



**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Social Sciences**  
**Department of Social Anthropology**

**MA Thesis**

**Change and Continuity in Early Marriage Across Three  
Generations among Selected Rural Communities in North Mecha  
Woreda, Amhara Region**

**By**

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**Change and Continuity in Early Marriage Across Three  
Generations among Selected Rural Communities in North  
Mecha *Woreda*, Amhara Region**

**By**

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**A Thesis Submitted to Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa  
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**Advisor: Guday Emirie (PhD, Associate Professor)**

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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**



# DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and it has not been presented for a degree in any other University, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged and properly referenced.

**Declared by: Tirusira Gebey**

**Signature:**



**Date:** 13 June, 2024

**Approved by: Guday Emirie (PhD, Associate Professor)**

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**Date:** 13 June, 2024

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## GLOSSARY<sup>1</sup> OF LOCAL TERMS

<i>Abäləǵ</i>	Fictive-kinship relationship established through god-parenthood and childhood
<i>A`glyami or läqso</i>	Funeral ceremony, weeping, lamentation
<i>Aräqi</i>	A home-made (local) liquor
<i>Birr</i>	The currency unit of Ethiopia
<i>Däga</i>	Highland ecological zone
<i>Debo/ wanfela</i>	A community based cooperative labor agreement in which two or more people work together on each other's plots for an equal length of time.
<i>Gedo</i>	The custom of protecting the early married girl (usually under 9 years old) from sexual intercourse with her husband until she reaches the age of 11 depending on her physical maturity.
<i>Gibto/gulo)</i>	<i>Lupinus albus</i>
<i>Got</i>	Village
<i>Dik'ala</i>	A child delivered by a girl or a woman outside formal marriage.
<i>Doro wät</i>	Hot and spicy chicken stew
<i>Əngära</i>	Traditional Ethiopian bread made from a batter and is cooked like a pancake, the daily basic food for the household
<i>Gabi</i>	Traditional cotton made ticker blanket like longer and wider scarp
<i>Gogǵo mäwca</i>	Parental economic support provided for a newly-weds when they establish their own hut
<i>Kəndəš bəkənde gabəčča</i>	A marriage takes place without parental endowments such as land and/or other property
<i>Kebele</i>	The lowest government administrative unit, which refers to community in this study.
<i>Krəstənnaləǵ</i>	God child
<i>Kul</i>	Traditional eye-liner
<i>Mahbär</i>	A community based kebele in the name of honors a chosen Saint by gathering around a nearby church and switching out the food and drink supplies.
<i>Mälsa</i>	Go back the bride to visit her parents
<i>Muqäcca</i>	Wooden made mortar used for pounding crops, grains and cereals
<i>Netela</i>	Traditional cotton made lighter longer scarp
<i>Mushira</i>	Bride or groom
<i>Qada</i>	A traditional measurement of land
<i>Qalä mähalla</i>	Qath, promise, pledge
<i>Qätänna</i>	Territory or region
<i>Qemet or weshema</i>	Informal or illegal wife
<i>Qes</i>	Priest
<i>Qomo-qär</i>	Girls who remained unmarried after the socially appropriate age for marriage (until the age of 15) in the study communities.

<sup>1</sup>Some of the glossary of local terms are taken from Guday (2005:196-200 )

<i>Qoqor</i>	Rat poison
<i>Qunna</i>	Made up of grass which is approximately equivalent to 10 kilogram
<i>Rist</i>	A type of land ownership determined by lineage.
<i>Sänbäte</i>	A weekly Sundays community based association by around a parish church and members take turns providing food and drinks
<i>Sänbäte temari</i>	A religious Sunday student and sings religious mezemur
<i>Säytan</i>	Satan, demon, devil
<i>Säfet mäsfat</i>	Making baskets, female's task
<i>Shimagilä</i>	Elder
<i>Siso(sostäñña)</i>	A share cropping system based on one-third share for the cultivator
<i>Tich'ich'iti</i>	Betrothal/Fiancé
<i>Tämmad</i>	Hiring someone's land for a specified amount of payment usually in grain
<i>T'egera</i>	Martreza
<i>Tiftfe</i>	Decorative dress made up of cotton
<i>Wamira</i>	A cup made of calabash
<i>Wanich'a</i>	A cup made of horn
<i>Wanna mize</i>	The first (main) best man of a groom
<i>Wayna daga</i>	Mid-highland ecological zone
<i>Woreda</i>	The local level government administrative unit higher than <i>Kebele</i> (the lowest government administrative unit), which refers to District
<i>Weranita</i>	Made up of grass which is approximately equivalent to 20 Kilogram
<i>Yänäfs abbat</i>	Confessor-father
<i>Yaqorqoro bet</i>	A house made of wood and mud with tin-corrugated roof
<i>Yäsämanya gabäčča</i>	A traditional marriage contract with equal contribution of cattle and/or other properties
<i>Yäsämanya wəl</i>	"Eighty-bond"
<i>Yesəti üsadari</i>	A man who is in the bride's side that serves the bridegroom as a best-man in the wedding ceremony.
<i>Yesega wät</i>	Beef/meat stew
<i>Yesete mize</i>	Best woman upon the wedding day
<i>Yewond mize</i>	Best man upon the wedding day
<i>Zämäd ginignyu</i>	Voluntary annual relative gatherings around a parish church or tree and members take turns in providing food and drinks.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAU	Addis Ababa University
ACPAUCECMA	African Common Position on the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BPS	Bachema Primary School
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
E.C	Ethiopian Calendar
EDHS	Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD(s)	Focus Group Discussion(s)
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FTC	Farmers' Training Center
HEW(s)	Health Extension Worker(s)
IDI	In-depth I interview(s)
KPS	Kurtbahir Primary School
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoWCYA	Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NMWPC	North Mecha <i>Woreda</i> Planning Commission
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
STDs	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCEDAW	United Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
UNECA	United Nations African Economic Commission
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WDG(s)	Women Development Group(s)

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## ABSTRACT

*The overall objective of this study was to investigate change and continuity in early marriage across three generations (grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations) among Bachema and Kurtbahir Rural communities in North Mecha Woreda, Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia. More specifically, this study is aimed at: (1) exploring change in early marriage across three generations among the study communities by focusing on change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations and reasons for such changes during the daughters' generation among the study communities; and (2) investigating continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations by further exploring factors contributing to the continuation of the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes during the daughters' generation among the study communities. To attain these objectives, primary data were gathered through a combination of ethnographic research methods involving in-depth interviews with extended cases studies across the three generations, focus group discussions, systematic observations, and key informant interviews. Secondary data were collected through review of related literature and relevant documents. The collected data were thematically organized and analyzed through triangulation of findings from different sources. The study found that the age at first marriage as well as the age at first childbirth has increased in the daughters' generation due to several factors, of which the expansion of formal education and the increase in parents' awareness about the health impacts (mainly fistula) of marrying their daughters at an early age are mentioned by the study participants as the major factors accounted for such change. The study also identified reasons for the continuity of the practice of early marriage during the daughters' generation in both study communities for the past five years. Children's lack of interest in formal education, newly emerging love-based marriages, parents' desire to protect their daughters from premarital sex/pregnancy and family honor, life insecurity, and lack of government control and weak law enforcement are the major reasons for the persistence of the practice of early marriage during the daughters' generation for the past five years, especially since the COVID-19 outbreak. Finally, the study concludes by suggesting possible areas for future research based on the implications of the major findings of the study.*

**Key words:** Early Marriage, Change and Continuity, Across Generations, Rural Communities, North Mecha Woreda

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, an estimated 640 million girls and women alive today were married in childhood (UNICEF, 2023 May). Early marriage is either formal or informal marriage that takes place either of the spouse or both are under the legal minimum marriageable age 18. Early marriage occurs in every part of the world, but it is most common in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Ibid).

Ethiopia is one of the countries that have shown significant improvements in early marriage practice. For instance: the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data suggests changing trends in girls marrying below the legal minimum age of 18 from 63 percent in 2011 to 58 percent in 2016 (EDHS), and the mean age of first marriage changed from 16.5 years in 2011 to 17.1 years in 2016 (Central Statistical Agency & ICF, 2016:67). Accordingly, girls' access to formal education and their reproductive health care are improved from the past generations (Jones et al., 2018), and girls' voice in decision making is also improved (UNICEF and IDRC, 2020).

Early marriage is an illegal practice in the world that affects a child's right to choose his or her partner in general and girls in particular. The Ethiopian government has taken intervention measures by signing different international, continental, and national declarations to prevent it. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989: articles 19 and 24), the United Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UNCEDAW, 1997: article 16), African Charter on the Rights and well fare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990: article 21), African Common Position on the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa (ACPAUCECMA, 2015): cited in MoWCY, 2019. Despite this improvement, in Ethiopia, the practice of early marriage continues in many girls, with 15 million children married before the age of 18, and has the third rank among early marriage-practicing countries in eastern and southern Africa (UNICEF, 2018). Moreover, in Ethiopia, 40.3 percent of girls were married before the legal minimum age of 18, and 14.1 percent of girls were married before the

age of 15 (MoWCY, 2019). The more vulnerable girls are those in rural residences, uneducated, and with poor economic status (Jones et al., 2018).

The risk of early marriage is various in Ethiopian regions. Amhara region is the largest home of early marriage traditions in Ethiopia (Abera et al., 2020). Because, in the Amhara region, parents make marriage promises to their children before they are born (Guday, 2005; Dessie et al., 2023). Among the Amhara region, early marriage is most common in most eastern and western Gojjam (Zelalem, 2018).

Though the Amhara regional state highly practiced early marriage, the region has registered various changes. Among these changes, according to Dessie et al., (2023), in Amhara, 79.8 percent of girls got married in 2000 changed to 42.9 percent of girls that got married in 2016 with the mean age at first marriage 9.8 during grandparents' generation change to 11.9 in daughters' generation (Melese et al., 2021).

However, about 62 percent of females are married off without their consent (Abeje et al., 2023). This is often practiced in rural areas and has less educational status because in rural communities there is a deeply rooted social norm that denies girls opportunity to better well-being (Abeje et al., 2023; Guday and Eshetu, 2016). Such norms encourage parents to arrange girls' marriage at an early age, in a hidden manner to escape punishment from the government (Guday and Eshetu, 2016).

Guday and Eshetu (2016) suggested further study on the change and hidden arrangements of early marriage practices due to the higher gap between the prevention laws and the rural communities. Therefore, this study tries to investigate change and continuity in early marriage with specific reference sites to Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities of North Mecha *Woreda*, Amhara National Regional State.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

For a country like Ethiopia, which is struggling to eradicate early marriage while parents push their daughters to marry at an early age due to sticky social norms (Jones et al., 2018), education is thought to play an important role in girls' future well-being, girls' better lives, and so on

(Melese et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2020; Abeje et al., 2023). Moreover, early marriage is a harmful practice mainly for girls' health. The national as well as regional legal frameworks denounced that the legal age of first marriage is 18 years old for both girls and boys, changes in terms of prevalence are registered in Ethiopia in general and in Amhara region in particular (Erulkar, 2022; Dessie et al., 2023; Melese et al., 2021), and the age at first marriage also changed across three generations (Melese et a al., 2021). The findings of these studies focus on the prevalence and drivers of early marriage based on quantitative data. Moreover, none of them are conducted in the study area, and no study to date deeply investigates change and continuity in early marriage across three generations. Furthermore, there is no ethnographic study conducted in North Mecha *Woreda* in relation to change and continuity in early marriage across three generations. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by investigating why and how early marriage is changing and continuing across three generations based on ethnographic data.

On the other hand, the ethnographic study conducted by Guday and Eshetu (2016) on the changing and hidden aspects of early marriage arrangements across three generations (grandparents, parents and children's generations) among selected rural communities in Fogera *Woreda* revealed that early marriage arrangement patterns changed during the children's generation and suggested the need for conducting further research on the changing and hidden arrangements of early marriage and the gap between the national law legislating against early marriage and the practice of early marriage in other rural communities of Amhara region. Moreover, this study was based on ethnographic data collected among two rural communities in Fogera *woreda*, South Gondar zone of Amhara region. However, the ethnographic data was collected in 2010. Therefore, the current study attempts to fill the gap with up-to-date ethnographic data on change and continuity in early marriage by focusing on change and continuity in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations (grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations) among selected rural communities in North Mecha *Woreda*<sup>2</sup>, North Gojjam zone of Amhara region.

Of course, the current study area was studied by Guday since 2005 for the fulfillment of her PhD entitled "Early Marriage and Its Effects on Girls' Education in Rural Ethiopia: The Case of

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<sup>2</sup> Currently, the previous "West Gojjam Zone" divided into two zones: West Gojjam Zone and North Gojjam Zone and North Mecha *Woreda* is located under North Gojjam administrative zone.

Mecha *Woreda*<sup>3</sup> in West Gojjam, North-Western Ethiopia.” She investigated issues like the procedures of marriage, causes of early marriage, consequences of early marriage, and also the effect of early marriage on girls’ education based on ethnographic data collected from selected rural communities. However, the focus of her study was not on investigating change and continuity in early marriage across three generations. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap.

A recent study conducted by Abeje et al., (2023) on changes and continuity in the practice of early marriage in the case of Kewet and Bahir Dar Zuria *Woreda* shows that early marriage is a continuous practice due to family and community-level structural reasons with 62 percent of girls got married without their knowledge and consent. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. However, it does not focus on in-depth anthropological investigation of changes and continuity in early marriage practices across three generations. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on change and continuity in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations (grandmothers’, mothers’ and daughters’ generations<sup>4</sup>) among selected rural communities in North Mecha *Woreda*, North Gojjam zone of Amhara region. It also attempts to further explore the reasons for change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes during the daughters’ generation on one hand and factors contributing to continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes during the daughters’ generation on the other hand based on a combination of ethnographic research methods involving in-depth interviews with extended case studies across the three generations, focus group discussions, systematic observations and key informant interviews supplemented with review of relevant documents and related literature.

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<sup>3</sup> Currently, the previous “Mecha *Woreda*” is divided into two *woredas*: North Mecha *Woreda* and South Mecha *Woreda*

<sup>4</sup> Though early marriage occurs in both girls and boys, the consequences of early marriage are more severe in girls (UNICEF, 2022). Therefore, the study focuses more on females than males by classifying them across three generations.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The overall objective of this study is to investigate change and continuity in early marriage across three generations (grandmothers', mothers' and daughters' generations) among Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities (hereafter the study communities) in North Mecha *Woreda*, Amhara region.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The study is specifically aimed at:

1. Exploring change in early marriage across three generations among the study communities by focusing on change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations and reasons for such change during the daughters' generation among the study communities.
2. Investigating continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations by further exploring factors contributing to continuation of the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes during the daughters' generation among the study communities .

### **1.4 Research Methodology**

#### **1.4.1 Research Design and Approach**

To achieve the objectives of this study, I used qualitative research design because qualitative research method enables me to obtain in-depth and comprehensive data about change and continuity in early marriage across three generations among the study communities (Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities). The qualitative research approach emphasizes extensive fieldwork and is mostly used in anthropological research (Bernard, 2006), in which the systematic inquiry of social phenomena in natural settings is employed (Teherani, et al., 2015). I used an ethnographic research approach to explain change and continuity in early marriage with specific reference to age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations

by using ethnography research approach. This is because “ethnography focuses on describing and interpreting the culture of the sharing group” (Creswell, 2007: 68).

## **1.4.2 Data Collection Methods**

In this study, I employed both primary and secondary data collection methods. In doing this research, I followed five steps (choosing the research problem, formulating the research design, collecting the data, analyzing and interpreting the data). Data collection is one of the most significant steps in a research project (Ferraro and Andreatta, 2010).

### **1.4.2.1 Primary Data Collection Methods**

The primary data in this study refers to the first-hand information that I collected from informants and used for the entire work. The primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with extended case studies across three generations (grandmothers’, mothers’ and daughters’ generations), key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and systematic observations supported with photographs. I used these primary data collection methods to overcome the limitation of a single method and helped me to collect detailed data about change and continuity in early marriage across three generations in their natural setting. All of the interviews and FGDs were conducted in Amharic language, the local language of the ethnographic research sites (Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities) and the study area (North Mecha *Woreda*).

#### **❖ Key Informant Interview (See Appendix I.1)**

It is one of the data collection methods used in this study. I selected this data collection method to grasp relevant data from key informants who have the best knowledge about change and continuity in early marriage in the study communities because these key informants have great attachments to the issue and also they are the concerned people about the issue. Data were acquired through semi-structured interview questions related to early marriage, change in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations, and continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations (see Appendix I.1). I conducted a total of 24 individual interviews with key informants who were selected based on their knowledge about the culture of the study area/communities and issues related to early marriage,

their role/position in the study area/communities, and their years of experience (two or more than two years' experience) in the study area/communities and their willingness. The key informant interviews were conducted with *woreda* officers (the *Woreda* Women, Children and Social Affairs' Officer, the *Woreda* Justice Officer, and the *Woreda* Education Office gender expert), rural *kebele* leaders, women league representatives, women development group leaders, women affairs' representatives, women federation representatives, council of elders, teachers (school girls' club representatives), religious leaders, health extension workers (HEWs), and other knowledgeable elders (see appendix III: 3.1).

During the interview, I was listening as a learner because the informants were subject matter experts. Some of the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder with the consent of the study participants; while for those who did not allow me to capture their voices, I took notes. The key informant interview with the aforementioned sources is designed to get specific information that addresses the research objectives. The interviews with *woreda* officers, health extension workers, and rural *kebele* leaders were conducted at their respective offices at the informant's convenient time. On the monthly religious day, interviews were conducted with religious leaders, and other knowledgeable elders at the farmers' training center (FTC) as well as their work place.

### ❖ **In-depth Interview with Extended Case Studies (see Appendix I.2)**

The in-depth interview is the other data collection method used for obtaining information on what people think or feel as well as on what they do (Ferraro and Andreatta, 2010). According to Bernard (2006), in anthropology, in-depth interviewing means an ethnographic interview which means a semi-structured interview based on the use of an interview guide. An interview guide is a written document that gives an outline of the study. In-depth interviewing is repeated face-to-face conversation with open-ended questions that are used to grasp the viewpoints of informants on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words (Bernard, 2006). The in-depth interview is the most important way to collect the richest data.

I selected in-depth interview data collection method to conduct individual interviews to address the research questions because some informants might be uncomfortable in discussing and speaking out in a group setting. Furthermore, informants might not be able to explain their

personal experiences, feelings, and behavior in a group setting, but they were able to do so when interviewed individually.

I conducted this data collection method with a total of 12 early married individuals (6 from each rural community), such as grandmothers (4 individuals), mothers (4 individuals), and daughters (4 individuals) who were selected with the help of key informants and community elders based on their experience, willingness, and family ties (meaning at least two of them are alive along with family generation) (see appendix: 3.2). I probe the questions within the themes to get more deeply their lived experiences of early marriage.

Accordingly, the marriage life stories and lived experiences were narrated in each theme of the study. Majority of the interviews were conducted at their home, and I used a voice recorder when the informants narrated their history according to the consent of the informants while for those who did not allow me to capture their voices, I took notes. The main reason for employing this interview with the aforementioned informants is to examine change and continuity in early marriage mainly focused on age at first marriage and arrangement processes across three generations.

#### ❖ **Focus Group Discussion (see Appendix I.3)**

Focus group discussion is applied in a qualitative approach. According to Bernard (2006), a focus group discussion is used to collect data about content and process by relying on why people think, view, and perceive the issue. Focus group discussions do not replace other methods of data collection; rather, they support or supplement them. According to him, a group typically should comprise 6-12 participants, but 7 and 8 members are the most common size. If the number of members is too small, it will be dominated by one or two individuals, and if the number of members exceeds ten, it will be difficult to manage. As a result, smaller groups are preferable when trying to hold in-depth discussions about sensitive issues (Morgan, 1997). A focus group discussion is a discussion with a small group of people with similar backgrounds on a specific topic.

The reason behind employing this data collection method was to supplement the data that came from other data collection methods and to get adequate information about the issue from

participants' discussions, whether they debated or agreed with each other's opinions or views. So, it addressed the research objectives in addition to the other data collection methods that were used in this study. Moreover, to explore views, feelings, and experiences on early marriage in the study communities and the extent to which the age at first marriage and its arrangement processes is changing and continuing across three generations, focus group discussions were held with Bachema and Kurtbahir men only, women only, school boys only, and early married school girls only (see appendix III: 3.3).

I conducted a total of 8 focus group discussions (FGDs) in the study sites (4 FGDs from each rural community), each FGD consisting of six participants, but one FGD was conducted with early married school girls with four participants after some informants left the group discussion for different reasons such as lack of willingness to stay in the group discussion and lack of time. The FGD participants were selected based on their knowledge about the issue, willingness, and age (35-60 for men and women, 10-20 for school girls and boys). Based on this, the facilitator was used in identifying participants and organizing the two focus group discussions (i.e.FGD7 and FGD8) in Kurtbahir rural community. The key informants, school girls' club representatives, were used in identifying participants and organizing the focus group discussions with school boys and school-early married girls (FGD1, FGD2, FGD5, and FGD6). I also used the key informants, health extension workers from Bachema rural community, to identify participants and organize the focus group discussions with men and women (FGD3 and FGD4).

The separate FGDs with men and women were held to understand their perspectives, feelings and their experiences on change and continuity in early marriage in the study communities. Moreover, I used the FGDs with school boys and early married school girls to capture their views, feelings, and their experiences on continuity in early marriage and their reasons for the continuation of the practice of early marriage.

The discussions lasted a minimum of 30-minutes and a maximum of 1:00 hour for each session. The FGD with early married school girls and school boys were held in their school classroom at the end of daily class. Two FGDs (one FGD with men from Kurtbahir and one FGD with women from Bachema) were held at the farmers' training center (FTC). One FGD with men was held on tree shade around Kotekotema St. Michael church and the remaining one FGD with women were

held around their village i.e. Gulite, Kurtbahir. All of the discussions were held on religious days because of peak harvesting seasons.

During the FGDs, my involvement was as a moderator by raising semi-structured guiding questions and the discussions were recorded through a voice recorder with the consent of each FGD participant.

### ❖ **Systematic Observation**

It is a systematic way of data collection method in qualitative research design. I used all of my senses to examine people in their natural settings or naturally occurring situations (Jorgenson, 1989). Observation is viewing a particular incident or phenomenon or even, interactions and interpersonal relationships between two or more people. I lived for a total of three months in Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities. During my stay, I systematically observed the day-to-day activities of the societies and, the economic and cultural practices of the community. Moreover, girls were engaged in distilling as well as selling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor) after school or before school.

I participated in one wedding ceremony and various religious and social gatherings such as *sägge*, annual religious celebration, *Sänbäte* and *mahbär* at Bachema and Kurtbahir Orthodox Christian Churches. I participated in girls' club and child rights club activities at Bachema and Kurtbahir full-cycle primary schools. I participated in harvesting and charcoal production activities in the study areas.

The reason for using this method was to gather more information that cannot be touched through other methods and also enabled me to make smooth relationships with the people in the study area. The data obtained through observation were recorded on field notes. Alongside voice recording of the in-depth interview, key informant interview and FGD, I observed the informants' way of expressing responses, facial expressions, movements, and feelings, and then recorded them on my field notes.

## ❖ Photographic Documentations

I employed this method to improve ethnographic data collection and documentation. I took photographs of different occasions and activities, such as wedding ceremony, *aräqi* (homemade local liquor) market, annual religious festivals, and social gatherings. These photographs were used as sources of data that supported the data gathered from other primary data collection methods because photographs inform the current nature of cultural practices (Carvalho, 2011). Moreover, the photographic documentations attached with this thesis inform the change and continuity in early marriage on the base of arrangement processes (see Appendix: 5.4).

### 1.4.2.2 Secondary Data Collection

The purpose of secondary data collection is to review empirical literature and to conceptualize related concepts. Secondary data were collected from articles, related books, and related research findings. In doing so, I reviewed relevant documents, which supplemented the primary data collection.

## 1.4.3 Methods of Data Analysis and Fieldwork Experience

### 1.4.3.1 Methods of Data Analysis

I used to write everyday data summaries in my special research notebook in Amharic language, then I transcribed the data into my special notebook. After I finished the fieldwork, I went to Bahir Dar because my family live there. Then, I began transcribing and translating the data from Amharic into the English language with the support of an assistant translator with chronological files. Next, I thematically organized the data and placed similar topics into themes. This was followed by a more organized analysis of the recurrent themes and issues into logical themes. Afterward, I wrote up the thesis based on the themes and presented the data through qualitative data analysis such as words, narration as well as detail and brief description of the data.

To increase the validity and reliability of this study, I triangulated various primary data collection methods (in-depth interviews with extended case studies, key informant interviews, FGDs, and systematic observations). The data were collected by using a voice recorder, video

recorder, field notebooks, short summaries, voice-recorded debriefing with my thesis advisor, and transcripts of informal conversations. Then the primary and secondary data were organized, triangulated and analyzed within the themes.

### **1.4.3.2 Fieldwork Experience**

To investigate change and continuity in early marriage across three generations, I selected North Mecha *Woreda* (which was previously part of Gojjam zone, but currently part of North Gojjam zone) for ethnographic fieldwork in this study. The main reason for choosing this study area (North Mecha *Woreda*) is time because it was studied by Guday for her Ph.D. dissertation in 2005. So, I selected this area to explore the change and continuity in early marriage with specific focus on age at first marriage, early marriage arrangement processes, and reasons for continuity and change in age at first marriage and early marriage arrangement processes across three generations.

The time I spent conducting ethnographic fieldwork added up to a total of three months in two selected rural communities of North Mecha *Woreda* within two phases. The first phase of the fieldwork was held from 11<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The second round was from 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023 to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023. I did different tasks during my stay. During the daytime, I used to go around the FTC to contact key informants and around the villages to conduct in-depth interviews with extended case studies with grandmothers, mothers and daughters. Sometimes, I went around the workplace of my informants. I was engaged in visiting social and religious gatherings (such as *sänbäte* and *mahbär*) as well as in a wedding ceremony since creating trust on the informants about me. During the night time, first, I had debriefing sessions with my advisor (on the telephone) for all of the period I stayed in the field which helped me to see the gaps in my interviews and get directions in what way I interviewed to get saturated data.

On Tuesday, Hidar 3, 2015 E.C., I went to Bahir Dar Menharia. The reason for my being there in the morning was to go to the place I selected for the study, North Mecha *Woreda*, Merawi. As soon as I arrived at Merawi, North Mecha *Woreda* administration town, I met with the North Mecha Women, Children and Social Affairs' Office. Then, I presented support letter given to me by Addis Ababa University Department of Social Anthropology to North Mecha *Woreda* Women Children and Social Affairs Head, Ato Takele, and asked him to give me the necessary

cooperation by explaining the purpose of my field study. I received his approval and even told me that it would be useful for them to know the situation by coming to their *woreda* to conduct this kind of research. Automatically, he introduced me to the concerned *woreda* officer. I also told them that if I could get enough information that I needed, it would be fine.

I asked him to give me the general introduction information about early marriage changes in their *woreda*. Then I selected Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities among 38 rural communities of North Mecha *Woreda*. The first research site, Bachema rural community, was selected by myself since it was certified by the *woreda* due to the absence of harmful traditional practices and is located only 5 km away from Merawi. However, the second research site, Kurtbahir rural community, was selected with the help of Ato Takele due to its less availability of early marriage reports and accessibility of transportation. In other words, this study area was selected based on their changes in early marriage practice.

Ato Takele also introduced me to the selected rural community administrators' leaders through a call. And he wrote a supportive letter to the selected rural communities. Then copies of the administrative endorsement were carried out and shown to the rural communities to get their authenticity in the research process. The selected rural communities' leaders (*likemenbers*) wrote a supportive letter to the selected focused schools (Bachema primary school and Kurtbahir primary school). Then, I carried and showed the school principals to get the goodwill.

After the selection of the study sites, I selected a female assistant with the help of Ato Takele. I visited these sites (Bachema and Kurtbahir) for 9 days and made a good rapport with the communities. 10 key informants were selected. At that time, I conducted informal discussions and interviews with different people of the study sites, *woreda* officers, school teachers, and local community leaders in the respective research sites. Accordingly, I conducted one informal FGD in Kurtbahir rural communities with the help of my assistant. I also attended one social gathering (*sægge*) at Kotekotema villagers, Bachema rural communities, which helped me to create smooth relationships with the communities. Additionally, I collected data about the demographic part of the study like population number, location of the *woreda*, production, type of soil, number of rural communities, number of schools, health centers, and so on.

After I came back to Addis, I started to develop my proposal. During my stay in Addis Ababa starting from 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 through 6<sup>th</sup> January 2023, I held extensive and intensive sessions of discussions and consultation with my advisor from whom I gained constructive comments. These helped me to note the gaps in the research instruments. I was also engaged in an extensive search for relevant literature from different sources. I then returned to the field on 10<sup>th</sup> January to collect detailed data.

The second phase of fieldwork started on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023. It was devoted to conducting interviews, FGDs, document analysis, and systematic observation. I began full-time fieldwork in January 2023. The first week was spent in intensive interviewing with *woreda* level key informants. These interviews were held at their office at their convenient times. In the second two weeks, I started interviews with selected rural communities' level key informants. During this time, I also selected the remaining key informants with the support of one key informant from *woreda* and health extension workers based on the criteria of knowledge about the issue, work experience, and willingness to participate. Then, followed the main phase of the fieldwork consisting of daily interviews with grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, concerning their marriage histories. This enabled me to get detailed and brief data to analyze generational change and continuity in early marriage practice.

In most cases, I spent weekends and religious holidays among Bachema and Kurtbahir informants. Sometimes, I was engaged with informants in their workplace. At the school level, I spent going to class and library and attending club meetings with students. Accordingly, I explained mathematics questions outside the classroom. This enabled me to create good friendships with selected informants and get good data concerning attitudes towards formal school, reasons for dropping out of formal school for girls as well as boys, and related issues of early marriage.

Basically, during the second phase of the field, I performed the following fieldwork activities:

1. Informing myself came back to North Mecha government officials at Merawi, capital of North Mecha *Woreda*, and familiarized me with them specifically concerned officials, and with the selected rural communities officials as well as communities.

2. Examined Bachema and Kurtbahir full cycle primary schools' rosters;
3. Conducted key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and FGDs with selected informants,
4. Collected written documents from the *Woreda* Women's Children and Social Affairs Office to get a general picture of early marriage practices.
5. Attended the day-to-day activities, religious and social gatherings, and wedding ceremonies.

To be honest, my closeness with key informants (health extension workers, kebele leaders, girls club representative teachers) and my assistant made things easier for me. Moreover, due to the political instability, the communities were hesitant to give me the real data at the beginning before the key informants and my assistant introduced me to express that the data they gave me would be used only for academic purposes.

On Sunday, Yekatit 5, we started a trip to *Neno*, Kurtbahir rural community together with my assistant data collector. My assistant data collector was 24 years old and a representative of women's affairs at the rural community level who used to live with her family in Kurtbahir. My host family was her family. I and my assistant went to *Neno* to attend a wedding. After 35 minutes of walking, we arrived near the wedding house. It was Sunday, so the road was full of people going to church and *sänbäte*. 'Can we get the wedding house?' I asked her because there were so many eucalyptus trees on the road. She said to me, 'It is far'. I walked the dusty road because the people were taking this road for driving carts. Upon arrival, we stayed at Emebet's friend's house. We were served food and *tella*. They were neighbors and the wedding was Emebet's friend's uncle, Yibeletale. Then, Emebet told me why she didn't want to or couldn't go to the wedding house, and we agreed to call her when I was done with the wedding program, and we parted ways after being introduced to her friend. I went to the wedding house with Emebet's friend. I observed attentively on everything that was going on at the wedding. In this wedding ceremony, three children (here I used fictive names to identify: Belachew, Mulunesh and Almaz) got married at a time due to economic (minimizing wastage to prepare the marriage ceremony). During this time, I conducted different informal conversations and talked with the groom as well as with the bride's friends.

Accordingly, based on them, Belachew, 25 years old, was dropping out of formal school and was a farmer as well as doing small business activities and his bride was dropping out of grade 9 and 17 years old; the bride was good at distilling *aräqi*. Mulunesh was employed in Bahir Dar and her groom was a deacon and lived in Bahir Dar, so the marriage was performed based on religious laws. The other daughter, Almaz, 16 years old, was a grade 9 student at Rim Secondary School. After school, she used to distill *aräqi* and had an ox as well as six chickens, and her groom was an oxen trader. All of them were getting married based on their consent. I systematically observed, the brides and the groom's mother was preparing food and *tella* for the *shimagilawech* or *ketaroch*. Young men hang the photo banners of the bride and the groom. After a few minutes, the wedding guests started singing, and the groom's best friend escorted the bridegroom out of the house saying, 'Hewi loga'. At this time, two of the groom's best friends came to me and asked me to be their escort, and I agreed. Immediately, we went with the groom along with Emebet's friend. I was immersed in the groom's best-men (*yewond mizewoch*). Next, we got into the Isuzu bus. Focusing on this whole process, I continued my spontaneous escort while taking videos and photos of the processes of the current generation wed, what was done at the time of the wedding, and how the marriage was taking place. *Yewond mizewoch* contributed 600 birr each to the transportation cost but the two best-young women (*yeset mizewoch*) did not. Although the road was rough, we traveled for 40 minutes, got out of the car, and walked 10 minutes. The 13 best-young men *sang*, the *best-man*, the *best-woman* and I accompanied the groom. When we reached the wedding house, we entered the house where the bride was. The number of wedding guests was small. There were elders, a priest, relatives, and friends of the bride. After 5 minutes of singing, we accompanied the groom and bride to the arranged place.

Afterward, the lunch ceremony took place. The bride's brother gave two pots of *yeseqa wät* (meat stew ) and *doro wät* (chicken stew), 40 liters of *tella*, 2 bottles of *aräqi*, and 30 *anğära* prepared for both best-men and best-women *mize* . Next, the best- man *mize* selected two best-men from among the 13 best-men and ordered them to provide service for other best-men and best-women.

After the lunch, the ring ceremony took place. We stopped at the door of the house where the priest, the elders, and a few guests had gathered to perform the ceremony. When all was quiet,

the priest began to pray. After 10 minutes, the priest blessed them and the groom placed the bride's ring, earrings, and necklace on her. The bride also put the necklace on the groom.

Then, the graduation ceremony was performed by the father of the bride, the elders, the monks, and the closing prayer of the priest. Here when they graduated, they said that *anch be leji ante be habet lemshinaneſ yabekkachu* (be blessed with children and wealth). Next, the bride and groom kissed their graduated people. The bride's mother gave *gabi* (traditional cotton made ticker blanket like longer and wider scarp) to the groom and *netela* (traditional cotton made lighter longer scarp) to the bride. The other guests gave starting from 50 *birr* for the groom as well as the bride.

At 11:30 PM, we took the bride and returned to the groom's family. We were given a sheep from the bride's family. I was able to collect the information I needed on each occasion because I was one of *mize*. The best-woman, who was with me, told me that I should not leave without observing the evening program. But the next morning, I explained to her that I had an appointment with Bachema rural community. I exchanged phone numbers with majority of *mizewoch* so that I returned to Merawi town. In general, I observed that the local government bodies were participating in the wedding without complaining about the practice of early marriage because they themselves used to marry girls who were below 18 years old. Moreover, the wedding ceremony mentioned above was visible for government bodies that were responsible for preventing the practice of early marriage at the community level.

## **Challenges in a Fieldwork**

During my time in the field, the fieldwork was interesting and a great learning experience. However, I faced the following challenges:

- The unavailability of most male and female informants for interviews at their homes due to peak harvesting season. I tried to overcome this problem by rearranging my schedule in accordance with my informant's convenient time, mostly during religious days, and also going to their workplace.

- The difficulty in getting consent from my informants. Since the instability of politics and the study areas community were the followers of Orthodox Christianity, most of the informants considered and treated me as a government or religious missionary. So, it took time to convince them that I used the information only for academic purposes. I introduced myself as an Orthodox Christian and I showed my ID that my place of birth is Bahir Dar. Thus, to solve this problem, I was required to interact with them frequently and go to church.
- The refusal of some informants to be voice recorded. So, it took me a long time to take notes. But I tried to overcome this problem by taking notes by using personal abbreviations, symbols, and so on.
- The difficulty of getting consent from early married school girls. Even if their marriages were based on their knowledge about marriage before 18 is ‘illegal’, they considered me a government officer. But I tried to overcome this challenge as follows: first, I frequently attended the school compound, and next I talked with students about their schooling, sometimes in class. Then, I helped them in doing mathematics exercises. Finally, I got the consent and did FGD with early married school girls.
- Difficulty of participating in early marriage wedding ceremonies. Since, in most cases, marriage wedding are held on Miyaziya (usually after Easter fast) in the study sites. As a result, my assistant data collector said to me, “There are two girls I know who under 18 years old are. So from these weddings, I will tell you the date of the wedding and you will come to my house and we will go to the wedding together”. Incidentally, starting from 1<sup>th</sup> Miyaziya up to the one-week Ethiopian calendar, there was a security problem. When I called her, I was unable to reach her until the Eastern holiday. However, when I called her after four days of the holiday, she picked me up and said, “I am sorry, the wedding is over”. I tried to find another wedding ceremony with the help of my key informant at Kurtbahir School. Then, one day before the wedding day, we called and arranged to meet at 2 o’clock in the morning, in Merawi town, and went to the wedding together. The next day, when I was on the way to go from Merawi to Bahir Dar, she called me and said, “Tirusira come back to Bahir Dar, my close relative died, I am going there”. Due to these challenges, I couldn’t attend early marriage wedding ceremonies other than one.

#### **1.4.4 Ethical Considerations**

Acquiring data from people about people is part of research (Punch, 2014). So researchers must protect their research subjects, build trust with them, promote research integrity, and guard against misconduct and impropriety (Israel and Hary, 2006).

First, I obtained a supportive letter from department of Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University. Then, the North Mecha *Woreda* administration office informed and gave oral consent about how to get the concerned officers (Women and Children Affairs Office, rural communities' officer, education centers). I also obtained a supportive letter from the Women, Children, and Social Affairs Office at North Mecha *Woreda*. Then, to get the informants' and participants' consent, I gave them information about the purpose of the study and confidentiality. The actual names of the participants are not mentioned in the study; rather, I used codes and fictive names to identify their identities, and also non-participating in the study is allowed.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The finding of this study is expected to provide a brief insight into change and continuity in early marriage arrangement processes and change in age at first marriage across three generations in the study communities. Additionally, the study is expected to give the way for different scholars and researchers who will be interested in conducting further study on change and continuity in early marriage in other communities of the study area in particular and in Amhara region in general.

#### **1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited both geographically and thematically. Geographically, it was conducted among Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities in North Mecha *Woreda*. Thematically, the study focused on change and continuity in early marriage across three generations (grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations). Moreover, the study mainly focused on early married girls, and I specifically asked the informants to share their views, attitudes, thoughts, and emotions related to the discussion guiding questions (see Appendix I )of the study.

The reason to take a large part in this study is that early marriage practices are more commonly performed by girls than boys. Thus, the study rural communities (Bachema and Kurtbahir) were purposely selected to investigate the objectives of this study in detail. The first justification is that the North Mecha *Woreda*-recognized Bachema rural community is free from practicing in harmful traditional practices in general, early marriage in particular (see appendix IV) and Kurtbahir rural community also had a low rate of early marriage reports among North Mecha *Woreda* rural communities.

The distance of the selected rural communities to the capital (Merawi) of North Mecha *Woreda*, Bachema, is 5 km away from the capital, Merawi, whereas Kurtbahir is 15 km away from the capital. However, the study would never attempt to generalize early marriage arrangement process of the *Woreda*; rather, it gave an ethnographic account of data about the two research sites. Moreover, the major reasons for the selection of these study sites were change in early marriage practices, availability of transportation to the research site, and the distance variation from the *woreda* capital, Merawi.

Having this in mind, this study has the following limitations:

- **Problem of translation:** the research data was collected in Amharic language. So, I found it difficult to translate the rich ethnographic data into English.
- **Problem of security in the study area:** the political instability in the study area made it difficult for me to access and obtain all relevant data and to observe weddings during the peak wedding season after the Ethiopian Easter in April 2023.
- **Financial and time constraints:** This kind of ethnographic research requires movement among the study sites. Due to time and financial constraints, the research covers only the selected rural communities. Moreover, the findings of this study represent only the two study communities (Bachema and Kurtbahir) in North Mecha *Woreda*.

## 1.7. Operational Definitions of Terms Used in this Study

**Early marriage:** marriage takes place before legal marriageable age 18 years old.

**Change in early marriage:** in this study change in early marriage refers to change in age at first marriage, change in arrangement process and change in wedding ceremony.

**Continuity in early marriage:** refers to the persistence of early marriage practice.

**Three generations:** In this study, “three generations” means grandmothers’, mothers’ and daughters’ generations, each of the three generations is operationally defined as follows:

1. **Grandmothers’ Generation:** The generation of women who have married granddaughters and who are 50 years old and above.
2. **Mothers’ Generation:** The generation of women who have married daughters and who are 35 years old and above.
3. **Daughters’ Generation:** The current generation of girls who are married and under 18 years old generation.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

The main body of this thesis contains of six chapters. The first chapter deals with introduction part which includes background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research design and approach, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, fieldwork experience, ethical considerations, scope and limitations of the study, significance of the study and organization of the thesis. The second chapter deals with review of related literature. The third chapter describes the study area and ethnographic research sites. The fourth chapter deals with change in early marriage across three generations (grandmothers’, mothers’, and daughters’ generations); and reasons for change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes during the daughters’ generation. The fifth chapter deals with continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across grandmothers’, mothers’, and daughters’ generations and reasons for continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement process during the daughters’ generation. The last chapter but not the least deals with summarize the major findings and draws concluding remarks based on the major findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter consists of the conceptualizations of early marriage and review of related empirical literature.

#### **2.1 Conceptual and Legal Frameworks of Early Marriage**

##### **2.1.1 Local Conceptualizations of Early Marriage**

It is difficult to give a generalized definition of early marriage. Moreover, the socially acceptable marriageable age contradicts the legal marriageable age. The social definition of early marriage is different from the legal definition of early marriage that contribute to the persistence of early marriage (Guday and Eshetu, 2016; Yitaktu et al., 2023). In Ethiopia in general and in Amhara in particular, societies can defined early marriage in-terms of age group. Accordingly, Bogalech (2008) states that early marriages are any unions in which one of the partners is under eighteen years old. Child marriage refers to unions below 10 years old, and adolescent marriages are between girls in the ten to fifteen age range (Ibid). Moreover, the recent study by Yitaktu et al., (2023) found that the socially appropriate age for girls' is 12 years old because girls are eligible for marriage before the age of 14 because they are no longer socially considered as children, whereas boys are eligible for marriage usually at the age of 18 or above (Guday, 2005:125).

Similarly, UN ECA (1999), cited in Guday (2005:45), defines early marriage as the traditional practice of individuals getting married under 18 years old. This concept encompasses various types of marriage that occur before adulthood. In this context of early marriage, UNECA also distinguishes child marriage, early adolescent marriage, and late adolescent marriage as subsets of early marriage. Child marriage involves the union of children who are under the age of 10. Further, UNECA defines early adolescent marriage as marriages taking place from 10 to 15 years old, and the age range for late adolescent marriage is 16 to 20 years old. As a result, early marriage refers to a marriage practice that occurs before or during adolescence. In this study, I prefer to use the term early marriage to explain change and continuity in early marriage across

three generations in the study community, as most other research in the field does. This study contends that early marriage is a broad notion that encompasses child marriage, adolescent marriage, and child bride.

Furthermore, although most people understand the legal meaning of early marriage, in actuality, in the study communities, early marriage is conceptualized as a marriage taking place when girls aren't physically, psychologically, or emotionally strong and ready for marriage. Accordingly, early marriage means that females marry before they reach the socially accepted marriage age (*lä-aqəmā hewan dāräsäč*) which is usually 15 years old and before they physically mature (biological characteristics such as menstruation onset and breast development). In other words, the marriage that takes place during adolescence years is not seen as early marriage among the studied communities. This means that in the study community, people define early marriage and child marriage differently. So, in this study, early marriage is used to refer marriage that takes place earlier than 18 years of age.

### **2.1.2 Government Legal Frameworks**

Ethiopia has formulated and written different legal and policy frameworks for preventing gender based violence in general, early marriage in particular. In this regard, Article 35(4) of the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995, which discusses the abolition of harmful customs, provides women with equal rights and protections as men and also goes into more specific rights, such as the rights to equality in marriage, maternity leave with full pay, full consultation in national development policies, and the right to acquire, administer, control, use, and transfer property, with an emphasis on land and inheritance issues.

The Revised Family Code of 2000 eliminates betrothal and raises the minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both sexes (Art. 7). It also addresses other issues such as divorce and custody. Early marriage is illegal and a crime under Article 648 of the Revised Criminal Code of 2005, which states that "whoever concludes marriage with a minor apart from circumstances permitted by the revised Family Code is punishable with: a) rigorous imprisonment not exceeding three years, where the victim is thirteen years or above; or b) rigorous imprisonment not exceeding seven years, where the victim is less than thirteen years."

Likewise, the Amhara National Regional State Family Code (2003) establishes the essential conditions of marriage in Article 17 and Article 18, which state the issue at hand as follows:

*A valid marriage shall take place only when the spouses have given their free and full consent (Article 17). Neither a man nor a woman who has not attained the full age of eighteen years shall conclude marriage (sub Article 1), and notwithstanding the provisions of sub Article (1) of this Article, Justice Bureau of the region may, on the application of the future spouses, of the parents or guardian of one of them, for serious cause, grant dispensation of not more than two years (Article 18).*

Based on the above articles on which the national as well as the regional legal frameworks are based, early marriage is a fundamental violation of human rights, threatening the lives, well-being, and futures of girls around the world (UNICEF, 2022). Based on the above national and regional laws, the minimum marriageability age is 18 years. So, in this study, early marriage is used to refer to girls that get married before they reach 18 years old.

## **2.1.3 Types of Early Marriage**

### **2.1.3.1 Types of Early Marriage in Ethiopia**

Within the Ethiopian context, there are various forms of early marriage, marriage before or during adolescence. In Ethiopia, early marriage can be categorized into three types: these are arranged marriage, abdication marriage and marriage by choice (Emirie et al., 2021; Pankhurst et al., 2016). Moreover, According to Pankhurst et al., (2016), basically early teen marriage and middle teen marriage type of early marriage are practiced in Ethiopia. Early teen marriage is a marriage where the girls are between 13 and 14 years. This is dominantly exercised in northern part of Ethiopia. Girls get married when they are 15, 16 or 17 years old; this is categorized under middle teen age. This type of early marriage is mostly common in the Oromia Regional State. Most marriage is formulated based on the negotiation of the spouses' family than the spouses' self- decision.

### **2.1.3.2. Types of Early Marriage in Amhara Region**

Guday (2005: 125), who conducted an in-depth ethnographic investigation, classified early marriage arrangements in the Mecha *Woreda* (currently North Mecha *Woreda* in North Gojjam Zone), West Gojjam of Amhara into four types. These are:

1. *Yeqal kidan gabcha* (promissory marriage, betrothal before birth).
2. *Yanqelbba gabcha* (marriage of a female child who is still on the back of her mother and fed her mother's breast, or marriage of a girl-child between the age of five and nine).
3. *Yemadego gabcha* (marriage of a girl-child between the age of five and nine)
4. *Yelejinet gabcha* (marriage between female and male children, female between the ages of 10 and 14, and males between the ages of 15 and 17).

According to Guday (2005), all the above types of early marriage are arranged by parents' consent rather than the spouses' willingness and full consents.

## **2.2 Review of Related Literature**

### **2.2.1 Prevalence of Early Marriage across Three Generations**

As Ethiopia has adopted various national, international, and continental human rights conventions, laws, and policies to protect all peoples in general, and children from early marriage in particular that have been continued in the country, early marriage progress is declining in Ethiopia. However, most studies argued that early marriage is still more prevalent in Ethiopia in general, and in Amhara Regional State in particular (Abera et al., 2020; Zelalem, 2018; Setognal et al., 2021).

Early marriage is a global phenomenon and it has persisted in Ethiopia across generations. However, due to governments and NGOs efforts to tackle early marriage practice, the prevalence rate in Ethiopia in general and in Amhara in particular has registered a decline progress. Based on the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Surveys from 2005-2016, the girls married before the legal minimum age of marriage i.e.18 years old has declined by 18%, and Amhara has experienced greater reductions next to Addis Ababa (Erulkar, 2022) because of the increase in women's education, urbanization, behavioral change, and media exposure (Dessie et al., 2023).

The study by Bantebya et al., (2018), also shows that the mean age at first marriages has decreased from the past to the present. Similarly, Guday (2005) reveals that early arranged marriage traditions in Ethiopia vary between generations and are mainly organized by parents,

with a longer length of procedure. Furthermore, the average age at first marriage in the mothers' generation was eleven years during her study time, but it dropped to eight years in the daughters' generation at her study time (Ibid.). Hence, even if there are some changes, early marriage which was common in the past remains common present.

In their study Melese et al., (2021) found out that the prevalence of early marriage among grandmothers', mothers', and daughters' generations is 75.9 percent, 69.9 percent, and 74.3 percent, respectively. This illustrates that early marriage appears to get less and less as we move from the grandmothers', mothers', and a slight increase in daughters' generations. The greatest decline occurred in the grandmother to mother generations. These generations also saw significant increases in the mean age at first marriage. For the grandmothers', mothers', and daughters' generations, the mean age at first marriage was 13.5 years, 14.5 years, and 14.6 years, respectively. However, there was a rise in the prevalence of early marriage throughout mothers' and daughters' generations, as well as a little drop in the mean at age at first marriage across mothers' and daughters' generations.

### **2.2.2 Change and Continuity in Early Marriage Arrangement Patterns across Three Generations**

Arranged marriage is common in Ethiopia. Marriage union in general, early marriage in particular, is mostly based on the parents' consent to the proposals and parental blessing (Kaduuli, 2010, cited in Bantebya et al., 2018).

The groom's side is required to make the first marriage proposal in an arranged marriage. The girl's father is in charge of gathering information about a potential proposal and making the ultimate choice about the marriage (Ghimire et al., 2018). On the other hand, there is some space of girls' choice on marriage in today's generation compared to the in the past generations (Jones et al., 2020). Moreover, currently girls are deciding whom to marry, when to get married and how to married, or girls have the consent to get marry at any age specifically adolescence age with the driver of education and urbanization, so that arranged marriage is somehow changed to cohabitation (UNICEF and IDRC, 2020).

Despite these changes, because of the patriarchal system, there have been the consent of girls' choice. Fathers are acknowledged to be the head of the household and the breadwinner of the family (Guday, 2005: 99). Hence, these show that the decision making processes are different based on gender. In terms of marriage preparation, the fathers of the bride and groom must make financial and social arrangements for their daughter's/ son's marriage. Furthermore, parental endowment, usually in the form of cattle or land, is popular in the Amhara Region (Guday, 2005), and these endowments are equal contributions from the spouses' families to the couples in order for them to establish themselves with wealth. These parental endowments are still prevalent in adolescence marriage (UNICEF and IDRC, 2020). According to Alemante (2004) cited in Guday (2005:46), there are four phases of early marriage arrangement patterns in Ethiopia. These are:

1. the arrangement of marriage for political alliance “dynastic inter-marriage” which was practiced before 1941,
2. early marriage arrangement based on economic motives which was in the period from 1941-1975,
3. early marriage arrangement was based on economic motives and life securities during the mid-1980s, and
4. Early marriage arrangement patterns based on cultural and religious covers or sociocultural justifications since 1980s towards the present.

On the other hand, Guday and Eshetu (2016) identified early marriage arrangement patterns across grandparents', parents', and children's generations. These researchers found that the marriage arrangement pattern was changed across three generations. The grandparents' generation arranged early marriages based on religious and political concerns. Early marriage arrangement patterns in the parents' generation was similar to those in the grandparents' generation, but the quality and quantity of marriage decreased due to insecurity. The same study also revealed that in children's generation, the public attendance and witnesses of individuals in marriage arrangements have been changed to be hidden. Furthermore, the marriage feast was more elaborate in grandparents' and parents' generations, but in children's generation marriage arrangement and feast takes place in a more secret manner (Ibid).

Spouses have different age gaps between them. This age gap is still commonly practiced. The husband should be five to ten years older than his wife (Jones et al, 2020; Guday, 2005). The major issue in this age difference is to keep the security of the marriage (Guday and Eshetu, 2016).

### **2.2.3 Reasons for Change and Continuity in Early Marriage Arrangement Patterns across Three Generations**

#### **2.2.3.1 Reasons for Change in Early Marriage Arrangement**

The practice of early marriage has changed as a result of governments and non-governmental organizations working to eradicate it in Ethiopia generally and in Amhara specifically (Erulkar, 2022). The shifts in the early marital arrangement pattern start with the attitudes of the family. Therefore, the primary reasons for the change in the early marriage arrangement pattern are economic issue, social and family reasons, and government policy (Guday and Eshetu, 2016).

According to the review, arranged marriage has declined and cohabitation has become a norm. These changes are the result of increased opportunities and contexts for young people in all sites to get to know each other and make their own decisions about forming relationships (Pankhurst et al., 2016 cited in UNICEF and IDRC, 2020:4).

The major reasons for the change in early marriage are the direct results and interrelated outcomes of different stakeholders. As a result, Jones et al., (2018) argue that the change in the arrangement of early marriage is the outcome of macro, meso and micro level factors that work to shift the gender norms. Here, the argument urges to indicate the 'macro' as the government formulates policy and laws that promote gender equality and challenge their odds of early marriage. The meso factor includes formal education that have crucial role for challenging social norms and early marriage. The micro level for family, peers, personal experiences and interpersonal relationships that who prefer to shift gender norms and early marriage. This line of reasoning further elaborates that the availability of education, the improvement of boys' and men's education, girls' aspiration of future husband, keeping more girls in school and rights based school curricula, and land fragmentation, improvement of divorce and contraception are driving changes in gender norms and early marriage (Jones et al., 2018:49).

Furthermore, school curricula in Ethiopia, particularly civics and biology subjects, improved children's knowledge of their rights; school girls' clubs that deliver messages about the dangers of child marriage and foster friendships between girls and teachers; and government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that raise awareness among communities or gatekeepers about the consequences of child marriage and the positive outcomes of girls' education drives for a change in early marriage (Jones et al., 2020).

Additionally, Tafere et al., (2020) showed that expansion of urbanization, schools and local income-earning opportunities, combined with an increased awareness of child rights, appear to provide young people with the ability to more freely exercise choice over their relationships, including self-initiating their marriages or union are the basic reasons to change girls' age at first marriage.

### **2.2.3.2 Reasons for the Continuity in Early Marriage Arrangement Patterns**

Apart from the change in early marriage arrangements, there have been several reasons for practicing and processing early marriage. As a result, the reasons for the persistence of early marriage are traditional and patriarchal norms, which continue to dominate marriage procedures and practices, particularly in rural regions that limit girls' choices (UNICEF, 2020).

Early marriage is still practiced in Ethiopia, particularly in the Amhara Region, for a variety of reasons that extend across generations (Abeje et al., 2023; Guday and Eshetu, 2016). The reviewed studies have continuously maintained that the arrangement of early marriage in Ethiopia in general and in Amhara in particular, is closely related to community and family factors, the parents' economic status, and the 'low' status of women in education and decision-making. In other words, the reasons given for early marriage in Ethiopia revolve around economic, socio-cultural, and institutional factors (Melese et al., 2021).

According to a study by Abeje et al., (2023), despite the fact that early marriage practice is changing, there are numerous reasons for the continued practice of early marriage as explained in the next section.

### **2.2.3.2.1 Social Norms and Family Context Reasons**

Social norms influence girls' well-being. As girls mature in their socialization of social norms and values, they are confined at home, assisting their mothers with domestic chores, preparing food, caring for the family, being expected to maintain limited (but supervised) interaction with community members, and not being expected to prioritize education, but prioritize marriage without considerations of age (Abeje et al., 2023).

Early marriage is rooted in traditional social and cultural norms and values of girls. Parents have put reasons to practice early marriage of daughters as a form of protection against premarital sex and pregnancy, keeping virginity until marriage, thus keeping the family's dignity/honor as well as offering the young girls lifelong security (Guday, 2005; Guday and Eshetu, 2016; Pankhurst et al., 2016; Alem et al., 2020; Melese et al., 2021), fear the prospect of remaining unmarried (*qomo-qär*), parents desire to have male protector and security providers for their daughters, parents' desire to bring or have grandchildren and assure continuity of their family line (Guday and Eshetu, 2016; Abeje et al., 2023), and peer pressure (Emirie et al., 2021) are some of the reasons for the persistence of early marriage. In addition to these, as parents or families pressurize girls to get married (Abeje et al., 2023) this contributes the continuity of early marriage.

Even if, the parents' attitudes towards education is improved, but still it is viewed as valueless and girls are unable to advance with their education because of their domestic work load (Emirie et al., 2021; Abeje et al., 2023). Lack of hope in formal education also motivates parents to marry off their children early (Guday and Eshetu, 2016).

### **2.2.3.2.2 Economic Context Reason**

Early marriage is common in low economic status than high economic status as it is direct linked to poverty (UNICEF, 2021; Melese et al., 2021). Moreover, engaging in early marriage can lead to short-term economic benefits for the family, in terms of money, cattle and land (Vergroesen, 2017). In other words, early marriage is a means of coping up the economic crises or shortage for family in terms of getting bride wealth and bridal gifts (Melese et al., 2021). On the longer term, as Guday's (2005) and Melese et al.'s (2021) studies indicate that keeping the girls in the family

house and paying for their education poses a continuous economic burden on the parents and the rest of the family.

Furthermore, early marriage for girls is viewed as a means of escaping poverty and family problem, i.e., if a girl is married early, the family has one less household worker, and the hope is that the girl herself will be better off. In other words, parents may feel that marrying a daughter at a young age can help them economically besides helping the girls themselves escape from workload while with their families (Pankhurst, 2016). Early marriage is a systematic way of parents to escape from girls' school fees, school materials like exercise-book, pen and so on and other expenditures. Similarly, Rubin et al., (2009); Sekiwunga and Whyte, (2009) cited in Bantebya et al., (2014) show that parents feel educating a girl as a waste of time and resources when they are supposed to get married.

On the other hand, parents' wealth status is directly linked to early marriage continuity. Wealthy parents can have a great influence in the marriage arrangement because they have the potential to exchange gifts and parental endowment to the new spouses (Guday and Eshetu, 2016). Moreover, wealthy parents have desires to create alliance with respected and wealthy persons (Emirie et al., 2021).

### **2.2.3.2.3 Institutional Factors**

Besides the sociocultural and economic reasons, institutional factors also contribute to practicing early marriage. Lack of access to secondary school is mostly cited as the basic institutional factor for early marriage. Moreover, according to Melese et al., (2021), studies show that long distance from home to school, insufficient availability of instructional materials, lack of means of transportation and limited job opportunity are listed as the institutional factors that enforced early marriage.

Furthermore, the study by Alem et al., (2020) affirmed that educational status of women, and decisions on first marriage, educational status of husband, and region were significantly associated with early marriage. The women who have no education are 4.21 times highly affected by early marriage than the women who have completed higher education (Ibid). Limited access to post primary education and poor quality of education (Emirie et al., 2021), weak law

enforcement, and girls' inability to advance with their education (Abeje et al., 2023) are contributors to the persistent practice of early marriage.

#### **2.2.3.2.4 Place of Residence**

Some studies (e.g., Guday, 2005; Pankhurst et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2018) reveal the relationship between rural and urban residence with age at first marriage. Thus early marriage is more common phenomena in rural areas than in the urban areas. Accordingly, the study of Alem et al., (2020) indicates that living in rural areas increases the level of early marriage. Thus, girls who live in rural areas are more likely to marry 1.6 years younger than those who live urban areas.

On the other hand, the study by Minale and Dagne (2019) found that in Injibara Town, Amhara Region, the trend of early marriage has been seen 44.8%, higher prevalence than the national average. Hence, early marriage is also practiced in urban areas.

#### **2.2.3.2.5 COVID -19**

Even though the prevalence of early marriage has shown significant reductions in the world in general and in Ethiopia in particular, the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 appears to contribute to the increase in the early marriage. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021), over the next decade, 10 million additional girls will marry before the legal age of 18 years old due to the pandemic. According to Jones et al., (2020), girls are at the most risk of early marriage than boys in the phase of the pandemic. The study reveals that seasonality, lack of surveillance and school closures are listed as key factors that lead to parents to arrange early marriage during the pandemic period (Ibid).

Generally, the majority of the findings of the empirical studies in early marriage show some changes in the practice of early marriage in Ethiopia. However, the studies didn't pay enough attention to the change and continuity in early marriage across three generation in the country in general and in the research area in particular. The study conducted by Abeje et al., (2023) focused on the change and continuity of early marriage in the West Gojjam Zone of of Bahir Dar and Kewit *Woreda* in the Amhara National Regional State. The study employed a mixed research approach. This study focuses on the same themes dealt by Abeje et al., (2023), but it

differs in its geographical scope (North Mecha *Woreda*) and in its approach (a diachronic qualitative research approach). In other words, this study focuses on the change and continuity in early marriage across three generations (grandmothers', mothers', and daughters' generations) in North Mecha *woreda* among the selected rural communities that have not been addressed in the previous studies. Hence, this study attempts to fill the gaps in the reviewed related studies.

## CHAPTER THREE

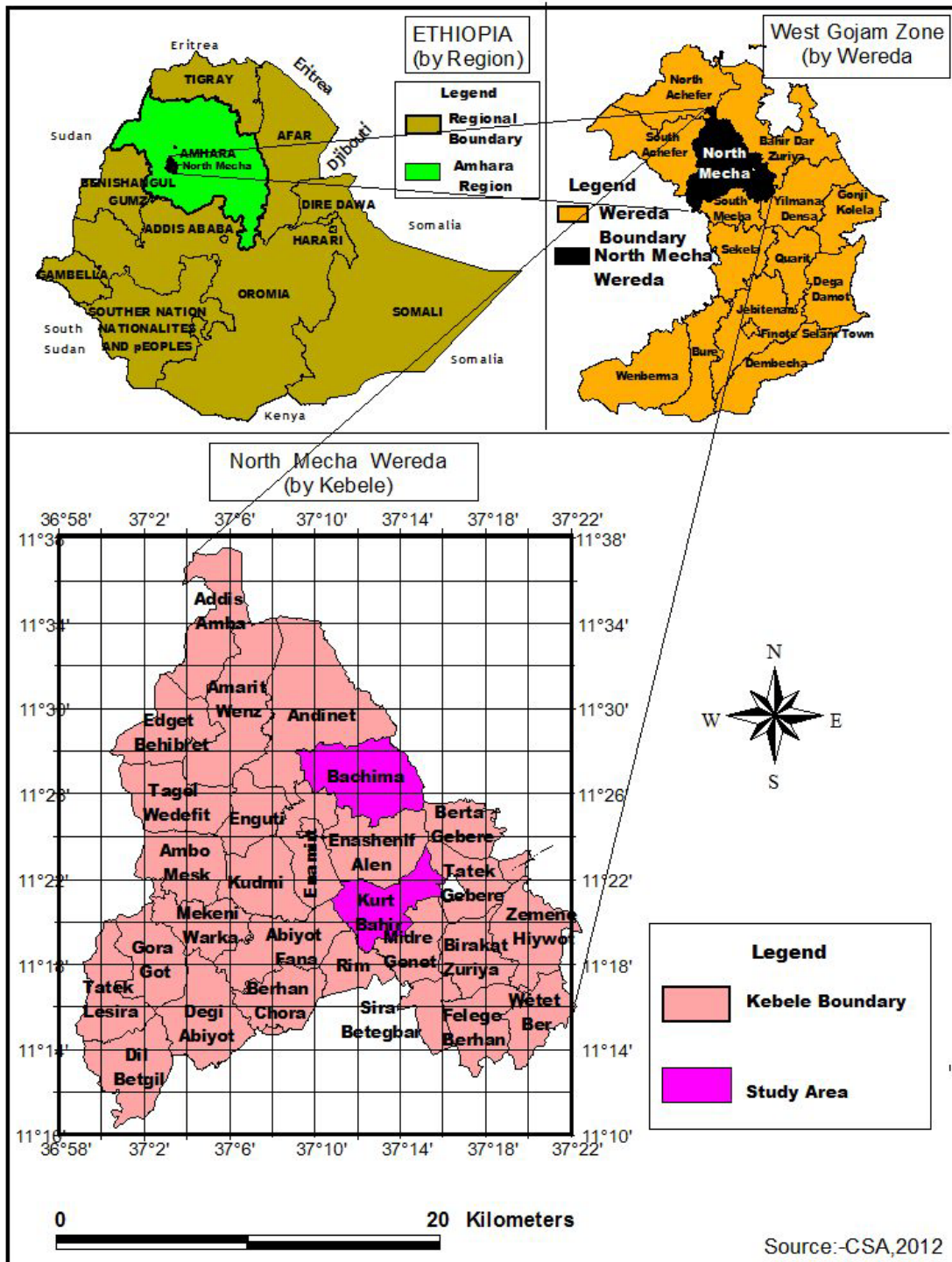
### DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA AND THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH SITES

#### 3.1 Study Area Description

The study area, North Mecha *Woreda*, is found in the West Gojjam Zone of the Amhara Region (see Figure 1 below). It is bordered on the west south by South Achefer *Woreda*; on the east by Yielmana Densa *Woreda*; on the south by South Mecha *Woreda*; and on the north by Bahir Dar Zuria *Woreda*. It is 34 km far from the southern part of Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara region, and about 546 km away from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia (WASH Strategic Plan in North Mecha *Woreda*, 2018:2).

There are 33 rural communities and 5 urban towns in North Mecha *Woreda* (Ibid). For the purpose of administration, the rural communities are categorized into six *qätänna*:(1)Merawi Zuria,(2) Rim,(3) Wettet Abay,(4) Amarit, (5)Dagi and (6) Birakat. Merawi Zuria *qätänna* (where the first ethnographic research site, Bachema, is found) is located in *wäyña däga* (mid-highland) ecological zone and it consists of 8 rural communities (Enamert, Bachema, *Enguiti*, Kudmi, Enashenfalen, Kolela, Berta Geberi and Taringa). Rim *qätänna* (where the second research site, Kurtbahir, is found) is situated in *wäyña däga* (mid-highland) ecological zone and it consists of 4 rural communities (Rim town, Rim Zuriya, Kurtbahir, and Abyot Fana). Wettet Abay *qätänna* is located in *wäyña däga* (mid-highland) ecological zone and it consists of 6 rural communities (Bikolo, Meken, Amebo Mesike, Agamena, Goragote, and Dermeni). Amarit *qätänna* is located in *wäyña däga* (mid-highland) ecological zone and it consists of 6 rural communities (Amarit town, Tekle Dibi, Addis Amba, Ediget Behibret, Huletu Teleta, and Andenet). Dagi *qätänna* is located in *wäyña däga* (mid-highland) ecological zone and it includes 6 rural communities (Dagi town, Dagi Abyot, Addis Alem, Dagali Addis Alem, and Tateqe le sira). Birakat *qätänna* is located both in *wäyña däga* (midland) and *däga* ecological zones and involves 8 rural communities (Birakat town, Birakat Zuriya, Tateqe Gebere, Zemene Hiwot, Wettet Bere, Yenesale Merte, Felege Brihan, and Meder Genet (NMWPC, 2021/2022).

Figure 1. Map of the Study Area



According to North Mecha *Woreda* Planning Commission (NMWPC, 2021/2022), the *woreda* has a total population of 301,537 (148,742 males and 152,795 females), out of which 52,446(17.39 %) are urban residents whereas 249,091(82.6%) are rural residents. This shows that the majority the *Woreda's* population lives in rural areas including the research sites (Bachema and Kurtbahir),

### **3.2 Agro-ecology**

North Mecha *Woreda* has two climatic zones: 92 % *wäyna däga* (mid-highland), and 8% *däga* (highland). Its annual average temperature is 24 degree centigrade and its altitude is between 1,500-2,500m above sea level (WASH Strategic Plan in North Mecha *Woreda*, 2018). It occupies an estimated total area of 108,012.7 hectares or 1,080.13 Km<sup>2</sup> (7,111.97 hectares for cultivation, 12,818.98 hectares for grazing/grassland, 20,597.4 hectares for forestry, 2,283.76 hectares covered by water) and among 7111.97 hectare cultivable land, only 3841.6 hectares is used for irrigation and other projects (NMWPC,2021/2022:3).

Most parts of North Mecha *Woreda's* landscape are plain and with red soil type dominance (Ibid). This means that the study area is suitable for the production of agricultural products. *Meher* (*Tehisas*, *Tir*, and *Yekatit*) is the harvesting season for the majority of the rural communities in the *woreda* (including the research sites, Bachema and Kurtbahir). Around 12 rural communities (Kudmi, Enashenfalen, Kolela, Taringa, Enamert, Enguiti, Tekle Dibi, Ambo Mesik, Ediget Behibret, Abyot Fana, Huletu Teleta and Andenet) of the *woreda* benefit from *Qoga* dame that has two production seasons: *Belg* (i.e. Miyazia and Ginbot) and *Meher* (i.e. Tehisas, Tir and Yekatit).

### **3.3 Livelihood Activities**

In Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities, agriculture is the major means of livelihood activity. The study communities are performing agricultural activities (including livestock rearing). The major types of livestock reared in the research sites are cattle and equine; oxen, cow, calf, heifer, sheep, and goat constitute the prominent cattle. Oxen, sheep, and goats are used as food and for sale. Oxen are the principal cattle for farming and cows for milk. In the study communities, dairy cows are another means to generate household income by selling milk. Some

of the study communities have *Korma* (i.e., improved species of cows). *Yegama kebt* (equine) is the second important type of livestock, comprising mules and donkeys. Mules are used for material transportation and as a source of income through driving carts.

In the study communities, men and boys (usually above 15 years old) are also involved in trading livestock (oxen, sheep, goats), driving carts, daily labor (cutting eucalyptus trees, eucalyptus wood peeling), charcoal production, selling eucalyptus wood, etc. On the other hand, women are generating income from distilling and selling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor), and daily labor (embedding charcoal with compost). Some adolescent married females have small shops where they used to sell mobile cards, hair oil, hair brushes, *omo*, biscuits, needles, coffee, and so on (see Appendix V:3), and some sell tea and *Shiro*, especially in Yidonga area ( Bachema) due to the main road from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar and the bajaj station for Bachema communities.

In both research sites (Bachema and Kurtbahir), maize and grain (*dagusa*) are the major crops. Wheat, Lupinus albus (*gibto/gulo*), *teff*, and barley are also produced at both sites. Maize and grain, which are the principal food crops, are also used as cash crops. In other words, farmers in both rural communities have access to either large farmland or small land tend to produce maize because its product is better than other crops and it is an important ingredient for preparing *aräqi* (homemade local liquor).

Barely and lupinus albus are the second-important crops. Barely is the second important ingredient of *aräqi* (homemade local liquor) and *tella* (homemade local beer). On the other hand, lupinus albus is used as a food crop, especially when people drink *aräqi* and *tella*. During my stay in the field, the price of the above-mentioned major crop products was as follows: One bowl (in Amharic *mesferiya sahin*), which is equivalent to 1 kilogram, was 30 *birr*; one bowl of maize was 25 *birr*; one bowl of grain was 32 *birr*; and one bowl of Lupinus albus was 25 *birr*.

### **3.4 Social Institutions**

Health institutions: North Mecha *woreda* has only one hospital in Merawi, the capital of the *woreda*. In this *woreda*, there are 10 health centers and 38 health posts. This means that almost all of the *woreda* rural communities' have a health post, whereas the health center is located at the *qätänna* level (NMWPC, 2021/2022). In both research sites, the health extension workers are

providing contraceptives, pregnancy monitoring, vaccination, and health insurance services at the health posts. Most women have been using injectable contraceptives do not get the service when they come to get the service; or they return without an injection. Most women in both research sites do not want to use other types such as three- or five-year contraceptives because they think that they will not be able to have children when they want to have children.

Educational institutions: According to the *Woreda's* Planning Commission report (2021/2022), there are 22 first-cycle primary schools (grades 1- 4), 54 full-cycle primary schools (grades 1-8), 6 secondary schools (grades 9 and 10), two preparatory schools (grade 11-12) and only one TVTE government college.

There is also preschool education (zero class) in all primary schools and each rural community has at least two primary schools. With specific reference to the two study communities, the first research site (Bachema) has two full-cycle primary schools (Bachema Primary School and Yechali Primary School) and one first-cycle primary school in Yidonga (see table 3.1 below). The second research site (Kurtbahir) has one full-cycle primary school (Kurtbahir Primary School) and one first-cycle primary school (Neno Primary School) (see table 3.1 below).

**Table 3.1 Research Sites number of Primary Schools and their Expansion Year**

No	School Name	Year of Expansion	Location(Research site)
1.	Yechalie Primary School	1-6 grades in 1982(1975 E.C) Upgraded 1-8 grades in 2011(2004 E.C)	Bachema rural community
2.	Bachema Primary School	1-4 grades in 1998(1991 E.C) Upgraded 1-8 grades in 2015(2008 E.C)	
3.	Yegend Primary School	1-4 grades in 2012(2005E.C)	

4.	Kurtbahir Primary School	1-4 grades in 1986(1979 E.C) Upgraded 1-8 grades in 2012(2005 E.C)	Kurtbahir community	rural
5.	Neno Primary School	Alternative School ( <i>Amarach tmertbet</i> ) in 2003( 1996 E.C) Upgraded 1-4 grades in 2010 (2003 E.C)		

Source: KII2, January 16, 2023

Religious Institutions: In the *woreda* context there are three religious institutions for Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Protestants, respectively. The majority (95.54 %) of the *woreda* population are the followers of Orthodox Christianity followed by Muslim followers (4.46%) and protestant followers (0.1%) (NMWPC, 2021/2022:14). In both research sites, there are some protestant followers, whereas majority of the study area is followers of Orthodox Christianity.

In both research sites (Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities), bicycles, motor bicycles, and bajaj are used for people's transportation. In Kurtbahir, *kitiket mekina* (Isuzu bus) is also used for transportation. Both communities use solar energy for light, wood, crop residues, and animal dung are used as the major source of energy for cooking and distilling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor).

### **3.5 Gender and Primary Education in the Study Communities**

According to the North Mecha *Woreda* education office, the enrolment rate of females in formal schools is increasing from year to year. This enrolment rate is due to parents' knowledge about the value of education in general and girls' education in particular; and the presence of educationally successful female family members or kin who are used as positive role models for female students. According to the key informants, the other important thing to increase girls' school enrolment is the government's focus on promoting girls' education by creating awareness among parents about the importance of girls' education and by punishing parents if they arrange early marriage for their daughters.

According to the review of Bachema and Kurtbahir full cycle primary school rosters, the female school enrolment rate has increased during the duration of the ethnographic fieldwork compared

to the previous years. During the same period, the proportion of girls enrolled in formal education is greater than that of boys (see Table 3.3 & 3.4 below). According to the informal interview with teachers, this is because parents in general fathers in particular are more aware about to send girls to primary school.

**Table 3.2: Bachema and Kurtbahir Primary Schools (BPS &KBS) Enrolled and Dropped-out Male and Female Pupils by Year and Grade Level**

Year	Grade Level	Enrolled						Dropped- out					
		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
		BPS	KPS	BPS	KPS	BPS	KPS	BPS	KPS	BPS	KPS	BPS	KBS
2020/21 (2013 E.C)	1-4	405	321	372	334	777	655	14	3	10	8	24	11
	5-8	305	318	204	388	709	696	44	35	26	28	70	63
	1-8	710	639	576	<b>722</b>	1486	1361	58	38	36	36	<b>94</b>	74
2021/22 (2014 E.C)	1-4	374	342	340	330	714	672	25	15	13	1	38	16
	5-8	319	267	337	355	656	622	59	40	48	38	107	78
	1-8	693	609	677	685	1370	1294	84	55	61	29	<b>145</b>	94

Source: Bachema and Kurtbahir Primary School Rosters (2020 - 2022)

While enrolment rates in primary education are improving in both study sites, the school drop-out rate of both girls and boys is also increasing from year to year in both study communities (see Table 3.3 & 3.4 above). The school dropout rate of boys is higher than girls (Ibid). According to the local people, the basic reason for school dropout is a lack of hope in formal education due to a low passing rate of preparatory school students (see Table 3.5 below) and a lack of job opportunities for those who graduated from higher education institutions.

Local primary school attending children learn basic maths calculation which is helpful for boys to become good small business traders, and for girls to become good income generators by distilling and selling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor). Accordingly, the reason why children go to school now is to be able to read and write, to be able to calculate, and to wait until girls reach the age of *akale meten* (usually 15 years), and some of the boys are to get a driver's license.

Boys usually drop out between grades 5 and 8. This is partly explained by the fact that once boys reach grades 5-8 or age 15 and above, they become eligible to work for a job in small business trading. Many of them stop schooling once they have reached this education level because they are migrating to '*bereha*' (Jawe, Bambuk, and Metema) to start earning an income. Teachers, students, and community leaders in both sites felt that students failed because the national exam they were required to take in grade 12 was tough. Those who fail feel ashamed and demotivated to continue their education. Some (especially girls) are also influenced by their peers, i.e. when their best friends stop attending school, some girls also stop learning. For boys, friends and parents influence them to drop out of education and engage in trading as well as migrate to Jawe, Bambuk, and Metema for work. According to the FGDs with elder men and women, unemployed graduates push students to drop out the formal school and make their businesses for boys, and get married for girls.

During the study period (2022/23), there were two preparatory schools (Grades 11-12) in North Mecha *Woreda*. On the contrary, the passing rate of grade 12 national exams for both girls and boys declined compared with the past two consecutive years (see Table 3.5 below). When we see the female pupils' passing rate as compared to male pupils, only 19.2% of girls joined university education. This implies that only a small number of girls passed the national exam. Hence, even though girls' participation in preparatory education is on the increase, the gender gap still exists in passing the university entrance national exam. According to the local people, girls who are not able to pass the grade 12 national exam used to come back to their natal family and get married.

**Table 3.3 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who passed the National Exams in North Mecha Woreda**

Year	Number of Registered Students			Number of students who Passed the Exam			Percentage
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
2020/21 (2013 E.C)	1127	1378	2505	244	141	385	15%
2022/23 (2014 E.C)	1904	1834	3738	134	32	166	4.44%

Source: North Mecha Woreda education office (2021- 2022)

### 3. 6. Capital

All community members have not equal status. According to Bevan (1997) cited in Guday and Eshetu (2016), there are different criteria to categorize rural communities into poor or rich. In Bachema and Kurtbahir, according to interviews held with key informants, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with men and women, the community members are categorized into poor and rich based on the following criteria:

1. Economic capital includes the size of land (covered by eucalyptus tree and used for cultivation), type of house, number of cattle, and amount of annual crop product.
2. Social capital involves relationships with others, number of children, family ties or kin groups, and membership in social organizations such as *mahbär*, *idir*, and *equp*.
3. Educational capital includes a number of educated and employed children.

To be considered rich in the study of rural communities, the rural farmers needs to have more than 5 *qada*<sup>5</sup> land, more than 10 cattle or 3 *korma* (lit. improved species of cows), have smooth relationships with others, and participate in organizations. Having educated family members or

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<sup>5</sup> 1 *qada* land is equal to 0.25 hectare (Guday, 2005:129).

children and who have been employed are also indicators of a rich peasant. On the other hand, the reverse is under the category of poor.

### **3.7 Rural Institutions and Community Based Organizations**

#### **3.7.1 Rural Institutions**

In Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities, there are local administrative structures. The leader of the kebele (*liqemenber or wanna Astedadari*), Manager, and parish leader. They are responsible for collecting taxes and managing and implementing the rural land policies. In both sites, there are women's affairs, women's federation, women's league, and women's association structures. These are represented by females to ensure women's participation and gender equality. Basically, the responsibility of these women based institutions is to help each other and support community women, and to prevent girls and women from harmful traditional practices (HTPs), especially early marriage and FGM.

#### **3.7.2 Community Based Organizations**

*Debo or wenfel* (helping each other at work) is one of the community-based organizations (CBOs). This is done by men, especially during ploughing, harvesting, and building houses. This takes place if any rural community is unable to employ a daily laborer. Currently, all households in the study communities have their own iron-corrugated roof houses (*yaqorqoro bet*).

*Sänbäte* and *mahbär* are the other forms of community-based organizations of peasants that help each other when he/she is A'giyam or läqso *sidersbet* (*lit.* sarrow). Accordingly, *sänbäte* is a Sunday feast, celebrated on the shade of trees in the church compound. *Sänbäte* is mostly regarded as men; women participate in the feast if she is single (due to divorce, a monk, or husbands die); whereas *mahbär* is held in the name of different religious saints. Hence, St. Sillasse, St. Michael, Kidist Kidanemihret, St. Gabriel, St. Maryam, St. George, and Beale Egiziyabiher. In all the above listed *mahbär*, both men and women are participated in the feast.

*Zämäd ginignyu* is community based organization with relatives in both mother and father lineage that helps to prevent marriage between relatives. Accordingly, *Zämäd ginignyu* is three-day feast, celebrated on the shade of trees and sponsored by the relatives in the same area. On

that day, no less than three heads of cattle would be slaughtered. Moreover, 20 liters of *tella*, 20 *anğära*, and 50 *birr* for each people are expected to contribute to the feast. Men, women, and children participate in the feast and know each of the relatives in the feast.

### 3.7.3 Religious Celebration

Among the followers of the Orthodox religion, there are major known annual holidays like *Meskel*, *Timket*, *Genna*, and *Fasika*. As majorities (95.54%) of the study areas' communities are followers of the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity, they celebrate the above listed religious holidays with festivals. On the other hand, *Buhe* (i.e. Nehasi13 E.C) and New Year in the name of Saint Yohannes, i.e., Meskerem 1) are also celebrated.

Additionally, there are annually celebrated religious holidays. These are, Tir 12 (*zegelila*), Tir 18 St. George, Tir 21 Asterio Maryam, Yekatit 16 St. Kidanemihret, Megabit 5 Abun G/menfes kedu (Abo), Megabit 10 Tekeste. They celebrate these annual religious days with festivals. In this regard, I observed that the community who live around Abo *debir* (parish), they sponsored to prepare the festival.

In both the study sites, there are celebrated monthly religious days in each month i.e. St. Sillasse the 7<sup>th</sup> day of every month; Tekest the 10<sup>th</sup> day of every month; St. Michael the 12<sup>th</sup> day of each month; Kidist Kidanemihret the 16<sup>th</sup> day of every month; St. Gabriel the 19<sup>th</sup> day of every month; St. Maryam the 21<sup>th</sup> day of the month; St. George the 23<sup>th</sup> day of every month; and Beale Egiziyabiher the 29<sup>th</sup> day of every month. Additionally, *Sänbäte* (Saturday and Sunday) are also celebrated. In these holidays, farming activities like ploughing, harvesting, and digging are forbidden. They believe that if you don't respect these days, God will punish you. The last month but not the list, i.e., *p'agume* with six or five days is a unique month, because in this month, most of the community, especially the youth, goes to church in the morning. The third day is called *rufayel*, if it rains on this day, children will leave their naked bodies to be soaked by the rain because it is believed to be as holy water.

### 3.8 Land Redistribution and Gender Relations

Land tenure refers to how access is granted to rights to use, control, and transfer land and other natural resources, as well as associated responsibilities and restraints. Ethiopia has different land tenure systems. Before 1974, Ethiopia had three major forms of land tenure system, such as communal, *rist*, and *gult* (Temesgen, 2013). *Rist* was a group right. Though ultimate ownership resided in the extended family of an extremely remote and legendary ancestor, cultivation and distribution were individualistic. The *rist* system is the right to land use that members of families and clans had in the area where their ancestors had settled and lived for over long periods of time. It is a kind of birthright to the land. It is inherited from generation to generation in accordance with the provisions of local customary law (Molla, 1984), under this system, the *rist* owner had the right to distribute his land to his sons and pass it to his grandsons (Ottaway, 1978).

*Gult* is the right to collect tribute from landowners. It is a different kind of institution that emerged with the earliest processes of state formation in northern Ethiopia (Dessalegn, 1984). Thus, *gult*, unlike *rist*, was not hereditary. His right was restricted to collecting tribute from peasants living on his *gult* (Shiferaw, 1995). In general, pre-1975 land was distributed through the lineage within both sexes (male and female).

In 1975, land redistribution changed since the *Derg* regime came to power. The radical land reform of the *Derg* was reinforced with the slogan 'Land to the Tiller'. As a result, individual households had only use rights to land and the rights could not be transferred by sale, lease or mortgage (Berhanu &Fayera, 2005; Crewett et al., 2008,cited in Guday and Eshetu, 2016). During this period, the redistribution of land was based on family size, families with many children got a larger size of land than families with a small number of children (Guday, 2005: 102). Hence, the women's right to land was restricted, because only women headed households were able to get land that belonged to rural communities.

When we see the FDRE, in 1995, the federal constitution declared land as a property of the state and the people of Ethiopia, article 4(4) declared that gender equality on the rights and control of land. However, 1996/97 land reform was focused on the household heads. Moreover, women's rights to use land were associated with their position in relation to men-as mothers, wives, sisters,

and daughters (Gray and Kevane, 1999 cited Guday and Eshetu, 2016). As a result, parents used arranged marriage to adult sons to get land, but girls were victims of early marriage.

According to the study, community elders and knowledgeable individuals, the basic difference between the 1996/97 land redistribution and the current one were during 1996-97, there were four committees set up at *kebele* level such as: (1) *yemeriet yzota atari committee* ((land-possession verifying committee); (2) *yebeteseb bzat attari committee* (family-size verifying committee); (3) *meriet delday committee* (land-allotment committee); and (4) *qireta semi committee* (grievance hearing committee). These committees were giving land to married boys. But currently, land is scarce because of population density. Both women and men had equal access to land from their parents when they got married. It is an asset and basic for production, parents distribute their lands to their children if they get married.

When we see the land holding arrangements in the study communities, largely, men in the poor household families were renting land in the rich or wealthy rural farmers and/ or in religious institutions as well as schools. The agreements between the two parties are mostly with annually. In the study communities, there are two forms of renting land: (1) Payment in kind; and (2) Payment in cash.

The first form includes *Siso (sostäñña)* and *ekul (bale ekul)*. *Siso (sostäñña)* (one-third) is a common arrangement for land renting. The major role of the *sostäñña* is harvesting and farming activity. Thus, the agreement is held on a specific ploughing to take 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the final product (harvest). *Bale ekul* (equal or 1/2) is currently a way of arrangement for land renting. Payment for this kind of rent is based on the agreement of the two parties on the crop (in kind). According to the local people, the *bale ekul* is renting farmland from a rich person or church or school on the agreement of taking *ekul* (equal) of the final product.

The second form of renting land arrangement is currently common, payments done in terms of money (*birr*). According to the local people, one *qada* of land is rented 3000-5000 *birr* per year. Mostly, this is viable if maize is sown.

### **3.9 Kinship and Descent**

In the views of Radcliffe Brown (1952), kinship is a socially constructed structure that expresses the relationship between ego, his parents, and his siblings. To Mair Lucy (1972), kinship is the expression of social relationships in a biological tie. However, kinship is not only a biological tie, rather it goes to a socially constructed connection between a person and his forbears, real or putative (Ewuruigwe, 1994). This is so because kinship relations extend to affinal relations and fictive relations. Affinal relationship is established through marriage.

The institution of fictive-kinship relationship is established through God-parenthood and childhood (locally known as *abäləğ*) is commonly practiced by all Orthodox Christians (Guday, 2005:84-85). In the research communities, previously marriage up to the seventh degree of consanguinity, and marriage between fictive relations were strictly prohibited. However, nowadays, there are some changes related to the marriage rules i.e. marriage up to five degrees of consanguinity is prohibited, and marriage between fictive relations, the God childhood (*krəstənnaləğ*) is not allowed to marry with God parenthood's child, but the God childhood sisters or brothers can marry the God parenthood's child. Hence, note that boys are selecting their mates.

Descent refers to that line segment that indicates membership in one's society. Descent is reckoned through both father's and mother's lines (Guday, 2005). Descent is one part of make kinship relationship. Among the study communities, kinship relationship through descent is counted through the line segment of both mothers and fathers up to the seventh degree of consanguinity. Mostly, settlement in the study communities after marriage is patrilocal; a married son builds his own house around that of his father.

### **3.10 Gender Socialization**

There are different agents of socialization (such as family, education, peer groups, and mass media). Among these, family is the first and major agent of gender socialization. Children are imitating gender based tasks in early childhood. In the ethnographic study communities, children above six years old are expected to help their parents in according to their sex. Moreover, males are trained to help with their fathers' work, whereas females are trained to help with their

mothers' tasks. Men and boys are responsible for performing agricultural activities to become strong and successful farmers and breadwinners as household heads.

Women and girls are responsible for fetching water from the nearest possible spring, river, or other sources for house consumption and distilling *aräqi*, baking *əngära*, preparing food, brewing *tella*, rearing children, selling *aräqi* and malt in the market. Livestock herding, and taking grain to the nearby mill are done by both sexes. In addition to household responsibilities, women have duties of land preparation, sowing, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, and livestock production. In the studied communities, distilling *aräqi* is the highest value to getting girls married because it is one of the requirements. The local people used to ask girls by saying “ሰንት ትጠምዳለች/ *Sint titemdalech?* (How many bottles of *aräqi* she used to distill per day”?) as a requirement for her to get married. As a result, girls/daughters used to learn domestic tasks properly by the supervision of their mothers. In the study communities, a 12 year old girl/daughter is expected to distill *aräqi* without the supervision of her mother.

### **3.11 Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms**

In the study communities, the traditional way of resolving disputes involves the mediation process and local elders carry out the reconciliation process according to what they inherited from their forefathers to protect the members of their community from quarrels/ violence and to maintain peace in their locality.

An elder man is a respectable person who reconciles all without partiality in times of conflict. It is disrespectful to reject the decision of an elder. There are several types of reconciliation that elders do. Among these types are family feuds, cattle theft, conflicts over border issues, and so on. In most cases, the *Shimgilina* (council of elders) is carried out in the social gathering days mainly on Sundays after the church mass ceremony. In this study community, *Shimgilina* is locally preferable than the formal court does to its cost and time effectiveness (Key interview with council of elders, and knowledgeable individuals; Guday, 2005). Moreover, in the study communities, the quarrels between husband and wife can reconcile by the *shimaglies*, and also the *shimaglies* have role in the case of divorce to divide the wealth equally.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## CHANGE IN EARLY MARRIAGE ACROSS THREE GENERATIONS AMONG THE STUDY COMMUNITIES IN NORTH MECHA *WOREDA*

This chapter presents and discusses the major findings on change in early marriage with specific reference to age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations (grandmothers', mothers' and daughters' generations<sup>6</sup>) and reasons for such changes or factors contributing to change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes among the daughters' generation in the context of Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities (the study communities hereafter) of North Mecha *Woreda* based on mainly primary data gathered through a combination of ethnographic data collection methods involving key informant interviews, in-depth interviews with extended case studies and focus group discussions (see Appendix III) supplemented with document reviews (see chapter 3)<sup>7</sup> and review of related empirical studies (see Chapter 2).

### 4.1. Age at First Marriage and Its Arrangement Processes Across Three Generations

#### 4.1.1. *Age at first marriage and its arrangement process during the grandmothers' generation*

During this generation, all grandmothers<sup>8</sup> who participated in this study got married before the age of 18. According to most of the study participants,<sup>9</sup> the grandmothers' generation dates back to the imperial regime (locally known as *ye Haile Selassie zemen*) when marrying-off girls at an early age (teens), which was the tradition (Levine, 1965, in Guday and Eshetu, 2016). For Hoben (1973), the marriageable age of women during that time (50 years ago, i.e., during the grandmothers' generation) was between 10-13 for the bride and 18-20 for the

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<sup>6</sup> In this study, "three generations" consist of grandmothers (women who have married grand-daughters), mothers (women who have married daughters) and daughters (early married girls) (see Appendix III: 3.2).

<sup>7</sup> See Table 3.1 & 3.2.

<sup>8</sup> In this study, "grandmothers' generation" refers to the generation of women who have married granddaughters and who are 50 years old and above.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix III (3.2 & 3.3. FGD 1, March 9, 2023 & FGD 5, March 16, 2023)

groom. Guday (2005) also found that most women in her ethnographic study communities got married with their first husband when they were between seven and eleven years old and the average age at first marriage for this generation of women was eleven years old.

In the study communities, marrying girls at an early age was very common during this generation mainly due to deep-rooted gendered social norms, parents' desire for creating or strengthening strong social networks through their children's marriage and absence of educational opportunities for children in general and for female children in particular. According to community elders and grandmothers who participated in this study (see Appendix II & III), it was very common to marry off girls before the age of 15 during their time (*zemen*) when female children did not have access to formal schooling in their localities. Similarly, Melese et al., (2021:101) noted that the average age of first marriage for girls during the grandmothers' generation was 13.5 years old.

In both study communities, the marriage alliance was based on the parents' preference, which did not take into account the girls' age due to the local tradition of marrying girls before the age of 15. In this connection, grandmothers who participated in this study narrated the condition during their generation in their own word as follows:

*During the grandmothers' generation if a girl grows up a little, the family used to protect her from qomo-qär<sup>10</sup> -stigma through marriage because marrying girls before the age of 15 was a norm. During that time, parents used to marry off their daughters at an early age in order to create alliance with families who have power, respect, wealth (in terms of number of cattle and size of farm land) through marriage. The decision for girls' marriage had been made by their fathers and grandfathers.<sup>11</sup>*

During this generation, parents used to follow the existing societal norms and marriage customs. The main purpose of marriage was to form social and economic alliances between the marrying families without taking into account their children's age during the arranged marriage negotiation process. As a result, there was a huge age difference between the

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<sup>10</sup> *Qomo-qär* refers to being remained unmarried after the socially appropriate age for marriage (until the age of 15).

<sup>11</sup> IDI with Case 2, February 7, 2023, Bachema; IDI with Case 3, February 16, 2023, Bachema; IDI with Case 5, February 17, 2023, Kurtbahir; and IDI with Case 6, February 14, 2023, Kurtbahir.

marrying spouses (usually the groom was between 7 to 10 years older than the bride). Grandmothers who participated in this study narrated their lived experience as follows:

*During our generation, the age of the girl child had not been considered in the marriage arrangement process. A 10-year-old girl was forced to marry a 20-year-old boy. As a result, we [as a child bride during that time] used to cry, especially when we started sleeping with our husband because our bodies were not physically mature enough to have sexual intercourse with our husband who was much older than ourselves. Such condition had created emotional pressure on us.<sup>12</sup>*

In short, during the grandmothers' generation, parents used to arrange their daughters' as well as sons' marriage being dictated by the existing social norms as well as religious and political values. During that time, religious and local political leaders were not against the arranged marriage of children at an early. Moreover, there was no legal sanction against early marriage during most of the elderly study participants in both study communities.<sup>13</sup> This finding supports Guday and Eshetu (2016)'s argument that during the grandparents' generation in their study communities in Amhara region, marriages were arranged by parents and blessed by religious fathers who encouraged the marriage of daughters before the age of 15.

In general, it was common for parents to arrange marriage for their children (usually female children between the ages of 9 and 14) to create marriage alliance between families with similar social and economic status. In other words, parents used to give high value to the marrying families' social and economic status (see also Reminick, 1976, in Guday & Eshetu, 2016) more than their children's age during the marriage arrangement process. Moreover, political power was one of the important factors for forming alliance between the marrying families during the grandparents' generation when the children's marriage arrangement was mainly based on their parents' social, economic, and political status. This finding is in line with Guday & Eshetu (2016)' argument which stated that social, economic, political and religious values prevailing during grand-parents' generation influenced the marriage arrangement processes during the grand-parents' time in their study rural communities in

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12 IDI with Case 2, February 7,2023, Bachema; IDI with Case 3, February 16,2023, Bachema; IDI with Case 5, February 17,2023, Kurtbahir and IDI with Case 6, February 14,2023, Kurtbahir).

13 See Appendix III.

Amhara region where they collected ethnographic data in 2010. However, the ethnographic data collected mainly through focus group discussions held with community elders and in-depth interviews with grandmothers (see Appendix II & III) in the present study communities revealed that absence of formal schools in their localities and lack of educational opportunity for female children in particular contributed to the common practice of arranged marriages for girls below the age of 15.

#### ***4.1.2. Age at first marriage and its arrangement process during the mothers' generation***

During the mothers'<sup>14</sup> generation, girls usually got married before they reach the age of 15 like that of girls in the grandmothers' generation. According to adult focus group discussion (FGD) participants from both study rural communities<sup>15</sup>, “if a girl passed the age of 15 without getting married, the community used to talk about the unmarried girl's parents by saying 'ምን ጎዶሎ ኑሮባቸው ነው ልጃቸውን የማይደረጉት' (literally meaning ‘what is missing in their kinship line’)?<sup>16</sup>

However, during the mothers' generation when most of the mothers who participated in this study used to recall, the number of girls who used to get married below the age of 15 started to decrease during the mothers' generation as compared to the grandmothers' generation, the time when girls were promised for marriage while they were still in their mothers' womb. During this period, there was legal sanction against the marriage of girls below the age of 18 according to in-depth interviews held with mothers and adult FGD participants in both study communities.<sup>17</sup>

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14. In this study, the “mothers' generation” refers to the generation of women who have married daughters and who are 35 years old and above.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 3.3 (FGD 3, March 14, 2023; FGD 4, March 26, 2023; FGD 7, March 21, 2023 & FGD 8, March 21, 2023)

<sup>16</sup> But the contextual meaning is far beyond this literal meaning, which reveals the difficulty of directly translating local sayings into English.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 3.2 and 3.3 (FGD 3, March 14, 2023; FGD 4, March 26, 2023; FGD 7, March 21, 2023 & FGD 8, March 21, 2023)

Community elders and council of elders in the study communities<sup>18</sup> further noted that during the *Derg* regime (when the majority of the mothers who participated in this study used to recall), there were committees at the rural community level who were evaluating and determining the eligibility of girls to get married [through their parents] mainly based on the girls' physical development as evidence. In this connection, the participants of FGDs held with women (mothers and grandmothers) in Bachema narrated the situation as follows:

*During mothers' generation, marrying both girls and boys below the age of 18 was not allowed. During that time, the local rural kebele leaders used to imprison parents who had arranged marriage for their daughters or/and sons below the age of 18. As a result, parents used to practice the tradition of arranging marriage for their children, especially daughters as early as the date of the birth of a baby girl in a secrete manner or through a promissory marriage arrangement process mainly for the purpose of forming social and economic alliance with the marrying families.<sup>19</sup>*

According to community level elderly key informants, after the collapse of the *Derg* regime, the EPDRF government continued to strongly control marriage below the age of 18 in the study communities and parents who had arranged early marriage for their children were imprisoned by the *woreda* court. However, in the study communities, there were community members who used to practice early marriage in a hidden manner because of fear of legal sanctions. As a result, the practice of early marriage was decreasing in terms of girls' age at first marriage as compared to grandmothers' generation, when girls were promised for marriages while they were still in the womb. Regarding the age at first childbearing, women had their first child at the age of 15. One of the in-depth interviewees among the mothers' generation narrated her lived experience as follows:

*My name is Wubzer [fictive name]. I live in Kurtbahir rural community. Now, I am 40 years old. I don't know the time when I got married with my first husband, Nebere [fictive name]. My husband was 8 years older than me. When I was 6 years old, my parents forced me to go to my husband's family. I was always crying because I missed my family very much. Then when I was 8 years old, I got lost in a tree and returned to my natal family. When I did this repeatedly, my husband forced me to go with him... Finally, I got divorced from*

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 3.1.2.

<sup>19</sup> See FGD3, March 14, 2023, Bachema.

*my first husband through my parents. But my parents married me with a second husband in that year. When I got married with both husbands, it was arranged with the consent of my parents without my knowledge. I had my first child when I was 15 years old in my second parental arranged marriage with Birhanu [fictive name].<sup>20</sup>*

In general, during both the grandmothers' and mothers' generations, the usual age at first marriage for girls was below 15 years old according to the lived experiences of almost all study participants in both generations. In other words, in both generations, girls were socially expected to get married before the age of 15 mainly because of the fear of *qomo-qär* stigma though there was a legal sanction against marriage below the age of 18 during the mothers' generation. Even until recently, when the local girls used to attend secondary education in the *woreda's* capital town (Merawi) by renting dormitories, if non-school attending rural girls passed the age of 15 without getting married, they would be insulted and referred to as *qomo-qär* (unmarriageable or unwanted for marriage).

#### ***4.1.3 Age at first marriage and its arrangement process during the daughters' generation***

During the daughters',<sup>21</sup> generation, the number of girls who got married below the age of 15 through parents tends to decrease as compared to their mothers' generation according to the participants of focus group discussions held with women (mothers and grandmothers) and men (fathers and grandfathers) in both study communities (see Appendix 3.3). However, the marriage of adolescent girls, especially those in mid-adolescence (usually between 14-17 years old) was not locally considered as "early marriage" in the current generation of girls though almost all study participants in both study communities are aware of the legally appropriate age of marriage (18 years for both girls and boys). As a result, girls have been married-off in their mid-adolescence age either through their parents or based on their own initiative/agency in forming love-relationship with boys while attending primary school in their locality and/or secondary school in Merawi (the capital town of the study *woreda*) where they live apart from their parents by renting dormitory with their peers from their locality

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<sup>20</sup> See Case 1, February 4, 2023, Kurtbahir (see Appendix 3.2).

<sup>21</sup> In this study, "daughters' generation" refers to the current generation of girls who are married and under 18 years old.

according to women (mothers and grandmothers) and men (fathers and grandfathers) who participated in focus group discussions.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, in both study communities, there are primary school attending girls who got married before the age of 14 (see Appendix 3.3, FGD 1 & 5). There are also local girls who got married below the age of 18 after dropping out from secondary school or being unable to pass the 10<sup>th</sup> grade national examination (see Appendix 3.2: 1, 3 & 7).

In the daughters' generation, during the EPDRF regime (locally known as *ye Ehadig zemen*), the government had a significant role in legislating against the marriage of girls below the age of 18 by promoting girls' education through expansion of primary schools in both study rural communities and by using the local school system as one mechanisms for preventing girls' marriage that takes below the age of 18. However, formal schools, especially secondary schools located apart from both study communities, have become a big opportunity for adolescent girls to meet with adolescent boys in schools for a long time of the school day, and some of them have made sexual relationships and/or adolescent-initiated marriages before the age of 18 according to community level elderly key informants<sup>23</sup> and adult focus group discussion participants.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Abeje et al., (2023:9) found that rural schools have become a fertile ground for boys and girls to confide in sexual desires thereby creating an opportunity for the occurrence of untimely sexual relationships between teens.

In both study communities, grandmothers and mothers (see Appendix 3.2) who participated in this study revealed that the current generation of girls are growing faster than 'the previous generations of girls by re-calling/referring to their own girl-hood experiences' and they attributed the change in 'the current generation of girls' increases in their desire for sexual intercourse to "the hot temperature". Moreover, during the current generation, girls live in a relaxed condition as formal school students and they have rapid biological, cognitive, and psycho-social development unlike the previous generations of mothers and grandmothers who

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22. See Appendix 3.3 (FGD 3, March 14, 2023; FGD 4, March 26, 2023; FGD 7, March 21, 2023 & FGD 8, March 21, 2023)

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 3.1.2, 3.2,

<sup>24</sup>. See Appendix 3.3 (FGD 3, March 14, 2023; FGD 4, March 26, 2023; FGD 7, March 21, 2023 & FGD 8, March 21, 2023)

had been over-burdened with domestic activities during their girl-hood in their communities where the previous generation of girls did not have access to formal education like the current generation of girls. One of the key informants during informal conversations confirmed this by stating that “in previous times, girls were expected to get married at an early age with a customary sanction (*gedo*<sup>25</sup>), which prohibits the husband to have sexual intercourse with his child bride. This customary sanction has been eroded during the daughters’ generation when the newly-wedded couples used to have sexual intercourse during their wedding day.”<sup>26</sup> So, parents are required to delay their daughters’ marriage age until they reach the socially acceptable marriageable age. On the other hand, this study also found that in the study communities, nowadays, girls are delaying age at first marriage as compared to the past generation. Thus, the local people attributed this to change in the post-marital residence of early married girls. This means in the previous generation, married girls used to live with their in-laws immediately after marriage and they were expected to respect in-laws as well as their husband. However, nowadays, married girls do not respect their in-laws as well as their natal families unlike the past generations of mothers and grandmothers. Moreover, during old times, after marriage, early married girl used to live with her in-laws until she reached the socially appropriate age of establishing her own hut (*gojjo*). Then, she used to come back to her natal family to make baskets for her hut and to learn how to spin cotton under her mother's supervision. But, this generation of girls prevented themselves from learning such kind of indigenous feminine skills.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, in both study communities, arranging marriage for girls at early age (below the age of 15, which is the socially appropriate marriageable age for girls) is often seen as protecting them from wedlock pregnancy and related stigma. As a result, some parents in both study communities continued to arrange marriage for their daughters (including primary school attending girls) at an early age (as early as age 12).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Gedo* refers to the custom of protecting the early married girl (usually under 9 years old) from sexual intercourse with her husband until she reaches the age of 11 depending on her physical maturity.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 3.1.2 (KII-07).

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix 3.2: IDI with grandmothers (Case 2, February 7, 2023; Case 3, February 16, 2023; Case 5, February 17; Case 6, February 14, 2023) and mothers (Case 1, February 4, 2023; Case 4, March 8, 2023; Case 5, February 17, 2023; Case 6, February 15, 2023), FGD4, March 26, 2023 and FGD8, March 21, 2023).

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 3.3 (FGD 1, March 9, 2023 & FGD 5, March 16).

In general, as compared to the previous generation of mothers, age at first marriage has increased during the daughters' generation in both Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities, mainly due to the availability of primary schools in both localities where both boys and girls are attending school starting from the age of 7 (see Chapter 3). As a result, school girls in both study communities used to get married when they reach grade 5 and above.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the age gap between spouses has declined from 7-10 years old during mothers' generation to 3-5 years old in the daughters' generation<sup>30</sup>. In other words, the husband was usually 7-10 years older than his wife during the mothers' generation, whereas the husband of the current generation of girls is usually 3-5 years older than his wife. Furthermore, the marriage of the current generation of girls (especially secondary school attending girls) is mainly based on their choice/preference unlike that of their mothers' generation which was fully arranged by their parents as discussed in the previous sub-section (4.1.2). The findings of this study also revealed that currently married girls usually give birth to their first child after 2 to 3 years of married life (after living together with their husband in their own house). In other words, married girls used to delay their first birth for a period of more than a year after they started to live together with their husband by using contraception provided free of charge through the local health extension workers in both study communities. In short, there are some changes in age at first marriage and its arrangement process in the daughters' generation as compared to the past generations of mothers as well as grandmothers in both study communities due to various reasons, of which the major ones are discussed below.

## **4.2 Reasons for Change in Age at First Marriage during the Daughters' Generation**

Age at first marriage has increased in the daughters' generation than that of the previous generations of mothers and grandmothers as discussed earlier. According to community level elderly key informants and in-depth interviews held with grandmothers and mothers from both study communities, the major reasons for increase in age at first marriage for the current daughters generation includes expansion of formal education and increase in parents'

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<sup>29</sup> KII8, January 14, 2023; KII11, January 26, 2023; KII14, January 16, 2023; KII16, January 23, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> See also Ghimire et al (2018:36) which found that the age difference between spouses is between 3 and 7 years, and in most cases, it is less than 5 years.

awareness about the health impacts (mainly fistula) of marrying their daughters at an early age, which are briefly discussed as follows:

### ***1. Expansion of Formal Education***

In both Bachema and Kurtbahir communities, expansion of formal education is the major factor accounted for increasing girls' age at first marriage. Melese et al., (2021) also revealed that the expansion of formal education during the daughters' generation increased girls' age at first marriage. In line with this, one of the community level elderly key informants explained the issue under discussion as follows:

*During our time, formal education was not widespread and the fate of children, especially girls was being forced to get married through their parents. During the Derg regime, there was mäsärätä tәмәrt program in our locality where mainly boys and men used to attend. During the EPDRF regime (ye Ehadig zemen), a formal school was opened in our locality and children (both girls and boys) got the chance to attend formal school starting from the age of seven. As a result, age at first marriage for girls increased.<sup>31</sup>*

From this, we can understand that having a formal school at their parents' locality promoted girls' access to formal education. Moreover, parents, especially fathers' education either through mäsärätä tәмәrt or attending some grades of formal education enabled them to understand the value of education which motivated them to send their children (both sons and daughters) to the locally available formal school. Furthermore, the government's role in preventing girls marriage at an early age (before the age of 18) by promoting girls' education through the local formal school system contributed to increase in girls' age at first marriage in the study communities though there are still school girls who got married before the age of 18 either through parents or based on their own initiative/choice as discussed above (4.1.3).

### ***2. Parents' awareness about the harmful impact of early marriage on girls' health***

In the study area, government bodies (such as the women and children's affairs' officers at the *woreda* level with its focal persons at the community level and school teachers (closely working with local leaders) as well as health extension workers (closely working with women

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<sup>31</sup> KII 7, February 2,2023, Kurtbahir

development groups) at the community level) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (mainly Birhane Hewan) have played a significant role in preventing girls from early arranged marriage by raising awareness about the law legislating against the marriage of boys and girls below the age of 18 and the harmful impact of early marriage on girls' health. As a result, the local people are aware of the legal minimum marriageable age (i.e., marriage that takes place below the age of 18 for both boys and girls is referred to as an early marriage) as well as its negative health impacts on girls (mainly fistula, which has frequently been mentioned by almost all study participants in both study communities). Here it should be noted that almost all the residents of the study communities are followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (see Chapter 3) and religious leaders used to teach the local people at the local parish (*deber*) after Sunday mass (*kidassie*) about the negative health consequences of early marriage on girls.

Of course, the above mentioned various government bodies and some NGOs contributed a lot in promoting the local peoples' awareness about the legal minimum marriageable age for both girls and boys in general and the negative health impact of early marriage on girls in particular. However, it does not mean that early marriage has been eliminated among the current generation of girls in the study communities. In this regard, community level elderly key informants including women development group leaders in both study communities as well as separate focus group discussions held with men (fathers and grandfathers) and women (mothers and grandmothers) explained the issue under discussion as follows:

*Previously, the local rural kebele leaders used to come to our village and taught us about the dangers of early marriage and advised the local people to send children, especially girls to school instead of arranging early marriage, particularly for girls. We have been also trained by an organization called Birhane Hewan some years back (2004-2006E.C) about the need for educating girls and the negative impact of early marriage on girls' health... They told us that if girls get married before they reach the age of 18, they would be at risk of fistula. However, there are no government bodies as well as other organizations concerned about girls' education and the impacts of early marriage on girls' education in our locality for the past five years. As a*

*result, there are school girls who got married below the age of 18 mainly based on their choice in our locality.*<sup>32</sup>

Further discussion with elderly study participants about the reasons for increase in the number of girls who got married below the age of 18 for the past five years in both study communities revealed that some years ago local schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the conflict situation, which has been aggravated starting from April 2023. In the 2023/24 academic year, all schools in the study area (North Mecha *Woreda*) are closed. This might increase the number of marriages among previously school attending girls in the study communities, which calls for further research.

In general, according to community level study participants (see Appendix III), there are some changes in age at first marriage and its arrangement process in the daughters' generation as compared to the past generations of mothers as well as grandmothers in the study communities in North Mecha *Woreda* mainly driven by the expansion of formal education in their locality and girls' improved access to primary school in their locality on one hand and girls' opportunity to continue with their secondary education in Merawi apart from their parents' locality being financially supported by their uneducated rural parents hoping that their daughters would be successful in their education and be able to get gainful employment. However, most parents who participated in this study were complaining about the 'bad behavior' of the current generation of daughters, especially those who got opportunity to attend their secondary schools in Merawi (the *woreda's* capital town) apart from their parents' village, who are considered as not respectful to their parents and parents do not have the power even to influence their secondary school attending daughters' marriage decisions at the expense of their education for which parents invested a lot.

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<sup>32</sup> KII6, Febraury2, 2023, Kurtbahir; KII10, January 23, 2023, Bachema; FGD3, March14, 2023, Bachema; FGD4, March 26, 2023, Bachema; FGD7 and FGD8, March 21, 2023, Kurtbahir).

### **4.3 Reasons for Change in Early Marriage Arrangements Processes during the Daughters' Generation**

Various factors have influenced marital practices, particularly early marriage arrangements across time. According to the findings of this study, the following are the primary causes of change in early marriage arrangements during the daughters' generation among the study communities.

#### ***1. Legal/policy initiatives and program interventions***

One of the primary drivers of change is the government's intervention in the form of laws, codes, policies, and programs. The initiatives of the government and non-governmental organizations in raising awareness about the detrimental implications of early marriage for girls, such as fistula, are effective. The government establishes structural institutions at the *woreda* level, such as the office for women, children, and social affairs. This office also works at the rural community level with some NGOs to raise awareness among parents about the illegality of practicing such a marriage. These contributed to a shift in established gender norms among the daughters' generation mainly by promoting girls' education in both study communities.

#### ***2. Expansion of primary schools***

The government's expansion of primary schools in each rural communities allows girls to attend school. As a result, school curricula and clubs strengthen females' decision-making, resistance, and skills. Furthermore, girls' clubs provide girls with opportunity to cancel their parents' arranged marriages, which is critical for their future well-being. Even though the government forbids early marriage and parents are aware of the illegality of doing so, parents arrange early marriage by modifying the arrangement. The aim is to avoid penalties, and it also helps to reduce wedding preparation costs.

#### ***3. Modernization (Media, Mobile technology and Transportation services)***

Because modernization is sweeping the globe, 'traditional marriage' is giving away to 'modern' marriage. Marriage, particularly the habit of early marriage, is one of the causes of changing

one's way of life, which implies that the previous generations everything was cheap and there was a smaller population, all relatives were invited to the wedding ceremony when parents arrange marriages for their children in both rural communities. Of course, according to the study participants, the living conditions (such as having modern grain grinding mill, transportation services, and the modern means of communication such as the use of mobile phones) have improved in recent years, yet everything is still dependent on money. It comes at a price. As a result, it has contributed to changing marriage arrangement patterns among the current generation of girls and boys.

Moreover, technology, urbanization, and media are grounds for changing the marriage arrangement patterns. People listen to radio programs and watch TV in the electrified city. This program educates people about the illegality of early marriage as well as the harmful consequences of preparing elaborate and expensive wedding feasts, as well as the importance of girls' education. People, on the other hand, have learned from their lived experience about the harmful impacts of preparing expensive wedding feasts and currently they used to less elaborate wedding feasts by reduce unnecessary expenditures used for preparing elaborate wedding feasts during the previous generations. In this regard, participants' key informant interviews held with rural community leaders and focus groups with held with men (fathers and grandfathers) and women (mothers and grandmothers) in the study communities revealed the following:

*Previously, it was customary to organize an elaborate wedding feast with a large number of guests, including priests, deacons, relatives, and friends. At that time, social networks were strong, and no one was excluded from participating in such kind of feast. However, this traditional custom did not provide any support for the newlyweds. So, now parents are taking lessons from previous experiences and tend to prepare simple and less elaborate wedding feasts and ceremonies, inviting a small number of guests (mainly close relatives, friends, and one priest if there a priest among family member or close relatives).<sup>33</sup>*

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<sup>33</sup> KII11, January26, 2023, Kurtbahir; KII12, January16, 2023, Bachema; FGD3, March 14,2023, Bachema; FGD7, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir; FGD4, March 26,2023, Bachema; FGD8, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir).

Currently, the local schools attending mid-adolescent girls and boys also have mobile phones, which they use to communicate with one another as well as to view movies and videos. This enabled adolescents to organize their marriages in a 'modern' manner. Furthermore, girls and boys communicate via mobile phone and select their marriage match. However, in the past, the would-be-husband and the would-be-wife did not speak to each other, which was both a humiliation and an indication of misconduct or rudeness (᠒᠕ᠯ) from the perspective of the previous generations of mothers/fathers and grandmothers/grandfathers.

Technology, in the form of transportation services, has also been observed to modernize 'traditional' weddings. During the mothers' and grandmothers' generations, the bride-groom traveled to the groom's parents' village by horseback being accompanied by one of the groom's best-men , while the remaining best-men traveled by foot across large distances. People now use locally available transportation services (such as Bajaj, Motorcycle, and Isuzu bus) to provide comfort for the bride-groom and best-men and to include some mid-adolescent girls as members of the best-men, which was not the practice during the previous generations of grandmothers and mothers. Furthermore, the type of the bridal gift has been shifted from traditional jewelry to 'modern' jewelry as discussed in the previous sub-sections.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONTINUITY IN EARLY MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENT PROCESSES ACROSS THREE GENERATIONS AMONG THE STUDY COMMUNITIES IN NORTH MECHA *WOREDA*

This chapter presents and discusses findings on continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations (grandmothers', mothers' and daughters') and the reasons for continuity in early marriage arrangement processes during the daughters' generation in the context of Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities (the study communities hereafter) of North Mecha *Woreda* based on mainly primary data gathered through a combination of ethnographic data collection methods involving key informant interviews, in-depth interviews with extended case studies and focus group discussions (see Appendix III) supplemented with document reviews (see chapter 3)<sup>34</sup> and review of related empirical studies (see Chapter 2).

#### 5.1. Continuity in Early Marriage Arrangement Processes across Three Generations

When marriage is considered, weddings follow. A wedding is a party where two married people are called husband and wife. Ceremonial marriage is common in the tradition of Amhara. The wedding ceremony takes place after certain steps, which are briefly described by Guday (2005:126) as follows:

*Customarily, early marriage arrangements involve three procedures: (1) sending of agabi shimaglewoch as a marriage negotiator (shimaglie melak); (2) ceremony of fixing the number of cattle endowed by each parent and the amount of bridal gift; and (3) if the two families agree on the first and second procedures, they will fix the wedding day, and then start wedding preparations.*

In the past, the virginity of girls before marriage was highly valued surrounded by the celebration of those who maintained it. Non-virginity was a sign of stigmatization and disgrace to the family honor. However, nowadays, it is not highly regarded due to premarital sexual relations have

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<sup>34</sup> See Table 3.1 , 3.2,3.3,3.4 &3.5

become common in mid-adolescence age. Accordingly, daughters become pregnant before marriage, and as a result of this, some are forcing a marriage with the boy who impregnated her, but some unwed pregnant daughters live in their parents' home. However, religion, for example, Orthodox Tewahido Christianity continues to consider virginity as a requirement for marriage.

In the study rural communities, parental endowments to the newly-weds vary in terms of quantity and quality across time. The variety of marital behaviors, according to Bossen (1988), as mentioned in Guday and Eshetu (2016:52), is one obstacle in evaluating and generalizing marriage activities. As a result, cattle were the most important asset to arrange marriages in the past, and *macha* (some amount of money) was sent from the would-be groom's family to the would-be bride's family (Guday, 2005:126).

In the daughters' generation, land is the most important form of property, and money should also be given to the would-be-bride and the would-be-groom by each parent. During the informal transfer of land from parents to their children, agreements are made outdoors under tree shade and are witnessed by some *agabi shimaglewoch*. Thus, *agabi shimaglewoch* may not be determined by age because young males who are friends of the would-be groom can be *shimaglie*. The bridal gifts (dress, necklace, earrings, and other jewelry) would be negotiated and fixed by the groom and the two fathers in front of the *agabi shimaglewoch*.

According to community elders and FGDs with men and women, in the past, marriage, especially early marriage, took place with elaborate feasts. Because, at that period, there was a small population and everything was cheap as well as produced in their homestead. For instance, oil was prepared in the home, and the prices of crops were cheap. Nowadays, money is easy to come, farmers produce large amounts of crops by using 'modern' technology, and life is better than the previous times. Although the current families have better economic status, the marriage feasts in general and the early marriage feasts in particular are less elaborate due to the increased population (relatives). So, it is difficult to invite all the guests like previous generations because everything is expensive. For example, it takes more than 40,000 *birr* to buy one ox, and the price of oil is 950 *birr* for five liters. As a result, early marriages are now performed with a minimum ceremony following a public arrangement process, but in some cases, it would be hidden. Additionally, parents prefer to give endowments in the form of land and money as well as a

bridal gift during their children's marriage arrangement process rather than organizing an elaborate wedding ceremony for their children. In short, during the daughters' generation, the wedding feast is not as elaborate as their mothers' generation.

Children's marriage was arranged by fathers, grandfathers, or close relatives during the olden times. In this regard, Guday (2005:128) noted that fathers choose a spouse for their children and decide on the timing of the marriage, whereas mothers have little influence in proposing or deciding such serious social events but are responsible for preparing food and drinks for wedding ceremonies. Hence, the bride and groom do not know who to marry or when to marry. However, in the daughters' generation, there are some changes in this regard. The bride would also know her husband before the wedding day. Although it would be the groom's choice, his wife's parents arrange the marriage in accordance with the groom's indication. Here it should be noted that, nowadays, the choice of an appropriate mate is based on the character, work habit, and behavior of the would-be-groom and the would-be-bride rather than the parents' character, conduct, and work habits.

### **5.1.1 Grandmothers' Generation**

In Bachema and Kurtbahir, women were married-off before they reached 15 years old, based on their traditional marriage customs. During this generation, according to the local tradition, the boy's father, grandfather, or close relative used to choose the appropriate spouse for their son. The selected would-be bride's parents accepted the requests of the would-be husband's family based on the character, conduct, and working habits of the would-be husband's father. Because the rich would marry with the rich; the poor would marry with the poor; the weaver would marry with the weaver; and so on. In short, the marriage arrangement process involves equal matching of economic resources as parental endowments and the social status of the marrying families.

Most of the time, September and November are “ውል መያዣ” ( marriage contracting seasons), while “ቅባላ” (a month after Christmas and before Easter fast i.e. January) and after Easter fasting seasons (i.e. April) are known as wedding seasons because that are the end of the harvest season and religious fasting months (Guday and Eshetu, 2016:51).

In the process of preparing the marriage contract, the *agabi shimaglewoch* makes three formal visits to the girl's parents. Then, the marriage contract is made, and the parental endowments in terms of cattle, *ማጫ* (*macha*), and *gedo* are written. When they make a contract with the bride's father and the groom's father, they used to say to each other, “የሥላሴ እምነት ይሁንበኝ ቃሌን አላፈርስም” (Let me believe in the Trinity, and I will not break my word/promise of marriage). The "ማጫ" was paid by the groom's father to the bride's father in terms of money that was used to buy bridal gifts. If a contract is signed, the wedding date will be extended by at least six months for the following reasons:

1. *People who are having a wedding will use their grain if they produce enough for the wedding, but if they don't, they will buy it, and the price will be cheaper during this period.*
2. *The invited persons who come to the wedding feast are expected to eat and drink at the wedding without anything, meaning it is the end of the harvesting season.*

It is said that “□□□ □□□ □□ □□□□” (means the parental endowment between both sides are equal), but if the would be husband’s parental endowment exceeds the would be wife's parental endowment, it is kept private for the would be husband. The rationale for this is that when they get divorced, the *nibret* (wealth) listed as "private" will be given to the husband solely, while the other will be compensated equally.

There is written document the bride should not sleep with the groom until she reach the age of *le akale meten* (until she reaches the age of 13 to 15 years during the daughter’s generation). This obligation is called *gedo*.<sup>35</sup> However, sometimes from the age of 9 or 10 the bride is forced to have sexual intercourse with the groom by considering her physical development.

Before the wedding day, all the relatives are invited and a close relative is given one *quna* (which is equivalent to 10 kilograms) of raw *teff* (in Amharic; *teff yinagnal*). To get a very high reputation, the festive preparation is clear for all people. The close relatives and neighbors who are invited to the wedding with contribute *anğära*, *tella* (homemade local beer), and *aräqi* (homemade local liquor), and those who came will stay for at least 5 days in the wedding-

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<sup>35</sup> *Gedo* refers to the custom of protecting the early married girl (usually under 9 years old) from sexual intercourse with her husband until she reaches the age of 11 depending on her physical maturity during the grandmothers’ and mothers’ generations.

sponsored house. Thus, each contribution should be returned when they prepared wedding ceremony for their children.

On the day of the wedding, the sister of the groom takes a piece of “*difdif*” on clay and turns *muqäcca* (mortar) 3 times, by saying *kosoye*. The groom is carried by anyone and turns *muqäcca* (mortar). The reason why it is called *kosoye* is to say that when a *koso* is seen, a sister who breaks when she is lost, a mother is a sister who heals pain. Here, it should be noted that we the bride/wife will live together with her in-laws from the day of the wedding, so he [her husband] will see her as his sister and she will see him as her brother. Then, the sister gives it to the groom after three times turn, the groom throws it into the *muqäcca* (mortar) and then *mizewoch* (the best-men) breaks it and sings. The number of best men is 10 to 20 and they are chosen by the would-be husband’s father based on the following criteria:

1. *Zefen yemichl* (who has the ability to sing)
2. *Kererto yemichl* (who has the ability to perform war song/chant)
3. *Eskista yemichl* (who has the ability to dance)
4. *Letsib yemaychekul* (who has the ability to calm others)

In this regard, one of the community level elderly key informants described the issue under discussion as follows:

*Next to choosing the would be bride for his son, it is the responsibility of the would be husband’s father to choose the best-men. Best-men have a great responsibility. In our culture, best-man should be calm, not in a hurry to fight, good in singing and dancing, otherwise the child's father's honor will be affected and he will be humiliated.*<sup>36</sup>

It takes 3 to 4 hours to walk from the groom to the bride's house. They will arrive on the evening of the wedding day (in Amharic ቀንበቀ / ቀንበቀቀ) around 2:00 pm local time. They go with a cloak, hat, bride's service (makeup, kul, *lb alba suri* (bound heartless pants), a button, a mule / the bride's dress /, the men's clothes. Upon arrival, they would be greeted (welcomed) by *Yesäti äsadarl* (female host). The *wanna mize* (the main best-man) consults the *Yesäti äsadarl* to fill in

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<sup>36</sup> *KII6, February 2,2023, Kurtbahir*

the gaps related to the wedding event. Then, lunch ceremony takes place. It was made in “mesob” (5 people eat and drink by offering *ənğära* at a table). The eating utensil is called *waranta* (It is prepared from “gramta”- grass). The drinking utensil is *wamra* (which is made from a calabash in the shape of a cup), and for older people *wanicha* (a cup made of horn). Next, the *qale mehala* (oath) ceremony takes place. The groom’s *wanna mize* and the elders make dialogue according to the local customs such as:

- *Shimagelie: mushiraw manew* (Who is the bridegroom)?
- *Mize: mushiraw egele new* (The grooms’ name)
- *Shimagelie: kemenu* (with what)?
- *Mize: ke ristu, ke gultu, ke melkam balebetnetu, ye erf achebabetu, 3shimaglie kawekew kebetu* (From his rist, from his gult, from his parents good name, from his farming, from the cattle that know 3 *shimaglies*).
- *Shimagelie: setenal* (We gave her for married him/ we permitting to marriage)
- *Wanna mize: manin* (Who)?
- *Shimagelie: mushirayetu egelie* (The brides’ name)
- *Wanna mize: ke minua* (with what)?
- *Shimagelie: ke ristua, ke gultua, ke melekam balebetnetua, ke enzert achebabetua, 3 shimagliee kaweqew kebetua* (from her rist, from her gult, from her parents good name, from her handling the tools for spinning cotton spindle, 3 *shimaglies* know the cattle).

In the morning, a mule is presented and the bride is mounting on the mule after being blessed by the elders. The phrases of blessings/best wishes for the bride “አዝለሽ ወዝውዘሽ ተመለሽ” and for the groom “ሀብትህን ያቅናው የምትዘራው ያፍራ”. Here, it should be noted bride is socially expected to be a good mother for her child, whereas the groom is expected to be the breadwinner as the head of the new household. Finally, they go to the house of the groom’s parents while dancing, singing and blowing trumpets.

When they arrive at the groom parents' home the *qalä mähalla* ceremony takes place. The groom's mother is called, and then the *wanna mize* holds the bride's thumb to the groom's mother before the bridegroom comes down to hand over the trust given under the *mize*, and she swears an oath by saying:

*"I see her as my child."*

*"If she (the bride) tells me a secret, I'll keep it."*

"I will teach her feminine skills in the presence of *yänäfs abbat* (her confessor father). My soul will return to her home. The reason for this is that the bride will live with her in-laws until she started to live together with her husband in their own house. Till then the mother-in-law promised to see her as her child, and protects her from her son not to have sexual intercourse with her until she reaches puberty. This locally known as *gedo*, which is the custom of protecting the early married girl (usually under 9 years old) from sexual intercourse with her husband until she reaches the age puberty (usually the age of 11) though it depends on her physical maturity during the grandmothers' and mothers' generations.

The next evening, they go to the bride's parents' house. They return in the evening and wait for 10 days because it is believed that *Säytan* (bad evil) will approach them if they get out before these days following the wedding day. After 10 days, they go to the groom's parents' house in the evening and stay with the groom's family until they establish their own hut (*gojjo*). The time when to establish their hut will be decided by the groom and his father. After the decision of the groom and his father, the girl returns to her mother's house to make baskets and other handmade household utensils for her newly established hut.

One of the in-depth interviewees among the grandmothers generation narrates her lived experience pertaining to the issue under discussion as follows:

*My name is Birkenesh [fictive name], I am 51 years old now. I have three daughters and four sons. I stayed together my first husband until he passed away. Since my father was a landlord (balabat), I got married with my deceased husband through his relatives' recommendation; my deceased husband's family was also a landlord. Their lineage was carefully investigated by my father and he found that they were not from the socially marginalized occupation groups (such as weaver -shemani, evil eye-*

*buddha, tanner-faqi, etc.) and my father and my would-be-husband's father together with the elder man agreed and made a contract agreement about my father got 3 t'egeera (maritireza which was equivalent to 30 birr at that time). In this way, traditional clothes such as Tiff kemiss (dress), netela, dkot (tied on hand), albo (jewelry tied on foot) were bought for me. We were given three cows by each of our parents, who were considered as wealthy during that time when our parents also prepared elaborate wedding feasts. I got married with a public wedding when I was 11 years old. I gave birth to my first child at the age of 14 and I had a relationship with my husband at the age of 13 because I was under the gedo contract agreement for two years. My husband was at least 10 years older than me.<sup>37</sup>*

### 5.1.2 Mothers' Generation

At this time, the arrangement of marriage was similar to the grandmothers' generation. However, in this period, there was promissory marriage arrangement, which is locally known as “ልጅህን ለልጄ” (your child marries to my child) even before the birth of girl child to strengthen the relationship between marrying families (as discussed in Chapter 4). In this regard, Guday (2005) noted that parents arrange their daughters' marriage with promise and when the girl is at the back of her mother during her ethnographic fieldwork conducted between April 2003 and January 2004 among rural communities in the former Mecha Woreda of West Gojjam zone (see Chapter 3 for description of the current study area). In the present study rural communities, an elderly community leader with very long years of experience as rural community leader and two elderly women among grandmothers who participated in this study affirmed that:

*During this (mothers) generation early marriage was not allowed by the government, unless the government body in the local structure gave a permit by observing the physical development of the would-be bride. Due to this restriction, in our locality, people used to practice early marriage in a hidden way, i.e., the bride's parents used to invite the groom's parents to celebrate their child's marriage. Then, the bride's parents celebrate their daughter's marriage when the bride is at the back of her mother (in Amharic ባባባ ባባባ ባባባባ ባባ ባባባ ባባባባ ባባ ባባባባ).<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>37</sup> IDI Case 2, February 7, 2023, Bachema

<sup>38</sup> Key interview with rural leader (KII11, January 26, 2023) and in-depth interview with grandmothers (Case 2, February 7, 2023; Case 6, February 14, 2023).

During that time, early-married girls give birth to their first child at the age of 13. Another thing that is different from the generation of the grandmothers is that when marriage before the age of 18 was banned by the government during the *Derg* regime, the prevention of underage marriage started at the local government level. It was evaluated by the committee (which is currently under the leadership of the rural community) and only those who have passed the age evaluation would get married. The EPDRF regime also strongly prohibited early marriage but local parents did not easily stop the practice of early marriage mainly for daughters due to deep-rooted gendered social norms. During the *Derg regime*, local parents continued to practice early marriage of their daughters underground as follows:

- ❖ *The bride's parents used to invite the main one (the person with the authority to punish those who violated the law prohibiting marriage below the age of 18) from among the executives (currently it means bribery).*
- ❖ *The wedding feast used to be celebrated in secret since the members of the community used to collaborate with this practice.*

### **5.1.3 Daughters' Generation**

#### **1. *Early Marriage Arrangement Process During the Daughters' Generation***

In the current generation of daughters, marriage takes place in a “modern” way and the early marriage arrangement process and the wedding feast differ from the previous generation of mothers. Currently, there is no an elaborate wedding feast, but it is being done in the name of a religious ceremony (e.g. *Mahbär*) and ring ceremony. Moreover, in the study communities, some of early marriage arrangements take place openly, while in some cases it was practiced in a hidden manner mainly to hide it from the legal government bodies, but not other community members who also practice it in a similar way.

According to the current tradition, the would-be husband chooses his potential wife by considering her character and her work habit, especially her skill and experience in distilling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor), and the economic status of her parents. Here, it should be noted that mothers used to train their daughters about how to distill the homemade local liquor properly

by giving incentives. So, if a girl is able to distil *aräqi* alone, in the community tradition, she is ready to get married. And if parents have more land, then the girl is more likely to get married at her early age.

On the other hand, once the would-be husband has found an appropriate girl for him, he does not accomplish the marriage process. Instead, he informs his father to arrange the marriage. Then, the would-be husband and his father assign three *agabi shimaglewoch*, who best know the two families. Mostly, the would-be husband's best friend is part of the *agabi shimaglewoch* because he has his own role in the process of choosing the girl. Then, the *agabi shimaglewoch meet with* the would-be husband, his father and the would-be wife's father under a tree in the area to discuss about the marriage. *Agabi shimaglewoch* may not necessary visit the would-be bride's parents' three times because the would-be groom and would-be bride would decide about their marriage before sending *shimaglewoch*. At this time, the would-be husband would be available to hear the contract. Among the studied communities, the formal marriage contract lists the size of land with its border provided by each family, because this is an important for equitable common property division upon divorce.

Next, the contracting ceremony takes place; this ceremony involves a coffee ceremony, eating *dabo qollo*, eating *əngära* and drinking *tella* and *aräqi*, which takes place at the would-be bride's parents' home. In this ceremony, the would-be husband's father would be expected to sponsor by contributing one bottle (equivalent to 1 liter) of *aräqi and dabo kollo*.

In the study communities, a marriage arrangement in general and early marriage arrangements in particular takes a short process ranging from three to four month as compared to the mothers' and grandmothers' generations. The marriage ceremony takes place in the name of social or religious celebrations. At least one week before the wedding day, the would be bride and groom would be examined for HIV/AIDS. Then the would-be husband should give bride gift (including buy ring (gold), silver necklaces silver earrings and clothes for the would-be bride). Most of the time, the marriage is practiced during January and after Easter fasting season (April). However, out of the 7 days of a week, the days on which weddings are held are on Tuesdays, Thursday, and Sunday.

The families of the two prospective bride and groom invite some close relatives (e.g. sisters and brothers of their parents, neighbors and friends, and the parents' confessor father). They used to invite them by saying, “በቤት በቤት”<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, the number of people who are invited to the marriage ceremony is limited for two basic reasons. First, inviting a large population needs much economy. Secondly, people perceive that preparing an elaborate wedding feast and inviting large people as a harmful traditional practice since it is a wastage of the marrying families as well as the newlyweds’ economic resources (In Amharic በቤት በቤት በቤት በቤት በቤት በቤት). Hence, the quantity of wedding ceremonies is declining, the invited close relatives and neighbors are not expected to contribute to the wedding preparation and the invited the guests (particularly close relatives from far away villages) would stay in the wedding ceremony sponsoring family’s home for a maximum of two days.

The groom also asks his close friends to accompany him. The best-men (*mizewoch*) *must* cover the cost of contracting a car, a bajaj, or a motorcycle, and this has to be returned when each of these best-men gets married, but the female *mizewoch* are not expected to pay the transportation cost. The bride takes injectable contraception before the wedding day to prevent pregnancy, because the newlyweds will have intercourse during their honeymoon. On both sides (the bride and the groom’s side), parents slaughter an ox, bake *ənḡära*, make *wät*, and prepare local drinks in small quantities as compared to the previous time. The change in the current marriage arrangement practice is not good for the invited close relatives. In this connection, women (mothers and grandmothers) who participated in one of the focus group discussions noted that:

*In the past, when a wedding was held, a feast was more elaborate and it was said that I am going to set up a wedding for you to come (in Amharic ልጅ ልጅ ለው እንድትመጡ/ lije lider new endetmetu). The invited close relatives come to the wedding and eventually stay for a minimum of five days. But, nowadays, wedding ceremonies are taking place in a “modern” way. Then, the invited relatives return home without playing with the invited guests and wedding sponsoring families.<sup>39</sup>*

On the day of the wedding, around 4:00p.m., the elders who made the contract come to the would-be bride's family, then enter a house prepared for them separately. Next, they rewrite the contract that had before and clearly explain what was given to the new couples by both families.

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<sup>39</sup> FGD3, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir



They return to the groom's family around 10:00 p.m local time. On their arrival, the guests warmly welcome them by singing. After that, the groom performs the ritual of slaughtering a sheep and jumping over it, which customarily signifies the well-being of the newlyweds. After that, the bride and the groom enter the bridal hut (*chagula bet*) with the groom's *mizewoch*.

On the day after the wedding, the groom and the bride with the bestman return to the bride's family by having a sheep hand, this return is called “መልሰ/*mälisa*”. On the third day (in Amharic ሰልሰት) a new name will chose for the bride. The best name to be chosen is the groom's mother. The reason is to honor the groom's mother, but the husband gives a new name to his wife and the bride gives a name to her husband.

Brides are kept for 5 days because they say that the devil will not approach them. On the 5th day, they go to the bride's family and return after 3 days. The girl lives with her husband's family for 6 months to 1 year. That is until they build their own house. If the groom builds a house for them, an early married girl does have and make her own home immediately after her marriage.

Here, it should be noted that the bridegroom will come back in the day, which means that the place where the bride's and groom's parents' village are very close. According to community level elderly key informants and men who participated in focus group discussions in both study communities, in the past time, the bride's parent's house and the groom's parents' house were far away, so it took more than 3:00 hours to walk. A mule was kept only for the bridegroom.

## ***2. Mate Selection During the Daughters' Generation***

In previous generations, parents' roles in spouse selection and marriage procedures were higher than that of their daughters' generation. Accordingly, girls were not allowed to say anything about the mate selection process, and they could not discuss about their marriage because, at that time, choosing a male partner by girls was considered as a shame and a violation of the local gendered norms and traditions. As a result, parents were responsible for deciding on their children's marriage and arranging their children's marriage without the would-be-brides' knowledge or decision. In this connection, Guday (2005:126) stated that:

*According to the local tradition, parents' choices of spouses for their children are affected by various factors. For instance, when choosing a husband for his*

*daughter, the father looks at the character, conduct, and working habits of the would-be husband's father. If a father wants to select a girl-child (before she reaches the biological age for marriage or leaqme hewan) for his son, the father investigates the girl-child's parental as well as personal backgrounds.*

However, this has changed in recent years during the daughters' generation. Accordingly, the couple agree and decide to marry and ask their parents to formalize the marriage arrangement process. According to the current tradition, boys are expected to choose their spouses with the support of their friends. This procedure involves the investigation of the characteristics of a girl, her being skillful and has the experience of distilling best *aräqi* (homemade local liquor), not chatting with other boys, the type and size/amount of her parents' endowment, and her education status.

Moreover, men and women during FGDs in both study communities agreed that children's preference in selecting their mate is a good thing and has become a normal procedure. Currently, children do not allow their parents to choose their mate, but they select their mate with their close friends. After their selection, parents arrange the marriage. Thus, except the selection of a mate, parents are involved in the arrangement of their children's marriage as further elaborated by the study participants as follows:

*It is common and normal to make meetings and selections between married spouses. This is good because the girl knows whom to marry. The girl and the boy agree to marry and love each other, and then the parents accept the children's choice and arrange the marriage. It is better than the previous generations. This is the current norm.<sup>40</sup>*

*They no longer follow the traditional culture. In previous generations, the boy's parents would identify a girl as their son and request her parents to send respected elders. But today, the boy would identify a girl he would like to marry and tell his parents to make a marriage contract. The boys think that they are wise enough to do so since they attend formal school. So, they don't follow the previous traditional norm. Of course, the current mate selection process is actually good because the marriage arranged in this process will not easily end up in divorce.<sup>41</sup>*

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<sup>40</sup> FGD3, March 14,2023, Bachema; FGD7, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir

<sup>41</sup> FGD4, March 26,2023, Bachema; FGD8, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir

knowledgeable key informants, community elders and participants of FGDs held with men and women in both study communities highlighted the increased agency of girls in convincing or pressurizing their parents to agree with their the marriage partner they choose, some of them used to threaten their parents by saying that they will die if they did not agree with their choice. The parents expressed the issue under discussion as follows:

*In our communities, some girls passed away by eating qoqor because their parents did not accept their choice of a partner; rather they forced their daughter to accept parents' order. As a result, currently, parents are forced to accept their daughter's preference or choice to protect their daughters for losing their life because some girls in our villages passed away by saying, "This is my husband; this is my future; this is my love."<sup>42</sup>*

Early married girls also shared the above views with the researcher during focus group discussions held with early married school girls and in-depth interviews held with married girls among the daughters' generation. These study participants clearly stated that their parents asked them to show willingness about their mate selection and they allowed them to discuss about their marriage with them. Based on the girls' willingness to accept their choice; parents arranged their daughters' marriage. Furthermore, one of the early married school girls FGD participants illustrated the issue at hand as follows:

*My name is Tewabech [fictive name]. I am a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student. I am 14 years old. I got married on Yekatit 5, 2015 E.C. My husband is ye senbet temari [Sunday school student] at Yidonga Mariam church, Bachema. My husband knows me and selected me for marriage. Then, he and three shimagelewoch came to my parents' houses and requested my parents to marry-off me. Next, my parents asked me to let them know about my willingness by explaining his behavior (he is good, a religious person who attends Sunday school regularly, has a respected behavior, and so on), then I decided to marry him because my parents told me that he is a religious student. Both sides of the parents gave us 30,000 birr (15,000 birr each). We were married in a church ceremony. In our area, especially if the marriage takes place in a church, the boy will ask someone he knows to be his wife.<sup>43</sup>*

In the current tradition of the study communities, children choose their partner, which has become most common at this time. In most cases, marriage arrangements take place when the

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<sup>42</sup> KII10, January 23,2023, Bachema; KII7, February 2,2023, Kurtbahir; FGD3, March 14,2023, Bachema; FGD7, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir; FGD4, March 26,2023, Bachema; FGD8, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir.

<sup>43</sup> FGD1, March 9,2023, Bachema Primary School

would-be husband and the would-be wife agreed and made a decision to marry. Sometimes, marriage arrangement takes place without girls' agency, specifically in Kurtbahir rural community relatively far from the *woreda's capital* town. In other words, boys choose to whom to marry.

Participants of FGDs held with early married school girls and school boys as well as elderly community level key informants revealed the presence of two forms of mate selection in early marriage arrangements, which are:

1. *A boy chooses a girl and asks his parents to arrange it. In this form of mate selection, the boy chooses his would-be wife without asking herself. Sometimes, it is done to religious students, such as deacons, priests, and sänbät temariwoch.*
2. *Jinjena (Love): the couples know each other and agree to get married. In other words, the boy requests the girl to be his girlfriend. Then the girl also accepts his request. This is usually done after the age of 15 or when they complete their primary education in their parents' locality and join their secondary education (9<sup>th</sup> grade) in the woreda's capital town (Merawi), far from their parents' village. Mostly, this stage is the fire age so they cannot think about their future. As a result, they select their partner by themselves and decide to get married. Moreover, the girl knows the timing of their marriage and whom to marry.*

Community leaders including rural leaders, *woreda* officers and mothers who participated indicated that secondary schools are located far away (Merawi) so they used to rent dormitory for their children. Then, they spend most of their time playing together and fall in love under the pressure of friends. Because they have a mobile phone, they call us. No one sees them because they are far away from their parents' village and live in a rented house/dormitory in Merawi, and they watch romantic movies and apply what they see. After they fall in love with each other, the boy sends shimaglie (an elder) to the would-be wife's parents' house. In short, the above two types of mate selection are practiced in the daughters' generation.

### ***3. Types of Early Marriage During the Daughters' Generation***

Nowadays, mid-adolescence marriage is the most common form of early marriage. Marriage arrangements take place for girls at adolescent age. In other words, girls are locally considered as eligible for marriage at the age of 15 and 17, which are considered as the socially appropriate

marriage age for girls (በግሪል ግሪል በግሪልግሪል), whereas boys are locally eligible for marriage usually at the age of 22 and above.

The ethnographic data suggest that girls enter marriage at an early age, which can be classified into three age brackets:

1. *Early adolescence marriage (marriage of an adolescent girl between the ages of 12 and 13, and the age group of girls are mostly married with boys attending Sunday school, deacons or priests because of girls' virginity during marriage is highly required for marriages conducted through the church.*
2. *Mid-adolescence marriage (marriage of an adolescent girl between the ages of 14 and 17).*
3. *Older adolescence marriage (marriage of an adolescent girl between the ages of 18 and 19).*

Early adolescent married girls are not expected to establish their own hut (*gojjo*) immediately after marriage. But they are expected to go to and live in their in-laws' family. Mid-adolescent and older adolescent married girls are expected to live with their husband in their own house after marriage. Here, it should be noted that the promissory type of marriage in particular and marriage below 10 years old in general is not practiced during the daughters' generation in both study communities.

#### ***4. The Economics of Early Marriage During the Daughter's Generation***

In Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities, mid-adolescent marriage is widespread. Adolescent marriage is based on the estimation of wealth that parents prepare for endowment. It is the land and money they [the newlyweds] use for establishing and leading their own house after marriage. An equal amount of land and money is given to the newly married couple by both parents.

The money given to them depends on the economic status/capacity of parents on both sides, and which in turn determines the newly married couple's plan in running their married life, such as opening a shop or running a small business in the *woreda's* capital town (Merawi) or fattening oxen for sale (the groom) and the bride would engage in distilling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor) for sale as well as for using the left over to fatten oxen. During the fieldwork, the usual amount

of money given to the newlyweds by their parents ranges from 20,000-50,000 *birr* on each side. In addition to the money, some parents also provide a small plot of land, about half a *qada* or one *qada* of sea-tree and crop-land on each side. The marriage arrangement is based on equal matching of parental endowments on both sides, i.e., a girl from a rich family gets married with a boy from a rich family. If a girl's parents do not have the economic capacity to provide parental endowments during her marriage, she gets married with a boy from a poor family without any parental endowment. So, both of them will lead their married life by working hard. This type of marriage is locally called “ገገገገ ገገገገ.”

During the current generation of secondary school attending girls from well-to-do families, the groom is expected to buy rings (gold), necklaces and earrings (silver) for the bride, and clothes she wears on the wedding day. After their marriage, the newlyweds used to live with the groom's family for some time (about six months to a year) and they keep the harvest for themselves during their stay with the groom's family. During that time the bride used to distill *arüqi for sale*, while the groom engages in farming and fattening oxen for sale, driving carts, and both the bride and the groom use the money they earn on both sides of their parents for establishing and running their own household. The husband's father provides them with wood for building their own house. When they establish their own house, the wife's mother buys and gives them a pot, *jerica*, dough *mabukiya* bucket, barrel, and *mesob*. Then, the couples rent another land to produce more harvest, usually maize. The rent may be in money or produce. If it is in *birr*, one *qada* of land is sown by paying 3000-4000 Birr for one year. The other option is called ጥጥጥጥ. ጥጥጥጥ means a person who has no land goes to someone who has land to cultivate, sow, cover the cost, and then share the harvest with the owner based on the agreement. They farm products are shared among the farmer and landowner by using traditional measurements as follows:

1. One-third (1/3): This means that the farmer takes two quintals of the produce and one quintal goes to the owner of the land.
2. One-fourth (1/4): This means one for the owner, and three for the farmer.
3. Equal (1/2): This means that the farmer and the owner of the land share the produce equally and straw equally.

In general, children, especially girls, whose families have a lot of land (eucalyptus and cropland) get married early. According to the community, a person who has less than 5 *qada* of land is considered as poor, if it is more than that, that person is rich. The presence of family wealth has made children, especially girls to marry at an early age mainly because of the high demand for marrying such girls assuming that their parents will provide them a large quantity or amount of endowments during their marriage.

## **5.2 Reasons for Continuity in Early Marriage Arrangement Processes during the Daughters' Generation**

### ***1. Lack of Hope in Formal Education***

In the study communities, education was considered as a means for human development and gainful employment. In this regard, key informants from the study communities mentioned that there have been opportunity for and access to education throughout three generations though the accessibility of education was generally limited, particularly for girls, in the past. In other words, due to the prevalent social attitudes, schooling was mostly for boys though there is a shift in attitudes regarding girls' education among the daughters' generation.

In both study communities, children (both boys and girls) are attending school and they are expected to graduate and support their families with gainful employment. Thus, the major role and duty of parents would be to allow children to attend their formal education. More specifically, local girls used to attend school with the expectation that they would lead a better way of life than their mothers' and grandmothers' generations. Moreover, educationally successful girls who manage to get gainful employment are locally considered as economically independent from their husbands when they get married.

In the previous generations, most of the parents in general and mothers in particular, could not get the opportunity of attending formal education and even they cannot read and write their names (do not have *mäsärätä tәмәrt* ) due to early arranged marriage. They always regret for themselves and as a result they want to send their children to formal school. They argued that currently, an educated person can lead a good life because everything has become modernized.

This study found that there are two major factors which motivated parents to allow their children attend formal school. Firstly, most of the community members want to send their children to school because parents have limited land. So, they allow children to attend formal school by keeping the land with them. In this regard, one of the key informants utters the situation in his own words as follows:

*Now, equality is more practiced, and when children get married parents of both sides must give land for the new spouse. Previously, boys were given land from the rural leaders when they got married to a girl of whatever age. During that time, parents used to give to an additional land through an arranged marriage to their children, but not now. As a result, parents want to send their children to school, and keep their land with them.*<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, most of the community members understand that an ‘illiterate’ (uneducated) person cannot go with the current situations. Moreover, uneducated girls are not preferred for marriage because girls are also expected to be engaged in income-generating activities (e.g. being shopkeepers, selling *aräqi*, and so on).

Although education provides a lot of benefits, and parents are allowed to send children to school, the children usually drop out of school, and even they don’t have an interest in continuing their education. Children argue that attending school up to grade 8 or secondary school is enough. This study identified two major reasons for local students’ school dropout. Firstly, most of the students want to engage in small business. School boys and girls lack interest in continuing their formal school due to their interest in getting short-term little income through trading for boys, and selling *aräqi* for girls. As a result, local girls are currently getting married at an early age and parents are arranging their daughters’ marriage with their willingness.

Secondly, children have had their questions about the value of education now. In this regard, 10 years ago from now, successful people in schooling had the opportunity to be employed in different organizations, like teaching, accounting, agriculture, and so on. However, nowadays, they observe high youth unemployment in their community; there are numerous school leavers who remain without jobs and living with their parents, and this is demoralizing. Therefore, as a result, students continue to drop out from school and search for other alternatives since the do

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<sup>44</sup> KII12, January 16,2023, Bachema

not see the value of education as even those who have studied at the university level are at their parents' home. In both study communities (Bachema and Kurtbahir), marriage is often seen as an option for girls who are attending their primary education in their locality or secondary education in Merawi (the *woreda's* capital town) because they do not have any options for the future.

On the other hand, some parents also question that lack of employment opportunities for young people as a factor discouraging them from investing in the education of their children. Similarly, the previous study shows that parents' lack of hope in formal education is one of the basic reasons for practicing girls' early marriage (Guday and Eshetu, 2016). In the Bachema and Kurtbahir, many parents used to mention the list of the unsuccessful grade 12 national exams and unemployed graduated pupils as cases in the past two years in particular, many students have failed and living in their parents' house by working on small businesses. The experience of children not successfully in passing the grade 12 national exam (see Chapter 3, Table 3.3), which too often happens to many parents, that influences the younger siblings or the younger children to go to the local formal school. One of the key informants in Bachema explained the issue at hand as follows:

*In our community, there are many children, girls and boys, who failed in grade 12. They are living with their parents now. Boys are fattening and trading oxen, driving cart, etc., and girls are distilling and selling aräqi like their parents, and the younger children also drop out from school. They are not interested to go to school because they saw the older brother, sister or villagers who are not successful in education, i.e, the see no value in education because it doesn't make any difference. So, parents cannot force them because education should have a positive return after some years, if not it is just a waste of children's time and the family's economy.<sup>45</sup>*

In the studied communities, the girls' and boys' motivation for formal education decrease, and their school dropout rate increased (see Chapter 3, Table 3.1 & 3.2). Accordingly, local girls complete their secondary school education in Merawi and then return back to their parents' village, and marry an uneducated farmer. This reveals that the parents' expenditure on their children's schooling is in vain and there is no benefit to staying in formal education, so marriage

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<sup>45</sup> KII14, January16,2023, Bachema

is the main option for girls. The following case shows an arranged early marriage of a girl that took place in St. Michael *degess* (*feast*) due to her lack of hope in formal education.

### **Case 1: A girl who got married due to lack of hope in formal education**

One of the community level key informants<sup>46</sup> narrates the situation of his sister in his own words as follows:

*I was born and grew up in Kurtbahir rural community. My parents have six children (three sons and three daughters) including me. I am the second child in the family; my older brother was born when our mother was 14 years old. Hence, during my mother's time, there was no contraception method, and women did not get any opportunity of education other than marriage. Our parents were not well economically. For example, they didn't have enough land so that I and my older brother didn't get the opportunity to attend formal school, rather we were employed in a wealthy person's house, and also, we migrated to Jawi, Bambuk, and Metema to get money. Then, I and my older brother started to improve our parents' lives. For instance, we bought additional land, so that we harvest more products like Dagussa (Millet), Bokolo (Maize), and so on. Then, we got married. I always regret for my being unable to attend formal education.*

*But the rest of my siblings (Sitota, Wedalate, Tadela, and Derbe) got the opportunity to attend schooling. My younger sister (Sitota) is successful in her education and got a job in Bahir Dar in 2003 E.C., so our families are happy. She is a role model for my family and in the village too. Nowadays, children are lacking hope in education, and getting married is becoming the only option for girls.*

*My sister (Tadela) was a grade six student in Kurtbahir primary school and she was 15 years old. She dropped out from school and she preferred to get married. She told our family that, currently, “ፍጥነት ስላለው ስለሆነ ስለሆነ ስለሆነ” (education has no any benefit...), graduated pupils came back to their parents, and work for their parents. Hence, it is better to get married and lead own personal life. I (KII8) and our parents advised her repeatedly to continue her education. But, she didn't accept our advice. Finally, our parents were forced to arrange her marriage without informing me and our sister (Setota), for fear that I (KII8) and our sister (Setota) would cancel her arranged marriage. As a result,*

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<sup>46</sup> KII8, January14, 2023, Kurtbahir.

*she warned our father and mother, that she would eat qoqor (rat poison) and die if the wedding was canceled or delayed. Then, our family accepted one of the villager's requests for the proposed husband when she was only 15 years old. Tadela (Case 1) is good at distilling aräqi (homemade local liquor). The main reason for accepting the marriage alliance was the proposed husband of Tadela had good behavior and strong work habits in farming plus in trading cattle (oxen and sheep) and he is respected by the local people. As a result, they perceived that Tadela's future would be good because her proposed husband's and her work do complement because the leftover of aräqi (homemade local liquor) is important for fattening oxen as well as sheep for sale.*

*Then the Tadela's wedding ceremony preparation started. She knew her would-be husband, and she was happy to get married with him. Next, the two parents and her would-be husband wrote the agreements of their parental endowment with the six shimaglies (elders) on both sides. Parental endowment was made in terms of land which is one qada of land and 30,000 birr on both sides of parents was given to the new would-be spouses.*

*The marriage took place in the name of St. Michael degess (religious feast). At this time, I (KII8) get a message as "tsbele kimesu". After the hidden arranged marriage, Tadela (Case 1) went to her husband (Yilekal)'s family and she started distilling aräqi for sale. After living with her husband together with her in-laws for seven months, they built their own house far from her in-laws with the support of our parents and Yilekale's father. Now, she lives together with her husband in their own house.*

According to the above case, before Tadela's marriage, her parents encouraged her to go to school and delay her marriage by mentioning her older sister as a role model for her success in formal education. But she had no interest to continue her education being influenced by the local graduated adolescents who have not gotten better job opportunities. On the other hand, her parents feel quite proud of the fact that they were able to keep her options before she made any mistakes on her life.

## ***2. Love / Freedom of Choice***

Arranged marriages are increasingly giving way to freedom of choice, or "love matches," in which young people play the dominant role in selecting whom they will marry. Accordingly,

girls have improved their agency of marriage (Jones et al., 2020). In the study communities, adolescent girls themselves have an interest to get married, which has becoming normal.

Girls had little or no voice regarding their marriage in Bachema and Kurtbahir during their grandmothers' and mothers' generations due to the rigid gendered social norms. Furthermore, in the past, meeting and discussing about marriage with one's prospective husband was considered as a shameful act. However, in the current generation, girls have the freedom to choose whom to marry and when to marry. Furthermore, girls are taught about their rights in school, but they believe that marriage of their choice is their right regardless of their age. In this regard, the local level key informants and parents who participated in this study acknowledged that:

*Because the government is expanding elementary schools for all peasants, girls now have equal access to formal education as boys. Teachers in schools teach girls in particular and children in general about their rights. However, girls do not understand the value of their right to choose their marriage partner. As a result, school girls' choice to get married early is happening because they fail in love with school boys. Even if parents and government bodies advise them to postpone their marriage, they say it is for love, and getting married is our right, so parents are forced to arrange their daughters' marriage at an early age.<sup>47</sup>*

Schools are one of the socialization agents in which children spend a significant amount of time. This alters early marriage arrangement processes in a variety of ways. Schools have created opportunities for children to learn about their rights, either through school clubs or through school curricula, such as civics. This gives youngsters the ability to choose their spouse and decide on their marriage. In this regard, one of the community (school) level key informants in reported that:

*The number of early marriages among school girls is increasing because these are children's rights. They have their independence. We cannot even punish (beat) the kids in school. This independence drives young people away from it because they believe that everything is their right. As a result, school girls and school boys did not attend their education attentively. Instead, they preferred to talk about*

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<sup>47</sup> KII10, January 23, 2023, Bachema; KII7, February 2,2023, Kurtbahir; FGD3, March 14,2023, Bachema; FGD7, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir; FGD4, March 26,2023, Bachema; FGD8, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir.

*their boyfriend or girlfriend. Finally, they drop out from school, and adolescents get married.*<sup>48</sup>

There are numerous incidents in both Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities where school girls' falling in love with school boys and getting married before the minimum legal marriage age of 18 and before completing their elementary and secondary education. Even if parents aspire to have successfully educated and employed children which are considered as a social capital to the family, children in general and girls in particular didn't achieve their parents' desire since most school attending girls used to get married at an early age before completing their education since they fall in love with school boys while attending their education.

The following case (Case 2) explains the above situation since this is the case of a 10<sup>th</sup> grade complete girl who got married at an early age despite her parents' wishes for her to go to college for further education.

**Case 2: A 10<sup>th</sup> grade complete girl who got married at an early age because of love**

Mirtezer (fictive name) got married at the age of 16. Her husband was 7 years older. Her parents, particularly her father, were not happy with her marriage, rather her father's aspiration was to educate her up to the college level and become a government civil servant. But, she did not continue her education after grade 10 because she fell in love with Molla (fictive name), her husband. So, she forced her father to arrange her marriage with Molla, because she loves him (Molla). Her father attempted to refuse her to accept her decision and he also tried his best to extend the marriage arrangement process. But, he couldn't and she took with Molla even they (Mirtezer and Molla) meet at the daily labor work. So, her father arranged her marriage at the age of 16 by giving endowments. Her husband, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade dropout, was a cart driver in Bachema rural community. Her marriage took place in the form of a ring ceremony to minimize the parents' cost of preparing elaborate wedding feast. Here, it should be noted that her marriage was public and the local government bodies also knew about the marriage arrangement process. After her marriage she retails *aräqi* while living with her husband. Two years after her marriage, she got pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl at the age of 18. She is happy with her marriage

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<sup>48</sup> KII15, February 2,2023, Kurtbahir

because she lives with her love husband, but she regrets about her being unable to continue with her further education. Her own words describe the situation as follows:

*At the age of 16, I married my first husband on Miyaziya 27, 2011 E.C. My husband dropped out of eighth grade and now drives a cart. He is around 7 years older than me. I received my 10<sup>th</sup> grade result in 2010 E.C., and my family wanted me to attend private college by funding the tuition expenses, but I had a daily labor activity in our neighborhood. My husband, Molla, and I met at work. My husband and I talked on the phone a lot. Then, I fell madly in love with him. My parents advised me not to marry so young, but I refused because I loved him and wanted to marry him that year. Next, my father accepted my choice and arranged my marriage. My wedding took place publicly and the local government bodies were aware of it. We live in a similar rural community, Bachema, but in a different parish (village). Then, each of our parents gave us 1 qada of land and 10,000 Birr each. My husband bought me gold ring for my finger, silver for my neck and ears, and more clothes. Immediately after the wedding, I started to live together with my husband in our own house, because before our wedding, he built a 16 Zingo tins house under the main road from Merawi to Bahir Dar far from his parents' village. My husband works as a cart driver and I retail homemade local liquor for customers (in Amharic, aräqi ke miyawetut eyterkebhu ekomeralthu). We have a daughter who is 1 year and 6 months old. I am happy to have married the one I love, but I regret for not being able to continue with my education.<sup>49</sup>*

In short, in the studied communities, love-based early arranged marriage has become a normal practice. In a love-based marriage, the couple decides to marry and the girl's parents would give their consent/approval for arranging her marriage. They would usually have met or seen each other (mostly the boy sees the girl) when the girl goes to school, when they rent a dormitory in Merawi where they attend their secondary school, when they work in a daily labor, or when attend their friends' marriage ceremonies in the villages. Moreover, the early marriage arrangement process and the wedding take place publicly, so the local government bodies are also aware of this practice.

According to in-depth interviews held with grandmothers and mothers and key informant interviews held with religious leaders and local rural kebele officials as well as FGDs with men

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<sup>49</sup> IDI Case 2, February 7, 2023, Kotekotema village, Bachema rural kebele.

(fathers/grandfathers) (see Appendix III), this type of marriage has become a normal practice in the study communities because of the introduction of mobile phones in the area. Much of the relationship takes place by phone, and in some cases, the boy and the girl do not even meet each other before the intermediary role of their friends. This usually occurs without the knowledge of the parents, who only hear about it once their children have asked their parents to arrange their marriage. Moreover, 'modern' technology, especially mobile phones have made connections easier between boys and girls, and hence parents' inability to manage changing adolescent relationships that contribute to this type of marriage has led to this process of early marriage arrangement, which has become more common in both study communities.

### ***3. Life Insecurity***

Life insecurity is the other reason for the continuation of early marriage in the study communities. Parents are securing their girls' future by arranging early marriage. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic followed by the political instability, most girls were influenced by such conditions to get married. About this, according to the official document I got from the *Woreda* Education Office, more than 110 girls were married off before they reached the minimum legal age of marriage during the pandemic outbreak. At that time, the lack of attention from the sector offices or the local bodies as well as the closure of local schools that protect girls from early marriage created a favorable situation for parents to arrange early marriage for their children. This further explored that early marriage is still commonly practiced and currently the number of early married girls (including school girls) is increasing mainly because of the current security conditions in the study area, which calls for further research about the impacts of the current conflict on the practice of early marriage among school girls.

Additionally, in the studied communities, there were deeply rooted cultural norms, which are difficult to change at once. Miresa (2020) shows that gender difference is viewed as natural and never changed in the Ethiopian context. Accordingly, domestic activities (for example, distilling *aräqi*, food preparation, etc.) are assigned to girls, whereas boys' roles are outside the house for example tending cattle with specific reference to the study rural communities. This situation increases the gender-based discrimination of school attending girls because school girls have domestic workload at their parents' home. So, they do not have enough time to do school



### **Case 3: Life Insecurity Leads to Early Marriage**

W/ro Darechey, a 38 years old woman, who lives in Bachema PA, has four children (two females aged 19 and 15, and two males aged 11 and 7, respectively). Her husband is a good farmer and all their children have attended formal school starting from at the age of 7. Since the pandemic outbreak, W/ro Darechey and her husband decided to arrange their daughters' marriage. Because she was so worried about her daughters for fear of rape and other threats due to the local school being closed, and on the other side she (the mother) was worried about her death before she saw her daughters' marriage.

W/ro Darechey pressurized her daughters (Zimame and Amarech grade 9 and 6 students, respectively) to accept their proposed marriage. Zimame did not easily accept her proposed marriage, but when her (Zimame's) friends pressurized her to accept her parents' decision by telling her that her age was appropriate for marriage and the resuming of the school was under question or they couldn't believe going back to school again, and if Zimame lost that chance, she wouldn't get a good husband. Here, according to informal interviews with different individuals, if the girls' age is increasing within their parents' home, their chance of getting married is less, because people perceived that she has changed boyfriends. Finally, the two early married girls accepted their parents' decision and arranged marriage, when Zimame was a grade 9 student at Merawi secondary school, and Amarech was a grade 6 student at Bachema primary school.

Their wedding feast was held in a ring ceremony in a hidden manner, because at that time preparing a wedding feast was not allowed due to the pandemic. After their marriage, one of the bride (Amarech) went to her in-laws' home, but Zimame remained to there and started to live with husband at their own house located in a place far from her in-laws as well as her parents' village (Kotekotema, Bachema ) because her husband built a house before their marriage. However, after they got married, schools resumed teaching, but the married girls could not continue their school due to workload. Zimame still regrets for dropping out of school, but her sister is happy with her marriage. W/ro Darechey is happy with her daughters' marriage because she saw her daughters got married before she passed away and become a grandmother as rite of passage or success in her lifetime.

Zimame and Amarech have been using contraception since their marriage. Now, Zimame gave birth to her first son at the age of 17. I witnessed that the 17-year-old early married girl, Zimame, got her one month baby vaccinated at a health post in Bachema with her husband and her mother.

By the same token, Zimame's mother, Darechey, narrated the situation as follows:

*Zimame is my first child. She was good in her school performance. During the time when COVID-19 occurred in Ethiopia, she was a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student at Merawi secondary school. Then, she came home when the school was closed. But the little girl was not very fond of education. When the school was closed, we didn't think it would be open again. So, I (Darechey) and my husband, Tesfahun, decided to marry-of both of them. But, Zimame refused to accept the proposed marriage, and we tried to persuade her to accept the proposed marriage through her friends. Next, after studying the behavior of her would-be husband and his love for work, we arranged their marriage secretly. Now, Zimame has given birth to a son at the age of 17.<sup>51</sup>*

Initially, Zimame wanted to complete her secondary education successfully and become an accountant, with her parents covering her school fees. Unfortunately, the school was closed due to the outbreak of the pandemic and she came back to her parents to live with them. There was frequent and strong pressure from her parents and her friends to accept the proposed marriage due to the pandemic. On the other hand, Zimame's mother, Darchey, had the power to decide her daughter's marriage. Then, Darchey prepared some wedding feast, which took place as a ring ceremony. Zimame further narrated the situation in her own words as follows:

*Now, I am 17 years old and dropped out from 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and become a mother of a baby. My parents, especially my father, have an interest in formal education. My dream was to successfully complete my secondary education and joining university and graduate with good grades. However, in 2012 E.C the Ethiopian government declared the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and closed schools. Thus, marriage requests were coming to my parents from the villagers. My mother had an interest in arranging marriage. She did not tell me about the school will be resumed teaching, rather she had been telling me about her interest of seeing my marriage and my child before she passed away due to the pandemic. My friends also pressurized me to agree with my parents' arranged marriage. In my surroundings, all people pushed me to get married and no one encouraged me by saying that the school would be reopened. I did not expect and never dreamed that Belete, aged 25, would be my husband. Accordingly, I accepted my parents' proposed marriage*

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<sup>51</sup> IDI Case 4, March 8, 2023, Misana mender, Bachema.

*because I didn't have any other alternative to choose and I was unable to get my teacher and tell the situation. My parents were happy about my decision to accept their proposed marriage. Thus, the marriage was arranged in a hidden manner in the form of a ring ceremony due to fear of the pandemic. However, a month after my marriage, the school resumed teaching but I could not go back to school because of the workload in my house. Still, I always regret for dropping out of my education (Bachema, March 2023).*

#### **4. Fear of Daughters' Pregnancy before Marriage**

Parents fear that their daughters could get pregnant before arranged marriage and face the "ዲቃላ" stigma in their society. Moreover, the stigma is basically attached to a pregnancy that happened before a girl got married and then her family, mainly her father and mother are not respected and always disgraceful in the eyes' of the local community. Therefore, parents want to marry their daughters when they reach at the socially acceptable marriage age, which is the mid- adolescence age (15-17). For this reason, a girl should keep her virginity until she gets married to get the honor and reputation of her family by not getting pregnant before marriage.

Guday and Eshetu (2016) revealed that pregnancy that occurs outside of marriage is not accepted by the local community and it is a shame. Community members further acknowledged that any pregnancy in marriage is acceptable. But, if girls get pregnant in premarital sex, then, her family will be despised by the local community; they will be humiliated. Furthermore, Popenle and Whithead (2004:21) cited in Guday and Eshetu (2016:98) stated that having a child before marriage does not make her (the girl) preferable for marriage. Accordingly, she cannot also get married; rather she faces the stigma of 'ግግግ'. Therefore, it is good to marry a girl before she becomes pregnant. One the key informants explained the reason why girls are forced to get married before they get pregnant by using the proverb which says, "ግግግ ግግግ ግግግ ግግግ" (we have put the ashes before the ants come) (KII4, February 4, 2023, Kurtbahir). This means that before the girls become pregnant, parents have to take care of their daughters, i.e., they should marry off their daughters at an early age.

In one of the study communities, which is far from the urban center where there are secondary schools, most students from that community used to attend their school by renting a dormitory. Thus, boys and girls are exchanging their books or exercise books and the parents themselves

didn't see and control them. Most of the time, girl falls in love with a boy more easily than the boy. The following statements explain the issue under discussion:

*Secondary schools are limited or are not expanded in rural areas, and are mostly found in town areas. As a result, parents are responsible for their children's school fees, dormitory rent, food, and other expenses. However, adolescent school girls and boys meet each other in their class and dorm, and when a girl requests a book or other item, the boy provides it while simultaneously demanding sex; finally, this leads to pregnancy and then coming back to their parent's home. As a result, girls become the burden of their parents.<sup>52</sup>*

Even so, if the main objective is to avoid pregnancy before marriage, pregnancy might sometimes lead to marriage. As a result, one of the *Woreda* level key informants explained the following case about arranging a pregnant-girl's marriage covertly as follows:

*I remember a pregnant girl coming to me in 2014. That girl is 14 years old and in seventh grade. Her family seems to be well-to-do and well-respected in the community. The girl became pregnant with a boy she loved, who was with her. The young man was a student. A neighbor informed the girl's father that he had seen her with one of the villager's sons. However, the girl's father refused when a neighbor informed him that his daughter does not usually attend school because he was overconfident in her. When the girl found out she was pregnant, she came to me and told me what had happened. She threatened me that if her parents did not arrange her marriage before giving birth, she would eat qoqor (rat poison) and die. Then I called her uncle and informed him that she was pregnant. Finally, the pregnant girl's marriage took place in a ring ceremony,"ገገገገ ገገገገ ገገገ ገገገገ ገገገገገገ ገገ ገገገገ" with amate telemno abat tedelelo (marriage alliance is made when the father of her husband is begged and her father is cajolement) .<sup>53</sup>*

Furthermore, in both Bachema and Kurtbahir study communities, the use of contraceptive or family planning method outside married life is not approved by the local community, which is a shame. Community members also agreed that a married girl can use any form of family planning method. However, if unmarried girls are found using any contraception, the community regards them as a prostitute (in Amharic “ሸርጭጣ”).

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<sup>52</sup> KII3, January 13, 2023, North Mecha *Woreda*, Merawi.

<sup>53</sup> KII3, January 13, 2023, North Mecha *Woreda*, Merawi

## ***5. Protecting Family Honor / Fear of Losing Social Status***

There is a significant belief in the studied communities that the local community members place a high value on family honor. A girl holds the most responsibility for upholding the family's dignity and reputation by getting married in accordance with the local marriage customs.

An out-wedlock pregnancy sullies the family's honor and reputation. Similarly, Miresa (2020) noted that in Ethiopia, a girl's virginity and sexual morality are directly related to the honor and standing of a parent or kinship. So, if the girl loses her virginity and engages in sexual relations before marriage, it will bring humiliation and marginalization to the parents. Hence, early marriage for girls is locally considered a strategy to protect family honor. The participants of FGDs held with women (mothers and grandmothers) and men (fathers and grandfathers) (see Appendix III) also explained how family honor as one of the many factors reinforces early marriage for girls in their locality as follows:

*If the parents do not arrange their daughters' marriage at an adolescent age, the communities talk about the girl in particular and her father in general. People ask why not her parents arrange her marriage by giving her their endowments. They derogatorily say they are waiting until she gets pregnant before marriage to someone, and the girl's father twisted his neck (in Amharic, ባባባ ባባ ባባባባ ባባ ባባ ባባባባ/ ባባባባ ባባ ባባ ባባ ባባ ባባባባባባ ባባ ባባባባባ). As a result, parents are forced to arrange early marriage for their daughter before she gets pregnant to protect the family's honor.<sup>54</sup>*

Similarly, one of the early married girls, Birke Taye, aged 15 and dropped her schooling at grade 6, asserted that the family needed their honor and the deep-rooted social norm leads to her to get married at an early age. She further acknowledged that she tried to cancel her parents arranged marriage with the support of the school girls' club, but she could not escape from early marriage. So, she regrets about dropout from her schooling since her parents forced her to get married. Her case is narrated below.

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<sup>54</sup> KII6, February2, 2023, Kurtbahir; KII10, January23, 2023, Bachema; FGD3, March 14,2023, Bachema; FGD7, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir; FGD4, March 26,2023, Bachema; FGD8, March 21,2023, Kurtbahir.

#### **Case 4. Parents need of Family Honor and Hidden Early Marriage Arrangement**

Birke, a 15-year-old girl, is the subject of this story. She lives in Kurtbahir, a rural community. Her wedding took place in Miyaziya 2014E.C. Her father wanted her to marry a respectable man from the neighborhood. Birke was attending her fifth-grade lesson at Kurtbahir primary school in the same year. Her husband, Faintahun, was 22 years old. Birke had a high workload at home because she was the first child for her family. For example, she used to help her mother by distilling homemade local liquor and caring for the child. She used to mow grass for the cattle and fed them. Her father's friend saw her with two boys one day when she was mowing the grass for the livestock. Then, he appeared to Mr. Taye and told him to push his daughter before she got pregnant with someone else and the father not be embarrassed in the place where he had been respected. Mr. Taye then took his friend's advice and decided to arrange Birke's marriage in consultation with his wife. Mr. Taye then accepted the request of the villager's would-be husband. After that, they began preparing for her wedding without Birke's knowledge about their decision.

Birke applied to the school girls' club after hearing from her friends that her parents has the plan to arrange her marriage. The girls' club then alerted the *woreda* by speaking with the school principal. The official from the *Woreda* Women, Children, and Social Affairs' office seized Birke's father, Ato Taye, from his home and detained him. After three days of imprisonment, Ato Taye was released on bail with the promise of a 100,000-birr fine if he forced his daughter, Birke, to marry. She received an incentive prize from the Women, Children, and Social Affairs' office as a result of Birke's recommendation. This, however, was not enough to protect Birke from the arranged marriage. Ato Taye was not concerned about the 100,000-birr punishment he signed, but rather the humiliation/stigmatization of some families due to some girls in the area who gave birth outside marriage. Therefore, before the day the marriage was supposed to take place, without the knowledge of Birke as well as the government body, the marriage was secretly performed in the name of *St. Michael's mahbär*. She finished her grade 5 education and enrolled in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade this year. However, she dropped out from school due to her parents, her in-laws and her husband who did not allow her to continue her schooling. No one came and asked her when she missed her school.

With the same token, Birke narrated the situation as follows:

*I'm Birke, and I'm in grade 5 at Kurtbahir Full Cycle Primary School. Since I am the first child in my family, I am responsible for both inside and outside of the house responsibilities. My family is respected in the community. My family pushed me to marry a 22-year-old farmer when I was 15 when I started fifth grade. I applied to the school girls' club before getting married, and they signed my father and sent him after three days imprisonment, and they rewarded me. Then, I assumed the wedding was canceled, but my parents forced me to marry on St. Michael's*

*Mahbär, which was earlier than the planned wedding date. Now, I dropped out of sixth grade because they (my parents and my husband) wouldn't let me study. Nobody asked me when I got absent from school. I would not have married at my early age or dropped out of school if they had watched me with the support of the school or the government.<sup>55</sup>*

Similarly, one of the community level key informants claimed that his status and societal norms played a pivotal role for his daughter's marriage at the age of 15. His daughter was the third child of the family and she was forced into marriage in this year (2022/23) when she was in grade 9. He further explained the situation as follows:

*I'm a priest and have three children (two boys and one girl). They are all in school; the first and second boys are in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, respectively, while the girl is in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The school is far away, and they all study at a rented house in Merawi. In our locality, young school girls become pregnant while attending Merawi secondary school, putting a strain on the family's finances as well as undermining the family's prestige. As a result, I and her brothers decided to marry off my daughter since we would be humiliated if she committed wrongdoings. I arranged her marriage publicly, and the wedding took place in the form of a ring ceremony with the slaughtering of one ox in November of this year. We (I and her in-laws) gave them 100,000 birr and 1 qada of land on both sides. They can live together in their own house whenever they want because her husband is also a student. We put the endowment money in their accounts and said it would help them to open a shop.<sup>56</sup>*

This study found that the wedding ceremony took place in a hidden manner for the legal bodies when the girl was applied to the girls' club where her parents proposed her marriage. Otherwise, it was visible to all and nobody tried to cancel the marriage.

In short, parents fear humiliation and disrespect in their culture if their daughter becomes pregnant before marriage. As a result, parents believed that marrying off their daughters as early

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<sup>55</sup> IDI Case 3, February 16, 2023, Kurtbahir.

<sup>56</sup> KII5, January 24, 2023, Kotekotema village, Bachema.

as possible are the best option. The family members' motivation is to maintain their social status and respect than their daughters' future lives.

## ***6. Continuity of the Family Line***

The continuation of the family line is one of the advantages of marriage. There is a link between the size and number of offspring and the continuity of the family lineage in this ethnographic study area. This suggests that if the number of girls in the family is small or if there is only one in her family home, the girl will get married in middle adolescence. Parents are concerned about two things in this situation. First, if a girl stays in school, she will not have many children. Second, the discontinuity of genealogy is troubling.

As a result, parents' fertility is at risk, especially if the mother has no sisters or if they only have one daughter among their children, and their only alternative is to marry off their daughter. According to Guday and Eshetu (2016), parents arrange their daughters' marriages to continue their lineage or to see grandchildren. This ethnographic study demonstrated that one of the reasons why parents plan their daughters' marriages is to fulfill their parents' desire to become grandmothers and increase their family's ancestry.

Tirunesh, one of the in-depth interviews held with mothers' generation, narrates her lived experience as follows:

*My name is Tirunesh. I am 38 years old now. I married my first husband when I was 10 years old. My husband was a farmer, and he is 7 years older than me. I dropped out of school when I was in grade 2 at Kurtbahir Primary School because my parents forced me to get married. My mother has one sister, so my mother wants to see my child rather than continuing with my education. Then, my father arranged my marriage and I got married. I had my first child when I was 13, and I have a total of five children (now I have four children; one child (my first child) passed away). My parents are happy because they achieved their desired status to become a grandmother or father through my marriage. But I regret for continuing with my education.<sup>57</sup>*

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<sup>57</sup> IDI Case 6, February 15,2023, Kurtbahir

## ***7. Lack of Government Control or Weak Law Enforcement***

The Ethiopian laws and policies declare that early marriage is a violation of rights, which is an illegal traditional practice. Moreover, the revised criminal code of the country, especially Article 648, clearly states the illegality of early marriage. Accordingly, the revised family code of the Amhara regional state (2003) also grants the child the right to marry when it takes place at the full age of eighteen years. These laws and policies are known in the study communities where there has been awareness creation about the illegality of marriage before the age of 18 for both girls and boys. Furthermore, there is a rural community level committee established to eliminate harmful practices including early marriage both study communities. The task of this committee is to prevent and stop early marriage. In the past, especially before the outbreak of the pandemic, girls were released from early marriage through strict control and monitoring by government bodies.

According to the key informants, rural community leaders, knowledgeable individuals, and participants FGDs (see Appendix III), previously teachers taught us about the negative consequences of early marriage in a drama form; *kebele* leaders and relevant bodies used to come and give lessons in the farmer's training center (FTC). Parents who married off underage daughters were punished as a lesson to the rest of the community. But now, especially since the pandemic broke out, because there no strong government control and there is no awareness creation activity about the consequences of early marriage, especially on girls' education, the number of school girls who got married before the age of 18 has increased. One of the *woreda level* key informants revealed the following:

*Previously, police, woreda women, children, social affairs' officers, and rural leaders' roles in preventing early marriage were high, but not now. Thus, the government bodies' role becomes softened. The different government bodies and NGOs ways of creating awareness among people don't fit with the community context. But they report false information or data. So, now, the local government bodies are also part of those who are practicing early marriage.<sup>58</sup>*

*The role of teachers and other key actors in the study rural communities that prevent early marriage has diminished. Moreover, the teachers support for children through advice, rounding up dropout students, and considering measures of community service for parents who do not send their children to school has*

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<sup>58</sup> KII3, January 13, 2023, North Mecha Woreda

*declined. Accordingly, teachers' and parents' relationships become weak. As a result, girls are vulnerable to early marriage and school dropout. Moreover, currently, there is no the previous form of tracing whereabouts of the absent or dropped students. I witnessed that the teachers write a list of dropout students with their reasons and report to the principal.*

Even if they received a case, the government bodies did not follow up it to the end; they didn't take strict punishment. Moreover, this situation is made for parents, as there is no punishment when a daughter's marriage is reported.

In the study communities, there are various government institutional mechanisms in place to prevent girls from early marriage. These are briefly described below.

#### **5. Women, Children, and Social Affairs' Office in North Mecha Woreda**

Numerous bodies collaborate in this arrangement. The *Goje limeade aswegaj* committee is established at the community level, which includes the kebele leader, kebele manager, religious father, health extension worker, school principal, police officer, women's development group leader, and youth development leader, among others. The focal point of education is the principal of the school, who coordinates the clubs in the school, especially the girls' club, gender club, and children's club. The Girls' club works to create awareness about early marriage-related issues, and if parents arrange the girl's marriage, they can appeal to the club's representative teacher to cancel it. Gender club creates awareness to change social norms and focus on gender-based division of activities. The children's rights club focuses on teaching child rights so that children know their rights and report if their parents push them to marry before they turn 18. I obtained this information through observation and informal interviews with students. However, this office has not been able to prevent or stop early marriage as much as it should be. In this regard, one of the key informants said that:

*At present, it is very difficult for us to stop early marriage because most of the members of the Goje limade asewgaji committee in each kebele are part of the community. So they cover us. In addition to this, girls have consented to get married. Sometimes the girl says that she wants to marry him since she loves him because her parents force her to do so.<sup>59</sup>*

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<sup>59</sup> KII1, January 12,2023

In addition to this, some of the so-called leaders or those who are expected to protect girls from early marriage are themselves participants in the secret process, that is, some of the leaders I found in the study communities marry used to marry their daughters before they turn 18 (see marriage arrangement in daughters' generation). Some of them arrange the marriage secretly by talking to the boy who will marry the girl.

## **6. North Mecha Justice Office**

This office works with partners in the *woreda* police women and children department and the *woreda* court to prevent early marriage. In addition to the police, the office works together with non-governmental organizations (UNICEF 2007-2013 E.C.) to prevent early marriages. UNICEF supports them economically by providing vehicles or motorcycles. However, preventing early marriage has far-reaching challenges. Among them, the following are the major ones.

**I. Existence of legal gap:** This means that the law says that the marriage should be terminated 15 days before the marriage takes place. This encourages the marriage to take place. But in violation of the law, it is suspended until the wedding day to save the lives of the children. In this regard, one of the key informants in the *woreda* shows that the extent of prevention in the *woreda* is as follows:

*It was said that early marriage was going to take place in our woreda, we got together and went. The girl is 13 years old. The marriage was arranged in the city. The wedding ənğära is baked. Then we called off the wedding. We handed over the baked ənğära to the hotel, and in this way, we canceled the marriage*<sup>60</sup>

Another gap in the country's law is that children (under 18 years of age) should not be arrested. This is the reason why the marriage is conducted in a secret or hidden manner and the parent is arrested when it is known by the governmental protectors and the rest of the relatives wed the children. As a result, the bride and groom who are under 18 years old, are arrested until the wedding day passes with violation of the law.

*We received a case from a rural community in our woreda. A girl reported to a school girls club that her parents had been forcing her to marry. Then, we went*

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<sup>60</sup> KII3, January 13,2023, the Woreda

*and brought the parents (her mother and father) and arrested them. But it is not as we thought, we thought that if the other parents were arrested, the marriage would be canceled, but we heard that a relative wed her. This happened in 2008 E.C.* <sup>61</sup>

**II. Security:** In this period, especially since 5 years ago, unemployed young people have been engaged in criminal activities. Therefore, when we received the case, the girl who was supposed to marry tried to attack or harm those who were going to stop the marriage.

**III. Love:** girls sometimes, because they are under the influence of their parents when we leave after making a suggestion, the parents advise her to say I love him, I will die if I don't marry him. The other is having true love and sometimes getting pregnant before marriage.

**IV. Not knowing the exact age of the girl who is to be married before her age.** Of course, the age test will be conducted at the Feleg Hiwot Referral Hospital, but the result of the test does not show the actual age of the girl.

**V. Lack of budget:** There is no allocated budget to prevent or eliminate early marriage at the *woreda* level. This has a big gap.

In general, in the study communities, girls are more vulnerable to marry than boys at an early age due to complex and interrelated factors discussed above. Currently, after completing the ethnographic fieldwork for this study in April 2023, the schools in the study area are closed because of the current conflict. So, there is a need for further research on the impact of the current conflict on early marriage in the study area.

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<sup>61</sup> KII3, January 13,2023, the Woreda

# CHAPTER SIX

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter briefly summarizes the major findings of the study based on the specific objectives of the study and then draws concluding remarks based on the implications of the major findings of the study.

### **6.1. Summary of Major Findings of the Study**

The major findings on change in early marriage across three generations revolve around (1) change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across the three generations (grandmothers', mothers' and daughters' generations) in general and factors contributing to such change during the current generation of daughters in particular; and (2) continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across the generations in general and reasons for the continuation of the practice of early marriage during the current generation of daughters in particular in the context of Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities, North Mecha *Woreda* of Amhara region.

#### **1) Major findings on change in age at first marriage and its arrangement processes across the three generations and factors contributing to such change during the current generation of daughters**

The major findings on change in age at first marriage across the three generations are briefly summarized as follows:

- ❖ During the previous generations of grandmothers and mothers, it was common for parents to arrange marriage for their female children between the ages of 9 and 14, whereas the current generation of daughters used to marry between the ages of 14 and 17. According to study participants, the absence of formal schools during the grandmothers' generation in their respective localities (Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities) and lack of educational opportunity for female children in particular contributed to the

common practice of arranged marriages for girls below the age of 15 during the previous generations (mainly grandmothers' generation).

- ❖ The age at first marriage has increased during the daughters' generation in both rural communities, mainly due to the availability of primary schools in both localities. Moreover, the age gap between spouses has declined from 7-10 years old during the mothers' generation to 3-5 years old in the daughters' generation. The findings of this study also revealed that currently married girls usually give birth to their first child after 2 to 3 years of married life (after living together with their husband in their own house). In other words, married girls used to delay their first birth for a period of more than a year after they started to live together with their husband by using contraception provided free of charge through the local health extension workers in both study communities. In short, the age at first marriage as well as the age at first child birth has increased in the daughters' generation due to several factors, of which the expansion of formal education and the increase in parents' awareness about the health impacts (mainly fistula) of marrying their daughters at an early age are mentioned by the study participants as the major factors accounted for such change.

The following are also the major findings pertaining to change in early marriage arrangement processes across the three generations and factors contributing to such changes during the daughters' generation:

- ❖ In the past, children's marriage was arranged by fathers, grandfathers, or close relatives. Guday (2005:128) also found that fathers choose a spouse for their children and decide on the timing of the marriage, whereas mothers have little influence in proposing or deciding such serious social events but are responsible for preparing food and drinks for wedding ceremonies. Moreover, the bride and groom do not know whom to marry or when to marry. However, in the daughters' generation, the bride would also know her husband before the wedding day. Here, it should be noted that, nowadays, the choice of an appropriate mate is based on the character, work habit, and behavior of the would-be-groom and the would-be-bride rather than the parents' character, conduct, and work

habits. Furthermore, the marriage of the current generation of girls (especially secondary school attending girls) is mainly based on their choice/preference unlike that of their mothers' generation which was fully arranged by their parents. According to the current tradition, the would-be husband chooses his potential wife by considering her character and her work habit, especially her skill and experience in distilling *aräqi* (homemade local liquor), and the economic status of her parents.

- ❖ ***Change in parental endowments for the newly-weds:*** parental endowments to the newly-weds vary in terms of quantity and quality across time. As a result, cattle were the most important asset to arrange marriages and bridal gift in some amount of money was sent from the would-be groom's family to the would-be bride's family in the past generations of women (see also Guday, 2005:126). In the daughters' generation, land is the most important form of property and money should also be given to the would-be-bride and the would-be-groom by each parent. An equal amount of land and money is given to the newly married couple by both parents. The money given to them depends on the economic status/capacity of parents on both sides, and which in turn determines the newly married couple's plan in running their married life, such as opening a shop or running a small business in the *woreda's* capital town (Merawi) or fattening oxen for sale (the groom) and the bride would engage in distilling *aräqi* for sale as well as for using the left over to fatten oxen. During the fieldwork, the usual amount of money given to the newlyweds by their parents ranges from 20,000-50,000 Birr on each side. In addition to the money, some parents also provide a small plot of land on each side. In general, the marriage arrangement is based on equal matching of parental endowments on both sides, i.e., a girl from a rich family gets married with a boy from a rich family. During the current generation of secondary school attending girls from well-to-do families, the groom is expected to buy ring (gold), necklaces and earrings (silver) and clothes for bride. Furthermore, the marriage of the current generation of girls (especially secondary school attending girls) is mainly based on their choice/preference unlike that of their mothers' generation which was fully arranged by their parents. The findings of this study also revealed that currently married girls usually give birth to their first child

after 2 to 3 years of married life. In other words, married girls used to delay their first birth for a period of one or more years by using contraception.

- ❖ ***Change in wedding feasts:*** early arranged marriage took place with elaborate feasts in the past when the population was small and everything was cheap, whereas the early marriage feasts are less elaborate during the daughters' generation of daughters when the population is high and everything is expensive. As a result, early marriages are now performed with a minimum ceremony following a public arrangement process, but in some cases, it would be hidden. Moreover, parents prefer to give endowments in the form of land and money as well as a bridal gift during their children's marriage arrangement process rather than organizing an elaborate wedding ceremony for their children. In short, during the daughters' generation, the wedding feast is not as elaborate as their mothers' generation.
  
- ❖ In the current generation of daughters, marriage takes place in a “modern” away and the early marriage arrangement process and the wedding feast differ from the previous generation of mothers. Currently, there is no an elaborate wedding feast, but it is being done in the name of a religious ceremony (e.g. *Mahbär*) and ring ceremony. Moreover, the number of people who are invited to the marriage ceremony is limited for two basic reasons. First, inviting a large population needs much economy. Second, people perceive that preparing an elaborate wedding feast and inviting large people as a harmful traditional practice since it is a wastage of the marrying families as well as the newly-weds' economic resources (in Amharic ለአኖራ ማብላት ነው አንጂ ሌላ ጥቅም የለውም). The groom also asks his close friends to accompany him. The best-men (*mizewoch*) must cover the cost of contracting a car, a bajaj, or a motorcycle, and this has to be returned when each of these best-men gets married, but the female *mizewoch* are not expected to pay the transportation cost.

In general, the above major findings on change in early marriage arrangement processes during the daughters' generation are the result of various factors, of which the following are the major ones most commonly mentioned by the participants of the study:

1. ***Modern communication Media:*** Local adolescent boys and girls who attend their secondary education in the *woreda's* capital town used to listen to radio programs and watch TV and get informed about the harmful consequences of preparing an elaborate and expensive wedding feasts, as well as the importance of girls' education. The local parents, on the other hand, have learned from their lived experience about the harmful impacts of preparing expensive wedding feasts and currently they used prepare to less elaborate wedding feasts by reduce unnecessary expenditures used for preparing elaborate wedding feasts during the previous generations.
2. ***Mobile Technology:*** Currently, the local schools attending mid-adolescent girls and boys have mobile phones, which they use to communicate with one another as well as to view movies and videos. This enabled adolescents to organize their marriages in a 'modern' manner. Furthermore, girls and boys communicate via mobile phone and select their marriage match. However, in the past, the would-be-husband and the would-be-wife did not speak to each other, which was both a humiliation and an indication of misconduct or rudeness from the perspective of the previous generations of mothers/fathers and grandmothers/grandfathers.
3. ***Modern Transportation Services:*** Technology, in the form of transportation services, has also been observed to modernize 'traditional' weddings. During the mothers' and grandmothers' generations, the bride-groom traveled to the groom's parents' village by horseback being accompanied by one of the groom's best-men, while the remaining best-men traveled by foot across large distances. People now use locally available transportation services (such as Bajaj, Motorcycle, and Isuzu bus) to provide comfort for the bride-groom and best-men and to include some mid-adolescent girls as members of the best-men, which was not the practice during the previous generations of grandmothers and mothers.

## 2) Major findings on continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across the three generations and reasons for the continuation of the practice of early marriage during the current generation of daughters

The following are the major findings on continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations (grandmothers', mothers' and daughters') and the reasons for continuity in early marriage arrangement processes during the daughters' generation in the context of Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities of North Mecha *Woreda*.

- ❖ During the current generation of daughters, the marriage arrangement process involves equal matching of economic resources as parental endowments and the social status of the marrying families like that of the past generations of grandmothers and mothers. In other words, girls from “rich” families get married early. However, in general, across the three generations, the presence of family wealth has made children, especially girls to marry at an early age mainly because of the high demand for marrying such girls assuming that their parents will provide them a large quantity or amount of endowments during their marriage though parental endowments to the newly-weds vary in terms of quantity and quality across time.
- ❖ During both grandmothers' and mothers' generations, girls were socially expected to get married before the age of 15 mainly because of the fear of *qomo-qär* stigma though there was a legal sanction against the marriage of girls below the age of 18 during the mothers' generation. Even until recently, non-school attending rural girls who passed the age of 15 without getting married have been insulted as *qomo-qär* (unmarriageable or unwanted for marriage). Moreover, the current generation of girls in both rural communities are socially expected to be virgin during their first marriage and pregnancy before marriage is shameful for both the girls and her parents like that of the previous generations of women mainly because of the deep-rooted gendered social norm which reinforces early marriage among the current generation of girls.

- ❖ The study also found that the usual age of marriage for girls was below 15 years old during both the grandmothers' and mothers' generations. This finding was based on the lived experiences of grandmothers and mothers who participated in in-depth interviews with extended case studies in both study communities in particular and women focus group discussants consisting of grandmothers and mothers in each of the study communities in general.
- ❖ In both study communities, there are primary school girls who got married before the age of 14 and there are also local girls who got married below the age of 18 after dropping out from secondary school or being unable to pass the 10<sup>th</sup> grade national examination.

In general, in both study communities, the current generation of girls are marrying below the age of 18 and the number of early married girls (including primary and secondary school attending girls) is increasing since the past five years due to the following major reasons:

- ❖ ***Lack of Hope in Formal Education:*** In the study communities, education was considered as a means for human development and gainful employment. So, in both study communities, children (both boys and girls) are attending school and they are expected to graduate and support their families with gainful employment. More specifically, local girls used to attend school with the expectation that they would lead a better way of life than their mothers' and grandmothers' generations. Moreover, educationally successful girls who manage to get gainful employment are locally considered as economically independent from their husbands when they get married. However, contrary to parents' expectations, most school attending girls and boys used to dropout from school since they lack interest in continuing their formal school due to their interest in getting short-term little income through trading for boys, and selling *aräqi* for girls. As a result, local girls are currently getting married at an early age and parents are arranging their daughters' marriage with their willingness since they observe high educated youth unemployment as well as numerous school leavers who remain without jobs and living with their parents. As a result, students continue to drop out from school and search for other alternatives since they do not see the value of education as

even those who have studied at the university level are at their parents' home. In both study communities (Bachema and Kurtbahir), marriage is often seen as an option for girls who are attending their primary education in their locality or secondary education in Merawi (the *woreda's* capital town) because they do not have any options for the future.

- ❖ ***Life Insecurity:*** in the study communities, parents are securing their girls' future by arranging early marriage since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic followed by the political instability, which also reinforced early marriage among school attending girls as revealed in the review of the official document from the *Woreda Education Office*, which states that more than 110 girls were married off before they reached the minimum legal age of marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak when the schools were closed. At that time, the lack of attention from the sector offices or the local bodies as well as the closure of local schools that protect girls from early marriage created a favorable situation for parents to arrange early marriage for their children. This study further explored that early marriage is still commonly practiced and currently the number of early married girls (including school girls) is increasing mainly because of the current security conditions in the study area, which calls for further research about the impacts of the current conflict on the practice of early marriage among school girls. Because of the outbreak of the pandemic, schools were closed, which led the local people to think that schools would not be opened again, and so that parents married off of girls who have been attending school before the pandemic. In the tradition of the study communities, husbands are the protector of wives from rape. Moreover, parents desire to see their daughters get married before they pass away. In this regard, parents push girls to get married at the socially appropriate age for marriage (15 to 17) since they think that their daughters will not find a good husband if they stay unmarried beyond that age. Moreover, plenty of cases in the study communities revealed that parents' pressure on girls to accept arranged marriage during the pandemic was high for fear of rape.

- ❖ ***Fear of Daughters' Pregnancy before Marriage:*** Parents fear that their daughters could get pregnant before arranged marriage and face the "ዲቃላ" stigma in their society. Moreover, the stigma is basically attached to a pregnancy that happened before a girl got married and then her family, mainly her father and mother are not respected and always disgraceful in the eyes' of the local community. Therefore, parents want to marry their daughters when they reach at the socially acceptable marriage age, which is the mid-adolescence age (15-17). For this reason, a girl should keep her virginity until she gets married to get the honor and reputation of her family by not getting pregnant before marriage. Guday and Eshetu (2016) revealed that pregnancy that occurs outside of marriage is not accepted by the local community and it is a shame. Community members further acknowledged that any pregnancy in marriage is acceptable.
  
- ❖ Furthermore, in both study communities, the use of contraceptive or family planning method outside married life is not approved by the local community, which is a shame. Community members also agreed that a married girl can use any form of family planning method. However, if unmarried girls are found using any contraception, the community regards them as a prostitute.
  
- ❖ ***Protecting Family Honor / Fear of Losing Social Status*** There is a significant belief in the studied communities that the local community members place a high value on family honor. A girl holds the most responsibility for upholding the family's dignity and reputation by getting married in accordance with the local marriage customs. An out-wedlock pregnancy sullies the family's honor and reputation. This study found that the wedding ceremony took place in a hidden manner for the legal bodies when the girl was applied to the girls' club where her parents proposed her marriage. Otherwise, it was visible to all and nobody tried to cancel the marriage. In short, parents fear humiliation and disrespect in their culture if their daughter becomes pregnant before marriage. As a result, parents believed that marrying off their daughters as early as possible are the best option. The family members' motivation is to maintain their social status and respect than their daughters' future lives.

- ❖ ***Continuity of the Family Line:*** According to Guday and Eshetu (2016), parents arrange their daughters' marriages to continue their lineage or to see grandchildren. This ethnographic study demonstrated that one of the reasons why some girls are willing to get married at an early age through their parents to fulfill their parents, mainly mothers' desire to become grandmothers.
  
- ❖ ***Lack of Government Control or Weak Law Enforcement:*** Surprisingly all the study participants are well aware of the illegality of marriage before the age of 18 for both girls and boys. Furthermore, there is a rural community level committee established to eliminate harmful practices including early marriage both study communities. The task of this committee is to prevent and stop early marriage. In the past, especially before the outbreak of the pandemic, girls were released from early marriage through strict control and monitoring by government bodies. Previously teachers taught us about the negative consequences of early marriage in a drama form; kebele leaders and relevant bodies used to come and give lessons in the farmer's training center (FTC). Parents who married off underage daughters were punished as a lesson to the rest of the community. But now, especially since the pandemic broke out, because there is no strong government control and there is no awareness creation activity about the consequences of early marriage, especially on girls' education, the number of school girls who got married before the age of 18 has increased.
  
- ❖ Of course, in the study communities, there are various government institutional mechanisms in place to prevent girls from early marriage. More specifically, the ***Women, Children, and Social Affairs in North Mecha Woreda has established*** the *Goje limeade aswegaj* committee at the rural community level, which includes the rural kebele leader, rural kebele manager, religious father, health extension worker, school principal, police officer, women's association leader, and youth association leader, among others. The focal point of education is the principal of the school, who coordinates the clubs in the school, especially the girls' club, gender club, and children's club. The Girls' club works to create awareness about early marriage-related issues, and if parents arrange the girl's marriage, they can appeal to the club's representative teacher to cancel it. Gender club

creates awareness to change social norms and focus on gender-based division of activities. The children's rights club focuses on teaching child rights so that children know their rights and report if their parents push them to marry before they turn 18. I obtained this information through observation and informal interviews with students. However, this office has not been able to prevent or stop early marriage as much as it should be. In addition to this, some of the so-called leaders or those who are expected to protect girls from early marriage are themselves participants in the secret process, that is, some of the leaders in the study communities used to marry their daughters before they turn 18 and some of them used to arrange the marriage secretly.

## **6.2. Concluding Remarks**

The following concluding remarks are drawn from the implications of the major findings of the study.

The study found that there is change in age at first marriage during the daughters' generation (usually between 14 and 17 years old) as compared to the previous generations of grandmothers and mothers when parents used to arrange marriage for their daughters between the ages of 9 and 14 mainly for creating marriage alliance between families with similar social and economic status. This finding supports some of the findings of the previous studies conducted in Amhara region (such as Guday 2005; Guday and Eshetu, 2016). More specifically, Guday and Eshetu (2016) found that the social, economic, political and religious values prevailing during the grand-parents' generation influenced the marriage arrangement processes during the grand-parents' time (the imperial regime) in their study rural communities in Amhara region where they collected ethnographic data in 2010. However, the ethnographic data collected mainly through in-depth interviews with grandmothers and focus group discussions held with community elders in the present study communities revealed that the absence of formal schools during the grandmothers' generation in their respective localities (Bachema and Kurtbahir rural communities) and lack of educational opportunity for female children in particular contributed to the common practice of arranged marriages for girls below the age of 15 during the grandmothers' generation.

In the daughters' generation, the government had a significant role in legislating against the marriage of girls below the age of 18 by promoting girls' education through the expansion of primary schools in both study rural communities and by using the local school system as one of the mechanisms for preventing the marriage of girls below the age of 18. So, as compared to the previous generation of mothers, the age at first marriage has increased during the daughters' generation in both rural communities, mainly due to the availability of primary schools in both localities. Moreover, the age gap between spouses has declined from 7-10 years old during the mothers' generation to 3-5 years old in the daughters' generation. The findings of this study also revealed that currently married girls usually give birth to their first child after 2 to 3 years of married life (after living together with their husband in their own house). In short, the age at first marriage as well as the age at first child birth has increased in the daughters' generation due to several factors, of which the expansion of formal education and the increase in parents' awareness about the health impacts (mainly fistula) of marrying their daughters at an early age are mentioned by the study participants as the major factors accounted for such change.

Surprisingly, in both study communities, there are primary school girls who got married before the age of 14 and there are also local girls who got married below the age of 18 after dropping out from secondary school or being unable to pass the 10<sup>th</sup> grade national examination. This finding contradicts with the basic assumption that improved access to formal education protects girls from early marriage. More specifically, formal schools, especially secondary schools located apart from both study communities, have become a place where adolescent girls meet with adolescent boys and some of them have made sexual relationships and/or adolescent-initiated marriages before the age of 18 as repeatedly reported by community level elderly key informants and adult focus group discussion participants. This finding supports Abeje et al., (2023:9)'s argument that "rural schools have become a fertile ground for boys and girls to confide sexual desires thereby creating an opportunity for the occurrence of untimely sexual relationship between teens."

In both generations, girls were socially expected to get married before the age of 15 mainly because of the fear of *qomo-qär* stigma though there was a legal sanction against the marriage of girls below the age of 18 during the mothers' generation. Even until recently, non-school attending rural girls who passed the age of 15 without getting married have been insulted as *qomo-qär* (unmarriageable or unwanted for marriage). However, there has been change in the process of arranging marriage for girls below the age of 15 during the mothers' generation as compared to the grandmothers' generation, i.e., during the mothers' generation, it was arranged in a hidden manner because of the legal sanction, whereas it was publicly arranged during the grandmothers' generation since there was no legal sanction. The study further revealed that there are still girls who got married below the age of 15 through parents in a hidden manner like that of the mothers' generation, but the number of girls who got married below the age of 15 in the current generation of daughters has been decreasing as compared to their mothers' generation. However, the marriage of adolescent girls, especially those in mid-adolescence (usually 14-17 years old) has been increasing in the current generation of girls though almost all study participants in both study communities are aware of the legally appropriate age of marriage (18 years for both girls and boys). As a result, girls have been married-off in their mid-adolescence age either through their parents or based on their own initiative/agency in forming love-relationship with boys while attending primary school in their locality and/or secondary school in Merawi (the capital town of the study *woreda*) where they live apart from their parents by renting dormitory. In general, across the three generations, the presence of family wealth has made children, especially girls to marry at an early age mainly because of the high demand for marrying such girls assuming that their parents will provide them a large quantity or amount of endowments during their marriage though parental endowments to the newly-weds vary in terms of quantity and quality across time.

Furthermore, during both grandmothers' and mothers' generations, girls were socially expected to get married before the age of 15 mainly because of the fear of *qomo-qär* stigma though there was a legal sanction against the marriage of girls below the age of 18 during the mothers' generation. Even until recently, non-school attending rural girls who passed the age of 15 without getting married have been insulted as *qomo-qär* (unmarriageable or unwanted

for marriage). Therefore, parents in both rural communities are forced to marry their daughters before the age of 15 because of the fear of *qomo-qär* stigma attached to only girls across the three generations of women. Moreover, in both rural communities, some parents continued to arrange marriage for their daughters (including primary school attending girls) at an early (below the age of 15) in order to protect their daughters from premarital sex/pregnancy and related stigma. Here, it should be noted that girls in both rural communities are socially expected to be virgin during their first marriage and pregnancy before marriage is shameful for both the girls and her parents. In other words, violation of such gendered social norms results in social sanctions which reinforce early marriage among the current generation of girls in the study communities. In short, the deep-rooted gendered social norms pertaining to girls' purity and marriageability persist across the three generations in the study rural communities. The previous empirical studies (e.g. Guday, 2005; Guday & Eshetu, 2016; Melese et al., 2021; and Abeje et al., 2023) also found that gendered social norms are the major drivers of early marriage among the rural communities of Amhara region. This entails that the deep-rooted gendered social norms are difficult to change across time in the study communities.

In general, there are some changes in age at first marriage and its arrangement process in the daughters' generation as compared to the past generations of mothers and grandmothers in the study communities in North Mecha *Woreda* mainly driven by the expansion of formal education in their locality and girls' improved access to primary school in their locality on one hand and girls' opportunity to continue with their secondary education in Merawi apart from their parents' locality being financially supported by their uneducated rural parents hoping that their daughters would be successful in their education and be able to get gainful employment. However, most parents who participated in this study were complaining about the 'bad behavior' of the current generation of daughters, especially those who got the opportunity to attend their secondary schools in Merawi (the *woreda's* capital town) apart from their parents' village, who are considered as not respectful to their parents and parents do not have the power even to influence their secondary school attending daughters' marriage decisions at the expense of their education for which parents invested a lot.

The study further argue that though the number of girls who got married below the age of 15 in the current generation of daughters through their parents has been decreasing as compared to their mothers' generation, the number of 'love-based early marriages' driven by mid-adolescent school girls (mainly between the ages of 15-17) has been increasing in the current generation of girls though almost all study participants in both rural communities are aware of the illegality of marriage below the age of 18. More specifically, formal schools, especially secondary schools located apart from both rural communities, have become a place where adolescent girls meet with adolescent boys and some of them have made sexual relationships and/or adolescent-initiated marriages before the age of 18 as repeatedly reported by community level elderly key informants and adult focus group discussion participants. This finding supports Abeje et al., (2023:9)'s argument that "rural schools have become a fertile ground for boys and girls to confide sexual desires thereby creating an opportunity for the occurrence of untimely sexual relationship between teens." In general, this finding contradicts with the basic assumption that improved access to formal education protects girls from early marriage and calls for further research on "why do rural school girls prefer to marry at an early age instead of focusing on their formal education?"

Of course, during the ethnographic fieldwork in both study rural communities, the girls' and boys' motivation for formal education is low, and their school dropout rate is high. Surprisingly, there are local girls who completed their secondary school education in Merawi and then came back to their parents' village, and marry an uneducated farmer. This reveals that parents' expenditure on their children's schooling is in vain and there is no benefit to staying in formal education, so marriage is the main option for girls. On the other hand, some parents also question that lack of employment opportunities for young people as a factor discouraging them from investing in the education of their children. Similarly, the previous study shows that parents' lack of hope in formal education is one of the basic reasons for the practice of girls' early marriage (Guday and Eshetu, 2016). In Bachema and Kurtbahir, many parents used to mention the list of the unsuccessful grade 12 national exams and unemployed graduated pupils as cases in the past two years in particular, many students have failed and living in their parents' house by working on small businesses. The experience of children not successfully in passing the grade 12 national exam, which too

often happens to many parents, that influences the younger siblings or the younger children to go to the local formal school.

Of course, in both study communities, there has been change in age at first marriage across the three generations though it tends to be increasing in the daughters' generation since five years ago due to various factors, mainly due to the decline in the value of education, lack of job opportunities, and life insecurities. Further discussion with elderly study participants about the reasons for the increase in the number of girls who got married below the age of 18 for the past five years in both study communities revealed that some years ago local schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the conflict situation, which has been aggravated starting from April 2023. In the 2023/24 academic year, all schools in the study area (North Mecha *woreda*) are closed. This might increase the number of marriages among previously school attending girls in the study communities, which calls for further research.

In general, in the study communities, girls are more vulnerable to marry at an early age than boys due to complex and interrelated factors such as deep-rooted gendered social norms, the prevailing marriage arrangement based on the economics of arranging early marriages for children in general and girls' in particular, institutional factors, the newly-emerging love-based adolescent driven marriages among school attending girls facilitated by modern mobile technology and exposure to urban life, mainly among girls and boys attending their secondary education in the *woreda's* capital town, Merawi, apart from their rural parents' village. Above all, lack of hope in formal education is the major factor that contributed to the increasing number of early married girls (including secondary school attending girls) during the current generation of daughters in both study communities.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Primary Data Collection Guiding Questions

### Appendix I.1: Key Informant Interview (KII) Guides

#### I.1.1. *Woreda* Level KII Guide

##### Part One: Site Identification and Personal Information

1.1. Location identification: *Woreda* \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_  
Place of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

##### 1.2. Personal information

- Could you please tell me your name, age, education level, responsibility?
- Could you please tell me how long you have served in this position in this *Woreda*?

##### Part Two: *Woreda* Level KII Questions

##### 2.1. Questions related to early marriage and its practice in the study area (*Woreda*)

- What do you mean by early marriage?
- Do you have reported cases of early marriage? If so, how many, when, from which Kebele/rural kebele?
- What do you say about the trend of the practice of early marriage in this *woreda* based on reported cases of early marriage? Increasing? Decreasing? Where? How? Why?
- Who are more vulnerable to early marriage? Girls? Boys? Why?
- Which children/girls are getting married early? Children/girls/boys from rich/poor families? Why?
- Are there any mechanisms used for preventing children/girls from early marriage in this *Woreda*?

##### 2.2 Questions related to change in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations

- What do you say about change in the practice of early marriage and its arrangements in this *woreda* across time (such as across grandmothers', mothers' and daughters' generations)?
- Is there any change in the practice of early marriage and its arrangements among the current generation of girls/ including school girls in this *woreda*?
- If so, where/ in which locality?
- If so, what do you think are the major factors that contributed to change in the practice of early marriage and its arrangements among the current generation of girls/including school girls in this locality?

##### 2.3 Questions related to continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations

- Is there any continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes across grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations in this *Woreda*?
- If so, where/in which locality/ How and Why?
- What do you think are the main reasons for the continuity/persistence of the practice of early marriage among the current generation of girls/ including in-school girls in this *woreda*/locality?
- Do you have any additional points related to the issues discussed so far?

## **I.1.2: Community Level KII Guide**

### **Part One: Site Identification and Personal Information**

#### **1.1. Location identification**

Rural *Kebele* (Community) \_\_\_\_\_ *Got* (Village) \_\_\_\_\_

Place of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

#### **1.2. Personal information**

- Could you please tell me your name, age, education level, responsibility?
- Could you please tell me how long you have served in this position/role in your community?

### **Part 2: Community Level KII Questions**

#### **2.1. Questions related to early marriage and its practice in the study community**

- What do you mean by early marriage?
- What do you say about the practice of early marriage in this community? Increasing? Decreasing? How? Why?
- Who are more vulnerable to early marriage in this community? Girls? Boys? Why?
- Which children/girls are getting married early in this community? Children/girls/boys from rich/poor families? Why?
- Are there any mechanisms used for preventing children/girls from early marriage in this community?

#### **2.2 Questions related to change in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations in the study community**

- What do you say about change in the practice of early marriage and its arrangements in this community across time (such as across grandmothers', mothers' and daughters' generations)?
- Is there any change in the practice of early marriage and its arrangements among the current generation of girls/ including school and out of school girls in this community?
- If so, for which group of girls? School girls/out of school girls?
- If so, what do you think are the major factors that contributed to change in the practice of early marriage and its arrangements among the current generation of girls/including in-school and out of school girls in this community?

#### **2.3 Questions related to continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes across three generations in the study community**

- Is there any continuity in the practice of early marriage and its arrangement processes across grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations in this community?
- If so, where/in which locality/ How and Why?
- What do you think are the major reasons for the continuity/persistence of the practice of early marriage among the current generation of girls/ including school girls in this locality?
- Do you have any additional points related to the issues discussed so far?

# Appendix I.2: In-depth Interview Guide for Extended Case Studies with Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters

## Part One: Site Identification and Personal Information

### 1.1. Location identification

Rural *Kebele* (Community) \_\_\_\_\_ *Got* (Village) \_\_\_\_\_  
Place of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.2. Personal information

- Could you please tell me your name, age, education level, marital status, choice of marriage/partner, age of first marriage?
- If you have children, please tell me the age at which you had your first child?
- Please tell me how many children you have? (female, male)
- Do you have a married child? If yes, how many children? (female, male)
- At what age did your child get married?
- Do you have a child studying or graduating? If yes, how many? (female, male)

## Part Two: Questions prepared for in depth informants

### 2.1 Questions related to early marriage and age at first marriage

- What do you understand by early marriage?
- Where did you first hear about early marriage?
- What do you think is the ideal/socially appropriate marriage age for girls? How does the person around you reveal it? What about boys' marriageable age?
- Who arranges the marriage of girls? What about boys?
- How would you describe the practice of early marriage across your generation and other generations of females in your locality (grandmothers, mothers, and daughters' generations)
- Please share your thoughts on the vulnerability of girls and boys to early marriage in your locality?
- Are girls and boys at different risk for early marriage? Why do you think they are more vulnerable?
- Which children/girls are getting married early in your locality? Children/girls/boys from rich/poor families? Why?
- Are there girls or boys who don't marry underage in your locality? If so, why?

### 2.2 Questions related to change in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations in the study community

- Share your thoughts on the arrangement of your early marriage.
- How was the marriage arrangement process when you got married with your first partner? What about the other generations of females in your locality? (grandmothers, mothers, and daughters' generations)
- Do you think there has been a change in the arrangement of early marriage in your locality as compared to your generation and the other generations of females in your locality? If yes, could you please explain to me what has been changed and how it has been changed?
- Is there any change in early marriage arrangements during the current generation of daughters/girls in your locality? If so, what are the reasons for this change?
- Could you explain to me how the reasons you mentioned contributed to the change? You can mention an example.

### 2.3. Questions related to continuity in early marriage arrangements across three generation processes across three generations in the study community

- How do you describe the continuity of early marriage in your locality across three generations (grandmothers, mothers and daughters)?
- Are there parents who arrange early marriage for their daughters in this locality? If so, why?
- Do you have any additional points related to the issues discussed so far?

## Appendix I.3: FGD Guides

### I.2.1. FGD Guide for Women and Men

#### Part One: Site Identification and Personal Information

##### 1.1. Location identification

Rural *Kebele* (Community) \_\_\_\_\_ *Got* (Village) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of FGD \_\_\_\_\_ Place of FGD \_\_\_\_\_ Date of FGD \_\_\_\_\_

##### 1.2. Personal information of the FGD participants

- Could you please tell me your name (optional), age, education level, marital status?

#### Part Two: Women and Men FGD Questions

##### 2.1. Questions related to early marriage and age at first marriage in the study community

- What do you mean by early marriage?
- What is the locally/socially appropriate age of first marriage for girls? For boys?
- What do you say about the age difference/gap between spouses (husband/wife) in your community?
- Who are more vulnerable to early marriage in this community? Girls? Boys? Why?
- Which children are getting married early in your community? Girls/boys from rich/poor families? Why?
- In this community, girls are expected to be what? [Before, now]? What about boys [before, now]?

##### 2.2 Questions related to change in age at first marriage across three generations in the study community

- What do you say about the change in age at first marriage across grandmothers, mothers' and daughters' generations in this community?
- Is there any change in age at first marriage during the daughters' generation compared to grandmothers and mothers' generations? If so, how and why?

##### 2.3. Questions related to change in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations in the study community

- Who is arranging girls' marriage in this community? (Before, now)? What about boys' marriage? (before, now)?
- What do you say about change in early marriage arrangements across grandmothers', mothers' and daughters' generations in your locality?
- Is there any change in early marriage arrangements during the current generation of daughters in your locality?
- If so, since when? How?
- If so, what do you think are the major factors that contributed to change in early marriage arrangements during the generation of daughters in your locality?

##### 2.4 Questions related to continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations

- Is there any continuity in early marriage arrangements across grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations in your locality?
- If so, what do you think are the major reasons for the continuity/persistence of early marriage arrangements among the current generation of girls/ including school girls in your locality?
- Do you have any additional points related to the issues discussed so far?

## **I.2.2. FGD Guide for School boys and School girls**

### **Part One: Site Identification and Personal Information**

#### **1.1. Location identification**

Rural *Kebele* (Community) \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Type of FGD \_\_\_\_\_ Place of FGD \_\_\_\_\_ Date of FGD \_\_\_\_\_

#### **1.2. Personal information of the FGD participants**

- Could you please tell me your name (optional), age, education level, marital status?

### **Part Two: School girls and School boys FGD Questions**

#### **2.1 Questions related to education and early marriage in the study community**

- What do you say about the benefits of education? How does your community view girls' education? What about boys' education? [Before, now]?
- Are there students who dropout from your school?
- If so, who are the majority of school dropouts? Girls/Boys? Why?
- What alternatives are available in your community for school dropout students (for girls/ boys)?
- Who dropped out from school during COVID-19? Girls/Boys? Why?
- What are vulnerable to early marriage in your school/community? Girls/boys?
- Are there married children (girls/ boys) in your school?
- If so, why do students (girls/boys) get married in this locality?
- What is the role of the local school in preventing girls from early marriage in this community?
- Are there other governmental/non-governmental organizations which prevent girls from early marriage in your community? (Before, now)?

#### **2.2. Questions related to change in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations in the study community**

- In your generation, who is arranging girls' marriage? What about boys' marriage?
- Who chooses the girl's husband in this locality? What about the boy's wife? (Before, now)?
- Is there any age difference between the husband and his wife? (before/now)? Why?
- What do you say about change in early marriage arrangements during the grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations?
- Is there any change in early marriage arrangements during the daughters/girls (including school girls) in this community? How? Why?

#### **2.3 Questions related to continuity in early marriage arrangement processes across three generations in the study community**

- Is there any continuity in early marriage arrangements across grandmothers, mothers and daughters' generations in your community?
- If so, what do you think are the major reasons for the continuity/persistence of early marriage arrangements among the current generation of girls/ including school girls in your locality?
- Do you have any additional points related to the issues discussed so far?

## Appendix II: Summary of Primary Data Sources

Instruments	Participants	No. of participants
Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	<u>Woreda Level Key Informants</u> The <i>Woreda</i> Women, Children and Social Affairs' Office (1) The <i>Woreda</i> Justice Officer (1) The <i>Woreda</i> Education Office Gender Expert (1)	3
	<u>Community Level Key Informants</u> 2 Religious leaders (one from each rural community) 2 Council of elders (one from each rural community) 2 Community knowledgeable elders ( one from each rural community) 1 knowledgeable former community leader from Kurtbahir 2 Kebele leaders (one from each rural community) 2 Health Extension Workers (HEWs) (one from each rural community) 2 School girls' club representative female teachers (one from each rural school) 2 Women league representatives (one from each rural community) 2 Women federation representatives (one from each rural community) 2 Women Development Groups (WDGs) leaders (1 to 30) ( one from each rural community) 2 Women affairs' representatives (one from each rural community)	21
In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with Extended Case Studies	4 Daughters (2 from each rural community) 4 Mothers (2 from each rural community) 4 Grandmothers (2 from each rural community)	12
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	2 FGDs with Men (1 FGD for each rural community, 6 members for each) 2 FGDs with Women (1 FGD for each rural community, 6 members for each) 2 FGDs with early married School girls (1FGD with 4 members from Kurtbahir rural community, 1FGD with 6 members from Bachema rural community) 2 FGDs with School boys (1 FGD for each rural community, 6 members for each)	46

## Appendix III: Profiles of Study Participants

### 3.1. Profiles of Key Informants

#### 3.1.1. Profiles of *Woreda* Level Key Informants

Name	Sex	Age	Educational Level	Role/Position	Experience in this role/position	Date and place of Interview	Duration of the interview
Abebe Ambelu	M	33	BA in Social Work BA in Management	Women's awareness and mobilization expert, North Mecha <i>Woreda</i> Women, Children and Social Affairs Officer	4 years	January 12,2023 (Tir 4, 2015), at his office	1:07:20 hour
Anthun Getaneh	M	35	MA Accounting and Finance	Gender expert, North Mecha <i>Woreda</i> Education Officer	4 years	January 16,2023(Tir 8, 2015), at his office	38 minutes
Fentanesh Belete	F	45	BA in Management	Prosecutor expert, North Mecha <i>Woreda</i> Justice Officer	1997 Up to now	January 13,2023(Tir 5, 2015), at her office	48 minutes

#### 3.1.2. Profiles of Community Level Key Informants

Name	Sex	Age	Education Level	Role/ Position	Experience in this role	Date and Place of Interview	Duration of the interview
4. <i>Qes</i> Bekalu	M	40	Religious school	Religious leader, Kurtbahir	10 years	February 4,2023(Tir 27, 2015), FTC	30minuets
5. <i>Qes</i> Mekuriyaw	M	43	Religious school	Religious leader, Bachema	20 years	January 24,2023(Tir 16, 2015), FTC	45 minuets
6. Amare Huni	M	80	Uneducated	Knowledgeable elder man, Kurtbahir	-	February 2,2023(Tir 25, 2015), at his workplace	47minuets
7. Shegnew Asaye	M	73	Uneducated	Council of elders leader, Kurtbahir	10 years	February 2,2023(Tir 25,2015), FTC	50 minuets
8. Defaru Temesgen	M	35	Can read and write	Former community leader , Kurtbahir	7 years	January 14,2023(Tir 6, 2015), at his workplace	1:10:15 hour
9. Anmute Getahun	M	60	Grade 8	Council of elders leader, Bachema	8 years	January 17,2023(Tir 9, 2015), at his office	31 minuets
10. Melshi Sentayehu	F	60	Uneducated	Knowledgeable elder woman, Bachema	30 years	January 23,2023(Tir 15, 2015), FTC	1:00 hour
11. Tewabe Belay	F	45	Grade 6	Kebele leader, Kurtbahir	3 years	January 26,2023(Tir 18,2015), at his office	30 minuets
12. Zerihun Yihune	M	56	Grade 4	Kebele leader, Bachema	31 years	January 16,2023(Tir 8,2015), in Merawi town	44 minuets
13. Zemenay	F	32	Level 4 Management	HEW, Kurtbahir	5 years	January 26,2023(Tir 18, 2015), at her office	40minuets
14. Tihune Muchie	F	38	Level 4 m-Management	HEW, Bachema	4 years	January 16,2023 (Tir 8,2015), at her office	50 minuets
15. Minalush Chanie	F	31	10+3	Teacher & girls' club representative, Kurtbahir primary school	2 years	February 2,2023(Tir 25, 2015), at the School	1:00 hour
16. Seada Muhamed	F	36	10+3	Teacher & girls' club representative, Bachema primary school	3 years	January 23,2023(Tir 15, 2015), at the School	40 minuets
17. Aster Maru	F	39	Grade 6	WDG Leader of 1 to 30, Kurtbahir	6 years	January 14,2023(Tir 6, 2015), FTC	45 minuets
18. Felegu Degu	F	34	Grade 3	WDG Leader of 1 to 30, Bachema	4 years	January 27,2023(Tir 19, 2015), FTC	36 minuets
19. Beletu Ashageri	F	24	Grade 10	Women affairs representative, Kurtbahir	2 years	January 18,2023(Tir 10, 2015), in her home	46 minuets
20. Abeju Biders	F	43	Grade 3	Women affairs representative, Bachema	32 years	February 6,2023(Tir 29, 2015), FTC	43 minuets

21. Mulu Beza	F	35	Uneducated	Women league representative, Kurtbahir	5 years	February 2,2023(Tir 25, 2015, FTC	33 minuets
22. Bezunesh Tefera	F	38	Grade 3	Women league representative , Bachema	6 years	January 27,2023(Tir 19, 2015, FTC	48 minuets
23. Derba Gedefaw	F	38	Uneducated	Women federation representative , Kurtbahir	5 Years	January 18,2023(Tir 10, 2015), FTC	43 minuets
24. Semegn Assifa	F	40	Mäsärätä təmört	Women federation representative , Bachema	3 years	January 24,2023(Tir 16,2015), FTC	40:24 minuets

### 3.2. Profiles of In-depth Interviewees (Extended Case Studies: Daughters', Mothers' & Grandmothers' Generations)

No	Code	Name	Age	Generation & Family relationship	Educational Level	Age at First Marriage	Mate Selection	Age of First Child Birth	Date & Place of Interview	Duration of the interview
1	Case 1	Meseret Derje	15	Daughters' generation	Grade 9	15	Herself	No child	February 4,2023(Tir 27,2015), at her parent's home, Kurtbahir	43 minuets
2		Wubzer Much	40	Mothers' generation-mother of Meseret (no.1)	Uneducated	6	Family	15	February 4,2023(Tir 27, 2015) FTC, Kurtbahir	48 minuets
3	Case 2	Mirtezer Bihone	18	Daughters' generation	Grade 10	17	Herself	19	February 7,2023(Tir 30, 2015), at her home, Bachema	1:10 hour
4		Birkenesh Biseti	51	Grandmothers' generation, a grandmother of Mirtezer (no.3)	Uneducated	11	Family	14	February 7,2023(Tir 30, 2015), Her home, Bachema	50 minuets
5	Case 3	Birke Gashew	16	Daughters' generation	Grade 6	15	Family	No child	February 16,2023(Yekatit 9, 2015), Her parents' home, Kurtbahir	33 minuets
6		Yesharge Awelew	55	Grandmothers' generation, grandmother of Birke (no.5)	Uneducated	9	Family	15	February 16,2023(Yekatit 9, 2015), Her home, Kurtbahir	45 minuets
7	Case4	Zimame Tesfaye	17	Daughters' generation	Grade 9	15	Family with her agency	17	March 8,2023(Yekatit 29,2015) Health Post, Bachema	40 minuets
8		Darchey	37	Mothers' generation, mother of Zimame (no.7)	Uneducated	4	Family	15	March 8(Yekatit 29, 2015) Health post , Bachema	38 minuets
9	Case 5	Banchu Gedefeye	36	Mothers' generation	Grade 10 certificate	3	-First her family -Second herself	22	February 17,2023(Yekatit 10, 2015), FTC, Bachema	40 minuets
10		Semegnsh Derse	56	Grandmothers' generation, grandmother of Banchu (no.9)	uneducated	8	Family	13	February 17,2023(Yekatit 10,2015),FTC, Bachema	48 minuets
11	Case 6	Tirunesh Mekoyet	36	Mothers' generation	Grade 2	7	Family	15	February 15,2023(Yekatit 8, 2015), FTC, Kurtbahir	43 minuets
12		Yeteysi Ademasu	53	Grandmothers' generation, grandmother of Tirunesh (no.11)	Uneducated	8	Family	14	February 14,2023(Yekaitit 7, 2015), Her home, Kurtbahir	36 minuets

### 3.3. Profiles of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Participants

#### FGD 1: FGD with Early Married School Girls in Bachema

No	Name	Age	Grade Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Menallush Worki	14	7	March 9,2023(Yekatit 30,2015)	Bachema Primary School	48 minutes
2	Selam Bimeraw	14	8			
3	Tadila Webi	15	8			
4	Tewabech Challew	14	6			
5	Yewebzer Gedamu	15	8			
6	Zemenay Tibebu	12	5			

#### FGD 2: FGD with School Boys in Bachema

No	Name	Age	Grade Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Amelaku Belay	18	Grade 8	March 9,2023(Yekatit 30,2015)	Bachema Primary School	44 minutes
2	Asenakew Shita	14	Grade 5			
3	Birhanu Balew	16	Grade 7			
4	Biyadegelegn Tesema	15	Grade 6			
5	Mulualem Yigzew	17	Grade 7			
6	Yeber Asefaw	18	Grade 8			

#### FGD 3: FGD with Women in Bachema

No	Name	Age	Educational Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Abebech Mersha	40	Uneducated	March 14,2023(Megabit 5,2015)	FTC(Farmers' Training Center)	51:23 minutes
2	Asemaru Mognnet	35	Grade 2 dropout			
3	Birtukan Sitotaw	42	Uneducated			
4	Fasika Zelalem	50	Uneducated			
5	Tabeba Tewlegn	39	Uneducated			
6	Tiruye Belachew	39	Grade 3 dropout			

#### FGD 4: FGD with Men in Bachema

No	Name	Age	Educational Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Ademasu Menagie	48	Mäsärätä tēmärt	March 26,2023(Megabit 17,2015)	Around St. Michael Church	55 minutes
2	Chernet Nega	46	Grade 3 dropout			
3	Fikadu Chalachew	47	Mäsärätä tēmärt			
4	Molla Motte	55	Mäsärätä tēmärt			
5	Silabat Derbe	40	Grade 6 dropout			
6	Tebekew Bayihe	52	Uneducated			

### FGD 5: FGD with Early Married School Girls in Kurtbahir

No	Name	Age	Grade Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Betelihem Asenage	14	7	March 16,2023(Megabit 7, 2015)	Kurtbahir Primary School	46 minutes
2	Eseynesh Koyachew	13	6			
3	Mertenesh Kassaw	15	8			
4	Mertzer Hunachw	12	5			

### FGD 6: FGD with School Boys in Kurtbahir

No	Name	Age	Grade Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Agemas Zeleke	19	Grade 8	March 16,2023(Megabit 7,2015)	Kurtbahir Primary School	46 minutes
2	Asechalew Tegegn	14	Grade 5			
3	Derso wendemu	16	Grade 6			
4	Kassa Tebekew	17	Grade 7			
5	Moges Baye	17	Grade 7			
6	Tarekegn Menale	18	Grade 8			

### FGD 7: FGD with Women in Kurtbahir

No	Name	Age	Educational Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Amognesh Demelash	45	Uneducated	March 21,2023(Megabit 12,2015)	Around their village (Guilt)	50 minutes
2	Ajebush Chellot	36	Grade 2 dropout			
3	Hayemanot Gezachew	35	Grade 4 dropout			
4	Huluager Ayele	39	Uneducated			
5	Menderinesh Goshu	55	Uneducated			
6	Silenat Kebed	38	Uneducated			

### FGD 8: FGD with Men in Kurtbahir

No	Name	Age	Educational Level	Date of FGD	Place of FGD	Duration of the interview
1	Bekele Gezachew	55	Uneducated	March 21,2023(Megabit 12,2015)	FTC (Farmers' Training Center)	1:00 hour
2	Demeki Much	38	Grade 6 dropout			
3	Mesiganaw Taye	43	Mäsärätä tәмәrt			
4	Shiferaw Hunegnaw	45	Mäsärätä tәмәrt			
5	Tilahun Belete	42	Mäsärätä tәмәrt			
6	Webetu Yeshabel	50	Uneducated			

**Appendix IV: Scanned Copies of Relevant Documents**

(Scanned by: Tirusira Gebey)





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የትምህርት ሚኒስቴር  
የትምህርት ሚኒስቴር

ቁጥር/ሰር/ት/ት/566/80/11  
ቀን/02/10/2014/9/9

ለሰሚን ሚኒስቴር ወረዳ ሴቶች እና ማህበራዊ ጉዳይ ጽ/ቤት  
መርጫ

ጉዳይ - የተፈጸመን ያለዕድሜ ጋብቻ ስለማሳወቅ

በሰሚን ሚኒስቴር ወረዳ ትምህርት ጽ/ቤት ስር በሚገኙ 1ኛ እና 2ኛ ደረጃ ት/ቤቶች ላይ በ2014 ዓ/ም በ2ኛው ወሰን ትምህርት በተሰበሰበ መሪዎች ያለዕድሜ ጋብቻ ተፈጽሞባቸው ትምህርት-አቸውን ያቋረጡ ወ=0 ሴ =30 ድ = 30 ፣ ያለዕድሜ ጋብቻ ተፈጽሞባቸው ትምህርት-አቸውን እየተማሩ ያሉ ወ = 0 ሴ = 12 ድ = 12 እንዲሁም ያለዕድሜ ጋብቻ ሊፈጸም ሲል በጥቆማ ጋብቻ ተሰረዙ ብዛት ወ = 0 ሴ = 1 ድ = 1 በጠቅላላው ወ = 0 ሴ = 42 ድ = 42 ህጻናት ተማሪዎች ላይ ያለዕድሜ ጋብቻ ተፈጸመ ስለሆነ በእናንተ በኩል እስፈላጊው ክትትል እንዲደረግ እናሳስባለን።

ገልጻል

- ለጽ/ቤታችን ላላፊ  
መርጫ



ከሰሚን ጋር  
ጽ/ቤት  
የወረዳ ጽ/ቤት ጽ/ቤት ጽ/ቤት  
ጽ/ቤት

የተማሪዎ ስም	የሌሎች ት/ቤት	የክፍል ደረጃ	ምርመራ
1 መስከረም ጋሽ	ቁ/ባዕር	5ኛ	ጋብቻ ሳይረጸም የተቋረጠ
2 ሰራየ መኳንንት	ኖጻ	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
3 መሰረት ተናኘ	ኖጻ	7ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
4 አዛኝ ከንዴ	ኖጻ	7ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
5 የኔኦሜሶ ያረጋል	ኖጻ	6ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
6 የሽመቤት ወርቁ	ኖጻ	6ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
7 ሙሉግብት አሰማሪ	ኖጻ	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
8 አይናዲሶ ጨቅሌ	ኖጻ	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
9 ሰሩአገር ደምለው	ኖጻ	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
10 ሙሉግብት አውነቱ	አ/ልደት	2ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
11 ትግስት ስሜኔዛ	አ/ልደት	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
12 አዲሱ አንዳለው	አ/ልደት	6ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
13 አመቤት አለኝ	አ/ልደት	4ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
14 በላይነሽ አይሸሽም	አ/ልደት	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
14 መሳይት ብርሃኑ	አቤዮት	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
15 ዘነብ አሰማሪ	ዳጊ	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
16 ሙሉዮ ሻታ	ዳጊ	4ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
17 ሀብታሚ አንተውንኝ	ዳጊ	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
18 ዘመናዊ መለሰ	ገም/ገነት	7ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
19 ዘነብ አሰማሪ	ገም/ገነት	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
20 ሙሉዮ ሻታ	ገም/ገነት	4ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
21 ሀብታሚ አንተውንኝ	ገም/ገነት	8ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
22 ሰብለወርቅ መዘመር	አ/መሰከ	6ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
23 ሰመኝ አሰማሪ	ሰብሃቱ	6ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
24 ማመደ ዘውድ	ማዮዳ	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
25 ዘውዲቱ ደጌ	ማዮዳ	8ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት የቋረጠች
26 ዘመናዊ አያል	ማዮዳ	6ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
27 ሙሉነሽ ሙሉጊታ	አናሽንፋለን	4ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ
28 ጥሩቀን መጠላ	አናሽንፋለን	4ኛ	ትም/ት አየተማሪች ያለ

የተማሪዎ ስም	የሰዎች ብት ት/ቤት	የክፍል ደረጃ	ምርመራ
30 ታምራላት ደባለኝ	ወንድም	3ኛ	ትም/ት እየተማረኝ ያል
31 ሙሉሃብት ደባለ	ወንድም	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
32 ሙሉሃብት አምሳሌ	ወንድም	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
33 አይናዲስ ቻሊ	ወንድም	5ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
34 ሆዴ ደጉ	ወንድም	6ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
35 ሲሳይ ደጋረገ	ጠለታ	6ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
36 ትግበት ጠቃ	ብራታት	7ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
37 ብርብካን አለሙ	ብራታት	7ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
38 ያምሮት ገነት	ድንጅ	8ኛ	ትም/ት እየተማረኝ ያል
39 አማንቱን ጌታሁን	ድንጅ	8ኛ	ትም/ት እየተማረኝ ያል
40 ብርብካን ልጃለም	መር/02	6ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
41 አባይነሽ አማረ	ደኖብት	8ኛ	ትም/ት እየተማረኝ ያል
42 ትርንጎ እየነው	አለገባ	4ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ
43 አመልማል መሰረት	አለገባ	4ኛ	በጋብቻ ምክንያት ት/ት ያቋረጠኝ

- ጠቅላላ የሰዎች ብት ት/ቤት የተፈጸመባቸው ተማሪዎች ብዛት ወ = -- ሴ = 42 ድ = 42
- የሰዎች ብት ት/ቤት ለፈጸሙባቸው ሲል በጠቅላላ የተፈጸመባቸው ተማሪዎች ብዛት = ወ = -- ሴ = 1 ድ = 1
- የሰዎች ብት ት/ቤት የተፈጸሙባቸው ትም/ት ያቋረጠ ተማሪዎች ብዛት ወ = -- ሴ = 30 ድ = 30
- የሰዎች ብት ት/ቤት የተፈጸሙባቸው ትም/ት ያቋረጠ ብዛት ወ = -- ሴ = 12 ድ = 12

የገቢዎች ማጠቃለያ ሠራዊት በተባሉ ደረጃ የሠዝብ ቁጥር መረጃ

ተ.ቁ	የተባባሪው ስም	በ2012 ዓ.ም			በ2013 ዓ.ም			በ2014 ዓ.ም			በ2015 ዓ.ም			በ2016 ዓ.ም		
		ወ	ሴ	ደ	ወ	ሴ	ደ	ወ	ሴ	ደ	ወ	ሴ	ደ	ወ	ሴ	ደ
1	አንጉሪ	3872	3836	7768	3872	3210	7282	3872	3910	7782						
2	ቆለላ	2347	2482	4829	2347	2428	4775	2389	2483	4872						
3	ገዥ	6574	6656	13230	6574	6673	13260	6927	6798	13715						
4	አናሾንፋላን	5307	5828	11135	5747	6673	12420	4912	5003	9915						
5	አናግርት	2433	4457	6890	4912	5003	9915	4912	5003	9915						
6	ገዥ	8976	5734	14710	4912	4144	9056	4160	4244	8404						
7	ቁርጥግህር	4737	4012	8749	4957	4013	8970	6441	6166	12607						
8	በርታ	2392	2089	4481	4013	2634	6647	4737	4013	8750						
9	አደገት	4089	4476	8565	2557	4308	6865	2557	2634	5193						
10	አደራ አገግ	2911	2965	5876	3021	2970	5991	4300	3990	8290						
11	ጊቱ ጠላታ	3318	3146	6464	3285	3945	7230	3021	2919	5940						
12	ተክለደብ	4179	4549	8728	4117	4492	8609	3285	3945	7230						
13	አንደገት	6015	4908	10923	6015	5513	11528	4211	4408	8619						
14	ጣሪንግ	2434	2747	5181	2475	2736	5211	6015	5513	11528						
15	አምሮ መሰጠት	4741	5255	10002	4747	4944	9691	2475	2736	5211						
16	አጋምር	1508	1696	3203	1545	1997	3542	4747	4944	9691						
17	መስከረም	3865	3973	7838	4252	4347	8599	1516	1997	3513						
18	ጉራጉጥ	3277	3677	6954	3402	3585	6987	4405	4453	8858						
19	ሪም ዙሪያ	1968	2068	4036	1986	2068	4054	5902	3545	6947						
20	አባቶች ፋና	2096	2007	4103	2294	1913	4207	2083	248	2456						
21	ደረሰህ	1215	1158	2373	1215	1258	2473	2296	1913	4209						
22	ጣሪ ቃት ዙሪያ	2782	2841	5623	2876	2932	5807	1248	1280	2528						
23	ምድረ ገንጽ	2882	2892	5774	2918	2805	5723	2876	2931	5807						
24	ተጠቅ ገብራ	4025	3304	7329	4565	3278	7843	4565	3178	7743						
25	መታት በር	4334	4730	9064	4370	4941	9311	4210	5001	9211						
26	ዘመናዊ ህይወት	6180	5135	11315	5848	5318	11166	5848	5318	11166						
27	ሰጠ ገብር ሃን	4828	4385	9213	4834	4404	9238	4838	4414	9254						
28	ይህን ለምርት	4053	4109	8162	2981	3110	6091	3100	3018	6118						
29	አደራ ልደት	1981	2020	4001	2012	2088	4100	2026	2098	4124						
30	ደጋሪ ስ/አላም	1284	3364	4648	2911	3593	6504	2911	3393	6304						
31	ደጋ ህይወት	3010	3129	6139	3713	3863	7576	3713	3863	7576						
32	ተጠቅ ሰራ	3700	3820	7520	4630	3718	8348	4630	3710	8340						
33	ድል በትግል	4713	4574	9287	4550	4264	8814	4550	4260	8810						
34	መታት አገደ	8578	9158	17736	11035	13718	24753	11035	13310	24345						
35	ጣሪ ቃት ካላማ	3813	5418	9231	5000	7004	12004	5000	7004	12004						
36	ደጋ ካላማ	2410	2568	4978	2452	2552	5004	2452	2552	5004						
37	ሪም ካላማ	3043	2932	5975	3043	2932	5975	3043	2932	5975						
38	አማራት ካላማ	1012	1031	2043	2093	3025	5118	2093	3025	5118						
	ድምር	140,951	144,574	285,525	147,274	150,327	297,601	148,742	152,794	301,537						

Date: Nov 07, 2022  
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To Whom It May Concern

Our student Tesfaye Gebrey is working on her/his research entitled Change and Gender Communities of Work Ethic Practices in Addis Ababa Residential Communities the case of North Mekele Woreda.  
We appreciate your support to the student for her/his research work.

Sincerely,



Kiya Gezahegn (PhD)  
Chairperson, Department of Social Anthropology

## Appendix V: Photographic Documentations

### 5.1 Photographic Documentation of Ethnographic Research Sites;

Photographed by: Tirusira Gebey



The researcher on Bachema rural community research site.



The researcher travelling Kurtbahir rural community research site



Annual religious day after mass gathering, Kotekotema Abun gebermenfes kedus Church, Bachema rural community (14<sup>th</sup> March, 2023).



Community meeting (25th January, 2023), Bachema rural community.

**5.2 Photographic Documentation of Bachema and Kurtbahir Primary School;  
Photographed by: Tirusira Gebey**



Bachema Primary School (grades 1-4) pupils and the female teachers (February, 2023)



Bachema full cycle primary school (1-4) girls club member pupils (February, 2023).

**5.3 Photographic Documentation of Activities; Photographed by: Tirusira Gebey**



An early married girl with her shop, guilt village, Kurtbahir rural community



Bachema women travelling to Yidonga mill (January, 2023)



Merawi town, Saturday's market (February, 2023)



The researcher participating charcoal production in Yidonga,  
Bachema rural community (January, 2023).



The researcher participating in harvesting, Kurtbahir rural community (January 2023).



Adolescent boy driving a cart, Kotekotema, Bachema rural community (13<sup>th</sup> February, 2023).



A woman with her early married girl and grandchild in health post, Bachema rural community.

**5.4 Photographic Documentation of Wedding Ceremony in Kurtbahir Rural Community, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2023; Photographed by: Tirusira Gebey**



Ring ceremony



## 5.5 Photographic Documentation of Focus Group Discussions



