



Early marriage and education: the complex role of social norms in shaping Ethiopian adolescent girls' lives

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Key messages

- In the context of rapid economic development, but from a very low base, gendered social norms for adolescent girls in Ethiopia are shifting, albeit in a highly uneven manner.
- Key drivers of progressive gender norm change include access to education, positive local role models, supportive male relatives, and top-down social mobilisation and legal changes.
- Key forces impeding progressive gender norm change include the realities of girls' care work burden, 'sticky' conservative gender norms about girls' and women's bodies and sexuality, geographical isolation, and the physical and social isolation of out-of-school girls.
- Policy and programming solutions include greater attention to educational and vocational training alternatives, radio-based social change communication, community conversations, school clubs and other safe spaces for girls where they can seek advice and share their views and experiences.

Acknowledgements

The team would like to gratefully acknowledge the valuable contributions of many individuals whose time, expertise and ideas made this effort possible.

We would like to give special thanks to the woreda administration, education office, health office, women's affairs office, and justice office in Metema, Worebabao and Yilmana Densa woredas, as well as the kebele administration for their role in facilitating the interviews in Bulbullo, Dembashi and Metema Yohanes kebeles.

We also wish to thank Save the Children International in Ethiopia and the Social Anthropology Department at Addis Ababa University for supporting the research process.

Above all, we thank all the girls and boys, women and men in the communities visited, who willingly shared their ideas and experiences with us in interviews and focus group discussions. Without their insights, this study would not have been possible.

We are also grateful for the funding provided by the Department for International Development, the insightful comments provided by Dr Fiona Samuels and Prof Anne Whitehead, and the editorial support of Kathryn O'Neill. Any remaining errors are those of the authors alone.

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Executive summary

This report presents and examines the key drivers of shifting and persisting social norms surrounding early marriage in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, and its effects on adolescent girls' educational opportunities and broader wellbeing. It focuses on how gendered social norms are shaped by individual agency, socioeconomic conditions, demographic factors and social institutions.

The Ethiopia study is part of a multi-country, multi-year initiative (also covering Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam) funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on gender justice for adolescent girls. In this second year of the Ethiopia study, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), in partnership with national researchers at Addis Ababa University, used a common set of qualitative research tools adapted to the local context to examine how early marriage practices and related social norms limit girls' future life chances. Fieldwork was undertaken in 2013 and 2014 in three sites in Amhara Regional State: Dembashi (West Gojjam zone), Bulbullo (South Wollo zone) and Metema (North Gondar zone).

The national context

Ethiopia has undergone strong economic growth over the past decade. Although the poverty rate has fallen from 39% in 2004 to 30% in 2011, it remains one of the world's poorest countries. The government's commitment to promoting gender equality has resulted in significant policy developments and good progress in reducing the gender gap in a variety of development indicators. For example, there has been a decrease in the percentage of primary school-age girls who are out of school (from 70% in 1994 to 34% in 2008) and in the maternal mortality ratio (from 1,200 per 100,000 live births in 1994 to 500 in 2013). There has also been an increase in life expectancy at birth for girls (from 62 years in 1994 to 65 years in 2013) and in the ratio of male and female labour force participation (from 80% in 1994 to 88% in 2013). Nevertheless, the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) indicates that Ethiopian women, adolescents and youth are particularly disadvantaged, ranking Ethiopia 129th out of 136 countries (Population Council, 2010).

Adolescent girls aged 10-19, who comprise 24% of the population (CSA and ICF International, 2012), face numerous challenges. The 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) reveals that the average age at marriage is 16.5 years, and over 41% of women aged 20-24 report that they were married by the age of 18 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). As a result of early marriage, Ethiopia has one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in sub-Saharan Africa – 72.4 births for every 1,000 young women aged 15-19 (UNFPA, 2011). Moreover, only 42.5% of pregnant women receive any form of prenatal care.

Presently multiple and inter-linked social norms dictate young girls' constrained choices and capabilities. Discriminatory social norms and practices still compromise girls' capabilities and compound their exclusion. Practices found to inhibit adolescent girls' equal development and access to gender justice include early marriage and early pregnancy; unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities; limited mobility; limited decision-making power over social relationships; socially accepted notions of masculinity regarding violence – at home, in the community and at school; limited control over sexuality and fertility decisions; limited authority in the family; and inequitable care practices at home.

In recent years, the Family Code and the Penal Code have been revised to make marriage and divorce procedures reflect gender equality; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) was prohibited, and the laws address domestic violence to some degree. But despite this supportive legal environment, girls remain particularly vulnerable in many respects, largely because of prevailing gendered social norms. They are less likely to have access to formal

education, more likely to be married as children (to men who are, on average, five years older), and are growing up in a culture in which gender discrimination permeates social institutions. The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) ranks Ethiopia 64th out of 86 countries, suggesting that there is still much to be done to improve girls' capabilities.

Study sample and methodology

The primary research took place in three rural kebele towns in the Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia: Dembashi in Yilmana Densa Woreda (West Gojjam), Bulbullo in Worebabo Woreda (South Wollo) and Metema Yohanes in Metema Woreda (North Gondar). Amhara state, one of Ethiopia's largest but most disadvantaged regions, is situated in the north-western and north-central part of the country. Amhara's population of approximately 20 million is overwhelmingly rural, characterised by high levels of food insecurity and low levels of education – for example, more than 60% of women over the age of 15 have never been to school (CSA and ICF International, 2012). The three sites were chosen because they are diverse in terms of demographics and geographical proximity to migration hubs such as Sudan and Yemen. Despite their differences, our findings point to certain patterns in changing gender discriminatory norms that limit adolescent girls' capabilities across the communities.

Key findings

Getting married: While prevailing norms about early marriage persist, there has been an increase in the average age of marriage, from 4-12 years in the previous two generations to 10-plus years in the current generation. Most study participants had been married before reaching 18 (the legal age for marriage), although many expressed regret at marrying early. Despite their realities, almost all participants agreed that 18-20 was the most appropriate age for a girl to marry. Changes in people's perceptions about the appropriate age for marriage can be attributed to education, legal monitoring by the kebele (village authority), and greater awareness of illnesses associated with early pregnancy such as fistula.

Our research found that arranged marriages generally take two different forms: (1) parents decide on the marriage and arrange the wedding without the knowledge of the boy or girl involved; or (2) a boy and girl agree to marry and ask parents to arrange the marriage through the traditional process. In the latter case, parents may disagree with the choice the boy and the girl have made, in which case the boy and girl either attempt to reason with their parents or take their own action by eloping or migrating.

As a result of changing beliefs about the appropriate age of marriage, there was a consensus that arranged marriages are relatively uncommon nowadays, with boys and girls increasingly likely to choose their own partners. Moreover, some young girls are striving for independence in taking decisions regarding how many children to have, or, in the event of a violent marriage, asking for a divorce if economic circumstances permit. Even so, several of the young married girls interviewed for this study reported that they were only informed of their marriage one week (or even a few hours) before it took place, having never met their future husband prior to the wedding ceremony. As arranged marriages become less common, a culture of dating is starting to emerge. However, young adolescents who choose to date engage in secret meetings for fear of bringing gossip and shame to their family. When partners want to marry, the boy sends elders to the girl's parents to make the offer as a formality to uphold traditional familial hierarchies.

Before a marriage can take place, there is a culture of gift-giving. Traditionally, gifts were given in the form of cattle or ox, but there is a recent trend of gifting land, especially in Dembashi. Parents of boys and girls give land to their children at the time of marriage. As a result, land ownership has become an important criterion for choosing a partner. Land shortages have had a significant impact on marriage practices, both as a driver of change and maintainer of stasis, all depending on whether a girl has land. In the context of land shortages and a rapidly growing population, ownership of land has become one of the more 'desirable' characteristics for a future wife, more so than beauty or education. Ironically, then, girls from relatively better-off families who stand to inherit

land are likely to marry at an early age whereas girls from poorer families with fewer land assets are likely to struggle to find a marriage partner.

Being married: After they marry, girls find very limited possibilities for an independent life. Many young married girls report that they were unable to continue their education without the support of their husbands, which they received relatively rarely. Community consensus regarding what makes a ‘good wife’ explains much about why this is so; a good wife is defined almost exclusively in terms of the work she does for her husband, children and home. Furthermore, while there was general agreement that domestic abuse had decreased, domestic abuse thrives in relationships where the wife has no access to an independent income, and becomes socially isolated due to economic reliance on her partner.

Despite reinforcement of traditional gender roles across multiple domains, there was a shift in a desire for egalitarian practices with regard to decision-making in the home. Indeed, egalitarian decision-making was reported as the mark of a ‘good husband’. Similarly, education seems to be impacting on views about household labour. While girls expressed that they want a somewhat more equal division of labour at home, it was evident that boys and parents generally did not regard an ‘ideal wife’ as one who had ambitions for greater equality.

Similar to the research findings in year 1, there has been a slight generational shift in reproductive expectations, influenced mainly by education, access to reproductive rights, and a relative economic decline in the area. Health professionals and schools teach young people about reproductive health, contraception and menstruation. However, only girls learn about contraception, and the information on sex is largely biological rather than practical or rights-based in nature. As a result, there remain high expectations that girls will bear children soon after marriage, and interviewees explained that infertility often leads to men leaving the current wife and marrying another.

Though divorce is viewed negatively (except in the case of theft or adultery) and couples are encouraged to stay together, it happens relatively often, and when it happens, families generally do not disown their daughters. Indeed, some of the women we interviewed had been married multiple times (up to five times), as had the sisters or relatives of other interviewees, and had generally been able to return to their natal homes for short periods for emotional and possibly limited financial support. This said, a number of in-depth interviews revealed that even though girls may be worried, scared or depressed about their marriage, they did not wish to shame their parents and knew they would eventually be taken back to their in-laws if they tried to run back to their parents’ house, suggesting that divorce remains an option of last resort for some young women.

Drivers of change

Legal and law enforcement changes: The Ethiopian Government has considerable reach down to village level. Due to successful interventions by health workers, women association leaders and school directors, there is widespread knowledge of the legal penalty for marrying children under the age of 18, and people are now less likely to listen to elders on the issues of marriage and FGM/C, paying heed to the law instead. Kebele meetings educate communities about early marriage, while teachers encourage parents to send their children to school, and try to ensure that girls do not drop out. In Bulbullo, kebele officials only approve a marriage once they have received written confirmation of the age of the partners from physicians and the Woreda Justice Department. In order to circumvent the secret marriages that are still occurring, teachers and kebele officials are generally active in following up cases of girls who stop going to school, pressuring parents to send them back (or else face a fine); when a girl is absent, they try to find out whether it is due to early marriage.

Population communication channels: Greater awareness of harmful gendered social norms has also come through successful social change communication initiatives at community level. For example, local radio stations broadcast information about the dangers of early marriage and the law. Our fieldwork strongly indicated that educated children are increasingly questioning their elders’ beliefs and are more responsive to the content of gender equality programmes on the radio, regardless of what their parents think. However, when talking about what sources of information on adolescents’ health and wellbeing were most effective, different groups had different opinions, largely because adult men spend more time in public places and in turn have better access to information.

Changes via school clubs: Thus while men thought the radio was the best medium, women and adolescents believed that information given in school, through youth clubs, or during community discussions reached them more effectively since not many people had access to radio. Indeed, respondents identified school clubs as one of the most effective ways to learn about rights as well as important matters around sexual and reproductive health – information that girls were generally unable to receive at home. Girls in particular are taught about their rights at school and know how to complain if their parents try and force them into marriage; girls’ clubs have therefore been established as school-based support networks. Gaining this knowledge about their rights has been transformative for some girls, who speak openly about how they would refuse their parents’ decision to marry early or to marry someone they did not want to.

Changing beliefs about sexual health: Expectations of girls being virgins at the time of marriage persist, but are seeing a decline in some communities. Previously, discovery of a non-virgin bride would have been grounds for divorce, wife-beating, or shame, but as more unions are being formed on the basis of love as opposed to parental pressure, and HIV tests are more accessible, virginity is no longer such an important social or health issue. Similarly, female circumcision is practised in the research sites but is in significant decline, and moreover does not seem to enter into the marriage equation. Respondents argued that the practice has been largely abandoned following education campaigns by health workers, although individual case study interviews suggested that this is not entirely the case, with some girls reporting first-hand experience of FGM/C.

Change via education: Education is clearly a major factor contributing towards changing ‘sticky’ norms. Most interviewees in Dembashi and Bulbullo agreed that education is important for girls as well as boys. The value of education is seen both from a practical perspective and a more aspirational one. From a practical standpoint, men and women as well as adolescent boys and girls believed that ‘men don’t want to marry an illiterate girl’, and so if a girl aspires to an educated husband, she must push ahead with her own studies. Also, in a context of growing economic hardships, the value of girls’ economic contribution to the household is more important today, and there is a sense that with better education, girls can aspire to make more money as well as better manage household finances.

Change through religious leaders: The church is a key enforcer of social norms and has considerable potential to bring about change in gendered social norms. For example, the church and kebele officials teach community members about HIV at meetings, and there is a penalty for people who do not attend. The church teaches that girls should not marry under the age of 18; it used to uphold 15 as the right age for marriage, but as this contradicted the government’s position, the church hierarchy changed its official messaging (although our research suggested that local priests hold varying views on this matter).

Islamic religious leaders also continue to play an important role in people’s lives in the predominantly Muslim communities of Bulbullo and Metema. In Bulbullo, religious officials reportedly do not allow a marriage to take place unless both partners are 18 years or older, as they will be held legally responsible if they approve an early marriage.

Importance of role models: Other factors that have helped change social norms surrounding early marriage are positive female role models and the support of male relatives. As more girls are educated at higher levels and take up positions as health extension workers, teachers or government officials, younger girls aim to achieve similarly and express ambitions for a better life through education. Girls who succeed in their education provide examples to their peers and encourage other parents to send their daughters to school.

Engaging with men and boys: The importance of engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and increasing girls’ opportunities also emerged strongly in our fieldwork. Boys recognised that girls’ work burden at home affects their school achievements. As such, a common ingredient across many of the successful positive outlier case studies, particularly from Dembashi was the key role of supportive fathers, brothers and husbands in enabling girls to delay marriage and/or continue their education.

Inhibitors to change

Care economy burdens: Deeply entrenched beliefs that hold girls and women as caretakers of the home and family act as strong contributors to high dropout rates of girls from schools and, inevitably, early marriage. As a result (and also reflecting the stark realities of the care economy in the context of large family sizes, declining economic wellbeing, and lack of agricultural mechanisation in the research sites), adolescent girls are often enrolled in school but only attend sporadically because of the need to support their mothers' care role burden.

Barriers to obtaining an education: Adults' attitudes towards girls' education – i.e. that it does not lead anywhere – can reduce girls' educational aspirations. Financial concerns are exacerbated by the high cost of books and uniforms, which also acts as a barrier to girls' education. This is compounded by the distance to school, especially secondary school: if the school is too far away to travel every day, then parents must pay for rent, food and firewood for their children to stay closer to the school – something that prevents many children (especially girls) from attending secondary school. Parents in all three areas were also concerned for their daughters' safety and their 'virtue'. The general perception is that if girls have to walk long distances to school each day, or live outside the parental home, they may be exposed to rape or engage in premarital sex. As a result, girls wishing to continue their education until 12th grade face numerous challenges and many drop out to get married instead of finishing their schooling.

When girls are uneducated and live at home, parents often choose to marry them off so that they no longer have to 'worry for them'. In such cases, parents choose partners for their daughters and expect daughters to 'obey' them or become their 'enemy'. Girls who refuse their parents' partner choice are thought to cause shame and embarrassment to the family. In this regard, our findings suggested that there appears to be an especially strong sense of filial piety among girls, rooted in gendered ideals that girls should be obedient and submissive; this acts as a significant counterweight to the growing awareness among girls and young women of their individual rights to education and bodily integrity.

Conservative norms about sexual and reproductive health: Greater awareness of girls' reproductive rights has failed to create a lasting change in conservative social norms around girls' sexuality. Respondents suggested that while the contributions girls make to the productive and care economies are essential, they are also viewed as a source of concern because of the close association between girls' sexuality and family honour. Girls who become pregnant out of wedlock may flee, commit suicide or give their child to their parents and then move out of the area to avoid the shame and community censure. As mentioned above, there is a generational change in sexual and reproductive expectations for girls, but in general there were some gaps between discourses on girls' rights and actual changes in practices. Indeed, a number of respondents were highly critical of the focus on 'rights', claiming that the discourse was 'eroding tradition', encouraging disobedience, and resulting in confusion and tensions across generations and between boys and girls, young men and young women.

Mixed role of migration: Another significant factor that is contributing to shifting gender norms in some cases but reinforcing harmful norms in others is migration. Discussions with key informants indicated that migration is a big factor in young people's lives. In Bulbullo and Metema, girls commonly migrate across the border to the Middle East to find employment as domestic workers; labour and human rights violations are common, and girls who find themselves working for families in places like Sudan and Saudi Arabia live an isolated existence of long working hours and language barriers. Similar to the year 1 research findings, migration is thought to make contradictory contributions, reducing early marriage in some cases but increasing it in others. Some adolescents report that parents do not want their daughters to be married before migration as this would mean sending remittances to her husband as opposed to her parents. On the other hand, the danger of rape while working overseas leads other parents to marry their daughters before they migrate, because married girls are less likely to be raped than unmarried girls, or they would have at least lost their virginity during the marriage. Unmarried returnees often face further problems as men are distrustful of women who have migrated. Women who return are thought to have been sexually active while abroad and thus 'unfit' to meet Ethiopian men's needs.

Policy implications

Given the key role of education in shifting gender norms, ensure continued and expanded support to enable girls to attend school and receive quality education. Participants in our research pointed to the importance of education in changing gender norms and providing agency to adolescent girls. Though enrolment in primary school is higher than it has been in previous generations, an overwhelming number of girls drop out of school by 8th grade, either because they fail examinations, because the distance to secondary school is too great, or because of time they have to spend in care economy realities. The government needs to address this high dropout rate through a variety of strategies, including incentives for families with daughters to complete high school, affirmative action for girls to pass examinations, and alternative options for employment that include vocational training.

Encourage progressive role models for adolescents so that they can imagine future lives that are different from those of their parents. Initiatives could include educational programming, visits to university campuses in urban centres, and girls' clubs, where female role models could be invited to talk. Study participants – young and old – pointed to the importance of positive role models in providing them with the agency to challenge gender norms in their family and in their community.

Enhance and provide support services for girls who are married. While it is clearly important to take a preventive approach to early marriage, many adolescent girls in Amhara are already married and their needs must not be overlooked. As a result of the social and physical isolation these married young girls experience, they need support services that can help them cope with the rigid cultural expectations of being a 'good' wife. A recent study of Amhara girls indicates that child marriage is associated with higher odds of suicide for girls aged 10-17. Therefore, initiatives are needed that can provide mental health services and support for young girls who are already married. Options to re-enter school after a gap in education will also help to empower married girls and help close the gender gap in school completion rates.

Invest in school clubs for girls at risk of child marriage. Support services for unmarried girls should be enhanced through ensuring continued participation in school clubs, which are considered safe spaces where girls can seek advice and share their views and experiences. Girls' clubs are viewed as a popular space to discuss issues such as reproductive health, early marriage and sexual violence. They also provide a level of community safeguarding, in that girls are instructed to inform their teacher if their parents are trying to arrange an early marriage so that the school and kebele officials can intervene, keep the girl in school, and take action against her parents if necessary. Girls' clubs should be encouraged and expanded.

Engage more boys and men in conversations about gender equality and family planning, and encourage new masculinities. Since constraints on girls' capabilities are often due to gendered rules dictated by fathers and husbands, it is vital that men and boys are engaged in conversations about changing gender beliefs, norms and practices. Helping men to learn about new forms and practices of masculinity – through awareness-raising and education initiatives led by professionals experienced in working sensitively with boys and men – is crucial to bringing about change. Efforts should involve collaborations with organisations that promote caring, non-violent and equitable masculinities and gender relations internationally by taking to scale effective approaches that reach out to men and boys to reduce violence against women.

Empower communities to have a 'bottom-up' approach to changing gender norms. Our findings indicated mismatches between what adults believed about changing gender norms and what was occurring in homes with respect to gender roles. Strategies are needed to mobilise the community in ways that will help to create an environment in which the prevention of child marriage is seen as a common good and a collective responsibility. Parental misperceptions about the degree to which community members support child marriage – or its prevention – need to be corrected. A combination of top-down legal changes and a bottom-up approach emanating from the community will strengthen prevention efforts.

1 Introduction

1.1 Social norm change processes in a context of rapid economic change



Picture 1: Group of school children, Dembashi Kebele, Amhara, 2013

Ethiopia has undergone strong economic growth over the past decade, but remains one of the world's poorest countries. Still almost entirely reliant on subsistence agriculture and with one of the world's highest birth rates (72.4 per 1,000 live births for young women aged 15-19) (UNFPA, 2011), its per capita income is about a third of the regional average (\$370 vs \$1,176) (World Bank, 2012), and its Human Development Index (HDI) ranking is among the very lowest (173 out of 187 countries). Most Ethiopians find it difficult to earn a living and remain highly vulnerable, with two-thirds of people living on less than \$2 a day and nearly half undernourished. More than half (55%-60%) of the Ethiopian population is under 18 years of age (The African Child Policy Forum, 2009).

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) indicates that Ethiopian women, adolescents and youth are particularly disadvantaged, ranking Ethiopia 129 out of 136 countries (Population Council, 2010). A high proportion of adolescent girls (41% in 2011) experience early marriage – that is, they marry before the legal

minimum age of 18. Child marriage is a violation of children's rights and is among the most prevalent forms of exploitation of girls. Early marriage is associated with high domestic demands in terms of household tasks, limited freedom and independence to thrive professionally, and overall reduced life choices. Young married girls are most likely to become pregnant before the age of 15, increasing fivefold their likelihood of dying during childbirth; they are also more at risk of intimate partner violence over the life course (CSA and ICF International, 2012).

Despite these challenges, Ethiopia has made significant progress in some areas over the past decade – for example, the poverty rate has fallen from 39% in 2004 to 30% in 2011, and primary education completion rates have climbed from 35% to 58% over the same period (DataBank, 2014). Girls and women have also benefited from significant policy measures designed to improve gender equality; notably, the Family Code was revised in 2000 and the Penal Code in 2005 to make marriage and divorce procedures reflect equality, to make female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) illegal, and to address domestic violence to some degree. In addition, the Federal Rural Land Administration Law states that women have equal rights to use and control the land as well as rights to transfer and bequeath holding rights (ECA, 2009). The Ethiopian Government has adopted an innovative, cost-effective first-time registration process (Deininger et al., 2008) that has led to over 40 million land parcels being registered to women in four of the largest highland areas, including Amhara.

These top-down legal changes have contributed to dramatic improvements in girls' lives (Table 1). From 1994 to 2013, there has been a decrease in the percentage of primary school-age girls who are out of school and in the maternal mortality ratio; at the same time, there has been an increase in life expectancy at birth for girls and in the ratio of male and female labour force participation.

These changes notwithstanding, girls remain particularly vulnerable to constrained life choices; they are less likely to have access to and complete formal education, more likely to be married as children (to men who are, on average, five years older), and are growing up in a culture in which gender discrimination permeates social institutions. For instance, the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2011 shows that men are more likely to own land, alone or jointly (26%-27% male vs 12%-13% female) (CSA and ICF International, 2012). Moreover, the DHS (2011) indicates that the average age at marriage is 16.5 years, and over 41% of women aged 20-24 were married by the age of 18 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). The high rate of early marriage means that Ethiopia has one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with 72.4 births for every 1,000 women aged 15-19 years (UNDP, 2011). Additionally, only 42.5% of pregnant women receive any form of prenatal care (CSA and ICF International, 2012).

Table 1: Narrowing gender gap in Ethiopia between 1994 and 2013

Indicators	1994-1998	1999-2003	2004-2008	2009-2013
Rate of out-of-school females of primary school age (%)	70.2%	57.4%	34.4%	N.A
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	1,200	990	740	500
Life expectancy at birth for girls (number of years a newborn infant would live)	62 years	63 years	64 years	65 years
Ratio of female to male labour force participation (%)	79.6%	80.4%	86.2%	87.5%

Source: DataBank, 2014; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014

In light of these rapid changes and ongoing challenges, this report seeks to better understand the extent to which social norms surrounding early marriage practices are shifting. It considers what some of the remaining barriers are, and the broader spill-over effects that discriminatory gender norms around marriage are having on girls' capabilities – especially in education but also in terms of their reproductive and sexual health, emotional wellbeing, economic empowerment, and voice and agency.

1.2 About this report

This report draws on research from in-depth qualitative fieldwork undertaken in 2013 at three sites in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia: Dembashi in Yilmana Densa Woreda (West Gojjam), Bulbullo in Worebabo Woreda (South Wollo) and Metema Yohanes in Metema Woreda (North Gondar). It is part of a multi-country, multi-year initiative (also covering Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam) funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)'s Adolescent Girls and Social Norms project. The research in Ethiopia aimed to explore what drives the shifting and persisting norms surrounding early marriage practices, and how they affect adolescent girls' education and other capabilities. ODI, in partnership with national researchers, is exploring the key capabilities that shape girls' current wellbeing and future potential. Focusing on economic, educational, physical, psycho-emotional and civic participation capabilities, it aims to shine a light on discriminatory social norms, make visible the often hidden experiences of adolescent girls and identify how policy and programme actors can better respond to their needs and priorities.

The report begins by laying out the conceptual framework for the study, which is similar across all four countries involved in the DFID project. It then introduces the broader Ethiopian political and socio-cultural context, providing an overview of the current situation for Ethiopian girls vis-à-vis practices surrounding marriage, fertility and education, among others. We then briefly outline the study sites, sample, methodology, and research tools. Our primary research findings are presented in sections 5 and 6. Integrating information from adolescent girls, their families, and community leaders, we address the ways in which early marriage practices and gender norms are precluding girls' education and limiting their future life choices. We then explore how social institutions and agency interact with modernity to both maintain existing gender norms – and conversely to change them. Building on our respondents' stories about their lived realities, the report concludes with a discussion of policy and programming implications for governments, NGOs and other stakeholders, so that they can maximise the potential to drive change towards more progressive gender norms that will expand rather than limit girls' horizons.

2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for year 1 research was informed by the capabilities approach to development, underpinned by current thinking around gender justice and entitlements. As reflections on the findings of year 1 research have progressed, the conceptual framework has also evolved. The current framework (see Figure 1) illustrates how both the drivers of positive change in social norms and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms may be mediated by a variety of factors, operating through a variety of institutions and sites, to affect adolescent girls' capability domains.

Source: Marcus, 2014



Figure 1 illustrates some of the main forces that contribute to positive change in gender norms (on the left) as well as those that help maintain discriminatory gender norms (on the right). Some forces – such as education or the media – can either promote change or help maintain discriminatory norms, and they thus appear in both clusters of forces. This is important for the overall conceptualisation of change and persistence in gendered social norms, as our research findings strongly suggest that change processes in gender norms are neither uni-directional nor uni-causal, and that the same factors and mediating institutions can effect outcomes in different ways. Though there are forces of positive change, as we will see in our research findings, the reality is not quite as simple. The interests of powerful groups are evident in both spheres – either as drivers of positive change or forces resisting such change. The blue and orange spheres illustrate both the structural drivers of change in gender norms and more contingent or social psychological factors that may promote or impede change. Neither the forces promoting change nor those maintaining norms are determinant – they are in constant interaction with each other.

Social norms – and processes of change or stasis – affect agency and what individuals actually do. Agency is also affected by a myriad of other factors, which mediate the effects of gender norms on behaviour; selected influences are shown in the figure in grey. Both norms and adolescent girls' agency operate through a range of institutional sites (illustrated by the turquoise ovals) and affect the ultimate outcomes – adolescent girls' capabilities (indicated in green). Feedback arrows indicate that these are not one-way processes; girls' capabilities affect their agency and thus their capacity to challenge discriminatory norms.

The following are some of the key messages and issues identified from a literature review on social norms and norm change (Marcus, 2014) that have particular relevance for our study:

- No one theoretical perspective on norm maintenance and change fully captures the processes and range of factors that hold gender norms in place or underpin change in particular situations. It is productive to combine insights from analysis of structural processes that facilitate norm change, studies of social convention and conformity, and analysis of agency and resistance.
- Social norms are part of the way in which gendered power inequalities are maintained. Analysis of these power inequalities is thus vital for understanding different groups' capacity to challenge norms.
- Processes of norm change can be rapid and abrupt or incremental and unnoticed, or somewhere in between. Such processes are often complex, messy and non-linear.
- Because gender norms are often held in place by several factors simultaneously, challenging discriminatory norms frequently requires coordinated action on more than one factor.
- While the key drivers of change are specific to particular socio-cultural contexts and gender norms, an emerging consensus indicates that the increase in girls' access to education and the growth in economic opportunities for young women have played a particularly important role in changing gender relations, and frequently in changing social norms.
- Social mobilisation and campaigning by feminists has played a critical role in shifting public policy, with impacts on gender relations. There is also some evidence that large-scale activity to promote gender equality, such as communication campaigns and subsidies for girls' education, have contributed to norm change.
- Legal change – either as a response to changing social norms and to activist pressure, or as a response to leadership by an elite group – can also drive changes in gender norms and wellbeing outcomes for women and girls. Enforcing gender equality laws can stimulate and reinforce compliance with expected behaviour that underpins and feeds into norm change at the local level.
- The vast majority of the world's population live in contexts affected by large-scale structural changes such as globalisation, increasing access to education, and the rapid spread of communications technology – all of which can have a profound effect on gender norms. While in the main, these

changes are leading to more egalitarian gender norms, they can also give rise to resistance movements asserting discriminatory gender norms.

- The role of the multiple potential drivers of norm change is mediated in any given context by numerous factors: the broader cultural and ideational (including religious) context from which social norms governing gendered behaviour derive; the strength with which norms are held in any particular reference group; individual views (which do not necessarily accord with social norms); and socioeconomic factors that facilitate or limit individuals' and households' room for manoeuvre. Thus, even in a supportive context of expansion of affordable secondary education, structural change in the economy, and new normative and empirical expectations concerning sending daughters to secondary school, an individual household may be unable to comply with norms because of poverty, or because, in the absence of others to undertake care work, the eldest daughter is needed to look after a sick relative.
- Since gender norms reflect deeply entrenched social structures, it is rarely only social conventions that hold discriminatory norms in place; gender norms also reflect moral codes, religious codes and cultural values, and the social and economic interests of specific groups, encapsulated in specific gender ideologies. Where there is more than one set of factors holding a norm in place, change in one area only (e.g. social convention) is likely to be insufficient, and it may be necessary to address all determining factors.
- Just as social norms are held in place by a number of factors simultaneously, change may also be driven by multiple factors occurring at the same time, which may be operating on different levels. Thus, for example, structural forces of change or stasis set the context in which psychological processes promoting or undermining change take place. Analytically and practically, it is vital to disentangle the different processes that are taking place simultaneously.
- Role models have been identified as critical to catalysing norm change processes, both in the empirical analysis of processes of norm change in particular contexts and in the theoretical literature. Role models may persuade people to adopt new norms; they also influence norms where less powerful or lower-status people are inclined to imitate. Role models may be community leaders, religious figures or celebrities such as music or sports stars, but they may also be other girls or adults who challenge particular norms in their community, or who have done so in the past and can be seen as living proof that new norms can lead to positive outcomes.
- It is increasingly recognised that adolescent girls, just like adult women, do not all accept the gender status quo. As interest in girls' empowerment has grown, so has understanding of the ways in which girls already influence decisions about their own futures, those of their younger siblings and, in the case of married girls and young women, the areas in which they have decision-making power in relation to their children. Although not all girls experience prevailing gender norms as constraining, and although not all those who do are able to challenge patriarchal patterns of power and authority within households, there are increasing examples of girls directly challenging discriminatory gender norms. These processes have been particularly well documented in relation to early marriage and girls' right to secondary education.

Table 2 summarises the factors that either contribute to or detract from the likelihood of change in social norms.

Table 2: Conditions in which gender norms are most likely to change

<i>More likely to change when...</i>	<i>Less likely to change when...</i>
No parties have strong economic interests at stake (e.g. stand to lose from change, or to gain from continuation of old norms) or parties have a strong economic interest in changing	There are strong economic interests in continuation of a practice
No one's power is directly threatened by change	Certain groups perceive their power and status to be directly undermined by change
One key factor underpins a norm	A norm is underpinned by multiple causal factors ('over-determined')
There are no religious injunctions to continue a certain practice	There are religious injunctions in favour of a particular practice
A critical mass of others have already changed their practices	Very few others have changed practice
Role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote changed norms	Role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote the status quo or more inequalitarian norms
A changing institutional or political context provides opportunities for changed practices	The institutional or political environment is resistant to change
Norm change communications are paired with opportunities for action	It is unclear to people how they would implement the new norm

Source: Marcus, 2014

Changing gender norms and relations can give rise to hidden or overt resistance, sometimes involving political mobilisation against gender equality. Resistance to more egalitarian gender norms may be motivated by perceived challenges to the power, status or economic interests of an individual or group, by ideational factors such as a perception that traditional values or religious traditions are under attack, or by both factors simultaneously. 'Injunctive' gender norms (views about what people *should* do in a given society) are often different from 'descriptive' norms (what most people are actually *doing*), and may change at a different pace or in a different direction; reference groups holding these norms may differ, depending on the norm. Some norms have been identified as particularly 'sticky' and resistant to change – typically those where powerful vested interests uphold them or where a multiplicity of factors contribute to their persistence.

3 Methodology



Picture 2: Dembashi agricultural environment, 2013

The focus of the research in the second year of the project was to obtain a more in-depth understanding of how and why discriminatory gendered social norms are changing or not changing, so as to better inform relevant policies and programmes. The qualitative research instruments used sought to unpack the factors that shape some norms, shedding light on why some social norms are being relaxed or even transformed, while others remain sticky.

To explore this issue in Ethiopia, focusing on early marriage and its impacts on adolescent girls' capabilities (especially in education), qualitative data were collected in three towns in Amhara Regional State: Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema. Each town is located within a different zone in the region, all with very distinct characteristics. The three sites were chosen because they are highly diverse in terms of demographics, socio-cultural traditions and geographical proximity to migration hubs such as Sudan and Yemen. They were different from the research sites chosen in year 1, although still in the same zones; this was to avoid research saturation but gain a fuller picture of the variety of sub-national contexts, and how gendered social norms play out therein.

3.1 Characteristics of the research sites

Amhara Regional State, one of Ethiopia's largest but most disadvantaged regions, is situated in the northwest and north central part of the country. The Amhara people (numbering approximately 20 million) comprise one of the nine ethnic divisions (*kililoch*) of Ethiopia, and are predominantly (more than 85%) engaged in agriculture. The region is characterised by high levels of food insecurity due to recurrent drought and deforestation, and low educational attainment (for example, more than 60% of women over the age of 15 have never been to school) (CSA and ICF International, 2012).

3.1.1 Dembashi, West Gojjam zone

The West Gojjam zone is located in south-east Amhara. Its total population is 2,106,596 and is 99% Ethiopian Orthodox Christian.¹ Dembashi is a small village of just over 6,000 people.² It is located within the Yilmana Densa woreda, in one of the most food-secure areas of Amhara. According to the Food Economy Group, surplus crop production ‘ensures food self-sufficiency and generates relatively high cash incomes’ for middle-income households (Food Economy Group, no date (a): 19). The road infrastructure here is also one of the best in Amhara, facilitating trade and markets.

3.1.2 Bulbullo, South Wollo zone

The South Wollo zone is located in southern Amhara. In 2007, the population was recorded as 2,518,862, 70.89% of whom were Muslim and 28.8% Ethiopian Orthodox Christian. Communities in South Wollo have strong social cohesion they have active religious entities such as mosques and feast groups, and households are connected through kinship, neighbourhood, religious or ethnic ties. According to Amare et al., ‘mutual assistance’ – in the form of farm labour exchange, gifts of cash or food, lending oxen and helping out in times of need – ‘serves to bind together people in networks of reciprocity’ (Amare et al., 2000: 7). Land scarcity is a persistent problem; a large number of households are unable to produce sufficient food because landholdings are ‘limited and unequally distributed’ (Amare et al., 2000: 9).

Bulbullo is a village of around 7,000 people³ located within the Worebabu woreda. It is located close to the main north–south highway to nearby towns Dessie and Addis Ababa. The South Wollo Meher-Belg livelihood zone, where Bulbullo is located, is a ‘chronically food insecure area’ (Food Economy Group, no date (b): 1). The dry conditions, unreliable rainfall, infertile soil, crop pests and small landholdings result in chronic food shortages. Coping mechanisms employed by households include labour migration to the Middle East and increased seeking of remittances from family members working in Arab states.

3.1.3 Metema, North Gondar zone

Metema Yohanes is a kebele town in the North Gondar zone of north-western Ethiopia, bordering Sudan. The North Gondar zone is a rural area with a total population of 2,929,628 (2007). In the 2007 Ethiopian Census, 10,171 people were recorded as living in Metema. The predominant religion in North Gondar is Ethiopian Orthodox Christian; 95% of census respondents declared this as their faith, with just 4% identifying themselves as Muslim. Although the main ethnic group in North Gondar is Amhara, the Metema woreda – typical of many border areas – comprises various ethnic groups and has been host to a series of settlement programmes promoted by the Ethiopian Government over the past decade (Sesame Business Network, no date).

According to a 2004 World Bank memorandum, the average rural household in North Gondar has 1 hectare of land, and only 14% of people work in non-farm related jobs (World Bank, 2004: 18). The major crops grown by farmers in the region are sorghum, cotton, teff and sesame, contributing significant amounts of sesame for export to Sudan; livestock are mainly goats and cattle are, for local use. North Gondar is constantly at risk of drought (Sallabank, 2014; World Bank, 2004).

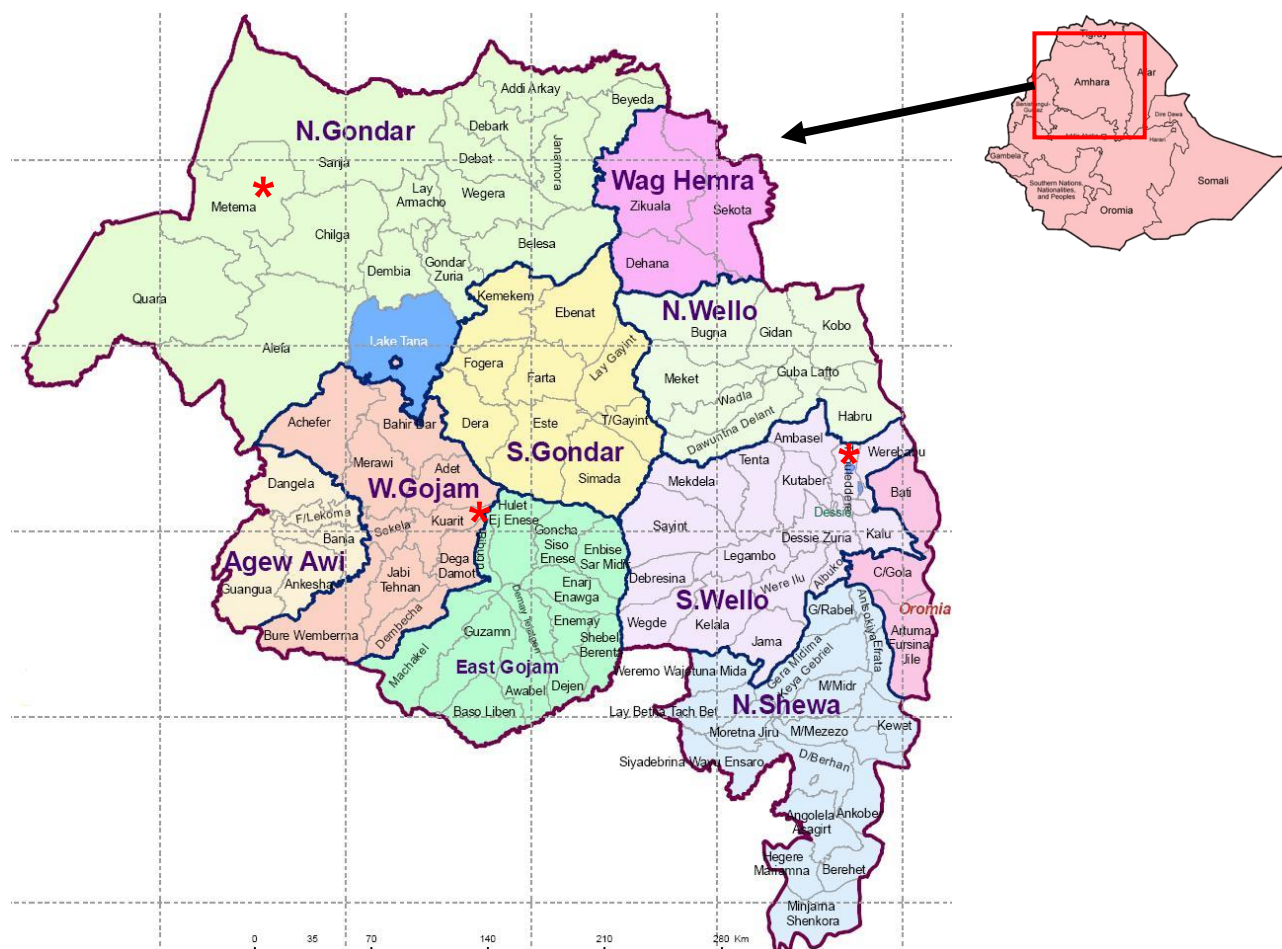
As a border town, Metema hosts a number of temporary residents including migrants hoping to find domestic work in Sudan, Libya, the Middle East or Europe. For this reason, within the national context of mass youth labour migration, Metema has received attention as a key trafficking route. According to 2010 data from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), between 75,000 and 100,000 Ethiopians annually use a one-month tourist visa to cross the Metema border by bus to Sudan (Gessesse, 2013).

1 According to the 2007 Census

2 In 2005, the population of Dembashi was reported as 6,336.

3 According to a report by the Food Economy Group, the population of Bulbullo was 6,693 in 2005.

Figure 2: West Gojjam, South Wollo and North Gondar zones in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia (see red star for sites)



Source: www.ethiodemographyandhealth.org; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subdivisions_of_Ethiopia

3.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork in these three localities was conducted by a team of four researchers: three local researchers (a senior male research who is the principle investigator in Ethiopia and two junior female researchers) and an ODI Senior Research Fellow (Nicola Jones). For ethical reasons, the team ensured to the extent possible that the in-depth interviews with adolescent girls and the focus group discussions with girls and women were conducted by female researchers given some of the delicate subjects under discussion. The table below summarises the data collected in the three field sites, and explains the rationale for each of the instruments used.

Table 3: Research instruments used for data collection in Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema

Instrument	Purpose	Who	Number
Group community mappings / historical timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand shifts over time in social norms and possible drivers To contextualise findings To unpack minority status - what does it mean to be minority when you are a majority in that area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 with younger people; 1 with older people 	Bulbullo: 2 Dembashi: 2
Small group discussions with girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore adolescent girls' perspectives on social norms, and the reference groups who monitor these. Role of peers / friends Siblings Scenarios – what would happen if your sister went against/goes against parental will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-School Dropouts Married Not-married Never in school 	Bulbullo: 2 Dembashi: 2 Metema: 2
Small group discussions with boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore adolescent boys' perspectives on social norms, and the reference groups who monitor these. Role of peers / friends Siblings Scenarios – what would happen if your sister went against/goes against parental will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-School Not-married 	Bulbullo: 1 Dembashi: 1 Metema: 1
In-depth interviews with boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To unpack perceptions using blanks/ formulaic approaches: ideal boy/ ideal husband, etc Use of participatory approaches including reactive tools and visual tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys with a sister 	Bulbullo: 9 Dembashi: 5
Focus group discussions with adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore adults views on social norms for adolescent girls – and the extent to which they are or are not changing over time and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> with mothers of adolescent girls with fathers of adolescent girls 	Bulbullo: 4 Dembashi: 4 Metema: 2
Intergenerational tools (3 interactions per tool) Inter-generational trios Marital network case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore shifts in the relative importance and framing of a particular social norm across generations 	4 inter-generational - three generations (unmarried adolescent girls) [2 in school; 2 out of school] 4 in-laws just 2 generations for adolescent wife and husband (married adolescent girls)	Bulbullo: 24 total interactions - 4GTs - 4 MNs Dembashi: 24 total interactions - 4GTs - 4 MNs

Outlier case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore examples of adolescents who fall at one end of the spectrum or other (full compliance, or non-compliance/transformation) and to unpack what contributed to their experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adolescents/young people who fall ‘outside the norm’ potentially their parents and siblings as well (at least for a sub-group of these cases). 	Bulbullo: 9 Dembashi: 15 Metema: 9
Key informant interviews (KIIs) – local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain expert insights into why a social norm is sticky or flexing or transformation To explore local blockages to political ideologies which sought to operate directly on norms - e.g. religious authorities, elders, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Especially with non-usual suspects –e.g. police, justice/security, border guards, religious authorities, etc. 	Bulbullo: 7 Dembashi: 5 Metema: 2
TOTAL interactions			133 Bulbullo: 58 Dembashi: 59 Metema: 16



Picture 3 (left): Mothers FDG Dembashi ,2013



Picture 4 (right): Inter-generational trio with men, fieldwork, Dembashi, 2013

4 Locating Ethiopian adolescent girls in their political and social context

In order to understand girls' changing life opportunities, it is essential to situate community-level findings within the context of broader political and socioeconomic shifts.

4.1 Political context for Ethiopian girls

4.1.1 The national context

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been governed by a ruling coalition of four groups comprising the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) since 1995. The EPRDF promoted a policy of ethnic federalism, dividing the country into nine semi-autonomous regions and two chartered cities, meaning there are four layers of government administration: region, zone, district (woreda) and ward (kebele). The country's recent history has seen three distinct political regimes: Imperial, led by Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974); Communist, overseen by a military junta called the Derg (1974-1991); and the Federal Democratic Republic, run by the EPRDF (1995-present).

Before the 1974 revolution, organised activities for women were run mainly by non-governmental bodies such as the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association, the Ethiopian Officers' Wives Association, and the Ethiopian Female Students' Association. However, these associations were limited as they had no power to inform any government policies or laws. In fact, during the Derg regime, the legal marriage age for girls was 15 years. After 1974, the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA) was established. Unfortunately, due to its close ties with the Derg regime, REWA did not attempt to empower women or promote women's interests. Thus, there was little or no improvement in the lives of women in both rural and urban areas.

Currently, the Ethiopian governmental structure has two primary organs: Federal Government and regional states, which both have 'legislative, executive and judicial powers' (Twibell, 1999: 410). The Prime Minister heads the Federal Government and each regional state has its own president, elected by the State Council. Ethiopia has a top-down approach to policy and law, and the Ethiopian Constitution is the supreme source of law, from which all other laws derive (Twibell, 1999: 409). The Council of the Federation and the Council of People's Representatives have ultimate power, including the power of constitutional interpretation, and the power to allocate federal revenues to states (Twibell, 1999: 414).

The latest political regime, the EPRDF, has remained in power for two decades, leading scholars such as Abbink to state that the party is 'uncomfortable with the idea of an opposition' (Abbink, 2010: 2). In the 2010 elections, the EPRDF won by a landslide, taking 499 out of 547 seats.⁴ Although the EPRDF has brought greater religious freedoms to the country, it has also sought to monitor and control religious activities due to the potential power they represent (Haustein and Ostebo, 2011: 755-758). The EPRDF is criticised by some for its high levels of involvement in all spheres of citizens' lives (Tegegn, 2008: 455; Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009: 193).

4 National Electoral Board of Ethiopia: Official Results of the 23 May 2010 General Election (www.ethemb.se/ee_eth_election2010.htm)

4.1.2 The role of religion in politics

Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is the predominant religion in Ethiopia, with 43% of the population identifying themselves as upholding this faith in the 2007 Census, compared to 34% identifying themselves as Muslim. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is the predominant Christian church in Ethiopia and its sixth and current Patriarch is Abune Mathias, who came to the role in February 2013. Similarly, the main religion in Amhara is Ethiopian Orthodox Christian: in 2007, 82.5% of people in Amhara identified themselves as Orthodox Christian, with 17.2% Muslim (CSA, 2007).

Although the government is secular, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a powerful entity in the country. Despite the federal government system, church power is centralised and the Patriarch uses regional parish councils and regional bishops as instruments and agents of local control. Although the Derg separated church and state powers in 1975, the Church remains a powerful ally to the government due to its 'real influence in the countryside' (Ancel, 2011: 13). Hausteina and Ostebo state there is a 'conflation of EPRDF and church interests', which is driven 'more by internal church politics than direct government action' (2011: 763).

Islam was once viewed as the traditional 'enemy' of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with Muslims previously 'confined to political limbo' (Larebo, 1986: 158). However, Muslims have gained increased recognition since 1975 and Sharia courts have jurisdiction over some family and inheritance cases. The Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) represents Ethiopian Muslims, with a mandate to 'articulate the needs and aspirations of the nationwide Muslim community' (Larebo, 1986: 158). EIASC members are drawn from the nine regions and two city administrations of the country. However, in 2012, elections for the Supreme Council were met with protests. Protestors believed that the government was trying to fix the election outcome (Voice of America, 2012), indicating that like the Orthodox Church, Islam also has close governmental ties.

4.2 Social context of Ethiopian girls: drivers and inhibitors of early marriage practices

Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, ranking 18th globally in 2013 (International Center for Research on Women, no date). In 2011, 41% of Ethiopian women aged 20-24 had been married before they reached 18 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). In the Amhara region, this percentage is even higher, at 50% (Erulkar et al., 2010). Indeed, out of the country's nine regions, Amhara has the lowest average age at first marriage for girls, at 15.1, which is significantly lower than the national average of 17.1 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). In Amhara, the average age at first marriage for young men is 20.6, also lower than the national average of 23.1.

Though still prevalent, there has been a slow decline in child marriage since 2005, when the figure was 49% for women aged 20-24 (CSA, 2005: 82). One of the findings from this study's year 1 research was that migration may partly explain this decline, even though migration itself serves to reinforce several oppressive norms and structures for girls and women. Youth unemployment in Ethiopia is high, but has been declining slowly since 1999 (from 11% in 1999 to 7% in 2005). However, as Broussar and Tekleselassie (2012) state: 'while the economy has demonstrated impressive reductions in unemployment, women have not benefited as much as men. They have significantly higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts and are often confined to the informal sector'. In 2005, 79% of Ethiopian women aged 15-29 were participating in the labour force compared with 86% of men in the same age group. Lack of employment opportunities in Ethiopia, combined with low female educational attainment, has led to a rise in youth migration to the Middle East, where the majority of migrants are adolescent girls seeking domestic work in Arab states such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait.

4.2.1 Key laws, programmes and policies affecting adolescent girls

In the past two decades, significant policy steps have been made to improve gender equality (see Box 1). The Family Code was revised in 2000 and the Penal Code in 2005 to make marriage and divorce procedures more egalitarian. The revised Federal Family Code sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both sexes (Article 7) and has done away with betrothal, which would lead to the creation of an alliance between families when the children are young. It also covers other issues, including divorce and custody, and limits the powers of family arbitrators who could previously have attempted to reconcile the couple and only if they failed to reconcile, could

grant divorce. Currently, family arbitrators are restricted to providing conciliation efforts only (Articles 80 and 82).

Article 35 of the Ethiopian Constitution provides women with rights and protections equal to those of men and also goes into more specific rights, including: the right to equality in marriage; to maternity leave with full pay; to full consultation in national development policies; to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer property, with an emphasis on land and inheritance issues; and to equal employment, pay and promotion. In 2000, the Land Use Rights Proclamation was revised to state that men and women have an equal right to use land, and it empowered women by mandating joint titling (requiring photographs and signatures from the husband and wife). In addition, the Federal Rural Land Administration Law states that women have equal rights to use and control the land as well as rights to transfer and bequeath holding rights (Economic Commission for Africa, 2009).

Box 1: Legislative changes for reducing gender based violence

The Penal Code revision makes female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) illegal. Article 568 contains provisions on circumcision for girls, stipulating that the penalty for circumcision ranges from 3 months' to 3 years' imprisonment and a fine of between 500 and 10,000 birr, or both. The links between FGM/C and early marriage in Ethiopia are complex, rooted in traditional gender norms that seek to control girls' lives and their sexuality, and limit their opportunities for empowerment (ECA, 2009). In a 2014 World Vision report, findings from Ethiopia's Oromiya region suggest that FGM/C is often seen as a prerequisite to marriage, or marriage follows immediately after FGM/C. Traditional norms reinforce that FGM/C is related to sexual purity, which is a desirable quality in a bride.

The revised Penal Code also addresses domestic violence to some degree. Further, though abortion is illegal, the grounds for legally sanctioned abortion have been extended. Rape, sexual abuse and abduction merit tougher and graver penalties. Other offences are also criminalised, including intentional transmission of contagious diseases, trafficking for prostitution and forced labour. All categories of sexual abuse carry grave penalties.

On 24 October 2013, Ethiopia launched a National Alliance to End Child Marriage (Box 2), as well as announcing the development of a national strategy on harmful traditional practices and an action plan on FGM/C, child marriage and abduction. The government drafted this strategy in partnership with donors, civil society organisations and other development actors (UNFPA Ethiopia, 2013).

Box 2: National Alliance to End Child Marriage in Ethiopia

'Ethiopia commits to eliminating child marriage and FGM by 2025'

'Our approach puts girls at the heart of our commitment, working closely with them, their families and communities, to end these practices for good and break the cycle of harmful traditional practices.'

His Excellency DPM Mekonnen said that Ethiopia would achieve its goal by 2025 through a strategic, multi-sectoral approach and highlighted four areas where the government has promised to take action:

1. Through incorporating relevant indicators in the National Plan and the National Data Collection Mechanisms including the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey to measure the situation of FGM/C and Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and to establish a clear benchmark
2. Through enhancing the coordination and effectiveness of the National Alliance to End Child Marriage and the National Network to End FGM by engaging different actors with key expertise
3. Through strong, accountable mechanisms for effective law enforcement
4. And through an increase of 10% in financial resources from the existing budget to eliminate FGM/C and CEFM.

Source: United Nations in Ethiopia

(http://et.one.un.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=193:ethiopia-commits-to-eliminating-child-marriage-and-fgm-by-2025&catid=82:news-and-updates&Itemid=492)

The Amhara Region's Five-Year Strategic Plan, which focuses mainly on promoting economic growth in the region, has since 2005 maintained that unleashing the potential of women is central (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development, 2006). However, progress has been uneven, with multiple demographic indicators showing that Amhara girls and women are doing better than their counterparts in other regions on some indicators, while they are below the national average on others.

4.2.2 Drivers and inhibitors of early marriage

Although early marriage is against the law, and a number of local, government and NGO initiatives are in place to stop the practice, it still continues; the average age of first marriage in Amhara state was reported as 15.1 in 2011 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). Early marriage of girls used to be very common in the Imperial period prior to 1974, especially in northern Ethiopia and among the Amhara. These early marriages were accompanied by traditional practices such as '*madego*', where a married young girl lives with her in-laws and works for them (Boyden et al., 2013: 10). According to Boyden, child betrothals served as a 'strategy to seal alliances between wealthy households' (2013: 11). Such early marriage practices are linked to a cultural logic that is twofold: families have strong vested interests in the productive and reproductive capacities of women, and child marriage ensures girls' social integration, protection (see below), and moral and social development. This explains why, in the past, child marriages were often arranged by rich or politically powerful families who wished to secure suitable partners for their descendants (Reminick, no date). Early marriage is not so much seen as a 'threat' or 'harmful practice' but essential to wellbeing and social survival (Boyden, 2013: 14), especially as it is considered to extend a woman's reproductive years.

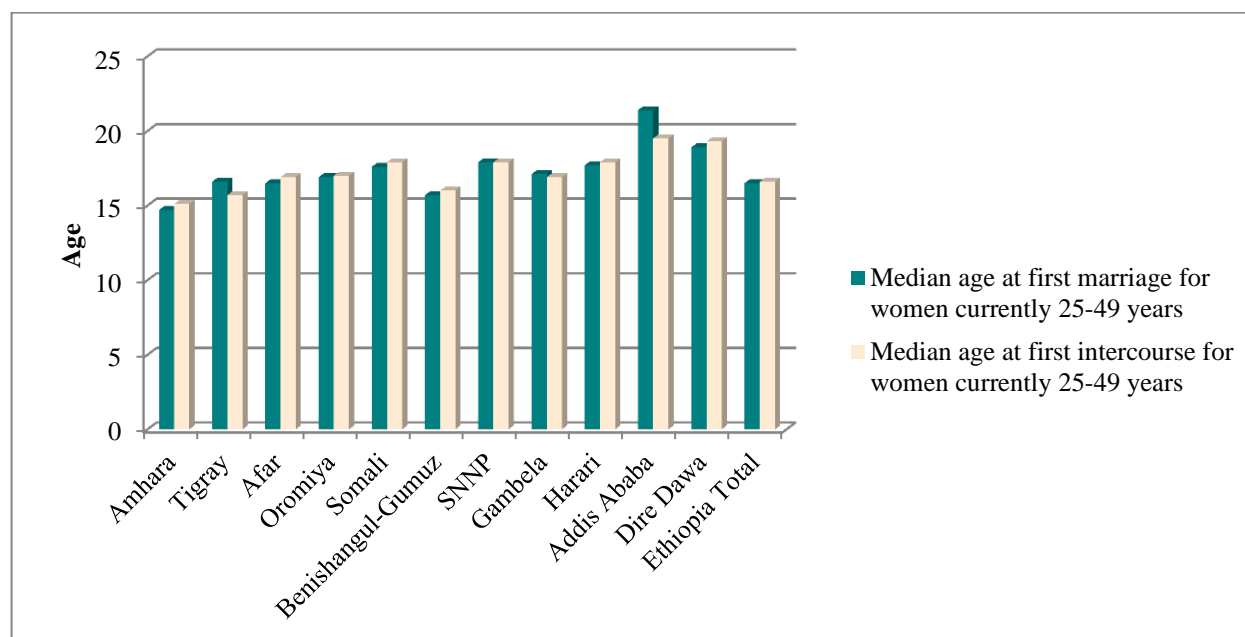
Early marriage often results from a system of values that justifies control over women's sexuality and fertility. For this reason, parental preoccupation with the risk of rape, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy is a key driver of early marriage. Parents see early marriage as a way to 'protect' their daughters from defamation or shame – but, more importantly, to protect their reputation or family honour. Religious values also have a part to play: Erulkar (2013) found that Muslim girls were significantly more likely to be married between the ages of 15 and 17 than non-Muslim girls.

The financial burdens of taking care of a child – in addition to viewing marriage as a 'rite of passage' whereby girls acquire more status and have more voice once they manage their own home – are also strong contributors to early marriage (see Box 3 on page 28). In Amhara, it is customary for the bride and groom's parents to endow the newly-weds with land and cattle, each family providing gifts of equal value. However, Boyden et al (2013) discovered that since land shortages have become an issue, couples receive small parcels of land from each set of parents, and money instead of cattle, ranging from 500 to 1,000 birr (£18-£37).

Early marriage not only puts girls' health at risk due to consequent early pregnancy, but also precludes further education, affords them little say in household decision-making (including on contraception), and significantly increases the chances that they will experience domestic violence (Erulkar, 2013). Nonetheless, there is a growing awareness that early marriage is harmful to girls due to significant legislative changes at the government level and successful interventions that deliver the messages about the negative consequences of early marriage practices for girls.

Figure 3 shows the median age at first marriage and at first intercourse for women aged 25-49 in various regions of Ethiopia. It shows that Amhara girls are marrying and having first intercourse at a younger age than girls in other regions of the country. For Amhara girls, the median age at first marriage is 14.7 years, while age at first intercourse is 15.1 years; the national averages are 16.1 years and 16.6 years respectively. These statistics highlight the importance of understanding the role and power of cultural beliefs in the region.

Figure 3: Median age of girls at first marriage and first intercourse in Amhara and other regions of Ethiopia



Source: CSA and ICF International (2012)

Box 3: Drivers of early marriage – reflections from year 1 of the study

During the year 1 fieldwork, one of the most commonly cited reasons for early marriage was related to household economic burden. Respondents stated that parents of girls will choose to marry off their daughters early to diminish the cost burden on the family (one less person to feed) and to obtain a dowry. Parents of sons, on the other hand, will seek out brides who could give bride price, as wedding gifts serve as a way to reduce severe financial strain (gifts received by girls from her parents come under the control of the husband after marriage). For instance, a 17-year-old girl, Makeda,* in the district of Kelala, said:

‘Any dowry a female receives would go straight to her parents. She gets nothing for herself. Presently a dowry is worth 4,000 birr. The dowry amount is higher for a girl that is considered to be good to go to Arab countries.’

Upward social mobility for girls is thought to be obtained by marrying a young man from a wealthier family. Some girls spoke about marriage to a man with land or a better economic situation as a way of coping with poverty. Wedding gifts were also sources of assets for adolescent girls and boys. Common wedding gifts in rural areas include animals (a pair of oxen or one ox, a cow or some shoats) and sometimes a piece of land. Other gifts come in the form of cash or household goods.

Yet another factor contributing to early marriage was parents’ desire to avoid their daughters having premarital sex and becoming pregnant. The repercussions of becoming pregnant out of wedlock are severe as they are deeply ingrained in cultural beliefs of ‘bad’ behaviour. Parents spoke of their fear that unless they are married, girls might become sexually active – either ‘consensually’ or through rape – which would bring shame to the family and ruin the girl’s reputation and subsequent marriage options.

Source: Tefera et al., 2013

* Names have been changed to protect identities

4.2.3 Overview of the reasons for change in early marriage practices

There are various factors that contribute to changes in early marriage practices. At the government level, the Revised Family Proclamation of 2000 prohibited marriage under the age of 18. This legal change took hold in

2003, and by 2004 fines of 200 birr were imposed on Amhara families who arranged early marriages (Mekonnen and Aspen, 2007). Data in the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2011 suggest that age at first marriage increases with level of education. Women aged 25-49 who have been educated to secondary level are married, on average, at 22.8 years old. Wealth is also a contributing factor: the average age of marriage for women in the lowest (poorest) quintile is 16.4, yet in the top quintile it is 19.1 (CSA and ICF International, 2012: 66, Table 4.4). Furthermore, land shortages and the high cost of living in Amhara have also changed attitudes towards fertility: large families are increasingly viewed as a burden rather than an advantage. With a shift in parents opting for smaller families the reproductive and economic incentives of marrying off daughters at a young age have been reduced.

Boyden (2013: 21) found that arranged marriages are becoming less frequent and that more young couples are choosing their partners across urban and rural sites in many parts of the country, including Addis Ababa, Hawassa, and the regions of Amhara, Oromiya and Tigray (see Box 4). School clubs, such as girls' clubs, also appear to be making a difference to early marriage; they provide a safe space for girls to discuss their rights and harmful practices, and to develop life skills – for example, how to reduce the likelihood of rape and unwanted pregnancy, or to avoid early marriage (Tefera et al., 2013: v).

Box 4: Inhibitors of early marriage – reflections from year 1

Though early marriage was still common, as evidenced by the high number of adolescents interviewed who were married (and sometimes divorced) before age 18, a growing number of girls were avoiding marriage at an early age. For some girls, having their parents' support to marry at a later age was crucial to postponing early marriage. In other families, an older brother or sister who was economically better-off and able to contribute to the family budget could influence decisions about a younger sibling. For example, an older sister who had made money through migration to the Middle East was able to protect her younger sister from parents wanting to marry her off. Amina,* an adolescent girl in the town of Kobo, stated that:

'I was in Grade 5 at the time. My father and mother decided to marry me off. My sister objected to the idea of marriage and took me with her. I stayed with my sister until I completed my elementary education.'

With the increase in migration as a livelihood alternative for girls and their families, some girls opted to migrate rather than get married, despite the risks associated with living in cities within Ethiopia or abroad. Nevertheless, migration itself involves significant costs, so girls from the poorest households are unable to migrate, and many girls get married before they migrate to limit reputational costs once they are away.

Officials from the authorities who were interviewed spoke about efforts to change parental attitudes towards child marriage, protect girls who are forced into marriages, and even facilitate divorce for young women in violent marriages. One of the most common preventive practices reported was for schools to monitor girls' attendance. When a girl stops going to school, the headteacher visits the family to enquire about the situation. In some cases, such monitoring had kept parents from forcing girls into marriage. This resulted in an improvement in the situation of early marriage, as reported by some older adolescents and young women who had managed to avoid the practice. Indeed, some girls chose to live on their own in urban areas, once they had a parent's support against early marriage.

Source: Tefera et al., 2013

* Names have been changed to protect identities

4.2.4 Education

Although education is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 13, decades of intermittent war and famine have meant that education was often not prioritised, hence the adult literacy rate in Ethiopia is only 39% (2007 data cited in AllAfrica, 2013). Youth literacy, at 55% in 2007, shows substantial improvement, though girls continue to lag significantly behind boys (47% versus 63%) (ibid.). Furthermore, while 'Ethiopia's primary school enrolment rate has tripled in recent years, from 25 per cent in 1996/97 to 88 per cent in 2009/10' (AllAfrica, 2013), secondary enrolment rates remain dismal, with 'only 14% of young people of secondary school age... attending school' (CSA and ICF International, 2012: 29). There are also stark differences in enrolment rates between rural and urban areas and by wealth quintile, with poor, rural girls least likely to ever attend school (ibid: 29). Only

5.9% of rural girls were attending secondary school in 2011 (ibid: 30). Nevertheless, female secondary school enrolment has grown by an annual average of 10% for the past five years (Ministry of Education, 2011: 11).

While attendance may be rising and the educational gender gap is narrowing (Frost and Rolleston, 2013: 7), completion is problematic due to high levels of grade repetition and dropout, especially in rural areas. Dropouts between grades 1-8 have increased since 2005. Data from the 2009/10 school year show that most children drop out in grades 1 and 5, and for all grades except 4 and 6, the dropout rate is slightly lower for girls than boys (Ministry of Education, 2011: 35). 2011 data show that although 7,939,023 girls were enrolled in primary school that year, a mere 773,312 girls were enrolled at secondary level.

A study by Erulkar (2013) in the Awi zone of Amhara found that girls remained in school for an average of five years. Erulkar finds that of all out-of-school girls, nearly one-third cited early marriage as their reason for dropping out. However, there is also evidence showing that household burdens and care responsibilities also draw girls out of the classroom and back into their parental homes. According to the Demographic and Health Survey 2011, 48% of girls do a minimum of 28 hours of housework per week (CSA and ICF International, 2012). These domestic responsibilities leave girls with little time and energy for school, let alone homework (see Box 5). Other reasons why girls drop out are that they are needed to care for siblings, the cost of schooling is too high and parents usually prefer to send sons to schools, parents do not believe schooling will lead to employment for girls, or they have arranged early marriages (Frost and Rolleston, 2013; Erulkar and Muthengi-Karei, 2012).

Reflections from year 1 suggest that lack of access to secondary schools in the research sites further pushes children from poor households to end their schooling because their families cannot afford to send them to secondary school (due to the considerable costs of renting a room in the town where the school is, and transport costs). Further, the risk of gender-based violence is also a barrier to education for girls in the study sites, particularly those attending secondary school far from their home. On the other hand, household-level factors influencing girls' attainment include the level of educational attainment of caregivers, and family wealth. Thus, having a carer or parent who could read is associated with children being closer to the 'expected' age for their grade, and wealthier families are more likely to send their children to school from an early age (Frost and Rolleston, 2013: 10). Moving beyond the household level, the government uses effective enforcement mechanisms to encourage school attendance – for example, by fining or depriving households of government social services if they do not send their school-age children to school, (Woldehanna, Jones, & Tefera 2005: 22).

Recognising women's social disadvantage in society, the Ethiopian Government has embedded affirmative action within the Constitution (articles 35:3, 41:3 and 41:4), and introduced a lowered passing mark for girls on exams in grades 10 and 12 and at university level, as well as 'special support' in terms of extra classes or tuition for girls during their studies.⁵ The respective pass marks are decided by the Ministry of Education on a year-by-year basis.

Box 5: Girls' education – reflections from year 1

Family poverty and the need for labour for domestic and farm tasks emerged as strong barriers to girls staying in school and completing their education. Most adolescent girls complained about the challenges of managing their workload at home and finding time for school work. Most girls are expected to become caregivers, often at the cost of developing other skills that could be more fulfilling for them in the long term. As seen from the quotes below, education for girls is given less priority than household tasks.

'It is my mom who raised me. She didn't have adequate wealth. She fell ill with a kidney disease. As a result she is now in Addis. But I am here holding two children. As a consequence, I am not attending my schooling properly. I am in Grade 7. I am busy doing cooking food, feeding these children and doing other tasks in the house. So this by itself is a big influence. Bearing such a responsibility at this age is a big problem.' (Saba,* a 14-year-old girl from Kelala)

'I have paid 100 birr registration fees. I bought exercise books, textbooks and pens and pencils. I also rented a house in Kobo town for 100 birr per month, where I am attending my secondary education. In addition, the school has asked students to contribute money to buy a plasma television to receive lessons that are broadcast to all secondary schools.'

⁵ The Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003 mandates this.

'I also used to take foodstuff from my parental home. I cook my own food from Mondays to Fridays. I used to go to my parents' home on weekends when I get money [10 birr for a round trip] for transportation. Last year, I worked for the safety net public works programme [Ethiopia Productive Safety Net Programme] before I went to Kobo town to attend my secondary education.

'This year, the untimely rain has destroyed the crops. So I am afraid that this may not be a good year for me to continue with my secondary education because my parents may force me to stop my education due to economic problems.' (Besrat, 15-year-old, Kobo)

Source: Tefera et al., 2013

* All names have been changed to protect identities

4.2.5 Employment

Youth unemployment is high in Ethiopia, and employment options for women are limited. Broussar and Tekleselassie report that in 2011, 41% of urban young women were employed in the informal labour market, compared with less than 30% of young men. Erulkar and Mekbib (2007), in their sample of slum-dwelling girls in Addis Ababa, found that over 75% were working as domestics, reflecting the very limited employment options open to poor, uneducated girls (see also Broussar and Tekleselassie, 2012).

Erulkar's 2012 study of adolescent girls in Amhara found that a key reason for girls not attending school was parents not seeing the benefit of schooling for girls (Erulkar and Muthengi-Karei, 2012: 2). This is not surprising when, according to the 2005 National Labour Force Survey (CSA, 2006: 31), the illiterate working population was higher than the literate population (81.4% and 68.7% respectively). Even girls who complete their schooling struggle to find work, so for parents, the cost-benefit analysis of investing in a daughter's education does not weigh in favour of schooling. This combination of high youth unemployment and the cost-benefit disadvantages associated with girls' education has caused a vast number of adolescent girls to migrate to the Middle East (or other cities in Ethiopia) to seek employment, instead of continuing with their schooling.

Beydoun (2006) notes, '(i)ntersecting with poverty are the prevailing patriarchal systems that subordinate women, and thus, squarely compound their indigence and circumscribe employment options', leaving them, according to Wujira (2010), 'mostly unemployed' and with 'limited participation in the formal economy'.⁶ The end result is that Ethiopian girls and women are less educated than boys and men,⁷ enjoy fewer land rights (CSA and ICF International, 2012), earn two-thirds less (Zoellick, 2012), and are increasingly looking towards other countries not only in 'search of better job opportunities' (Wujira, 2010: 1), but also in order to make their own decisions, assert their independence, and exercise their agency (de Regt, 2010, 2012; Gebre, 2012; Dessiye, 2011).

4.2.6 Migration

Alongside economic reasons, educational failure is a driver of migration for young girls. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2011), which found that 11% of Ethiopian migrants migrated before the age of 18 (half legally and half illegally), notes that girls often choose to migrate after failing an exam cycle in the 8th, 10th or 12th grade.

Ethiopia has high levels of internal migration, largely linked to political instability, war, famine and economic decline (Mberu, 2005: 17). In the case of rural out-migration, Ezra (2001: 3) adds drought, environmental degradation and poverty to this list of factors. Ezra (2001: 4) claims that the Amhara region's population cannot be sustained by the natural resources available, due to a scarcity of arable land. As a result, families send members (including children) as daily labourers to areas with greater employment opportunities.

However, adolescent girls have other motivations to migrate (Box 6). Erulkar et al. (2006: 368) found that almost one-quarter of adolescent girl migrants to Addis Ababa had migrated to escape child marriage, and almost half were seeking greater educational opportunities.

6 Beydoun, 2006: 1014; Wujira, 2010: 3; see also Gebre, 2012; ILO, 2011; Reda, no date, Dessiye, 2011; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009; Endeshaw et al., 2006

7 UNICEF (2012) reports a youth literacy rate of 63% for boys and 47% for girls (www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_statistics.html).

External migration

External migration from Amhara to the Middle East is widespread, and almost all legal migrants are women and girls. Although Ethiopian migration to the Middle East (primarily to Lebanon) began as early as the 1980s,⁸ in recent years Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been absorbing the vast majority of legal migrants, as their demand for domestic labour has recently exploded.⁹ Woldemichael (no date), citing data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), observes that as the Ethiopian economy slows,¹⁰ the number of migrants continues to increase, with over 100,000 legally departing in the eight months between July 2012 and March 2013. Wujira (2010), also citing MoLSA, adds that ‘100 percent of these women migrated for the purpose of serving as domestic servants in private households’.

As it is a fairly recent phenomenon, specific research on adolescent female migrants is limited. However, between July 2012 and February 2013, almost 34,000 Amhara women migrated to find domestic work in other countries (Woldemichael, no date: 37). Due to extensive access to false identity cards that show a false age, it is suspected that a large proportion of these migrants are adolescent girls. However, in October 2013, the Ethiopian Government issued a ban on migration, in order to ‘safeguard the wellbeing of its citizens’ (BBC News, 2013). Three months later, they lifted the ban, following a new set of labour agreements that include minimum wage and insurance guarantees for migrants.¹¹ Despite the minimum legal age for migration being set at 18, there is evidence that adolescent girls as young as 13 migrate from Ethiopia to seek domestic work in Arab countries. A study by Agrinet and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2004, as cited in ILO, 2011) found that 7.5% of Ethiopian migrants to the Middle East had left home between the ages of 13 and 17. Gebre (2012: 262) found that migrants were often married girls between the ages of 16 and 20 who ‘were escaping the oppression of the marital home’. Woldemichael (no date) reports that falsified ages are quite common (see also Endeshaw et al., 2006), with girls in her sample stating that kebele officials helped them falsify their documents so that they could migrate.

Legal and illegal migration

Migration occurs both legally and illegally, with employment agencies and illegal brokers profiting from hopeful families.

Fernandez (2010: 252) describes the two ways to undertake legal migration: the first is for migrants to ‘secure work contracts abroad through their personal contacts’ and then register their migration with MoLSA. This path, while faster and officially legal, often relies on migrants’ personal contacts with illegal brokers. The second path is for migrants to go through private employment agencies, which ‘unofficially charge women between 2,000 and 8,000 Ethiopian Birr (US\$200-800) for their services, even though the cost of a return ticket, visa and insurance are supposed to be borne by the employer, and women are only supposed to pay for their passports and medical examination’ (ibid.).

Illegal migration is preferable for some migrants, according to de Regt (2010: 255) ‘because the fees they have to pay are less high or because it can be arranged faster’. MoLSA officials estimate that up to 70% of all migrants leave the country illegally.¹² The ILO (2011) observes that there is little transparency regarding the size of agency commissions from employers, and MoLSA officials acknowledge that even legal employment agencies often end up depending on illegal brokers to obtain the new migrants they need to keep caseloads high.¹³ For under-aged girls this is advantageous, as fewer questions are asked. However, as Wujira (2010) observes, it can result in debt bondage if migrants or their families must take out loans to pay those fees – and it offers none of the protections provided by private employment agencies such as protection against abusive employers by providing 24-hour services that migrants can contact.¹⁴ Whichever channel they take to get to the Middle East, there is overwhelming

8 Beydoun, 2006

9 Fernandez, 2010; ILO, 2011; Minaye, 2012

10 After several years of double-digit growth, the Ethiopian economy has slowed since the onset of the global financial crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts a 6.5% growth rate in 2012-2013. Interview: ‘IMF sees Ethiopia’s economic growth slowing as private sector struggles’, 23 May 2013 (www.imf.org/external/country/ETH/rr/2013/052313.pdf).

11 (<http://www.migrant-rights.org/research/ethiopia-to-lift-uae-ban/>)

12 As cited by the US State Department 2013 (<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2013/215460.htm>; see also Fernandez, 2010)

13 Ethiopian Employment Exchange Services Proclamation Number 632/2009 as cited in Woldemichael, 2013: 8

14 See also Woldemichael, 2013; de Regt, 2010

evidence that Ethiopian women and girls are often working and living in dangerous situations,¹⁵ as domestic work is ‘not regulated and inspected’ and affords little protection, particularly for live-in workers (ILO, 2011: 13).

Box 6: Migration – reflections from year 1 and other ODI research

Findings from multiple projects reinforce the economic gains of international migration. Young adolescent girl group participants in Kobo cited at least one person from their families (a sister, brother, aunt or uncle) who had migrated to Saudi Arabia, and most of them had had to dropout from school to migrate.

‘Some of my friends have migrated to Jeddah by dropping out from school. The girls went there because there is no other place they can go to. If girls run away from home and move to another place inside the country, the family would find you and bring you back to your parents’ home.’ (Miriam,* 15-year-old girl, Kobo)

‘Her [a girl’s] dream might be building a house or making her family’s life better. All this might become a reality because she went there.’ (Naomi, Hara)

The financial incentive is further enhanced due to disillusionment with good employment opportunities for girls and women in Ethiopia.

‘Here, the alternatives are prostitution, preparing local drinks, and work[ing] as maidservants. However, these all are not life-changing. As a result, girls decide to migrate.’ (Kiya, older woman in Hara)

‘I am thinking about going to Jeddah since the [economic] return from formal education is not as immediate as going to Jeddah, [and] since I have school friends who have migrated to Jeddah and used to send money to their families.’ (Zehna, 15-year-old girl, Grade 6 dropout, Kobo)

Source: Tefera et al., 2013

* All names have been changed to protect identities

4.2.7 Adolescent sexual health information and reproductive rights

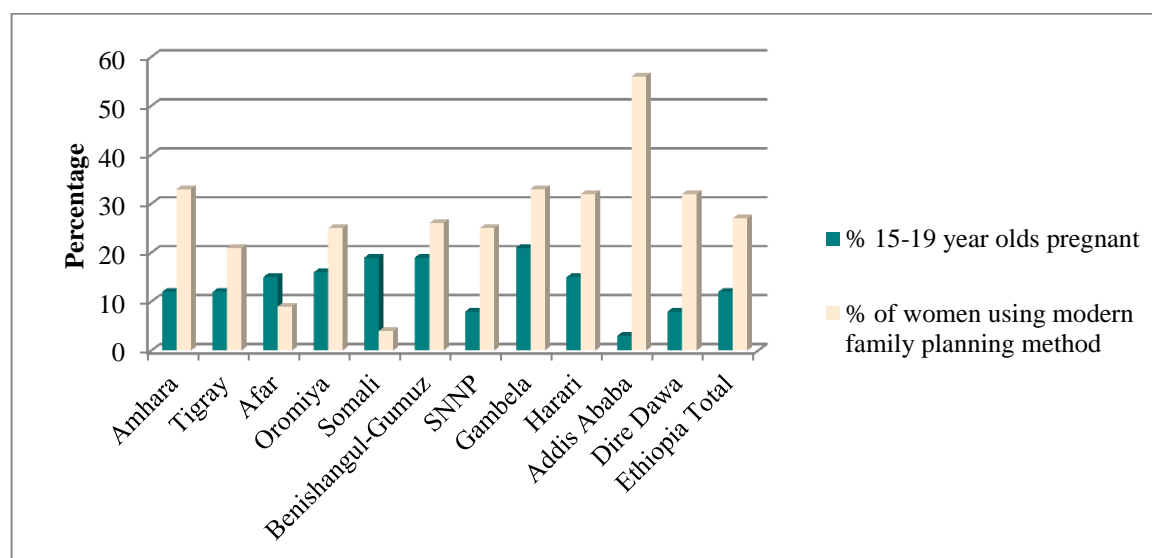
Numerous local studies have been conducted over the past decade to assess levels of sexual health knowledge and reproductive rights among Ethiopian adolescents (Box 7). Although there is increasing awareness of and access to contraception, some areas of the country are struggling to bridge the gap between reproductive health knowledge and contraceptive use. Key deterrents from accessing health services were parental disapproval, lack of basic information, and pressure from partners. Recent research in Northern Ethiopia demonstrates that there is good understanding of sexual health and the importance of contraception; in a study by Melaku et al (2014), 85% of sexually active students were using contraception and 90% of girls with unwanted pregnancies had accessed abortion. However, in a study from a rural part of East Gojjam, 67% of adolescents had knowledge of reproductive health, and only 21.5% had used contraception (Abajobir and Seme, 2014).

The contraceptive injection, which lasts for three months, is the most common form of birth control among young people in Ethiopia (Population Council, 2010); however, its availability depends on being able to access a local health centre, which is difficult for many rural adolescent girls. Nevertheless, it seems that the government is keen to promote better access to contraception, (Kaba and Mariam, 2012). Earlier this year, the Ethiopian Government joined forces with Argentina, Denmark and Morocco to lead a group of more than 60 states in an effort to draw attention to insufficient access to contraceptives and family planning services (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2014).

Figure 4 shows the percentage of girls aged 15-19 who are pregnant with their first child in various regions of Ethiopia. On average, 12% of Amhara girls reported being pregnant with their first child between the ages of 15 and 19, which corresponds to the national average. On the other hand, more girls in Amhara reported using modern methods for family planning – 33%, compared with the national average of 27%. However, 56% of the population in Addis Ababa report using modern family planning methods, suggesting that there is potential for tremendous improvement in their uptake in the Amhara region.

15 Woldemichael, 2013; Reda, 2012; ILO, 2011; Minaye, 2012; Beydoun, 2006; de Regt, 2007; Fernandez, 2010; Endeshaw et al., 2006

Figure 4: Percentage of 15-19 year old girls pregnant and percentage using family planning in Amhara and other regions of Ethiopia



Source: CSA and ICF International (2012)

A study by Alemayehu et al (2010) found that girls with lower educational attainment were more likely to become pregnant during adolescence than their better educated counterparts, especially if they were from rural areas. The study recommended that measures to keep girls in education and prevent early marriage would also deter adolescent pregnancy. This is reinforced by findings from a study in north-west Ethiopia, which states that school is the primary source of information on reproductive health, and that adolescents prefer to discuss reproductive matters with their peers rather than their parents (Yesus and Fantahun, 2010).

Box 7: Sexual and reproductive health – reflections from year 1

Girls as young as 13 and 14 were relatively comfortable talking about sex and their reproductive health. This is perhaps a result of increasing familiarity with the issues owing to the work of local health personnel and NGOs that promote ‘community conversations’, often linked to coffee ceremonies** where girls are able to talk about these issues.

Although this knowledge is important for being in a better position to make decisions about their bodies, older members of the community do not like this openness and call the young adolescents ‘shameless’. Most girls, however, said they felt that they had insufficient information about menstruation. Many of these girls still believed that menstruation begins after a girl first has sexual intercourse, which, according to custom, should take place on the nuptial night.

If a girl starts her menstruation before her wedding night, she is believed to have had sex prior to marriage. When an adolescent girl menstruates for the first time before marriage, she is insulted by the community. One of the risks of this negative social practice is that girls are married off early before they menstruate to avoid feeling ashamed in the community. As a result, girls are more at risk because before menstruation, their bodies have not yet entered puberty and thus they are at great physical and emotional risks if they start a sexual relationship. This suggests that existing family and community structures have not changed sufficiently to give adolescents – girls in particular – a supportive context for using the new information to achieve greater psycho-emotional wellbeing.

There were mixed views as to whether access to contraceptives had empowered girls to manage their pregnancies. Married women spoke about using contraceptives to delay pregnancy, both with or without agreement from their husbands. Thus getting their husbands’ consent was no longer a condition for a woman to use contraception, especially since free contraception was available for adolescents starting from the age of 13. Although women are unable to make decisions about their reproductive health openly, they are slowly beginning to find agency in

taking decisions over their own bodies. For instance, Kuleni,* a 15-year-old girl in Kobo, stated:

'I have no health problems. I started menstruating on my wedding day. I took contraceptives before my wedding. My mother and sister knew about this but my husband did not.'

** Ethiopia's coffee ceremony is an integral part of social and cultural life. An invitation to attend a coffee ceremony is considered a mark of friendship or respect and is an excellent example of Ethiopian hospitality.

Source: Tefera et al., 2013

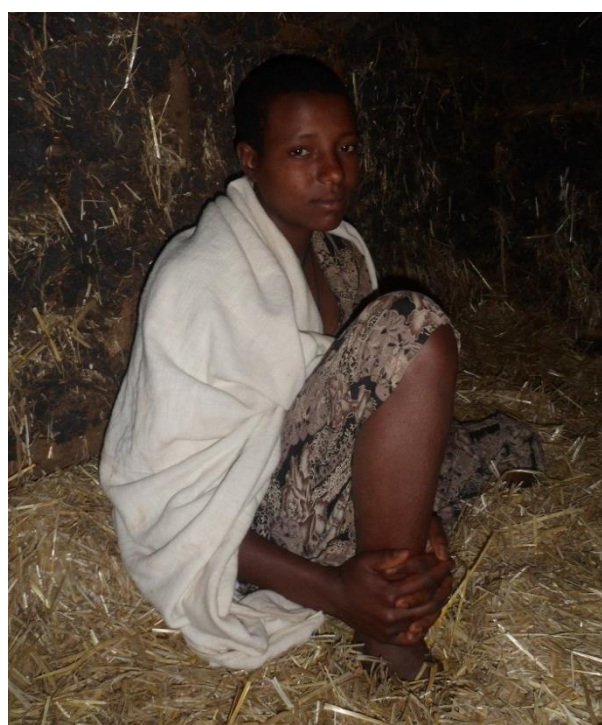
* All names have been changed to protect identities

5 The interplay of early marriage and education and effects on adolescent girls' lives in our research sites

Having mapped out the broader Amhara context on early marriage and investments in girls' education, we now turn to a discussion of our primary research findings from our three research sites in Gojjam, Gondar and Wollo.

5.1 Getting married

Amhara marriage practices, which mark a major shift in a girl's roles and responsibilities, continue to place a disproportionate burden on girls – both in terms of getting married and in terms of being married (UNFPA, 2013). Amhara girls have less choice than boys over marriage partners and age of marriage and are expected to bear the brunt of household labour. Many experience gender-based violence, and although they have the option of divorce and remarriage if the abuse becomes intolerable, single women are stigmatised. Our respondents agreed that while some marriage practices are shifting rapidly, most are more entrenched. In particular, early marriage is widely recognised as negative for the girl involved, but illegal marriages still happen and are not uncommon.



Picture 5: Adolescent girl 15 years, Dembashi, 2013

5.1.1 When do girls get married?

While almost all participants stated that 18-20 was the right time for a girl to marry (18 being the minimum legal age), a significant proportion of the girls in all three towns (Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema) had been married before 18, and some as young as 10. Though participants stated that early marriage is declining, one interviewee from Dembashi, for instance, has received (and declined) multiple marriage offers for his 12-year-old daughter. He says, *'I refused, saying that she had to finish her education.'* Similarly, in Metema, participants agreed that the average age for marriage was between 14 and 17 years. In all three sites, if girls' parents are unable to send them to school, it is assumed they are better off married than at home. Moreover, age at marriage is not a consideration for boys. In small group discussions, participants indicated son-preference when they stated that *'parents do not count their sons' age to determine when they should marry'*. As a result, most of the married girls in this study

had husbands who were, on average, 8-10 years older than them. Such stark gender differences in appropriate age for marriage continue to reinforce the discriminatory emphasis on marriage for girls.

According to community timelines, traditionally, parents used to marry their children to create a bond with other families. Furthermore, families would gain respect from their elders if they marry their daughters young. However, parents also used to rush their young daughters into marriage because of fear that they may become pregnant out of wedlock, or with the hope that they would produce grandchildren for them while they are still alive. Young brides who were forced into early marriages were given short notice of their marriage, as their parents feared they might commit suicide. Even today, the community mapping and focus group discussions suggested that elders and people with no or low levels of education continue to actively endorse early marriage (see quote in box). Older people prefer early marriage (from the age of 10), believing that 18 is too late.

'I know a girl who married young claiming that she was 18 years old. In other words, her parents wanted her to marry and warned her that she should say that she is 18 years old if people ask how old she is. The parents of the girl are very strict. If somebody tells them they saw her with a boy, they beat her. When the marriage proposal came she agreed to it because she wanted to be free from all the pressure they put her in.'

Aria, unmarried, 14-year-old girl from Metema

According to participants in Bulbullo, there is a geographical divide in early marriage practices: early marriage has largely diminished in the highlands and girls now marry over the age of 18 (in the previous generation the average age was 15); however, the problem still exists in the lowlands and is linked to an absence of schools and economic disadvantage both in terms of care economy realities and lack of employment opportunities. In Metema, participants believed that early marriage decreased for a while during a period when kebele officials monitored the practice, but since their attention has shifted to other issues such as migration, early marriage practices are becoming more frequent again. As there is no birth registration process in the area, girls may be married off early if their parents say they are older than they actually are.

While a qualitative study such as this with purposive sampling cannot be seen as representative, the fact that it was not difficult for us to locate girls who had married before the age of 18 suggests that early marriage is not uncommon. Nevertheless, according to the community timeline exercises and the intergenerational trios, the average age at marriage has certainly increased over time (Box 8). Mothers had typically been married aged around 12-15, while their grandmothers were married at age 4-5 in *madego* arrangements (see Box 9).

Box 8: Intergenerational changes in marriage norms

Zumame* is an illiterate 14-year-old girl who helps her grandmother with household chores instead of going to school. Within her family, there has been a steady increase in the age of marriage with each generation; where her grandmother was married around the age of five through a *madego* arrangement, and her mother at 15, Zumame is unmarried and believes that 20 is the right age of marriage for girls: *'It is their own choice. No one would force them into marriage. It was in the old times that they used to marry involuntarily. Presently that is not the case. Currently the children marry when they fail in their education... Even if I fail, I wouldn't marry until I get economically independent.'*

Despite the traditions that determined an arranged marriage for Zumame's grandmother, Segenet,* (aged 60) and Zumame's mother, Segenet supports the right of girls to choose their partner: *'Presently the children marry on their choice. In our time, however, there was no such thing. It was parents who made the decision as to whom we were to marry...Currently people are more civilized.'* She also mentioned that in her time, gender-based violence in the home was much more common: *'Marital life was full of fighting in each and every house.'*

Although Zumame's mother and grandmother have been too poor to send her to school, they do not plan to marry her and still want to educate her at some point in the future. Zumame's mother, Yirgedu,* aged 30, was married instead of being educated, and both she and Segenet regret it. Yirgedu now knows that her lack of education has prevented her from improving her children's lives and can see the cycle of illiteracy and poverty: *'I feel sad that my children are remaining illiterate like me.'*

Yirgedu explains how marriage traditions have changed since her youth: *‘Presently it is not parents who arrange marriage. It is the children who marry based on their choice... However, I will not allow my children to marry unless they fail in their education.’* Segenet also prioritises education over marriage and wants her granddaughter to be educated more than anything else: *‘My advice for her is to educate herself, if she can, or to work hard and change her life. I don’t want her to marry.’*

** Names have been changed to protect identities*

Source: Intergenerational trio 2, Dembashi, West Gojjam

However, others – particularly younger and educated people – consider early marriage something that illiterate girls only enter into and actively discourage it: one young woman noted that she scolds her friends who drop out of school to marry. Moreover, many study respondents associated early marriage with a range of unwanted health and financial problems, including fistula, unwanted pregnancy, birth problems, divorce, and financial burdens on parents. Even those who had been informed of their marriage only on the day of their wedding were taken for an HIV test before the marriage in recognition of potential health risks.

It was also interesting to note that although participants stated that the ideal age at marriage is 18-20, this appears to be the upper limit: girls who remain single over the age of 20 may be considered unmarriageable, particularly by older generations. Leaving marriage too late is considered risky and families are fearful that there may not be enough eligible men.

Box 9: Traditional West Gojjam marriage practices

In West Gojjam, a number of traditional marriage practices are possible, although there was a general consensus that they were declining in popularity, except for tekerchem and gaido:

- **Unfitted marriage:** when an old man marries a much younger girl. This accounts for less than 5% of marriages now, and appears to happen in the case of very vulnerable girls such as those who have been orphaned or who come from a distant community.
- **Tekerchem (translates to ‘imprisonment’):** when a bride/groom goes to live with their in-laws. Traditionally, the bride would go to the groom’s family, as grooms who live with their in-laws were considered weak; however, respondents increasingly view this as less taboo now, especially if it is due to financial reasons and do not negatively judge men who live with their bride’s family.
- **Gaido:** a contract (previously oral but increasingly written) agreed between the two families which states that the groom will not have intercourse with his bride until she is matured (usually around 15 or 16). This also has the effect of reducing very early pregnancy and associated risks. If a man breaks the gaido, he will be punished or fined by elders. After the gaido is fulfilled, a couple can move out of their parents’ home and into their own. Given this, some wives grow up considering their husband as though they are a brother.
- **Madego:** arranged marriages between a very young bride (0-9 years) and an adult husband. The parents sign the wedding contract on her behalf, and the bride goes to live with her husband and his in-laws, with an agreement that no intercourse will happen until the bride is ‘matured’ (i.e. has developed breasts and is menstruating). While this system clearly removes any option for girls’ agency, young men also reportedly suffer from this tradition as one case study in Dembashi highlighted:

‘But my husband [who was 27 years at the time] also decided to marry another wife as he believed that waiting for me until I get matured is to waste his time without a wife... He didn’t know that I was a three-year-old child beforehand – he only knew the case on the wedding day.’

- **Polygamy:** the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which is widely respected among our study community in Dembashi, does not permit the practice of multiple wives, and priests actively teach monogamy. However, men with mistresses are still regarded highly by some as a manifestation of masculinity and economic wherewithal. Due to public condemnation based on health (e.g. HIV/ AIDS), polygamy is diminishing and most people are openly scornful towards those who have mistresses – it

is deemed irresponsible in the context of HIV. Husbands will generally only take a mistress when their wife is unwell or no longer sexually attractive. However, the government teaches women not to tolerate mistresses and adultery is regarded as solid grounds for divorce.

5.1.2 Who chooses?

Following traditional norms, parents and grandparents were responsible for making decisions about who a girl or boy marries. In Dembashi, for example, three of the four girls in the small focus group did not pick their husbands, and only met them on their wedding day. Even when one girl refused to get married and expressed her desire to go to school instead, her parents told her that she *'... had no right to make any decision with regard to marriage'*. Such beliefs and values are upheld by parents and elderly grandparents who are gatekeepers of the culture of arranged marriage. Girls in our study report that the opinion of 'elderly who are older than 70 years' is most influential in getting girls to marry early and maintain the respect of the family. Young boys report that 'old people' want existing traditions and norms to persist.

While fathers and grandparents/elders continue to have considerable say in whether or not a girl is to be married early, our respondents indicated that there is increasing desire for girls' agency and some choice, albeit constrained. For example, focus group discussions with adolescents who had been married early indicated that girls preferred to marry someone of their choice, worrying that *'...because it is an arranged marriage you would marry a man whom you don't know. You don't know if a man is good or not. You marry him just because your parents want to create a bond with his parents. The boy may be naughty. But as long as his father and his mother agree, you have to marry the boy. Your parents give you to a husband not by evaluating him but by evaluating his parents.'* Another participant expressed fear that *'arranged marriage may end up with a life full of misery'*.

Despite these girls' desires and fears, they were all married before the legal age of 18, mainly to young men who they did not know before marriage. Some participants felt that in some situations, girls may prefer early marriage and trust that their parents' decisions are made in their best interest. They believed that arranged marriage provides uneducated girls with a sense of independence from their parents. One girl stated, for example, that although her marriage was arranged, she accepted it because it meant she could escape from caring for her mother and brothers. However, because most young couples live with the groom's family for up to 10 years before moving into their own household, the independence that early marriage can afford is often bounded.

Yet, it was noted that there are some shifts in cultural expectations of who chooses the marriage partner. Community discussions, focus group discussions with unmarried adolescents, and individual interviews indicated that freely chosen marriages are deemed more sustainable, particularly by young people, and are increasingly preferred, although they have only become respected in the past couple of years. One boy interviewed, for example, has older male and female siblings with arranged marriages, but his parents are permitting him to choose his own wife. Indeed, a majority of the fathers and mothers in Dembashi reiterated that things have changed, and girls and boys can now choose their own partners. Previously, parents would pressurise, beat or force daughters who refused marriages into accepting them. However, as one kebele manager in Bulbullo said, *'let alone to practice the abduction, the father is even unable to give his daughter to anyone without her consent'*. Nowadays, beating girls is 'unthinkable' for some; nevertheless, it still happens. One Metema girl was forced to marry her husband under threat that her father would kill her otherwise (Box 10).

Even though partners can increasingly choose their own spouse, parental acceptance of their chosen marriage partner remains important, especially as young couples have high respect for their parents and often rely on them for financial assistance. Nevertheless, in Bulbullo in particular, filial loyalty to parents has decreased dramatically within the space of a generation. Where previously, *'a girl didn't have the right to choose her husband'*, these days, according to young women, *'children do not accept their parents' decision in matters of marriage and migration'*, especially if the children are better educated than their parents.

This is very much the case in Metema: if parents do not approve of a girl's choice and she is adamant that she will marry her partner anyway, she may elope to a neighbouring town or country. For this reason, parents who disapprove of their child's partner must be tactful, both because of fear of feeling shame in the community and for fear of losing their daughter; as one participant explains: *'If the daughter's parents refuse to approve the proposed marriage, she escapes from the area to a place chosen by her partner, which can include going abroad by*

crossing the border... key decision-makers are not the parents, but the son and the daughter. Parents aware of such a situation seldom go against their children's will.'

As mentioned above, arranged marriages (either by parents or male siblings in the case of parental death) are increasingly viewed as unsustainable. One participant had two older sisters with arranged marriages; they were divorced and remarried several times, so when she told her parents she did not wish to marry, they respected her decision. When young people choose their own partners, it is less to do with status and ancestry and more about looks, education, employment, skin colour and emotional attraction. In the words of one young Bulbullo man: *'The basic thing for marriage is love.'* Furthermore, girls who choose their own partner marry older, attend school beforehand and know their rights (e.g. legal marriage age, right to an education). Similarly, girls who had been married early stated that they would have preferred to continue their education and gain economic independence. However, girls who choose their own husbands but do not seek permission from their parents are considered *'gatte wott'* – uncontrollable and rude.

Box 10: Parental control over daughters' relationships

Although some respondents say that girls' choices are becoming increasingly respected, some extreme examples of parental coercion, including death threats, still exist. Some parents not only have the power to choose a marital partner for their daughter, but also demand that they divorce them later on. Within this context, migration can provide a means for girls to gain independence.

Hirut* is a 17-year-old girl who was forced by her father to drop out of school and get married:

'I was good at my lessons when I was grade 7 student, but things were out of my control... I was engaged to a young boy... but only found out one year before my wedding ceremony. I was not told directly. As I knew the situation, I reacted to my father, but he told me that he would kill me if I refuse their decision.'

Later, once Hirut and her new husband had moved into their own home, her father took control again. He found out that her young husband had sold her dowry, and demanded that they divorce. He threatened them and shot at them with a gun, and Hirut left the marriage in fear of her life.

'When my father forced us to divorce, we refused to. Later on we realised that my father would kill us if not... My father was out of control. Though he shot at us, both of us bowed down and a bullet missed us.'

In an attempt to finally gain independence from her father's control, Hirut stole 500 birr from him, escaped her home and migrated across the border to Sudan to begin a new life as a domestic worker: *'I couldn't live here. I planned to commit suicide if I stayed longer here. Later on I decided to go there than dying here... Life became totally meaningless for me.'*

**Names have been changed to protect identities*

Source: Outlier case study interview with a 17-year-old young woman in Metema, North Gondar

5.1.3 Being single and dating

Marriage is intrinsically linked to reproduction and is an integral part of life; as a consequence, unmarried, single girls are shamed. Fear of this shame is a driver of early marriage because parents do not wish to be judged by the community, especially as having an unmarried daughter in the home who is not participating in education is looked upon as a burden. Although being a single woman is not a respected status, numerous participants stated their wish for it to be deemed acceptable. Young girls we interviewed had a desire to remain single until they had completed their education and had become financially independent. However, girls are regularly undermined and considered 'failures' (especially by illiterate elders) if they are over 17 and single; a common insult is *'kumo ker'*, which translates to 'unworthy of marriage'. This insult is rooted in the notion that girls are waiting for a husband to propose to them and where being single is not a respected choice. Yet there are examples of change, as seen in the case study (Box 11).

Box 11: The power of individual agency: the story of Dembashi's only female militia member

Zemenwua* is a 23-year-old single woman who is Dembashi's only female militia member. While she is the subject of considerable gossip, especially among female community members, she is proud of her role. Her success in overcoming conservative gender norms is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the life paths of her two older sisters. They were both married at age 3 and 5 years respectively but, partly due to the disappointment of her sisters' multiple remarriages, and partly due to her clear ambitions, her parents have never attempted to arrange a marriage for Zemenwua: *'I told them that I would marry a husband who I want after I have completed my education and get employed. I told them also that I would not marry a husband they choose for me.'*

Despite the fact she failed her grade 10 exam, her ambition is to join the police force. She has already undergone a 15-day training course to be a kebele militia and she is determined to put her career before both marriage and social approval: *'I know that it isn't good in our culture for a matured girl to be single. But I know what is good for me. If I engage in marriage, I will not compete for a job and not be able to participate in any training... It is very difficult to leave the home to search for a job once I get married. This is because it is the wife who is supposed to manage the housework here. Once a girl marries, her husband doesn't allow her to move freely. In this regard, it is good to be free.'*

Although she has had a boyfriend for four years, she is not ready for marriage and does not plan to have children until she is financially prepared. She stated: *'Giving birth to a baby without having sufficient and dependable income is like going to prison.'* Her boyfriend, an ex-priest and farmer, is subject to considerable pressure from peers and family members to find another partner given Zemenwua's unorthodox views and behaviour, but both of them are of the view that community disapproval of their relationship stems from a deficit of education and are thus able to resist the dominant social norms.

**Names have been changed to protect identities*

Source: Outlier case study interview with a 23-year-old woman in Dembashi, West Gojjam

Dating is a recent phenomenon and is kept secret from parents. Couples tend to meet in secret places, as people gossip and insult young couples who walk together in public. One girl shared that her mother told her to stop seeing her boyfriend in case it embarrassed her father. This kind of community talk brings shame upon a family. On the other hand, another participant, who is unmarried, has been dating her partner for four years. Young boys and girls explained that in this emerging culture of dating, when partners want to marry, the boy still sends elders round to the girl's parents to make the offer as a formality.

5.1.4 Bride price

The payment of bride price, also known as dowry, is still practised in Dembashi and Metema and is paid at the time of betrothal, making it very difficult for girls to refuse to go through with the marriage. In Dembashi, it can be anywhere between 30 and 500 birr, and can also come in the form of cattle. Currently, the rising cost of living and land shortages have caused marriage (and consequently bride price) to become property based (especially land), even when the marriage is entered into freely. When a girl's parents are poor, it is difficult for her to marry due to lack of land ownership, so it is mainly rich girls who are married earlier. Adult males of the Dembashi community agreed that if a girl's family does not have property/land, it will be difficult for her to get married. The value of land ownership was further reinforced as elders in the community stated that *'if a girl has a farm land, whether she is beautiful or not it is very easy for her to get a husband'*.

In Dembashi, a few participants reported that parents are responsible for helping their children (boys and girls) begin their lives by providing start-up capital or assets, maybe building a home in the town nearby. Participants in Dembashi stated that a couple's parents are expected to contribute properties equally. In other words, both sets of parents are expected to give gifts, usually in the form of land. In some families, parents prefer children to complete their education and become employed so that they can share their economic burden with their children, especially marriage costs. One parent stated: *'If there were sufficient arable land, many of us would prefer our children to get married'* (see also discussion on drivers below).

While in Dembashi, bride price takes the form of land, in Metema it is paid in jewellery and is closely linked to virginity. As one young man explains: *‘If he has a desire to marry her he buys all the jewellery that he is told to buy and marries her. However, if she has past sexual history, the bride present decreases.’* Other women report that bride price in Metema is higher than it has been in the past, with some families giving 20 to 50gms of gold.

Conversely, in Bulbullo, there are conflicting opinions on bride price. Some participants state that it is considered backwards and is no longer practised, yet others claim that it still exists and is calculated based on the cost of the wedding feast (and can reach 6,000 birr). Some said the bride price paid is higher for literate girls, but others disagreed.

In sum, because Dembashi is an agricultural surplus producing area, land has taken on more significance for bride price whereas in Metema which depends primarily on trade, portable assets especially jewellery is more important. Bulbullo is a food insecure area and thus local livelihoods and so cash is derived from petty trade, chat crops and remittances, and thus bride price is lower as local families cannot provide it.

5.1.5 Marriage preparations and wedding ceremonies

According to the community mapping respondents in Dembashi, a few Christians choose to marry in churches but many choose to marry before elders. Similarly, in Bulbullo, in previous times of economic prosperity, lavish feasts and long ceremonies (typically lasting three days) were prepared by the bride’s family with slaughtered oxen and a large number of guests. In Metema, a traditional Muslim wedding ceremony used to consist of the following:

1. 15 days of ‘playing’ (celebrating with family and friends))
2. A three-day wedding ceremony (based on Qur’an law)
3. 15 days where the young couple stay in a house with friends (‘Milash’)
4. A small ceremony when the couple move into the groom’s parents’ house.

Wedding ceremonies used to last a week, but are now much shorter and smaller since people are reluctant to spend large sums of money. Where oxen used to be slaughtered and a local drink called *‘tella’* prepared, preparations have become much more simple, consisting of a simple ring exchange and a small feast with the family. One boy who chose his own wife after facing initial hurdles with family approval (as the girl had no land to her name) said that he challenged his family’s desires for a marriage ceremony as he only wanted to give her a ring and spend the day with his wife, his family, and his close friends. In Bulbullo, extended and costly wedding ceremonies are branded as ‘bad culture’ and instead there are small ceremonies within the bride’s house where local drinks are prepared and a goat or sheep is slaughtered.

There is a growing recognition in both Dembashi and Bulbullo that there is no economic advantage from marriage for parents if the money received from bride price is spent on wedding ceremonies. Gifts in the form of land and cattle go to the bride and groom, and thus parents increasingly believe that spending money on education is a better investment so children can become self-reliant. Young people also increasingly reported that they would prefer start-up capital for a small business instead of a wedding ceremony. Nevertheless, despite being informed of the economic costs of extensive wedding feasts, participants report that large wedding feasts still take place in Metema, largely because of the easy access to cash in this trading community (Box 13).

In conclusion, before girls get married, they face a range of difficulties as a result of conservative norms around the age they are forced to marry, who chooses their groom, and the financial burden their families face as a result of dowry. Yet, recent changes include an emerging culture of dating and slightly more agency in choosing their partners. Parents are also recognizing that wedding feasts are unwise financial decisions. This complex relationship between traditional sticky norms and changing norms continues to persist, even after girls get married.

5.2 Being married

5.2.1 Life after marriage

According to focus group discussion participants, the gendered division of household tasks is deep-rooted, illustrated by the local Metema phrase ‘women to the kitchen, men to the court’. Such divisions are reinforced by the Church in Dembashi where ‘only men stand on the stage’. ‘Good’ women generally do not do ‘male’ jobs like going into the field, but in some families young daughters assist with gathering crops as well as weeding. In fact, married as well as unmarried girls in Dembashi reported that the role of a good wife is to manage her home well and feed the husband and children. If a woman refuses to stay home and do household jobs, she may be labelled as ‘disobedient’, be beaten by her husband, kicked out of her parents’ home or shamed in the community. This viewpoint was repeated by many participants. Men do not cook but as young men help tend the land of widows and old people; they are seen as an asset to the community, not just their own family.

This gender-stereotyped household division of labour has tremendous impacts on adolescent girls’ education. For most participants, it was clear that daughters are expected to help their mothers with household tasks, consequently taking time away from their school work to do so. There was widespread recognition (including among boys) that girls’ domestic workloads disadvantage them academically. For instance, one in-depth interview with a boy revealed that his sister was *‘unable to study when she got home because there were lots of things she had to manage at home’*, which was not the case for him. Interestingly, there were signs of cultural flexibility in this family, evidenced by his mother’s request for him to have a child only after he is economically stable. However, despite his mother’s progressive views on childrearing, his sister had to devote time to domestic tasks over her education.

Beliefs that domestic tasks take precedence over education for girls are clearly deeply entrenched and continue to persist despite attitudinal changes in other domains. Girls are expected to perform more household tasks than boys, such as fetching firewood and water. In Bulbullo, there were numerous instances of eldest daughters being illiterate compared to their younger, educated female siblings, because they had spent time helping their mother with housework and bringing up the younger children. As a result of high expectations from girls to prioritise household tasks over education, many girls were unable to obtain pass marks during the final exams and consequentially have no other choice but to get married.

Male and female respondents were generally in agreement that mothers complete all the housework and make decisions on the household, except for child’s partner choice (see above). Furthermore, although women are in charge of childcare, men make the decisions regarding children’s schooling. Men also tend to control household finances and decisions on family size, and husbands might beat or leave their wives if they do not produce enough children. However, there was a general view that domestic violence in general has decreased, and moreover that more egalitarian decision-making is increasingly the mark of a ‘good husband’. Nevertheless, domestic abuse thrives in relationships where the wife has no access to an independent income, and becomes socially isolated due to her economic reliance on her partner (see Box 12). If taken to the authorities, participants in Bulbullo stated that *‘they [authorities] don’t take that seriously. They assume that she is beaten due to her own fault.’*

This form of physical and social isolation was evident in numerous accounts across all three study sites (Box 12). Girls face constrained choices post-marriage – especially if they are unable to continue their education – due to poverty, domestic responsibilities, and disapproval from the husband. In Metema, focus group discussions revealed that none of the girls in the locality had completed their education as they are not allowed by their husbands to continue schooling after marriage. Isolation is noted in other domains too. As one 16-year-old in an unhappy arranged marriage noted: *‘It is a taboo to talk about sex around here. Whatever happens, you should tell nobody else.’* Such isolation makes girls particularly vulnerable to oppressive cultural norms and impacts their emotional and mental health.

Box 12: The risk of domestic abuse in arranged marriages

Rabia* is 23 and from another part of the state, but moved to her current village with her husband two years ago. Her parents forced her to drop out of school in grade 3 to earn money. She has been married twice; the first time was as a very young child, under the *madeo* system. Her 27-year-old husband grew tired of waiting for her to mature and so divorced her and married another wife. However, her parents arranged a second marriage for her to a much older man because they were poor and had neither land nor cattle to provide her with.

'He told me that he had money in the bank and his own house here. He promised me he would buy me clothes. But he didn't buy clothes as he promised.'

Now, Rabia is trapped in an abusive relationship with a much older man whose promises of wealth and stability have failed to materialise. Although she wants to return home to care for her elderly parents, she lacks the financial means and crucially her husband's support. She feels trapped and isolated, facing pressure from her husband to have a child: *'He doesn't care for me. He doesn't have good behaviour. He drinks alcohol and regularly beats me.'*

Local authorities have been insensitive to her situation and, more generally, to the complex relationship between gender and power in domestic abuse situations, merely advising her husband to finance her trip home 'when he could'.

** Names and some details have been changed to protect identities*

Source: Outlier case study: big age difference between husband and wife, West Gojjam

Not all girls are equally vulnerable to oppressive social structures. Focus group discussions with some girls emphasised that a good husband not only provides economically for his family and engages in community work, but also *'discusses plans and decisions with his wife'*. These changes in expectations of a good husband can be attributed to education, which also seems to be affecting views about household labour.

Other intergenerational changes were noted in the beliefs held by mothers and grandmothers, with respect to marriage and FGM/C. In community mapping and focus group discussions, mothers appear to be concerned about the changing *behaviour* of their daughters. Some daughters are no longer accepting everything their parents ask them to do. Although mothers regard this as a negative change in their daughters' behaviour, it is a sign that girls are slowly being empowered to question the status quo. One educated participant from Bulbullo stated that she does not intend to perpetuate the gendered division of labour in her own home when she has children. On the other hand, an uneducated participant of around the same age declared her desire to have two daughters and one son, as the daughters could assist her with household chores. In farm work, men perform more 'difficult' tasks such as ploughing land, whereas women harvest and carry the crops.

Expectations from a new daughter-in-law seemed to be somewhat different in Dembashi compared with other sites, perhaps because of the tradition of girls marrying into their in-laws' homes at a very young age. Mother-in-laws reported being seen more as a mother figure, with the older women viewing their daughters-in-law as company.

5.2.2 Fertility and access to contraception

There has been a generational shift in reproductive expectations influenced by education, access to reproductive rights, and relative economic decline in the area. Health professionals and schools teach about reproductive health, contraception and menstruation. However, only girls learn about contraception at school and the information on sex is largely biological rather than practical or rights-based in nature. Uneducated girls did not receive such information from their families as it is taboo to talk about sex; however, some expressed an intention to have these conversations with their own daughters, suggesting that discussing sex is becoming increasingly acceptable.

Pregnancy is expected to follow very soon after marriage, as exemplified by the Bulbullo participant who explained: *'In our village there is a saying that goes "an infertile woman can't have a home".'* However, these expectations are slowly changing, heavily influenced by economic circumstances. Parents generally reported not

using contraception, believing that people with lots of children deserve respect. Some also discourage their children from using it, believing that children are raised ‘as per their luck’ (i.e. one should not control the number of one’s offspring, God will decide which children survive). But the current generation largely concurred that this attitude is irresponsible, and although parenthood is viewed as an important source of personal pride, couples only desire to have as many children as they can provide for economically, especially in the context of land shortages. On the whole, both young wives and husbands reported being supportive of contraceptive use in order for them to save childrearing for when they are financially prepared.

According to the community timeline undertaken in Dembashi, women began using contraceptives around 2003, and openly so in 2005. They are readily available from health centres in all three research sites and most participants were using the contraceptive injection to control their fertility. Most young interviewees stated they wanted between two and four children, some expressing son preference, as sons do not bring the risk of social problems later such as unwanted pregnancy.

Despite widespread access to contraception, sexual consent is not taught or valued highly in any of the three research sites. It appears that the husband’s decisions often have more weighting: in several interviews, young women noted that they had become pregnant earlier than they had wanted due to their husband’s wishes. Furthermore, a number of girls gave accounts of being forced into sex with their husbands; one of them was even physically forced by her mother-in-law. As one grandmother states: *‘There was no such thing as asking your willingness for sex’*, and another participant states that women’s consent is still irrelevant today.

Clearly, norms around virginity upon marriage are changing overall. Interview respondents noted that if a groom finds that his new wife is not a virgin, there is nothing he can do. Previously, it would have been grounds for divorce, wife-beating, or shame, but as more unions are being formed on the basis of love, as opposed to parental pressure, and HIV tests are more readily accessible, virginity is no longer such an important social or health issue. Proof of negative HIV status is more important than ‘proof’ of virginity. In Bulbullo, being better informed about sexual health allowed the community to have an open-minded view about virginity. This is seen in a group discussion where boys reported that *‘a woman can lose her virginity not only by sexual intercourse but by working heavy things. People have been taught about this fact and the practice has changed.’*

Female circumcision is practised in all three sites but is in significant decline; however, it does not seem to enter into the marriage equation. Respondents argued that the practice has been largely abandoned following education campaigns by health centre workers and legal monitoring. For instance, Zumame’s mother states: *‘I would prefer if they get circumcised as per the old custom. However, I haven’t circumcised my daughters because the kebele officials prohibited it.’* Despite monitoring by the kebele of who has been illegally cut, individual case study interviews suggested that this is not entirely the case, as some adolescents reported first-hand experience of FGM/C. In West Gojjam, the practice is traditionally carried out on the seventh day after a girl’s birth, and in North Wollo, on the third day after birth; the practice is underpinned by the belief that uncircumcised women cannot have sex or give birth. One woman stated that she would prefer it to still happen, regardless of the health risks, because *‘it is better to keep one’s tradition’*, but overall it did not appear to be an issue that engendered strong views in the community.

5.2.3 Divorce and remarriage

Divorce is viewed negatively (except in the case of theft or adultery) and couples are encouraged to stay together; however, it is an option and when it does happen, families generally do not disown their daughters. Indeed, some women stated that they had been married multiple times (up to five times), as had the sisters or relatives of other interviewees, and had generally been able to return to their natal homes for short periods of time for emotional and possibly limited financial support.

In all three sites, divorce seems to be common. Women participants in focus group discussion who had married young had divorced at least once and in some case even three times. They believed it is more likely for early marriages to end in divorce. Domestic violence is seen as solid grounds for divorce and there was general consensus that parents would be supportive of their daughters in these situations, to the extent that their limited resources would allow. A 16-year-old girl, married at the age of 10 against her will, explained that she had eventually secured her family’s backing to return home and focus on her studies as they had come to realise how miserable she was with her in-laws.

I don't want my husband. From the beginning, I married him without my will. If I was happy with him, I would tolerate my mother-in-law's behaviour and live with them... My priority is my education and I cannot attend my education being with his mother.

This said, a number of in-depth interviews revealed that even though girls may be worried, scared or depressed about their marriage, they did not wish to shame their parents and knew they would eventually be taken back to their in-laws if they tried to run back to their parents' house. Participants in Metema stated that women are fearful of divorcing their partners, even if they are unhappy in the marriage, because they may not find another partner. As one young man from Metema said: *'In this area, once women get married, it means they are imprisoned. They do not believe that they could get another husband and another job or have another choice. They think their marriage is their final destination. The men, however, abandoning their wives at home, have affairs with another women. There are men who love other women, leaving their wives at home.'*

Elders and the courts can decide on the division of assets in a divorce; assets are usually listed on marriage contracts. Since 2005, childrearing responsibilities were divided equally. Furthermore, divorced women now have an entitlement to half the land,¹⁶ whereas previously they could only claim the crops from the land. However, there was a general sense that the courts would be a last resort. For example, one young woman who was in the process of separating from her husband was emphatic that she did not believe the courts could help, especially if men have strong local social capital or business contacts. Several others also highlighted that it was difficult for widows and divorcees, in the absence of land or other assets, to remarry.

5.3 What drives social norm change?

5.3.1 Top-down mobilisation

Health workers come to our school and teach us about reproductive health. They explain to us the dangers of marrying below years. They teach us about HIV transmission... I believe it is useful although the community has not yet implemented it. Students believe in what they have been taught and try to implement it. Therefore a parallel belief is created. Unless the community accept the change it will be very difficult for young people to implement what they learn.

Estibel, 17-year-old boy in school, Dembashi

The Ethiopian Government has considerable reach down to village level, but study respondents emphasised that it is whether parents and elders accept government reform initiatives that makes the difference.

In some cases, though, parents' hands are increasingly forced: the fact that there is a legal penalty for marrying children under the age of 18 seems to be widely known, and due to successful health education campaigns, people are also less likely to listen to elders on traditional practices, increasingly listening to the law instead. In Bulbullo, kebele officials only approve a marriage once they have received written confirmation about the age of the partners by physicians and the Woreda Justice Department.

Yet, as mentioned above, parents are engaging their children in secret marriages that may not require kebele permission. In order to circumvent secret marriages, teachers and kebele officials are generally active in following up cases of girls who stop going to school, pressuring parents to send them back (or else face a fine). When a girl is absent, they try to find out whether it is due to early marriage. Both adult and girl respondents spoke about officials' role in ensuring that girls continued in school. However, once official monitoring ceases, norm change that relies on penalties is unlikely to be sustainable (see Box 13).

Box 13: Unsustainable top-down mobilisation and the failure of Metema's financial penalties

In Metema, female focus group participants reported that traditional marriage practices, including expensive wedding ceremonies, have been on the rise ever since kebele officials stopped monitoring and penalising these activities. Initially, when restrictions were first brought in, people would organise secret marriage ceremonies, but

¹⁶ Federal Rural Land Administration Law

they now happen openly.

'In this locality it is common to prepare extensive wedding feasts that last a week... The kebele told us that it is a harmful tradition to have sumptuous wedding ceremonies, then started to penalise those who do so, from 1,000 to 2,000 birr. At the start, there was an underground ceremony, which people said was to venerate saints or arc angels. However, people soon began to throw marriage celebrations in public and were not afraid of the penalty. They prefer to be penalised. Then, the kebele let them off. So now, it is just like it was before.'

The kebele's financial deterrents are not responsible for the shift in attitudes that has led to a uni-directional decrease in early marriage in Bulbullo and Dembashi. Female participants in two focus groups also mentioned that early marriage was on the rise again. Some girls mentioned that they knew a girl who had recently been married aged 14, and one girl said: *'Marrying off a girl under 18 years was prohibited. It has started again this year.'* Older female participants in a separate focus group believed this was due to the lack of kebele supervision:

'There was serious supervision on early marriage by the school and government offices; as a result, the practice was abandoned. However, there has been no more supervision over the past two years because the government believed that the attitude of the society had changed towards early marriage.'

Source: Small group discussion with girls and focus group discussion with women, Metema

Laws protecting victims of domestic violence and permitting women to inherit land from their parents have contributed to increased gender equality. Kebele meetings educate communities about early marriage (though one participant states that the authorities have been known to turn a blind eye), while teachers encourage parents to send their children to school, and try to ensure that girls do not drop out. However, one way for parents to get around this is by never enrolling their daughter in school in the first place. In one case, an illiterate girl was married secretly, believing her parents got away with it because the kebele officials did not know about her. However, this is a rare case, and girls' education has generally increased due to awareness-raising from teachers, health workers, agricultural experts and kebele officials.

The so-called '1 for 5' (one leader for five members)¹⁷ Development Army programme, which has been set up to encourage community participation in agricultural and health extension, as well as broader awareness-raising activities, supposedly encourages discussion among neighbours on marriage, reproduction and health. However, in reality, we were able to find little evidence of regular activities related to changing gender norms and traditional cultural practices. Instead, the Development Army activities appeared largely limited to mobilising community labour to participate in terracing and other community environmental or development projects.

5.3.2 The role of religious leaders

The church is a key enforcer of social norms; people are likely to listen to church teachings and tend to attend services regularly, especially women. In Metema, it was agreed that the ideas put forth by the church are mostly good, partly because priests *'do not preach things which can hurt the society'*. The church and kebele officials teach the community about HIV at meetings, and there is a penalty for people who do not go to these meetings. The church also teaches that girls should not marry under 18; previously, it used to promote 15 as the right age of marriage, but as this contradicted national law, the church changed its stance. Indeed, in Bulbullo, it was stated that religious officials would not allow the marriage to take place unless the partners are 18 years or older as they will be held legally responsible if they approve an early marriage. However, in Dembashi, among the lower levels of clergy, there were mixed views about the appropriate age for marriage. For example, a key informant interview with a priest reveals that: *'It is deacons who marry as per the church's procedure. Students of the Sunday school can also marry this way. A girl is 16 years and the deacon is 20 years. This is done lest they lose their virginity before marriage. Most marry around this age.'*

¹⁷ The so-called 5-1 Development Army is a community development initiative initiated by the government where rural communities are organised into cells or groups of 5 led by a leader or facilitator. The members plan, implement and evaluate their own activities, typically related to community infrastructure but also related in some locales to legal and rights awareness raising.

The extreme position of power for religious leaders has both positive and negative consequences for young girls. Our findings show that when priests endorse legal age restrictions for marrying girls, there are significant positive impacts on the society's cultural views. However, in many instances, the religious leaders encourage traditional viewpoints that continue to reinforce discriminatory norms against girls and women. For instance, in Metema, the priest is known to protest when girls diverge from the norm and wear 'tight trousers' to church, causing others to gossip and insult the girl.

'When parents discover that their daughters engaged in love affairs, spend their time out of school, they decide not to send her to school again. This kind of thing is common in this locality. People believe that girls' education in Matera will not lead to anything. If parents hear that their daughter is engaged in love affair, they automatically stop them from going to school. Parents do not want to hear that the daughter of so and so is spoiled.'

Group discussion with girls in Metema

Similarly, a teacher in Metema states that it is difficult to generalise that religious leaders are against the government edification on early marriage. She narrates an incident to support her statement:

According to deacons there is no age limit for a girl to marry, but they said that "if a girl's leg touches the ground when she sits on a chair, she is ready for marriage". This is our religious culture which has been passed from generation to generation. Once we went to a rural area to teach about early marriage as a harmful traditional practice. There was a 13-year-old girl in grade 6. There was a deacon in grade 8 and he wanted to marry her. The parents of both agreed on the marriage alliance and they started to prepare for the wedding ceremony. But the school was against their marriage. However, the deacon insisted on the marriage, saying "no one can take her away from me". And the wedding ceremony continued to be prepared.

'If the uneducated girl has land, she would be married more quickly than the educated. If the educated has salary and the uneducated has nothing, the educated would marry quickly.'

Estibel, 17-year-old boy in school, Dembashi

5.3.3 The political economy of land

Land shortages have had a significant impact on marriage practices, both as a driver of change and in maintaining stasis, all depending on whether a girl has land (see quote). As it is customary for parents to give land to young couples, parents believe daughters are better off in education since in the meantime they can hold onto their land. However, if a girl has land, she will be in great demand to marry as soon as possible, with suitors including government workers.

During focus group discussions, women and adolescents said that one of the reasons for girls not to be able to marry is lack of land – in fact, ownership of land has become one of the more 'desirable' characteristics for a future wife, more so than beauty or education. This was noted by many participants, particularly in Dembashi. For example, the father of a boy reported that, *'In the past, land was not taken into consideration. It was cattle that were required. Presently, however, the primary consideration is land. For example, when my son marries, he would ask her if her parents would give her land. They talk of other assets only after they agree on land. He may not be interested in her that much if she doesn't have land. That is because land is the backbone of their living. If she has cattle, that is good. But it wouldn't be as important as land.'*

The importance of land ownership also affects boys' future marriage options, though to a much lesser extent than girls. However, young boys in Dembashi report that if parents do not have land to give to their sons, they go to another woreda, Jawi, to find employment. While boys have the freedom to find employment opportunities outside their community, girls' movement and freedom is restricted by cultural norms. Another boy whose brother got married even though his parents were unable to give him land currently has sisters who are 'not betrothed' because his family does not have enough land to give.

5.3.4 Communication via media

Our fieldwork also strongly indicated that educated children are increasingly questioning their elders' beliefs and are more responsive to the content of gender equality programmes on the radio, regardless of what their parents think. The radio broadcasts information about the law, and the dangers of early marriage. However, when asked

which sources of information were most effective in disseminating information on health and wellbeing for adolescents, different groups expressed different opinions. Adult men suggested that radio was an effective means of communicating information, possibly because men have better access to radios. However, women and adolescents (boys and girls) thought differently. For instance, Ali, a 19-year-old young man in Bulbullo, wants to listen to the radio but is not allowed to: *'Parents consider radios as noisy. For example, I want to listen to the radio every night. However, my father does not allow me to do so saying that it disturbs them.'* The women and adolescents interviewed believed that information given in school, through youth clubs or during community discussions was more effectively in terms of reach, because many people do not have a radio.

5.3.5 Education

There has been a significant shift in attitudes toward education in the past five to ten years that coincides with the push for Education For All, increased investment by the government on education infrastructure (including making secondary schools more accessible to children from smaller towns), and greater efforts by local authorities working with teachers in the community to promote education. As a result, most interviewees in Dembashi and Bulbullo agreed that education is important for girls as well as boys. This is illustrated by one woman during a focus group discussion who, when asked to characterise 'bad parents', said: *'Bad parents don't educate their children because they don't know the importance of it'*. Conversely, in Metema, there was more negativity towards female education; as one girl in a group discussion stated: *'People believe that girls' education in Metema will not lead to anything.'*

Whereas better educated households tend to be supportive of children's education, adults and adolescents from poorer and illiterate households have mixed opinions about its value, particularly within a national context of high youth unemployment. Many participants, including the woreda education officer in Bulbullo, stated that young people and parents 'lose hope' in education when they see students who have finished grade 10 or 12 unemployed and living at home with their parents. Similarly, another mother in Metema spoke of her disillusionment with education for her son: *'Here, our children lose hope on education, seeing people who sit idle as they did not succeed in high school leaving examination. My son was good at school but he can't join a university [because of] one point. Most of all he is doing nothing now. That is why both parents and children have lost hope on education. No one helps them if they once fail in school and there are no employment opportunities for such people.'*

The value of education is seen both from a practical perspective and an aspirational one. From a practical standpoint, men and women interviewed, as well as adolescent boys and girls, agreed that *'men don't want to marry an illiterate girl'*, and so if a girl aspires to an educated husband, she must herself push ahead with her studies. Also, in a context of growing economic hardships, the value of girls' economic contribution to the household is more important, and there is a sense that with better education, girls can aspire to make more money.

There is, however, also an aspirational side to education, with parents hoping that their daughters (and even some younger girls hoping that they themselves) can become teachers, doctors, manage a small business or, at the very least, become better wives and managers of the home. This new positive impetus toward education has started to generate a virtuous cycle of better educated parents and older siblings who are more supportive of education – and girls' education in particular.

However, despite this positive progress overall, there are still many barriers to girls' education, particularly in small towns like the ones included in this study. School expenses continue to pose a barrier for poorer households. Most of the challenges to continue supporting girls' education come at grade 9-10, when the registration fee is 100 birr. Stationery and clothes are an additional cost burden. School uniform is mandatory from grade 5 upwards and there is a shortage of books. This is compounded by the distance to school: if the school is too far away to travel every day, then parents must pay for rent, food and firewood, which many families cannot afford, so their children stop attending school.

A recent positive change in Dembashi was the construction of a school up to 10th grade, which has greatly reduced the need to travel long distances and has enabled some girls to continue their schooling. However, in Bulbullo and Metema, the local schools only provide teaching up to the 8th grade; those who want to continue their education must travel over an hour each way to the neighbouring towns of Bistima and Shedi. In practice,

many girls drop out after 8th grade because their parents are unable or unwilling to pay for a room in the town for their daughters.

Distance to school is not only a concern from an economic perspective. Parents in all three areas are also concerned for girls' safety and their virtue. The general perception is that if girls have to walk long distances to school each day, or live outside the parental home, they may be exposed to rape or may engage in premarital sex. As discussed, given the social value attached to virginity in marriage, many parents are unwilling to take such risks. One girl from Metema clearly drew the link between distance to schools and early marriage: *'The absence of a high school in Metema has become a cause for early marriage. Had there been a school in Metema, girls could have continued their education under the strict follow-up of their parents.'* There were some outlier cases of girls who had continued onto 12th grade and beyond despite these barriers, but they were clearly only a small minority. Moreover, parents distrust their daughters and believe they will engage in sexual activities (see quote above) if they are given the freedom to attend school far from their home. These strong traditional beliefs are restraining girls' educational capacities.

'Students who complete grade 10 and leave the place also become role models for the others following them. So the attitude of the society, especially the youth, is changed to giving attention to education and going abroad instead of marriage.'

Kebele manager in Bulbullo

When it comes to investing in their children's education, son preference is still a problem, albeit less so than it used to be. Nevertheless, when resources are scarce, parents generally prioritise their sons' schooling, as explained by this 18-year-old girl who had dropped out of school: *'They forced me to stop my education and made me to marry. The reason why they gave [my brother] money for was that they were afraid that he might migrate... It is because I am female that I have been forced to drop out from school.'*

As mentioned in section 5, when children (especially girls) are unable to go to school, they marry earlier or migrate, as these are considered the best alternative options. Our individual case studies reveal that girls who do not attend school are socially and emotionally isolated from their peers; this has an impact on their social lives and exposure to information about sexual and reproductive health, as well as taking a toll on their emotional wellbeing.

5.3.6 Communication via school clubs

School clubs are seen to have an important value for adolescent boys as well as girls, although evidently adolescents who are out of school do not benefit from these (though some might have access to out-of-school youth clubs).

Respondents identified school clubs as one of the most effective ways to learn about their rights (including to an education, and to say no to early marriage) as well as important matters around sexual and reproductive health, which they do not learn about at home. Girls in particular are taught to complain if their parents try and force them into marriage; girls' clubs have therefore been established as support networks. For some girls, gaining this knowledge about their rights has been transformative. One mother in a focus group said that girls in schools often knew more about their reproductive health than their mothers know. In Metema, girls report that the 'girls club' members contribute cash for each other to buy soap and other things needed during their menstrual cycle.

While most school clubs have been effective in raising awareness of the harms of early marriage and sexual relationships, they have not achieved similar success in tackling larger issues surrounding migration. In Bulbullo, for instance, despite activities by the Youth League Club and the Women's Club to create awareness about the dangers associated with migration, it was noted that *'the goal of young women in Bulbullo is to migrate'*. In many cases, girls drop out of school in order to generate income for their family through migration.

5.3.7 Role models

There were only a few role models for adolescent girls in Dembashi and Bulbullo specifically, yet the importance of role models in driving change is evident in the words of one mother, who said: *'Students are reluctant to continue their education until the end and there is no hope of getting better things by learning as there are no role models in this locality. This is the major problem of Metema.'* Young girls in Metema report that *'There is no girl*

who has succeeded to join the university or any college. Let alone joining the university, I have not even heard of any girl who has completed grade 10.'

On the other hand, in Dembashi and Bulbullo, as more girls are educated at higher levels and take up important positions as health workers, teachers or government officials, younger girls see their achievements and set their own hopes higher. Girls who succeed in their education provide good examples to their peers and encourage other parents to send their daughters to school. For example, one 35-year-old woman who was interviewed spoke about the value of having role models for her to aspire to in completing her education. She explained that she had started supporting a political party while very young. This allowed her to meet people who inspired her not to be a farmer in a rural area. She completed 12th grade at school and she is now doing well as a primary school teacher. Given that there are now even some university graduates in town, they can be good role models for girls, telling them about their positive experience in school and university. One female university graduate, for example, said: *'I feel that joining a university is the same as going to heaven.'*

Role models were also found to be an inspiration for young girls to migrate, especially in Bulbullo. Many participants expressed that the success of others who had migrated serves as a strong influence to young girls to follow the same path (many times without getting married). However, there are no efforts by local authorities or the community to ask these 'role models' to talk to adolescent girls at school about their experiences, which could be a useful way of encouraging more girls to stay in school.

While role models have had a predominantly positive influence on adolescent girls' views on marriage and education in Dembashi and Bulbullo, the context of Metema is different. Since Metema is a border town, most of the residents are migrants; often they travel from other parts of Ethiopia to migrate to Sudan but are unable to do so for various reasons, or they are returnees from Sudan who do not have the money to go back to their villages. Discussions revealed that these youth from the highlands serve as 'negative' role models, influencing the local youth on a host of factors ranging from being exposed to 'more fashionable clothes' to encouraging migration.

5.3.8 Supportive male relatives

The youths consider the future and live as per the time. On the other hand, the adults want to live as per the past. So it is better for her [a girl] to look forward into the future instead of remaining backward.

Group discussion with boys in Bulbullo

The importance of engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and increasing girls' opportunities emerged strongly in our fieldwork. A common ingredient across many of the successful outlier case studies from Dembashi and Bulbullo was the key role of fathers, brothers and husbands in supporting girls to continue their education and delay marriage (Box 14). In such a male-dominated culture, men's voices have the power to dramatically improve the lives of girls and women.

It is noted that supportive attitudes emerge from a combination of empathy and fear of the law. A 44-year-old in Bulbullo stated that: *'Dictator husbands respect the rights of their wife by fearing the law. When I want to oppress my wife, immediately my sisters come to my mind and I remember the importance of the laws.'*

Box 14: Engaging men and boys: the supportive role of fathers, brothers and husbands in avoiding early marriage and advancing girls' education

Male relatives emerged as critical catalysts for change in the stories of adolescent girls in our study communities. Segenet,* a 21-year-old unmarried university student from Dembashi, describes the vital support of an uncle when her parents forced her to drop out of school and take care of their cattle: *'I totally left school and went into keeping the cattle. After four years, my mother decided to take me back to school. But my father refused, claiming that he didn't have the capacity to send me to school. Finally, my uncle intervened and urged my father to change his mind.'*

A 26-year-old university graduate from Dembashi described the financial support her older brother and cousin gave her through her studies, and Melkamie, a 28-year-old primary school teacher, explained how she attributes her success to her father's desire for her to complete her education: *'My father didn't want me to marry before I completed my education. He expected me to be successful in my education, so it is because of my father's extra effort that I became successful.'*

Older brothers, especially those who are educated or employed, can often influence parental decisions on behalf of their younger sisters, as in Senayit's case: *'I heard that a marriage offer was sent when I was about three years, but my brother advised my mother to reject the offer as he wished for me to attend school.'* She is now 15, unmarried, and the same brother is emotionally and financially supporting her through her education: *'My brother bought me educational materials like the English-Amharic dictionary. These things motivated me to attend my education seriously.'*

One of the key drivers of girls dropping out of school is their inability to combine household tasks with study. When girls get home from school, they are expected to fetch water, cook, make coffee, wash their father's feet and perform other chores. Boys are only expected to help their fathers tend to their land and animals when necessary. However, a surprising number of men and boys described their disapproval of the traditional gendered division of household labour, some noting how they had initiated changes to this in their own homes:

Ahmed, 63, explained: *'I taught my children how to prepare food and bake injera (traditional bread). I told them that we have no option but to share responsibilities of taking care of house chores together. When the girl fetches water, one of her brothers bakes injera and the other keeps the cattle. The old culture was that it was shameful for man to help his wife in preparing food, even if he would eat that food. Now this old culture is non-existent.'*

Seid, a 16-year-old boy from Bulbullo, stated: *'Discrimination in terms of responsibilities should be stopped. The culture of giving on-the-field tasks to men and household tasks to women should be abandoned. There should be cooperation in all of the jobs among women and men.'*

On top of household labour, domestic decision-making is increasingly a shared activity in some families. Where it has traditionally been the father's role to hold absolute authority over all decisions affecting the family, including the number of children a couple has, Kebede, a 24-year-old man from Bulbullo, described how he and his wife make choices: *'We both discuss the issue and arrive at a decision that satisfies both of us.'* This differs greatly from the view of a 63-year-old living in the same area: *'Usually, the interest of the man is respected as he has the power to dominate her'*, which suggests that there has been a recent shift in gender norms that is taking root among the current generation of young people.

**All names have been changed to protect identities*

Source: In-depth interviews with men and boys from Dembashi and Bulbullo

5.4 What slows social norm change?

5.4.1 Care economy realities

Adults and adolescents were both of the view that although the legal and policy frameworks against early marriage and in favour of girls' schooling have made an impact on behavioural change shifts, social norms had been changing less steadily. In other words, while some parents are supportive of education, other parents had

agreed to send their children to school out of fear of the legal or financial penalties rather than due to genuine recognition of the value of girls' education. Partly as a result of this – but also reflecting the realities of the care economy in the context of large family sizes, declining economic wellbeing, and lack of mechanisation in agricultural production – adolescent girls in particular are often enrolled in school but only attend sporadically because of the need to support their mothers' care role burden. And in the case of out-of-school girls, in-depth interviews suggested that it was as much the domestic labour deficits as material poverty that prevented them from being in school. As a 12-year-old from an intergenerational trio noted: *'I really feel sad. It is really difficult to know that I am remaining their [grandmother and mother's] servant... I don't have the time to play with them [other children]. I am too busy supporting my parents... my parents would like me to work not to play.'* These care work burdens appear to fall disproportionately on girls' shoulders, as highlighted in Box 15.

Box 15: No other option: the intersection of foregone educational opportunities, the demands of the care economy and early marriage

Yichalem* is an 18-year-old girl who dropped out of school at 13 and was married at 17. She comes from a poor family with a disabled father. Although her mother and relatives arranged her marriage, she accepted their decision in an attempt to escape her caring duties: *'When he requested my mother to marry me, I accepted the offer. Otherwise, my role could have been caring for my mother and my younger brothers.'*

She had already dropped out of school in grade 8 because her family could not afford to send her: *'One day when I was grade 7, we were supposed to have sportswear. All my classmates brought it but I wasn't able to, as my mother didn't have any money. I thought that if my father wasn't disabled, it could have been easy for me to buy sportswear.'*

Meanwhile, any money the family had was used to support her older brother who was training to be a teacher: *'They forced me to stop my education and made me marry. The reason they gave him money was that they were afraid he might migrate... It is because I am female that I have been forced to drop out from school.'*

Her uncle even contributed to her brother's education, but did not financially support her at all, leaving her at home to care for her mother and younger siblings. She said: *'I have suffered a lot as a result of dropping out my education. The chance to attend school was given to my brother.'*

* Name changed to protect identity

Source: Outlier case study interview with an 18-year-old girl in Dembashi, West Gojjam

Financial burdens are further enhanced by the amount parents have to spend on educational materials. A father in Bulbullo shared that it costs them 1,500 birr to pay for their son's textbooks for the academic year. With the responsibility of having to cover costs of education, concern over security of the girl (considering the distance of schools from home), and a drop in harvest as a result of drought, it is no wonder that parents prefer that their girls help in the household work or marry early so they no longer have to 'worry for them'.

5.4.2 Filial piety

There appears to be an especially strong sense of filial piety among girls in all three research sites, rooted in gendered ideals that girls should be obedient and submissive, which acts as a significant counterweight to the growing awareness of their individual rights to education and bodily integrity. Evidence for such beliefs is seen in conceptions of 'good girls vs. bad girls' in the following quotes by unmarried girls in Dembashi: *'A bad girl disobeys her parents and is not willing to work. Such kinds of girls are among those who go to school. Girls who are not going to school obey their parents and do any work they are asked to do. The community considers girls that disobey their parents as rude and immoral.'* Indeed, some young girls across the sites report that disobeying parents will turn them into their parents' 'enemy', and a girl will lose support from her parents if she chooses to follow her own path.

However, in Metema, due to its geographical proximity to the Sudanese border, parents are much more careful about openly rejecting their daughter's partner choice since elopement or migration are realistic options if a girl wants to live independently. A number of younger girls said they would refuse a marriage partner who was not to

'People believe that girl's education does not her take anywhere. Therefore, parents have no other choice than marrying their daughters off. The majority of girls who go to Shedi [town where high school is located] are engaged and have rings. These girls are 15 and 16 years old. The fact that they have engagement rings makes them less vulnerable to having relationships with other boys. Boys also may not try to bother a girl because she already has someone else. Although parents do not want their daughters married at the age of 15 and 16 years, they feel if their daughters are married and have rings on their fingers, they would be less vulnerable.'

Group discussion with girls in Metema

their liking or if they were forced into an early marriage against their will. Although 'modern' marriage practices allow boys and girls to choose their own partners, older members in the community still play an important advisory role, as one participant explained: *'Parents... seldom go against their children's will. But this does not mean they don't advise them. If they think the marriage does not seem favourable to their respective son or daughter, parents inform them on the possible disadvantages of marriage such as the harm of early marriage and interruption of learning. There have been cases where such pieces of advice helped both sexes to revise their proposal and changed their mind against the planned marriage.'*

Despite some parents giving their sons and daughters a degree of agency in choosing their own partners, a number of older girls emphasised that they had tolerated very difficult and even abusive early marriages out of a desire not to displease their families, and when they did seek an exit option it was typically with considerable emotional stress and at considerable cost both to the family's reputation and finances.

5.4.3 Conservative norms surrounding girls' sexuality

Although not as stark as in some cultural contexts, there does appear to be a relatively strong cultural preference against girl children, as summed up in this quote from an unmarried girls' focus group discussion: *'What use would a girl be? She only cries when she is faced with challenges. It is not good to be a girl.'* Respondents suggested that while girls' contributions to the productive and care economies are essential, they are also viewed as a source of concern, because of the close association between girls' sexuality and family honour. In Bulbullo, it is expected that a girl 'must' remain a virgin *'... till she marries and make her parents proud'*. Even from a young age, in more conservative families, focus group discussions emphasised that 'good girls' do not play outside, they are also reluctant to stray far from their home to play. Conservative norms around girls' sexuality are contributors to girls' early marriage (as seen in the quote below). Parents who want their daughter to be educated in schools far away from their town arrange for their daughter to get engaged out of fear that she might enter into a sexual relationship while away from home.

This distrust of girls and their potential involvement in sexual activities is exacerbated in Bulbullo by the presence of tea rooms – male only spaces where boys meet to chew khat.¹⁸ Girls are not welcome in tea rooms, as there is a suspicion that boys will try and have sex with them. Girls also help with housework instead of attending school. Among more educated families, however, girls and boys play together without problems or judgement.

Community and family censure of pregnancy out of wedlock is strong. Community mapping and focus group discussion participants from Dembashi emphasised that when a girl gives birth out of wedlock, it is a source of great disappointment and shame. It is not tolerated and parents may threaten to beat, kill or disown daughters in such cases. As one young adolescent aged 12 noted: *'I know girls who were beaten by their parents just because they have a boyfriend.'* Girls who become pregnant out of wedlock may flee, commit suicide or give their child to their parents and then move out of the area to avoid the shame. In Bulbullo, there are mixed views about whether pregnancy out of wedlock is still taboo. One respondent shared a story of a young girl who was raped by someone who visited the village. When she became pregnant as a result of the rape, she dropped out of school, and moved out of the village. Other respondents say that although it is still considered 'shameful' and 'bad practice', girls are not as ostracised and punished as they used to be. There are some instances where parents have challenged the stigma around this; for instance, unmarried female participants in a focus group discussion stated that if a girl gives birth out of wedlock, her parents will help her to raise the child.

¹⁸ Chewing khat is a cultural tradition, which involves chewing a leaf of the khat plant that is a mild narcotic.

5.4.4 Backlash against a human rights discourse

Adolescent respondents and their parents reported that school curricula and school-based clubs are increasingly teaching about children's rights and gender rights, but there were very mixed views as to whether this was appropriate within the Amhara cultural context, and there was even evidence of a cultural backlash in the views expressed by young girls and boys. Indeed, a number of respondents were highly critical of the focus on 'rights', claiming that the discourse was 'eroding tradition', encouraging disobedience and resulting in confusion and tensions across generations and among the genders. This is clearly illustrated in Metema, where girls who are beginning to wear trousers instead of traditional skirts and dresses are using rights-based language to defend their decisions (Box 16). Somewhat ironically, one participant in a focus group discussion with married girls who had managed to stay in school – a group which had clearly benefited from greater awareness about children's rights and gender equality – noted, *'That [civics and ethical education] is the worst option [to support girls' wellbeing]. It is after the coming of the notion of equality that people stopped respecting each other.'*

In this case, several participants attributed their ability to stay in school not to a growing cultural respect for rights but because their husbands were more 'modern' and recognised that with higher education, girls could better manage the household economy and/or a small business. Young boys in Metema reported similar views when asked about what makes a 'good' woman. One boy stated that, *'To me, forgetting the old culture and creating new rules following the advancement of technology is not acceptable, it is indecent. In fact the problem brought by dressing [non-traditionally] might not be this much harmful, but change in attitude is. Therefore, I think if they are a husband and a wife, she accepts all his orders.'*

Box 16: Girls who wear trousers, 'rights', and the threat to traditional gender norms

Like all border towns, Metema is home to many temporary residents, and they are exposed to different languages and cultures. A number of respondents described an increasing trend of young women wearing trousers instead of loose skirts, posing a threat to traditional gender norms; people attribute this change to the presence of commercial sex workers in the area.

Women and girls who wear tight trousers are perceived as 'rude' and 'bad'. Conservative, religious and older members of society judge women's conduct based on their appearance, assuming that 'good' (synonymous with obedient) women dress in keeping with tradition. In the hope that their daughter does not shame them with 'bad' behaviour, families control their daughters. One young boy described how his father governs what his sister wears:

'Women getting dressed in trousers is against the norm...my father didn't allow my sister to go to church wearing trousers and short clothes because he tells her that people might say that somebody's daughter is rude. He tells her to get dressed in such wide and long clothes.'

Women who wear trousers face a greater risk of sexual violence, especially when crossing the border into Sudan. A female returnee describes her border crossing: *'I remember some women were raped, especially those who use make-up and wear trousers.'*

Nevertheless, girls are defending their decisions to wear non-traditional clothing with rights-based arguments. One male respondent describes: *'They wear trousers and do what they want... If someone asks her why, her reply would be: "It is my right. I can exercise my democratic right." Her response is the same if her father asks her too. Though old people try to say no to this, because there is something called "rights", they keep quiet.'*

Source: focus group discussion with young boys in Metema; interview with 26-year-old returnee in Metema

5.4.5 Geographical location

Since this place [Bulbullo] is convenient, many people come here. As a result of this, there is cultural exchange. Besides, it is easier to come here and teach the people about issues. This cannot be the case for the remote areas. It is very difficult to go and teach in the remote areas. Unless the children who attend school there tell their parents about problems associated with early marriage, it is difficult for others to go and teach there. Due to the remoteness of the area and due to the difficulty of the roads, there may be no one who would be willing to go and teach there. Consequently, the people in those areas may not have any awareness. They may not become civilised that easily.

(Group discussion with boys)

As noted in the quote above, geographical location is a major factor that contributes to changing or maintaining cultural norms. Although Dembashi is only 8 km from the nearest market town and about 20 km from the woreda town, there are no public transport links; one has to walk at least 90 minutes to have the option of finding a local bus or truck and only the better-off are able to afford horse/donkey and carts to travel. Thus, it remains geographically isolated; this is highlighted by the fact that the neighbouring market town has been enjoying electricity for more than a decade but locals in Dembashi are still waiting to get on the grid, despite wires and posts having been in place for over a year. Bulbullo, on the other hand, is less isolated, as the village is close to the highway. Yet, despite its location, adolescents in Bulbullo report having to travel three hours each day to get to school, only to come home and have to help their parents with agricultural or household tasks.

'My mom does not want any of her children to go to foreign countries. However, migration has become the order of the day. Children look at those who have already gone and want to follow their steps. My mother let my sisters go just because they insisted on going by watching their friends who had already gone.'

Ali, 19 years old

Migration

Discussions indicated that migration has a big impact on young people's aspirations (see quote to the right). One key informant interviewee, the Bulbullo Woreda Education Officer, believed that migration is a greater cause of female school dropout than marriage. In Bulbullo and Metema, girls migrate across the border to the Middle East to find employment as domestic workers; however, labour and human rights violations are common, and girls who find themselves working for families in places like Sudan and Saudi Arabia live an isolated existence, working long hours and with limited social interaction due to language barriers.

Even though migration opportunities are increasing for girls in the nearby market town – with brokers regularly asking around for interest among local girls to migrate overseas – only two girls have left Dembashi for the Middle East, and few locals are even aware of these cases. However, Bulbullo faces a problem of migration due to a straight road that links it to Djibouti through Afar. In Bulbullo, according to officials at the Office of Women's Affairs, there are many factors that contribute to migration, including *'poverty, unemployment, the separation of parents, marriage problems, and the existence of illegal brokers'*. Metema, as a border town, is home to a large number of migrants from South Ethiopia, or Somaliland and Eritrea. Participants report high levels of migration, with young people *'migrating in trucks'*. These migrants mostly consist of women under the age of 18.

There are many dangers associated with the migration process (see quote below). Rape, murder, and other forms of abuse are common in stories of young adolescent girls choosing to migrate. In many cases, brokers disappear with young girls' money and their migration comes to a halt. As a result, women who are robbed and stranded are left with no *'money to return'*. With no money and family support, participants report that some returnees become commercial sex workers to support themselves. This has had a profound impact on the Metema community – both positive and negative. Though migrants from outside Metema are one of the catalysts for exposing local adolescents to new beliefs and attitudes, elders feel that the local youth have become *'spoiled'* as a result of seeing migrants in their local community. Indeed, some women report that due to the high number of sex workers in Metema, farmers from rural towns come to Metema to engage in illegal sexual activities.

Migration and Early Marriage

Similar to the findings from year 1 research, migration seems to act as a force that increases the likelihood of early marriage for some girls, but reduces it for others. Some adolescents report that parents do not want their daughters to be married before migration as this would mean that she would send remittances to her husband as opposed to her parents. On the other hand, the danger of rape while migrating leads parents to marry their daughters before they leave, reflecting the view that married girls are less likely to be raped than unmarried girls.

Interviews with uneducated boys in Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema suggest that boys are unlikely to marry girls who have migrated for a host of reasons, ranging from feeling inferior (because she has earned money) to distrust about her sexual history. Moreover, although some men marry returnees because of the prospect of financial gain, most returnees are generally considered unfit to meet the needs of their Ethiopian husband.

Having presented our findings on the complex interplay of social norm change processes surrounding early marriage and education in our research sites, we turn to our final section on conclusions and policy and programming implications.

'Just last week we brought young girls who came from Jima (town in south-west Ethiopia) Brokers took these girls and raped them one after the other and beat them. We were informed about this and we rushed to the spot. The assailants were not there but we found the girls. They were tired and thirsty. We gave them water and food. We sent them back to Addis Ababa the next day.'

We see untold cruelty committed on migrant girls. However, there are problems to bring perpetrators to justice. The mandates of the Federal Government are delegated to the regional state. The ultimate decision is made by the Federal Government. In this regard, bringing perpetrators to justice is a long process. As a result, brokers caught by police and brought to the regional state court are released because it has no authority to penalise them. Consequently, the broker who was released on bail disappears and the file is closed. Because of this problem, it was not possible to teach those criminals a lesson so that they do not repeat the same crime against young and innocent girls trying to migrate in search of jobs. And we continue burying six to seven bodies a day. Overall, all that we have are sad stories.'

Informal discussion with police officer in Metema region

6 Conclusions and policy implications

6.1 Conclusions

Ethiopia has made tremendous progress recently in enhancing women and girls' rights. As a result of policies that require both spouses' consent in the administration of marital property, and raising the legal age of marriage, our findings suggest that discriminatory gendered social norms for adolescent girls in Amhara are beginning to shift. There has also been encouraging progress in terms of reducing early marriage practices and a weakening of harmful norms, which marks an important departure from the experiences of adolescent girls' mothers and grandmothers. In particular, the average age at marriage has steadily increased over the past three generations, and elders, parents, and young adolescents are all aware of the ramifications of disobeying the law. Changes have been attributed to strong monitoring practices by kebele officials and awareness-raising programmes by health workers. Nonetheless, the findings reveal that oppressive gender norms are changing in a highly uneven manner that often corresponds with geographical location, level of household income, and level of education. Early marriages still happen and are not unusual, especially among rural, poor and uneducated families. As a result, adolescent girls in Ethiopia continue to face numerous challenges that result in a poor quality of life.

We can conclude that Amhara communities are undergoing a transformative gender norm change that is impacting girls' lives in varied ways. This study has considered both the key drivers and key inhibitors of changing gender norms (Figure 5). The **key drivers** of progressive gender norm change include access to education, legal changes, top-down social mobilisation, positive local role models, and supportive male relatives. Girls from supportive families that recognised the value of their education, especially those with supportive fathers or elder brothers, were able to avoid early marriage arrangements while simultaneously completing at least secondary school, with a few even attending university. Awareness-raising efforts spearheaded by school clubs, the kebele, the health centres and, to some extent, the church have enhanced girls' knowledge of their rights, and thereby equipped some young girls with the confidence to defy conservative traditions upheld by community elders. Schools and school clubs teach girls about their rights, including where to access family planning advice and contraception, and the danger and illegality of early marriage. At the same time, kebele officials (specifically women association leaders) and police have made clear the legal consequences of early marriage and the need for compulsory education. With the backing of the law, kebele officials and school teachers actively seek out girls who stop attending school so that they can persuade those girls' parents to support them to stay in school. In our study, participants believed the most effective awareness-raising solutions would be: guidance and counselling in schools, radio, mobile services, community conversations, and school clubs.

Nevertheless, the **forces that impede progressive gender norm change** remain strong, including care work burdens, 'sticky' conservative gender norms about girls' and women's bodies and sexuality, a strong sense of filial piety on the part of girls, and social isolation as a result of migration. A major parental motivation to marry a daughter early is the fear that she will engage in premarital sex and give birth out of wedlock. In Christian communities, pre-marital pregnancy is deeply shameful for the girl and her family; pregnant girls have been known to run away from the area, while those who stay in the area usually stop attending school and spend most of their time isolated inside their parental home. Early marriage provides a precautionary defence against this risk to a family's honour. This fear of loss of girls' virginity also plays a role in keeping girls out of higher levels of education. Nevertheless, in Bulbullo, children born out of wedlock are no longer taboo, in part because international migration remittances are affording greater financial flexibility. Although it is still considered 'bad practice' and shameful, some girls report that they will not be ostracised and punished for having children outside

of marriage. Whereas previously, parents would beat girls who gave birth outside of marriage, now, it is not uncommon for parents to assist with raising the child.

Figure 5: Drivers and inhibitors of change in gender norms in Amhara, Ethiopia

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Education

- Agreement in Dembashi and Metema that men want to marry an educated girl.
- Providing education is thought to help girls to be self-reliant, especially in Dembashi.
- *Exception to drivers:* In Bulbullo and Metema, proximity to school causes girls to drop out due to safety reasons.

Top-down mobilisation

- In Bulbullo, kebele officials only approve a marriage after receiving written confirmation of the age of partners.
- School teachers and kebele officials are strong enforcers of the law and monitor when girls are absent from school.
- *Exception to drivers:* In Dembashi and Bulbullo, kebele monitoring is decreasing and as a result, some girls are getting married at the age of 14.

Local role models

- In both Dembashi and Bulbullo, local girls who completed their education and were employed were a source of inspiration (role models) for girls who wanted to complete their education.
- *Exception to drivers:* In Metema, there was a general agreement that there aren't any local role models to motivate young girls to complete their education.
- *Exception to drivers:* In Bulbullo and Metema, role models also contributed to high migration, since young girls see remittances being sent home from those who have already migrated.

Communication via media, school clubs

- In Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema, school clubs and radio broadcasts were thought to be important sources of awareness-raising. Girls can complain to schools if parents force them into marriage. Radio broadcasts reach adult men most easily.

Supportive role male relatives

- In Dembashi and Bulbullo, having supportive brothers, fathers, or husbands was key to ensuring that girls' continued their education and did not marry early.

INHIBITORS OF CHANGE

Filial piety

- In Dembashi, 'good' girls are characterised by obeying their parents.
- In Bulbullo, girls are given opportunities to refuse arranged marriages but much less than boys.
- In Metema, parents fear that girls may elope or migrate and are thus more careful about openly rejecting their daughter's partner choice.

Migration

- Due to the fear of rape, some parents in Bulbullo and Metema tend to marry their daughters early, before they migrate.
- Other parents in Bulbullo and Metema do not want their daughters to send remittances to the husband's family, so they do not marry the daughters before they migrate.
- Generally speaking, boys in Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema are less keen on marrying a girl returnee.
- *Exception to inhibitors:* Women in all three sites are empowered because of the income they earn after migration

Conservative norms around women's bodies and sexuality

- In Bulbullo, girls are expected to remain virgins, but this is changing as proof of negative HIV status is now more important than proof of virginity.
- In Metema, bride price is often linked to the girl's status as a virgin.
- In Dembashi, giving birth out of wedlock is a source of shame for the family.
- In Bulbullo, there are mixed views on the 'shame' of giving birth out of wedlock.
- *Exception to inhibitors:* Girls are more aware of their sexual rights and some are taking contraception, even without the husband's permission.

Care economy realities

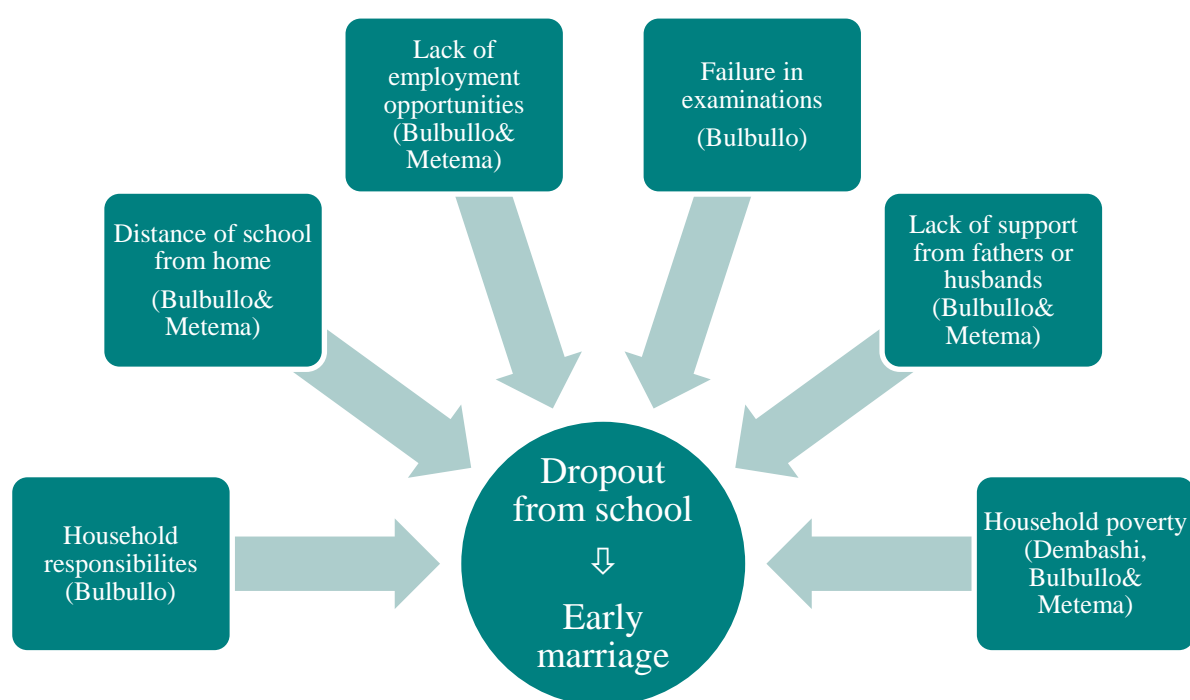
- Household poverty and household responsibilities in Dembashi, Bulbullo and Metema act as barriers to girls' education in terms of how much time girls can spend on schoolwork and whether they have the economic means to continue their education.

We found that education is a key driver for social change; yet a large majority of the girls in our study reported dropping out of school by 8th grade as a result of multiple factors (Figure 6). Even when adolescent girls are considered better off in education than marriage, if they fail their education exams, marriage is seen as the best option available to them due to the stigma of families having an ‘idle’ matured daughter at home.

However, the primary cause of girls’ educational failure is their lack of time for study, due to demands placed on them to carry out a high proportion of household and care work, doing tasks that are largely reserved for women and girls. Young boys are generally not tied to such burdensome duties and are therefore able to stay in school longer and improve their employment prospects. In order to eradicate early marriage, it is critical to overturn this deep-rooted gender division of household labour, which restricts girls’ rights and opportunities from a young age.

Further, given that small towns seldom have secondary schools – and even less frequently preparatory schools – girls who wish to continue their education either need to travel long distances every day or be supported to live away from the parental home. In both cases, parents see this as an important risk to the family honour for girls either to engage in premarital sex or be raped. As such, many parents prefer their daughters to marry early rather than run the risks associated with continuing their education. Distance to school, gender-based violence, and the value attributed to virginity are also factors keeping girls from further education and incentivising early marriage.

Figure 6: Factors contributing to school dropout rates



Note: All factors were evident to some degree across all three sites, but in the figure we have indicated the sites where they were most prevalent.

Clearly, it is crucial to address and mitigate the many factors that impede girls’ ability to complete their education. Lessons from various countries can help to find strategies that are most effective. Cash transfers have been widely used and shown to be effective in a range of countries and contexts, across multiple human development domains. Interventions such as the *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* in India are novel strategies designed to help girls stay in school longer. This initiative, introduced in India in 1994, provides monetary benefits to a family, which accrue until the daughter turns 18 years old and is conditional on the girl being fully immunised, completing her schooling up until grade 10, and remaining unmarried. Evaluation of this intervention shows that although the incentives may be

too weak to ensure that the poorest children start school, they may still play a role in helping girls who are already in school, stay in school longer (Sinha and Yoong, 2009).

Similarly, other conditional cash transfer schemes in Brazil (*Bolsa Familia*), Malawi (*Social Cash Transfer Scheme*) and Mexico (*Progresar/Oportunidades*) have served to address gender imbalances by economically empowering women and giving them greater bargaining power at home. In Ethiopia, especially in the Amhara region, poverty is one of the main barriers to girls completing their schooling. A single solution is unlikely to solve the numerous challenges that Amhara girls face. Evidence from previous conditional cash transfer (CCT) interventions in Ethiopia (DFID, 2011) suggests that transfers alone are unlikely to achieve greater social mobility unless supported by complementary interventions such as skills training.

Maximising the impact of CCTs by providing more informed affirmative action policies may be a powerful approach to reducing gender inequality in school completion rates in Ethiopia. Currently, affirmative action in Ethiopia is enshrined in Article 35(3) of the Constitution and the Federal Government has enacted legislation that aims to increase women's enrolment at the higher education level. However, participants in our study report that only a small number of girls are able to complete their schooling as a result of failing their examinations, even at lower grade levels. The female dropout rate from secondary schools is estimated to be so high that only a very small number of girls are even eligible for entry into higher education.

Finding creative solutions to improving completion rates (such as reducing the rigidity of examination requirements to pass a grade level) may be one way to increase the number of girls who complete secondary school, and are thus eligible for affirmative action policies at the higher education level. Thus, increasing the quality and accessibility of secondary school is essential. High rates of female dropouts were also attributed to lack of motivation to complete school as a result of poor employment opportunities in Ethiopia.

Poor job opportunities result in higher dropout rate and a higher number of girls choosing to migrate to nearby countries. Despite an investment of 2.8 million birr in this region to provide licences in the areas of agriculture, industry, hotel and tourism, real estate commerce and social services, more than 85% of the population in Amhara continues to be engaged in agriculture.¹⁹ Thus, it is important to pay attention to skills development to improve both completion rates and employability for Amhara girls and boys. In 2008, the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia launched the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) strategy to improve the training of technical teachers and the improvement of technical capacities at selected TVET institutions by 2017. With an ambitious vision that is focused on improving the infrastructure of TVET institutions, it is also necessary to think critically about issues of communication of information and facilitating access and admission for girls from rural households to these TVET institutions.

One of the central components necessary to transform restrictive gender norms is to engage boys and men in discussions around the need for change, because most often decisions about girls' lives are taken by their fathers or husbands. There is a large body of literature on the importance of engaging boys and men in changing gender inequalities (Connell, 2003). Moreover, the United Nations has been calling for a step change in men's practices for more than a decade, as well as the structures and factors that enable, encourage and shape those practices. Programmes that are most effective are those that are well designed, integrate all members of the community, include mass media campaigns, and have targeted conversations about transforming gender and masculinity (Barker et al., 2007).

Helping girls attain agency and improve their capabilities requires a combination of tactics, including building on effective and evidence-based interventions that are being used internationally, as well as supportive legal machinery, and tailoring of policies specific to Amhara girls' realities.

6.2 Policy and programming recommendations

Based on our respondents' stories, our research in Amhara suggests that the following policy and programming priorities need to be considered if adolescent girls' capabilities are to be realised:

19 http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/en_GB/stateamhara

Given the key role of education in shifting gender norms and providing agency for adolescent girls, ensure continued and expanded support to enable girls to attend school and receive quality education. Though enrolment in primary school is higher than it has been in previous generations, an overwhelming number of girls drop out of school by 8th grade as a result of failing school examinations and time spent in care economy realities. The government needs to address this high dropout rate through a variety of strategies, including incentives for families with daughters who complete high school, increasing the quality of teaching, making secondary schools more accessible, affirmative action for girls to pass examinations, and alternative options for local employment that include vocational training.

Encourage progressive role models for adolescents so that they can imagine future lives that are different from those of their parents. Initiatives could include educational programming, visits to university campuses in urban centres, and girls clubs where role models could be invited to talk. Our participants – both young and old – point to the importance of positive role models in providing them with the agency to challenge gender norms within their family and community.

Enhance and provide support services for girls who are married. While it is clearly important to take a preventive approach to early marriage, many adolescent girls in Amhara are already married, and their needs must not be overlooked. As a result of the social and physical isolation these married young girls experience, they need support services (including mental health services) that can help them cope with the rigid cultural expectations of being a ‘good’ wife. Options to re-enter school after a gap in education will also help to empower married girls and help close the gender gap in school completion rates in communities.

Invest in creating ‘safe spaces’ for girls who are at risk of early marriage. Support services for unmarried girls should be enhanced through ensuring continued participation in school clubs, which are considered safe spaces where girls can seek advice on issues such as reproductive health, early marriage and sexual violence, and share their views and experiences. Girls’ clubs also provide a level of community-based protection and safeguarding: girls are instructed to inform their teacher if their parents are trying to arrange an early marriage so that the school and kebele officials can intervene, keep the girl in school, and take action against her parents if necessary. Such clubs should be both encouraged and expanded.

Engage more boys and men in conversations about gender equality and encourage new masculinities. Since constraints on girls’ capabilities are often the result of gendered rules dictated by fathers and husbands, it is vital that men and boys are engaged in conversations about changing normative gender beliefs and practices. Helping men to learn about new forms and practices of masculinity through awareness-raising and education initiatives – led by professionals who have experience in working sensitively with boys and men – is crucial to bringing about change. Efforts should involve collaborations with organisations that promote caring, non-violent and equitable masculinities and gender relations internationally, by taking to scale effective approaches that reach out to men and boys to reduce violence against women. An example of one such organisation is Promundo,²⁰ which works with men in Brazil, India, Portugal and the United States, and has succeeded in reducing inter-partner violence among men aged 18-29.

Empower communities to have a ‘bottom-up’ approach to changing gender norms. Our findings indicated that there were mismatches between what adults believed about changing gender norms and what was occurring in homes with respect to gender roles. Strategies are needed to mobilise the community in ways that will help to create an environment in which preventing early marriage is seen as a common good and a collective responsibility. Parental misperceptions about the degree to which other community members support early marriage or its prevention need to be corrected. A combination of top-down legal changes and a bottom-up approach emanating from the community will strengthen prevention efforts.

²⁰ www.promundo.org.br/en/

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Appendix

1. Research instruments

1.1 Community conceptual mapping and timeline

INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents:

Per research site, undertake one discussion with each of the following:

- Younger people (18 - 30), male and female mixed, involving youth leaders, NGOs workers, ok if they are from outside the community as they might have an interesting perspective (e.g. young teachers or government employees).
- Middle-aged people (30-50), male and female mixed, involving community leaders and respected persons who feel free to talk
- Older men (60+) (male only - for grandfathers' perspectives; could be the village elder or others).

Procedures:

Plan to take at least 2 hours. Start with the conceptual mapping (general discussion first), then proceed to the community timeline. You can start with the marriage theme, then education in one group; and reverse the order with the other group in case things get more rushed towards the end.

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers, tape and pins; drawing board

Thematic focus

- What sorts of norms and practices are there in this community around early marriage and other marriage practices? Around girls' schooling?
- Are there differences between girls and boys?
- Have these norms and practices shifted over time? If so how and why?
- What sorts of interventions if any exist or have existed to change these norms?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO COLLECT

- Date _____ Location _____
- Numbers of participants (at beginning): _____ (at end): _____
- Kind of participants (older men/women; younger men/women): _____
- Ages (average): _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____
- **How was the process?** Was it participatory; did everyone take part in the discussion; did anyone dominate? Did anyone walk out, why: was it difficult / easy to manage, why; were people comfortable / uncomfortable, why? etc.

QUESTION GUIDE

Timeline of changes

Draw a timeline on a large sheet of paper or the ground to map changes in marriage practices and girls education at community level against the backdrop of major events in the country and district/locality.

- Political/governmental/administrative changes (national and local levels)
- Introduction of particular policies, laws, programmes, services
- Economic changes, conditions
- Environmental events (droughts/floods, harvest failures)
- Introduction of new technologies (ICTs, for example mobile phones, others)
- Conflict, war, displacement

Discussion of 1) whether the types of changes being mapped affect other communities in the district or are unique to this community; and 2) how these changes intersect with marriage and education - as you go along with the other questions

Community timeline framework

Conflict					
Technological					
Environmental					
Economic					
Laws/policies/ programmes services					
Local political					
National political					
Changes in:	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Marriage					
Girls' education					

Marriage

We would like to talk about marriage in this community.

Forms/types and practices

What do you understand by marriage in this community?

- Can you please describe the most common forms of marriage and marriage processes/ practices here?
 - Forms: Religious/civil/customary/cohabitation
 - Types: Monogamy/polygamy
 - Practices: Preparation; bride wealth; arranged/by choice; marital residence patterns

- Are these forms/types of marriages/ practices common throughout this district? Or do they vary by group? Explain.
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages of one form / practice over another? (for men/women?)
- Have these practices changed over time? Since when? Why/why not/ causes? What are your views/feelings on these changes/lack of change?

Evolving marriage practices

Before and after exercise: Ask group participants to provide 2 statements following the patterns below to describe reality in their communities.

- **We used to think X about marriage but now we think Y**
- **We used to do X but now we do Y about marriage**

[give hypothetical examples that illustrate both change or stasis or partial change – to avoid leading them in a particular direction]

In-depth discussion of age at marriage:

To explore changes or lack thereof around early marriage norms and practices in their community and their views on these changes /non-changes – positive/ negative and why

- What is the usual age for marriage in this community (for girls/boys)? Has this been changing? How/why?
- What do most people think is the appropriate age for girls to marry in this community and why? Is it different for boys and why?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys). What do you think about this?
- Do some girls marry later or not at all? Who/ which girls? [individuals or groups] Why? And how do people here think about this?
- Have these attitudes evolved over time and if so how and why? Are you able to link any of these changes to events in your timeline?
- Are there some ideas/ customs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls' marriage at early or late age [separate when you ask people so as not to get muddled!]? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?
- Are there specific people/groups who actively work to maintain girls marrying at age X? [fill in early expected age of marriage] Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? / Why are they influential?
- Are there specific groups working to move the desirable age of marriage for girls? Who are they? [If national level actors] How are their views communicated/ conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?
- What are some of the positive or negative consequences for a girl who marries very early or very late

Incentives: *For each probe as follows: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*

- What are the incentives for parents to marry their girls at an early or later age?
- Why are the incentives for girls to marry at an early or later age?

Sanctions: *For, probe as follows: Are the consequences economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*

- If a girl's parents wants her to get married early and she refuses, what happens?
- If a family is not willing to marry their daughter off early, what happens?
- If the expected age of marriage here differs from the legal age, how do people decide what to do? What motivates this decision-making process? What happens?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing her family what happens?

Special questions on children outside of marriage (*Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?*)

- Is it common for girls in this community to have children before they are married? Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?

- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
- How is having a baby when not married viewed by others? (Parents, peers, relatives, authorities, future marriage partners....) and how does the unmarried girl view herself?
- What differences are there in having a baby when married or unmarried?
- Does having a baby when not married create any particular problems/challenges for the girl?
- How are boys who have fathered children when not married viewed by the community? How do they view themselves?
- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy?
- What are some of the services that exist for young married couples? How could these be strengthened?

Education

We would like to talk about education services in this community and differences between education for girls and boys.

Services

Can you please describe what exists here. [this is supposed to be a quick answer]

- Primary; Secondary; tertiary; alternative; skills training; religious ; informal education
- Since when have these services been available? [remember to add to timeline exercise later].
- What do you think about these services?
 - Accessibility; Quality; Value

Comparative value of education for girls and boys

The following for quick and animated discussion:

“Education is important for boys” Why or why not?

“Education is important for girls” Why or why not?

Is education more important for boys than for girls? Why or why not?

- Until what age or grade do you think it is appropriate for girls to get an education and why?
- Is it different for boys and why?
- Do some girls not go to school? What influences this? Are there any particular groups of girls who are less likely to go to school and why? Is it different for boys? Why?
- Are there some ideas/ customs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls' education? Do these change with the age of the girl? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?
- Are there specific people/groups who actively work to resist girls school attendance beyond primary level? Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? / Why are they influential?
- Are there specific groups working to promote girls' education beyond primary level? Who are they? [If national level actors] How are their views communicated/ conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?
- Have attitudes and practices around girls' education changed over time? How? Why? In some places more than others? What do you think about these changes?

Incentives: (For each of the scenarios below probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)

- Why would parents want their girls to leave school after their primary education? [The emphasis here is on what they hope to gain...]
- Why would girls want to leave school after their primary education?
- Why would parents want their girls to continue in school?
- Why would a girl want to continue in school?

Sanctions: (For each of the scenarios below probe: Are the consequences economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)

- If a family wants their daughter to continue in school beyond what most girls do, what happens?
- If the expected level of education for girls here differs from the legal level of compulsory education, how do people decide what to do? What motivates this decision-making process? What happens?
- If a girl tries to stay in school beyond what her parents want, what happens?
- If the parents want the girl to continue her schooling, and she refused what happens?

Intersection of early marriage/pregnancy and girls' education norms (to be integrated above)

- How does marriage affect a girls' education trajectory? (Does it prevent girls from staying in school?)
- How do people feel about this? (parents; parents-in-law; community members; teachers; local authorities; religious authorities; husbands)
- Are these feelings/attitudes and practices/consequences different for particular groups of girls (probe for social class, ethnicity, religion etc.)?
- Does this change if the married girl has a child? If so how and why?
- What about having a child outside of marriage - how does this affect a girls' education trajectory?
- How do people feel about this? (parents; parents-in-law; community members; teachers; local authorities; religious authorities; husbands)
- How does later education [education beyond primary education/ expected norm] for girls affect marriage practices and prospects? (girls' individual outcomes; family outcomes)
- What are some of the laws/policies and programmes to support girls' education?
- What do you think could be done to strengthen laws/policies and programmes to support girls' education?

1.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) adolescent girls and boys

INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents

- Total of five groups (approx. 5-6 participants per group):
- Girls and boys – 14/15-19 years. In and out of school; married and non-married;
- 1. Unmarried girls– in-school
- 2. Unmarried girls – out-of-school
- 3. Married girls– out-of-school
- 4. Unmarried boys - in-school
- 5. Unmarried adolescent mothers – out of school (special questions)

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers; tape; pins; drawing box

Thematic focus:

- Ideals of being a woman/man; wife/husband
- Social norms and practices around marriage and education
- Changes in the above

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO COLLECT

- Date _____ Location _____:
- Numbers of participants (at beginning): _____ (at end): _____
- Kind of participants (girls/boys; married/unmarried; in/out of school. adolescent mothers _____)

- Ages (average): _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____
- **How was the process?** Was it participatory; did everyone take part in the discussion; did anyone dominate? Did anyone walk out, why; was it difficult / easy to manage, why; were people comfortable / uncomfortable, why? etc.

QUESTION GUIDE

Ideals of masculinity and femininity

Warm-up exercise

Start with drawings of girl / women and boy/ men – then use post-its to brainstorm on characteristics of ideal boy/girl/ man/woman

- What are girls expected to do and how are they expected to behave? What about boys?
- What types of things are girls told that they shouldn't do? [e.g. girls are not supposed to do....] What about boys?
- What are the key roles and responsibilities of boys/girls; men/women in the family?

Views on girls

- Do you think many girls are able to meet those expectations? [referring back to the drawings]
- Are they difficult to achieve?
- Do girls feel under pressure to live up to those expectations? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do you gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if you don't?
- Do some people/individuals have different expectations for girls and women?
Peers; adults; religion/ethnicity; socio-economic status; occupational status

Views on boys

- Do you think many boys are able to meet the expectations? [referring back to the drawings]
- Are they difficult to achieve?
- Do boys feel under pressure to live up to those expectations? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do boys gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if they don't?
- Do some people/individuals have different expectations for boys and men?
Peers; adults; religion/ethnicity; socio-economic status; occupational status

Views on Marriage and fertility

Age

- What do you think is a good age for girls to be married? Why? How about for boys? Why? Do adults feel the same?
- What is the usual age in this community?
 - Has it changed? Since when and what drove that change?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys)? What do you think about this?
- What are some of the advantages (practical/economic/social) for girls to marry early? Marry later? [what do you mean by later if not already mentioned – use the specific age that they have already given...] Not marry at all?
 - For parents; for girls; other family members [e.g. brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins]
- What are some of the disadvantages (practical/economic and social) of marrying at an early age? Marrying later? Remaining single?
 - For parents; for girls; other family members [e.g. brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins]

Qualities of a marriage partner

[get the group to fill in the blanks... ask for quick responses]

- A good wife is/does _____?
- A good husband is/does _____?
- A bad wife is/does _____?
- A bad husband is/does _____?

Probe: reasons for these, change over time, similarities and differences with their parents, vary according to different types of girls/boys (socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity etc.)?

Some themes you might like to explore would be: ideals of virginity vs experience; marrying for love vs marrying for money, etc.; children or marriage;

Rationale for marriage (*Probe: Have there been any changes in the above over time?*)

- Do most girls want to get married in this locality? If so why/why not?
- What are your expectations from marriage – positive and negative? [including probes around children, protection/family honour, economic security, emotional wellbeing etc.]
- What if a girl in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are her alternative options?
- Do most boys want to get married in this locality? If so why/why not?
- What are their expectations from marriage – positive and negative? [including probes around kids, family honour, economic security, emotional wellbeing, fear of GBV, concerns about care work burden etc.]
- What if a boy in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are his alternative options?

Choice of marriage partner (*Probe: Have there been any changes in the above over time?*)

- Do girls get to choose their husbands? Why/why not? Who makes the choice and enforces it? Are there particular groups of girls who have greater agency/flexibility in the process? Has this been changing over time?
- What are your feelings about arranged marriages? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
- Do boys chose their wives here? And has this custom been changing over time – if so how? Why?
-

Marriage arrangements (*Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?*)

- What are the differences between different forms of marriage (religious, civil, customary, cohabitation)? Which type is most practiced here and what do you think about it?
- Is bride price given at marriage in this community? Why/Why not? By all groups or some? What does it consist of? How do you feel about it? What if it is not given?
- Are there any special preparations for girls and boys before marriage (Physical/ informational? Other?) Who conducts this preparation? When does it occur?
- Where does the married couple live after marriage? (With the boys' parents? With the girls' parents? With other relatives? Alone?)
- What happens if there are problems in the couple? Who can you turn to? How do they help you?
- Do you think there could be any programmes that could help you in married life?

Fertility/children (*Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?*)

- What is the usual size of the family here? How many children would you want?
- What about the gender of the child? Does it make any difference to you, your husband, your parents/ parents-in-law?
- What if you can't have a child?
- What if you have a child when you are not married?
- How are these views/expectations different between you and your parents/ grandparents? Now/long ago?

Access to services (*Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?*)

- What do girls do when they get pregnant? Who do they turn to? Where do they go?

- What are some of the problems and/or challenges adolescent girls face when pregnant, giving birth, and after giving birth (*Probe: health, social, material.....*)
- Do adolescent girls have access to reproductive health services in this community? (contraception; safe deliveries)?
- What are some of the obstacles to using these services? (e.g. awareness, language, attitudes of service providers, perceptions of quality/confidentiality, distance, costs)
- Do you have to be married to have access to these services?
- Is there sufficient information about SRH accessible to girls in this community? What do you think could be done to improve this situation?
- In the case of domestic/ GBV who can girls turn to for help? Are there specific services? What about legal aid?
- If a girl is divorced/abandoned/ widowed, how is she supported (e.g. do families take them back in)? Is there legal protection? If there is, do the courts treat girls equitably?
- What do you think could be done to strengthen services for girls who are having trouble in their marriages?

Views on education

- Have you all been in school at some point? (for those out of school) What grade are you in school (for those in school)
- Do most children go to school here and until what age? Are there any differences between boys and girls? Has this been changing?
- What are the expectations for sons vs daughters – if there are differences why? Has this been changing over time?
- Who should ensure that all children go to school and to what age? Is it different for boys and girls?
- Are the experiences of boys and girls similar or different in school? If different, why?
 - Treatment by teachers (favouritism, discipline, abuse); peer groups; teaching/learning experience; school environment –safety/sanitation; leadership/participation in schools; extra-curricular activities; sports; discipline/subjects ; performance; retention/dropouts
- What has your school experience been like? Are you learning important and useful things? Do you think it is preparing you well for your future? What could be done to improve this?
- What about your future plans about school? Beyond school? What thinking informs these plans? Are there barriers for you to achieve those plans?
- If you have children, what would be the ideal school trajectory for your children?

Intersections between marriage/pregnancy and education for girls (*integrated into the above*)

- Should an 18 yr old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/ disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time?
- Is it common for girls to withdraw from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What do you think might be done to support married girls/ or unmarried mothers to continue with schooling?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated girls. If so why/why not? Is this changing?
- Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? For the girl? For the boy? Has this been changing at all over time?
- Do you think being more educated makes you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [for example....] Is this changing over time?

- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers? Is this changing over time?

1.3 IDIs with unmarried boys (15-19 yrs) who have adolescent sisters

INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents: A mix of in and out of school boys

Materials needed: Flip chart, markers; tape; pins; drawing board

Thematic focus:

- Boys' views of ideals of being a woman/man; wife/husband
- Social norms and practices around marriage and education
- Changes in the above

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO COLLECT

- Date _____ Location _____:
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Individual information as follows:

• <i>Name</i>	
• <i>Age</i>	
• <i>Place of birth</i>	
• <i>Place of residence</i>	
• <i>Education status/level – own</i>	
• <i>Education status/level – siblings</i>	
• <i>Education status/level – parents</i>	
• <i>Work or occupation</i>	
• <i>Parents' occupations</i>	
• <i>Parent's marital status (includes polygamy) of parents (and number of children)</i>	
• <i>Household living arrangements (who lives in his household; who is considered the head of household?)</i>	
• <i>Ethnicity/ language</i>	
• <i>Religion</i>	

QUESTION GUIDE

Ideals of masculinity and femininity

Warm up:

We'd like to start by drawing the members of your family and then talking about their main roles and responsibilities within the household. (Have them draw members of their family)

- Similarities and differences with siblings
- Roles of parents
- Have these always been so or are they changing? If changing, why?

Now we'd like to sketch your community and ask you to identify places where boys and girls go – either jointly or separately. (Have them sketch their community)

- What do you do in these different spaces?

- If there are differences between girls and boys, why?
- Have these always been so or are they changing? If changing, why?

Ideals of masculinity (Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?)

- What are the characteristics of an ideal boy in your community? Of an ideal man? Are there any common sayings or proverbs that people use around here?
 - Do you think many boys obtain this ideal?
 - What do you think about this in your own case? Is it important to you? If it is, is it difficult to achieve?
 - Do you feel under pressure to live up to that ideal? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do you gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if you don't?
 - Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Peers; older brothers; adults; religious leaders; others

Ideals of femininity (Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?)

- What are the characteristics of an ideal girl in your community? Of an ideal woman? Are there any sayings or proverbs that are used around here?
 - Do you think many girls obtain this ideal?
 - Are these ideals important to you? Why/Why not?
 - Do you think it is difficult for girls to achieve these ideals? In what way?
 - Do you think your sister feels under pressure to live up to these ideals? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do girls gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if they don't?
 - Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Peers; adults; religious leaders; others

Views on marriage / children outside of marriage

- Why would you want to get married? What do you hope to get out of it?
- What would you look for in a girl you would like to marry? What sort of girl would you want to avoid?
- When you are married, what do you think will make you a good husband? Do you envisage any obstacles in becoming a good husband? [probe on the below:]
 - Employment prospects; housing arrangements; assets; land; affordability of marriage; meeting parents' expectations for a marriage partner
- What sort of boys do you think girls seek to avoid?
- What do you think your father's view is in terms of ideal wife/ ideal husband? If different, what accounts for this difference?
- What do you think is the best /most appropriate age for a girl to marry? For a boy to marry? Why? What is the expected age in this community? Has this changed over time?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is in Viet Nam? (for girls/boys)
- Who decides on the appropriate age for marriage? How is it enforced? What happens if it is not followed? Has this changed over time?
- Who if anyone provides you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality? What sorts of things do you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What are the gaps? What else would you like to know more about? What about girls – who helps them?
- Do you or your parents have to prepare in any way for you to get married? [economic contributions (including bride wealth), rituals, sharing of information on what to expect (role of uncles?)] If so how? What about your sister? What are your views on these customs? Have they been changing over time and why?
- Do boys choose their wives here? What about you – what do you want? What is likely to happen to you in reality? And has this custom been changing over time – if so how? Why?
- Do girls get to choose their husbands? Why/why not? Is this changing over time? Are there particular groups of girls who have more choice in the process? What about the case of your sister or close relative?
- Do you expect to have multiple wives? What are your views on this? Is this practice changing over time?
- What happens if a boy fathers a child without being married? How does he feel? What does he do? How does the girl feel/what does she do? How do others view them? Do they view the boy and the girl differently?
- If you fathered a child without being married, what would you do?

- Is this common here? What could you do to prevent this?

Views on education

- Do most children go to school here and until what age? Are there any differences between boys and girls? Is this changing over time?
- What about in your family? What are the expectations for sons vs daughters – if there are differences why?
- Who should ensure that all children go to school and to what age? Is this different for boys and girls?
- Are the experiences of boys and girls similar or different in school? If different, why?
 - Treatment by teachers (favouritism, discipline, abuse); peer relations; teaching/learning experience; school environment–safety/sanitation; leadership/participation in schools; extra-curricular activities; sports; discipline/subjects; performance; retention/dropouts
- What has your school experience been like? Are you learning important and useful things? Do you think it is preparing you well for your future? How could your education be improved?
- What about your future plans about school? Beyond school? What thinking informs these plans? Are there barriers for you to achieve those plans?
- If you have children, what would be the ideal school trajectory for your children?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls (to integrate into the questions above)

- Should an 18-yr-old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/ disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any classmates or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated girls? If so why/why not? Is this changing?
- Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? For the girl? For the boy? Is this changing at all over time?
- Do you think being more educated makes girls better wives, mothers, daughters-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [for example....]

Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

1.4 Focus group discussions (mothers and fathers)

Respondents: Mothers and fathers with adolescent girls – 4 per site (2 with mothers/ 2 with fathers)

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers (*if optional drawing to be done*)

Thematic focus

- Comparative views of men and women on ideals of masculinity and femininity
- Comparative views of mothers and fathers on social norms around marriage and education for sons and daughters
- Views and perceptions on changes over time
- Views and perspectives on laws, policies and programmes to address these issues

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO COLLECT

- Date _____ Location _____:
- Numbers of participants (at beginning): _____ (at end): _____
- Kind of participants (mothers/fathers): _____
- Ages (average): _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____
- **How was the process?** Was it participatory; did everyone take part in the discussion; did anyone dominate? Did anyone walk out, why; was it difficult / easy to manage, why; were people comfortable / uncomfortable, why? etc.

Ideals of masculinity and femininity

Optional: Start with a visual – asking one of the participants to draw a picture of a man and a woman, a boy and a girl. As the discussions below advance, or at the end, conduct a brainstorming on the following and write on the flip chart:

A good girl is/does _____ A bad girl is/does _____
A good boy is/does _____ A bad boy is/does _____
A good woman is/does _____ A bad woman is/does _____

Ideals of masculinity Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?

- What are the characteristics of an ideal boy in your community? Of an ideal man? Are there any common sayings or proverbs that people use around here?
- Do you think many boys/men obtain this ideal?
- What do boys and men gain if they manage to obtain this ideal?
- What are some of the challenges faced in obtaining this ideal?
- What happens if a boy or a man is not able to obtain this ideal? (Who enforces the ideal?)
- Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Men/women; Girls/boys; Religious or clan leaders; district authorities/government workers; others
- Are any of the above ideals changing over time?

Ideals of femininity Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?

- What are the characteristics of an ideal girl in your community? Of an ideal woman? Are there any sayings or proverbs that are used around here?
- Do you think many girls/women obtain this ideal?
- What do girls/women gain if they manage to obtain this ideal?
- What are some of the challenges faced in obtaining this ideal?
- What happens if a girl or a woman is not able to obtain this ideal? (Who enforces the ideal?)
- Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Men/women; girls/boys; religious or clan leaders; district authorities/government workers; others
- Are any of the above ideals changing over time?

Views and perspectives on marriage

Marriage forms/types/roles

- We would like to talk about marriage in this community. Can you please describe the most common forms of marriage and marriage processes/ practices here?
 - Forms: Religious/civil/customary/cohabitation (comparative advantages/disadvantages)
 - Types: Monogamy/polygamy (comparative advantages/disadvantages)
 - Practices: Preparation; bride wealth; arranged/by choice; marital residence patterns
- Are these forms/types of marriages/ practices common throughout this district?

- Have these practices changed over time? Since when? Why/why not/ causes? What are your views/feelings on these changes/lack of changes?
- What are the qualities/characteristics that make a good husband/wife? Have these changed over time?
- What kind of husband/wife would you like for your daughter/son? (Probe on what makes a good husband and a good wife and what they most hope for their child)
- What kind of husband/wife would you NOT like your daughter/son to have? Probe on what makes a bad husband and a bad wife and what they most fear for their child)
- Do you think your spouse shares your views of ideal husbands/wives?
- Would you like your daughter's/son's marriage to be the same or different from your own? Please explain.

Early marriage

- At what age do most girls and most boys marry in this community? Has this always been the case, or is it changing over time?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys)?
- What do you as parents (mothers/fathers) think is the appropriate age for girls to marry in this community and why?
 - Is it different for boys and why?
 - Are these views held by everyone in the community, or are there differences (Do mothers and fathers agree? Do daughters and sons agree? What about have religious leaders, district officials, government leaders, others.....?)
- Do some girls marry later or not at all? Who/ which girls? [individuals or groups] Why? And how do you as parents think about this?
- Have attitudes and practices about the age at marriage evolved over time and if so how and why? (How do these attitudes and practices compare with the time you were married?)
- Are there some ideas/ customs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls' marriage at early or late age [separate when you ask people so as not to get muddled!]? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?
- Are there specific people/groups who actively work to maintain girls marrying at age X? [fill in early expected age of marriage] Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? / Why are they influential?
- Are there specific groups working to move the desirable age of marriage for girls? Who are they? [If national level actors] How are their views communicated/ conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?

Incentives: For each probe as follows: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?

- What are the incentives for parents to marry their girls at an early or later age?
- Why are the incentives for girls to marry at an early or later age?

Sanctions: For each probe as follows: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?

- If you as a parent want your daughter to get married early and she refuses, what happens?
- If you and your spouse disagree about the age at which your daughter marries, what happens?
- If you as parents are not willing to marry their daughter off early, what happens?
- If the expected age of marriage here differs from the legal age, how do people decide what to do? What motivates this decision-making process? What happens?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing you first, what happens?

Special questions on children outside of marriage (Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?)

- Is it common for girls in this community to have children before they are married? Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
- How do you as parents view girls having babies when not married? How do others view this? (Relatives, authorities, future marriage partners....) and how does the unmarried girl view herself?

- What do you as parents do if your son/daughter has a child without being married?
- What differences are there in having a baby when married or unmarried?
- Does having a baby when not married create any particular problems/challenges for the girl?
- Which is worse for your daughter – getting married at an early age or getting pregnant without being married?
- How are boys who father children when not married viewed by the community? How do they view themselves?
- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the services that exist to help young married couples in their family life?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?

Views and perspectives on education

- Do most children go to school here and until what age? Are there any differences between boys and girls?
- Is the situation in education different from in your time? (i.e., did most girls/boys go to school, until what age, etc.)
- What about in your family? What are your expectations for your sons vs daughters – if there are differences why?
- Who should ensure that all children go to school and to what age? Is this different for boys and girls?
- Are the experiences of boys and girls similar or different in school? If different, why?
 - Treatment by teachers (favouritism, discipline, abuse); peer relations; teaching/learning experience; school environment –safety/sanitation; leadership/participation in schools; extra-curricular activities; sports; discipline/subjects; performance; retention/dropouts
- What have your daughters' school experience been like? Are they learning important and useful things? Do you think it is preparing them well for their future?
- What could be done to improve education – for girls/for boys?
- What about your daughters' future plans about school? Beyond school? What thinking informs these plans? Are there barriers for them to achieve those plans? Any difference between your sons and daughters?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls

Integrate into questions above if possible

- Should an 18-yr-old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/ disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time? (*Ask also about their own daughters*)
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing? (*Ask also about their own daughters*)
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have friends or relatives who have had any experience of this? (*Ask also about their own daughters*)
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this? (*Ask also about their own daughters*)
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated girls? If so why/why not? Is this changing? (*Ask also about their own daughters*)
- Does education of the girl or the boy have any influence in the marriage payments/bride wealth? (*Ask also about their own daughters/sons*)

- Do you think being more educated makes girls better wives, mothers, daughters-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [for example....](Ask also about their own daughters)
- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers? (Ask also about their own daughter/sons)

1.5 Inter-generational trio

INSTRUCTIONS

- Start – if possible – by interviewing the grandparents or mothers in order to have a baseline to compare with the daughters
- The first set of questions are for the grandparents and parents
- The second set of questions are for adolescent girls,

Respondents

- 3 generations of women – grandmother, mother, daughter
- 2 with in-school girls; 2 with out-of-school girls; all unmarried.
- Likely due to girls marrying and moving away that would be working with younger girls – 13-15 yr olds? [key is the three generations – even if a younger girl would be ok...]

Thematic focus:

- To explore shifts in the relative importance and framing of norms and practices around marriage and education across 3 generations

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TRIO (to attach)

- Date _____ Location _____:
- Names of full trio.
 - Grandmother _____
 - Mother _____
 - Girl : _____

Notes on the process: (Challenges in finding everyone; different residential places; other....)

A. QUESTION GUIDE: GRANDMOTHERS AND MOTHERS (Intergenerational trio)

- Date: _____ Place _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on grandmothers / mothers

- Person interviewed: _____ Relation _____
- Age: _____ Ethnic group _____ Religion _____
- Current marital status?
- When married? (age/date)
- What type/form of marriage? (monogamy/polygamy; civil/religious/customary/ cohabitation)
- How many children? Ages? Where living?
- Residence after marriage/currently/since when;
- Household living arrangements: extended or nuclear family (who is living in the household; who is considered the head of the household)
- Schooling? Level? If left early, when and why?
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)?

- What is/was your husband's occupation (subsistence, income)

Marriage

Age at marriage

- When you were a child, what were the ideas and customs/beliefs as to when a girl should get married? And what age did they usually get married?
- What were the ideas/customs/beliefs as to why a girl should get married at a particular age? [e.g. honour, fertility, virginity].
 - *Have these ideas on age of marriage been changing over time? Since when? What do you think about the changes?*
- What were the reasons for you to get married at the age you did? [e.g. filial piety, obedience, resistance, reluctant agreement, willingness]
 - Were your reasons for getting married at the age you did in line with common attitudes and customs? Why/why not?
 - If they were in line with typical attitudes/customs, what were the positive gains that you expected from following the attitudes/customs? And were these gains realised?
 - If it wasn't in line with typical attitudes/customs, what were the expected consequences from resisting the typical attitudes/customs? And what happened in practice [to you or to others]?
- Did your family support your approach or not? If so why/why not?
 - If they didn't support you, was there ever any threat or practice of violence? Would violence have made a difference to your views/ practice?

Type and forms of marriage

- What was the type and form of marriage that was typical in your day (religious/customary/civil; polygamous/monogamous) and what type did you have?
 - *Is this changing today? If so, since when? How and why?*
- Did you choose your partner? Why/why not? How did you feel about that?
 - *Have these processes been changing over time? Since when? How, why, why not? What do you think about the changes?*

Processes and preparations for getting married

- What was the process for getting married when you got married? [economic preparation [bride wealth, dowry, material to prepare etc./ rituals...]. What were your views about this?
 - *Has this process been changing over time? Since when? How, why, why not? What do you think about the changes?*
- Who told you what to expect during the marriage process and after marriage? What was your experience?
- Who if anyone provided you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality? What sorts of things did you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What were the gaps? What else would you have liked to have known more about?
 - *What about girls today – who provides them with information/helps them prepare for marriage? Explain any differences from your day.*

Main reasons/expectations of marriage

- What were the main reasons to get married when you were growing up (children? security? companionship? social acceptability? prestige? other?)
- What were your reasons?
 - *Have reasons for getting married changed today? If so, how? Since when? What do you think about the changes?*
- Before you got married how did you view marriage? What did you think it would bring you? Did you have any concerns? After you got married, did your views stay the same or change? Why?
- Who did you turn to when you had problems in your marriage? What kind of help did you receive?

- *If your daughter / granddaughter has problems in her marriage, who can she turn to and how can they help her? What kind of services do you think could be provided to support people in marriage and family life?*
- What were your expectations in terms of marriage age for your daughter? And for your granddaughter? Have they been met? Why/why not?

Special questions on children outside of marriage (*Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?*)

- Was it common in your time for girls in your community to have children before they are married? Did you know of girls who did?
 - *Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?*
- What effect (positive/negative) did having a child have on an unmarried girl's life in your day? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
 - *Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?*
- What about the boys who fathered children outside of marriage? How were they usually viewed? What did they usually do in your day? Did they take responsibility for them?
 - *What happens today?*
- Which is worse for your daughter /grand-daughter – getting married at an early age or getting pregnant without being married?

Education for girls.

Her experiences

- Did most girls go to school when you were growing up? Why or why not? If so, until what age?
- If you went to school, tell us about your schooling experience. Was it any different from your brothers? If so, how?
- If you went and dropped out, would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why/not? What prevented you from this?
- Did school experiences vary for boys or girls? If so, how and why?
 - Attitudes/treatment by teachers; attitudes of parents; length of schooling; time for homework; school environment/ facilities; getting to school – distance/transport
- Have you been influenced by any particular role models? E.g. teachers, older sisters, successful business women, community leaders.
 - How? In what way? How did this change your perspective as to what you could be? Relationships with others etc...
- Did going to school / not having gone/having dropped out of school have an influence on your later life?
 - Material; psycho-emotional; intellectual; social capital

Perceptions of changes

- *Do you think that ideas/attitudes/customs around girls' education have changed since your day? If so, how and why? What were the drivers of change? What do you think about these changes?*
- What were your expectations in terms of education for your daughter? And for your granddaughter? Have they been met? Are they the same or different vis-à-vis your expectations for your sons/grandsons?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls

[to integrate into discussion above and ensure to probe perceptions of change over time...]

In your day...

- Would an 18 yr old girl have been in school or married? What were the advantages/ disadvantages?
 - *Have things been changing over time and if so how?*
- Was it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What did you think about this?
 - *Has it been changing? What is it like today?*
- What did you think about married girls and schooling? Were you aware of any laws on this? Did you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
 - *What about today?*

- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Were you aware of any laws on this? Did you have any friends or relatives who had any experience of this?
- *What about today?*
- Were there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling?
- *What about today? Should there be? What kinds?*
- Do you think more educated girls had more problems finding husbands than less educated girls in your day? If so why/why not?
- *Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?*
- Did education have any influence in the marriage payments? In what way? For the girl? For the boy? *Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?*
- Do you think that being more educated would make you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this would have created create problems? [for example....]
- *Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?*
- Do you think education made boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?
- *Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?*

B. QUESTION GUIDE: DAUGHTERS (Intergenerational trio)

- Date: _____ Place _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on the daughter

- Name: _____
- Age: _____ Ethnic group _____ Religion _____
- Marital status _____
- If married; type of marriage _____; children? _____
- Current household living arrangements (extended or nuclear family; who is living in the household? Who is considered the household head?) _____
- In school? _____ If not in school, what level reached (if any) _____
- What level of education do your siblings have? If dropped out did your brothers leave school at the same age/grade? What about sisters? If different, why? _____
- Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not? _____
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____

Marriage

Age

- What are the current ideas/customs/beliefs as to when a girl should get married?
- At what age do girls usually get married today? Is this different from the time of your mother/ grandmother?
- What are the ideas/customs/beliefs as to why a girl should get married at a particular age? [e.g. honour, fertility, virginity].
- If married: at what aged did you marry? Was this in line with general expectations? If not, what happened when you married at the age you did? Did anyone try to stop you from this?
- If not married: at what age do you expect to get married? Is this in line with general expectations? If not, what will happen if you do not get married at the age you are expected to?

Types and forms of marriage

- What type of marriage is typical today (religious/customary/civil) and what type do you have/ expect to have?
- What about polygamy/monogamy? Which is more common today and what type do you have/ expect to have?

Processes/preparation

- What are processes for getting married today? [economic preparation [bride wealth, material to prepare etc./ rituals...]. What are your views about this? Do you think these processes are changing?
- Did you/Do you expect to choose your partner? Is this what is usually done? What happens if you refuse to marry a partner chosen for you?
- Who usually informs girls about what to expect during marriage? Has anyone told you what to expect during the marriage process and after marriage? What was your experience?
- Has anyone provided you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality? If so, who? What sorts of things did you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What were the gaps? What else would you like to know more about?

Expectations of marriage

- What do you expect to get out of marriage? What do you think it would bring you? Do you have any concerns?
- Who do you think you can turn to if you have problems in a marriage? (relatives? Religious leaders? Others?) Are there any services to support you in your family life?
- Do you think that there have been any changes in ideas/attitudes/customs around marriage from the time of your mothers/grandmothers to today? If so, how and why? What were the drivers of change? What do you think about these changes?
- Do you expect your marriage to be the same as or different from the marriage of your mother? Please explain.

Special questions on children outside of marriage (Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?)

- Is it common for girls in your community to have children before they are married? Do you know of girls who have?
 - *Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?*
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
 - *Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?*
- What about the boys who father children outside of marriage? How are they usually viewed? What do they usually do? Do they take responsibility for them?
- Which do you think would be worse for you - getting married at a very early age or getting pregnant without being married?

Education for girls.

- If you went to school, tell us about your schooling experience.
 - *Where? When? For how long? Did you stop? Why did you stop? How did you react? Would you have liked to have continued? What was/is positive? What was/is challenging?*
- Do school experiences vary for boys or girls? If so, how and why?
 - *Attitudes/treatment by teachers; attitudes of parents; length of schooling; time for homework; school environment/facilities; getting to school – distance/transport*
- Have you been influenced by any particular role models? E.g. teachers, older sisters, successful business women, community leaders.
 - *How?; In what way?; How did this change your perspective as to what you could be?; Relationships with others etc...*
- Do you think that going to school / not going to school will have an influence on your later life?
 - *Material; psycho-emotional; intellectual; social capital*
- Do you think that ideas/attitudes/customs around girls' education have changed since *over time (since your mother's/grandmother's time)*? If so, how and why?
 - *What were the drivers of change? What do you think about these changes?*

Intersections between marriage and education for girls [integrate into the above, if easier. Probe perceptions of change over time...]

Today

- Is an 18-yr-old girl likely to be in school or married? What are the advantages/ disadvantages? Have things been changing over time and if so how?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who had any experience of this?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated? If so why/why not? Has this been changing?
- Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? In what way? For the girl? For the boy?
- Do you think that being more educated will make you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [for example....]
- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

1.6 Marriage Networks

INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents:

- Start with girl and husband as the centre of analysis (Questions A). Then interview the parents and in-laws (Questions B); also include at least 1 paternal aunt (Questions C)

Thematic focus

- Intra-household relations including power relations and decision-making
- Views and expectations of marital roles and responsibilities
- Sources of support for married girls

Materials required:

- Flip chart and markers

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO COLLECT ON THE NETWORK

- Date _____ Location _____:
- Names of full network.
 - Girl _____ Husband _____
 - Girl's mother _____ Girl's father _____
 - Boy's mother _____ Boy's father _____
 - Paternal aunt _____

Notes on the process: Any challenges in identifying/locating/interviewing the different members of the marriage network? Did they live in different communities/areas?

A. QUESTIONS FOR THE GIRL AND HER HUSBAND (marriage network)

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on the girl and her husband

- Name _____ Relation (husband or wife) _____
- Age: _____
- Residence _____
- Ethnic group _____ Religion _____
- When married (age/date)? _____
- Any children? How many/gender and ages? _____
- Residence after marriage (with parents/parents-in-law/ on their own (specify if same or different village) _____
- Current household living arrangements (extended or nuclear family; who lives in the household?) _____
- Schooling: In school? Level? If left when and why (age/level)? _____ How did you feel about it at the time?
- What level of education do your siblings have? If dropped out did brothers/sisters leave school at the same age/grade? If different, why? _____
- Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not? _____
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____

Views on marriage and childbearing

- What type and form of marriage did you have? [customary/religious/civil; monogamy/polygamy]. How did you feel about this and why? Were the views the same as your parents? If no, how was this difference resolved?
- Was your marriage arranged or did you choose your partner? What are your feelings about this? Was your opinion sought? Is this the same as or different from your parents?
- Did anyone provide you with any information, instructions or physical preparation for marriage before you were married? Please explain. Are these preparations the same as in your parents' time?
- What did you or family have to prepare for your marriage – e.g. bride-wealth/goods? How did this make you feel? Is there any change in this practice from your parents' time?
- How is life different for you now vs unmarried peers or relatives? How do you feel about these differences?
- Did your marriage have any impact on your education/schooling? In what way?
- Has anything about your education had any impact (positive/negative) on your marriage?
- What did you expect from married life? What has really happened? Has marriage fulfilled your aspirations or not? How/why?
- What is the biggest change being married has made in your life?
- Do you have children? (how many/ages/gender)
- How many children are you expected to have? How many would you like to have?
- Does it matter if girl or boy?
 - To you? To your husband/wife? To your parents? To your in-laws?
- What would happen if you don't have children?
- Do you (your wife) have access to SRH services? Do you (your wife) use them now/before marriage? Why/why not?
 - For girl: What does your husband or in-laws think about this?
 - For boy: What do you think about this?
- If you have a child, did you (your wife) give birth in hospital or home? Were there any complications?
- What are your hopes and worries for your family currently and for the future?
- Do you think your marriage is different from your parents? In what way and how?

Intra-hh power relations/decision-making

- How would you characterise your experience as a married woman/man?
 - What is expected of you?
 - By mother in law /father in law?
 - By your own mother/father?
 - By your husband/wife?
 - What do you feel about those expectations?
 - Is it difficult or easy to meet those expectations?
 - What happens if you don't meet these expectations?
- Who is considered the head of your household?
 - What roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority does that person have?
 - What resources are under that person's control?
- What roles, responsibilities or decision-making authority do you have? What resources do you have control over?
- Do you think your experience within your married household is common around here? Why/why not?
- Do you think these roles and relations in the household have changed over time?
- Have household living arrangements (ie who is living together in the household) changed over time?

Time use chart

Ask the husband and the wife to draw a pie chart indicating how they spend their time on different activities; then discuss the difference and the implications.

- How would you describe an ideal wife/husband?
(A good/bad wife is/does _____; A good/bad husband is/does _____)

Sources of support

- On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being very unhappy and 10 being very happy, where would you put yourself and why?
- In many households there are tensions/ differences between household members at different times. Does this happen here and if so between whom? How are the tensions manifested – does this ever result in violence? If so how do you deal with this situation? Do you feel you have adequate support?
- What links, if any, do you have with your natal family (mother/father/siblings)? If so, with whom, how, how frequently? Would you like more or less contact or ok with the status quo?
 - For girl: What links, if any, do you have with your paternal aunt? If so, with whom, how, how frequently? Would you like more or less contact or ok with the status quo?
- What links, if any, do you have with your childhood friends/ friends from natal residence? If so, with whom, how, how frequently? Would you like more or less contact or ok with the status quo?
- What is your main source of psycho-emotional support?
- What kinds of additional forms of support/programmes of support do you think would be useful to you to support you in your family life? (Include all forms of support – psycho-social/legal/education/economic...).

B. QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND PARENTS-IN-LAW (Marriage network)

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____
- Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on mother; father; mother-in-law; father-in law

- Name _____ Relation (girl's father/mother; boys' father/mother) _____
- Age _____ Religion _____ Ethnic group _____
- Current marital status _____ When married (age/date)? _____

- What type/form of marriage? (monogamy/polygamy; civil/religious/customary/ cohabitation)
- How many children? Ages? Where living?
- Residence pattern after marriage?
- Current household living arrangements: extended or nuclear family (who lives in the household)
- Schooling? If left when and why? What were your feelings at the time?
- Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not?
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)?

Themes to focus on with parents and parents-in-laws

Their own marriage

- Tell us a little about your married life? How would you characterise your experience as a married woman/man?
 - What was expected of you? (at first/over time?)
 - By mother-in-law/father-in-law?
 - By your own mother/father?
 - By your husband/wife?
 - How did you feel about those expectations?
 - Was it difficult or easy to meet those expectations?
 - What happened if you didn't meet these expectations?
- Who was/is considered the head of your household?
 - What roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority does/did that person have?
 - What resources are/were under that person's control?
- What roles, responsibilities or decision-making authority do/did you have? What resources do/did you have control over?
- Do you think your experience within your married household is common around here? Why/why not?
- Do you think these roles and relations in the household have changed over time?
- Have household living arrangements (i.e. who is living together in the household) changed over time?
- How would you describe an ideal wife/husband?

Their view on their daughter/son's marriage

- What are your hopes for your children's marriage?
- How was the partner selected – and what criteria led to the choice or acceptance of the choice?
- Did you and your child agree on this?
- Would the decision have been different if it were a son/daughter?
- Did you and your spouse agree? Why /why not?
- What do you think about the ages at which your daughter/daughter-in-law was married?
- What preparations [economic, information, guidance, skills training] were entailed in the marriage transaction? What did you think about this? Did it go as expected? How is this similar or different to your day?
- What are your views and expectations about the spouse? Are they being realised?
- Were there trade-offs with the daughter/daughter-in-law's schooling? What were your feelings about that? Satisfied/regrets?
- What are your expectations of your daughter/ daughter-in-law / son/ son-in-law?
 - Economic support; care work; psycho-emotional support; reproduction – children; community standing; social capital
- What are your expectations for grandchildren?
 - How many? Grandsons vs granddaughters? Care expectations? What happens if the couple doesn't have any?
- Do you know of any problems or tensions in the marriage/ tensions (of your children)
 - What kinds? What do you do? What do you counsel your children to do? Are there support structures?
- Frequency of interaction between parents and married daughter?

- What do you think would be good to have as programmes of support for married couples (man/woman) (include all forms of support – psycho-social/legal/economic/educational.... etc.)

C. QUESTIONS FOR THE PATERNAL AUNT (marriage network)

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on the paternal aunt (in addition to general ones at outset)

- Name _____ Relation (paternal aunt) _____
- Age _____ Ethnic group _____ Religion _____
- Residence (place) _____ Household (living with whom?) _____
- Marital status/ and type/form _____
- Any children? How many/boys/girls ages? _____
- Schooling? _____
- Occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____
- Occupation (subsistence/income etc) of husband (past/present) _____

Themes to explore

Marriage and education

- Can you tell us a little about your marriage?
 - Age at first marriage
 - What type/form
 - Preparations for marriage
 - Residence pattern on marriage
 - Age at birth of first child
 - Expectations of marriage vs realities
- What do you feel about
 - Different kinds of marriage contract: bride wealth? polygamy? unmarried girls having children?
- Do you see any changes in the way marriage is practiced in this community? What changes and why? What do you think about these changes?
- What do you think the appropriate age of marriage is (for girls/boys)?
- Which is worse: getting married early or having a child without being married?
- What makes the ideal husband/wife?
- What do you think about education for girls?
 - Until what age should girls remain in school? Until what age do girls in this community usually stay in school? Has this been changing over time?
 - Is education considered more important for boys than for girls? If so, why? What do you think?
 - What has been the effect of education for girls and marriage? (positive and negative; age at marriage)
- Do you think educated girls/boys make better marriage partners?

Role of paternal aunt in marriage preparation

- What is the role of the paternal aunt in the life of her niece?
 - Is this role important only during marriage processes or does it go beyond that?
 - Why is the paternal aunt so important?
 - What happens if a girl does not receive preparations from her paternal aunt?
 - Are there any changes over time?
- Can you describe your role as paternal aunt for your niece?
 - Before, during and after the marriage process?
 - What was expected of you with your niece?
 - What did you do? What kinds of information did you give? How did you prepare for this?

- What are the benefits to the girl?
- What did you gain out of this?
- Were there any challenges in this role?
- Do you have other nieces for whom you fulfil the same role?
- Do boys have similar relatives who perform functions of preparing them for marriage?
- If you have a daughter – did you provide her with pre-marriage information, or was that provided by her own paternal aunt?
- Do girls get sexual and reproductive health information from any other sources, besides the paternal aunt?
 - From whom and what do you think about it?
- What kind of additional services do you think girls need to help them in their marriage and family life?

1.7 Case studies (typical cases and outliers)

INSTRUCTIONS

Respondents

- Girls/ young women aged between 16-25 years. The below are examples rather than exhaustive...
Apparently positive
- Girls with tertiary education – e.g. from the community but could be residing elsewhere now such as capital cities
- Girls who are married but continued with their education
- Girls who have a child but continued with their education
- Girls with a successful business /income-generating opportunity
- Girls who proactively escaped early marriage
- Girls who entered into love marriages /relationships

Apparently negative

- Girls who were married early [and willingly] and have very constrained life opportunities
- Unmarried girls who had a child early and have very constrained life opportunities
- Girls who dropped out of school early or who never had an education (e.g. housemaid)
- Girls who were married early but unwillingly but gave in due to social norms
- Girls who were trafficked or forced into marriage
- Divorced/separated/widowed/abandoned girl
- Girls who were married at a young age as a second/third etc wife into polygamous households

Thematic focus

- Examples of adolescents would fall at one end of the spectrum or the other (full compliance/non-compliance/transformation)
- Perspectives on these situations (feelings about; reasons for; consequences of...); available sources/programmes of support; recommended additional support needed

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers; tape; pins; drawing table

BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO COLLECT

- Date _____ Location _____:
- Name _____ Age _____.
- Case study type _____
- Current Residence (place) _____ household (with whom?) _____
- Education _____
- Marital status/children _____
- Ethnicity _____ Religion _____
- Parents' marital status/residence _____

- Parents' main occupation/livelihood (mother/father) _____
- Current livelihood (herself/ her husband, if applicable) _____

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Note: Describe why this girl was selected for a case study: ie she is an example of _____

Warm-up: Timeline

Start by drawing a timeline of their life until now – divided by positive and negative experiences/key events and ask them to talk about their life history and how they evaluate it.

Themes to cover include [but as appropriate depending on girl in question]:

Life stages including positive and negative experiences

- Education
- Adolescent transition (e.g. menstruation, sexuality etc.)
- Marriage
- Pregnancy/childbirth
- Child rearing
- Family relationships and fortune/misfortunes
- Occupational/income-earning history
- Care work – within their natal home, marital home
- Health history
- Migration history

Informal and formal support

- Support people e.g. peers, friends / networks/ organisations
- Access to services (e.g. health, school, justice, credit/economic assets, legal aid)
- Access to media, technology, phones, internet and the role this has played in their life and wellbeing
- Role models; people they look up to; inspiring individuals (can be family, service providers, famous people)
- Recommendations for other types of support needed (psycho-social; legal; economic; information/education; other.....)

Assessing life quality – past, present and future

- Assessment of their life trajectory compared to siblings and/or others and drivers thereof
- Views on role that community and family attitudes/values/practices/beliefs have played in shaping or constraining their trajectories
- Aspirations and how they have evolved over the course of adolescence
- Aspirations for their own children/future offspring

Potential framework life history discussions

Work	
Sexual maturation/health	
school	
Home life	

Changes in:	Birth	five years	10 years	15 years	2010
Marriage					
Girls' education					

1.8 Key Informant Interview Guides

A. NATIONAL LEVEL

Date and place of interview: _____
 Name of key informant: _____ Gender: _____
 Ministry/Department /Agency/Institution: _____
 Function: _____
 Facilitator: _____
 Interview start: _____ End _____

Key categories of respondents;

- Government: Ministries of 1) Gender, community development and youth; 2) Education; 3) Health (SRH for adolescents); other?
- Development partners: UN (UNICEF and UNFPA); DFID; other bilateral...key international NGOs (Plan, World Vision; others?)
- Local NGOs/CSOs
- Academics : legal experts; others
- Religious authorities

Introductions:

Thank KI for taking the time to meet with us. Introduce team and explain research context (DFID-funded multi-year/multi country study). Follow up to year 1 research on broad capability domains for adolescent girls (results presented at national stakeholder meeting in August). Explain year 2 research aims: to explore in more depth social norms around early marriage (and different marriage forms/practices) and adolescent girls' capabilities – particularly in education. Year 2 will be looking at 2 different communities to try to understand change and persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage and education. Ultimate aim: to contribute to knowledge base to address discriminatory social norms in order to enhance gender justice for adolescent girls and young women.

Background information (will depend on respondent)

- Key programmes and policies respondent is involved in
- Overview of issues around young people in general, and adolescent girls in particular – what are the key challenges?
- What are some of the programmes underway to address these challenges?

Key questions to explore:²¹

- **Overview of marriage forms and practices that may inhibit adolescent girls' capabilities (*probe throughout for changes overtime*)**
 - Forms of marriage (monogamy; polygamy)
 - Type of marriage contract (civil, religious, customary)
 - Customary practices (arranged marriages; marriage by abduction);
 - Practice of bride price; age differential between husband and wife;
 - Women's roles/rights/responsibilities within marriage;

²¹ Precise questions and focus on the interviews will depend on the nature of key informant (role, specialty, etc.)

- Issues of consent to marriage; issues to do with the dissolution of marriage (divorce /widowhood /abandonment);
- Domestic violence...
- **Existence and scope of problem of early marriage in Viet Nam**
 - Is there a problem? At what age do girls normally get married? Does it vary from place to place? By ethnic group and/or religion? By urban/rural? At what age do you think girls should get married? Boys?
- **Causal factors for persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Why do girls continue to marry at early ages? How are social norms for early marriage enforced? Who is most responsible for keeping these norms alive? Are these factors different in different places?
- **Consequences of early marriage**
 - Educational / physical / psycho-social...
- **Changes in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Any changes over time? In particular regions? Urban/rural? How/where/why are norms and practices around early marriage changing?
- **Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth outside of marriage**
 - Is this a common problem in Viet Nam? Or is it rather rare? Does it vary from place to place? What factors lead to differences?
 - Has the situation been changing over time?
 - Is pregnancy/childbirth out of marriage accepted by the community (by families, by religious leaders, by others)
 - Existing laws, policies and programmes to address this.
 - What more needs to be done?
- **Laws/policies and programmes to address issues of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy (in particular) and gender equitable marriage practices (in general)**
 - Existing laws, programmes and policies? (Who is doing what? What seems to be working best? What are some of the key challenges?)
 - Recommended laws, programmes and policies? (What more is needed? Suggestions for moving forward)
- **Girls' education: progress and challenges**
 - Key issues in girls' education in Viet Nam today (Primary? Secondary? Tertiary?)
 - Factors contributing to progress in girls' education
 - Challenges to progress in girls' education
 - How are social norms around girls' education changing over time (or remaining the same)? (Does this vary from place to place? How/why?)
 - Any specific linkages between early marriage/girls' education (including drop-outs due to early marriage/pregnancy; lack of parental investment; parental desire for bride wealth...)
 - Existing laws/programmes/policies to promote girls' education (Describe progress and challenges)
 - Problems of gap between policies/programmes on paper and implementation on the ground
 - Recommendations on what more is needed to move forward on girls' education
- **Specific suggestions/recommendations for the research**
 - Other key issues to explore;
 - Further references/ and sources of information
 - Additional stakeholders/programmes/key informants
 - Particular information re: Ha Giang, Meo Vac

B. DISTRICT/SUB-DISTRICT LEVEL

Date/place of interview: _____

District/Sub-district/Parish: _____

Name: _____ Gender _____

Ministry/Department /Agency/Institution: _____

Function: _____

Facilitator _____

Time: Start: _____ End _____

Key categories of respondents

- Local government representatives (LC; technical departments such as Gender, CD, Youth; other)
- Teachers, health workers, community development workers, child protection officers, police, justice officials
- Religious leaders
- Cultural leaders
- Other elders, including women's group leaders
- CSOs, NGOs, project personnel

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Background issues on district/locality

- Population; main sources of livelihood; religions; ethnic groups;
- Services (schools/training institutes; health structures; social centres; commercial centres)
- Overview of issues around youth/young people
- Overview of key issues around gender

Key questions to explore:²²

- **Basic forms of marriage and marriage practices that might have implications for girls:**
 - Forms of marriage (monogamy; polygamy);
 - Type of marriage contract (civil, religious, customary);
 - Customary practices (arranged marriages; marriage by abduction);
 - Practice of bride price; age differential between husband and wife;
 - Women's roles/rights/responsibilities within marriage;
 - Issues of consent to marriage; issues to do with the dissolution of marriage (divorce/widowhood/abandonment);
 - Domestic violence...
 - Probe in particular on issues around the proposed reform of Marriage and Divorce Bill
- **Existence and scope of problem of early marriage in Mayuge (*Mayuge in general – at district level; and specific communities at sub-district level*)**
 - Is there a problem? At what age do girls normally get married? Does it vary from place to place? By ethnic group and/or religion? By urban/rural?
- **Causal factors for persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Why do girls continue to marry at early ages? How are social norms for early marriage enforced? Who is most responsible for keeping these norms alive? Are these factors different in different places?
- **Consequences of early marriage**
 - Educational/physical /psycho-social....
- **Changes in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Any changes over time? In particular areas/communities? Urban/rural? How/where/why are norms and practices around early marriage changing?
- **Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth outside of marriage**
 - Is this a common problem in Vietnam? Or is it rather rare? Does it vary from place to place? What factors lead to differences?
 - Has the situation been changing over time?

²² Exact questions and focus will depend on the key informant (role, specialty, etc.)

- Is pregnancy/childbirth out of marriage accepted by the community (by families, by religious leaders, by others)
- Existing laws, policies and programmes to address this.
- What more needs to be done?
- **Laws/policies and programmes to address issues of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy outside of marriage (in particular) as well as gender equitable marriage practices (in general)**
 - Existing laws, programmes and policies
 - At national level
 - Implementation at local level (Who is doing what? What seems to be working best? What are some of the key challenges?)
 - Recommended laws, programmes and policies (What more is needed? Suggestions for moving forward)
- **Girls' education: progress and challenges**
 - Key issues in girls' education (Get details on education statistics/infrastructure/enrolments and any district-level reports available)
 - Factors contributing to progress in girls' education
 - Challenges to progress in girls' education
 - How are social norms around girls' education changing over in time (or remaining the same)? (Does this vary from place to place? How/why?)
 - Any specific linkages between early marriage/girls' education (including drop-outs due to early marriage/pregnancy; lack of parental investment; parental desire for bride wealth...)
 - Existing laws/programmes/policies to promote girls' education (Describe progress and challenges in implementation at local level)
- Recommendations on what more is needed to move forward on girls' education **Specific suggestions/recommendations for the research**
 - Other key issues to explore?
 - Further references/ and sources of information on Ha Giang/Meo Vac
 - Additional stakeholders/programmes/key informants?
 - Other?

1.9 Areas of inquiry

Use these themes as a background checklist, especially during training of the research teams to make sure important issues are captured. It doesn't have to be exhaustive but do try to get a rich complex picture of key concerns etc.

Broader context

Ideological dimensions/ context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion • Political ideologies • Ethnic identity • Socio-economic system • Social/community prestige [community pressure] • Patriarchy
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Marriage

Sub-themes	
Family codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family codes – formal (national laws) and informal • Inheritance laws and practices [including for widows] • Divorce – ease of / views about / consequences / conceptualisation thereof • Polygamy, monogamy • Civil, religious, customary • Cohabitation • Son preferences • Age of marriage [includes definitions of adolescence] / readiness for marriage

Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to family planning (practical and social) • access to justice [child support, divorce, abandonment]
GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marriage by abduction • partner age gaps
Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • virginity • value of fertility • knowledge brokers / aunties/ schools/ peers /media • honour/shame/chastity • Taboos about menstruation before marriage
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bride price • dowry • hope chests/preparation of goods... • inheritance • commodification of girls' labour • migration • son preference • economic security
Care economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender division of labour • expected roles of husband and wife – ideal vs reality • ritual privileging
Kinship and affinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residence patterns • Choice of spouse (parents vs girls; identifying partner and related processes) • Inheritance • Lineage/name
Psycho-emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affection vs indifference • Love vs hatred • Companionship vs loneliness/lack of communication • Protection /security vs fear • Happiness vs sadness/ depression • Respect vs lack of respect • Identity vs alienation • Belonging /inclusion/ vs isolation • Social acceptance vs stigma • [Positive deviance....]

Education

Supply		Demand	
Access to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance • Boarding schools • Safety/security/en route 	Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct • indirect [school donations, uniforms etc • opportunity costs –foregone child labour • extra-tuition
		Girls' mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • logistical • normative
Educational content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of curriculum • SRH curriculum • Textbooks – gender stereotypes • Ideologies – embedded in 	Gender division of labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time poverty • Son preference • Household chores

	curricula [moral/ etiquette/ natural laws of femininity] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifeskills • Gendered disciplines 		
Teacher/learning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination of girls • Discrimination of minority/socially excluded children • Female teachers; senior women teachers • Language of instruction • Class size • Performance/ assessment • Teacher favouritism • Teacher use of girls' vs boys' labour in classroom 	Household conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of light for study
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets /sanitation / menstruation facilities [access to pads/ napkins etc.] • School meals 	Family/peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic investment • Parental encouragement • Friends • Role models • mentors
Safety and security in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher violence / abuse • Student violence/bullying • Physical punishment 	Outcomes of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material • Perceived economic value • Opportunities post-education • Psycho-social • Aspirational • Status attached to education • Perceived psycho-emotional value – confidence, wellbeing, self-esteem, new horizons • Curiosity, questioning, understanding • Raised expectations • Intellectual ability • Higher capabilities • New knowledge • New information
Extra-curricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School clubs • Sports • Mentors • Career guidance • Participation in school governance 	Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical/ body • Early pregnancy • Menstruation • Sexuality • Body image / physical appearance • Psychosocial • Stigma re overage in school • Lack of sense of belonging in school environment • Mixed aged classes • Fears of scaring of prospective male partners... • Peer pressure

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Son preference
National policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory free education • Re-entry policies • Social protection related to education (stipends, cash, inkind transfers) • Mixed age 	Informal education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outside of school environment • Other sources of information • Learning family traditions/ skills etc.
Alternative education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonformal education • Religious education • Vocational education /training 		

1.10 Coding Matrix

Instrument

Location

Demographics

- Gender
- Age
- Education
- Married? If so, at what age.
- Household composition, with gender and age
- Occupation of HH members

Marriage Age Norms

- Normal age at marriage and thoughts as to why this age as opposed to another
- Changes to age norm?
- Changes attributed to?

Customs

- “Dating” or meeting?
- Whose chooses partner?
- Preparation for boy’s marriage
- Prep for girl’s marriage
- Details of ceremony
- Costs of marriage?
- Financial negotiation?
- Relationship between bride-price and education?
- Kidnapping/dragging incidence/exposure/stories?
- Divorce incidence/exposure/stories?
- Re-marriage incidence/exposure/stories?
- Treatment of children after re-marriage
- Spinsterhood
- Any notable generational differences in customs
- Drivers of generational shifts
- Any gender differences to highlight

Archetypes

- Good girl/daughter
- Good boy/son
- Good husband
- Good wife
- Good daughter-in-law
- Good son-in-law
- Good mother
- Good father

Marriage

- If married, what was “wanted” out of marriage? If unmarried—what is “wanted”?
- If married, has reality matched up?
- What do you want for your daughter/son out of marriage?
- GBV in HH?
- Thoughts re normalcy of GBV?
- Thought re causes of GBV/ generational shifts/solutions.

Education

- Thoughts on local demand for education
- Global thoughts on the advantages of education
- Thoughts on the irrelevancy of education
- Education costs/distance/local encouragement
- Gender add-ons
- Thoughts on the nexus of education and marriage—NOT age related
- Any noted relationship between education and the age of marriage

Fertility

- SRH contact/information
- Ideal family size/composition
- Who chooses?
- What if no kids?
- What if sex/pregnancy outside of marriage?
- Childbirth experiences

Forces supporting early marriage/restrictive norms

- Cultural beliefs
 - Re cultural cohesion—the “Hmong” way
 - Hmong interest in being NOT Kinh
 - Re girls’ role in terms of HH work
 - Re girls’ role in terms of marriage/reproduction
 - Re family honour and pre-marital sex
 - Re pride in being able to afford to marry son early
 - Re old age care and need to have children young
 - Re son preference in terms of the practical old age care that only sons can provide
 - Re son preference and education
 - Re son preference and lineage and custom
 - Re son preference and higher fertility
 - Re physical and social isolation of girls
 - Filial piety
- Agrarian reality and age of marriage

-
- Agrarian reality and fertility
 - Lack of questioning
 - Lack of information re laws
 - Fear of social sanctions for non-compliance
 - Rewards for compliance

Forces working for change

- Economic improvements
 - Technology
 - Infrastructure
 - Legal change
 - Top-down mobilisation (“carrot” oriented)
 - Top-down mobilisation (“stick” oriented)
 - Hmong mobilisation/snow-balling
 - Girl-driven (marriage too much work/clothes/adolescence is better than adult roles)
 - Role models
-
- Community support to be outlier
 - Rewards for becoming an outlier

Impact of social institutions

- Family structure
- Schools
- CSOs
- Local governance
- Government programming
 - Education
 - Health
 - GBV
 - Poverty

Impacts on capabilities

- Education
- Economic
- Physical
- Emotional
- SRH

Girl agency/decision-making stories

Services/knowledge wanted



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Photo 1: Group of school children, Dembashi Kebele, Amhara, 2013 – Nicola Jones, ODI
Photo 2: Dembashi agricultural environs, 2013 – Nicola Jones, ODI
Photo 3: Mothers' FGD, Demashi, 2013 – Nicola Jones, ODI
Photo 4: Inter-generational trio with men, fieldwork, Dembashi, 2013 – Nicola Jones, ODI
Photo 5: Adolescent girl, 15 years, Dembashi, 2013 – Nicola Jones, ODI

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ISSN: 2052-7209

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