or indirectly related to ensuring women empowerment and gender equality through alleviating harmful traditional practices that affect status of women. Woreda Government has a various responsibility which starts from policy implementation and other detail tasks so as to mitigate the effect of HTPs on the status of women.

The other partner organizations (CEPAR Ethiopia & Agriservice Ethiopia) are the main NGOs operating in the woreda where Gumuz communities are the main beneficiaries of the projects with various interventions. These organizations have their own strategies to address the gender related issues in the study area. Based on the findings of the study, Gumuz communities especially Gumuz women are benefited from these NGO interventions and many successes are

recorded as a result of their activities. However, these days there is a good start of change in situations because Community leaders and civil society organizations have also been assisted to engage communities in raising and discussing the issue. This has led to a good progress reported reductions in exchange marriage and increases in community awareness towards exchange marriage.

Finally, it is only when women are released from these HTPs and back-breaking domestic works that they will be able to participate in the national development effort on equal terms with men and go on to experience the benefits of their participation.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the major findings and conclusions the following recommendations are suggested.

❖ **GOs and NGOs role**: Those governmental and non-governmental organizations that have been working in Benishangul Gumuz regional state, particularly on women development and related issues needed to change the cultural stereotypes attached to women as secondary and subordinated. This can be possible through continuous awareness creation program.

❖ **Commitment of local Government**: It is observed that the level of practical commitment from local government is weak. So, it needs a better commitment from the Government side especially from Debate Woreda government in order to reverse these situations observed in the study area.

❖ **Awareness creation for stakeholders**: In order to make the society and parents aware of the value of girls' education, it is good to conduct continuous workshops and seminars with parents, religious leaders in the woreda at Kebele level. It is also important to broadcast through mass media the problem of female students and their solutions adequately. So that girls can aspire for and work toward continuing their education and benefit from their education.

❖ **Mainstreaming gender in all sector programs**: Gender mainstreaming strategy should be properly applied in all sector activities in order to address women specific needs, to initiate their equal participation in the process and to ensure women's equal benefit from the system.

❖ **Carrying out advocacy and awareness creation programmes**: Promoting women's equal access to and control over economic resources requires addressing

socio-economic issues particularly customs and traditions that affect realization of women's equal rights to property. Therefore, the woreda Government should give attention to address these issues through advocacy and awareness creation programmes to change community attitudes and practices.

❖ **Establishing strong women's organizations: Women's organizing has an aspect of empowerment and women's asso**ciations could serve as forum to women focused interventions. Thus rural women should be initiated to organize and struggle for their equal property holding and administering rights.

❖ **Networking and experience sharing**: Networking and experience sharing can facilitate change in people's way of thinking and can bring about change in attitudes and practices in the traditional practices. There is a big difference observed between Gumuz and other community groups towards understanding of HTPs even in the same regions. Experience sharing with nearby regions like Amhara and Oromia will help to understand the differences and to reconsider implementation procedures.

❖ **Initiating women's involvement in community activities and decision-making**: Women should be involved in the gender development programme implementation process and should be empowered to assume leadership positions. Therefore the gender development system should design strategies to initiate active involvement of women in the women empowerment process including at decision-making levels.

❖ **Further research**: Researches on region specific gender issue will help to point out problems related to women's right. Therefore, in depth research on traditional practices contributing for subordinate position of women should be carried out to come up with sound implications on the regional gender issue policy and its implementation.

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Annex I
Questionnaires
HHs in-depth interview

Name of interviewee: _____ KA: _____Village_____

1. Sex? _____
   a) Male
   b) Female
2. Age? _____
3. Households head?
   a) Male-headed
   b) Female-headed
4. Religion
   a) Orthodox
   b) Muslim
   c) Protestant
   d) Catholic
   e) Traditional
   f) No religion
   g) Other_____
5. Marital status?
   a) Single
   b) Married-monogamous
   c) Married-polygamous (how many wives/husband_____?)
   d) Widowed
   e) Other_____
6. Education status of household head
   a) Illiterate (no reading & writing)
   b) Primary
   c) Secondary
   d) College
   e) University
   f) Other
7. Type of marriage
   a) Exchange
   b) Inheritance
   c) Abduction
   d) Arranged
   e) Elopement
   f) Others
8. Age at first marriage
   a) 10-15
   b) 16-20
   c) 21-25
   d) 26-30

e) Mention if other
9. How many children do you have? _____
10. Who is the bread winner of your family?
  a) Husband
  b) Wife
  c) Both
  d) Children
  e) Others
11. Source of income for the household
  a) Agriculture
  b) Trading
  c) Formally employed
  d) Handcraft
  d) Daily labor
  e) Mention if other
12. Average monthly income for household: _____

Information regarding major Traditional Practices

1. What are the major traditional practices (harmful & beneficial) existing in your community?

2. Are all listed traditional practices under question No. 1 harmful? A) Yes, B) No

If No, why?

3. List major traditional practices which are beneficial to your community.

4. Please list major HTPs exist in your community according to severity to human well-being especially for lower status of women.

5. Why do HTPs continue and what are the triggering causes for those harmful traditional practices?

6. What was your delivery experience?

7. How do you manage menstruation? And What about your families attitude towards?

Information about community's attitude towards different traditional practices

1. What is your community's outlook towards these traditional practices?

1.1 Towards harmful traditional practices.

1.2 Towards beneficial traditional practices.

2. Who promotes/supports continuance of these traditional practices? (Elders, Youngsters, Women, Men, etc)

Information about participation of women in decision making at both family & community level

1. In what kind of household decisions are you participated?

2. In what kind of community activities are you participated?

3. In what kind of community decisions are you participated?

4. Do you feel as if you are equally deciding in household and community tasks?

- If not, why?

Information about women's access, control over and ownership of economic resources

1. What type of household properties do you access?

2. For what type of household properties do you have a control over power?

3. For what type of properties/resources do you have all access, control over and ownership right?

Information about community attitude toward girls' education

1. What about your outlook towards girls' education?

2. Who (girls/boys) got priority to attend school when shortage of resource to send all the children to school in the households? Why?

3. What are the role of girls & boys expected from the view point of community?

4. Is there any difference in treating girls & boys regarding feeding at household level?

   If yes, how and why?

5. What can be done to ensure equal treatment of daughters' and sons' at household level as well as community level?

Information about development actors
1. Are there any other development actors (GOs & NGOs) working towards promoting gender equality in your community?

If yes, who are they and what do you think is their contribution?

Questionnaires' for FGD

1. What are the traditional practices that affect status of women/girls in your community?

2. Is there any traditional practices beneficial to community? If yes, what are they?

3. What about your community's attitude towards these traditional practices?

4. How is the child delivery practice in your community?

5. What are the marriage types in your community?

6. Why girls/women isolated during menstruation and delivery?

7. Does women allowed eating meat of animals, chicken & egg? If not why?

8. Do women equally participate in different productive and community works that require decisions?

9. Can women have equal opportunity to access, control and owe parents' property?

10. Who (men/women) do you think work a longer hour a day in your community?

11. What is your opinion about girls' education?

12. Who (GOs, GNOs, etc) do you think is working towards promotion of gender equality & women empowerment and reducing the effect of HTPs in your community?

KII Guide for GO and NGOs

Name of your organization (GO/NGOs) in the study Woreda _____

Started development tasks in the Woreda period (optional) _____

1. What do think are the major traditional practices that affect status of women in your Woreda/operational area particularly in Gumuz communities?

2. Mention major consequences of harmful traditional practices on women/girls.

3. To what extent do you feel that your office makes contribution in reducing problems related to HTPs, gender inequality and women empowerment process?

A) To a great extent

B) To some extent

C) Hardly makes any difference

Why do you feel so? (Elaborate your response to the above question)

4. What are your areas of intervention? And explain how you meet the needs of women?

5. To what extent do the politicians exercise their influence in ensuring gender equality & women empowerment?

A) To a great extent

B) To some extent

C) Hardly any

Why do you feel so? (Elaborate your response to the above question)

6. List major strategies and measures to eradicate harmful traditional practices (HTPs) in your community/Woreda/.

7. Which group should be involved in the fight against HTPs?

    A. Religious leaders

    B. Political organizations

    C. Development practitioners

    D. Health professionals

    E. All of the above

    F. If others mention

KII guide for KA leaders and DF/DAs

1. Name of interviewee: _____, Kebele_____, organization_____

2. What do think are the major traditional practices that affect status of women in your kebele?

3. Mention major consequences of harmful traditional practices on women/girls.

4. Who do you think is mainly responsible for promotion of traditional practices in your kebele?

5. Do women in your community equally participate in different activities as men? If No, Why?

6. Do women in your community equally access, control, owe and decide over household properties as men? If No, why?

7. What is your community's' attitude towards girls' education?

8. Does girls' equally treated as boys' in your community? If No, why?

9. What do you feel about efforts of different organizations (GOs, NGOs, etc) towards reducing HTPs and promoting gender equality?

10. What are their areas of intervention and what about the changes observed in your community due to their interventions?

11. What should be done to end HTPs that affect status of women?

Figure 1: Discussion with Men groups

Figure 2: Discussion with Women groups

Figure 3: Both Women and Men Groups in their community

Figure 4: Women group

Figure 5: Cultural fire wood carrying style

PROFORMA FOR SUBMISSION OF M.A. (RD) PROPOSAL FOR APPROVAL

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Title of the Project   : Traditional Practices That Affect Women in Gumuz Community and

                                         Efforts Made in Mitigating Them in Dibate Woreda, Benishangul

                                         Gumuz National Regional State

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Date   : 17/11/2014

INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU), ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Proposal for Master's thesis on:

Traditional Practices that Affect Women in Gumuz Community and Efforts Made in Mitigating Them in Dibate Woreda, Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State.

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Table of contents

Contents **Page**

List of Synonymous

HTP   Harmful traditional practices

FGM   Female genital mutilation

IAC   Inter African Committee

HIV   Human Immune Virus

AIDS   Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

DFID   Department for International Development

CSA   Central Statistical Agency

FAL   Functional Adult Literacy

UN   United Nation

CRDA   Christian Relief and Development Agency

NCTPE   National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia

SCN-E   Save the Children Norway-Ethiopia

1. Project Title:

Traditional Practices that Affect Women in Gumuz Community and Efforts Made in Mitigating Them in Dibate Woreda, Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State.

2. Introduction

Traditional cultural practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations. Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group, such as women. These Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); forced feeding of women; early marriage; the various taboos or practices which prevent women from controlling their own fertility; nutritional taboos and traditional birth practices; son preference and its implications for the status of the girl child; female infanticide; early pregnancy; and dowry price. Despite their harmful nature and their violation of international human rights laws, such practices persist because they are not questioned and take on an aura of morality in the eyes of those practicing them. The international community has become aware of the need to achieve equality between the sexes and of the fact that an equitable society cannot be attained if fundamental human rights of half of human society, i.e. women, continue to be denied and violated. However, the bleak reality is that the harmful traditional practices focused on in this Fact Sheet have been performed for male benefit. Female sexual control by men, and the economic and political subordination of women, perpetuate the inferior status of women and inhibit structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate gender inequality (Halima, et al., 1988).

Several reasons are given for the persistence of traditional practices detrimental to the health and status of women, including the fact that, in the past, neither the Governments concerned nor the international community challenged the sinister implications of such practices, which violate the rights to health, life, dignity and personal integrity. The international community remained wary about treating these issues as a deserving subject for international and national scrutiny and action. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation were considered sensitive cultural issues falling within the spheres of women and the family. For a long time, Governments and the international community had not expressed sympathy and understanding for women who, due to ignorance or unawareness of their rights, endured pain, suffering and even death inflicted on themselves and their female children. Despite the apparent slowness of action to challenge and eliminate harmful traditional practices, the activities of human rights bodies in this field have, in recent years, resulted in noticeable progress. Traditional practices have become a recognized issue concerning the status and human rights of women and female children. The slogan "Women's Rights are Human Rights", adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in the same year, captured the reality of the status accorded to women. These issues have been further emphasized in the reports of the Special Rapporteur on harmful traditional practices (Halima, et al., 1988).

Ethiopia is a country of famous and long-standing history. It is also a country with many useful and promotional traditions such as postnatal care, social gathering such as "Edir" "Ekub" etc., caring for the aged, the disabled and others within the family circle. On the other hand Ethiopia is a country where harmful traditional practices continue to devastate, especially the health and social condition of mothers and children. It is evident that established systems and traditional values change with emerging challenges and the introduction of new ideas. Following intensive campaigns by non-governmental organizations the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination recommended the setting up of a Working Group to study the problem of harmful traditional practices (Dawit, et al., 2005).

Culture determines the power relations with in society in which men and male values have superior status over women and female values. In most societies, there are cultural institutions beliefs and practices, that undermine women's autonomy and contribute to gender based discrimination. Every culture has its ways of valuing girls and boys, and assigns different patterns of behaviors, attitudes, roles, rights, responsibilities and expectations in the socialization process (Lindsey, 2005).

Culture accounts for women's heavy involvement in domestic labor, and for their limited role in public life. Worldwide, women work more hours than men and most of their work remain unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued. They spend much more of their time in informal and unpaid household production work, which is substantial and important for the sustaining of families and communities. Women are involved in all agricultural activities and they are mainly responsible for the family, collect water, shop for food, prepare meals, wash clothes and look after children and aging parents (Arkutu, 1995).

Despite these, Women are the majority of the World's poor; the economic and social gap between men and women remains unequal. Among, 1.3 billion living in poverty in the World 70% are women (UNHCHR, 1997). Worldwide, women do not equally own, inhibit or control property, land and wealth. They have limited ownership of income, property and credit. The existing poverty gap has been directly linked to the existence of different stereotypes, traditions and cultural practices exercised in the World. Low percentages of women are found in the formal sector and they are highly concentrated in low paid production jobs. Women remain under represented in the highest paid, highest prestige sectors of the career ladders. Worldwide women hold only 10% to 20% of managerial and administrative jobs, less than 20% of jobs in manufacturing, only 10% of parliamentary seats and less than 5% of the world's heads of states (UNHCHR, 1997).

Although women represent at least half of the workforce in agriculture, they lag behind men in many ways. Often the work women do in agriculture is not visible, or it is simply not valued. They are often excluded from the more profitable aspects of agricultural enterprises. Land usually belongs to their husbands, brothers or fathers. Women are often ineligible to join cooperatives or receive credit, and are not targeted in technical training. Along with the burden of unpaid work at home, high levels of illiteracy and lack of bargaining power create significant economic disadvantages for women compared to their male counterparts. As a result they do not reach their potential as workers, entrepreneurs or consumers. (DFID, 2009)

In most societies, women education is considered as no value that they prefer men education. The cultural patterns and customs are the major obstacles to women literacy (Ballara, 1992). As Ballara

(1992) says **"Parents believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girls education; instead they invest time and money to educate boys."**

In Ethiopia, it is obvious that there are diverse cultural and traditional practices that contribute for the lower status of women. Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State is the one with some extreme traditional practices that aggravate the subordinate position of women especially within the Gumuz ethnic groups. Some of the major traditional practices existing among Gumuz communities are: **Exchange marriage, abduction, rape, female circumcision, polygamy, huge dowry, wife inheritance, extravagancy, extraction of milk teeth and others**. Despite different interventions (intentional targeting, awareness creation trainings, supports, etc) by Government and other partner organizations operating in the Woreda, the problem is still in the community as most of those practices are longstanding and deep-rooted within Gumuz ethnic groups.

3. Problem statement

Globally, the prevalence of several harmful traditional practices is mainly concentrated in African countries and to some extent in Asia and among immigrants of Africa in the West and European countries. Harmful traditional practices are the most humiliating and degrading experiences to girls and women. In Africa Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other priority Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) like early marriage, abduction, skin cutting do occur at different degree in different countries. Women and children who are the vast majority of the population suffer from harmful traditional practices, work stereotypes and gender distribution of labor. For this, there are 28 national committees in 28 African countries to follow up the issue of FGM and other HTPs under the umbrella of Inter African Committee (SCN-Ethiopia, 2011).

Ethiopia has over 80 ethnic groups whose cultures are rich and varied as their compositions. The country has beneficial traditional practices such as breast feeding, settling quarrels, social gathering and others that can be examples for the external world. On the other hand, there are harmful traditional practices that affect the health and social well-being of women and children in the country. Some of these practices include female genital mutilation, early marriage, abduction, milk teeth extraction, uvulectomy, bloodletting and others that seriously affect the health of children and contribute for the transmission of HIV/AIDS (NCTPE, 1998).

Culture determines what women and men should do; the resources women and men should get including education. Culture plays a significant role in the construction of gender inequality in such a ways that men have dominating position in different spheres. In Ethiopia, culturally, men are expected to be courageous, competent, domineering and to show qualities of leadership while women to be submissive, conservative, self-spoken and shy. Cultural assumptions in most societies expect men to seek achievement and dominance and women to be compliant and supportive. The differential perceptions and expectations of behaviors and roles of the society based on sex is what we call gender (Kalkidan, 2007).

Women are underrepresented in the formal sector of employment. The survey conducted by the Central Statistical Authority (CSA, 2004) showed that women account for less than half (43%) of the total employees in the country. Considering the percentage of female employees from the total number

of employees by employment type, the highest was in domestic activities (78%) and followed by unpaid activities (59.3%). In other types of formal employment (e.g. government, NGOs, private organizations), the percentage of female workers is less than 35%. On the other hand, the survey showed overrepresentation of female workers in the informal sector. About 58% of working women work in the informal sector whereas the percentage of working men in the informal sector was 37.7 % (ibid).

Violence against women is also deep rooted in Ethiopian society and one of subordinating factor of women. Women and young girls experience forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence that affects their health situation. But in most cases the violence committed to women are kept secret and not reported to legal bodies. A survey in all the region in Ethiopia except Gambella showed 2263 rapes and 507 abductions reported in one year (1998) and among the 15,367 women aged 15 to 49 years covered in the survey 85% experienced husband's beating (WAO, 2005).

The major problems related to the prevalence of traditional practices that affect status of women/girls among Gumuz communities in my specific study area (Debate Woreda), in Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State are: *exchange marriage, abduction, rape, female circumcision, polygamy, huge dowry, wife inheritance, extravagancy, extraction of milk teeth and others.* These problems are mainly affecting this specific ethnic group because almost all of the Gumuz communities are illiterate and marginalized from any current information updates because most of them live in inaccessible areas around forest without basic infrastructures as compared to other ethnic groups. In addition, they have low awareness level and highly conservative to their long-stand traditional practices in spite of their negative effects on the lives of the community. This and other related factors contribute a great role for lower status of the Gumuz community in general and Gumuz women in particular in the study area.

Regarding measures taken to alleviate these problems in the study area, the local Government and other partner organizations operating in the Woreda has been taking different measures so as to reverse existing situation. The main roles of local Governments are: taking some affirmative action during different opportunities, awareness creation, facilitating resettlement programs (collecting scattered households within different forests & low land parts the Woreda) to provide different basic infrastructures like school, health institutions, water supply, roads & etc; and other related measures. In addition to local Governments effort, other partners (mainly Agriservice Ethiopia and CEPAR) operating in the Woreda have been taking different actions like deliberately targeting these Gumuz communities in their interventions, awareness creation on negative impacts of harmful traditional practices, arranging community learning sessions at their village on different topics especially on harmful traditional practices and Gender equality, train and support on different income generation activities, giving attention on gender distribution during different activity implementation. In addition, these organizations have been establishing and constructing different schools, health posts, water supply and other related activities to provide access to different social services. Moreover, some of them also established grain-mill so as to reduce the burden of women in the community.

In spite of all these efforts from both local Government and other partners' sides, the problems are still in the community due to long-stand traditional practices of Gumuz communities and other limitations to address all aspects of development at the same time. Though it is difficult to eradicate all these deep-rooted traditional problems within Gumuz communities, there are undeniable attitudinal and practical changes especially on exchange marriage. That means before different interventions by local

Government and these partner organizations, the exchange of girls during marriage is done in the same day but now after intervention, the girls will be exchanged on different days and secretly because they are afraid of it as they learnt different times in their village and other sessions as it is a bad culture that affects human right itself. So, this is just only a spark in some households in the intervention areas and I am not saying that the whole Gumuz communities' attitude has changed.

4. Objective of the Study

4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the major traditional practices that affect women & partners effort in alleviating the problem in the study area

4.2 The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify major harmful traditional practices that affect women/girls in the study area.

2. To assess the attitude of the community toward different traditional practices.

3. To examine the participation of women in the decision making at both family and community level.

4. To explore the status of women in accessing and control over economic resources.

5. To examine the attitude of the community toward girls' education

6. To explore the main actors and their contribution in reducing the problem in the study area.

5. Hypothesis

Prevalence of traditional practices that affect the status of women will be reduced through implementation of appropriate interventions on harmful traditional practices & gender equality issues which in turn will help to empower women in all aspects.

6. Coverage of the study area (Universe)

Due to time and resources limitations, it is basically difficult to study the traditional practices that affect status of women in all the Woredas of Benishangul Gumuz National Regioonal State. So, the study area will be restricted to only Debate Woreda focusing on traditional practices that contributes for the subordinate position of women in Gumuz ethnic groups because Gumuz women is one of the most extremely exposed and affected by different traditional practices like exchange marriage, abduction, early marriage, female circumcision, rape and others; which in turn affects their life by prohibiting them from every opportunities. In addition to this, the researcher is working for one of the partner organization in the study Woreda. This increases the familiarity with the area and it gives an opportunity to observe their traditional society in which different traditional practices and gender inequality are highly prevalent. Moreover, it is known that most of the Gumuz communities live in marginal area of the country where they get little attention from the Government, Researchers and NGOs

7. Significance of the Study

Traditional values and practices are a root causes for discrimination and violence against women/girls. Despite about their 50% coverage in the study areas as well as our countries population, this value based discrimination is being one of the major problems and it is being even a universal problem in

women's life. As a result women face more constraints than men; they tend to be poorer and at lower status quo as does the world as a whole. So, addressing these constraints would help to reduce the root causes of poverty and vulnerability and contribute to sustainable, pro-poor growth. To this effort, major traditional practices that affect the women's status at household as well as community level will be identified so as to bring social transformation that treats the women in equal basis as men. Thus:

4. This study will provide a feedback for any partners operating in the study area so as to act accordingly.
5. The recommendations will help the local government as well as policy makers to address these issues in their decisions.
6. It will be a base to conduct further study.

8. Review of Literature and conceptual frameworks
8.1 Conceptual frameworks
Tradition represents the sum total of all behaviors that are learned, shared by a group of people and transmitted from generation to generation. It includes language, religion, types of food eaten, and methods of their preparation, childrearing practices and all other values that hold people together and give them a sense of identity and distinguish them from other groups. To evaluate a traditional practice as harmful/beneficial we might use the objective instruments based on the knowledge gained from social and natural sciences. Today we have ample knowledge about the physical nature of man, his physical anatomy and social life. It is therefore possible to objectively assess whether a specific traditional practice is harmful to the physical nature of a human being, his psychology and social needs and development, and therefore incompatible with scientific theory and practice (Dawit, et al., 2005).

Every culture consists of a set of patterns of behaviors that are contained in its social institution and within the personalities of individual. Culture is a social construction that provides guidelines for appropriate behaviors, social norms including those related to gender. Culture determines gender relations within a society, influencing roles and activities carried out by men and women. It also determines women's and men's access to and control over economic resources, and their ability to make decision at the family and community levels. Culture plays a significance role in the construction of gender inequality in which men have dominant power over different sphere of activity than women. Culturally, males are expected to be bread winner, aggressive, assertive, independent and competitive. On the other hand females are expected to be care giver, dependent, submissive, shy, calm, sensitive, quite and polite (Lindsey, 2005).

In Ethiopia culture influences the education of women that it result in gender division of labor where women are denied of important opportunities like educational access and burdened by heavy works which is hardly acknowledged (Emebet, 1998; Kalkidan, 2007). The other health problem related to the low socio-economic and cultural status of women, are among others, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), rape, abduction, etc. In Ethiopia, 80% of women (and in some parts of the country up to 100%) are mutilated, as a means of women's loyalty to culture and faith (Haregewoin and Emebet, 2003).

The vast majorities of Ethiopian women live in rural areas, and disproportionally share the burden of poverty. Women have less access and control over productive resources such as land and credit. Agricultural census study 2003 showed only 18.6% of the land holders are women. Agricultural census survey data of 2001 also showed only 9% of women's had access to agricultural extension service and only 12% of women had access to credit from the agricultural center (WAO, 2005). High proportion of

which is 65% of women in Ethiopia are concentrated in the informal sector and 26% of small scale manufacturing enterprises with low earning capacity (CSA, 2003).

Sweetman (1995:8) stressed: "Culture and Gender are intertwined interdependent and mutually defining to a certain extent". Socialization is a lifelong process that transmits essential cultural elements to the next generation. It begins in early childhood in which boys and girls learn the appropriate behavior of their sex. Socialization shapes individuals patterns of behavior and moulds one's personality ranging from tone of voice to physical chastisement. Through socialization an individual develops personalities, beliefs and cultural behavior of femininity and masculinity (Walby, 1990). Family is the primary and most significance agent of socialization in which children develop what is expected of their sex. It is central to women's lives and determinative of gender inequality. Family is responsible in molding a child's behavior, personality, identity and attitudes about gender. Beginning in infancy parents socialize their sons and daughters differently. Boys are more oriented towards what they should not do rather what they should do (don't be sissy, don't cry etc.) and raised to be more independent. On the other hand girls are often told to be good mothers and wives (Lindsey, 2005).

8.2 Review of Related Literature
8.2.1 The Role of Culture on Gender difference

It is widely accepted that culture is a means through which guidelines for appropriate behaviors, social norms including those related to gender are reflected. It is through one's culture that gender relation within the society and activities carried out by men and women are determined. That is, it plays a significant role in the construction of gender. Researches indicate that there is close relationship between culture and gender. According to Sweetman (1995), for example, "culture and gender are entwined, interdependent and mutually defining to a certain extent." For Coplan (1996), culture and gender are not only related but they have a strong relationship that gender is a "cultural construct."

Culture, among other factors, plays a vital role in shaping the lives of men and women. Cultural values, beliefs, and traditions significantly affect family life. Children from their childhood are brought up by their families according to the culture and customs in the area. Our country, Ethiopia, is a culture-oriented country that fathers and mothers are responsible in passing on what is appropriate to their children. Accordingly, as to Tefera, girls learn cultural roles from their mothers and boys do from their fathers. Particularly, after age nine or ten, more attention is paid to training the daughters in not only domestic arts but also the art of womanhood. These gender cultural divisions of labor at home make the girl or later a woman overburdened by routine house works which leave them little time for other tasks outside the house and force them to believe that other tasks are inappropriate for them that they will refrain from participating in such activities including education (Terera, 1994).

In Ethiopia cultural-social norms and traditions influence the education of women that it result in gender division of labor where women are denied of important opportunities like educational access and burdened by heavy works which is hardly acknowledged (Emebet, 1998; Kalkidan, 2007). In most societies, women education is considered as of no value that they prefer men education. Regarding this, Ballara (1992) stressing the cultural patterns and customs as one of the obstacles to women literacy, said, "Parents believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girl's education; instead they invest time and money to educate boys." In showing in which members of the society this negative attitude towards

women is prevalent, Ballara wrote that husbands, fathers and men in general have such attitudes towards women education mainly because they are afraid that it may reverse the traditional women roles by providing them with new roles.

Gender is the sex role identity used to emphasize distinctions between males and females. It refers to behaviors associated with members of a given sex. There are set of attitudes and behaviors developed and perpetuated in society towards people that judge or belittle them on the basis of their gender (Parpart, 1989). Gender became a critical analytical tool in the discourse of women's rights and entitlements to social and material resources.

Gender refers to the socially and culturally determined relationships between men and women. These relationships differ according to different societies. It should be distinguished from sex which is connected with the biological make-up of men and women. Gender differences are not determined by nature but by society, e.g. "women can cook food", while sex differences (which are biological) are natural, e.g. "only women breast-feed". In other words, gender is a "culturally constructed" meaning attached to sexes (Coplan, 1996). It is the extension of biological sexuality into products of human activity. It is the means through which an individual is viewed as masculine or feminine. Based on sex, there are behaviors and roles expected from an individual called gender roles. Gender role is a set of perceived behavioral norms associated with males and females (Sweetman, 1995). Gender roles are not determined biologically rather they are constructed socially. People, beginning from their childhood, learn what is regarded in their cultural context as appropriate for their sex.

Socialization process, which determines gender roles, is partly responsible for the subjugation of women in the country. Ethiopian society is socialized in such a way that girls are held inferior to boys. In the process of upbringing, boys are expected to learn and become self-reliant, major bread winners, and responsible in different activities, while girls are brought up to conform, be obedient and dependent, and specialize in indoor activities like cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, caring for children, etc. (Haregewoin and Emebet, 2003; Hirut, 2004).

The differences in the ways in which individuals are treated through the socialization process, due mainly to their sex status, leads to the development of real psychological and personality differences between males and females (Almaz, 1991). A man is a big person who has higher social position and knowledge, who can govern others and think in wider perspectives; while a woman is a person who can serve a man, who is like the husband's object transferred through marriage, and to whom he can do anything he wishes to do (Hirut, 2004).

Educating women is assumed not only inappropriate but is also worthless. With regard to this, different researchers cited in Karlekar reported that sending women to school which doesn't have any visible benefits, is often regarded as a waste of time for culturally, they are viewed as 'natural care givers' (Amin, Bhatty, Dumra, Khan, King and Hill and Sinha in Karlekar, 2000:90).

8.2.2 Property Ownership

Property ownership is a base for power in a society that plays important roles in distinguishing members of a society in the process of policy and decision making. Property ownership determines the social relations between men and women. Based on the Marxists argument, the extent of access to and control over resources within a society determines the sources of power. Having the means of production is the source of all forms of power that provides economic, socio-cultural and political status

and prestige. The social inequality between men and women mainly arises from unequal access to means of production such as land and credit. Women's relation to property and land is socially constructed and is discriminated on the basis of sex in which men have greater access to property than women (Shortall, 1999).

Worldwide, women lack several benefits which are related to ownership and control over property and land. Worldwide women hold limited property as compared to men. UN forth Conference Beijing, 1995 stated that women own less than 1% of world's property. These lacks of property ownership among women limit their opportunity to get loans and other means of production. Women's lacks of property and land right contributes to lag behind men and put women in a higher risk of poverty than do men. Beside; the husbands' approval is required for women to obtain independent title from her husband for land registration, application for credit and mortgage loans, and the likes. It is harder to get loans for single women and single-parent women outside of marriage or without the support of their husband or male relations (Heyzer and Wee, 1995). The patriarchal system wherever in the world, particularly in Africa restricts women access to productive resources such as land and credit. Women's and men's relation to land is regulated by customary cultural practices in which family structures, marriage and inheritance are the most influential factors on how land is allocated and transferred among households in a community.

Women in many African countries are negatively affected by land reform proclamation whether it is massive land redistribution or cropping programs. In Ethiopian case, most of the practices are discriminatory towards women even if the land reform proclamation stated that land shall be allocated equally to both men and women. Prior to 1991 land distribution to peasants, who organized themselves in peasant association and as head of households, were discriminatory to women. Usually land is registered in the name of men and assuming the household is uniform and stable. Such practices limit women's right to land. For instance, women lose this share of land when they marry outside of their community and in case of divorce in which they left their marital household.

8.2.3 Son preference as a tradition

In many societies the birth of a baby boy is received with great joy. The rituals are more elaborate with the mother receiving compliments for producing a male child. The father enjoys great pride with the assurance of continuity of the family line and the protection of his property. The birth of a girl however is less rituals with reduced value attributed to the mother. The reception ceremony is minimal and less colorful. In some societies particularly in Asia sever son preference leads to malnutrition of the girls with deprivation in treatment. In some cities in Asia female infanticide has become a practice to kill the girls soon after or before they are born. Clinics in India and china are cited as practicing early sex detection to get rid of a baby girl (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre Florence, Italy, 25-28 September 2006).

8.2.4 Taboos practiced in different societies

Food taboo
Consumption patterns are differing from culture to culture and society to society. Feeding practices are part of the culture of any given society and are related to traditions beliefs and taboos. Its pattern also differs from culture to culture and society to society. Food habits are mainly determined by the

availability of indigenous food supply, socio-cultural and educational orientation of food processing and preparation methods. Each culture whether traditional or modern, it has beneficial as well as harmful feeding practices. Most of the time women and children are highly affected by food habits and dietary discrimination (African Center for Women, 1997). In most traditional society's food taboos are specifically directed toward women. The best and most nutritious part of the food is given to men. The nutritional deficiencies of most women are high particularly among pregnant and lactating women. Pregnant women are restricted from certain food staffs. For example, in the South, South-Western and central part of Ethiopia, pregnant women are forbidden to take all foods which are white in color such as milk products, fatty meat, porridge and potato. Such foods are believed to be plastered on the body of the newly born baby. It is also assumed that the newly born baby and mother will have a bad smell if a pregnant woman eats vegetables. In the northern part of Ethiopia high carbohydrate and fat foods are forbidden for pregnant women with the assumption that it will bring about easier labor and smaller babies (CRDA, 1991). Nutritional taboos and the restriction of pregnant women from consuming certain kinds of food which is usually rich in the required nutrients leads to the low nutritional status among most women and put them at high risk of material death. Low body weight, iron deficiency and anemia are one of the main causes of death in case of hemorrhage during labor, and it is common among women in developing countries. For example in Ethiopia, the mean height of women is only 156cm, indicating severe past malnutrition, and puts women at high risk in delivery, and 30% of non pregnant women have a body mass index less that 18.5, which indicates serious chronic energy deficiency (NCTPE,2003).

Menstruation taboo

Among the various traditional taboos in African societies, menstruation is one of it. In many traditional societies female blood is treated asimpure and considered as pollution which is associated with dirt and danger. Menstruating woman is believed to be contaminated and excluded from the most ordinary life until she became clear. She also sits at some distance far from the village. She is prevented from planting, harvesting, preserving, cooking, serving and enjoying with others. It is believed that menstruating women are causes of economic disaster and it is unlucky when they are near to certain places. As (Delaney et a1. 1988:9) quoted it in the book of a cultural history of menstruation.

Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seed in gardens are dried up ,the fruit of trees falls off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once, seized by rust and a horrible smell fills the air to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bits with an incurable position. Even that very tiny creature the ant is said to be sensitive to it and throws away grains of corn that taste of it and does not touché them again .

Discrimination against menstruating women in the Jewish and Christian cultures is described in the Leviticus and is still observed among Orthodox Jews. It states menstruating women shall be kept apart for seven days and anyone who touches the woman and her property is considered as unclean. This religious ideology of menstruation keeps women out of their political and economic participation of their time. Hence menstrual taboo remains as one of subordinating factors in the control of women by men. Women are discredited by any behavior which draws attention to menstruation. Women are still considered physically and mentally unreliable workers and unstable human being that cannot fulfill their proper function during their cycle (Delaney et al., 1988).

In most societies of Ethiopia, menstrual blood is considered and associated with pollution. Menstruating women are not allowed to enter the church compound and do not participate in religious festivities. In some ethnic groups in the south and south west of Ethiopia, women in their menstruation time are segregated in a separate hut for the duration of menstruation. They are not allowed to use household tools, shake a male's hand, sleep on bed, wash hands or body in the house, grind grains preparing food and conduct gardening (NCTPE,2003).

8.2.5 Child Marriage

According to Article 1 of the Convention on the right of the Child, Child marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old. For this reason, some organizations strongly recommend the use of the term 'child marriage' for any marriage under 18 years old. They also advocate that 'any child marriage constitutes a forced marriage, in recognition that even if a child appears to give their consent, anyone under the age of 18 is not able to make a fully informed choice whether or not to marry.' Child marriages must be viewed within a context of force and coercion, involving pressure and emotional blackmail and children that lack the choice or capacity to give their full consent. It is estimated that 14 million girls under the age of 18 marry each year and, by 2020, 142 million girls will be married by their 18th birthday, if current trends continue.

However, the term "child marriage" can be seen as confusing. The UN defines a child as anyone under the age of 18, but there is no single definition of the term "child" worldwide, and there can even be variations within countries. For example, across the USA, states have different definitions of "child." According to the culture of many countries, a girl is only a child until she begins menstruation. So, in many countries, "child marriage" can be interpreted as the marriage of a girl who has not yet reached puberty. Because of the different definitions of who is a child, some organizations prefer to use the term "Early and Forced Marriage". A forced marriage is defined as a marriage "conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and is a marriage in which duress - whether physical or emotional - is a factor." According to the international journal of social sciences 28th March 2013.Vol.9 No. 1 **"Globally, child marriage is defined as the marriage of any child under 18. But different societies have different understandings of the age at which a child becomes old enough to marry."**

8.2.6 Traditional Delivery Practice

Harmful delivery practices of most traditional societies are also another cultural practice that puts women at high risk of maternal death. According to the World Health Organization, more than half of births in developing nations are attended by traditional birth assistance with little knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Usually traditional birth assistants use harmful treatments during delivery. For example, in case of obstructed labor, they massage the abdomen by pressing to force the baby out. In most societies the delay of delivery is believed to be is a punishment for marital infidelity and put the pregnant woman at high risk of death since she cannot get actual treatment (NCTPE, 2003).

The majority of babies in Ethiopia are delivered at home. According to the Demographic Health Survey of 2000, attended delivery in the hands of health professionals was only 6%, delivery by trained traditional birth attendants was 4%, delivery by traditional birth attendants was 26%, a large majority 58% delivered in the hands of any woman and 6% delivered alone without any assistance (Women Affair Office, 2005). There are harmful and complicated delivery practices exercised in different ethnic group of Ethiopia. It includes massaging the abdomen before and during delivery, shaking a woman in prolonged

labor, isolation during delivery and after delivery, suturing the vagina after delivery, drastic measures to hasten the expulsion of the placenta, inducing sneezing to force out after birth, taking bitter anti-helminthes drug during pregnancy are the main harmful delivery practices exercised in different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Furthermore, considering many children as wealth among most societies in Ethiopia leads repeated pregnancy without child space which puts women at high risk of dying during pregnancy and delivery (Almaz, 1991).

8.2.7 Efforts at international and national levels to empower women
International level

The international community has become aware of the need to achieve equality between the sexes and of the fact that an equitable society cannot be attained if fundamental human rights of half of human society, i.e. women, continue to be denied and violated. However, the bleak reality is that the harmful traditional practices focused on in this Fact Sheet have been performed for male benefit. Female sexual control by men, and the economic and political subordination of women, perpetuate the inferior status of women and inhibit structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate gender inequality. As early as the 1950s, United Nations specialized agencies and human rights bodies began considering the question of harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women, in particular female genital mutilation. But these issues have not received consistent broader consideration, and action to bring about any substantial change has been slow or superficial (Halima, et al., 1988).

A number of reasons are given for the persistence of traditional practices detrimental to the health and status of women, including the fact that, in the past, neither the Governments concerned nor the international community challenged the sinister implications of such practices, which violate the rights to health, life, dignity and personal integrity. The international community remained wary about treating these issues as a deserving subject for international and national scrutiny and action. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation were considered sensitive cultural issues falling within the spheres of women and the family. For a long time, Governments and the international community had not expressed sympathy and understanding for women who, due to ignorance or unawareness of their rights, endured pain, suffering and even death inflicted on themselves and their female children. Despite the apparent slowness of action to challenge and eliminate harmful traditional practices, the activities of human rights bodies in this field have, in recent years, resulted in noticeable progress. Traditional practices have become a recognized issue concerning the status and human rights of women and female children. The slogan "Women's Rights are Human Rights", adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly the same year, captured the reality of the status accorded to women (Halima, et al., 1988).

National level

Currently in Ethiopia the incumbent government is working towards boosting the involvement of women in various development programs. In this regard, in its effort to enhance their involvement, the government and its stakeholders are confronting with deep rooted and unhealthy stereotypes towards women that have been there with the community for centuries. Particularly, since then, women have got to equally exercise in many aspect of development in the country. For instance, inclusion of women has become a vital criterion in the assignment of higher positions like ministers and ambassadors by the

government. In addition, beginning from primary to higher education institution, affirmative action was introduced to help women participate in various sectors. In this regard, the incumbent government has shown strong political change and will that has been exhibited to help women involve fully in all development areas.

However, despite the efforts exerted there are still various problems that need serious intervention. In this regard, contemporary literature shows that a number of researches are being conducted on women education focusing on barriers to their attendance and success in their education. But among these researches we came across, we need to emphasize on the women cultural roles and how these in turn affect their participation in education general and Functional Adult (FAL) Literacy programs in particular. Our justification to critically review these issues is that in Ethiopia, as it is true in other developing countries, there is a need on the part of the government to achieve the Millennium Development Goals where achieving basic education is becoming a prior concern and mandatory this time. The government of Ethiopia is paying great attention to adult literacy campaigns to realize these demands. However, it apparently seems difficult to realize these intentions in very short period of time because of the cultural ties which are becoming bottle necks particularly to the education of adult women (The international journal of social sciences 28th March 2013. Vol.9 No.1).

9. Description of the study area and Research methodology
9.1 Description of the Study Woreda

Dibate Woreda is one of the 7 Woredas of Metekel Administrative Zone, which is located in Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State of Ethiopia. The Woredas of Mandura in the North west, Bullen in the west, Yaso Woreda of Kamashi zone in the south and Amhara region (Awe zone) in the North East surrounds it. Its capital town, Dibate lies at a distance of 427 and 547 kilometer away from Assosa and Addis Ababa, respectively.

The Woreda is administratively divided into 27 rural and 2 urban Kebeles. According to the current Woreda office of finance and economy, the total population of the Woreda is estimated about 82,009 (48.92% females) with 18,222 households. According to CSA (2006), the average family size of a household is 4.5. The total area of the woreda is about 368,289 ha and the average land holding size of a household is 2.63 ha (Save the children Canada, July 2011 survey report).

The existing five ethnic groups in the Woreda are Gumuz, Shinasha, Oromo, Amhara, Agew and Tigrie with a composition of 21.4%, 17.5%, 25.5%, 27.7%, 7.8% and 2% respectively. The majority of the population, 67%, is Orthodox Christians followed by Muslims, Protestants and Catholics in decreasing order.

According to the Dibate Woreda Agriculture Office, the total area of the Woreda is estimated at 368,289; out of which, cultivated land 6%, pasture land 11.9%, forest & bush land 75.1%, degraded and rocky land 5%; and settlement or homestead 2%. Geographically, the woreda capital Dibate is located in North 10046′ 40.3″ degree and East 036016′ 14.5″ . The Woreda has three distinct agro-ecological zones of highland 6.9%, midland 48.3% and lowland 44.8%. The altitude of the Woreda ranges from 1050 to 2657 meters above sea level and gets 1619.8mm annual rainfall & the rainfall pattern is mono-modal type with extended (six months) wet season i.e from May to October. The average annual maximum and minimum temperature reaches 31 0C and 14 0c respectively.

The district is endowed with a number of potentials that could be used for promoting growth and development in the district but from the total of 44.5% suitable land for cultivation only 36% of the this

potential land is under cultivation. Despite the presence of these potentials, however, people in Dibate district general and the Gumuz community in particular find themselves in destitute living condition partially because of inability to put these potentials to productive use.

The livelihood of the community (98%) relies on subsistence agriculture- crop-livestock farming. The major crops grown in the area includes cereal crops such as Millet, Maize, Sorghum and Teff while cash crops are ground nut, Sesame, Haricot bean, and Niger seed. The community is rearing livestock like cattle, sheep, goat, equines and poultry.

The major traditional institutions existing in the Woreda are Edir, Mahiber, Equb, senbetie and others. These institutions are established long ago and are serving the community to strengthen their social bondage and also means of helping each other. These institutions are free from external interferences and have their own purpose.

The main reasons for selecting Dibate Woreda as the area of the study were: (a) rural communities in the Woreda are exposed to a number of cultural and traditional beliefs. As a result, women in particular & community in general have been repeatedly prone to harmful traditional practices and related problems; (b) Dibate Woreda has been labeled as one of the Woredas for indigenous Gumuz ethnic group who are one of conservative traditional community in Metekel Zone of Benishangul Gumuz Regional state and (c) The researcher's employer is actively working on community capacity development project in the study area and this will supports the study as well as the researcher in many ways.

9.2 Research Methodology
9.2.1 Methodology
This study mainly focuses on major traditional practices that affect status of women and efforts made by partners to reduce the problem. In order to achieve the intended objectives of the study, the researcher will apply the qualitative research method which is a method useful to acquire different tangible information from all possible sources through closer investigation and it is an appropriate method to obtain facts about a particular target community from view point of women's status in the area. In addition, this method gives an appropriate opportunity to listen what people to say about their real lives.

9.2.2 Sampling
Considering accessibility, Kebeles for most native Gumuz ethnic population and stakeholders' intervention areas, four kebeles will be deliberately selected for the study. This is because Gumuz peoples are extremely conservative to their long-standing traditional practices (exchange marriage, abduction, rape, etc) that highly affect the status of women. The total number of households in four sample kebeles (Goncha=103, Sirben=312, Sasmanden=343 and Kidohi=149; total = 907) sum up to 907 households. From this given household numbers a total of 91(which is about 10%) respondents will participate in the study as deep-interviewees, key informants and Focus group discussion groups. From these sample kebeles, Gumuz ethnic based 30 women and 12 men farmer respondents will be randomly selected for in-depth interview and the rest sample population will participate in focus group discussion and as key informants. The higher number of women as a respondent is because the key concern of this study is so as to assess traditional practices that affect status of women hence women will get the core position in this study. In addition to in-depth interview, at least one focus group discussions will be conducted at each selected kebeles. Moreover, Kebele level Government leaders and Development facilitators' of partner organizations deployed at kebele level will be involved as key informants so as to acquire a diverse response and feedback so that it will help to meet the intended objectives of the

research study. Furthermore, after collecting all necessary information from grassroots communities' concerned Government & NGOs officials at Woreda level will be purposely selected and interviewed regarding the prevalence of problem and their efforts.

9.2.3 Sources of data

Generally both primary and secondary data will be employed to conduct the research.

Primary data will be collected through:

- ➢ In-depth interview
  A total of 42 randomly selected Gumuz ethnic based participants (30 women & 12 men) will be engaged in in-depth interview.
- ➢ Focus group discussions (FGD)
  Each FGD participants will be composed of elders, women farmers and men farmers in the four selected kebeles.
- ➢ Key informants
  - o This information will collected by using semi-structured and unstructured interviews with local leaders and local representatives of the partner organizations.
  - o In addition, officials/experts from concerned Woreda Governemnt offices (Woreda women and children affairs office & Education office) and Partner organizations offices (Agriservice Ethiopia, Debate program office & CEPAR) will be involved as key informants.
- ➢ Observation on insight of the participants towards women status.

Secondary data will be collected through:

- ➢ Document Reviews like written books and office records from concerned sectors like Woreda women and children affairs office, Woreda education office and Partner organization offices.
- ➢ Different literature reviews
- ➢ Magazines
- ➢ Journals
- ➢ Related researches

9.2.4 Methods of data collection

The required data for this study will be collected from the primary and secondary sources through:

1. Asking questions
   - In-depth interviews
   - Semi-structured and unstructured interviews with key informants
   - Focus group discussions
2. Observation of Behaviors
   - Participants observation towards women status
3. Utilization of Existing Records or Data
   - Documents Review
   - Literatures Review
   - Magazines
   - Journals
   - Related researches

10. Data Analysis

After completing data collection, it will be analyzed, verified and edited arranged serially. Then, descriptive method of data analysis including tabular presentation, mean average and interpretations, will be employed to analyze the primary and secondary data to be collected. This method is mainly used to describe the findings in tabular and narrative forms so as to organize and finally present the research report.

11. Expected outputs

It is expected that the study will explore the major harmful traditional practices that affect women and communities attitude towards women position. Besides, it sets the way-out toward the social transformation to uphold women status in the study area; and different partners' effort in alleviating this problem will also be evaluated in the research process. This all brings a clue regarding major harmful traditional practices, its effect on women's status & partners' effort so that it will provide appropriate information to any partners willing to stand & work against these existing problems. In addition the result of this study will help the Government especially Woreda Government to acquire appropriate feedback about their area so that they will probably act against the identified gap.

Table 1: Time Table

S/N	Major research activities	Time Schedule	Remark
1	Preparation and arrangement of questionnaires for research	October 15 – 30, 2014	
2	Data collection from different sources		
	• Selected six Kebeles	November - December , 2014	
	• Woreda level key informants /selected sector & NGOs/	January 01-15, 2015	
	• Documents Review & Secondary data collection	January 15 – 31, 2015	
3	Data analysis	February 01 – 08, 2015	
4	Draft report writing	February 09 - 15, 2015	
5	Final paper writing	February 16 – 28, 2015	
6	Paper printing for submission	March 1 –3, 2015	

Table 2: Required budget

S/N	Major research activities	Number of personnel required	Amount of pay in birr/day	Duration	Required budget in birr
1	Preparation and arrangement of questionnaires for research			-	-
2	Paper printing for submission				
	• Selected six Kebeles	2 research assistants	120	2 Month	7,200
	• Woreda level key informants /selected sector & NGOs/	1 research assistant	120	15 Days	1,800
	• Documents review & Secondary data collection	1 research assistant	120	15 Days	1,800

3	Transport cost to selected kebeles	3 including myself			1,350
4	Typing and binding of report				1,000
5	Overhead expenditure				3,000
6	Contingencies expenses (10% of the expenditure on the above items)				1,615
	Expected total cost in Ethiopian birr				**17,765**

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