

**REPORT
ON
CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES
OF
EARLY MARRIAGE
IN
AMHARA REGION**

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Acronyms

CBOs	Community- Based Organizations
CBRHA	Community-Based Reproductive Health Agent
CSOs	Community Support Organizations
EAs	Enumeration Areas
EDHS	Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey
FGDs	Focus group discussion
FMOH	Federal Ministry of Health
NCTPE	National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices of Ethiopia
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PSUs	Primary Sampling Units
RH	Reproductive Health
USUs	Ultimate Sampling Units

FORWARD

This study on the causes and consequences of early marriage in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia was conducted in March - April 2006. The principal focus of the study was to generate both quantitative and qualitative information on the current practice of early marriage and to critically examine the causes and consequences of the practice in the region. The detailed information on the causes and consequences of early marriage was collected from a sample of 2,072 females aged 12-49 years and from focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

A wide range of information on socio-economic background characteristics, marriage patterns - including age at marriage, stability of marriage, causes and consequences of early marriage, and gender-related issues (such as decision making on marital and household issues) were collected and analyzed by the study.

It is our hope that the findings of this survey will be an important contribution to the design, implementation and monitoring of strategies to fight the practice of early marriage in Ethiopia, and more specifically in Amhara.

Pathfinder International / Ethiopia remains thankful to USAID, for generously funding the study. Our deep appreciation is also due to Birhan Research and Development Consultancy for conducting the field research and producing the report. Pathfinder also owes a deep gratitude for its country office staff, including Bogalech Alemu, Kassahun Deneke and Gultineh Kebede, as well as Pathfinder staff Palena Neale, Jenny Wilder, Graciela Salvador-Davila, and Mary Burket for their technical inputs and tireless effort in finalizing and producing the report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most societies have norms that set a minimum age for marriage. But in many communities this age requirement is too low -- especially for girls -- and does not take their psychological or physiological readiness for marriage into consideration. This is true in many areas of Ethiopia where, though the legal age of marriage is 18, most girls marry much younger. The Ethiopian DHS 2005 reports that 13 percent of girls in Ethiopia are married by age 15 (a slight decline from 14 percent reported by DHS 2000), but those married before 18 remained high at 66 percent. The median age is 16.1 years. The survey reported particularly high rates of early marriage in the Amhara and Tigray regions.

This study aimed to generate a cross-sectional community-based study of both quantitative and qualitative information on the practice of early marriage and to examine its causes and consequences in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. It estimated the prevalence of early marriage in the region and examined its health, physiological, psychological, socioeconomic, and demographic consequences. A total of 1,700 households were surveyed, and all eligible females aged 12-49 were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. The qualitative information was collected through focus group discussions, in-depth-interviews with key informants, literature reviews, and personal observations.

Survey Results – A Summary

Fifteen percent of ever-married women in Amhara were married before the age of 12 years. The mean age at first marriage was 14.5 years, and about 44 percent of urban and 53 percent of rural ever-married women were first married between 12 and 15 years. Only 16.2 percent of rural women and 26.6 percent of urban women married at the age of 18 or older.

More than one third of the ever-married women had been married at least twice, and 14 percent of these women had been married three or more times. The majority of the respondents were not involved in any economic activities. Literacy among females aged 12-49 in the region is less than 40 percent. Only 15 percent were educated beyond the primary level.

Nearly three-fourths of the ever-married women had married men older than themselves, and the age difference was 10 years or more for half of the women married to older men. These results do not show variation by place of residence.

More than half of the married women reported they were pressured to marry, largely by their parents. This was more common in rural than urban areas.

Causes of Early Marriage

In the Amhara region, particularly in the western part, deep-rooted traditions compel families to continue the practice of early marriage despite its consequences. Some of the most important reasons reported for the practice of early marriage relate to maintaining family status in the community, which is closely bound up with the success of children. A

daughter's marriage represents her success. There is an old traditional concern that a girl will become too old for marriage, which will represent a failure on the part of her parents. Of major importance is creating a bond with the bridegroom's family, as well as ensuring the girl marries while she has her virginity. It was reported that enforcement of the legal age of marriage by authorities was inadequate.

Focus group discussions and key informant interviews refuted the theory of poverty as a dominant factor in early marriage; many of the families practicing it are financially secure. Only slightly more than a fifth of the respondents reported that they married early to collect a dowry. The study also dismissed lack of knowledge of the consequences of early marriage as a reason for its continued practice. Interviewees said a significant number of persons who vehemently disapprove of the practice publicly, still follow the practice in their homes.

Current Situation of Early Marriage

The qualitative results reflect a significant decrease in the prevalence of early marriage in recent times, attributable to measures undertaken by woreda and kebele administrations, legal bodies, religious and other community leaders, kebele-level committees, teachers and students' clubs, the police, youth and women's associations, and the Office of Women's Affairs. The increase in premarital sex is also considered a strong social influence that is changing many traditional patterns.

Consequences of Early Marriage

Reported consequences of early marriage include:

Instability of Marriage: The region is characterized with high incidence of marriage instability (27 percent in urban and 19 percent in rural were divorces), and the main reason is often attributed to early marriage. In 38 percent of cases "too young for marriage" was cited as the reason for dissolution of the first marriage.

Poor health: 8.4 percent of women who were married under the age of 14 reported sexual and sex organ related problems.

Fistula and related problems: Almost all respondents in the qualitative survey reported knowing of at least one case of fistula in their lifetime; some reported knowing of up to five fistula cases.

Too Many Children: Women married before age 15 had an average of 5 children, those who married between 15 and 17 years had 4.2, and women who married after age 18 had 3.1.

Main reason for school drop out and less education: Over 78 percent of never-married girls under the age of 24 were attending school, as compared to 8.9 percent among the currently married girls. **Among those out of school, 28 percent cited marriage and 19 percent cited child bearing as the main reason for not attending school.**

Impact on the well-being of children: Early marriage is detrimental to the children of the marriage, when the mother is neither psychologically or physiologically ready to care for her children.

Women's inequality: Early marriage limits female educational opportunity, thereby reducing their employment opportunity and economic independence. The

study has further confirmed that victims of early marriage are vulnerable to gender based violence, high fertility, marital instabilities, and to reproductive health related complications. Women's lack of decision-making power in their families and communities is exacerbated by the inherent power imbalance between a young girl and her husband, who is often 10 years or more her senior.

The imposition of marriage on children or adolescents deprives them of freedom, opportunities for personal development, health and well-being, education, and participation in civic life. Mitigating the practice of early marriage must be a priority in any development effort in Ethiopia. Based on the findings of the study, the authors make a number of recommendations to reduce the practice of early marriage including: programs designed specifically to reduce early marriage; working with women's associations, the Office of Women's Affairs, community organizations, religious and community leaders, influential community members and schools; and working directly with young girls to teach them their rights; strengthening the collaboration between law enforcement, community leaders, women and youth associations, parents, and schools; and providing additional focused training for community-based reproductive health agents.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. As a social practice entered into through a public act, religious or traditional ceremony, it reflects the purposes, character, and customs of the society in which it is found. Many societies have norms that limit the age of young girls to enter into marriage, but in some cases the age limit does not take into consideration their physiological readiness for childbearing. Marriage often takes place at ages much earlier than the legally ratified minimum age. Early marriage is the marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18.

The practice of early marriage is most common in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In specific parts of West Africa, East Africa and South Asia, marriage before puberty is not unusual. In North Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia marriage shortly after puberty is common among those living traditional lifestyles. Marriages of female adolescents between sixteen and eighteen years of age are also common in parts of Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Among those marrying early, some are forced into this union, others are simply too young to make an informed decision. Because the child does not have the opportunity to exercise her right to choose, early marriages are also referred to as forced marriages. In its most extreme form, forced marriages are the result of abductions.

1.2 Early Marriage in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is home to more than 73 million people and 44 percent of its population is under age 15. It is one of the poorest countries in the world; approximately 81 percent of its population lives on less than US \$2 a day, and in 2005, life expectancy fell to 49 years (World Fact Book, 2005), mainly due to the growing HIV epidemic.

According to the “Essential Conditions of Marriage” (Section 2, Article 6-16) of the Revised Family Code (Proclamation of 2000), Article 7 specifies the legal marriage age of both boys and girls as follows: “Neither a man nor a woman who has not attained the full age of eighteen years shall conclude marriage.” Despite this law, the country is known for one of the most severe crises of child marriage in the world. The Ethiopian DHS 2005 reports that 13 percent of girls in Ethiopia are married by age 15 (a slight decline from 14 percent reported by DHS 2000) but those married before 18 remained high at 66 percent. The median age also remained at about 16 years for the nation and 15 for the Amhara Region. The DHS 2005 report has further revealed that the practice of early marriage is decreasing among the

younger generation. As for example, the proportion of women married by age 15 has declined from well over 30 % among women older than the age of 30 to 13 percent among women age 15 – 19 years.

A study by the National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices of Ethiopia (NCTPE) estimated the proportion married before the age of 15 at 57 percent. The same study shows that the practice occurs in its more extreme forms in northern Ethiopia, where girls are married as young as eight or nine years of age. In some instances, they are even pledged at birth (NCTPE, 2003). Although early marriage is widely practiced in many parts of the country, rates in Amhara and Tigray region are much higher than the national average (82 percent in Amhara, 79 percent in Tigray, 64 percent in Benshangul, 64 percent in Gambella and 46 percent in Afar) (NCTPE, 2003). A recent study conducted in two woredas of the Amhara region also shows that 14 percent of women were married before age 10, 39 percent before age 15, and 56 percent before age 18 (Population Council, 2004).

In Ethiopia, early marriage is seen as a way to improve the economic status of the family, to strengthen ties between families, to ensure that girls are virgins when they marry, and to avoid the possibility of a girl reaching an age where she is no longer desirable as a wife (“Qoma Qerech”).

The practice of early marriage is now (for a while) understood to have very harmful effects on the health, psychological, physiological and socio-economic well-being of young girls (as well as for the newborns). However, this knowledge is not broadly shared across most of the population.

Sexual and reproductive health

When women are able to control their sexuality and fertility they are better able to take advantage of opportunities, including education and income-generating activities, that could mitigate gender-based barriers that make them vulnerable to poverty. Health, including sexual and reproductive health, ensures the capacity for personal development and economic security in the future. Health is the basis for productivity, the capacity to learn in school, and the capability to grow intellectually, physically, and emotionally.

However, statistics show that girls who marry before the age of 18 are disproportionately affected by complicated pregnancies that may lead to maternal mortality and morbidity, Girls aged 10–14 are five times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than women aged 20–24; girls aged 15–19 are twice as likely to die. Many of these deaths take place within marriage. (UNICEF, 2001)

Premature and forced intercourse often results in harm to the body in general, sometimes leading to death, as well as short and long term problems related to early pregnancy and delivery. Prolonged and obstructed labor can result in obstetric fistulas, which disproportionately affect very young and first-time mothers due to their incomplete development. With an estimated 1,500 new cases annually, Ethiopia has the highest prevalence of obstetric fistula in the world (NCTPE 2003). Though many girls with fistula lack access to fistula repair service, the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital alone admitted as many

as 1,200 fistula patients between October 2001 and September 2002 (Annual Report, 2002). This condition leaves girls and women continually leaking urine and/or feces, frequently leading to abandonment by partners, friends, and family.

The denial of education

Girls who marry young tend to drop out of school and are more likely to bear children during adolescence, thus effectively ensuring that they will not return to school or develop other work skills. Married girls receive little or no schooling. Seventy-three percent of married women have received no education, compared to 45 percent of never-married women (EDHS, 2005).

Autonomy and decision-making

As a result of early marriage, large spousal age differences are common, which usually limits married girls' autonomy and decision-making ability. The younger a bride is, the greater the age difference between her and her spouse, promising disparate roles in decision making. The mean age difference between spouses in Ethiopia is 10.1 years.

Gender-based violence

According to Article 144 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UN, 1994), gender-based violence is “...*violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*” Early marriage creates a number of conditions that expose married girls to poverty and violence. Men's control over key resources, social isolation, and the low socio-economic status and dependency of women predispose married girls to violence and poverty (Heise, 1999). Some examples of gender violence that can be exacerbated by early marriage include domestic violence, rape, and emotional abuse.

Many girls who are forced to marry early suffer from prolonged domestic violence. Furthermore, early marriage is often linked to wife abandonment. This plunges young girls into extreme poverty and increases the risk of their entering the commercial sex trade, either by force, or because of lack of other options.

Gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS

A combination of biological, socio-economic, cultural, and political factors put young women at greater risk of HIV infection than males. A girl is physiologically more prone to contracting HIV/AIDS, as her vagina is not well lined with protective cells and her cervix may be penetrated easily. A global analysis of the epidemic shows that the prevalence of HIV infection is highest in women aged 15–24 and peaks in men between five to ten years later.

By the end of 2005, women accounted for nearly half of all people living with AIDS worldwide, and represent almost 60% of infections in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, young women are several times more likely than young men to contract the disease through heterosexual contact. Worldwide, 62% of infected young people are girls, and that number soars to 77% in sub-Saharan Africa. A woman's vulnerability to the virus is attributable not only to biological differences, but also to deeply entrenched socio-economic inequalities that further compound her risk (UNAIDS / WHO; 2005)

Marriage can increase married girls' exposure to the virus, especially as older husbands may engage in unprotected sexual relations with other partners (Bankole, et al., 2004). The risk of HIV infection is higher among the poorest and most powerless in society, and, as such, married adolescent girls will be more at risk of infection than unmarried girls who are not having sexual intercourse. Married adolescent girls' inability to negotiate safe sex and other social pressures represents a critical channel of vulnerability. For example, a recent study by Tanzanian Media Women Association shows a strong correlation between HIV/AIDS, early school exit, teen age marriage, and pregnancy (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks: 2006). These girls are too young and lack the courage to persuade their partners to learn their own sero-status.

The situation in Ethiopia is not different. The national HIV prevalence in 2005 is estimated to be 3.5%; 3 % among males and 4% among females. Of the estimated 1.32 million People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in 2005, 730,000 (55%) were females. Females also accounted for 54.5% of AIDS deaths and 53.2% of new infections in 2005. In the age group 15-29 years, there were more women living with HIV/AIDS than men; in the age group 30+ years, there more men living with HIV/AIDS than women (MOH / National HIV/AIDS prevention and Control Office; 2006) .

In general, early marriage of girls impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually all of their rights. The imposition of marriage on children or adolescents who are in no way ready for married life deprives them of freedom, opportunities for personal development, health and well-being, education, and participation in civic life.

Unless measures are taken to address early marriage, it will continue to be a major stumbling block to the achievement of human rights. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide information that can be used to end the silent misery of thousands of girls in the region, to open up new horizons for them, and contribute to the development of policies, programs, and advocacy to bring this about.

The government of Ethiopia is taking measures to end the practice of early marriage by introducing changes in the legal structure. It has set the legal age of marriage at 18 for both females and males. However, it is not easy to change the mind-set of societies that believe that if they do not marry off their daughters young enough, they stand to lose rather than gain in the long run.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The principal purpose of this study was to generate both quantitative and qualitative information and to critically examine causes and consequences of early marriage in the Amhara Region. Presently, there is a lack of data on all aspects of early marriage. Earlier research has examined the problem in terms of demographic trends, fertility, and educational attainment. While there is ample information on early marriage of a general nature, there are few studies that have examined the practice from a human rights or gender perspective, its

impact on families, or the wider society. Data is needed on the psychosocial impact of early marriage on children and the ways in which this determines wider social, political, and economic consequences. This study attempts to fill these gaps.

1.4 Objectives:

The objectives of the study are to:

- i) Estimate the current prevalence of early marriage in the region;
- ii) Identify and study the demographic, cultural, socio-economic and other factors leading to early marriage;
- iii) Examine the reproductive health, physiological, psychological, socio-economic and demographic consequences of early marriage;
- iv) Estimate mean age at first marriage and assess age differences between spouses at first marriage;
- v) Assess the impact of early marriage on marriage stability; and,
- vi) Make programmatic recommendations that will help policy makers design interventions to mitigate the problems of early marriage.

CHAPTER II

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study was a community-based cross sectional design that combined both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Detailed discussion about the techniques and data collection instruments and procedures is given in the subsections below.

2.1 Quantitative Data

2.1.1 Sample Design

The primary consideration in the sample selection for any study is to include representative and adequate numbers of cases in order to perform a meaningful analysis. To ensure this, a three-stage stratified random sampling design was used. The woredas constituted the primary sampling units. The census Enumeration Areas (EAs), or villages, constituted the secondary sampling units. Finally, households were selected as the ultimate sampling units in the third stage.

As pointed out earlier, the main focus of the study was to generate information on the causes and consequences of early marriage in the Amhara Region, which is second in size only to Oromia. In view of that, the region was divided into five strata, namely, (i) East and West Gojjam, (ii) North and South Gondar, (iii) Wag Hemera, (iv) North and South Wollo, and (v) North Shoa, including the Oromia Zone of the region. A list of woredas in the Amhara Region was obtained from the 1994 Census reports, and a total of 18 woredas were selected at random. These woredas were distributed over the five strata using probability proportional to size, with size being the number of woredas in the stratum.

2.2 Qualitative Data

2.2.1 Techniques for Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative information was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews with key informants. Review of relevant literature and personal observations in the selected woredas of the region were used as a source of ideas for elaborating on the FGD and key informant findings. The FGDs were administered with parents (married men and women), and unmarried adolescents (boys and girls separately). The key informants' interviews were carried out with social sector head and/or worker at the regional, woreda, and community levels; school teachers; religious and other community leaders; and health workers. The FGD and the key informant interviews were carried out to gather in-depth information from individuals who were believed to be knowledgeable and could provide the information that supports or substantiates findings obtained through other data collection instruments.

2.2.2 Sampling for the Qualitative Survey

An attempt was made in the qualitative survey to collect representative data by selecting one woreda that represents the five strata for the quantitative survey. Thus, the qualitative information was collected from 10 woredas in the Amhara region. Of these, the majority were in the Western parts of the region, which covers East and West Gojjam and North and South Gondar. The rest were conducted in the Eastern parts of Amhara Region covering South and North Wollo, Oromia Zone, and Northern Shewa. The selected woredas were the following: Janamora and Dembia Woredas from N. Gonder Zone, Lay Gayint and Este from S. Gonder, Baso Liben from E. Gojam, Adet and Bahr Dar Zuria from W. Gojam, Kuta Ber from S. Wollo, Dewa Chefa from Oromia, and Debrebrihan Zuria from N. Shewa Zone

In each of these woredas, two FGDs (20 in total) were conducted with groups of between 8 and 12 members. Two key informant interviews were carried out in each of the 10 woredas selected for the qualitative survey.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

Initially, an extensive review of relevant documents and literature was undertaken, first to place the study in a demographic, social and health context, and secondly to gather information for the development of the study instruments. Based on the review of international, national, regional, and district level documents and research reports, three types of instruments were developed to collect qualitative and quantitative information on the causes and consequences of early marriage. These included a structured individual questionnaire, key informant interview guides, and FGD guides.

The structured questionnaire

The individual questionnaire is the most important instrument, as it was used to collect most of the quantifiable information on the causes and impact of early marriage from girls and women between ages 12 and 49. This instrument was used to collect quantitative information on respondents' socio-economic and demographic characteristics, issues relating to the causes and consequences of marriage, and the status of women. The questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of 2,072 respondents in the specified age group.

Key informant interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was administered to knowledgeable persons, including community leaders, women associations and police, structured according to the following main themes:

- Perception of the status of early marriage in the region,
- Perception of the problems associated with early marriage,
- Existing programs or interventions against early marriage, and
- Policies, laws, and action plans on early marriage and the associated RH, physiological, psychological, and socio-economic problems.

Focus group discussion guide

A FGD guide was developed to elicit information on the issues. The guide was used to administer FGDs with four groups of informants: married men, married women, unmarried men and unmarried female adolescents. The parents provided information about their experience regarding early marriage, and unmarried adolescents shared their attitudes about the practice.

The main themes included in the focus group guide were: the status of early marriage as perceived by each group; the associated RH, physiological, psychological, and socio-economic problems; policy and advocacy/enabling and supportive environments; and livelihood skills. In addition to these, the FGD guide attempted to address factors that impact positively as well as negatively on early marriage, parental attitudes, and suggestions for intervention strategies.

2.4 Preparation and Fieldwork

2.4.1 Recruitment and training

Supervisors, FGD moderators and note takers, and interviewers were recruited on merit. The recruitment was carried out in Dessie and Bahir Dar to get interviewers and supervisors who are familiar with the study sites. Qualified interviewers and supervisors were selected, and most of them had experience in data collection activities, as most of them had participated in the recent demographic and health survey.

The training was carried out in Bahir Dar and Dessie. Six supervisors, 32 interviewers, 3 moderators, and 3 note-takers were recruited and trained for three days on key issues related to procedures and techniques of data collection, handling of respondents, and techniques of sample selection. Rehearsal interviews and demonstrations were held and discussions initiated, based on the mock-interviews. The moderators and note takers were specifically briefed on techniques of FGD and on the contents of the guidelines prepared for the conduct of qualitative approach.

2.4.2 Pretest

Pretest of survey instruments is important and helps to detect both content and structural errors in the questionnaire, allowing for necessary corrections before undertaking the actual exercise. The pretest was conducted in Addis Ababa, and an attempt was made to cover areas where there are migrants from Amhara Region, who might have experienced early marriage. A number of questionnaires were completed during the pretest, especially by ever-married women who had been married young. During the pretest, in addition to technical scrutiny, interviewers were instructed to carefully identify ambiguous and inappropriate questions that were not clear or were offending to most respondents. Valuable input was obtained during the operation, which was used to modify the questionnaire, and a final version was produced.

2.4.3 Data collection

Initial steps in data collection involved identification of respondents for each survey and the administration of the various survey instruments. Supervisors checked filled-in questionnaires and made on-the-spot checking to see whether interviewers conducted successful interviews and recorded appropriate responses. In addition to the supervisors, qualified professionals were assigned to coordinate the overall data collection activities and to ensure correct implementation of the sampling technique.

Respondents were asked for oral consent prior to participating in the study. There were no incentives for participating in the FGDs, which were conducted within either the premises of schools or woreda health bureaus.

2.5. Data Processing

2.5.1 Editing and Coding

Usually interviewers are strictly instructed to fill in questionnaires in accordance with the guidelines provided and to protect against inconsistencies. Experience has shown that interviewers occasionally overlook some of these elements, which is why supervisors were assigned to review the questionnaires and identify incorrect and inconsistent responses and make appropriate corrections immediately. Apart from all these data quality control mechanisms, an office editing and coding activity was carried out to review for completeness and appropriateness in coding of responses

2.5.2 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was entered into the CSPro program. This recently-developed data processing package has options for entry “verification” by means of an interactive double entry for accuracy purposes. It also allows data entry in a format that can be analyzed using SPSS or other statistical packages.

The qualitative data generated from FGDs and in-depth interviews was analyzed using the Rasch analysis, as proposed by Linacre, J.M. (1995). The method promotes the clear conceptualization and construction of one-dimensional variables, and identifies useful rating scale categorizations. Moreover, it enables qualitative results to be reduced (summarized) into simple metric forms for plotting and further analysis. The Rasch Map brings together clear and unambiguous essential findings based on a well-defined linear metric. The analysis describes the perceptions regarding early marriage from different normative patterns of the various groups (young people, parents by sex, and policy makers). The analyses also show widely-held views and explore the varying perspectives on early marriage.

2.6 Organization of the report

The report is organized in eight chapters. Chapter Three presents the background socio-economic and demographic characteristics of respondents. Chapters Four through Seven present the survey findings. Chapter Four considers prevalence of early marriage and related practices. Chapter Five deals with the causes and Chapter Six with the consequences of early marriage. The last chapter is a summary of the more salient observations and makes recommendations arising out of these results.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

As some background information on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of respondents is essential for the interpretation of findings and understanding of results later in the report, this chapter provides socioeconomic profiles of respondents interviewed in the quantitative survey, including informants' age distribution, religious and ethnic background, level of education, and engagement in economic activity.

3.1 Age Distribution

The age distribution of survey respondents is presented in Annex Table 2. Due to the nature of the study, young girls between 12-14 years of age were included, constituting about 10 percent of respondents. In general, the age distribution varied by rural-urban residence. There were a relatively higher proportion of women aged 15-30 years in the urban areas (56 percent) than in the rural areas (48 percent). Overall, the proportion of younger respondents (12-30 years of age) is higher (about 60 percent) compared to those older than 30. This is a feature of populations characterized by high fertility and high mortality.

3.2 Religion & Ethnic Background

The population covered by the study were predominantly from the Amhara (93 percent) ethnic group, and the majority of them were members of the Orthodox Christian Church (82 percent) followed by Muslims (17 percent). See Annex Table 3 for further details.

3.3 Exposure to Radio Messages

Studies show that listening to information and education through radio motivates positive behavior change among listeners, including the practice of early marriage. In this survey, information was collected about the availability and use of radio receivers in the household.

As shown in Annex Table 4, over 56 percent of all households had no radio, (including 30 percent urban and 63 percent rural households). Fifty three percent of rural women and 28 percent of urban women never listened to radio, where as 43.4 percent of urban and 17.7 percent of rural women listened daily, and 10 percent of rural and 7 percent of urban women listened less than once a week. This suggests that rural women are disadvantaged in terms of access to information through radio. Moreover, as the majority of them are illiterate, the access to print media is also very limited.

3.4 Literacy and Level of Education

Literacy is an important personal characteristic. Literate persons are more likely to acquire knowledge from various pamphlets and other printed media. In line with this fact, respondents were asked whether or not they were able to read and write in the language they are most likely to use. The results are shown in Table 3.1. Although literacy is low in both urban and rural areas, rural women are more disadvantaged in this regard. About two-thirds (67 percent) of the rural women were illiterate, compared to 42 percent among urban women. Overall, literacy among females age 12-49 in the region appears to be less than 40 percent, which suggests that more effort needs to be exerted to keep girls in school.

Information was also collected on the highest grade completed by those who had formal education. As can be seen from Table 3.1, six out of ten women had no formal education at all. Among those with formal education, a little over a quarter had some level of primary education, and only 15 percent had education beyond the primary level. There was little difference in the proportion of women with primary education between rural and urban areas (25 percent vs. 27 percent). On the other hand, the proportion of women who have gone beyond primary education was about three times higher in urban than in rural areas (30.9 percent vs. 10.7 percent). Overall, only 15 percent of the respondents continued beyond primary education.

Table 3.1 Women respondents by literacy status, level of education, and place of residence

Literacy/Education	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Literacy						
Literate	247	58.3	551	33.4	798	38.5
Illiterate	177	41.7	1097	66.6	1274	61.5
Level of Education						
No Education	175	41.3	1058	64.2	1233	59.5
Primary Education	118	27.8	414	25.1	532	25.7
Junior Sec. Education	57	13.4	120	7.3	177	8.5
Secondary and Above	74	17.5	56	3.4	130	6.3
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0

As early marriage is believed to affect girls' participation in the educational system, an effort was made to assess current school attendance by age. Overall, 23 percent of the respondents (27 percent urban and 22 percent rural) were currently attending school (Table 3.2A). As expected, the proportion of women currently in school consistently decreases as they grow older. This could be due to the confounding effect of school drop outs and improved educational opportunities for the younger generation. More than 80 percent of girls between ages 12 and 14 were attending school at the time of the survey, and it is important to note that there is no significant difference by place of residence. This is, perhaps, an outcome of the effort being made to meet the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education.

Nevertheless, still a significant proportion of adolescent women (49 percent) within the school age bracket (that is 12-24 years), were not attending school at the time of the survey

Table 3.2A Percentage of women currently attending school by age and place of residence

Age Groups	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
12 – 14	25	80.6	146	85.4	171	84.7
15 – 19	62	62.6	175	55.2	237	57.0
20 – 24	14	20.9	28	12.1	42	14.1
25 – 29	5	6.9	3	1.3	8	2.6
30 – 34	5	9.6	2	1.0	7	2.9
35 – 39	1	2.0	2	1.0	3	1.2
40 – 44	1	3.6	2	1.2	3	1.5
45 – 49	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.6
Total	113	26.7	359	21.8	472	22.8

Table 3.2B shows the distribution of women of school age (less than 24 years of age) who were attending school at the time of the survey, by marital status. Most of the women currently attending are single. Only nine percent of current students are married. But there is some variation by place of residence. Urban married women are more likely to be enrolled in school than their rural counterparts. Girls in rural areas are more likely to attend school when they are not married. See Table 3.3B.

Table 3.2B Percentage of women age 24 or younger who are currently attending school by marital status and place of residence

<i>Marital Status</i>	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		Percent
Currently Married	7	14.0	21	7.9	28	8.9
Widow/widower	0	0.0	1	14.3	1	11.1
Divorced	4	20.0	16	29.1	20	26.7
Separated	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Living with a partner	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	100.0
Single/never married	90	72.6	309	80.7	399	78.7
Total	101	51.3	349	48.5	450	49.1

Out-of-school respondents were asked why they were not attending school. The results are shown in Table 3.3. Twenty-eight percent cited marriage, 19 percent cited childrearing-related problems, and 4 percent blamed a husband’s disapproval of their attending school. The total number out of school differed by place of residence, with 32.6 percent from urban

vs. 55.2 percent from rural areas. Other reasons mentioned include: parental disapproval (14 percent); lack of financial support (14 percent), obligation to household chores (7.6 percent), lack of interest (4 percent) and health problems (3.4 percent).

In urban areas, lack of financial support is a greater constraint on school attendance than in rural areas, whereas, in rural areas, parental or spousal disapproval or too much housework appear to inhibit one from attending school. About a fifth of the respondents in rural areas were not attending school due to disapproval by parents (16 percent) or husband (4 percent) compared to 6 percent and 2 percent, respectively, in urban areas.

Table 3.3 Out-of-school women aged 12-24 by main reason for not attending and place of residence

<i>Reason for not attending school</i>	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Dropped out due to marriage	12	12.2	119	31.7	131	27.7
Have children to look after	18	18.4	72	19.2	90	19.0
Parents/guardians do not approve going to school	6	6.1	59	15.7	65	13.7
Financial problem/lack of support	20	20.4	18	4.8	38	8.0
Too busy with household chores	4	4.1	32	8.5	36	7.6
Working to support myself	14	14.3	13	3.5	27	5.7
Husband does not approve going to school	2	2.0	16	4.3	18	3.8
Do not have the interest	5	5.1	13	3.5	18	3.8
Health problem	5	5.1	11	2.9	16	3.4
Weak in studies	0	0.0	7	1.9	7	1.5
No school around/school too far	1	1.0	1	0.3	2	0.4
Did not pass to the next level	1	1.0	1	0.3	2	0.4
Others	10	10.2	12	3.2	22	4.7

In many traditional societies, parents do not support young girls' education after a certain age, especially after puberty, due to fear of pre-marital sexual relationships and unintended pregnancy. They also fear the vulnerability to sexual abuse and rape after the age of puberty. Loss of virginity is considered a disgrace for the family. Greater effort is therefore needed to create an environment supportive of girls' education, which is an important aspect of human rights.

Over all, the figures on background characteristics under discussion (namely literacy and the level of education) clearly demonstrate the negative impact of early marriage upon school enrollment and educational attainment of women in the region.

3.5 Current Marital Status

The distribution by marital status sheds light on the proportion of the population currently in union and the extent of marriage dissolution in the study area. Table 3.4 shows the percent distribution of women by marital status and their place of residence. Overall, only 54 percent of the respondents were currently married. There were more unmarried women in urban areas than in rural, and divorce was found to be relatively higher in urban centers. About a third of the women in urban parts of the survey area were single, compared to 24 percent in rural parts. In addition, 12 percent of both urban and rural respondents were divorced, and about 8 percent were widowed. Overall, 27 percent of the women in urban areas and 19 percent in rural areas had dissolved their marriages. This shows that large numbers of marriages in the region are not stable.

Table 3.4 Distribution of women by marital status and place of residence

Marital Status	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Currently Married	176	41.5	932	56.6	1108	53.5
Widow/widower	35	8.3	122	7.4	157	7.6
Divorced	72	17.0	174	10.6	246	11.9
Separated	5	1.2	21	1.3	26	1.3
Living with a partner	1	0.2	3	0.2	4	0.2
Single/never married	135	31.8	396	24.0	531	25.6
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0

3.6 Frequency of remarriages

To assess the frequency of remarriage in the survey area, ever-married respondents were asked about the number of times they had been married. Nearly a quarter of these women had married at least twice, and 14 percent had married three or more times. As expected, remarriage increased with age. Among the younger group (age < 25), 18 percent had been married at least twice, and among those aged 25-34, 37.2 percent had been married two or more times. More than half of those aged 35 and older had been married two or more times during their life time (see Figure 3.1 and Table Annex 5).

As the data in Figure 3.2 below show, more education affects remarriage negatively. Over a quarter (26.6 percent) of remarried women with no education had been married twice. This dropped to 18 percent among those with primary education and further to 16 percent among those with higher than primary education. The proportion who had married more than twice dropped from 16 percent among women with no education, to 9 percent among those with primary education, and to 4 percent among those with higher than primary education.

Figure 3.1 - Married women by age group and number of times married

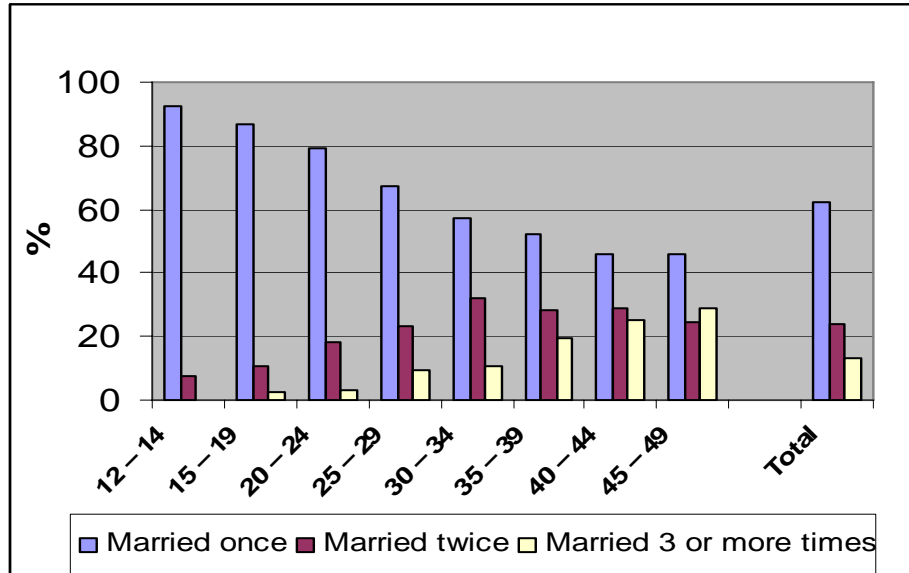
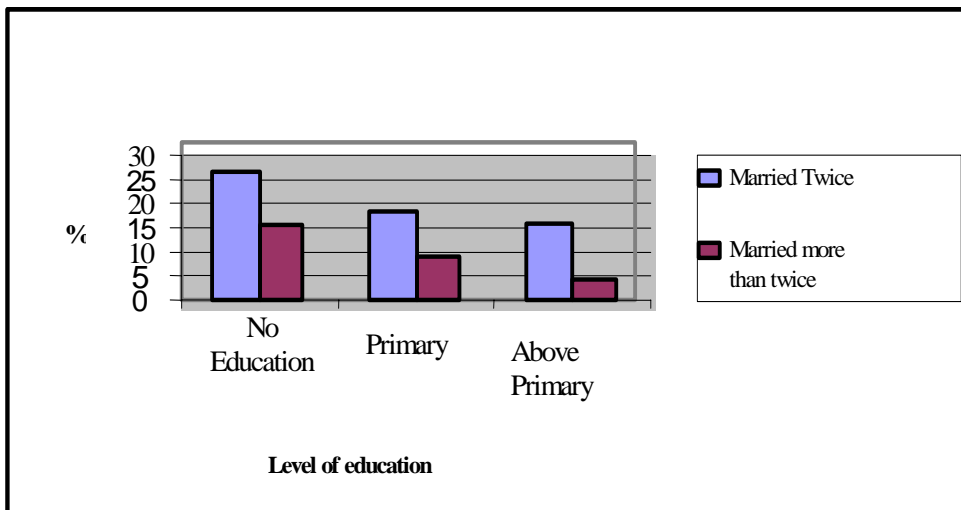


Figure 3.2 Remarriages by level of education



As can be further noted from Annex Table 5, first marriage was intact for only 62.5 percent of the ever-married women. Women whose first marriage was not intact were asked to report the main reasons for the dissolution.

These figures show that remarriage is a common practice in the survey area, and that it is more common among those with no education and older women. To a certain extent this could also imply that women with education are more capable and choose to remain independent because they are better able to support themselves.

As demonstrated in Table 3.5, 55.9 percent of terminated first marriages ended either because the woman was too young for marriage (37.6 percent) or due to lack of interest in the marriage (18.3 percent). Close to 17 percent of first marriages ended due to domestic violence. Only 6.5 percent of first marriages were broken due to the death of a husband and 3.5 percent due to infertility.

Though the percentage of women remarrying differs between urban and rural areas, the pattern of reasons appears to be similar. For instance, a quarter of urban women terminated their first marriage because they felt that they were too young for the marriage and 29 percent due to lack of interest. In rural areas, these percentages were 40.8 and 15.7 respectively. Similarly, violence-related termination accounted for 8.8 percent in urban areas and 13.1 percent in rural areas.

Table 3.5 Distribution of ever-married women who have married more than once by main reason for dissolution of the first marriage and place of residence(percent)

Reason for marriage Dissolution	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Too young for marriage	28	24.6	192	40.8	220	37.6
Not interested in the marriage	33	28.9	74	15.7	107	18.3
Argumentative	7	6.1	34	7.2	41	7.0
Due to death of husband	9	7.9	29	6.2	38	6.5
Infertility	4	3.5	27	5.7	31	5.3
Mistreated me	8	7.0	18	3.8	26	4.4
Drunkard	2	1.8	17	3.6	19	3.2
Beat me	1	0.9	10	2.1	11	1.9
Wanted to pursue education	3	2.6	4	0.8	7	1.2
Husband too old	0	0.0	5	1.1	5	0.9
Insulted me	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.2
Other	19	16.7	58	12.3	77	13.2
Total	114	100.0	471	100.0	585	100.0

As hypothesized, most women from rural settings terminate a first marriage due to problems associated with its having been an early marriage. This result indicates that, though society supports early marriage as a way of early family formation and reproduction, the practice has its own inherent social and psychological problems that can result in family disintegration. Most communities that practice early marriage do not seem to realize the long-term consequences of the practice and simply value the short term cultural “benefits.”

Apart from the reasons for the dissolution of first marriages, information was also collected on their duration. Results are presented in Table 3.6. More than 50 percent of both urban and rural failed first marriages were dissolved during the first three years. An additional 28 percent of urban and 25 percent of rural first marriages that failed, did so between four and ten years of marriage. Significant proportions of women whose marriages terminated also said that the first marriage ended after ten or more years of married life. This is more common in urban than in rural areas.

These findings indicate that marriage dissolution can take place at any time, irrespective of duration, but it is higher in the first three years of marriage.

Table 3.6 Distribution of ever married women whose first marriage had dissolved by duration of marriage and place of residence

Duration of first marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 - 3 years	57	50.0	244	51.8	301	51.5
4 - 5 years	13	11.4	59	12.5	72	12.3
6 - 10 years	19	16.7	61	13.0	80	13.7
More than 10 years	24	21.1	83	17.6	107	18.3
Not Stated	1	0.9	24	5.1	25	4.3
Total	114	100.0	471	100.0	585	100.0

3.7 Engagement in Economic Activity

Participation in economic activity not only gives women access to money, but also exposes them to information. Working women are exposed to the outside world and interact with persons other than their immediate family members. As a result, they are accorded a higher status compared to those who do not participate in economic activity. In view of this fact, respondents were asked about their engagement in economic activity and the type of work they are involved in.

As shown in Table 3.7, the majority of the respondents (54 percent) did not engage in economic activity. Even in urban areas, where opportunities are considered better, a substantial proportion of women (47 percent) reported that they were not engaged in any economic activity. The corresponding figure for the rural women is about 56 percent.

The type of economic activity pursued by women varied by their place of residence. Urban residents were more likely to be engaged in self-business (40 percent) or petty trading (25 percent). On the other hand, farming was the major activity in rural areas.

Table 3.7 Percent distribution of women by engagement in economic activity and type of activity and place of residence

Engagement in economic activity/ Type of activity	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Engagement						
Engaged in economic activity	226	53.3	726	44.1	952	45.9
Not Engaged	198	46.7	922	55.9	1120	54.1
Type of Activity						
Civil Servant	23	10.2	10	1.4	33	3.5
Petty Trading	57	25.2	70	9.6	127	13.3
Self Business/trade	90	39.8	98	13.5	188	19.7
Farmer	12	5.3	485	66.7	497	52.2
Daily laborer	18	8.0	49	6.7	67	7.0
Other	26	10.5	13	1.8	44	3.9
Total	226	100.0	727	100.0	953	100.0

Those who were not engaged in economic activity were asked why not. As shown in Table 3.8, a third of the urban and close to half of the rural women were not able to engage in economic activity mainly due to housework, as most of them were housewives. The second most significant reason was attending school, which was reported by 48 percent of urban and 34 percent of rural respondents, who were not engaged in economic activities.

Table 3.8 Distribution of women not engaged in economic activity by main reason for not being engaged and place of residence (Percent)

Reason for not being engaged	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Housewife	65	32.8	440	47.7	505	45.1
Student	95	48.0	317	34.4	412	36.8
Could not get job	13	6.6	35	3.8	48	4.3
Not Interested	1	0.5	8	0.9	9	0.8
Health Problem/ Incapacitated/ Pensioner	18	9.1	84	9.1	102	9.1
Other	6	3.0	38	4.1	44	3.9
Total	198	100.0	922	100.0	1120	100.0

The fact that the majority of the women were not engaged in economic activity, and that this is mainly due to the fact that they are housewives, could be considered a negative impact of early marriage.

CHAPTER IV

PREVALENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGE AND RELATED PRACTICES

The legal age of marriage is 18 years for both males and females, and any marriage before that age qualifies as early. This study sought to assess the prevalence and trends in the practice of early marriage in the Amhara Region.

This chapter presents additional study findings on the prevalence of early marriage in Amhara Region, its current status, and related issues, such as the age difference between couples, living arrangements after first marriage, and marriage without one's consent. The chapter begins by comparing the prevalence of early marriage in the Amhara Region with other regions in the country, followed by quantitative and qualitative survey data regarding age at first marriage, the best indicator of the prevalence of the practice of early marriage. Finally, the chapter discusses the recent decrease in the prevalence of early marriage, the reasons for that decrease, and other practices related to early marriage.

4.1 Amhara Region Compared to Other Regions

Ethiopia is known to have one of the most severe crises of child marriage in the world. Available studies show that although a high prevalence exists nationwide, the practice occurs in its more extreme forms and at higher numbers in northern regions, particularly in Amhara and Tigray Regions. According to NCTPE (2003), the rate is 82 percent in Amhara, 79 percent in Tigray, 64 percent in Benshangul, 64 percent in Gambella, and 46 percent in Afar Region.

Comparative studies conducted earlier in Amhara, Tigray, SNNPR, and Oromia regions also showed a high occurrence of early marriage in Amhara (Pathfinder International/ Ethiopia; 2005). The proportion married before the age of 15 was highest in both rural and urban areas of Amhara (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Percentage of Women Married Before the Age of 15 Years in the Urban and Rural Areas of Selected Regions

Region	Rural	Urban
SNNPR	6.7	13.7
Oromiya	13.3	10.1
Amhara	48.3	27.8
Tigray	26.6	18.8

Source: Pathfinder International/Ethiopia 2005; Report on KAP Survey of in FP

According to the qualitative assessment findings, within the Amhara Region, the problem of early marriage is much more serious in Western Amhara (which includes East Gojam, West Gojam, Awi, North Gonder, and South Gonder) than it is in Eastern Amhara (Wag Himira, North Wollo and South Wollo). However, a study carried out in 1999 by *YeEthiopia Goji Limadawi Dirgitoch Aswogaj Mahiber* also showed that early marriage is a conspicuous problem in North Shoa and the Oromia zone of Southern Wollo.

4.2 Early Marriage Compared to Other Harmful Traditional Practices

Key informants from the Women's Affairs Office of the Amhara Region expressed the strong opinion that early marriage is by far the most serious of harmful traditional practices in the region. Other key informants and members of FGDs called early marriage a central issue connected to almost all other gender-related issues, such as women's education, their decision-making ability, and health. These key informants believed that successful intervention on the practice of early marriage is the best remedy to address all other gender inequalities that women face in the region.

These respondent opinions were corroborated by the findings of a sample study carried out by the Bureau of Youth, Culture, and Sport Affairs of the Amhara Region on the major harmful traditional practices that are believed to be detrimental to development. The study revealed early marriage to be the most serious harmful traditional practice in the region.

4.3 Age at first Marriage

Actual age at first marriage is the best indicator of the prevalence of early marriage in any area. Due care was taken in both quantitative and qualitative surveys to collect reliable information on age at first marriage in the study area. This section of the chapter presents those findings.

4.3.1 Findings of the Quantitative Survey

Age at marriage classification was made to depict the picture at various physiological and puberty stages. In certain societies many believe that women reach puberty at age 12 and others think that age 15 is ideal for marriage. In the following analysis, the age at first marriage was categorized by taking into account all these considerations, and we believe that the distribution shown on Table 4.2 below provides a meaningful picture about the prevailing situation in the study region.

As shown in the Table, only 18.2 percent of the ever-married women were married within the legal age of marriage (18 and above years); the proportion of women who entered marriage at an appropriate age is only 16.2 percent in the rural areas and 26.6 in urban areas. It shows

that 15 percent of the ever-married women were first married before the age of twelve, when these young girls were neither physiologically nor psychologically ready for the union.

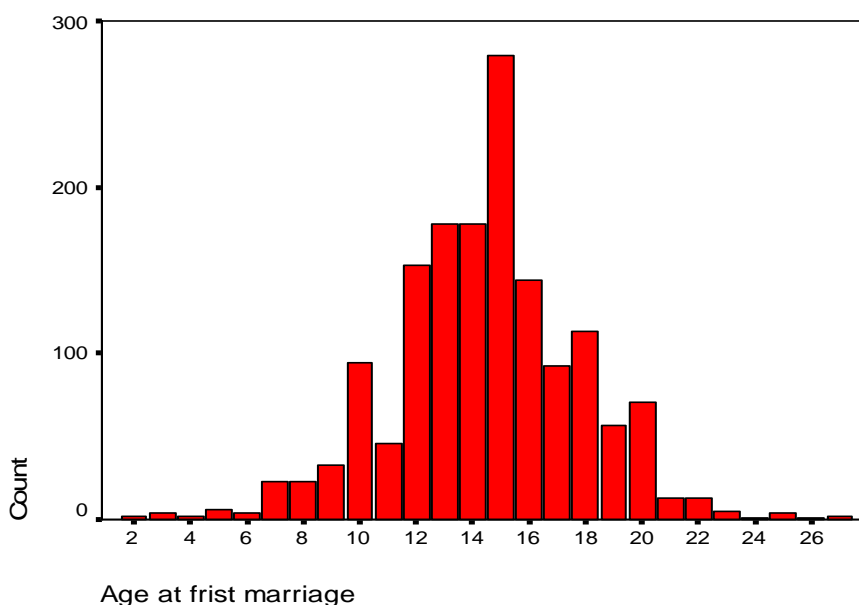
Table 4.2 Distribution of ever-married women in Amhara by age at first marriage and place of residence

Age at first marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 12 years	44	15.2	193	15.4	237	15.4
12 – 15 years	126	43.6	662	52.9	788	51.1
16 – 17 years	42	14.5	194	15.5	236	15.3
18 years and above	77	26.6	203	16.2	280	18.2
Total	289	100.0	1252	100.0	1541	100.0

The rate of such child marriage is almost the same in the rural and urban areas (15.4 and 15.2 percent, respectively). Moreover, about 44 percent of urban and 53 percent of rural ever-married women were married between 12–15 years of age. The proportion marrying between age 16 and 17 was 14.5 in urban and 15.5 percent in rural areas. It is also important to note that the age at first marriage data in urban areas might have been affected by respondents who had migrated to urban areas, since many rural women who marry young, and then terminate their marriages, migrate to urban areas seeking a better life.

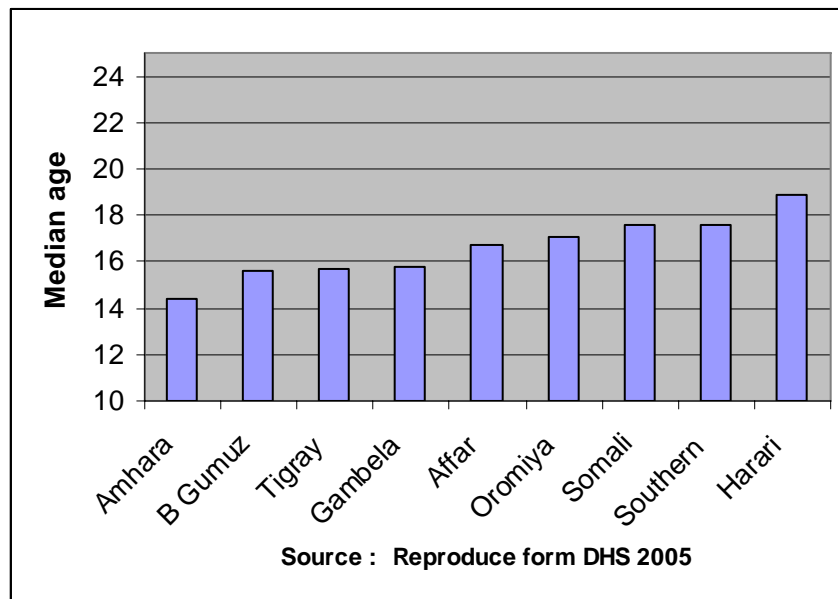
According to Figure 4.1, the mean age at first marriage was 14.46 and the median age was 14 years. The chart below shows the distribution of ever-married women by age at marriage, where the modal age at marriage was reported as 15.

Figure 4.1 Distribution of ever-married women by age at first marriage



The survey finding was also consistent to that of the DHS 2005. The reported age at first marriage by women in the age group 20 - 49 years was lowest for Amhara (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Median age at first marriage by Region,



4.3.2 Findings of the Qualitative Survey

In addition to the quantitative survey, effort was made to assess the situation of age at first marriage in the qualitative approach of the study. Information therein was obtained from the respondents (key informants and members of FGDs) and figures and documents provided by some of the key informants, particularly government officials.

Review of the literature carried out as a part of the qualitative part of the study revealed a few more localized studies that confirm the high prevalence of early marriage in the Amhara Region. For instance, a study conducted in Ankesha Woreda of the Awi Zone revealed that the average age of the first marriage of women in the area is 12 years, and in remote localities girls get married and/or begin shouldering household administration at the age of six to seven years (Bureau of Youth, 1996)

Still another study carried out on married couples in Awi Zone showed the lowest age of female spouses at three years and the highest at sixteen, which means that all marriages of girls of the area qualified as early marriage. The lowest age of first marriage among males was six years and the highest was thirty-six years. According to data obtained from each of the woredas of the same (Awi) zone, the average age of first marriage of the girls was 10.9 years in Banja; 10.1 years in Fagita; 12.1 years in Ankasha; 11.3 years in Guangua; and 11.9 years in Dangila. The average age at first marriage for the entire zone was 11.3 years (Bureau of Youth, 1996).

According to the report of the baseline survey on harmful traditional practices by NTCP (1998) the average marriage age for women in Amhara Region is 14.5, which is almost the same as the result of the quantitative survey. A report by the Women’s Affairs Office of the Amhara Region (Information Bulletin 2003), however, showed a lower age at first marriage (12.5 years).

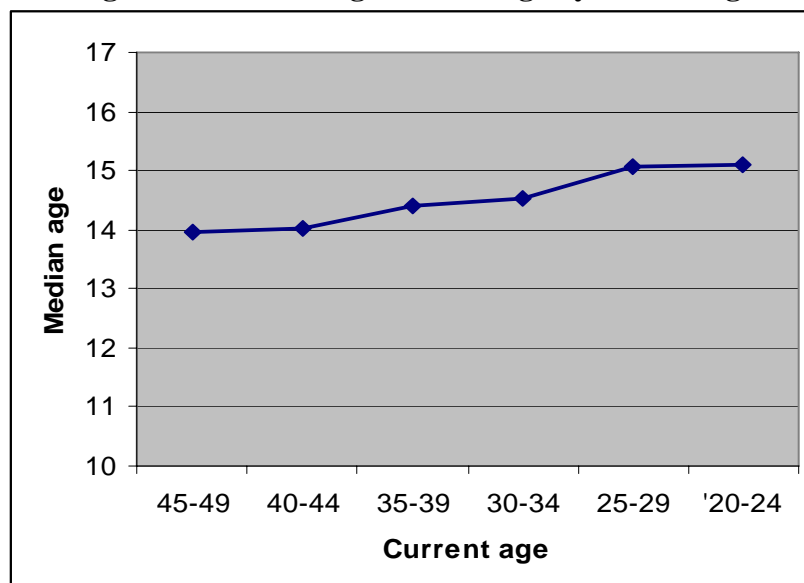
4.4 Current Situation of the Practice of Early Marriage

Though there is no statistical data that shows the trends of the practice of early marriage, key informants and members of FGDs report a significant positive change and decline in the practice. They held that currently a considerable proportion of girls are entering into union at the age of 18 years. Almost all informants expressed the belief that the practice of early marriage has decreased over the last three years, but most importantly in the last one year.

There were some differences of opinion on the scope of the decrease. A few were reluctant to admit that the practice of marrying young has decreased, while others were particularly emphatic on its recent decline. Retrospective analysis showed that those most reluctant to admit that it has decreased are those who disapprove of the practice more strongly. Such persons were married and unmarried females and individuals who are actually involved in the fight against the practice. Thus, according to a key informant, early marriage cannot be described as truly decreasing, especially compared to the efforts exerted to that end. She says, “People seem to have accepted the idea, but all of a sudden they return back to the old practice”.

The qualitative survey data on age at first marriage also shows a gradual increase in the age at first marriage among the younger cohort. The median age at first marriage has increased from slightly lower than 14 among women currently in age group 45 – 49 to slightly over 15 among women in the age group 20 – 24 (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Median age at marriage by current age



4.5 Reasons for the Recent Decrease in the Practice of Early Marriage

Understanding the reasons for recent drop in the practice of early marriage is useful in developing interventions aimed at expanding those changes. These constitute the lessons learned from past attempts and highlight the opportunities and challenges in the struggle against the practice. An effort was therefore made in the qualitative approach of the study to identify the major factors that contribute to the reported recent decrease in the prevalence of the practice. A description of that data follows.

The recent decrease in early marriage practice is primarily attributed to the various measures that are being taken by woreda and kebele administrations, legal bodies, religious and other community leaders, kebele committees, schools (teachers and students' clubs), the police, youth and women's associations, and the Office of Women's Affairs. Through their concerted and coordinated efforts, these bodies are playing an important role - individually and collectively - in fighting early marriage.

A report in the Information Bulletin (July 2003) of the Women's Affairs Office of the Amhara Region documented efforts to fight early marriage as a part of implementing the recent Family Law. Those efforts saved 1,570 children from illegal early marriage in 1996 EC (Ethiopian Calendar) and 9,078 children in 1997 EC (a total of 10,648 in the two consecutive years).

In some woredas, when community leaders, women's associations, or kebele administration members hear about a wedding arrangement, they go to the families and check whether the girl is under-age or not. If she is under-age, they cancel the arrangement. Quite a number of weddings have been cancelled as a result of such actions. There are instances where parents misreport the age of their daughters so that they can continue the wedding process. In such a situation, the kebele administration sends the girl child to a woreda health facility for examination of her age. The health facility report back to the kebele and the administration takes the appropriate action, depending on the girl's age.

One of the most important factors for the recent decrease in the frequency of early marriage is the role played by girls themselves. According to the unanimous opinion of the informants, encouraging change has been observed among the girls. Many of them have developed sufficient consciousness about the phenomenon and have started to fight for their rights (and/or those of their friends). Knowing about friend's or relative's proposals of early marriage, girls report to their teachers, the police, Women's Associations, Office of Women's Affairs or any other relevant bodies.

There are encouraging case stories of girls fighting for their rights. In Kol -Geredo Kebele of Kuta Ber Woreda, a 12-year-old girl heard that her parents planned to marry her off and had fixed the wedding day. She immediately reported it to the woreda court, which intervened and forbade the marriage. In Kendi Kebele of the same woreda, 15-year-old Zeyneba Yemer in grade 6 had a similar story. As soon as she knew that she was going to marry, she reported

to the kebele. When asked to cancel, the parents tried to convince the kebele that Zeyneba was 18 years old, but the kebele referred Zeyneba to Dessie Hospital to estimate her age. The hospital gave Zeyneba a certificate that shows she is under-age, thus saving her and allowing her to continue her education.

Various additional issues contribute to the current decrease in the practice of early marriage. These include:

- Continuous education conducted for woreda and kebele officials, as well as teachers, on the consequences of early marriage and existing laws;
- Awareness creation among community leaders (religious leaders, women's association, youth association) and community members on the negative consequences of early marriage and existing law;
- CBRHAs sensitize and educate communities on the consequences of early marriage and other traditional practices, which affect the reproductive health of women, men, and adolescents;
- Enforcement of the Revised Family Law and the criminal code on early marriage through active participation of the various stakeholders (including in- and out-of-school clubs, women's associations, the judiciaries, teachers, kebele officials, and the like).
- Religious leaders are involved in educating the community and they condemn early marriage and other harmful traditional practices. Many priests or *Kadi* do not accept under-aged couples for marriage; they request medical proof as evidence if they have doubt about the actual age of the bride.
- Schools are actively involved in prevention of early marriage. When female students are absent from school for some days, the teachers report their absence and the schools follow up and try to find out the reason for their absence. If the school finds out it is due to marriage, they first try to convince the parents to cancel the marriage. If this fails, they report to the justice office.
- Currently, girls are aware and have better knowledge about their rights and the consequences of early marriage. If they know that their parents are in the process of arranging a marriage, they immediately report to their school if they are students or to the kebele or police (woreda court) if they are out of school.

However, the above should not be taken to mean that everything has gone right. For, though there is encouraging movement to fight early marriage, much more remains to be done. There is still strong resistance among those involved in the practice.

Many parents continue to resist government interference in their domestic lives, saying “She is my daughter; I can do whatever I want.” In a number of cases, girls join with their parents and assert their desire for the marriage.

A key informant reported that out of 200 illegal marriages of under-aged girls in the Oromiya zone of the Eastern Amhara, they were able to cancel only 28 marriages due to parental resistance. Oromiya zone of Amhara region is a deeply conservative Muslim region, where parents feel strongly about marrying their daughters at a young age.

4.6 Age Difference between Couples

Age differences result in significant differences in life experience and outlook. Many studies have also shown that age affects an individual’s attitude and behavior. People who are in the same age bracket get along and understand each other more easily than in traditional societies where there is a large age difference. A couple’s age difference is believed to affect the level of their communication, mutual understanding, and agreement on various familial issues. It also affects the balance of influence and control within the family, giving an older man considerably more control than that held by his young wife.

Ever-married women were asked for information on the age difference between themselves and their spouses at the time of first marriage. Results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Percent distribution of ever married women by difference in age with first husband and place of residence

Age difference with first husband	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Older/Younger						
Older	207	71.6	910	72.7	1117	72.5
Younger	4	1.4	7	0.6	11	0.7
About the same age	64	22.1	262	20.9	326	21.2
Don't know	14	4.8	73	5.8	87	5.6
Total	289	100.0	1252	100.0	1541	100.0
How many years older						
Ten or more years older	101	48.8	450	49.5	551	49.3
Less than ten years older	106	51.2	459	50.4	565	50.6
Total	207	100.0	910	100.0	1117	100.0

Nearly 75 percent of the ever-married women were married to older men, and about 21 percent were of the same age. A very small percentage of women married younger husbands. Of those who married an older husband, the age difference was 10 years or more in half the cases.

The result shows no variation by place of residence. It is a normal and accepted norm among many ethnic groups in Ethiopia that husbands are slightly older than the wife. But in

certain cases much older men are married to younger girls due to economic and associated reason.

Age difference was also an issue during the FGDs. Discussants confirmed that early marriage usually involves large spousal age differences, which in most cases limits the autonomy and decision-making ability of married girls.

4.6.1. Previous Marriage Experience of Husbands

To shed light on the previous marital experience of husbands, respondents were asked whether or not their first husbands had been married before. Surprisingly, one-in-five reported that their husband had been previously married, which was more common in urban than rural areas. In four percent of the cases, respondents did not know about the previous marital status of their first husbands (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Percent distribution of ever-married women by prior marriage of their first husbands, number of wives, and place of residence

Husband previous marital status /Number of earlier marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Earlier Marriage						
Husband married before	68	23.5	242	19.3	310	20.1
Did not marry before	210	72.7	963	76.9	1173	76.1
Don't know	11	3.8	47	3.8	58	3.8
Total	289	100.0	1252	100.0	1541	100.0
Number of Times						
Married once	41	60.3	153	63.5	194	62.8
Two or more times	19	27.9	69	28.6	88	28.5
Don't know	8	11.8	19	7.9	27	8.7
Total	68	100.0	241	100.0	309	100.0

An attempt was also made to collect information on the number of previous marriages of the husbands for assessing the extent of vulnerability of young girls marrying older men. Twenty-percent of the husbands of women interviewed had been married before. Of these, 63 percent had been married once and 28.5 percent had been married two or more times. Differences were marginal between rural and urban areas. About 9 percent of the women reported that they had no idea about the number of previous marriages of their first husband (See Table 4.4).

4.7 Living Arrangement after First Marriage

Traditionally, young brides married before the age of 10 often stay with the husband's parents for a certain number of years until she reaches puberty and is able to manage her own

household. This practice is locally known as “Madego”. During this period, young girls are exposed to long hours of work by their in-laws. Moreover, they are usually given inadequate food that does not meet their nutritional needs. The bride’s family does not support or pay for the education of daughters-in-law, and the girls usually are forced to discontinue school, even if they are already enrolled.

For data on whether living with in-laws is still practiced, and if so, for how long, ever-married women were asked where they lived after their marriage. The results are presented in Table 4.5. The data show percent distribution of women by dwelling place after marriage and how long they lived under such an arrangement. The data support what was stated earlier. Nearly 60 percent of the ever-married women lived with their husband’s parents at the time of first marriage, varying considerably between urban (62 percent) and rural (47 percent) areas. A small percentage (8 percent) of the respondents reported living in their own parents’ house after marriage, and close to one-third reported living in their own home independent of parents, (more commonly in urban areas).

The practice of living with the husband’s parents was less common in urban areas traditionally, but because of housing shortages, it appears to be prevailing in urban areas as well recently.

Table 4.5 Percent distribution of ever married women by place of stay after marriage, duration of stay and place of residence

Place of Stay/Duration of Stay	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Place of Stay						
Husband's parents	136	47.1	780	62.3	916	59.4
Respondent's parents	29	10.0	100	8.0	129	8.4
Own home	120	41.5	361	28.8	481	31.2
Other place	4	1.4	10	0.8	14	0.9
Total	289	100.0	1252	100.0	1541	100.0
Duration of Stay						
Less than one year	57	35.0	286	32.5	343	32.9
1 - 2 years	33	20.2	261	29.7	294	28.2
2 - 4 years	45	27.6	263	29.9	308	29.5
More than 4 years	28	17.2	70	8.0	98	9.4
Total	163	100.0	880	100.0	1043	100.0

Those who lived in places other than their own home were asked about the duration of stay in the respective households. Only a third of those who lived in places other than their own house reported that they lived as a couple in the specified households for less than one year; 28 percent between 1-2 years, and 30 percent between 2-4 years. In rural areas, about 62 percent of the couples stayed for at most two years in places other their own home, while in

urban areas the figure was 55.2 percent. Couples in urban areas are twice more likely to not have their own home for four or more years than their rural counterparts (See Table 4.5).

4.8 Marriage without One’s Consent

Consent and age are the two most “Essential Conditions of Marriage” according to the Revised Family Code (Proclamation of 2000). Hence, the practice of early marriage violates the rights that are legally and constitutionally regarded as the first two most “essential conditions of marriage”.

Among those marrying early, some are forced into this union, others are simply too young to make an informed decision. Somebody else provides consent on the child’s behalf. The child does not have the opportunity to exercise her right to choose her mate. As a result, early marriages could be regarded as forced marriages. Young girls are forced or pushed into marriages by their parents, relatives, friends, local elders, and the like.

Many believe that an exemplary marriage is characterized by the mutual understanding and respect the couple has for each other. This normally happens when the couples have entered into the marriage willingly and without the influence of a third party. Willingness reflects the individual’s commitment and readiness to keep the marriage intact. In line with this, effort was made to see if respondents entered the marriage with or without the influence of a third party. In other words, married women were asked if they were pressured to get into the union and who provided that pressure. The result is presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Percentage of ever-married women by whether or not they were pressured to marry, who provided the pressure, and place of residence

Pressured to marry/ Persons who pressured	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pressured to marry						
Pressured	137	47.4	717	57.3	854	55.4
Not pressured	152	52.6	535	42.7	687	44.6
Total	289	100.0	1252	100.0	1541	100.0
Persons Who Pressured						
Father	119	86.2	660	91.7	779	90.8
Mother	117	84.8	640	88.9	757	88.2
Community Elderly	30	21.7	159	22.1	189	22.0
Other Relatives	20	14.5	126	17.5	146	17.0
Grand Parents	11	8.0	76	10.6	87	10.1
Relatives of Fiancée	9	6.5	54	7.5	63	7.3
Fiancée	11	8.0	39	5.4	50	5.8
Friends	0	0.0	7	1.0	7	0.8
Other	0	0.0	6	0.8	6	0.7

More than half (55 percent) of the married women reported being pressured into marriage, including 57 percent of those in rural areas and 47 percent in urban communities. These findings show the severity of the problem and shed light on the extent of violation of individual human rights. Young girls are being influenced to get into marriage without their consent and interest.

As can be seen from Table 4.6, most of the urging comes from parents, (90 percent reported pressure from fathers and 88 percent from mothers). Twenty-two percent reported influence from community elders, who in most cases act as intermediate negotiators between the brides' and grooms' families and work to get themselves heard and respected. In general, parents, grandparents, and other relatives play a significant role in pushing one into marriage.

The role played by parents goes beyond pressure to marry to include the choice of the husband, making the decision to marry, and arranging the marriage. Survey findings show that in 85 percent of the cases, parents choose the husband; in 86 percent of the cases, they are the decision makers, and in 88 percent, they arrange the marriage itself. In only 11 percent of the cases was the husband chosen by the girl or jointly with her parents. In 8 percent of the cases, the decision whether to marry or not was made by the girl or jointly with her parents. Urban areas appear to be slightly better compared to rural areas, as a higher proportion of the women choose their husbands, make the decision whether or not to marry, and arrange their marriages. For instance, 18 percent of urban women reported that they chose their first husband and 9 percent made the decision to marry.

More than 60 percent of the women reported that they were not informed about the wedding before the decision was made. Even in urban areas, 50 percent of the women reported that they were not informed about the wedding (albeit many of them could be migrants from rural areas). See Annex Table 6 for further detail.

Married women were also asked if they knew the bridegroom prior to the wedding. Surprisingly, three-fourths of the women in rural areas did not know the person prior to the wedding and were forced into union with a person about whom they knew nothing. The majority of ever married women (72 percent) were not asked for their consent

Further probing was made among those who had been informed prior to the wedding, to see if they were asked for their consent to the marriage. The data shows variation by place of residence. Only a quarter of the women in rural areas and 45 percent in urban areas were asked for their consent. Consistent with findings related to parental and relative influence, most of the young women who were asked for consent could not really refuse. In many societies, largely the rural part, disagreement is interpreted as disrespect and is regarded as indecent behavior. Many lack the courage to disagree for fear of rejection by family members and the community at large.

The survey also addressed issues pertaining to the practice of abduction. It was encouraging to note that abduction is not a major problem in the survey area. In both urban and rural areas, a small percentage of the women (6.6 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively) reported

having been abducted into marriage. However, this is not an insignificant proportion and the practice is considerably higher in other regions (NCTPE, 2003).

The preceding data and discussion clearly show that few women have a role in choosing their lifetime companion and in making the decision whether or not to marry. They are usually forced to marry men they do not know, their consent is rarely considered, and they usually have no information even about the wedding. One can imagine the psychological impact these experiences have on these young women.

It further shows that, although marriage is supposed to be a joyful occasion, uniting two families and creating a new domestic unit to continue the hope and values of the society, in reality, for young girls, the event often represents a serious abuse of their personal human rights.

CHAPTER V

CAUSES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

According to the “Essential Conditions of Marriage” (Section 2, Article 6-16) of the Revised Family Code (Proclamation of 2000), Article 7 specifies the legal marriage age of both boys and girls as follows: “Neither a man nor a woman who has not attained the full age of eighteen years shall conclude marriage.”

Given the overwhelming numbers of young girls placed in marriage at an early age, an attempt was also made in this study to identify the reasons why their parents pursue this practice, despite strong legal prohibitions. The present chapter offers both qualitative and quantitative data on these issues.

5.1 Findings of the Qualitative Survey

Historical Explanation

The practice of early marriage has its own historical background. Decades of feudalism in the country contributed significantly to the institutionalization of the practice. In this period, elites used marriage as a means to establish or strengthen relationships with the bride’s or bridegroom’s family to ensure social, economic or political benefits. At times, marriage was also used to ease tensions between two quarreling families. The urgent need to cement the relationship or realize the envisaged benefit precluded waiting until the children reached puberty. This practice established a very early marriage age as a norm in many parts of the country. The exact age of entrance into marriage depends on local established norms and values, and varies from place to place.

Poverty/Economic causes

Some analysts explain early marriage in Ethiopia as a way to improve the economic status of the family, arguing that poverty forces families to marry their daughters at a young age.

However, according to the results of the qualitative assessment, poverty is not a major cause of early marriage in the region, if it is a cause at all. For one thing, according to the opinions of the discussants, many of those who approve and/or practice it are relatively well-to-do. Moreover, for most families there is no significant economic benefit to be realized from early marriage of their daughters. Although the desire to get *macha* (money that the boy’s family gives to that of the girl on the agreement of the marriage) was mentioned as a possible motive, few informants mentioned it, and it ranked only 6th out of the 8 factors considered significant in the quantitative survey.

Lack of knowledge

It may also be thought that parents approve and practice early marriage because they are ignorant of its negative consequences upon their daughters. However, reports from informants, as well as personal observations during the fieldwork for this study, reveal that

lack of knowledge about the negative impacts can never be an explanation for its prevalence in the region. For example, two informants (a key informant and a member of one of the married women's FGDs) mentioned that they knew a number of persons who vehemently disapprove of early marriage and/or decry its negative impacts at public gatherings, but they nevertheless pursue the practice in their own homes.

Moreover, a key informant from the Office of Women's Affairs of the Amhara Region reported that people often disapprove of early marriage and even temporarily stop the practice, but some relapse back into the practice sooner or later, due to the strong cultural and traditional values attached to the practice. However, the overall trend shows that the practice has been decreasing in recent years, most importantly after the May 2005 revised criminal code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the revised family code proclamation of 2000.

Tradition/Cultural Values

According to the opinions of the informants, as well as the results of review of relevant literature, the major reported explanations for the approval and actual practice of early marriage include the desire or need to maintain the family's good name and social standing. There is also a personal interest - mostly among fathers - to create bonds or relationships with families of choice. These customs, combined with a fear that the girl might become unmarriageable later in life ("qT k[ç") and the need to ensure virginity of the girls at the time of marriage, are the driving causes of early marriage.

In some cases, community members could not imagine marriage beyond younger ages. An older unmarried daughter can become a disgrace to her family, prompting community rejection of the family and victimization of the girl through verbal attacks and gossip that the family simply cannot afford to risk.

However, the most important of the reported reasons for the practice is the cultural value and personal importance of witnessing the marriage of one's children (sons and daughters) and grandchildren. This is considered a mark of manhood/fatherhood. Analysis reveals that what is really sought here is not the satisfaction or well-being of the daughters, but that of the parents. It appears that a man's status in the community is greatly influenced by the success of his children, and for a girl, that means marriage. The younger generation seems to realize this and regard it as intergenerational issue. That was why adolescents, both males and females in the FGDs and individual interviews were highly emotional when expressing their disapproval of the practice.

The fact that tradition and cultural values are the most important causes of early marriage is highly supported by the findings of quantitative data in the study described below. According to this data, the response of "Tradition" as the cause of the practice of early marriage ranked the 1st out of the 8 factors; it was reported by about 82 percent of the respondents.

Limited law enforcement activity

Another important reason for the continuity of the practice of early marriage - in spite of the legal provisions - is the impression among parents that the laws and their consequences pose little real threat. This is mainly due to the fact that some community members are not aware of the newly adopted criminal code which criminalizes and penalizes the practice.

Premarital sex and pregnancy among youth

The last, but not least, reported reason could be considered a negative impact of modernization. Unwanted pregnancy is increasing among school girls, which is regarded as a disgrace to their families. This is a genuine traditional explanation for promoting early marriage.

5.2 Findings of the Quantitative Survey

Findings from the quantitative survey generally confirmed those of the qualitative data, with some variation in nuance. Most significantly, the deeply-rooted quality of the tradition perpetuates the practice automatically, with advocates rarely giving a second thought as to its consequences and the overall misery the practice brings to young girls.

Table 5.1 summarizes causes of early marriage mentioned by respondents in the order of their importance. As noted earlier, the majority could cite no reason other than that it is a tradition that they must adhere to. This would imply that community members follow norms without critically questioning the essence of the practice. Many married to strengthen a relationship with the bridegroom's family. Prestige was cited by nearly four out of ten of respondents married before the age of 18. Thirty percent reported that getting married at a later age is difficult. This element places a lot of pressure on the girls to comply, as they can foresee no future for themselves in the community except as a wife.

Table 5.1 Percentage of women married before age 18 by main reason for getting married and place of residence

Reasons for getting married	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
It is a tradition in the area	170	81.3	856	82.0	1026	81.9
To strengthen relationship	84	40.2	477	45.7	561	44.8
For prestige	75	35.9	411	39.4	486	38.8
Difficult to get married if older	52	24.9	318	30.5	370	29.5
The family will be victim of gossip	51	24.4	308	29.5	359	28.7
To collect dowry	39	18.7	229	21.9	268	21.4
To protect virginity and avoid premarital affair	46	22.0	220	21.1	266	21.2
Others	19	9.1	78	7.5	97	7.7

A little over one fifth of the respondents reported that they were forced into marriage to collect dowry, and about the same percentage reported that it was to protect virginity and avoid extramarital sex.

For a more thorough picture of the situation, respondent perceptions were analyzed by age at first marriage, and results are shown in Table 5.2. As expected, an overwhelming majority of women married before age 12 believed that they married too early. Surprisingly, 12 percent of those women in rural areas thought that the timing was right. Of the women who married between ages 12 and 15, about 37 percent considered that they married at the right time.

Table 5.2 Percentage of women who married before age 18 by age at first marriage , their perception of the timing of first marriage and place of residence

Age at first marriage	Urban			Rural		
	Too Early	Too Late	About the Right Time	Too Early	Too Late	About the Right Time
Less than 12 years	93.2	0.0	6.8	87.5	1.0	11.5
12 – 15 years	62.7	0.8	36.5	62.5	0.5	37.0
16 – 17 years	16.7	7.1	76.2	25.8	2.1	72.2
18 years and above	6.5	3.9	89.6	6.9	5.4	87.7
Total	45.7	2.4	51.9	51.6	1.6	46.8

Similarly, about three-quarters of the women married between ages 16 and 17 believed that it was the right time. Only 7 percent of women married at age 18 or later felt the timing for the marriage was too early, but for the majority (nearly 90 percent), it was the right time.

Further probing was made to understanding reasons why the marriage was considered too early. The results are summarized and presented in Table 5.3. The majority of the women felt that they were too young for marriage. Nearly 60 percent said they had no prior idea about the marriage and implicitly disapproved of it by stating that they were not ready for it. About a quarter of the early-married women in urban areas, and a fifth of their counterparts in rural areas believed their first marriage was mistimed because they wanted to pursue their education. A considerable proportion of the women also wanted to help their families before getting into marriage.

Despite the recently promulgated family law and its prohibitions against early marriage, the law has been poorly publicized, and most people are unaware of the legal provisions. As a result, most women do not seek legal protection against the practice. In addition to these problems, even those who are aware and seek legal protection may not be served well, as law enforcement activity is generally poor, especially, in most rural areas.

Table 5.3 Women who believe that their marriage did not take place at the right time by reasons and place of residence

Reason for the belief on the wrong timing of marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Too young to be married	111	79.9	573	86.0	684	85.0
Did not know much about marriage	82	59.0	379	56.9	461	57.3
Was not interested in being married	59	42.4	287	43.1	346	43.0
Wanted to pursue education	34	24.5	128	19.2	162	20.1
Wanted to help my family more	21	15.1	85	12.8	106	13.2
Did not like the person chosen for me	14	10.1	91	13.7	105	13.0
Wanted personal assets before marriage	12	8.6	66	9.9	78	9.7
Others	3	2.2	10	1.5	13	1.6

To understand the extent of such awareness, respondents were asked whether or not they knew of the legal provisions against the practice of early marriage. The result is shown in Annex Table 5. Contrary to the assumption that most people are not aware of the existing legal provisions against early marriage, it is encouraging to see that seven out of ten women were aware of the existence of the legal provisions, and that awareness rose to three-quarters among women in urban areas.

Only 37 percent of the women in rural areas mentioned the correct age for marriage, and about the same percentage explicitly said that they do not know if there is a minimum age for marriage. Though there is a slight improvement in urban areas, a substantial proportion of urban women still do not know the correct minimum age at marriage. Overall, 54 percent of the women in urban areas did not know the correct age of marriage. The majority know that there is a law against early marriage, but they don't know the exact legal age.

Respondents were asked what the ideal age for marriage should be for both boys and girls. The results are shown in Annex Table 8. As expected, suggested ideal ages vary by gender. Most of the respondents think girls should marry early and boys later. Consistent with findings on the perception of selecting a husband, men are seen as bread-winners and are expected to be educated, work and earn income, and to shoulder social responsibilities. Thus, they should marry later after accomplishing these tasks.

On average, a four-year difference between genders is considered ideal for marriage. The difference is even greater in urban areas where three-quarters of the respondents thought girls should marry by age 18 or earlier, compared to 83 percent in rural areas. In fact, four out of ten rural respondents favored marriage for girls below the minimum legal age, while an overwhelming majority thought boys should marry after age 20.

In brief, major factors leading parents to arrange early marriage for their children include the following:

- (i) Economically well-to-do peasant families can create economic alliances with other well-to-do families through their children's marriage;
- (ii) In a few cases, poverty forces peasant parents to marry more than one child in one wedding ceremony
- (iii) Parents want to secure their children's future through a marriage alliance. For most parents, the only successful vocation for the "girl-child" is to be a wife and mother. (Parents want to see their children married or settled before becoming old or passing away);
- (iv) Most importantly, the desire of the family to keep one's good name and social esteem and (mostly of fathers), to create bonds or relationships with families of their choice.
- (v) Parents want also to avoid the *qomo qär* stigma (fear of girls being unmarriageable at later ages) and to protect them from premarital sex, which is not equally scorned for boys. This inspires parents to marry their daughters while young to ensure social recognition and respect in their communities.
- (vi) Tradition and cultural values are the most important reasons for the practice of early marriage. In most of the cases the question "Why do parents marry their daughters too young?" is answered by "**Just because it is a tradition.**"

CHAPTER VI

CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

In this study, an assessment was made of the multifaceted consequences of early marriage for both the individual and the community. This chapter presents findings collected using both quantitative and qualitative instruments. In the structured questionnaire, women who married before the age of 18 were filtered and asked if they had encountered any problems as a result of their early marriage. As structured instruments are limited in scope in assessing deep feelings and pains that these women have experienced, in-depth information collected through probing and interactive conversations are added to fill this gap.

Unrestricted questions were employed through the qualitative assessment process to supplement and further explore the consequences of early marriage in the Amhara Region. According to the findings of the latter, early marriage is now well recognized as causing diverse, complex, and interrelated socio-economic, political, psychological, and physiological (reproductive health) problems for young girls. Likewise, most of the key informant interviewees and FGD participants disapproved of the practice, by reporting a number of specific negative consequences.

This chapter presents the findings of both qualitative and quantitative surveys regarding the negative consequences of early marriage.

6.1 Instability of Marriage

Family is the fundamental unit of any society, and the welfare of a society directly affects the well being of families that constitute it. The stability of marriage has important direct effects on the well being of a family.

A major negative consequence of early marriage is instability, (disagreements and eventual divorce or separation). Marriage without consent is widely thought to be the major cause for most of the divorces, and many of the early marriages are conducted without the consent of the girls.

The Amhara Region is characterized by a very high incidence of divorce. It also seems to be the major origin of the commercial sex workers throughout the country, and both can often be attributed to the exceptionally high prevalence of early marriage in the region.

According to the quantitative survey cited in Chapter Three, about 47 percent of marriages were terminated due to girls being too young for the marriage or due to lack of interest in the marriage.

Women married before the age of 18 were asked about the life they led in the early days of their first marriage. The results are presented in Table 6.1. Only 22 percent of these early married women said that it was very good. More than half said it was not bad (signifying some degree of dissatisfaction). The proportion of women reporting that it was not bad is relatively higher in rural areas than urban (53 percent versus 45 percent). In rural areas, surprisingly, one out of every five early-married women described their married life as bad. The percentage was even higher among urban respondents, where three out of ten women described it as bad. About 4 percent of the early married women reported that their married life was too bad.

Questions focused on the reasons why their married life was unpleasant. Results shown in Table 6.1 suggest that nearly three-fourths of the early-married women did not enjoy their married life because they were given responsibility beyond their capacity, and they simply could not manage to lead a proper life. About 43 percent also cited that they had to perform heavy domestic work, which they could not manage. Many girls forced into marriage at an early age are obliged to shoulder responsibilities of managing married life that they sometimes find difficult to manage. A traditional Ethiopian saying acknowledges the problems these young women have with becoming mothers: “**a child begot a child**”.

Table 6.1 Percentage of women married before age 18 by perception of their life in marriage, reasons for bad life, and place of residence

Perception of married life/	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Perception of married life						
Very Good	48	23.0	230	22.0	278	22.2
Fair/Not Bad	93	44.5	553	53.0	646	51.6
Bad	61	29.2	218	20.9	279	22.3
Worse	7	3.3	43	4.1	50	4.0
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0
Main reason for unpleasant married life						
The responsibility was beyond my capacity	49	72.1	189	72.4	238	72.3
Work Load	26	38.2	115	44.1	141	42.9
Did not marry the person I wanted	25	36.8	111	42.5	136	41.3
I was totally against the marriage	23	33.8	104	39.8	127	38.6
I was beaten/frequently quarreled	13	19.1	48	18.4	61	18.5
My husband mistreated me	9	13.2	51	19.5	60	18.2
Other	6	8.8	22	8.4	28	8.5

About 40 percent of early-married women in rural areas and nearly 37 percent of their counterparts in urban areas mentioned that they did not marry the person they wanted and are not happy about it. Quite substantial numbers of women were unhappy because they totally opposed their marriages but could not be heard. Nineteen percent of women unhappy in their

marriages cited violence (frequent quarreling and beating) as the reason, and mistreatment by the husband was worse in rural areas.

Loss of happiness and dissatisfaction with married life often lead women to try to get away by seeking divorce or running away to cities in search of other means of livelihood. These conditions seem to be the reason for a higher level of marriage dissolution among early-married women. Of those reporting divorce, 63 percent had married before age 15. Moreover, the results also indicate that a significant proportion of those who married below the legal age were not in stable unions even after the termination of first marriage (31.1 percent had married at least two times).

Survey respondents married early were also asked their perception of the appropriateness of their age at first marriage. As can be seen from Table 6.2, half believed that they married too early and half thought their union was at the right time, with urban women slightly more content with their timing than their rural counterparts.

Table 6.2 Percentage of women who married before age 18 by their perception of the timing of marriage and place of residence

Timing of first marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Too Early	132	45.7	646	51.6	778	50.5
About the Right Time	150	51.9	585	46.8	735	47.7
Too Late	7	2.4	20	1.6	27	1.8
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0

6.2 Impacts on the Health of the Women

One of the many sufferings early married women face is the physical pain associated with sexual intercourse due to the physiological immaturity of the sexual organs. Physical pain during intercourse, obstetric fistula due to youthful delivery, when girls are not physically matured, and other complications due to pregnancy are among the many health-related problems faced by young married women.

Considering these facts, empirical data was gathered on the health-related consequences encountered by early-married women. Women married before the age of 18 were asked if they had encountered any health problems as a result of early marriage. To have a better picture of the situation, the responses are organized by age at first marriage, (12-14 and 15-17 years).

As expected women who married earliest (ages 12-14) encountered more health problems than those married between 15 – 17 years (8 percent versus 6 percent). Those residing in urban areas are more likely to report such incidences than their rural counterparts. In fact, it

is heartening to see that the majority of the women encountered no health problems. But we believe that there were some who feared or were restrained from reporting, especially injuries related to sexual intercourse (See table 6.3).

Of this limited number of women reporting health problems, most were related to sexual organs, probably due to physical immaturity. To a lesser extent, early-married women reported facing pregnancy or delivery-related health problems. Consistent with earlier findings, some developed tension and frustration as a result of the marriage, and a few were reportedly victims of assault.

Discussants in FGDs have also strongly indicated that girls who married very young are at risk of birth related complications, such as fistula. They are neither physiologically nor anatomically ready to carry on a pregnancy/delivery, and in some instances, too small for a normal vaginal delivery. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that very young girls often receive inadequate nutrition, limiting even more their normal growth and development.

Table 6.3 Percentage of women reporting health problems as a result of early marriage and type of problem encountered, by place of residence and age at first marriage

Age at First Marriage/Problem encountered/ Type of problem	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age at first marriage 12 – 14 years						
Encountered reproductive health problem	9	11.8	33	7.7	42	8.4
Did not encounter	67	88.2	393	92.3	460	91.6
Age at first marriage 15 – 17 years						
Encountered reproductive health problem	3	3.6	27	6.5	30	6.0
Did not encounter	81	96.4	389	93.5	470	94.0
Total	89	100.0	426	100.0	515	100.0
Type of health problem						
Sexual and sexual organ related	6	40.0	44	56.4	50	53.8
Pregnancy or delivery related	5	33.3	37	47.4	42	45.2
Frustration/Tension	5	33.3	34	43.6	39	41.9
Injury as a result of assault	3	20.0	17	21.8	20	21.5
Excessive menstruation	2	13.3	14	17.9	16	17.2
Other	1	6.7	5	6.4	6	6.5

6.2.1 Fistula and Related Problems

The problem of fistula is foremost among the health impacts of early marriage. Prolonged and obstructed labor in most cases results in obstetric fistulas. Almost all respondents in the qualitative survey reported knowing of at least one case, and some were aware of up to five fistula cases.

It is important here to remember that problems with fistulae are generally kept secret and rarely publicized; only those who are very close to the concerned individual know about it. Hence, the magnitude of the problem is most probably higher than what is reported here.

The Amhara region is well known for the problem of fistula. Of women coming from all regions for care at the Addis Ababa fistula hospital, 40 percent were from the Amhara Region. The only fistula hospital/service in Bahr Dar town, capital of the Amhara Region, has reached its capacity to deal with the problem, and there are many women unable to get treatment.

6.2.2 HIV/AIDS Infection

Another health impact of early marriage is an increased level of exposure to infection by HIV/AIDS. Although the risk increase is not directly related to youth, instability is very common in early marriages, since the women enter the union by force and lack commitment and love to maintain the marriage. They run away back to their parents or to towns in search of a better livelihood, getting employed as housemaids or sex workers. This increases their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other STIs. The case of Belaynesh from Banja Woreda focus group discussion demonstrates the situation.

Belaynesh, who is 23 years old, was married at the age of eleven and gave birth at 12 to a son. However, the trauma of her early delivery was too much for her young and delicate body and the whole left side of her body remained paralyzed. As a result, her husband sent her back to her parents, eventually abandoning her completely and taking another wife. After years of suffering, her health improved but she found life extremely difficult. Leaving her son with her parents, Belaynesh moved to a town and ended up as a sex worker. Now, she is HIV positive.

6.3. Inability to Plan Families

Early marriage increases the span of a woman's reproductive period, and those who marry earlier are more likely to have a greater number of children than others. Due to age differences, economic dependency, lack of education, and many other associated factors, early-married women have and/or exercise lower sexual and reproductive rights than those who marry at appropriate ages. They have less ability to make decisions on matters related to reproductive health, such as the use of contraceptives and rights over sexuality (the ability to say "No" when asked for sex by husbands). Thus, early marrying women have less chance of spacing and/or avoiding unwanted pregnancy.

The study findings confirmed the fact that early marriage increases the number of children a woman has over her lifespan. The reported mean number of children ever borne by a woman increases with a decrease in her age at first marriage. It is 4.96 for those women who married under the age of 15 years, 4.15 for those married between 15-17 years, and 3.12 for those married over the age of 18 (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Reported mean number of children ever born by age at first marriage of ever married women

Age at first marriage	Mean No. of children ever born	Number
Under 15	4.96	643
15-17	4.15	448
18 +	3.12	233
Total	4.36	1324

A large number of children in an individual family leads, in turn, to a number of other socioeconomic impacts. Starting with household workload, maternal reproductive health problems, psychological problems, scarcity of resources for health care and nourishment of children, these problems multiply at the community and national levels due to overpopulation and environmental degradation.

6.4 Impacts upon Education

Education has a central place in the realization of gender equity, and at the individual level, it creates better opportunity for employment and earning, thus decreasing dependency and enhancing self-reliance. Educating a girl enhances the probability of improved reproductive health, family planning, well-being of children, higher economic earning, and improved household management. This and other studies reveal that early marriage has a major negative impact on women's education.

According to the qualitative sources of information, in the Amhara Region early marriage is the major cause of school leaving for girls, which directly affects women's social and economic status. If a girl drops out of school, it is more than likely that she has been married. Especially, in rural areas, marriage was reported by 77 percent of the respondents as their main reason for discontinuing education.

According to a study carried out by East Gojjam Zone education office, 58 percent of the 72 female students in Debay-Tilat were married. Similarly, of 58 students sampled from 7 schools in Emahoy Wereda, over 36 percent were already married, as were 30 percent of the 60 students sampled from 12 schools in Dejen Wereda who are living with their husbands (East Gojjam Education Office, 2005). All of these women were married below the legal age and remained so at the time of the sampling. Their husbands never allow them to use family planning methods (contraceptives), and therefore, they are all destined to drop out the school when they get pregnant. These figures illustrate the impact of early marriage on the education and future careers of girls.

Quantitative findings on literacy and the level of education presented in Chapter III clearly demonstrate the negative impact of early marriage upon school enrollment, as well as educational attainment of women in the region.

To assess the effect of early marriage on girls education, women who married before the age of 18 years were asked, first, if they were attending school before their first marriage, and secondly, whether or not they discontinued their education due to marriage. The results are presented in Table 6.5.

Consistent with the level of literacy and education observed earlier among the study population, the majority of the women were not attending school even before their first marriage. Only 27 percent of urban women and 14 percent of rural women attended school before their first marriage. But, of those who were in school, the majority discontinued after marriage. Especially, in rural areas, marriage is the main reason for discontinuing education, reported by 77 percent, and in urban areas that figure is 60 percent (Table 6.5). These findings clearly show that a serious consequence of early marriage is its disruption of the limited educational opportunities that young girls have and impacts on their long-term careers.

Table 6.5 Percent distribution of women who married before age 18 by school attendance after marriage and place of residence

Attending school/ Discontinued due to marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Attending school before marriage						
Was attending before first marriage	78	27.0	173	13.8	251	16.3
Not attending before first marriage	211	73.0	1078	86.2	1289	83.7
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0
Discontinued due to marriage						
Discontinued due to the marriage	46	59.0	135	77.1	181	71.5
Not due to the marriage	25	32.1	27	15.4	52	20.6
Still attending	7	9.0	13	7.4	20	7.9

6.5 Impact on the wellbeing of children

Apart from a young woman's education, early marriage has a negative impact on her children. As stipulated in the Proclamation No. 213/2000, the *Revised Family Code* was introduced to give priority to the well-being of children, their upbringing and protection. A very young mother may be unable to give the required care and protection to her children because she herself is a child, and in many instances has not developed the skills such as patience and tolerance needed to raise children.

6.6 Early Marriage and Gender Issues in General

The issue of gender inequality and women's low economic and social status is recognized as a serious impediment to development in the international arena. Concerted effort is being made at all levels in Ethiopia to ensure gender equity and equality. However, research continues to show that women are, in most cases, deprived of privileges and opportunities in many respects, and their contribution to social development is being undermined.

Early marriage limits female educational opportunity, thereby reducing their employment opportunity and economic independence. The study has further confirmed the fact that victims of early marriage are vulnerable to gender based violence, high fertility, marital instabilities and to reproductive health-related complications.

The situation is even worse in most rural areas of the country -- particularly in the Amhara Region. Gender equity demands sustainable and effective interventions that promote women's involvement in decision-making, as well as taking affirmative actions to avoid prejudice and ultimately ensure equality.

Such negative impacts on the females directly influence wider development efforts. Hence, solving these gender issues (which here means the practice of early marriage) has to be a priority in any genuine development effort.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

In Ethiopia, particularly in northern Ethiopia, early marriage is a common occurrence. Available data show that about four in five ever married women marry before the age of 18 years. However, the determinants of such early marriage are not well documented. The main objective of the study was to explore the determinants and consequences of early marriage in Amhara Region and provide programmatic recommendations to guide the design of interventions. Data were collected using stratified multistage sampling designs covering 18 woredas in the Region. A total of 2,072 women aged 12-49 years were interviewed, using a structured questionnaire. FGDs and key informant interviews were also conducted to gather qualitative information on the causes and consequences of early marriage in the region.

Findings indicate that early marriage is highly prevalent in the region and that it is the most serious of all the harmful traditional practices. About 60 percent of urban and 70 percent of rural ever married women got married before the age of 18 years. The majority of the women (54%) entered into marriage as a result of someone's pressure, and more than 80% of the marriages were arranged by parents. The mean age at first marriage was 14.5 years; 48% entered into marital union before the age of 15, and by age 18, 81% were married. The main reasons for early marriage included a combination of socio-economic and cultural/traditional factors. These include: prestige (maintaining one's good name and social esteem); strengthening the ties between the marrying families; ensuring virginity of girls at the time of marriage; avoiding the possibility of a girl not being marriageable later in life ("Qoma Qerech"); fear of premarital sex and pregnancy; lack of awareness about legal prohibitions and the poor level of law enforcement. The consequences of early marriage identified include: curtailment of education, early pregnancy and childbearing, health related problems such as fistula; domestic violence; marriage breakdown; high fertility, and threats to the wellbeing of children.

The results of this comprehensive survey confirm many assumptions and general beliefs about the causes and effects of early marriage in Ethiopia, and have highlighted areas that deserve further examination. The overarching issue is a woman's role in family, community, and society in general, and the longstanding assumptions generally shared by both men and women that women hold a lesser place, merit less influence, and deserve less recognition and respect.

For example, the survey result showed that a woman's decision-making role decreases as the decision becomes more significant to the household. About a third of married women in urban areas and 37 percent in rural areas usually make decisions on daily household purchases. But nearly 40 percent reported that only husbands make decisions involving major household purchases.

Regarding sexual and reproductive rights, about 60 percent of the married women reported that they could not say “No” when asked for sex by a husband or partner. Eighty percent of women reported that they could not ask a husband or partner to use a condom during intercourse, even if she suspects that he has another partner. These results reflect the low status of women in the home and the limited capacity they have to negotiate on issues related to their sexual life. One-in-five women in urban areas and a third in rural areas do not think it is appropriate for a woman to ask her partner to use a condom, even if she suspects that he has HIV/AIDS. They do not assume it to be right to make such a demand.

Considerable numbers of women believe that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for a reason. Women in urban areas are less likely to approve of wife beating compared to their rural counterparts. About a fifth of the urban and a third of rural women believe a wife deserves beating if she refuses sex with her husband.

Considering the division of labor in the household, the survey found that water fetching is a task relegated to women. More than three quarters of women in both urban and rural areas reported that fetching water or firewood is a woman’s responsibility. About 55 percent of urban women and 56 percent of rural adult women are involved in the collection of firewood for the household, indicating that women themselves have accepted their low status and that gender differences in favor of males over females appear in virtually all aspects of life.

7.2 Recommendations

Early marriage is recognized as a violation of human rights and a critical social problem with multifaceted consequences - particularly for women and children. The practice is also recognized as a barrier that inhibits young girls from attaining education that would otherwise have a lasting positive impact on their life and well-being. In view of these facts, and based on the findings of the study, the following programmatic recommendations are set forth to help design interventions that may reduce and ultimately eliminate the practice of early marriage and lessen the misery of thousands of girls in the Amhara Region and throughout the rest of the country.

Address Cultural and traditional values and norms

The study findings indicate that cultural and traditional values and norms are important determinants of early marriage. As child marriage is a tradition that has been maintained through generations, sometimes parents may be unaware of the dangers, or may feel that the dangers are justified for cultural or economic reasons. Even where parents and children understand the negative implications of early marriage, societal pressure to conform may be great. Traditions promoting early marriage need to be challenged.

Empower the youth (building the capacity of youth associations) by providing them with information and knowledge they can use to convince family and community members that early marriage has a negative effect on all of them, and create sensitization forums for community leaders such as woreda council members, kebele and women and youth association members.

Focus should be made on forming and strengthening anti-Harmful Traditional Practice clubs in schools, as they have proven to be very effective and efficient in fighting against the practice. Schools are basic stakeholders in early marriage issues, since they are the first institutions to be affected by the practice.

Efforts must be made to convince community leaders of the importance of girl's education by stressing its positive impact at the household level - especially on the well being of mothers, children, and the family.

Community-based organizations and community-support organizations (such as religious institutions and associations, *idir*, and any other local civic organizations), and schools are the best channels for raising awareness about the negative impacts of early marriage. Indeed, they have played a major role in recent efforts to reduce the practice, because people tend to listen more to something that comes through these channels. Community-based and community-support organizations should continue to serve as the means to raise awareness about the negative impacts of the practice.

Provide additional training to Health Extension Workers and Community-Based Reproductive Health Agents to enhance their knowledge and teaching on consequences of early marriage and existing laws and policies, so that they can raise the awareness of community members in these areas.

Law enforcement

A more rigorous enforcement of existing laws and policies is required to discourage early marriage. Allow anonymous reporting, work with the police and others, and make it clear that early marriage is a major violation of the rights of children.

Check and monitor the extent to which courts are implementing the existing relevant laws regularly. Despite the laws, most parents do not feel threatened by government intervention if they marry their daughters at a young age. But in some areas, recent reductions in the practice of early marriage are attributed to strong measures taken by law enforcement (the police and courts). Hence, it is important that the initiatives and commitments manifested in this area are maintained and further enhanced.

Strengthen law enforcement bodies to enable them to effectively discharge their duties and responsibilities, with due attention to the implementation of the family law and respect for children's rights.

Create options to early marriage: Education

The findings of the study show that early marriage is the major cause for girls not to attend school or discontinue their education. However, advising parents to send their daughters to school when schools are too far will not work. Making schooling for girls more accessible is very important.

Support Partners against early marriage

Those elements of communities that oppose early marriage, such as women's organizations, need support to ensure that they have the capacity to act effectively as advocates against it. Work jointly with religious, health, and educational leaders to develop an information and education strategy about the negative effects (social, economical, health, etc) of early marriage.

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Annex – I: Sample Size & Household Selection

For large populations, Cochran (1963:75) suggested the following equation to yield a representative sample for proportions.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{2}$$

Where n is the sample size, Z is the abscissa of the normal curve that cuts off an area at the tails (equals the desired confidence level, e.g., for 95percent confidence level $z=2$), p is the desired level of precision, p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, and q is $1-p$. The value for Z is found in statistical tables, which contain the area under the normal curve.

The attribute we want to estimate is the proportion of women who marry before age 15. In the Amhara region, this was 50 percent according to the 2000 EDHS. Substituting $p=0.5$ and $1-p=0.5$, $z=2$ in the above formula yields a sample size of 400 women for each stratum.

For a stratified sampling design, the total sample $n = \sum n_i, i=1, 2,3,4,5$. Thus, the total sample size will be $5*400=2000$ females aged 12-49, since our n is constant for each stratum. However, to adjust for non-response and vacant households, it was decided to add an allowance of 5 percent. Thus, the required sample size per stratum was 420 women on average.

Adolescents aged 12-14 were included among those eligible for the study, as it helps to find out whether or not marriage among very young adolescents still prevails (it used to be common in the region). Furthermore, this helps to assess the adolescent groups' perception about early marriage.

Assuming an average of 1.3 females aged 12-49 years per household, 320 households had to be contacted in order to interview 420 women. Thus, it was decided to take an overall sample of 1,700 households and to interview all eligible females aged 12-49.

EAs are of moderate size, about 200 households, and most nationwide surveys use EA sample size between 20 and 30 households. This survey employed an EA sample size of 20 households, which is widely accepted in many surveys. Considering non-responses and variations between EAs, a minimum of 85 EAs (on average about 5 per woreda) was assumed to be optimal for the survey, not only to control for variations within and between EAs, but also to secure enough cases for analysis. This suggests a total of 17 EAs per stratum. However, because there is considerable variation among strata in terms of population size, some adjustment was made using proportional allocation in order to take account of this. Annex Table 2.1 presents the distribution of the selected EAs by woreda and

rural-urban. The table also presents the number of households selected from each woreda, as well as the expected number of women to be interviewed.

The EAs were selected from a list of EAs in each stratum using a systematic sampling technique. Then a fresh list of households was prepared from which 20 households were selected, using a systematic sampling technique with a random start.

Selection of Households

A household is defined as a group of people who live in the same housing unit or compound and share meals from the same pot. The household sampling list for each selected village or EA was prepared by the research team. For each village, a systematic sampling technique was used to select 20 households from the list of households.

Selection of Individual Respondents

In each household, target respondents were women aged 12-49 who were usual residents of the household. Usual residents are emphasized because attributes of household members impact differently on early marriage. Only females were interviewed, because the problem of early marriage mainly concerns women. Overall, 2,072 women were interviewed and the response rate was 98.7 percent.

Annex Tables

Table 1 Distribution of Sampled Woredas, Number of EAs sampled, and Total Number of Households and Women Sampled by Stratum

Zone	Woreda	No. of sampled EAs			No. of Sampled households per Woreda	Expected No. of women to be sampled
		Urban	Rural	Total		
Mirab Gojjam	Bahir Dar Zuria	1	5	6	120	144
	Adet	1	4	5	100	120
Misrak Gojjam	Goncha Siso Enese	1	3	4	80	96
	Baso Liben	1	4	5	100	120
Semen Gondar	Janamora	1	4	5	100	120
	Dembia	1	4	5	100	120
Debub Gondar	Este	1	5	6	120	144
	Lay Gayint	2	3	5	100	120
Wag Hemera	Sekota	1	3	4	80	96
Semen Wollo	Wadla	2	3	5	100	120
	Kobo	1	5	6	120	144
Debub Wollo	Wegeda		5	5	100	120
	Kutaber	1	4	5	100	120
Oromia Zone	Chefegolanana	1	3	4	80	96
Semen Shoa	Ankober	-	4	4	80	96
	Debre Berihan	1	-	1	24	28
	Debre Berihan Zuria	1	6	6	116	140
	Mojana Wadere	-	4	4	80	96
Total	18	16	69	85	1700	2040

Table 2 - Age distribution of women by place of residence

Age Groups	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
12 – 14	31	7.3	171	10.4	202	9.7
15 – 19	99	23.3	317	19.2	416	20.1
20 – 24	67	15.8	231	14.0	298	14.4
25 – 29	72	17.0	237	14.4	309	14.9
30 – 34	52	12.3	192	11.7	244	11.8
35 – 39	50	11.8	200	12.1	250	12.1
40 – 44	28	6.6	169	10.3	197	9.5
45 – 49	25	5.9	131	7.9	156	7.5
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0

Table 3 - Percent distribution of women by religion and ethnicity (Annex)

Religion/ Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Religion		
Orthodox Christian	1705	82.2
Muslims	358	17.3
Protestant	5	0.2
Other	4	0.1
Ethnicity		
Amhara	1926	93.0
Oromo	57	2.8
Tigraway	46	2.2
Argoba	38	1.8
Other	5	0.2
Total	2072	100.0

Table 4 - Distribution of women by availability of radio in their household, radio listening habit and place of residence

Radio availability/ Listening habit	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Availability of Radio						
Available	293	69.1	615	37.3	908	43.8
Not available	131	30.9	1033	62.7	1164	56.2
Listening Habits						
Do not listen at all	117	27.6	865	52.5	982	47.4
Every Day	184	43.4	292	17.7	476	23.0
At least once a week	95	22.4	330	20.0	425	20.5
Less than once a week	28	6.6	161	9.8	189	9.1
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0

Table 5 - Distribution of married women by age group and number of times married

Age Group	Married Once		Married Twice		Married three or more times		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
12 – 14	12	92.3	1	7.7	0	0.0	13	100.0
15 – 19	131	86.8	16	10.6	4	2.6	151	100.0
20 – 24	193	79.1	44	18.0	7	2.9	244	100.0
25 – 29	195	67.2	68	23.4	27	9.3	290	100.0
30 – 34	136	57.4	76	32.1	25	10.5	237	100.0
35 – 39	127	52.3	68	28.0	48	19.8	243	100.0
40 – 44	90	46.2	56	28.7	49	25.1	195	100.0
45 – 49	71	46.1	38	24.7	45	29.2	154	100.0
Total	955	62.5	366	24.0	206	13.5	1527	100.0

Table 6 - Percent distribution of ever-married women by selected marriage related issues and place of residence

Selected marriage related issues	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Abducted into marriage?						
Abducted	19	6.6	64	5.1	83	5.4
Not abducted	270	93.4	1188	94.9	1458	94.6
Who chose first husband?						
Parents/Relatives	200	74.1	1044	87.7	1244	85.1
Parents and respondent	13	4.8	48	4.0	61	4.2
Respondent	49	18.1	55	4.6	104	7.1
Other persons	7	2.6	40	3.4	47	3.2
Decision maker for first marriage						
Self	25	8.7	46	3.7	71	4.6
Parents/Relatives	220	76.1	1108	88.5	1328	86.2
Parents and respondent	17	5.9	34	2.7	51	3.3
Respondent & husband	25	8.7	48	3.8	73	4.7
Other relatives	2	0.7	16	1.3	18	1.2
Marriage Arranger						
My parents	227	78.5	1125	89.9	1352	87.7
My self	17	5.9	33	2.6	50	3.2
My self and Parents	14	4.8	24	1.9	38	2.5
Respondent with fiancée	25	8.7	45	3.6	70	4.5
Other Relatives	6	2.1	25	2.0	31	2.0
Informed about						
Yes	136	47.1	392	31.3	528	34.3
No	145	50.2	798	63.7	943	61.2
Don't Know	8	2.8	62	5.0	70	4.5
Asked for consent?						
Yes	129	44.6	302	24.1	431	28.0
No	160	55.4	950	75.9	1110	72.0
Agreed/Disagreed to marry?						
Agreed	120	93.0	259	84.6	379	87.1
Disagreed	9	7.0	47	15.4	56	12.9
Know the person earlier?						
Knew the person	111	38.4	321	25.6	432	28.0
Did not know	178	61.6	931	74.4	1109	72.0
Total	289	100.0	1252	100.0	1541	100.0

Table 7 - Percent distribution of women who were aware of the legal provision against the practice of early marriage and place of residence

Awareness on legal provision and legal age of marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Awareness on legal provision						
Aware of provision	220	76.1	869	69.5	1089	70.7
Not aware of provision	69	23.9	382	30.5	451	29.3
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0
Knowledge of legal age of marriage						
Mentioned the correct legal age	133	46.0	456	36.5	589	38.2
Mentioned incorrect legal age	71	24.6	350	28.0	421	27.3
Do not know the legal age	85	29.4	445	35.6	530	34.4

Table 8 - Percent distribution of women by reported ideal age for marriage and place of residence

Ideal age for marriage	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Ideal age at marriage – for girls						
Less than 18 years	94	22.2	640	39.0	734	35.5
18 years	221	52.1	717	43.6	938	45.4
19 - 20 years	75	17.7	210	12.8	285	13.8
After age of 20	34	8.0	76	4.6	110	5.3
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0
Median Ideal Age	-	18	-	18	-	18
Ideal age at marriage – for boys						
Less than 20 years	48	11.3	238	14.5	286	13.8
20 – 25 years	286	67.5	1155	70.1	1441	69.6
26 – 35 years	90	21.2	254	15.4	344	16.6
Total	424	100.0	1648	100.0	2072	100.0
Median Ideal Age	-	24	-	21	-	22