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CULTURAL PRACTICES THAT AFFECTED THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN BENISHANGUL GUMUZ MANDURA WOREDA

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Cultural Practices that Affected the Status of Women In Benishangul Gumuz Mandura Woreda

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Abstract

This paper has the objective to assess the major cultural practices that affected the status of women in a society.

The research was conducted in one of the traditional societies in which gender inequality is highly prevalent, that is the Gumuz community in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State of Mundura Woreda. Both primary and secondary data were employed in this study. Qualitative method of in-depth interview, participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews and focused group discussion were utilized for primary data gathering.

Four kebeles' from the Woreda were selected purposively and a total of 57 respondents participated in this study. Men and women farmers, young girls, community elders, midwives, policeman, nurse and nun were included.

Findings of the study show that there are various cultural practices in Gumuz community that undermine the position of women in the society. Unfair sexual division of labor, lack of women's right to inherit property, various marriage practices, menstruation taboo, segregation of women during child delivery, food discrimination, son preference at birth, demanding greater number of children, domestic violence and sexual violence are the major cultural practices that put women at a lower status in Gumuz community. Furthermore, lack of awareness about the importance of family planning and girls' education is also another factor that puts women in a subordinate position.

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List of Acronyms

CRDA : Christian Relief and Development Association.

CSA: Central Statistical Authority.

ECSC: Ethiopian Civil Service Commission.

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

MOE: Ministry Of Education.

NCTPE: National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia

UNFPA: United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNU/INTECH: United Nations University Institutes for New Technology

WAO: Women Affair Office.

WHO: World Health Organization.

Chapter I

Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

The position of women in the world has claimed world wide attention in recent times. In all societies and spheres of activity, women are subjected to inequalities and discrimination, though the degree and extent varies from county to country and culture to culture.

Women are the majority of the world's poor, the economic and social gap between men and women remains unequal. Among 1.3 billion living in poverty in the world 70% are women. World wide women do not equally own, inherit or control property, land and wealth. They have limited ownership of income, property and credit. The existing poverty gap has been directly linked to the existence of different stereotypes, traditions and cultural practices exercised in the world (UNHCHR,1997).

Culture determines the power relations with in society in which men and male values have superior status over women and female values. In most societies there are cultural institutions beliefs and practices, that undermine women's autonomy and contribute to gender based discrimination. Every culture has its ways of valuing girls and boys, and assigns different patterns of behaviors, attitudes, roles, rights, responsibilities and expectations in the socialization process (Lindsey, 2005). Studies indicate that most cultures have their own examples of customs which reflect the "secondary status" of women. As Brettell and Sargent (2005: 86) has to say "***everywhere men have some authority over women that is they have culturally legitimated right to her subordination and compliance*".**

Universally, women are viewed as being closer to nature because of their reproductive function throughout the world, while men are linked with culture. The assumptions behind such thoughts have defined women in terms of largely maternal and domestic roles, while men have been defined as family bread winners and public agents. The confinement of women to the domestic sphere and care of children within the home, expresses their dependence on and subordination to the marriage contract. However, men's opportunity to access the public sphere lead their ability to hold the greater share of power and authority in all known cultures and societies (Linda and Rosemary, 1996).

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

Women make up to 40% of the world’s agricultural labor force, and in developing countries 67% of the agricultural work is done by women. But women are invisible farmers because of their farm work is consider not important. Women's work outside of the home for pay is segregated and subordinated. They work under quite different circumstances than men; women's rates of pay tend to be lower than those of men doing similar or comparable jobs (Seager, 2005).

Low percentages of women are found in the formal sector and they are highly concentrated in low paid production jobs. Women remain under represented in the highest paid, highest prestige sectors of the career ladders. Worldwide women hold only 10% to 20% of managerial and administrative jobs, less than 20% of jobs in manufacturing, only 10% of parliamentary seats and less than 5% of the world's heads of states (UNHCHR, 1997).

Women have less access to education and training opportunities as compared to men. Nearly a billion people of the world are illiterate and about two thirds of these are women (Segar, 2005). In most societies of Africa, the education of women is not considered as valuable. It is assumed that educating women would blemish the whole process of the tradition of socializing girls to be housewives. The assumption behind such thoughts is that if women become independent, they may not comply with socially and culturally accepted roles. In most societies, women are also assumed to be less intelligent and less competent than men. This false assumption reinforces the belief that education is not meant for women. Hence the participation of women in higher education particularly in the areas of engineering, architecture and medicine has continued to be very low. Therefore such field of specialization have been considered as 'male' fields (UNU/INTECH,1995).

The situation of women becomes the worse when we came to Africa, a continent where the majority of the people live in poverty. In various communities throughout Africa there exist cultural practices that advocate for the subordinate position of women. Women from infancy to adulthood are discriminated against in all aspects of life. Poor nutrition, violence, lack of education, early marriage, heavy work load and lack of control over resources are the major cultural practices that aggravate the subordinate position of women.

In Africa there are specific food taboos which are restricted for girls, pregnant and lactating women. Many of these foods are high protein sources which are very important for reproductive health. In most developing countries the average food in take of pregnant and lactating woman is far below that of the average male. It is a tradition that the best part of the meal goes to men and boys and the left over for girls and women. It is true that when the family is poor, girls and women do not get enough to eat. Studies indicate that 40% of the maternal deaths each year in developing countries result from poor nutrition among the majority of women (African Center for Women, 1997).

Early marriage is also another cultural practice that aggravates the subordinate position of women in most societies of Africa. Women in Africa tend to marry at the very young age of 16 or 17. It is believed that girl's main role in the society is to be a wife and mother, thus the sooner is the better for girls to get marry and achieve recognition in the community. This cultural practice limits women's future opportunities for education and other cash earning activities. In addition health complications that results from early marriage like risk of operative delivery, low weight and malnutrition are also other serious problems that most African women faced (Arkutu, 1995).

World wide, pregnancy related causes are the leading causes of illness and death in women aged 15 to 44. In Sub-Saharan Africa women face a 1 in 16 life time risk of dying from pregnancy related complications. Women have limited rights in determining of when and how many children to have. Every year 76 million unintended pregnancies occur in developing world (UNFPA, 2005).

The different violence committed against women and the girls are also other factors that undermines the status of women. In patriarchal societies it is the women who are more violated, compared to men because of the patriarchal notion that women are subordinated and inferior to men. The World Bank

estimates that rape and domestic abuse account for 5 percent of healthy years of life lost to women of reproductive age in developing countries (Delano,1998).

It is true in Ethiopia women are suffering from various traditional and cultural practices. The majority of Ethiopian people are living in rural areas with various cultural, traditional values, and beliefs that discriminate against women. Hence identifying the major cultural practices that aggravate the subordinate position of women is an issue that is going to be addressed in this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic society with diverse cultural and traditional practices. Some of these practices are beneficial to the maintenance and perpetuation of society as a whole. While others have long affected the livelihood and well being of its population particularly those of women and children.

Gender relations in Ethiopia are patriarchal and perpetuate a hierarchy where women are subordinated to men. In patriarchal societies men tend to have power over economic, political and reproductive aspects of life. Women on the other hand, are usually expected to be submissive, obedient and respectful of their husbands. The subordinate positions of women in Ethiopia are reflected with in the family and community as well as in all social, economic, cultural and political interactions and relationships (Eshetu, 2000).

The vast majorities of Ethiopian women live in rural areas, and disproportionately share the burden of poverty. Women have less access and control over productive resources such as land and credit. Agricultural

census study 2003 showed only 18.6 % of the land holders are women. Agricultural census survey data of 2001 also showed only 9% of women's had access to agricultural extension service and only 12% of women had access to credit from the agricultural center (WAO, 2005).

High proportion which is 65% of women in Ethiopia are concentrated in the informal sector and 26% of small scale manufacturing enterprises with low earning capacity (CSA, 2003). The low participation of women in the formal sector is attributed to low education and training opportunities. Women have less access to education and skill acquisition opportunities than men at all levels. In the year 2001/02 adult literacy for women was 34% against 49% for men and primary education was 77.4% for boys and 59.1% for girls. Data from preparatory program in the year 2002/03 showed only 27.4% were girls. Academic year 2003/04 for two/three year diploma program only 18.6% were women, post graduate masters degree programme only 6.8% were women(MOE, 2005)

Women's decision making abilities are also constrained by cultural, political and socio-economic dominance of men. Ethiopian women are under represented in the national and local assemblies and their participation in decision making is limited. For example, in the year 2005 women representation in house of people's representative and the regional levels was 21% and 12.5% respectively. Women do not occupy any key political position such as the rank of prime minister and other key executive positions. Among the total 18 minister's positions in 2005 women representation was only 1 (5.5%). This implies that, though some improvement has been made than before the most powerful position remains on the hands of men (GSI/AWPS, 2005).

The social-division of labor is assigned differently for men and women/for boys and girls. Women and girls are exploited in terms of unequal household

and agricultural work loads as compared to men and boys. In most societies of Ethiopia, women and girls take the major responsibilities of household maintenance and perform all domestic chores of fire wood collection, fetching water, doing agricultural work and food preparation. All of which require great deal of time and physical energy. Depending on the livelihood and culture, rural women in Ethiopia spend 13-17 hours a day in productive, reproductive and community activities (Desta, 1999).

The various traditional practices exercised in Ethiopia like early marriage, marriage by abduction, exchange marriage, inheritance marriage, female genital mutilation, menstruation taboo, food discrimination against women and segregation of women during delivery are the major subordinating factors of women (African Center for Women, 1997).

Women in Ethiopia have limited decision making powers in their reproductive health's and pregnancy related complications are serious problems. Ethiopia has one of the highest mortality rate in Africa, which is 870/100,000 live births (Meron, 2006).

In most societies of Ethiopia, marriage is arranged by the parents, particularly by fathers without the consent and knowledge of girls. Girls have no right and say about in mate selection and marriage arrangements of when and to whom they are going to be given (NCTPE, 2003).

Violence against women is also deep rooted in Ethiopian society and one of subordinating factor of women. Women and young girls experience various forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence that affects their health situation. But in most cases the violence committed to women are kept secret and not reported to legal bodies. A survey in all the region in Ethiopia except Gambella showed 2263 rapes and 507 abductions reported in one year

(1998) and among the 15,367 women aged 15 to 49 years covered in the survey 85% experienced husband's beating (WAO, 2005).

In general culture and traditional ideology has highly constrained women's empowerment not only in economic but also their participation in social, political, reproductive and sexual decision making power. Providing access to resources alone cannot be an assurance to women's empowerment. It requires transformation of ideology and the cultural role of women (Emebet, 1999).

Hence this study has been designed to study the major cultural practices that affected the status of women in Benshangul-Gumuz Mandura Woreda.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to identify the major cultural practices that affected the status of women in the study area.

Specific Objectives

- To provide an insight on cultural practices that determines the gender relation and gender based division of labor.
- To explore the right of women in the making and use of resources and the right to inherit economic assets.
- To examine the participation of women in the decision making process both at the family and community levels.
- To look into the attitudes of the society towards family planning.
- To explore the value of girls' education from the society's point of view.
- To assess the participation of women in marriage arrangements and
- To explore harmful traditional activities in the study area.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Women are half of the world's population and without their full participation in the development process, it is impossible to bring change. Therefore it requires transformation of the structures and systems which lie at the root of women's subordination and gender inequality. In this regard identifying cultural and traditional practices that have negative impact on women are essential to challenge the existing practices, and to bring social transformation in which women can take part on an equitable basis with men in all aspects of the development process. Hence this study is believed to be important in that it could help in the following ways.

1. This study can help development agents to shape their approach for the changing of the cultural role of women.
2. The recommendations drawn form the study can initiate policy makers to design policies that can tackle the existing cultural practices which undermine the status of women in the society.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

Because of time and resource limitation, it is practically difficult to study the cultural practices in all the Woreda of Benihangul Gumuz, Regional State. Hence the study is delimited to Mandura Woreda, mainly Gumuz people cultural practices that determine the subordinate position of women.

Chapter II

Overview of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Every culture consists of a set of patterns of behaviors that are contained in its social institution and within the personalities of individual. Culture is a social construction that provides guidelines for appropriate behaviors, social norms including those related to gender. Culture determines gender relations within a society, influencing roles and activities carried out by men and women. It also determines women's and men's access to and control over economic resources, and their ability to make decision at the family and community levels. Culture plays a significance role in the construction of gender inequality in which men have dominant power over different sphere of activity than women. Culturally, males are expected to be bread winner, aggressive, assertive, independent and competitive. On the other hand females are expected to be care giver, dependent, submissive, shy, calm, sensitive, quite and polite (Lindsey, 2005). Sweetman (1995:8) stressed: ***"Culture and gender are intertwined interdependent and mutually defining to a certain extent".***

Socialization is a life long process that transmits essential cultural elements to the next generation. It begins in early childhood in which boys and girls learn the appropriate behavior of their sex. Socialization shapes individuals patterns of behavior and mould one's personality ranging from tone of voice to physical chastisement. Through socialization an individual develops personalities, beliefs and cultural behavior of femininity and masculinity (Walby, 1990).

Family is the primary and most significance agent of socialization in which children develop what is expected of their sex. It is central to women's lives and determinative of gender inequality. Family is responsible in molding a child's behavior, personality, identity and attitudes about gender. Beginning in infancy parents socialize their sons and daughters differently. Boys are more oriented towards what they should not do rather what they should do (don't be sissy, don't cry etc.) and raised to be more independent. On the other hand girls are often told to be good mothers and wives (Lindsey, 2005).

Gender of the child is one of the predicates of how parents would behave toward their children. Studies indicate that a strong preference of sons can emerge from a variety of different cultural and historical experience. In patriarchal societies son preference is often institutionalized. This is mainly because in many societies the family linage is carried on through male children and the economic considerations, power and prestige are usually favor sons. In some societies son preference is expressed through sayings such as "**bringing up a daughter is like watering your neighbor's garden**", "**may you be the mother of 100 sons**", "**A son is your own; a daughter is someone else's**"(Arnold, 1997:2).

Researchers have found that, gender discrimination by parents begins on the day of the child's birth. Most ethnic groups of Ethiopia prefer boys to girls at birth and they welcome differently for baby boys and girls. For instance, if the new born baby is a boy guns are fired and (3-10 times) ululations declared to express their joy and happiness, whereas 3 ululations for a baby girl. Gender stereotypes and discrimination continue during early childhood and puberty. Both boys and girls are expected to develop sex roles at early stages. Boys are expected to be aggressive, courageous and help their father in hunting, farming and other activities that can prepare them for future adult lives and active role of men. On the other hand girls help their mothers in the domestic chores and taking care of younger siblings (Habtamu et al., 2004).

Message about masculine and feminine ideals are transmitted to both boys and girls through separate toys starting from early childhood. Toys and playing games are arranged differently for boys and girls. Usually little girls provided dolls, cradles, ironing boards, brooms and cupboards that inform them about domesticity. On the other hand boys are provides trucks, cars guns and more complex and expensive toys that encourage them self-reliance and problem solving. As Lindsey (2005:62) stressed:

> ***Gender socialization in early child hood helps boys develop "wings" which permit them to explore realms outside the home independent of adult supervision, whereas girls develop "roots" which tend to anchor them and keep them closer to home.***

Socialization process also continues in the school. School from nursery to college, teaches not only reading and writing but also different values, attitudes, expectation which is appropriate to the culture. The learning experience and the arrangement of both formal and informal is very different for females and males about what they may become, what they can expect of people in life, and what they can do and accomplish. The school system through its curriculum fosters gender stereotypes. School textbooks and teaching aids portrayed the stereotyped image of the activities of both children and adults, contributing to expectations of both present and future gender roles. Usually girls portrayed helping mothers with domestic chores while boys are engaged with helping fathers in manly activities. In school boys are encouraged to study science and technology to become doctors, managers, pilot's engineers etc. While, girls usually encouraged studying literature and skills to become secretary or clerks, hostess, nurse etc. (Ollenburg and Moore, 1998).

Therefore socialization is fundamental to women subordination in which cultural values and believe transferred from generation to generation.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

2.2.1 Sexual Division of Labor

Family also critical for the analysis of gender roles and relations and is the focal point of the sexual division of labor. Gender division of roles is assigned by each society in which women are engaged in reproductive activities in the private sphere whereas men are engaged in productive activities in the public sphere. According to liberal feminist analysis, sexual division of labor is not natural; it is the result of gender socialization process. Through social interaction one develops beliefs, values, customs and cultural behaviors of femininity and masculinity. In all societies certain tasks are predominantly or exclusively to women, others to men, while some may be done by both men and women. This culturally constructed division of women's role as mother and primary child care givers is a subordinating factor, as it confines their work into the domestic sphere limiting their potential for self development and self-realization. Because the nature of these activities of women work is socially under valued and sharply restrict women's ability to participate in cash earning activities (Weedon, 1997).

Reproductive Role

The culturally ascribed role of women as mothers and wives includes not only reproductive work of child bearing and rearing responsibilities but also, the daily of the labor force such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, firewood collection and so on. In most societies reproductive activities are placed up on the shoulders of women as the domain of domestic life. The relations between men and women in the domestic sphere are different and fundamental to gender subordination. Whether in nuclear or extended families, there are hierarchical relations characterized by men dominance and limit women to domestic lives. Though women spend considerable

amounts of time and energy working on reproductive activities, much of the household based activities are considered as natural for women and remained to be financially unrewarding and unrecognized. This lack of recognition for women's domestic work leads to dependency, less access to external sources of income and being dependent on household income (Cullagh et al., 1981). As (Walby, 1990:66) cited:

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

Productive Role

When women work outside of home they rarely have the same payment and recognition as men. Throughout the world the notion of women's work raises implications of low wages or non-wages associated with secondary status. Productive activities whether it is wage or non-wage women always get meager share of the benefits. They are engaged in productive work often as secondary income earners. Particularly in rural areas this usually takes the form or agricultural work. Feminist analysts argues that women are the invisible farmers but yet make up three-quarter of African agricultural labor force and half of the world's food produced by women (Ollenburger and Moor, 1998).

For instance women in Ethiopia are involved in a wide variety of economic activities and contribute a considerable share to the country's economy as whole and agricultural products in particular. Eighty seven (87%) of women in Ethiopia are involved in agriculture and contributing about 50% of agricultural income. Rural women participate in every aspects of farm

production including land cultivation, weeding, harvesting crops, storing and marketing grains. But little attention has been given to their contribution to enable them to benefit. This is also true in the case of urban women (Porter et al., 1999).

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

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

Community Role

In all known societies community functions are designed differently for women and men. Though both men and women are involved in community work, the visibility and rewards often favored men. Women's contribution associated with care taking and volunteer works to keep people and society alive and well functioning include such ceremonies as involving celebrations of birth, marriage, spiritual and socio-cultural happenings and mobilization of local resources, whereas men's participation in community involve taking positions as leaders, chairmen and representatives with the possibility of promotion in economical, political, social and religious arena (Moser, 1993).

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

2.2.2 Property Ownership

Property ownership determines the social relations between men and women. It is a source of power in a society that plays significant roles in differentiating members of a society in the process of policy and decision making. As Marxists argue, the degree of access to and control over resources within a society determines the sources of power. Having the means of production is the source of all forms of power that provides economic, socio-cultural and political status and prestige. The social inequality between men and women mainly arises from unequal access to means of production such as land and credit. Women’s relation to property and land is socially constructed and is discriminated on the basis of sex in which men have

greater access to property than women. Women in the world lack numerous benefits that come with ownership and control of property and land (Shortall, 1999).

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.3 Marriage as Subordination of Women

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

The ground rules of marriage in Victorian culture and described women's subordination in the role of wife. One of the fundamental inequalities of women in the marriage contract is the hard manual and physical work women are engaged in the domestic and private sphere. The rationale behind a husband as head of the household further emphasized the economic dependency of a wife in which women are expected to be obedience, submissive, subordinate and conforms to her husbands' interests. The economic dependency among most women is one of the main subordinating factors that make a wife stay under marriage whether it is satisfactory or not. This is because the economic cost of marital dissolution is greater for women than men. Thus life long fidelity and parenthood remains to be the sole responsibility of a wife and subordinating factor in the marriage contract (Bernard, 1991).

There are several types of marriage reflecting the diversity of the social institution in various parts of the world. Monogamy is a marriage of one man to one woman and the most common form of marriage in any class or society. Mostly such marriage practices occur through religious and the individual preference in engaging. Polygamy is a marriage of more than one spouse and it is illegal in many parts of the world. Such practice occurs in most African states and parts of Asia and the Middle East. Polyandry marriage is a system

in which a woman may get married more than one husband, whereas polygyny marriage is sharing of a husband with one or more wives. Polygyny, marriage is advantageous for men in terms of economic, social prestige and political power. In African societies having several wives helps a man to acquire more wealth and social prestige. Most women are high contributor to the production of wealth and income to their family. For instance, in Africa women are engaged in variety of economic activities, including land preparation, sowing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, storing and marketing. The same is true in the case of royal family where multiple marriages can extend political alliances and followers (Hunter, 1995).

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

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

their partner. In Africa marriage represents not only the relationship between individuals but also between two families and kinship (Hunter, 1995).

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

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

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

good wives and good mothers. It is more unaccepted if a woman over matures before marriage (Hunter, 1995).

2.2.4 Marriage Practice in Ethiopia

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

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

According to research made by Abeya Iffa in 2001, there are five types of marriage practices identified in the Gumuz community of Dedesa valley. It includes exchange marriage, kidnapping, elopement, inheritance and bride wealth. Exchange marriage is the dominant practice in which fathers or

elders play key role in the exchange process. Gumuz society is patrilineal and patrilocal family and power is mainly maintained through the father. A married woman is expected to stay in her husband's residence and carries out a heavy work load not only for her husband but also her mother in law.

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

Early Marriage

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

Early marriage is also a norm in most communities where virginity is highly required and pre marital sex is a taboo. In most societies, virginity is considered as a sign of purity and honor. A new bride expected to be virgin in her first marriage contract. For example, in most societies of Ethiopia culture dictates that women are expected to be virgins before marriage. Pregnancy before marriage is considered as an offense and a big shame to the family. A single woman who is not virgin on her wedding night may be not only beaten by her husband but also face the risk of being sent back to her family. Then

the bride's payment is given back to husband's family. Hence the high value given to virginity exposes girls to marry at an early age, to reduce the threats of loss virginity before marriage and premarital pregnancy (NCTPE, 2003).

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

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

Marriage by Abduction

Marriage by abduction is one of the female's subordinating cultural practices. It is a forced marriage without the consent of the girl and her parents. Usually abduction takes place when a girl is going to market, school or to visit relatives. The man who abducts the girl will force her into sexual intercourse against her will. The abductor may be someone whom she knows already or totally strange to her. After abduction takes place the abductor in

the traditional sense sends elders to the girls' family for reconciliation and recognition of the marriage. Usually the family's consent to the abductor's pleaded for reconciliation and marriage is agreed up on receiving a compensation of bride wealth. It is believed that in a society where virginity is highly valued, a girl who has lost her virginity would be socially unacceptable and discriminated for future marriage to somebody else (WHO, 2007).

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

2.2.5 Menstruation taboo

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

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

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

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

2.2.6 Food taboo

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

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

Nutritional taboos and the restriction of pregnant women from consuming certain kinds of food which is usually rich in the required nutrients leads to the low nutritional status among most women and put them at high risk of material death. Low body weight, iron deficiency and anemia are one of the main causes of death in case of hemorrhage during labor, and it is common

among women in developing countries. For instance in Ethiopia, the mean height of women is only 156cm, indicating severe past malnutrition, and puts women at high risk in delivery, and 30% of non pregnant women have a body mass index less that 18.5, which indicates serious chronic energy deficiency (NCTPE,2003).

2.2.7 Traditional Delivery Practice

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

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

There are harmful and complicated delivery practices exercised in different ethnic group of Ethiopia. It includes massaging the abdomen before and during delivery, shaking a woman in prolonged labor, isolation during delivery and after delivery, suturing the vagina after delivery, drastic measures to hasten the expulsion of the placenta, inducing sneezing to force

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

2.2.8 Culture and Violence

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

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

Control of women's sexuality is a part of a culture and means of social domination that perpetuate male dominance. Feminist analysts identify that sexual violence against women is an extension of normative male behavior that defines the traditional male sex role. Many men feel that it is necessary to commit a sexually aggressive behavior to ensure their dominance and keep women under their control (Bart and Moran, 1993).

Chapter III

Research Methodology

3.1 Methodology

The study focuses on identifying the cultural practices that determine the subordinate position of women. To achieve the objectives of the study I used qualitative research methods. Such methods are helpful in obtaining a closer investigation and it is appropriate in order to listen to what people have to say about their real lives: as a matter of fact the potential for listening is a major advantage of the qualitative method over the quantitative one.

I chose Mundura Woreda as my research site because of my familiarity with the area and because I had the opportunity to observe their traditional society in which gender inequality is highly prevalent. In addition the Gumuz people live in a peripheral area of the country where they receive little attention from the government, NGO's as well as researchers.

3.2 Sampling

Using purposive sampling, four kebeles were selected namely: Duchalumbia, Gidmdalif, Tunidadush and Dehagobesh. The reason was that in those kebeles there are a high number of Gumuz compared to other kebeles.

The total respondents who participated in the study were 57. The women and men respondents were selected randomly. Twenty (20) women farmers and 8 men farmers were involved in the in-depth interview. More number of women respondents are included since the women respondents are the focus of the study. Particular respondents were systematically selected to illustrate cases. Nine men community elders, 8 men farmers and 9 women farmers including

midwives were selected based on their position and status in the community and involved in the focus group discussion. Furthermore key informants such as, policeman; nurse and nun were also selected purposively. This helped the researcher to acquire a variety of responses which is useful in reaching the general and specific objectives of the study.

3.3 Data Gathering Instruments

Primary and secondary data were employed. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions were employed to collect primary data. Moreover literature reviews, books, magazines and related researches were also used as secondary sources of data for the study.

Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted to have an insight on the situation and the status of women in the study area. The researcher participated in the routine life and different practices of people. Fortunately the researcher was already familiar with the people in different project activities. It was not so difficult to involve in the culture, daily activities and the context. There was time the researcher attended coffee ceremonies, markets, funerals, feasts and cultural ceremonies. Participating in social activities was considered very important in order to create closeness and familiarity. The researcher as a participant observed and collected field notes on the actual activities of the people. These include: division of labor, decision making and their way of participating in different cultural and traditional ceremonies. This approach helped the researcher to engage in more open informal discussions and obtain information about the attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts of the society in many aspects of women's life.

In depth interview

Interviews were held for both men and women farmers. A total of 28 respondents (20 females and 8 males) were selected randomly based on the list of name found in the four kebele's. Guiding questions were prepared and interviews conducted in the mother tongue of the Gumuz with the assistance of a translator. The respondents were asked both general and specific questions with the aim of getting information about cultural practices and their relations with women subordination.

Furthermore, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were also conducted with key informants to get detailed information about women in the Woreda. Concerning the issue of violence against women, an interview was conducted with a policeman. A nun and a nurse who work in a clinic were also interviewed about women's reproductive health related issues.

Focus group discussion

Three focus group discussions were conducted with 9 men community elders, 9 women farmers including mid wives and 8 male farmers. These groups were approached because they have a significant role to play in the cultural and traditional practices, plus this approach helped to compare the information with the data obtained through in-depth interviews.

3.4 Data Analysis

In organizing the primary data, I read thoroughly the written information obtained from observational notes, interviews, focus group discussion and documents that are helpful for the study. Furthermore, I listen again and again the recorded information obtained for the study.

In analyzing the data information were grouped into themes based on the general and specific objectives used in the study. Specific data were analyzed in tabular presentation to make the findings simple and more readable. Descriptive method was used that is narrative explanation, illustration of cases and summarization of the findings. Finally all the data were organized and incorporated in the final research report.

Chapter IV

Findings and Interpretation

4.1 Background of Study Area

Benishangul-Gumuz is one of the 11 National Regional States Administrative Region of Ethiopia. It is close to 752 km from Addis Ababa. It covers an area of 49,289.46 sq. km. The Region is divided into three zones namely: Metekel, Assosa, and Kamashi. Metekel zone consists of seven Woreda, while Assosa and Kamashi comprise eight and five Woredas, respectively.

This study focused on Mandura Woreda which is part of Metkel zone. It covers an area of 1003.76 sq.km. bordering Amahara region in the East, Bulen and Dagur Woreda in the West. The central town of the woreda is Gilgel Beles. Three ethinic groups: Gumuz, Agao, and Amahara inhabited the Woreda. The Woreda has sixteen kebeles and one hundred eleven villages. According to 1997 Ethiopian Calender. Benishangul-Gumuz Regional Statistics, there are 4266 households with a total population of 29,970.

The altitude of this Woreda is 1000m to 1500m sea level. The annual rain fall varies between 1,200mm and 1390mm and temperature oscillates from 18^0c to 38 ^{0}c. The common types of crops in the Woreda are millet, maize, chick bean and teff. Vegetables like tomato, cabbage, paper, carot and oil seeds are also common.

4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

Table one: Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	Age level of Respondents						Total
	16-26	**27-37**	**38-48**	**49-59**	**60-70**	**71-81**	
Male	3	5	11	2	2	3	**26**
Female	4	7	6	7	4	3	**31**
Both sex	**7**	**12**	**17**	**9**	**6**	**6**	**57**
Religion							
Sex	**Orthodox**	**Catholic**	**Traditional**		**No religion**		**Total**
Male	-	3	17		6		**26**
Female	1	6	24		-		**31**
Both sex	**1**	**9**	**41**		**6**		**57**
Educational Status							
Sex	**Illiterate**	**Primary**	**Secondary**		**College**		**Total**
Male	6	19	1		-		**26**
Female	27	2	-		2		**31**
Both sex	**33**	**21**	**1**		**2**		**57**
Marital Status							
Sex	Single	Married	Widowed		Divorced		**Total**
Male	4	22	-		-		**26**
Female	6	18	7		-		**31**
Both sex	**10**	**40**	**7**		-		**57**

Of the total 57 respondents, the youngest respondent was 17 while the oldest was 74. Concerning the religious situation of the respondents the majority followed traditional beliefs, some followed the Christian religion (mainly Catholic) and some others had no religion.

In relation to education, most men farmers were primarily level and the maximum education level is grade 8, whereas almost all of women farmers were illiterate. Among the key informants the maximum educational level was diploma holder and the minimum was grade 10.

Most of the respondents were married, some were widows but inherited and some others were single. The age of the first marriage varied among the respondents. Most women respondents get married after their first menstruation (on average between 12 and 13 years old), whereas for the men the first marriage is between 16 and 20 years old. All the respondents got married through exchange marriage contracts. Most married men respondents had more than one wife, while all married women respondents had only one husband.

Concerning the number of children, women respondents had a minimum of 3 children and a maximum of 12, while men farmers had a minimum of 2 children and a maximum of 15.

The main source of income is farming and most of the respondents had no regular monthly income but this depended on the amount of grain and agricultural products they sold at market days. Almost all respondents replied that men are the bread winners of the family.

4.3 Sexual Division of Labor

Sexual division of labor is a socially constructed pattern that reflects the type of social interaction in that society. It also reflects the major role and responsibilities among males and females, the type of livelihood and the level of development. Like most Ethiopian communities the Gumuz have their own patterns of division of labor. The heavy work load in Gumuz communities concentrates mainly on women. Women in Gumuz perform most of the key reproduction, production and community functions in their respective communities.

According to the findings from in-depth interviews and participant observations, most women spent much of their energy and time in domestic and field works compared to their male counterparts. Below are the essential activities examined with respect to gender among Gumuz communities.

Table Two: Reproductive Work

Activities	**Female**	**Male**	**Periodicity**	**Time spent**
Preparation of food	✓	-	Daily	2-3 hrs/day
Firewood collection	✓	-	Daily	2-5hrs/day
Fetching water	✓	-	Daily	½ to 2 hr/day
Washing clothes	✓	✓	Weekly	2-4 hrs/week
Cleaning the house	✓	-	Daily	½ to 1 hr/day
Caring of babies	✓	-	Daily	The whole day
Grinding grains	✓	-	Three times a week	2-3 hrs/day
Health care & maintenance of the family	✓	✓	Daily	-

The preparation of food is generally the responsibility of women and young girls in Gumuz communities. The minimum time spent for food preparation per day is 2 hours and the maximum 3 hours. In Gumuz society the staple food prepared for consumption is porridge with a flat bread and *Borde* for drinking.

Firewood collection is the responsibility of only women; most of the respondents collected it from the forest on a daily basis. The minimum time spent for wood collection is 2 hours per day and the maximum is 5.

Fetching the water is also the responsibility of women: most of the respondents used to collect water from rivers and ponds and some also purchased it from water vendors. Those who collected from rivers and ponds spent 1 to 2 hour per day while those who purchased it from water vendors spent 30 minutes per day.

Washing clothes is another main responsibility of women. Women are responsible to wash the clothes of the family members at least once in a week and they spend from 2 hours to 4 hours per week. Men sometimes wash clothes, but only their own ones.

Cleaning the house usually takes from 30 minutes to 1 hour every day and it is always part of the responsibilities of the women.

Grinding grain is another responsibility of the women. Most respondents use manual grinding for their house hold consumption. They grind at least three times in a week and they spend on average 2-3 hours, depending on the amount of the grain. Some respondents use also grinding mills particularly when there is feast and festivities and the amount of grain is too much.

Caring for babies and younger siblings is also one of the main responsibilities of mothers and daughters. As I observed most mothers in the study area carry a small baby on their back while they go to fetch water and wood and even when they go to the market (see picture 3).

Though both men and women are responsible for the health care and maintenance of the family, usually women are the ones highly suffering when the health of any family member is affected. Respondents replied that though men are sharing the feeling and suggesting ideas, the actual treatment and caring of patients remain the main responsibility of women.

The above description clearly shows that women are responsible for almost all the reproductive activities. They spend much of their time in back breaking domestic chores since most of these activities have to be carried out on a daily basis. Men spend few hours on reproductive activities, because as it is mentioned before they are sometimes involved in the washing of clothes, health care and maintenance of the family.

As it is mentioned in the literature part, gender relation and division of labor between men and women are one of the fundamental factors for women subordination since women cannot find enough time and energy for self realization and development.

Productive Activities

The Gumuz community predominantly bases its livelihood on agricultural activities mainly depending on hoe (manual) cultivation. They also practice fishing and hunting and moreover they eat roots and vegetables. Unlike other communities of Ethiopia, the Gumuz are not cattle raisers. Most respondents revealed that they are afraid to keep cattle due to lack of experience, difficult weather conditions and fear of animal diseases. When they have cattle mostly they will give it to neighboring communities (Agew) for

keeping purposes. Hence the Gumuz own cattle just as an investment. This pattern of livelihood has an impact and determines the type of gender division among Gumuz communities; for instance in absence of plough farming. It is not easy to prepare the land for farming: as a matter of fact hoe cultivation process takes much time and energy

Parallel to domestic chores women are involved in almost all agricultural fields of work, while men perform productive activities (like preparing the land, cultivating, sowing, harvesting, hunting, fishing, preparing charcoal and building houses) which are mainly occasional, seasonal and normally take less time as compared to those activities performed by women. The following table describes the major productive activities among the Gumuz community.

Table Three: Productive work

Activities	Female	Male	Periodicity
Cleaning and preparing of land	✓	✓	Seasonally
Cultivation	✓	✓	Seasonally
Sowing	✓	✓	Seasonally
Weeding	✓	✓	Seasonally
Harvesting	✓	✓	Seasonally
Storing grain	✓	-	Seasonally
Marketing grains	✓	-	Twice a week
Hunting	-	✓	Out of farming time
Fishing	✓	✓	Seasonally
Cutting trees for charcoal	-	✓	Seasonally
Selling of tobacco	✓	✓	Daily
Making of local drink	✓	-	Twice a week
House construction	-	✓	Occasionally

As it is observed from the above table, that most of the productive activities are performed by both sexes. With the exception of few activities like hunting, cutting trees and house construction women are involved in most of the productive activities. Agricultural work is a double burden for women when we take into consideration the burden from domestic work, harsh climate, poor life conditions and dietary habits. Men are mainly involved in activities which are seasonal. With the exception of the busy seasons, men spend most of their days chatting, smoking, drinking and visiting friends.

Men's workload is much lower than that of women. It is worthwhile to mention the fact that what appears as an exclusive male domain of activities is always complemented by female labor but not vice versa. For instance traditionally agricultural activities are mainly a male domain but as we have seen in the table the contribution of women in relation to farming activities is of paramount importance to the livelihood of Gumuz community.

Community Activities

Women are actively involved in all aspects of their society's life. Women are both producers and reproducers and they are also active participants in the economic, social and cultural activities of their communities. However the varied and important roles they play have not always been recognized. As it is stated in the literature, in societies where men and women work side by side women frequently make up volunteer for any extra work to be done and do without any payment, while men are mainly involved in positions of direct authority and work with a possibility of promotion and paid capacity. The following table describes the involvement of men and women in community work among Gumuz community.

Table Four: Community Work

Female involved in	Male involved in
Taking care of elders and sick people	Chairing when there is community meeting and mediation when there is disagreement among people.
Preparation of food and local drink 'borde' for feast ceremonies and social occasions	Political leadership
Providing food and beverage for funeral and weddings	Attendance of death and marriage ceremonies
Assistance to child delivery	Preparing festivals
	Court

The above table indicates that both men and women are involved in community activities, but in different ways. The spatial division between the public world of men and the private world of women is clearly observed in the above table. Women are involved in community managing role based on care and maintenance of human beings and provision of items of collective consumption, men on the other hand play a community leadership role in which they organize at the formal political level within the framework of structural system. This implies that women are involved in voluntary community activities in which they are not paid, while men are involved in a position of community leadership with paid capacity. For example findings from focus group discussions indicate that when men elders seat for arbitration and chairing of community affairs they are paid by the community for the service they provide.

According to the above descriptions of reproductive, productive and community activities we can see that their sexual division of labor is one of the subordinating factors that exacerbate the lower status of women. As a matter of fact, women have a high burden of domestic and subsistence labor in the service of their family that limit their potential and time to look after other opportunities and self-development. Researchers indicate that most ethnic group of women in Ethiopia spend more than 14 hours per day on average in reproductive, productive and community work (Habtamu et al., 2004). Therefore, one can conclude that gender division of labor is a central feature of gender inequality both in its economic aspects and in the social construction of gender identities.

4.4 Access, Control and Ownership of Property

As Ethiopia is an agrarian society access to land and lack of it is a major factor that determines the nature of participation in the productive sector. Land has several dimension of ecological diversity, productive for human sustenance and wealth creation in the economy and it is the basis of all kinds of productive activities. As it is mentioned in the literature part, having and controlling land acquires importance not only in its own right but also as security for credit, criterion for access to inputs such as agricultural extension and chemical fertilizer and possibility of membership in co-operatives. Without land people lose their security and become dependent on those who have land.

The status and condition of Ethiopian women in this patriarchal society - reflected in the limited access and control over resources put them at the lower level of the society in spite of their significant contribution to the country. Finding from in-depth-interviews and focus group implies that Gumuz women have limited access, control and ownership of property. Land is regulated by customary laws which do not recognize the capacity of women to own or inherit land and property in their own name. The following table describes access, control and ownership of property among Gumuz community.

Table Five: Access, Control and Ownership of Property

Property	Access		Control		Ownership	
	Female	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**
Land	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
House	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
Farming implements	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
Household utensils	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cattle	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
Small animals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grain in store	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

From the table one can see that men have exclusive right of access, control and ownership of all properties in the family. Of course women have access to use all the properties in the family as far as they are married, have children and live peacefully with their husbands. But when we come to control and ownership of property they have limited rights. Women in Gumuz community have the right to control and administer only grains in store, household utensils and small animals (like chickens, goats and sheep). According to the prevailing tradition among the Gumuz community once grain is collected and put in the store it is shameful for men to visit and check the store. Both women and men respondents revealed that managing grain is the responsibility of women. However, men can control the amount of grain for selling and household consumption. Even after marketing the husband requests the left over money for drinking and enjoyment.

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

Focus group discussions revealed that in Gumuz culture the refusal of the new marriage arrangement puts women into risk not only in access to property but also loosing of her children. In addition, as violation of culture the widow will be isolated and no one will be willing to help her in case of emergency and bad events. The same is true in the case of divorce: a woman can stay in the house and will have access to properties as far as there is a son. If there is no son a woman has to leave the house without taking anything and go back to her family.

As we can see from the above description women access to resource and property is mainly through their husbands and sons. Hence one can conclude that the denial of women's right to inherit marital homes and properties among Gumuz community is also another subordinating factor that makes women totally dependent on marriage and other relationships with men in order to get access to means to live.

4.5 Types of Marriage and Practices in Gumuz Community

Intensive focused group discussions were conducted with community elders, men and women farmers on various marriage related issues. Furthermore men and women respondents were asked about their marriage experience through in depth-interviews approach.

In Gumuz among various particular practices that could be associated with describing to causes of women subordination, the different types of marriage are the main cause behind the prevailing inequality among men and women with varied implications for both sexes. In general, the marriage system of Gumuz is polygamous and endogamous. In Gumuz culture it is common for a woman to share a husband with one or more other wives. This is openly acknowledged, the wives usually live together although sometimes they live

separately. However, if a woman is engaged in extra marital affairs it is shameful and also dangerous for her, sometimes is put to death. She is labeled as a traitor and sent back to her parents.

Both men and women respondents were asked about their attitudes towards women extra marital affairs: men respondents replied in an aggressive way as they will not excuse it and women also accepted this attitude as part of their culture. The choice of a partner is made exclusively by men, mainly by the bridegroom and bride's fathers without consulting the women. A Gumuz woman can not marry outside the social groups. However, a man can marry a girl that is not originally from Gumuz, but such practice happens in rare cases.

Like most ethnic group in Ethiopia Gumuz women have no say in the selection of their spouses and the timing of their marriages. It depends on the wishes of their brothers and fathers. In Gumuz culture mothers also consent in the arrangement of the daughter's future but the decision remains on the hands of father. The main role of the mothers is the preparation of the wedding ceremonies. As in any traditional society, early marriage is common in Gumuz community. The 1997 National Baseline Survey shows that in Benishangul Gumuz the percentage of marriage women under 15 years old is 50.1% (NCTPE, 2003). This is also confirmed by this research focus group discussion has shown that in most cases Gumuz girls are expected to marry right after her first menstruation period.

Below are the main types of marriage practices among Gumuz community in Mundura woreda.

Exchange Marriage

It is the dominating type of marriage among the Gumuz community: in the Gumuz culture a girl can be exchanged for the sake of her brothers', father', uncles', or cousins' marriage. The main feature is that a male chooses the one that he wants to marry and inform the elders to discuss with her family. After full consultation and consensus of both families, marriage takes place through exchange of the bride groom sisters or near relatives. This is done without the actual desire of both girls, the one who is going to marry and to be exchanged. Girls have no right to choose and say anything about the arrangement. In Gumuz culture, exchange marriages can take place if and only if a man can have a sister or female relatives on his father side. The more sisters a man has, the more wives he can marry.

A girl's refusal may lead to constant harassment and physical abuse by her family particularly by her brother and father. This practice can be illustrated by the story of this 19 years old woman.

> ***I tried to hang myself because my parents do not allow me to live with the one I fall in love with. I am a grade two student and the last daughter in my family. All of my elder sisters and brothers already married through exchange marriage contract. I started a love affair with some one without the knowledge of my family. This was disappointing for my parents as I am out of their wishes and respect. Unfortunately my lover did not have a sister or near relative that can exchange and given to my family. This was really a big problem between me and my lover, but a good opportunity for my father because he prepared himself to marry a new wife through my exchange to some one that I did not know. That is why I tried to kill myself. Now I am out of my parent's home and my lover had to go away from the area, because of continuous verbal harassment and menaces from my family.***

Inheritance Marriage

A second marriage practice in Gumuz culture is the reassignment of widows within the husband's kinship. When the husband of a married woman dies she has to be inherited by or remarried to the family of the bride groom. In case her husband doesn't have a brother, one of his near relatives of the male line may marry her. If widow refuses to subdue for the new marriage arrangements with relatives of the deceased husband and does not have children, her family must return the one that was given in exchange previously, or another of their own daughters. However if male children have been born a widow can refuse to be inherited, because it is assumed that in the future household properties belong to the son. But a widow is not allowed to marry another husband out of her husband's kinship. It is difficult for a widow to refuse a new marriage arrangement in case all the children are females. In such case the refusal or a widow for the new marriage arrangement will lead not only to the loss of any access to her husband's property but also her daughter. In addition, she subjected to constant moral and physical abuses by the family of her husband and outcast by the community as she is violating cultural values.

The assumption behind inheritance marriage is to prevent the destitution of widows, maintain women's status in the society, care and look after the born children and protect the wealth from non-relatives. But it does not always work in this way: in practice the family of the deceased may even give to an old person a young widow or to a young person and old widow, and the future husband may have no interest in the marriage but do so for the seek of holding household property.

From the above description of inheritance marriage we can see that the role and interest of women is always subordinated to the wish and interest of her husband's family. Despite the fact that inheritance marriage seems advantageous for the widow and her children, the reality is the willingness to keep household properties and investments only in the male line. Furthermore, inheritance marriage implies that women are inferior and weaker and must be protected and ruled by males. This is the witnesses of a 65 years old lady who has accepted inheritance marriage as bogus guarantee.

> ***I have 12 children, 9 from my first husband and 3 from my second husband. When my first husband passed away his younger brother inherited me and I born 3 children from him. He stayed few years with me and he was visiting me while I was young and active. Now he married a young girl and he does not come to me any more. During the time of inheritance marriage arrangements, he promised a lot in front of the elders: that he would have kept and cared for the children as their father and helped me in every aspect of life as far as he alive. But today only my children are helping me.***

Bride Wealth Payment Marriage

This type of marriage is not common in Gumuz community, but it happens in rare cases. This is done when a man cannot have sisters or female relatives, and in order to be married he is expected to pay to the girls family guns, cattle and cash money. The amount of payment varies according to his family or relatives wealth and the decision is made by the elders. Absence for bride wealth payment to the girl family sometimes leads to marriage by elopement.

Marriage by Elopement

This is based on love and free will of both partners. The couple stays together without the framework of the exchange contract. Elopement is done without the knowledge and approval of the girl's parent. This type of marriage union mainly occurs because there is a young man with no sister or relatives for exchange and the refusal of the girl's parents. Such a marriage is not socially accepted and sometimes raises conflicts among the two families. And it is difficult for couples to live freely as other members of the society; particularly the boy will face repetitive menace and abuse by the girl's family. This problem can be settled either providing bride wealth payment to the girl family based on the rate and amount determined by elders or substituting a girl now or in the future depending on the availability of female relatives or future daughters of the couple.

From this we can understand that how much it is risk to violate the cultural accepted pattern of norms. And how much it is difficult to get acceptance by the society if some one stray out of the cultural value.

Abduction Marriage

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

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

4.6 Menstruation and Delivery Custom

As Gumuz is a traditional society women's blood is associate with pollution. Menstruated women are not allowed to enter the house and prohibited to touch household things until they become clean. It is believed that menstruated women are capable of contaminating furniture, food, utensils and material in the house. According to Gumuz culture the primary reason for the segregation of women during menstruation flow is the prevention of danger by the house sprit called '*Musa misa'*. Most of the respondents believed that the presence of menstruated women in the house and any blood seen in the house will lead to sickness. They believed that the house spirit '*musa misa'* will create pain, injury on the legs and even death to the women.

Finding from in-depth interviewed and focus group discussion revealed that menstruated women should isolate themselves, clean themselves and keep the blood out of sight. Most use no protection such as sanitary towels or pieces of cloth; therefore they just leave the blood to drip to the ground. Some instead will tie a piece of cloth between the waist and the legs. The lack of

sanitation facilities and the discomfort of menstruation flow lead most women to feel ashamed and to hide themselves. One of the respondents described menstruation period as a time of dishonor for women **“I don’t want to see any one during menstruation period; I hate my femaleness at this time".**

The same is true in the case of delivery; Gumuz women are segregated and left to deliver alone outside their houses. Though currently changing, still women after delivery should stay outside together with the baby for an average of 3 to 5 days (before the practice was one month). Similarly with menstruation taboo women after birth are considered as impure. If women deliver at home the community feels that something bad event will happen. Hence a chicken or a goat will be slaughtered for reconciliation and the house spirit *‘Musa misa’* will be asked for forgiveness.

Almost all women respondents revealed that their delivery practices are outside home. This is also confirmed by a clinical survey made by Comboni Sisters: this showed that in the last five years the total number of Gumuz women that came to the clinic for delivery service was only 48.

In Gumuz culture it is also forbidden to touch the new born baby except for the mother until the baby is one month old. This is because traditionally the baby is considered still as contaminated by blood and touching the baby will lead to death. This practice has negative effects on the health of the mother and the baby particularly when a mother is not feeling well after birth.

From the above description one can see that the menstrual taboo and the segregation of women during delivery among Gumuz community is one of discriminatory cultural practices that undermine the biological feature of women. The harmful delivery practices (women suffering during delivery time without assistance) can create a sense of social and psychological inferiority among women.

4.7 Feeding Habit

Food taboo is another cultural practice that subordinates women with regard to intra-familial distribution of food. In Gumuz community women are discriminated from some kind of food staff. Findings from focus group discussion and in depth interviews revealed that Gumuz women are not allowed to eat food such as meat of hunted animals, eggs and meat of animals slaughtered by their husband's clan. The assumptions behind such food taboo are that if women eat meat of hunted animals they will get sick, their body (arms and legs) will be injured. It is also culturally believed that if women use eggs and meat of animals in the house of their husband's clan, they will steal such food in another house.

Women's self-sacrificing role in food distribution is also a subordinating factor. In Gumuz family priority is usually given to male in food distribution system. It is culturally forbidden for women to taste the food before men particularly when the product is new from the store. Women are expected to serve their husbands first, then the children and finally themselves. Both men and women were asked why husbands are served first. Most of them responded that a husband is the bread winner, so he should be served first plus he is staying outside home most of the time, where he cannot get any food. But a wife remains at home and it is assumed as she can serve herself any time as she wants. However, the fact remains that wives usually sacrifice themselves and provide adequate meals to satisfy their husbands and children. The better share always goes to the man and the left over food to women.

4.8 Gender Preference among Gumuz

Gender preference is determined not only from the personal desire of parents but also from cultural and traditional attitudes of given societies. As it is mentioned in the literature in a particular society gender discrimination begins from birth and son preference is institutionalized. Male children are considered to be the support of the family that can ensure the continuity and protection of the family property. Male children are needed to carry on the family lineage and the preservation of the family name is guaranteed through sons. Male also are wanted in almost all religious ceremonies and pastoral activities.

Similarly in Gumuz community male children are favored. Both men and women respondents were asked about their child preference at birth. Most respondents wish to have more male children than female. The reasons they mentioned were: females are married out and join another family while males are a better guarantee for their parents at old age, males are good at helping and working in the family farm, males are the backbone and give prestige to the family and protect it from danger, males are a source of income for the family and the main stay after the death of the parents.

As we can see from the above description, gender preference is one of the many rooted cultural practices that put female children in a disadvantageous position. Females are disadvantageously treated particularly when there is little resource and parental investment. Female children can be discriminated from access to education, health, economic and recreational opportunities.

4.9 Attitudes and Expectation towards Girls and Boys

Socialization process is different from the girl child and the boy child. The role expectation of the society towards boys and girls is quite different. In most Ethiopian societies girls activities are primarily domestic and socially less valued. Boys' activities on the other hand are associated with higher worth, prestige and society advantages.

Likewise in Gumuz community there is certain sex oriented activities in which girls and boys expected to perform. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that girls are expected to be obedient, quite submissive, to respect their parents and to be good house keeper in the future. Most of the respondents revealed that girls are expected to help their mothers starting at an early age until the day of their marriage. Gumuz girls start to help their mothers at the age of 5 in all domestic chores: fetching firewood and water, cooking food, cleaning and washing clothes (see picture 5). On the other hand Gumuz boys are expected to be courageous and active. Respondents revealed that Gumuz boys also help their fathers in hunting and farming in order to prepare them for future adult life. Boys are also encouraged to go to school and play outside the home.

From the above description we can see that the culturally rooted expectation of society towards girls of seeing them mainly as wives and mothers while men as breadwinners and head of the house has negative implication on the future life of women. This is because socialization is fundamental and the social learning which occurs in childhood lays the foundation for future development.

Both men and women respondents were asked about their attitudes towards female education. Most of them have less concern about their daughter's education. They feel that sending a girl to school is meaningless. The reason they mentioned was that the girl themselves are not devoted for their study, they repeat one class many times and that is discouraging. The second reason they mentioned was that when girls stay in the school usually they start love affairs without the knowledge of their parents and this arise conflict between the two families. They also mentioned that educating women may lead to denial of their primary role in the household.

It is not surprising to hear such attitudes form uneducated parents. As we can see from the above description, Gumuz parents have little awareness about the importance of female education, most respondents do not see the benefits of female education and they feel that maternity and domestic tasks are the best things that female deserve. They depicted females as passive and not competent equally with boys, without considering the burden of female at home and the time they spent for domestic chores.

4.10 Awareness of the Society towards Family Planning

In most traditional societies child bearing is important for woman's status and prestige. The social status of a woman within the community is determined by the degree to which she meets some culturally defined concepts of fertility and the number of children she has is considered as an asset in most societies of Ethiopia.

Similarly in Gumuz community, children are considered as an asset. Both men and women respondents were asked about their awareness of family planning and attitudes towards the number of children. Almost all of the respondents were not aware of the family planning and they wanted to have

many children. Their reason was that the family farm land will be more productive if there are more children in the family. Plus the family chain will expand and the wealth also will be increased.

From the above description one can understand that the cultural beliefs of considering children as an asset and the lack of awareness about family planning among Gumuz community can be a possible factor of women subordination in the area; considering delivery begins at an early age. Once a girl is married it means she will finish delivering only when she reaches natural menopause. The physical burden women bear while they are pregnant and nursing limits their full participation in productive economy.

Furthermore, religious sisters and nurses who are working in the clinic were asked about the reproductive health problem of Gumuz women in the area. Gumuz women have no tendency to come to clinic for treatment, but sometimes when the problem become serious they report to the clinic. Usually Gumuz women come to the clinic when they become exhausted because of delay of delivery, retained placenta and strong hemorrhage. In Gumuz culture after delivery the umbilical cord remains attached until the placenta comes out and this lead to post partum hemorrhage.

4.11 Violence Against Women

Women suffer from various forms of physical and sexual violence at home and outside. As it is mentioned in the literature part in patriarchal culture women are socialized to accept any form of violence committed to them as natural consequences for their own mistake and in most cases violence against women, particularly domestic violence, remains silent.

In Gumuz, women experience various forms of violence like beating, rape and verbal assaults. Women respondents were asked about their experience of violence at home and outside. Almost all respondents revealed that

mistreatment by their husbands are part of their life and something normal for married women. Particularly wife beating is a usual practice among Gumuz community; the following are the main reasons that lead to wife beating mentioned by both men and women respondents:

- Food not prepared on time.
- A wife not serving her husband properly.
- Wife not at home.
- Lack of trust in financial terms.
- Jealousy
- Wife not caring and keeping the children properly.
- Generally a wife failing to perform all domestic chores properly.

Fortunately Gumuz women are physically strong and in most cases they fight back their husbands, but whatever the consequence of the beating, Gumuz women will not report to the police because they fear that if the issue comes to the police, it will be externalized and moreover the punishment will be serious and their husbands will be under arrest. If this happens it is shameful for the wife and the family as well, and it also a risk for the life of the wife, since she is depending on the resource of her husband's family. Hence Gumuz women would rather remain silent and they prefer to solve the problem through elders. The elders make reconciliation usually by asking the husband to present a chicken or a goat depending on the assets of the family. After slaughtering, everything is eaten and consumed by elders, family members, and neighbors. The slaughter of the animal is considered as a punishment of the husband and compensation to the wife. However, she gets nothing in return.

But the fact remains that there is no real punishment of the husband because the chicken or goat is always taken from the household and is not an extra source of income of the husband. In such practice women never gain compensation. Even sometimes this practice is a double punishment for the

wife because women are primarily responsible in case of scarce resources in the family.

From the above description we can see also the will of women to protect the family honor and their dependency on their husband that make women tend to keep silent about their sufferings when they are violated. To remain silent has a negative impact on the victim, since she suffers the burnt of violence alone which is harmful and degrading. In addition to keep silence leads the husband to be encouraged to repeat his violent behavior.

A policeman was interviewed about the issue of violence against women in the Woreda and the society awareness of reporting violence cases to the police: though currently the trend is changing and violence cases are minimized there are still sexual and physical violence in Gumuz community. Particularly on market days both men and women drink too much and violence cases often occur. To show how this occurs in the real life of Gumuz, the rape case of a 17 years old girl is reported recently.

> ***On December 18, 2006 while I was coming back from school a number of men approached me and kidnapped me. There were around nine in number, and after a lot of struggle and physical torture I collapsed and they raped me. I stayed with them for two days and after that they disappeared as they heard the information that policemen were looking for them. Then I went to my family and I reported the rape to the police. Three of them are already under prison sentenced for three years. Fortunately I am free from pregnancy but still there is some pain in my reproductive organ. I did also an HIV test and I am waiting for the actual result after 3 months; at the moment I stay at home because my parents are afraid to send me to school.***

From the above description of violence we can see the psychological, economical and social implication of rape cases in the life of the girl. The physical torture and shock faced by the girl at the time of kidnapping will remain printed in the mind of the girl. The psychological and moral crisis of the girl cannot be cured and treated easily. It has also the economic implication of unemployment. Rape and kidnapped put parents in fear of sending their daughters to school. As a result girls will not have appropriate education and the final consequence leads to unemployment and poverty. The social stigma attached to raped girls as vulgar and promiscuous also is another social crisis that will bring the girls themselves to alienate from social participation and activities.

The policeman further explains that the rights of women are also violated in case of conflict among men. Normally Gumuz people are aggressive and fight each other for small issues. It may be bad words, jealousy, land size, kidnapping of a daughter etc. Usually the crime takes place on market day when they are drinking too much. Even sometimes death happens. The saddest thing is that in case of death, whatever the reason the murderer should provide his sister or female relatives as compensation to the family of the deceased for reconciliation. Otherwise the problem will not be settled even if the murderer is being jailed. The woman who is given to the deceased family is expected to give birth almost immediately and she has no right to refuse.

From the above description we can see how women are victimized and mistreated by the fault of others. Women are considered as objects and properties exchanged as compensation.

The policeman also explains that the society's awareness to report violence cases is limited. Women are not courageous to report to the police when violence is committed to them. Women are obliged to accept violence as a social norm. And in most cases they prefer to solve their problems through elders. Hence most violence cases weather domestic or sexual remain unchecked.

Chapter v

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Summary

Culture plays a significant role in the construction of gender relations within society. Every culture has its own set of rules that determine gender relation and influence roles and activities carried out by men and women. It also determines women's and men's access to and control over economic resources and their ability to take decision in the family and at community level. Though gender relations vary among societies, the general pattern is that women are subordinate to men. Any culture has its example of customs which reflect the low value placed on women.

Patriarchal culture operates a dualist and hierarchical world view that puts men and women in contradictory and hierarchal way. Patriarchal system depicts gender inequality in which men have dominant power over various sphere of activities. It considers women as an object, a piece of property owned by men, either by the fathers before marriage, or the husbands during married life and finally their sons in widowhood. Patriarchal culture molds and shapes up males as bread winners, head of house, independent and insensitive, while females as housewives, dependent, submissive, shy, calm and polite. The subordination of women is reflected in the inequality and difference between men and women in the family and community, as well as in all social, economic, cultural and political interactions and relationships between people.

According to the literature review, the vast majorities of women in the world are poor and disproportionately share the burden of poverty. Women have little decision making power and smaller share of resources and benefits. They have less access to and control over productive resources, land and credit. Two thirds of the world illiterate is women. The limited educational and training opportunities among women lead to the fact that the majority of women are concentrated in the informal sector with low paid capacity. Women are under-represented in the managerial administrative and in the highest paid and highest prestige sector of the work force.

Most cultures are responsible for the heavy roles of women in the division of labor in which women are engaged at the same time in productive, reproductive and community activities. Women are engaged in a wide variety of economic activities, they spend much a lot of time in informal and unpaid household production work which is substantial and important for the sustaining of families and communities as well. However, their contribution is largely ignored, invisible and unpaid. In Africa the average work day for women in rural area is twice as long as that of men. Women in Ethiopia are involved in every aspect of farm production from soil preparation to weeding, harvesting and winnowing as well as involving in marketing. Rural women in Ethiopia spend 13-17 hours in productive, reproductive and community work.

The various traditional practices that are harmful and dangerous for girls and women are the main factor for their subordinating position in most societies in developing countries. In Ethiopia early marriage, marriage by abduction, polygamous marriage, female genital mutilation, massaging abdomen of pregnant women, prolonged labor, drastic measures to hasten placenta, bleeding after removal of placenta, isolation during delivery, menstruation taboos, food discrimination affecting women, son preference

are the major cultural practices that put women in subordinate position. Most of this traditional practices cause reproductive health problems among most women. In developing countries women faces 1 in 16 life time risk of dying from pregnancy related compilations.

Marriage practice among most societies in developing countries is also another factor that puts women in subordinate position. In Ethiopia marriage is mandatory for women and most societies feel that marriage is the only means that entitled women to have home, financial security and the benefit of motherhood. Usually marriage is arranged by the family particularly by the father without the consent and knowledge of the girls. Women do not have the choice of weather, when or whom to marry. Culture in most societies of Ethiopia dictates that women are expected to be virgin before marriage and pre marital sex is a taboo.

Gender based violence is another cultural practice that puts women in a subordinate position. Women suffer from various forms of violence, done everywhere and committed by almost every body from the nearest kin to officials in the form of domestic violence, rape and sexual assaults. Violence usually is directed to young girls and women who lack the economic and social status to resist or avoid it.

5.2 Conclusion

According to the findings there are unequal division of labor among men and women in Gumuz community. Gumuz women are spend much of their time on back breaking reproductive activities mostly carried out in daily basis. Moreover women in Gumuz are also involved in almost all the agricultural field work and community affairs. The numerous activities of women in Gumuz take up an average of 13 hours per day. This unfair sexual division of

labor is one central to gender inequality that limits women potential and time to look for opportunities of self-development.

Gumuz women's access to resource and properties is mainly through their husbands' and sons'. They do not have the right to inherit properties from their family or from their husband's by any means. This denial of women's right to own property and resources is another subordinating factor that makes women totally dependent on marriage and other relationships with men in order to get access and means to live. Women right to control and administer limited to stored grains. This means that Gumuz women can not have any means to improve their personal and family life. Because having resources is fundamental to any aspect of empowerment.

Polygamous marriage system among Gumuz and marriage arrangement by parents without the consents of the woman is one of the main causes of women subordination.

Exchange marriage system is one of the dominant type in Gumuz community that denies the right of the girl and done without the consent and willingness of both women (the bride and exchange one).

Inheritance marriage is another subordinating factor in which the household properties and investment kept only in the male line. In such marriage arrangements a widowed is not in a position to refuse the wish and interest of her husband's family. A widow refusal leads to loss of any property including her children and put her in risk of unaccepted by the society.

Menstrual taboo and segregation of women during delivery among Gumuz community is one of discriminatory cultural practices that undermine the biological feature of women and create a sense of social and psychological inferiority among women.

In Gumuz community women are discriminated from eating of hunted animals, eggs and meat of animals slaughtered by their husband's clan. It is also culturally forbidden to taste the food before men particularly when the products are newly harvested from the garden.

Son preference at birth among Gumuz parents also other discriminatory practices that put female child in secondary status with in the family and community as well.

Most parents in Gumuz are not educated and they don't know the importance of sending their daughters to school and providing the necessary support for their achievements.

In Gumuz having more number of children is considered as an asset and most of the societies are not aware about family planning. It is a subordinating factor in which a women stop delivery when she reached natural menopause.

Gumuz women are beaten by their husbands when they fail to perform the cultural designed role of women. The dependency of women on their husbands and protecting the family honor made most women remained to be silent about the suffering when they are violated.

Sexual and physical violence still exist in Gumuz community and most violence cases are not reported to the police and treated through elders. Moreover women are victimized and provides as compensation when death happen in case of conflict among men.

5.3 Recommendations

Culture and traditional practices play indispensable part in our lives and they have important effects on the way of life of individuals especially on the moral formation of a people. Individuals can not depend on themselves alone to track their way through life. Hence those cultural beliefs, norms and customs that can hinder peoples from fulfilling equal rights in the society and prevented them from enjoying their economic, social and political rights should be examine.

Women subordination existing in societies of every degree of complexity is so integral to society's culture. Addressing the cultural basis of women's subordination requires recognition of the means by which we are socialized to accept and perpetuate a reduction image of women's achievements and capacities. Hence the researchers would like to suggest the following recommendations.

- Those governmental and non governmental organization that are working in Benishangul Gumuz, particularly on women development and related issues needed to change the cultural stereotypes attached to women as secondary and subordinated. This can be possible through continuous awareness creation program.
- Benishangul Gumuz Educational Office needs to promote the importance of girls education and teach parents to send their daughter to school. Because education is one way in which women can emancipate themselves from the grip of culture through male domination.

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Guiding question for In-depth Interview

I General Background Information

1. Sex _____
2. Age _____
3. Religion _____
4. Educational Status
   - Illiterate _____ Secondary _____
   - Primary _____ College/University _____
   - Other _____
5. Marital Status
   - Single _____ Widowed _____
   - Married _____ Divorced _____
   - Others _____
6. Type of marriage
   - Exchange _____ Inheritance _____
   - Arranged _____ Abduction _____
   - Elopement _____ Others _____
7. Age at first marriage
   - 10 -15 _____ 21-25 _____
   - 16 – 20 _____ 26-30 _____
   - Others _____
8. Number of Wife/Husband
   - One _____ Two _____
   - Three _____ Four _____
   - Others _____
9. How many children do you have? _____

10. Who is the bread winner of the family?
    - Husband _____ Both _____
    - Wife _____ Children _____ Others _____
11. Source of Income _____

12. Average Monthly Income _____

Information about division of Labor

1. Which kind of reproductive activities are you involved?
   - how many hours did you spend per hour for each activity?
2. Which kind of productive and community activities are you involved?
   - how many hours did you spend per hour for each activity?
3. Which kind of community activities are you involved?
   - how many hours did you spend per hour for each activity?

Information about Power and Decision Making

1. Can you decide budget for house hold consumption?
If no why _____

2. Can you decide selling of crops production?
If no why _____

3. Can you decide Selling of cattle? (Ox, cow, sheep, goat)
If no why _____

4. Can you decide selling of small animals? (Chicken)
If no why _____

5. Can you decide selling of diary products? (milk, butter and cheese)
If no why _____

6. Can you decide number of children or your family size?
If no why _____

7. Can you decide about children education?
If no why _____

8. Can you decide about mate selection of your daughters and sons?
If no why _____

Information about Menstruation and Delivery Custom

1. What do you feel during your menstruation time? and how do you control the blood?.
2. How was your delivery experience? What challenging did you face?

Information about violence

1. Did you conflict with your husband? how often?
2. What are some of the problem that lead you for conflict?
3. Have you experience beating from your husband?

Information about expectations and attitudes of Societies

1. What is your sex preference at birth? a boy/a girl
Why _____
2. What do you expect from girls to achieve when they grow up?
3. What do you expect from boys to achieve when they grow up?
4. What do you expect from women as mother hood?
5. What do you expect from men as fatherhood?
6. For whom you are giving priority for education? Boys/girls _____
Why _____
7. Do you believe that women have equal right and position in society to men?
If no, why _____
8. Who is expected to eat food first in home?
Why_____
9. Do women have equal right to men to inherit their parents' property?
If no, why _____

*** Note**

For each question probing words like why, how etc. will be used to get detailed information.

Points for Focus group discussion

1. Can women have equal opportunity as men to inherit parents' property?
2. Can women have equal decision making power with men over house hold resources?
3. Do women equally participate in community activity that requires decision?
4. At what age should girls/boys marry?
5. How should a woman get married?
6. What is the role of fathers for daughters/son marriage?
7. What is the role of mothers for daughters/son marriage?
8. Why girls/women isolated during menstruation and delivery?(Do you think this is not dangerous for them)
9. What is your opinion about girl's education?
10. Does women allowed eating meat of animals, chicken & egg? If not why?
11. Why female are not allowed to eat food before a male?
12. In your opinion the marriage system that you follows well for women?
13. Are there a work only reserved for women?
14. Who do you think work for longer hours a day?
15. How divorce causes are treated?

*** Note**

For each question probing words like why, how etc. will be used to get detailed information.