

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY [AAU]

College of Development Studies [CDS]

Institute of Regional and Local Development Studies [IRLDS]

**The Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Gender: Women's Access to and
Control over Productive Assets in South Wollo**

By: Getachew Shambel



July, 2010

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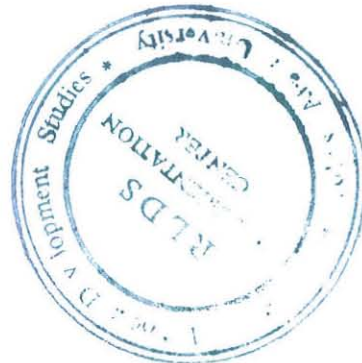
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (ACCRONYMS)

BPFA	Beijing Platform For Action
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FHH	Female Headed Household
FHH	Female headed Households
FLS	Forward Looking Strategies
FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICPD	Cairo International Conference on Population and development
ILC	International Land Coalition
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPMS	Improving Productivity and Market Success
LAC	Land Administration Committee
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MHH	Male headed households
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
REWA	Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SSA	Sub Saharan Africa

UN United Nations

UN/DESA/DAW United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division
for the Advancement of Women)

UNDAW United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

UNDP United Nations Development Program

UNECA United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNHCR United Nations High Commissions for Refuge

UNHCS United Nations Center for Human Settlement

USAID United States Agency for International Development

WFP World Food Program

WID Women in Development

Glossary

Borebore a soil which is a mix of brown and red

Galemota a divorced women

Kita a local bread

Kumoker a girl who has not been married for a long period of time

Kuribet a mat made of a dried animal skin

Medeb is a local bed like structure made of a brick like stones ordered one after the other and animal dung like cement used as a bed at night and a sit in during the day time

Sheri' a Islamic jurisprudence (law)

Shimgilina a traditional way of arbitration by local elders

Wushima adultery

Ye'ekul giving land to somebody who can work on the land for share

Abstract

This research is carried out in Argoba Woreda of South Wollo Administrative Zone, Amhara National Regional State. The research is carried out with the aim of scrutinizing the major socio-cultural stumbling blocks altering women's access to and control over productive assets impact.

The Researcher, in an effort of undertaking this research employs qualitative orientation through basic qualitative survey techniques. Focus group discussion, individual interview, and participatory observation used as basic data gathering tools accompanied by a guide checklist for primary data and published and unpublished documents for secondary information. Case stories are also the central part of this work captured through audio recorder. Information acquired through the above mentioned tools is analyzed through mainly textual formats and graphic and tabular ways to correlate various concepts vis-à-vis simple statistical procedure like percentage, mean and median.

The findings of the study shows that women's access to and control over productive assets is seriously constrained by various social, cultural, economic, political, psychological and ideological versions of analogy. Customary laws and patrilineal form of inheritance across families accompanied by lack of an enabling political framework to implement proclamations on the statutory law that allow women to have access to and control over productive assets are the major stumbling blocks. Lack of access to financial services and rural credit is also another impediment sidetracking women from engaging in productive income generating activities.

The study recommends few points as a way forward to tackling the predicaments dabbled on women. The major recommendations include; launching of rural credit schemes accessible to women, actions should have to be taken to implement the proclamation that allowed spousal joint registration of properties, building women's awareness about statutory laws and the woreda should take action to modify social and cultural attitudes and practices that disadvantage women, their has to be a mechanism of linking the customary and the statutory laws for a symbiotic mode of action, and research should have to be undertaken by multi-disciplinary teams at a regular basis for a better understanding of women's situation and the gender aspect in general.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the basic sections that served as a foundation for the research. The chapter encompasses background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, and research questions, significance of the research, limitations, and methodology.

1.1 Background of the Study

While women take an active role in agricultural production and processing and marketing of food products their identity as farmers is highly contested within the agricultural development framework in Ethiopia. This has led to a series of structural barriers, augmented by local cultural perceptions that have largely precluded women's participation in the agricultural extension process. In addition, women's access to land, technology and decision making power is critically impeded. Unless these structural and cultural barriers are actively addressed by agricultural development programs, women's location within the agricultural production process will continue to be marginalized hampering efforts to obtain household food security at a regional and national level (Emily, 1999).

Access to and control of land and financial services is crucial to relieve women from their economic dependency and enhance their engagement in income generating activities, but major social, cultural, political, and institutional challenges continue to prevent the rural women from gaining secure tenure rights – and such challenges are more pronounced for women.

The feminization of poverty is the tragic consequence of women's unequal access to economic opportunities (UNDP 1993:36). This is due to the deeply rooted discriminatory socio-cultural values and traditions embedded particularly in the policy and legal environment and in institutional support mechanisms (Ogato et al; 2009).

The World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in their separate analysis has put a light on some of the hindrances to promoting women in business and various productive roles at large including cultural and societal problems, the psychological impact of cultural norms, employment legislation and policy, lack of information, training, finance, technology and business infrastructure, fragmented approaches to identifying issues and developing strategy to influence policy affecting business and government intervention. This constitutes major

impediment to women and minorities enterprise development (ILO, 1993; World Bank, 2005). Also important, credit related, mobility related and time related constraints found to be with a substantial influence for a meager participation of women in income generating activities.

This study is carried out in Argoba Woreda, South Wollo Administrative Zone, Amhara Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) with the purpose of scrutinizing some of the major socio-cultural elements impeding women's access to and control over productive assets.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Significant gender inequalities can be found in peoples' access to other key productive assets and services: land, labor, financial services, water, rural infrastructure, technology, and other inputs. Available evidence indicates that the distribution of land ownership is heavily skewed toward men. For example, roughly 70 to 90 percent of formal owners of farmland are men in many SSA and in Latin American Countries (Doss 2005; Quisumbing, Estudillo, and Otsuka 2004). Gender related constraints reflect gender inequalities in access to resources and development opportunities. Although class, poverty, ethnicity and physical location may influence these inequalities, the gender factor tends to make them more severe (Kabeer, 2003).

A research carried out in Oromia Region in 2007 disclosed the fact that Community customs and traditions become major challenges in implementing policies that favor women in land acquisition. Traditionally, right to property pass through the male line in Ethiopia. This implies that women's status is generally inferior to that of male (Almaz, 2007). This study explored the measures undertaken to mitigate challenges stemming from traditional die-hards.

A research carried out in Amhara Region revealed that policies favoring women's equal access to landholding rights didn't bring the required change at community level (Sida, 2003; Askale, 2005). This study will explore the interplay between socio-cultural elements affecting implementation of policies related to women's access to land.

Several studies undertaken in the Region came up with reasons related to women's lack of access to and control over productive assets are women's low awareness on their rights and their subtle

involvement and engagement in decision making and administrative process (Askale, 2005; Deninger et al; 2007).

This study explored stumbling blocks threatening women's active involvement in decision making process related to their access to and control over productive resources ranging from the smallest household level and at a zonal level at large.

The Research area, Argoba Woreda is one of the Woredas within the Amhara National Regional State of South Wollo. Argoba Woreda is a newly established Woreda since 2004. Argoba is chosen for this research considering that it is a newly established Woreda remaining out of the reach of the government and the focus of researchers, limited empirical research has been conducted in the place, the socio-cultural dynamics of Argoba has got another luring facet inviting the researcher to carry out a research on that dimension, and finally to contribute for the existing scarcity of literatures and empirical research for others who have the interest of conducting research on the woreda.

The Researcher considered the respondents religious background, educational background, marital status, and economic background, as a basic variables to select respondents.

Finally, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the daunting socio-cultural elements having a debilitating negative impact on women's access to and control over productive assets to fuel their own development engine & measures undertaken so far to ease up the plights and predicaments.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General objective

The overall objective of the study focuses on the impact of the socio-cultural dimensions of gender on women's access to and control over productive assets to discharge their own developmental engine.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To explore some of the daunting socio-cultural elements impeding women's access to and control over some of the productive assets to discharge their productive role.

- To deal with and reflect upon the current scenarios and prospects on women's access to and control over some of the productive assets
- To explore alternatives mitigating measures being undertaken to curb the ill favored practices which tends to seclude women from access to productive assets and suggest some valid personal intellectual reflections.

1.4 Research Questions

The researcher focused on the following research questions during the research process;

- What are the prominent socio-cultural stumbling blocks threatening women's access to and control over some of the productive assets?
- What about the current perspectives and prospects as to women's access to and control over some of the productive assets?
- What are the mitigating circumstances and mechanisms so far been taken as a solution and being taken? If any.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research is believed to render planners and policy makers in the area of gender, with a basic informative baseline data to enabling them consider the socio-cultural scenarios before making an attempt of launching any development plan.

Also important, it will be of a paramount importance for those who would like to pursue their papers in issues like mine in Argoba as a supporting literature since much has not been don in the area(Argoba) regarding their history, gender issues and other dimensions.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the study

1.6.1 Scope

This study is confined within the realm of identifying the major socio-cultural scenarios in light of women's access to and control of productive assets in Argoba.

1.6.2 Limitations of the Study

The occurrence of predicaments in the research process is deemed inevitable and definitely will add a flavor to it if handled with care and patience. But it shouldn't be forgotten that too many plights might distort all the means's crucial to attain the end. Some of the challenges observed were;

- Lack of transportation
- Rural Peoples suspicion and conservativeness: considering the researcher as a politician at the initial stages of the research jeopardized free conversation and dialogue with the dwellers.
- Shortage of money to purchase equipments essential to running the research process
- Lack of food and potable water supply
- Procedural bureaucracy to acquiring permission of entry
- Election season: since the research has been conducted during critical periods of election campaign by political parties, the woreda and local politicians and officials developed suspicion about the mission of the study.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized based on five basic chapters. The sequential arrangement of the chapters is presented as follows;

The first chapter is the introduction part encompassing some of the basic introductory issues where the foundation of the thesis is lays. This chapter equips the reader with basic preliminary information about the subject under investigation. Chapter two is literature review on which some of the relevant literatures including empirical studies and conceptual and theoretical issues had been revised concomitantly. The other section is chapter three which is about description of the study area and this section renders with a basic acquaintances about the target area where the study is about to be undertaken. Some informatory descriptions about the area will be formulated based on the existing realities of the place. Chapter four is result and discussion and under the

mandate of this section the researcher is brought the basic findings of the study and interpreted basic findings in line with the research objectives that he formulated at the beginning. Chapter five is summary and conclusion this chapter summarizes the basic findings of the study and concludes based on the summaries made and finally recommended general and specific recommendation as a way out.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses major concepts, theories and empirical works regarding the concept of gender in general and historical background of feminism and the paradigm shifts from one concept to the other. The basic theoretical framework that served as a foundation for this research will also be seen in contemplation with other major discourses.

2.1 Definitions of Concepts

This section summarizes definitions of some of the frequently used working concepts.

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

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

Gender mainstreaming: is defined as:

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

Gender mainstreaming is clearly established as global strategy for promoting gender equality through the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995 (UN/ DES/ DAW,1995). Reference was made to importance of the mainstreaming strategy for each strategic objective identified in the Beijing Platforms for Action. Systematic consideration of differences between situations and needs of women and men in all

community policies and actions were set as basic features and principles in gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming involves restructuring policies, programs and activities to make sure that needs of women and men are equally addressed and both women and men have equal participation and both gain equal benefits. Gender mainstreaming is a process which requires shift in organizational cultures and attitudes. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is achieving women's empowerment and gender equality.

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

Access to land and other resources: Resources are means and goods including those that are economic like household income, productive like land, equipments, agricultural inputs (including labor) and opportunity to leadership and decision-making, information, organization and time. Access to resource implies to the ability to use resources and/or benefits and to make short-term decisions on these resources (Beatrice, 2004). Women's access to land has terms of use rights that imply getting opportunity to use and benefit from land. Access to land is a means to gain control over land.

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

Decision-making: In the context of land rights decision-making refers to decision on land use as an agricultural resource and its disposition. Decision-making related to land includes, land use

and improvements, control of products harvested from land including incomes earned from sales of products and decisions on land transfer through bequeath, inheritance, sale or rent.

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

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

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

Patriarchal ideology: A set of ideas defining women's roles as different from, and subordinate to, those of men.

Patriarchy: A system of male domination that is widespread but historically specific and can vary over time and context. Originally, this term was used to describe societies characterized by "the rule of the father," that is, the power of the husband or father over his wives, children, and property. The term has now come to refer to the overall systemic character of oppressive and exploitative relations affecting women.

Periphery: The Third World countries, characterized by underdeveloped economies and dependent relations with the metropole.

Global feminism: The celebration of different feminisms, grounded in the specificities of women's multifarious experiences. This will not occur until women from all racial groups believe that feminism recognizes their lived realities and incorporates those realities into feminist theories.

Egalitarianism: Relations based on the more or less equal participation of all adults in the production of basic necessities, as well as in their distribution or exchange and in their consumption.

Feminist: An individual who is aware of the oppression, exploitation, or subordination of women within society and who consciously acts to change and transform this situation.

Land tenure: In brief, the social relations established around and that determine who can use what land and how. A land tenure system and its set of tenure relations are interwoven and related to other societal structures and institutions, including family structures and its marriage and inheritance systems. All these structures tend to reinforce each other within a society: if there is a change in one of them, the others often modify and adjust to that change. In other words, a person, household, or group of persons does not possess, use, and transfer land independent of and isolated from other persons and institutions (CESCR, 1991).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

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

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

gender policy approach that focused on fulfilling practical gender needs although the WID approach improved opportunities for women, it failed to address the empowerment aspect, the power sharing. So there was a need for the programs of gender and development to move further.

A more people-centered approach was adopted in the *Second development decade* given its emphasis on issues of equity and redistribution as well as the meeting of the basic needs of people. This period coincided with the publication of Ester Boserup's path breaking work on *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970 giving an impetus to the Women in Development (WID) lobby. She highlighted women's productive roles in agricultural production, the informal sector and other areas apart from the reproductive sphere. Her contributions on women's role in subsistence agriculture particularly challenged the prevailing assumptions of development planners.

The *First Development Decade* had rapid industrialization as its goal and witnessed the initiation of large scale projects aimed at stimulating faster economic growth. The neo-liberal prescription of structural adjustment policies by the IMF and the World Bank was a direct outcome of the debt crisis, global stagnation and worldwide recession (Bradotti et al., 1994). With its emphasis on economic restructuring through cuts in government expenditure on social services, SAP sought to roll back the state by reducing its role while encouraging greater visibility for the private sector. Women were not visible in the First Development Decade. No explicit role was envisaged for them.

Thus the second policy approach Gender and Development (GAD) emerged. The GAD approach commenced on integration of gender issues into the Practical gender needs as needs that tend to be immediate and short-term, easily identifiable and can generally be addresses without changing traditional gender roles. The GAD approach was projected towards addressing strategic gender needs which can empower women and transform gender relations.

The overall goal of the GAD approach is women's empowerment. Empowerment entails increasing women's access to knowledge, resource and decision-making power to change their disadvantaged positions to the level of having control over their own lives (Parpart, 1989).

This goal was not easy to achieve and gender inequality still persists. It is reflected in many aspects in women's lives including their acquisition of resources. Feminism, although can be defined in a number of ways the following definition seems sound; Feminism is, "A belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression in all its forms and a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression" (Maguire, 1987: 79 cited on Brayton, 1997).

In the 1970's women started developing theories to explain their oppression and feminism as an ideology emerged. Feminists started to raise different issues and feminism branched out into many theories by the 1980's (ibid).

Feminist economic theory will be analyzed with respect to women's access to and control over productive assets for the purpose of this study. Feminist economists concern across the field of economics was based on its relation to gender and on firm rejection of gender marginalization in traditional economic theories. These feminists developed an economics that serve interests of large and different group of people (Strassman, 1999). Feminist economists contributed new insights to economic thought and Strategic gender needs are long-term and are not easily identified are common to almost all women and men enable women to become agents of change.

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

Feminist economists insisted on economic indicators that measure people's well-being. They argued that economic growth which basically considered the amount of money flow in the country's economy has little concern to social well-being of people. They rationalized that economic growth didn't give emphasis to resource distribution within a country. Feminist economists have also evidenced that economic discourses had perpetuated masculinist biases in theoretical and empirical researches. Gender biased research outcomes create low status, low

power and less rewards for women since economic theories and discourses influence political, economic and social policies. Feminist economists had contributed to economic theory and methodology and created alternative models such as the Capability Approach.

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Feminist economic methodology was categorized into Domestic systems, Economic success, Human agency, Ethical judgments and Gender, race, class, Power (Marilyn, 2004). In the domestic system feminist economists asserted that the household should be treated as an important economic institution and unpaid work performed by men and women in a domestic setting ought to be valued.

The importance of independent rights to women to access and control over productive assets can be divided into three categories of arguments (Agrawal, 1994) based partly on the points raised above.

In addition feminist economists emphasized on issues of power relation and inequalities within families and households. Bina Agarwal and other feminist economists contributed to basic understanding of intra-household bargaining power (Edith and Jolande, 1995). In feminist economics methodology, economic success should consider individual needs and entitlements on top of production of goods, distribution of wealth or income. In respect of this feminist economists; Amartya Sen, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and others had been forerunners in developing alternatives to the GDP such as the Human Development Index-HDI (Edith and Jolande, 1995).

A human agency methodology attempts to look at women's relationships within a given system, their relationship with people and institutions. It looks at where power in a system lies and who has unequal access to it. Women's limited access to institutions in a given system constrains their

involvement in decision-making. According to these feminists, many decisions are not made on women's own free-will but rather out of the limited choices in their lives.

Ethical judgments methodology looks at systems from a specific moral position and viewpoint rather than from point of view of neutral observer (Folbre, 1994). Feminist economists emphasized on importance of considering societal norms in economic issues.

Feminist economics methodology asserted on the need for incorporating issues of different groups of people. Gender, race, class and caste were focuses of attention. A gendered perspective exposes that economic relations and actions are directly affected by gender roles. Feminist economists therefore, underscored that a gendered perspective is central to the study of economics to spell out gender aspect of the economy.

Feminist economists' major area of inquiry was development. They argued that economic development; particularly in developing countries largely depend on gender equitable laws on ownership and inheritance and provision of gender sensitive sectoral policies. Feminist economists asserted that cultural factors are very important in explaining women's issues in the agriculture sector in developing countries. Feminist economists gave due emphasis to the agriculture sector as major area of development. Their view on the agricultural sector revealed that agricultural economic concepts should consider effects of gender relations in the system.

Feminist economists concern across the field of economics was based on its relation to gender and on firm rejection of gender marginalization in traditional economic theories. These feminists developed an economics that serve interests of large and different group of people (Strassman, 1999). Feminist economists contributed new insights to economic thought and Strategic gender needs are long-term and are not easily identified are common to almost all women and men enable women to become agents of change.

Feminist economists further underlined that economic approach in the agricultural sector and farming systems reflect gender ideologies in society. They affirmed that farm is seen as a purely economic unit managed by a male farmer, often considered active on the agricultural economic development. Women are associated with the domain of the family and the household hence, they are invisible in agricultural production regardless of their contribution to the sector and the

rural economy. Feminist economists asserted that family farm should be conceptualized in a different way because of its characteristics.

They explained family farm as a farm where capital, labor and management are mostly provided by the family who owns/uses the land. Family farm is primarily based on family labor and there are interlinks of economic activity and family life. Furthermore they affirmed that existing economic concepts could not be applied to study gender relations on family farms. Underlying reasons for these feminists view was that family farm is an area where labor and property relations are based on marriage and kinship and that power relation between men and women in society are reflected on farm activities.

Feminist economists' further emphasized that farm activities are outcomes of household decision-making processes although women and men farmers do not always have the same needs and interests. Women and men have different influences in the decision- making process. They underscored the need for more actor oriented approaches to incorporate women's roles in economic analysis and to address their issues effectively.

Since the provision of independent rights to women to access and control over productive assets has got a central importance to sustainable development and minimization of economic disparity between men and women as a major entity in the social system, (Agrawal, 1994) summarized the importance of independent right for women to access and control over productive assets from three categories of arguments based partly on feminist theories raised above. The arguments are the efficiency argument, empowerment and equality argument and the welfare argument.

The aforementioned theoretical basis of the feminist economists will serve as a reference frame and a foundation for this work. The socio-cultural factors that hampered women's independent right to control and access, and take benefit out of it will be seen and analyzed from the view point of the feminist notions. In a nut shell, the theoretical versions of the feminist economists stated above guides this research to cross checking analysis of the findings.

2.3 Historical perspectives and the move from WID to GAD

Much of the development thinking on economic progress in the 1950s and 1960s were summarized by the grand modernization vision of Rostow's stages of economic growth. In

assuming that all nations will pass through stages similar to those already experienced by the advanced industrial nations, Rostow's economic stage theory is synonymous with the sociological theory of modernization. This grand vision of a transition from subsistence to mass consumption and market economies has evaporated being punctured by the deteriorating conditions of living and worsening poverty of the masses of poor people in developing countries (Amy.M, 2002).

A major blame for the failure of the grand development project has been ascribed to the imposition of western culture and social construction of knowledge as well as the exclusion of gender from western construction of rational economic behavior. Development theories are global but they target Third World, in an attempt by the international community to speed up and encourage development of these nations. The earliest development theory is modernization theory. It upheld modernization as the solution to Africa's 'underdevelopment' and the underdevelopment of the third world. The early phase of African literature corroborated this development theory by the way thematic preoccupation focused on the conflict between tradition and modernity at the individual and communal level. Early African writers thematised the problem of inevitable social change brought about by the colonial encounter and how it impacted individuals and communities. The dog became deaf and indifferent to the hunter's whistle in the 'things fall apart' syndrome (Soetan, 1990).

Literature celebrated resistance to social change in the tragedy of the commons which was seen as the tragedy of cultural alienation, dislocation and disintegration. So far, four stages have been identified in the development debate (Young, 1993; Bradotti et al,1994; Harcourt, 1994; Parpart et al, 2000). The initial goal of the UN development decades were rapid economic growth, followed by basic needs incorporating redistribution and growth and in the 1980s structural adjustment. The 1990s have been marked an emphasis on Human Development with a simultaneous emphasis on the neo-liberal globalization project.

The First Development Decade had rapid industrialization as its goal and witnessed the initiation of large scale projects aimed at stimulating faster economic growth. The neo-liberal prescription of structural adjustment policies by the IMF and the World Bank was a direct outcome of the debt crisis, global stagnation and worldwide recession (Bradotti et al., 1994).With its emphasis

on economic restructuring through cuts in government expenditure on social services, SAP sought to roll back the state by reducing its role while encouraging greater visibility for the private sector. Women were not visible in the First Development Decade. No explicit role was envisaged for them.

The dominant paradigm of the family was that of the corporate unit of the male-headed household. Hence, benefits were directed at the male household head with the belief that such benefits would automatically 'trickle down' to other household members. Consequently development projects targeted men and only regarded women as tangential, viewing them mainly as wives and mothers and not as producers. The underlying development rationale was that of the household division of labor with men as producers (sometimes assisted by the women) while women functioned mainly as housewives and mothers. Expectedly, development planners focused on increasing the productivity of men in agricultural (mainly cash crop) production (Kabeer, 1994).

A more people-centered approach was adopted in the Second development decade given its emphasis on issues of equity and redistribution as well as the meeting of the basic needs of people. This period coincided with the publication of Ester Boserup's path breaking work on Women's Role in Economic Development in 1970 giving an impetus to the Women in Development (WID) lobby. She highlighted women's productive roles in agricultural production, the informal sector and other areas apart from the reproductive sphere. Her contributions on women's role in subsistence agriculture particularly challenged the prevailing assumptions of development planners. WID projects introduced income generation, small-scale projects for women. These have been criticized as being merely tokenistic given the low amounts of aid devoted to such projects. A major impetus for WID had resulted from the 1975 Mexico City UN women's conference and the resulting 1976-85 UN Decade for women.

While women's role in economic development did not occur in a vacuum, yet WID failed to account for the existing power structures codified in the sexual division of labor. Consequently in spite of greater attention to the institutionalization of women's issues through women's bureaux, very little improvements occurred in women's socioeconomic status. It is not surprising then that the terms on which WID sought to integrate (Kabeer, 1991).

Kabeer summarized the limited outcome of WID interventions succinctly as follows: “In other words, over a decade of WID policy has achieved a great deal in terms of ‘symbolic politics’ but rather less in terms of concrete achievements” (1994:9).

While UNECA proposed an African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Policies that would rely on a bottom-up approach to development, most other agencies did not question the usefulness of SAPs and its efficacy for development in developing countries. During the Second Development Decade, the second UN women’s conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980 and in reviewing progress made since the first women’s conference, the delegates noted deterioration in women’s conditions in most countries since the first UN Decade for Women. In spite of many areas of dissention revealing widely differing North-south ideological views, especially on the issue of female circumcision, by the end of the conference, over 70 countries had signed the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW set out the legally binding modalities and measures to protect women’s rights and achieve gender equality.

Forward Looking Strategies (FLS) emerged from the 1985 Nairobi conference to assess the progress of the targets set at the women’s Decade. The main strategy for advancing the FLS was to ensure women’s education at all levels. The Nairobi conference further emphasized the role of women’s machinery in facilitating women’s contributions to development. However with increasing economic deterioration as well as worsening poverty, in many sub-Saharan African countries, the Human development approach which revolved around investment in people and human-centered development was proposed by both the World Bank and UNDP as the development paradigm for alleviating poverty in the 1990s. The World Bank Human Development strategy has been criticized for making all but a cursory reference and adopting an instrumentalist approach to women. With the exception of its focus on the environment it was also viewed as basically similar to the Basic Needs strategy of the Second Development Decade (Cesile, 2005).

A more scathing criticism is that it regarded human development only as a means to an end, the end being economic growth (Bradotti et al, 1994). Although the UNDP Human development strategy has been lauded for being more people – centered than the World Bank’s version, yet

both were launched in the neo-liberal economic climate of globalization and the World Trade Organization (WTO) round of talks. With the emergence of new regional trade blocks, globalization has given rise to new arrangements of economic power which hold no promise for human development in the South.

A major criticism of the concepts of development is that they originate from western conception of economic and social realities. For all their seeming commitment to social equity, both the human development strategy and the GAD approach have taken the Western economic project of development as 'given'. Hence they often evade the prevailing inequalities between the North and South. This is more glaring in recent attempts at engendering reproductive health which hitherto had adopted a family planning approach to population control. While targeting women, the previous family planning approach emphasized birth control methods in the South, the reproductive health agenda arising from the 1995 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) proposed a more inclusive approach which targeted population control efforts not only at women but also at men. However, fundamentally unsustainable global economic policies which aim at favoring the economies of the North are at the root of Southern poverty and underdevelopment (Bradotti, 1994).

2.4 Arguments, Debates and Reflections regarding Women's Access to and Control of Productive Assets

In early 1976 Lynne B, in his book entitled with Women in the World wrote the following; "Women in every country, western and non- western, industrialized and rural, modern and pre-modern, are underutilized in terms of their numbers, denied access to positions of prestige and power, and expected to find their primary fulfillment as mothers and wives. Women still are channeled into traditional job categories, are paid less than men for equivalent work, and are dependent upon fathers or husbands for domicile, income, and permission to enter school or to go to work (Lynne, 1976). Further more, a book written in 1981 by Nici Nelson has said something fascinating as far as what is believed and perceived to be women's role success at both child bearing and food production is essential to women.

In the view of society, and especially in the eyes of the women theme selves, child bearing is basic to their reason for living, the very essence of their femaleness, and rising be food to feed

children is part of their nurturing role. To fail in this realm would be to fail as a mother and as a person (Nici, 1981).

As the Literature on Gender and Development has shown (e.g. Kabeer, 1994; Goetz, 1996; Kabeer and Murthy, 1996), power inequalities – both within and between households –can have a deeply negative effect on the distribution and reach of targeted poverty programmes. Credit intended for women for instance, is often misappropriated by male family members (ibid).

A Report developed by the World Survey (2009) on the Role of Women in Development has found out that the gender restrictions on women's mobility in many cultures and the gender discriminatory pattern of most rural development mean that women are likely to have less access than men to markets and infrastructure and greater limitations on the types of economic activity that they can undertake.

A Research conducted in Ethiopia, Oromia region, by Almaz (2007) has divulged the reality that Women in male headed households have relatively less decision-making power because, men control land in most married households.

The above mentioned researcher pointed out that local customs and traditions owns a gigantic share in debilitating women's access to and control over land. Land acquisition by unmarried, divorced, widowed and women in polygamous marriages are affected by community customs and traditions (ibid, 2007).

Various international organizations and writers have argued upon the issue of women's access to and control over productive assets from different perspectives. Though differently, most of them agreed upon the fact that gender inequalities are pervasive across many dimensions of societal life including households, social, economic and political institutions. The UN recognized that gender inequality resulting from women's low status persist in all societies although the extent of the gap varies across countries, cultures and time.

Parallel to the united nations' remark the World Bank study on regional patterns of gender inequalities in basic rights and in access to and control of resources reflect that disparities exist

all over the world and no woman in the developing regions has equal rights with man (World Bank, 2001).

Agrawal (1994) pointed a finger on debilitating impacts of right based inequalities emerging from differences in rights and privileges between women and men within the legal system, customary laws and community practices. Davison (1988) portrayed events in which those right based differences came to be visible and reflected. These fields are in marriage, inheritance, property ownership and management, in household and community activities and decision-making. Deprivation of women's land right through customary practices regarding land inheritance and property distribution after divorce is challenge in patriarchal societies.

Davison (1998) has come up with the finding that Women have indirect access to land in terms of use rights acquired through kinship relationships and their status as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters. Despite the use right women are privileged in some societies, according to these use rights may not grant enough security for women when family structures break due to various reasons.

In supplementing one of the critical sources of loss of women's use right Beatrice. A (2004) underlined that Breach in marriage is a serious issue in women's access to and control over land because, it results in vulnerable group of women, FHHs as single parents, widows or divorcees.

Women's denial and loss of access due to various reasons like those mentioned above increase the vulnerability of women to poverty and gave rise to the phenomenon of feminization of poverty and hunger. UNDP in its report articulated that the gendered face of poverty makes gender an issue in women's access to and control over land. The outcome of a study carried out by UNDP in developing countries reflected that poverty has a gendered face and that women are poorer than men (UNDP, 2000).

Further more, the interaction of statutory laws and community customs and traditions will determine how women's legal rights on land are actually realized in practice. Emily F (1994) Put a light in support of this claim saying that gap between legal systems and customary practices is obvious and nature of the gap defines the extent to Patrilineal communities are communities

where lineage goes through male descents (from father to son) in which socio-economic gender relations are shaped in the patriarchal system and are manifested in different forms.

In ascertaining women's access to and control over productive assets is an issue of human right, Quan(2000) argued that in patrilineal communities, the bride is moved to the bridegrooms' residential area which women's rights are neglected or promoted in access to and control over land in communities. Therefore, women's equal right on land is a human rights issue.

Gundersen A. (1992) has capitalized on the fact that women's equal access to and control over land is an issue of equity, poverty reduction, food security, sustainable development and even human rights. Therefore, these issues as discussed above make gender a critical issue in access to and control over land.

Bina Agarwal provided explanation on why gender equality should be major component access to and control over assets and the need for land reform land reform policies in her book *A Field of One's Own* (Agarwal, 1994). Agrarwal emphasized on the need for land policy focus on women's access to and control over land. She particularly stressed on the need for policy to address women's control over land and identified four main reasons on the need for women's control over land in addition to getting access to it. Agarwal identified welfare, efficiency, equity and empowerment as major reasons for women's need in gaining access and control over land. With respects to welfare she stated that women's control over land improve their households' livelihood and thus, improves household food security. In terms of efficiency, women's control over land increases agricultural productivity. Equity is gaining justice for women so it is recognizing women's equal access to land. With regards to empowerment, she emphasized that gaining control over land strengthens women's ability to struggle for equality, dignity and additional economic rights. Agarwal justified and stressed on significance of women's access to and control over land to achieve economic, social and political equality with men.

Land titling tend to be vested on men either by legal condition or by socio-cultural norms (World Bank, 2001). Even where formal title is given jointly to husband and wife, women might lose decision-making power in management of household land (Rocheleau and E. David, 1997). In this regard unregistered marriages, divorces and polygamy have major impacts on women's

Ethiopia's land certification scheme has been put forward as a good practice in land-titling. Land administration committees at kebele level (the smallest administrative unit) were required to have at least one female member. Land certificates, which included maps and pictures of both husbands and wives, were issued after public registration to ensure transparency. These certificates had particular value for women whose tenure rights were less secure than those of men. Women with joint certificates reported that these had improved their socio-economic status (Knox et al., 2007).

The status and rights of women not only in access to and control over resources, but also in other broader aspects are characterized by duality. Specifically, the issue of women access to and control over resources in Ethiopia has both spatial and temporal facets. Irrespective to the national and all-inclusive applicability of legal frameworks that at least profess to provide as equal rights to women as men in resource ownership, strong customary and cultural practices dictate the realities of women at the micro level, especially in rural areas (Zenebe, 2003).

2.5 Securing women's right to land and livelihoods

In recent years, women's access to and control over land, and their property rights have received considerable attention internationally, regionally and locally (The United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2001: 8). Internationally and regionally a growing interest has developed to address the impediments of women access to and control over resources as witnessed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Nairobi Forward- Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985) and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly of 'Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century'.

Governments have made numerous international commitments to promote and defend women's rights as well as recognizing the importance of women's rights in combating HIV and AIDS. However, these commitments are far from reflected in the ways in which resources are allocated and programs are prioritized. Women and girls are put at risk by economic vulnerability resulting from discrimination and lack of legal protections; by sexual violence, including in institutions

such as schools, prisons and workplaces; by domestic violence including marital rape; by violations of property and inheritance rights; and in some countries by harmful traditional practices such as exorbitant bride price, widow inheritance and even ritual sexual 'cleansing'. Despite their obligations to stop such violations and abusive practices, governments too often tolerate them (Beckmann, 1990-91).

Women's rights have generally taken second place to other institutional priorities. Structural adjustment and macro-economic stabilization programs have demanded reductions and/or the commercialization of social services including health and education, leaving women to bear the burden of care. Agricultural liberalization program, subsidy withdrawal and the closure of state marketing institutions have resulted in the collapse of smallholder livelihoods, forcing women to abandon food production for alternative livelihood strategies and, often, a hand-to-mouth existence (Griffiths, 1990/91).

2.5.1 International Commitment on Women's Right to Land and Property

Women's rights to land, housing and property are recognized and supported, albeit in a sometimes indirect or circumscribed manner, in a number of international and regional legal instruments and political documents including, *inter alia*, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights as well as the Beijing Declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Habitat Agenda of the Second World Conference on Human Settlements (Marjolein B, 2004).

In developing countries, men are increasingly migrating to urban areas in search of employment or to join military forces, leaving women to undertake agricultural activities for subsistence and to generate an income from their homes and off the land, where possible (UNCHS, 1999).

International commitments on women's rights to land, livelihood, food and health are made directly or indirectly in the following international declarations (among others):

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976)
- UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS Declaration of Commitment (2001)
- Millennium Declaration (2000)
- FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (2004)

Women's limited access to productive resources and inequitable decision-making power was put as major reason for feminization of poverty. Governments are required to re-formulate macro-economic policies that address gender disparities in economic power sharing to alleviate poverty and advance economic growth. Gender mainstreaming was also considered a major strategy to be followed by states to alleviate poverty especially among women living in rural households (Marjolein B, 2004).

The United Nations Higher Commission on Human Rights passed resolution on women's equal ownership access to and control over property and land (UNHCR 2003/ 22). International conventions ratified by governments including international human rights instruments and women's equal rights conventions were bases for considering women's access to and control over land as human rights issue in the resolution. African Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa adopted by the then OAU called upon all African states to eliminate discrimination against women and to ensure women's rights as set in international declarations and conventions (OAU, 2003). It demanded African governments to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative and institutional measures. The protocol includes a number of articles on women's social, economic and political equality and gives particular emphasis to the rights of widows and divorcees.

UN agencies and international organizations play significant roles in supporting women's equal rights on access to and control over land. FAO is the responsible UN agency to lead international efforts to overcome hunger. FAO draws special attention to rural development and facilitates debate forums on land policy issues. FAO established ILC that focuses on women's access to land and gender relations in land tenure. ILC runs 'Gender Relations in Tenure Project' on

women's rights to land which focuses on key issues regarding women's access to land (ILC, 2007).

2.5.2 Women, Land Tenure, Customary Laws and Changing Societies

In the African context especially, the role of customary inheritance and property laws cannot be ignored. While there are exceptions and examples of matrilineal societies, most African cultures are patrilineal. This has hindered women's access to land or other resources in three forms: Traditions that prevent women from owning land, traditions that prevent women from inheriting land, traditions that prevent women from speaking in public, traditions that prevent women from owning land include social, cultural and religious customs (Agrawal: 260 et seq, 486 et seq, 1997).

Despite the positive policy development, the general public environment of many countries does not support women's equal ownership rights, partly due to discriminatory customary practices. Below, some general trends on shifts from customary law to statutory law, and their impact on women are discussed.

In many communities access to land is governed by both statutory and customary laws. Customary laws emerge from unwritten social rules derived from shared community values and traditions. Customary laws limit women's rights on land to secondary rights mainly derived from their membership in patriarchal households. This law underpins patriarchal system of traditional authority to reinforce patriarchal values which disadvantage women and place them to subordinate position in society (WLSA, 2001; Walker, 2001a). Marriage has been primary means of getting access to land under customary system of tenure.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, unmarried women have little access to land because, they are not allowed to inherit property in most patrilineal societies while wives have better access to their husbands' land through marriage. Security of marriage thus becomes major requirement for security of tenure (Davison, 1988; Nizioki, 2002). On the other hand, studies revealed that marriage as an institution and family structures are becoming more and more unstable especially by impacts of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nizioki, 2002).

Some customary laws give sons exclusive right to inherit land and other property whereas wives and unmarried daughters have the right to be maintained. Pre-existing customary norms in some patrilineal societies in Africa used to allow widows continued lifetime rights on their marital land which passes on to male heirs after their death (Davison, 1988; Nizioki, 2002). But, this practice is not necessarily adhered to as land gained value. Widows are becoming vulnerable being forced off their deceased husbands' land by their in-laws or by their sons.

Customary laws generally sanction male authority over women. Men control household land because, community customs and traditions support land allocation to male. Under customary laws all property acquired by the spouses except, personal goods belong to the husband.

2.6 Women in Ethiopia; Bird's eye-view of the Past and the Present

There have been few studies concerning women in Ethiopia, but many observers have commented on the physical hardship that Ethiopian women experience throughout their lives. Such hardship involves carrying loads over long distances, grinding corn manually, working in the homestead, raising children, and cooking. Female genital mutilation is also practiced by many of the ethnic groups. Ethiopian women traditionally have suffered socio cultural and economic discrimination and have had fewer opportunities than men for personal growth, education, and employment. Even the civil code affirmed the woman's inferior position, and such rights as ownership of property and inheritance varied from one ethnic group to another (Abate, 1992).

As in other traditional societies, in Ethiopia a woman's worth is measured in terms of her role as a mother and wife. Over 85 percent of Ethiopian women reside in rural areas, where peasant families are engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture. Rural women are integrated into the rural economy, which is basically labor intensive and which exacts a heavy physical toll on all, including children. The Ethiopian Revolution had little impact on the lives of rural women. Land reform did not change their subordinate status, which was based on deep-rooted traditional values and beliefs. An improvement in economic conditions would improve the standard of living of women, but real change would require a transformation of the attitudes of governments and men regarding women (ibid).

There have been some changes for women in urban areas, where education, health care, and employment outside the home have become more available. Although a few women with higher education have found professional employment, most hold low-paying jobs. About 40 percent of employed women in urban areas worked in the service sector, mainly in hotels, restaurants, and bars, according to a 1976 government survey. Employment in production and related areas (such as textiles and food processing) accounted for 25 percent of the female work force, followed by sales, which accounted for about 11 percent. The survey also showed that women factory workers in Addis Ababa earned about a quarter of the wages men earned for the same type of work. These differences existed despite a 1975 proclamation stipulating equal pay for equal work for men and women (ibid).

Following the Ethiopian Revolution, women made some gains in economic and political areas. The Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association (REWA), which claimed a membership of over 5 million, took an active part in educating women. It encouraged the creation of women's organizations in factories, local associations, and in the civil service. Some women participated in local organizations and in peasant associations and kebeles. However, the role of women was limited at the national level. In 1984, for example, the government selected only one woman as a full member of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia. Of the 2,000 delegates who attended the party's inaugural congress in 1984, only 6 percent were women (ibid).

On a more positive note, the Dergue could claim success in increasing literacy among women. The enrollment of women in primary and secondary schools increased from about 32 percent in 1974/75 to 39 percent in 1985/86, although the rate of enrollment of urban women far exceeded the rate for rural women (ibid).

Regarding the women's policy and their right to land and resources the National Policy on Ethiopian Women was milestone for Article 35 of the FDRE Constitution. The policy affirms women's equal right with men in social, economic and political spheres. One of the major objectives is to facilitate conditions for rural women to access productive resources particularly land and basic social services (TGE, 1993:25). Contents of the policy further emphasize on ensuring women's equality through legal reforms, awareness creation, initiating women's participation in formulation of government policies and implementation of programs (TGE,

1993:26-28). Furthermore, government had developed and issued National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAP-GE, 2006). Therefore women's policy and rural land policy have strong linkages because women's policy put rural women's equal access to productive resources, particularly land, as basic for women's equality.

Besides the national policy for women a family law is also issued specifically. Family laws relates to very basic issues of family life, the relationship between husband and wife and the rights each have over family resources. Legislations addressing women's specific issues are necessary to translate women's legal rights to land to reality. Family laws are particularly important since control of marital property and equal share in divorce is the main area where women are mostly affected with regards to their rights to land. The FDRE issued family law that addresses a range of issues concerning marriage, administering individual and common properties in marriage and sharing property at divorce (FDRE, 2000). Women are provided equal rights with men in entering into marriage, within marriage and in divorce. Article 11 of the FDRE Family Law states that marriage is monogamous and Article 33 asserts that polygamy is illegal and the second marriage entered can be disbanded by law. Regions are provided rights to enact family laws within the framework of the FDRE family law.

2.7 The importance of women's right to basic productive assets

Men and women thus contribute to the welfare of their family, often in complementary ways; each type of contribution is indispensable, especially with poor families. In general women make a bigger contribution to the household as a whole than male. Moreover, in many regions, a third or more household is de facto headed by a woman. This is especially true of poor families where for e.g. migration is a factor or where marital expulsions are the case. Each resource plays a multi-functional role in the survival strategies of women. Not also they provide as a means of production, too often they serve as a means of social security (Beckmann, 1990-91).

Women must be granted independent rights to those productive assets, i.e. land, credit and financial support if they are to achieve autonomy, vis-à-vis other support services, like legal and extension services. The belief that women should share the rights on an equal footing with men is now gaining a wide spread international acceptance (Kelkar, 1992).

2.7.1 Arguments on the Importance of Independent Right to Women

The importance of independent rights to women to access and control over productive assets can be divided into three categories of arguments (Agrawal, 1994) based partly on the points raised above.

A. The welfare argument

Land and credit right and access to other expanded support services and productive assets when necessary to women can substantially reduce poverty and the threats of poverty, especially in poor rural households. However, they can also help women and the household with higher income to reduce the risk of poverty and in the family disintegrate following divorce or the death of a husband. Access to those productive assets is an important source of social security for the various categories of individuals and households (ibid, 1994).

B. The efficiency argument

Generally speaking, if women are given the same quantity and quality of land, the same 'inputs' and 'technologies' and the same education and information, they can produce as much, if not, more than men. Women are already responsible for a sizable proportion of agricultural output but due to their lack of land right, they cannot obtain access to these facilities. The resulting increase in productivity will help the family have a better life and in turn lead to a further improvement in productivity and higher financial income.

C. The equality and empowerment argument

Gender equality is a measure of an equitable society. Equal rights for men and women to productive assets are important aspects of gender equality.

Equality between men and women in securing and retaining access and control over productive assets, gives women economic empowerment while at the same time paving the way to political and social empowerment. It affords women greater respect and improves their bargaining position.

2.8 Legal Pluralism

In most developing countries, however, rights are derived from one legal system but from several concurrently (Beckman, 1990-91).

In these countries, the legal system of women vis-à-vis productive assets is governed by a situation of legal pluralism in which statutory law, local law and frequently religious law are simultaneously applicable. Statutory law covers all laws made by governments, ranging from legislations issued by different levels of administrations and judicial rulings to regulations, directives and informal provisions and decisions issued by government agencies or officials. The term local law covers a whole range of issues based partly on traditions and customs. They are usually referred to as traditional and customary laws (UNCHS, 1999).

Religious law, especially Islamic law, incorporates the official teachings of one of the schools of laws and local versions of Islamic law. The local versions of religious law are sometimes separated. Usually, however, the distinction is clear and they form a separable body of law alongside the official law of ethics, deriving and independent legitimacy from God. For instance, although the property acquired by a man through his own efforts is governed by Islamic law for inheritance purposes (i.e. it passes to his children) sons and daughters nevertheless obtain equal share (Gundersen, 1992).

Women's rights are frequently governed by one legal system, in which statutory law, local law, religious law, project law and international law all play a role. Each legal system has its own categories of right and objects of right, most of which apply very different definitions and therefore lack interface with the categories employed by other legal systems. The correlation between these systems is never consistent and depends on the location and context in which they occur. The effective dominance of one type of law cannot be assumed in advance but must be empirically tested. Several interpretations of the same law may be current (Kabeer, 1994).

CHAPTER III: METHODOS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter tries to introduce the geographical and socio-economic settings of the woreda. It contains the description of location, topography, climate, history and the research methods and design used as a tool to undertake the research.

3.1 Description of the Study Area

South Wollo is one of the Eleven Administrative Zones of the Amhara National Regional State lies between 90-140N and 360-40E in Ethiopia's North West. It is located at almost 401 kilometers away from the capital of Ethiopia Addis Abeba to the capital of south Wollo, Dessie.

South Wollo is bordered on the south by Semien Shewa and Oromia region, on the west by west Gojam, and on the North West by south Gonder.

3.1.1 Location, Topography and Climate

The Location Argoba Woreda (district) is one of the districts in Amhara Region. It is Located in South Wollo Administrative zone. It is bordered by Afar Region to the west, Qalu woreda from North and Oromia Zone of Kemissie from the South East direction.

The topography of the *Woreda* is almost mountainous. There is no river flowing down by the mountain. The mountains form a mountain of chains in a circular design as if it has been shaped by an architect deliberately. Most of the people have their tenure from the mountains which is not appropriate to ox plough rather for hand digging, cumbersome and labour intensive. Due to poor terracing and drainage mechanism too often the land is susceptible to soil erosion coming from the tip of the mountain. As a result, residents are vulnerable to frequent drought and migration for resettlement programs of the government.

Climate (Agro-ecology)

In general, the Woreda's climate can be divided in to two: *Dega*, *Woina Dega* (moderate), and *Kolla* (lowland). According to the agricultural office documents, *Kolla* covers 65percent of the *woreda*. Woyina Dega (Moderate) covers 25 percent of the area.

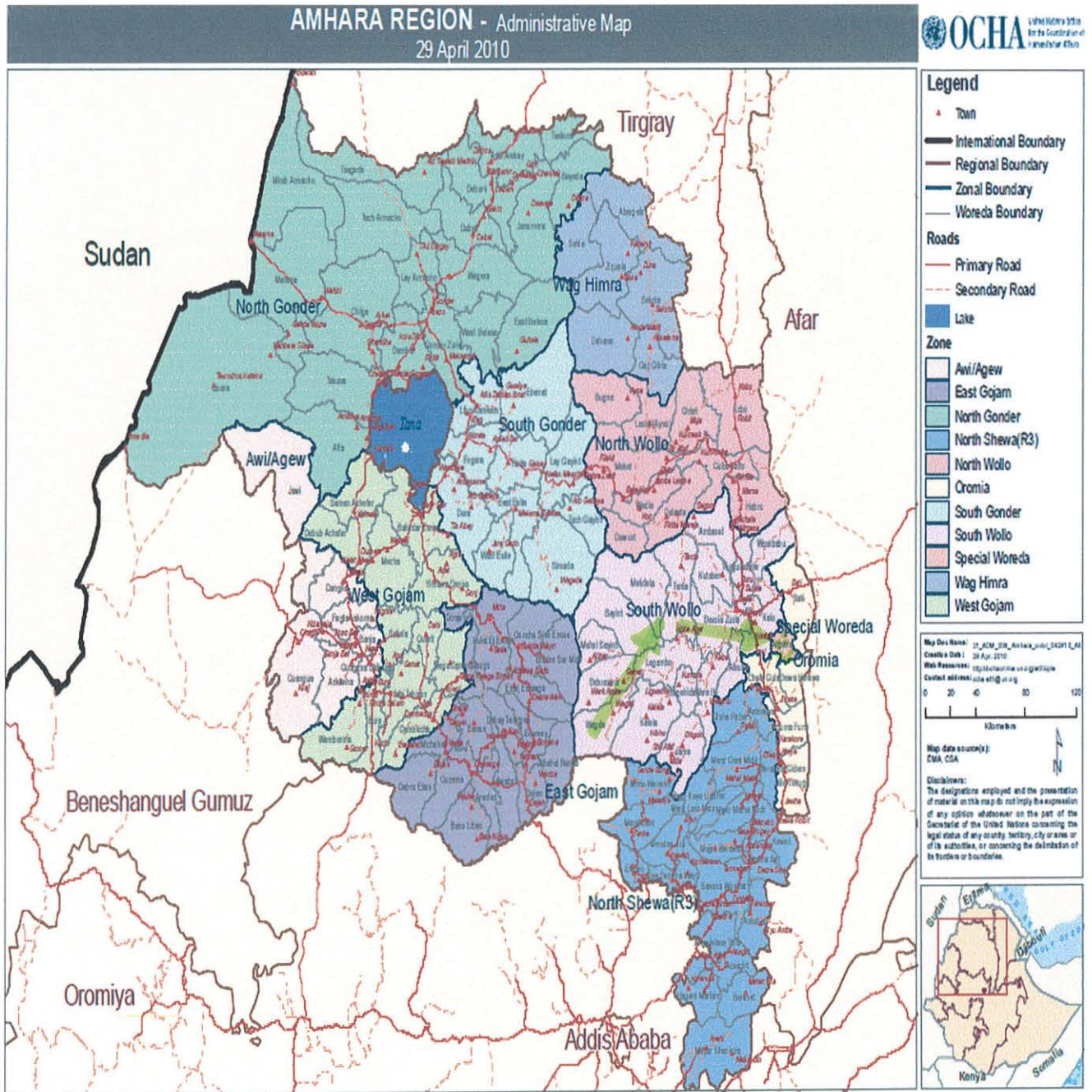
The remaining 10% of the territory, which is found in the western periphery, is categorized in *Dega(hot zone)* climatic zone. The chains of mountains form a sharp geographical division between *Woina dega* and *Kolla* zones.

Informants and the local peoples divided the agro-ecological zone of the Woreda on the basis of soil types and cropping patterns based on their experiences.

According to personal observations, the Development agents and the Local peoples, there are four types of soils categorized based on their colors as red, brown, black, and Borebor(a mix of brown and red) where approximately 80% of the land is covered by a mix of red and brown soil.

The economy of the woreda is dominated by agriculture. Argoba woreda is suitable for producing cereals and pulses, but cash crop production also exists in the form of fiber seed, potato, tomato and a variety of spices.

Figure 3.1-Location Map of Argoba Woreda in Amhara Region



Source: United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs(OCHA)

3.1.2 Tradition and History

According to the local elders of the woreda, Argoba peoples are descendants of Arab peoples. According to them the term Argoba comes from the Amharic term ‘*Areb Geba*’, which means

the Arabs have entered which connotes the entry and settlement of Arab peoples as a caravan traders in the current Argoba. Hundred (100%) of the population in Argoba are followers of Islam as a religion. They are collection of beautiful people- with alluring and astonishing beauty and personality.

Almost all peoples of Argoba speak Amharic as their first language while they have their own language called as *Argobighna*, which was on the verge of demise. Only few elders near by the border to Afar speak Argobighna. According to the woreda office of culture and information, through extensive support of the government they are able to recollect and published the first *Argobighna /Amharic Dictionary and alphabet in Argobighna*.

There are three nations dwelling in the woreda including *Oromo peoples* living by the border of *Kemissie, Oromia zone, Amhara region* near by the place called *Dewoy*, the *Afar pastoralists* settled bordering the Oromo people by the side of *Dewoy* and the Amhara peoples. There is a passive conflict between the Oromo Agro- pastoralists settled by the border and Afar pastoralists because of range land for their cattle's during times of drought and calamities resulted from the periods erratic rain fall.

Argoba is a recently established woreda formed in 2005 after one of the political parties which is '*The Argoban National Democratic Organization*' won in an election held in 1997 Ethiopian calendar. That time onwards Argoba has been standing as a legitimate woreda within the Amhara National Regional State.

3.1.3 A short history of the Argoba

Much has not been done than said about the history of Argoba people regarding their origin and culture. Studies on the Argoba people were made from 1993to 1997. It was possible to establish the settlement pattern of Argoba, and to know their general character.

It is said the Argoba came from Arabia. Nonetheless, on account of historical migrations, the Argoba are now intermingled both through marriage and shared culture with neighboring Amhara, Oromo, and Afar peoples. An Argoba does not speak only *Argobighna*, but now two

three or even more languages. Although they're all called Argoba, they are also found to be Doba, Shagura and Adiya. In language and culture, the Argoba have close connections with the Tigreans, the Amhara, the Harari, and both claimed to be Arabs and descendants of the Prophet Mohammed(PBUH). When the Harari trace their dynasty, they go back to Walasma. In this regard, the history of Argoba and the Harari has continuity and they have been and are connected in faith, domicile and history Aklilu A (2000).

The Meaning of Argoba

What does Argoba mean? The elders say that Argoba means Arab geba(Arabs have entered) and relates its etymology to an event. Others give a slightly different etymology and say it is derived from *har geba* and explains it means silk that is seen on a mountain. They further explain that the first Arabs who came into the area settled on a hill and pitched a silk tent and so they were given this appellation. Nevertheless, all Argoba believe that the name is derived from *Arab geba(The Arabs have entered)* and that they are descended from Arabs. Consequently, they consider themselves Arabs and tell others their genealogy to go back to the first followers of the Prophet Mohammed who came as refugees to Ethiopia. For them, the history of the Argoba and of the coming of Islam to Ethiopia is one and the same.

Asfaw Aklilu(2000) in his historical research regarding the origin of Argoba peoples wrote that; different people and different authors give different explanation on their origins. Some said that Argoba is an area that is found in *Yifat*, while others say that there is an area in Southern Wollo in the sub-woreda of *Qalu* that is called Argoba. As the natives of the area are also called Argoba, it is both the land and the people that are called Argoba. As Argoba is associated most of the time with Yifat, the Christians in *Yifat* call themselves *Yifate*, while Muslims there are called Argoba. The Muslims call the Christians there Amhara, while the Christians call the Muslims Argoba.

According to Cohen(1931), the linguists classified Argoba as Northern and southern Argoba. However, their spread is diffuse and discrete. The Argoba have their own historical and cultural features based on Islam. Wherever they go, they mix with the pagan and nomadic peoples they come in contact with, teaching them religion, agriculture and establishing village settlements. In

Hararge, this system is Known as Moggasa. With time, the Argoba came to use their own language only at home, and learn and adopt the language of the larger hosst community. The Argoba in the North speak Amharic, Oromo and Afar. Those in the middle speak Amharic, while some speak Afar. Those in the south speak Oromo and Afar, while a few speak Somali.

After 1991, the people known as Argoba formed a nationality and organized the Argoba People's Political Party which is based on *Gachenene* town in the Argoba Zone of Afar National Regional Government.

According to the narration of Argoba elders, the Argoba came from the east via *Zeila*. The first Argoba settled In Mejid (Ayelu) on a high mountain. *Ayelu* is a mountain in Harar to the east of Gewane. Once settled there, they developed the area through and cattle raising and became wealthy. Feeling the surfeit, they held weddings and fested during the fast of Ramadan. God got angry and sent Genni who then showered famine and plagues on them. Fleeing this situation, they left the area and went up to the highlands of *Shoa and settled in Yifat*. There, they established a sultanate under *Walasma leadership* and spread to *Cheno, Guzze, Tolha, Shenke* and other areas. Then they spread Islam to many places and founded new settlements. In short, traditional accounts connect the coming of the Argoba and founding of the yifat sultanate, while field data have established Argoba means *Arab geba or Arabs have entered*.

In almost every spheres of their life, the Argoba of South Wollo are ruled by traditional customary law (local law) and Religious law (to some extent) which is the Islamic Sheri' a. Due to various reasons (such as, meager attention given by the government to the people, lack of or no empirical research don on their origin and tradition, settlement patterns, and etc) their knowledge of statutory law and level of inclination to it is almost insignificant.

3.2 Methodology

This study looks into the socio cultural dimensions of the gender perspective in relation to women's access to and control over productive assets. Data presented in the study is obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data is collected directly from respondents using qualitative methods. Secondary data is collected through review of relevant literatures on women's access to and control over productive assets and the role of social norms and values to

enhance the pace of the problem in developing countries coming from Africa to Ethiopia. Background information on the research Woreda and Kebeles is obtained from the woreda rural development and agriculture office.

Useful information was gathered as a number of issues were raised from participants. The focus group discussion offered opportunity to capture case stories and to direct observation. Two case stories were captured on relevant issues raised on discussions from two women representing two villages. On top of this, the researcher's frequent visit to the Woreda Offices, the research Kebeles and villages offered opportunity to observe different activities and useful information was collected using observation check list that enriched research findings.

All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted using audio recorder. Community level interviews, focus group discussions with rural women and case stories were carried out with the help of the kebele officials and local women's representative.

3.2.1 Research design

The research design used for this research is a case study research design where the researcher studied the case of those women in Argoba and has come up with certain findings and commented to those predicaments in accordance with the research findings observed during the case. The research design is summarized by table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Summary of the research design and tools employed

NO	METHOD	TOOLS EMPLOYED	NATURE OF SAMPLES
1	Qualitative	Interview questions	Kebele officials, rural women,
		Focus group discussion	Rural women
		Case story	Rural women
		Observation checklist	The socio-cultural settings
		Tape Recorder	To capture interviews and Discussions

3.2.2 Qualitative method

Survey was conducted using focused samples. Information is gathered through interviews and focus group discussions using interview and discussion guides. Key informants interviews are carried out with Woreda Offices of Agriculture and Rural Development, Women's Affairs and Kebele LACs. Focus group discussion was conducted with rural women, married women (wives in male headed households) and FHHs (unmarried/single widowed and divorced women) and with others when ever required.

A qualitative research design or approach or orientation is selected based on the essence of what the research and the nature of the data to be collected should have to be. The research approach the researcher followed was a "Research before Theory approach" through the investigation of a phenomenon and delineating its attributes and measuring its attributes and then developing a generalization and theories based on what so far has been investigated

3.2.3 Sampling techniques

The researcher confined the sampling technique within the realm of purposive sampling so as to identify informants in accordance with a pre selected criteria, types of variables, size and proportion of the sub-samples.

Individual interviews using open ended questions and focus group discussion with rural women is considered important to get information on their lived experiences and views on their access rights to land and control over land, household resources and equal decision-making power. Discussion participants were purposely selected based on the need and convenience of the situation during the research process.

3.2.4 Data Source and Methods of Data Collection

The researcher first identified Kebeles and villages and qualitative survey respondents were drawn from kevels purposively.

The data was collected over one and a quarter month of fieldwork. It was collected in selected kebeles of Argoba woreda. The *kebeles* found at a distance of 35 km from the administrative office of the Woreda, *Senkele*.

The data was collected in two adjacent *gotes* of the *kebele* known as *Dibe and Arera Nechero(Adame.)* The two *gotes* have more than 255 households.

The site is selected based on different criteria; The first is limited or no empirical research has been conducted about the Argoba peoples, it is a newly established woreda that has been out of the focus of the government for so long, and it is a place with untouched socio-cultural values and traditions and employ to a greater extent traditional customary rules and to some extent religious laws as means of judgment, and the other is the researcher's personal acquaintance to the place brought about a luring impact to undertake a study in the place as it may contribute to disclose some hidden aspects of the people regarding their socio-cultural dimension of gender in access to and control over productive assets.

To achieve the objectives of the study a combination of data collection methods were employed. These are:

1. **In-depth Interviews:** Interviews were held with more than 18 key informants within and outside the

Kebele the Development Agent (DA), four woreda agricultural and rural development officials, two *kebele* officials, and three local elders and women to collect local traditions, and seven women who do have case stories. Officials were frequently been interviewed about women's access to and control over productive assets including land and credit as major resources as per the guide checklist. Some smallholder informants and other officials are repeatedly interviewed.

The informants were purposely selected for their knowledge, experiences, and public and government responsibilities in the locality. Most of the Interviews were captured through tape recorder and a written format in a note book.

2. **Focus Group Discussion:** Six focus group discussions were held to collect data about women's access to and control over land registration, use right and ownership, access to financial facilities to engage in various income generating activities and the household division of labour. Further, discussants have been organized in separate sessions to deal with major impediments hindering their access to land entitlement and benefit out of it and means of acquiring land and credit facilities. In similar fashion, a group of women discussants from different male headed and

female headed households, including widows and divorcees were purposively selected to reflect upon issues of their commonalities.

The second group of discussants comprised of various women from different age group and experience with additional novice participants to deal with the above mentioned issues. This session allowed maximum amalgamates of information and experience and valuable reflections regarding their access to productive assets, factors affecting their access to the major productive assets and the role of customary, religious and statutory laws.

All the discussions and interviews captured through Tape recorder and in a written format for the ease of memorizing them at the end of the day and writing the case stories.

Moreover, informal group discussions were conducted in those *Gotes* of the *kebele* during special occasions such as mourning events and wedding ceremonies.

3. Case Studies were conducted to collect information regarding the tradition perceptions that side tracked women from accessing and controlling resources through marriage, inheritance and government distribution and what has been done by the government officials.

Their composition is believed to have brought the diverse attitudes, constraints, and perspectives of the program in terms of resource, gender, and political and social participation.

4. Participatory Observation employed to gather information about people's task and activities in the real field situation and the sex and age distribution of individuals engaged in those activities.

5. Primary Statistical data from the DA, service co-operative, governmental teams, *woreda*, and zonal and regional agricultural offices has been collected and used in this study

3.2.5 Methods of Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observations were put into different categorical variables. Major themes were identified and analyzed thematically in line with research questions and were summarized for use in descriptive analysis. Qualitative survey findings are used to draw arguments on relevant issues with data collected from secondary sources and to draw conclusions and recommendations.

Analysis of this research involved diagrams to correlate the relationship between different concepts and variables, simple statistics, pictures, and maps. Therefore, both text, image, tabular and graphical ways of deriving inferences out of what people have said is indulged wherever necessary.

3.3 Quality and Ethical Consideration

The researcher received official permit from Argoba woreda Rural Development Bureau to conduct this study in Argoba woreda. Interview is administered on free will considering the informed consent of the interviewees and they were told that they can even decline if they don't want to be interviewed and also informants had been informed through the consent form that information provided by interviewees will not be transferred to a third party or will not be used for any reason without a due substantial knowledge of the interviewees.

Despite suspicion and deliberate reluctance of the target peoples at the early stage of the data collection process, peoples became the most important source of courage and support to the researcher gradually. The Argoba peoples have a very special quality of asking questions and never leave anything closed till they get convinced about any issue in which they think is pivotal. For every question the researcher raised, they always have a very challenging question which is beyond the legitimate scope of the researcher and the research it self. What is astonishing anyways is they have a well informed response for the question they posed. To measure the level of literacy and knowledge of some government workers coming to Argoba as a civil servant to serve them, they ask questions in which they already knew the answer. If they failed to answer questions as per their expectations and yardsticks that they already proposed, no matter how the guy is brilliant enough, that time onwards they may conclude that he is ignorant. This is the typical behavior of farmers in Argoba.

During sessions of focus group discussion and individual interviews session, discussants argued and counter argued for every piece of issue raised by the researcher and finally arrived at some conclusion without any kind of inter personal conflict with one another. If the majority has come up with an idea convincing enough, the rest of them never hesitate to join the others. This is a civilized form of culture. Arguing, questioning and counter arguing without factions with one

another and coming up to the same stand at the end of the day and even if they have differences never pave a way for conflict to prevail. These were the most important sessions that the researcher has acquired a great deal of information and knowledge of the rural people in Argoba.

CHAPTER IV: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section briefly discusses women's access to the basic productive assets such as land and credit facilities in the rural kebeles of Argoba. Women's situation under a multitude of customary and traditional thoughts and its impact on their access to the basic productive assets such as land and credit facilities shall be seen in a substantial detail. To this effect, the impact of customary and statutory laws have been analyzed and presented in a sequential manner. Further, the major impediments affecting women's genuine engagement in various income generating activities to fuel their own developmental engine have also been elaborated.

4.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

If not entirely, almost all weights of this research is based on qualitative research format. Summarizing and putting social affairs in terms of a blanket statistical data may not indicate the severity and urgency of events. People's feelings, ideologies, sorrow, perceptions and others like those mentioned, need sharp and critical tools to understand the intensity and magnitude as the subjects underscore say it so and for those societal and personal issues urging a thorough understanding and analysis, qualitative research deemed crucial and of a paramount significance.

As it has been mentioned in the research methodology part, respondents were selected based on a purposive selection fashion thinking that qualitative research yields a better representation of the issue under focus. The respondents selected considering the following variables into consideration; marital status, type of marriage, educational background, age, and sex, which is indeed intrinsic.

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics and Religious Affiliation of the Respondents

The researcher went through selection of respondents for the qualitative survey based on the specifications included in the guide checklist prepared before hand. Being with the kebele workers, local leaders, development workers, and teachers who do have a long year of service and stay within the community, the researcher identified households and individual woman in accordance with the required age group, marital status and type of marriage and etc. As far as the age matter is concerned, respondents were approximately from the age of 15-60 and among which, women informants approximately from the age of 30-45 took the lion's share.

The researcher has conducted six separate focus group discussion sessions in those kebeles, and all the discussants were women. The Focus group discussion encompasses different women ranging from 12-15 in number possessing different age, marital status, and economic position, so as to acquire to a maximum amalgamates of information. The interviews, unlike the focus group discussion which solely involved the female, entertained the male those who have more than one wife and others besides the inclusion of local elders, community arbitrators, kebele officials, police men, religious leaders, teachers, development workers, women's affairs representative and woreda level officials.

4.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Having a preliminary acquaintance about the socio-economic background of the respondents is indispensable for any kind of research, especially when we deal with social science research as the objectives directly or indirectly might seek the case in point. During the researcher's attempt in going through the case, pondered on educational background, annual household income, household asset ownership and control, household food sufficiency, household division of labor, and some other in ad hoc manner.

Educational background- in order to put a light on this issue, the researcher has prepared a list of categories in accordance with the interview guide checklist to categorize interviewees as per their level of education. The categories include, illiterate, those who are able to read and write, formal education (possessing different cycles in it), adult education and others. In all of the researchers' interviews with women of different age groups and marital status interviewed using interview questions most of them found to be with no educational background except few girls who are recently wedded by dropping out their schooling for an arranged marriage. Astonishingly, the rest of them fall under the category of illiterate with a negligible level of numeracy and literacy. The researcher found out a few women claiming to have a background of adult education program but yet none of them are capable of reading and writing since that was a long time a go.

Household asset ownership and control – An asset within the household includes, land, cattle, poultry and agricultural produces as well income earned from the sell of agricultural products,

cattle, poultry and etc. The issue of access and control as well as ownership over the households' property against the socio-cultural dimensions being the hub of this work, the researcher raised these issues often times during the focus group discussion with the rural women, during the direct face to face individual interviews and focus group discussion both with the rural women, the kebele officials, development workers and others and during the researcher's participatory observations as an insider.

A right to land entitlement and registration is still denied for all women despite a law exists(a statutory law) allowing women to have a share and control over productive assets on article 35-37 of the Amhara national regional states' family code. During the researcher's discussion with women exclusively, the researcher once asked a woman saying that, to whom the land belongs to, she immediately responded saying, "it belongs to us, to the family" and following this, the researcher posed another question, by whom the land is registered, she responded again 'Oh! By the name of my husband, by whom would you like it then to be?'

Regarding the issue of control and ownership of assets the researcher had a response from the discussants saying that "*the only authority we have and can decide upon is the food we make.*"

During an interview with the woreda officials about women's access to and entitlement to land registration and ownership right, it has been found out that there is a proclamation exists regarding land entitlement and ownership right in between a married couples and their family which is being implemented in different rural areas though not yet implemented in this woreda e to structural problems. This law intends to secure married women's access to and control over land through spousal joint registration where the photograph of the husband and the wife posted side by side and their children's below. The same thing holds true in case of control of income acquired from the sale of cattle and agricultural produces, the mandate is all unto the male.

During the moment of individual interviews with women and kebele officials, women in the study area own and control asset which is of a subtle value with a frequent supervision and interference of their husband. It has been divulged that, what women can own is poultry, money acquired from the sale of eggs and butter from the cows' even equines belongs to the male, women carry loads on their backs while male through his back pack animals. According to the

discussants, the reason why they possess properties of a subtle relevance and price is due to the cultural norms and the patriarchal thought that dictates land, cattle, pack animals and other financial assets of a higher value should belong to the male for security reason.

Annual income and household food sufficiency- annual household income is directly proportional with household food sufficiency while other things kept constant. Households' annual income is determined by the interplay of various factors ranging from the size of the land tenure up to the farming techniques employed. To bring about sustainable development on a long lasting basis, securing households' annual income by whatever ways possible is amongst those strategies essential to curb hunger and household food insufficiency there by achieving the millenniums development goal(MDGs), i.e. reducing poverty by half by 2020.

During the researchers' attempt to analyze the status of the respondents' annual household income, considered the respondents marital status and type of marriage, number of family members, vis-à-vis the respondents size of land tenure. Most of the respondents have approximately one hectare of land. The area being mountainous by its very nature, the land holdings of the people is from the mountain and which not subject to ox-plough rather meant for hand-digging, which is very much cumbersome and labour intensive. Their land is also too often susceptible to soil erosion due to poor soil conservation techniques and terracing system. Due to the prevalence of all those multi-faceted constraints it is not as such easy to bring about household food sufficiency.

Further more, during sessions of personal observation, it has been discovered that most of the farming labour is covered by male children who are under the age of eighteen and this is a clear manifestation of child labour exploitation. During an exclusive contact and interview with the kebele leaders and development workers (DAs), it has been found out that most of the agricultural labour relies on the shoulders of women and children that include land digging, preparation for sowing and weeding, harvesting, and grain storage. This fact has contributed to the findings that a diminishing agricultural productivity in the area, accompanied by other factors mentioned above, is resulted from the large scale engagements of children in the major farming activities that needs a long years of experience and energy. To supplementing the finding regarding the relationship between children's involvement in major farming activities

and a dwindling return in production, the development workers of the kebeles told to the researcher that, for a relatively good return in cropping activities the land needs to be dug a little bit deep down to the ground and to do that this kids do not have the capability, the expertise and the potential to do so.

Discussion with women house wives asserted that they're vulnerable to acute food shortage and in most cases the most susceptible type of households on a relative basis is the households with a relatively large family size, widowed women with kids not matured enough to carry out agricultural activities and households in polygamous marriage due to the partition of the limited resources the household has across the wives.

On the other way round, during the discussion with women regarding the most vulnerable family members during periods of calamities and food shortage, the discussants pin pointed that women and children are the primary victims. The kebele leaders of the village and local elders added on this issue including the reason why women and children are the primary victims saying that, *“during the times of calamities and season of drought, men family members (the husband and youths) have a tradition of migrating to urban areas on search of job for their own survival while taking all the money left with them leaving the wife and children at home. Those who are remaining at home .i.e. too often the wives, old peoples, and children are the primary victims of hunger and starvation since they have no one to take care of them.”*

Household division of labour- As the literatures regarding gender and gendered division of labour revealed that (Sinder M., 1991; Boserup., 1970; et al) gender division of labour is shaped by the society and their culture classifying as men's and females' work . The researcher has undertaken a focus group discussion so as to make a simple gender analysis regarding the respondents' state of household division of labour supplemented by individual interviews and personal observation.

The question respondents asked to respond both during the focus group discussion and individual interview session was about activities they undertake all year round. They reflected that they take care of all kitchen works (all activities in door) and out door agricultural activities including soil preparation for sowing, weeding, harvesting, transporting grains, collecting the straw after

harvest, and etc. They also have a communal role, like participation in mourning events, wedding ceremonies and etc, to undertake activities meant for the event which doesn't often involve and concern the husbands as central workers. Women actively participate in their triple role the productive, reproductive and community management roles. Though the productive role it too often unpaid.

The following case story depicts the socio-cultural expectations regarding gender division of labour within households.

Box One (case study 1)

Roles and Expectations [Beating the Feeding Hands]

Fatuma is a 52 years old woman, and she has six children, four girls and two boys among whom three of them are married [two girls and a boy]. We went to the house of fatuma and allowed to sit down by the “medeb” covered by “agoza”.

I asked Fatuma to share us what she thinks of “a woman’s role.” She laughed at me, and then the laughter has immediately turned back to a long gaze. While gapping, she posed me the same question I asked her. I told her that I am here to learn, therefore I do not know. She said to me, “[are you sure that you do not know such a simple question while claiming that a student? Well if you insist, a woman’s role is to take care of the household’s routine from the dawn to sun set, which is impossible to delegate”. She continued:

I undertake all the housing routines and the field work with my kids and husband.

Regarding whether she has support of her husband in indoor activities, Fatuma responded saying that: “How could I dare to order him like that, it is definitely my responsibility and against the local custom”. Then I said to her, but you help him outside what is thought be “a male’s task.

“Yes, of course! But often times my contribution is disregarded. What is considered is only my task inside the house even that is considered to be

as if it is simple and does not cost anything; while this is not the reality. I work hard in the home and outside in the field in times of ripping, soil preparation for sowing and transportation of grains in times harvest, etc.

From one of her stories:

One day, I had been seriously sick and the children were not around the home. My husband came home and asked me for lunch while seeing me down on the medeb, a locally made from brick-like stones and animal dung that is few centimeters above from the ground that serves as a bed at night and a seat in day and breathing fast, due to the severity. I said to him, I am sick, could not you see? Please bake some flour and make kitta, local bread. He laughed at me and said how, "How could I do that? I am a male what people will be saying if they see me in this condition?" So he refused. Finally, I crawled by my chest and made him lunch. You see, how hard the situation is! I believe that this are my tasks and I am obliged to do it no matter how hard the situation is!

Regarding the intra household gender division of labour it is found out that due to various cultural taboos and generational ill-favored imitations, asking the husband to assisting his wife in the kitchen will result in beating and divorce to the worst. The researcher even met a man who divorced his wife when asked by his wife his personal assistance in the kitchen during her time sickness.

Leaning on issues raised above, it possible to conclude that households' mode of division of labour amongst the married couples and in a given family is highly skewed towards the female counter part.

4.3 Women's right to access to and control over land

While there are exceptions and examples of matrilineal societies, most African cultures are patrilineal. This has hindered women's access to land or other resources in three forms:

- Traditions that prevent women from owning land
- Traditions that prevent women from inheriting land
- Traditions that prevent women from speaking in public

Traditions that prevent women from owning land include social, cultural and religious customs. Despite the positive policy development, the general public environment of many countries does not support women's equal ownership rights, partly due to discriminatory customary practices and inability to implement statutory laws that allow women own and use resources including land. Below, some general trends on shifts from customary law to statutory law, and their impact on women are discussed.

Right to land entitlement and registration, access to and control over it is too often seems like a legally left to the male while leaving the female out of the line.

As literatures have disclosed it, a deliberate reluctance in designing and implementing malicious and workable binding strategies brought about a debilitating impact on women's overall socio-economic conditions. Those terrible socio-cultural perceptions accompanied by a dwindling political support regarding women's right to access and control over productive assets and use and ownership of household properties, in turn paved the way for the contemporary trajectories of feminization of poverty. The concluding document to the fourth world conference on women in Beijing, Platform for action (September, 1995), cited the need to secure right to the land other resources as a major action point.

The status and rights of women not only in access to and control over resources, but also in other broader aspects are characterized by duality. Specifically, the issue of women access to and control over resources in Ethiopia has both spatial and temporal facets. Irrespective to the national and all-inclusive applicability of legal frameworks that at least profess to provide as equal rights to women as men in resource ownership, strong customary and cultural practices

dictate the realities of women at the micro level, especially in rural areas. On the Ethiopian law, regarding on the personal effect of marriage written on Article 635 indicated with a substantial detail.

Moreover, from a temporal perspective the numerous quagmires that rural women are in show prospects, which are highly precarious and unsteady. Nationally recognized constitutional rights are influenced by the spatial and diverse customs and beliefs, which in turn are subject to changes and improvements time dimensionally. The extent of the problems of rural women witness distinctive classifications as described by terms that range from the feminization of poverty to the feminization of agriculture, the feminization of immigration and so on.

This section will therefore, deals with findings regarding women's right to access, control and use over major productive assets such as, land in the study area in parallel being within the realm of the customary and local laws to see the impact of the socio-cultural expectations towards the issue of concern.

4.3.1 Socio-cultural expectations regarding women's right to access and control over land

According to literatures written on women's right to access and control over productive resources (Beatrice, 2004; Soetan, 1990) women's right to land vary in accordance with time and location, social group, cultural conditionalities, societies expectation to women, the nature of the land involved, the function it fulfills, and the legal system applicable. In a patriarchal society where male is considered to be the bread winner and the ultimate source of power, thinking about provision of women's right to land ownership, entitlement and ex benefit out of it issues is usually challenging. Due to the prevalence of a long year of patriarchal thoughts and traditional customary principles favoring to the male sections of the community at the expense of the rights of women, and due to poor statutory regulations shaped by the customary principles, attaining the aforementioned objective remaining a challenge.

To analyzing gaps regarding women's right to access, ownership and a right to land entitlement, the researcher have gathered fifteen (focus group discussants) in addition to those interviewed including police men, kebele leaders, and development workers of the woreda. All of the

discussants appeared for the focus group were female, including female headed households (female divorcees and widows) and a woman from a male headed household.

Almost all of the married women under a male headed households said that they have access to the land of their husband though they don't have a legal entitlement and registration over the tenure like he did. According to the respondents it is a common phenomenon for husbands to evicting the wife away empty handed from what she deserves to have as an exit option during times of divorce.

Further, it is revealed that during divorce it is up to the husband to decide whether to share or not to share. Since they employ the local customary rulings to settle factions during marriage, the local elders' coercive power regarding share of properties in times of divorce will no longer be functional and left to the husband to decide.

Regarding the question posed to the discussants about why not they claim their rights through statutory court, it has been found out that their level of acquaintance and understanding about the law is limited and they don't have access to the court in their woreda. According to the respondents, considering the mentioned hindrances, they rather prefer to settle affairs here at home with local elders through customary laws (*shimgilina*).

Further, in line what has been said above, the local women's representative added saying that *"those people's of the court, though judge women in accordance with the statutory laws, too often influenced by the local customs while passing judgments"* indicating that judgments are biased in favor of the male.

Relying on what has been addressed so far, due to those traditional age old perceptions and the prevalence of cultural die-hards, women themselves are made to be silent and consider so many things as normal. Limited access to the legal services and a meager acquaintance about the procedures, ironic threats from various cultural bullets of ill favored perceptions and a long year of patriarchal tyrannical rules have played a role in denying women access to their own property.

Even where statutory national laws recognize women's rights to land, housing and property, "traditional" values prevail amongst judges, police officers, local councilors and land officials.

They often interpret statutory laws in what at present are understood to be “customary ways”, as a result of which women are deprived of the rights they should enjoy under statutory law.

4.3.2 Means of land acquisition by women

Women’s equal rights to access, own and control land, housing and property are firmly recognized under international law. However, at country level, the persistence of discriminatory laws, policies, patriarchal customs, traditions and attitudes in various countries are still blocking women from enjoying their rights.

In accordance with the literature reviewed regarding means of land acquisition by women, the researcher grouped women’s response into four categories.

Table 4.1 depicts a tabular representation of Means of land acquisition by women and their percentage

Means of Land Acquisition	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Through marriage	58	73.42%
Through land distribution	8	10.13%
Through inheritance	13	16.45%
Land leasing	–	–
Total	79	100%

Source: *Owns’ Survey result in Argoba, 2010*

As seen in the summary of respondents’ feed back by the above simple statistical figure, most women possess access to land through marriage and a few from the governments’ process of land distribution. According to the figure, women’s access to land through inheritance ranks second by having a very significant variation relative to the first which is through marriage.

When we come down to the summary of the findings from the tabular statistical figure as well as from respondent’s own further explanation for each of the cases, we found the following;

Despite the fact that most of the women have access to land *through marriage*, the actual representation of the reality behind the curtain is different. As a matter of fact, 73.42 % of the respondents have acquired land through marriage but when we talk of the actual issue regarding control, entitlement and registration and real benefit, it has been found out that they have a figure head role. According to the respondents, the land is registered only in the name of the husband and the husband has ultimate power upon the land and the secondary use right has also been jeopardized by their husbands.

In an exclusive personal discussion with the woreda land administration office regarding the issue of women's entitlement and ownership issues, the office responded that the Amhara National Regional State has been implementing a promising rule regarding land entitlement and registration in most of the rural kebeles of South Wollo. The rule is about enabling a married woman acquire land and other properties through spousal joint registration.

In contrast to this, there is no single land amongst the sample respondents and interviewees the researcher found registered jointly based on the law of spousal joint registration. The officials pointed out the reason why this is so saying that it is due to structural problems accompanied by the newness of the woreda.

According to the findings, even if the land is cultivated by the woman's labour during her marriage, her husband retains the right to that land, despite the fact that the woman has invested labour in it. In the events of divorce, the woman will forfeit her rights to this land, and can only hope that her next husband will give her some more.

During a focus group discussion with women, they divulged that there are husbands' marry a woman in times of need of an intensive agricultural labour, and latter during the periods of harvest he divorced her empty handed like a slave.

Women's access to their husbands' land offer them secondary rights and this right is seriously been constrained in the real world because women's right from their husbands' tenure is safe and secured as long as the marriage is alive.

Box two (case story 2)

The following case story might show the severity of the situation regarding the issue mentioned above. The researcher being with the research team went down to reaching a woman. By the lead of the local dwellers we arrived to a hut, very small made of a grass roof and a mud. Inside is a woman around the age of 45 living alone and desperate. A face lined up with wrinkles seems like witnessing the level of trauma and agony she carried. Sitting by the fire, she welcomed us and became willing to respond for everything. She told us the following with tears from the beginning to the end and we also;

I married my husband through arranged marriage at the age of 12. During marriage, my father gave us a land which is half of a hectare as a gift, known as Gojo Mewcha, as a means to start life with. Then latter, during the dergue regime we've got a hectare of land by the governments' distribution. We started life with that a life which was beautiful and based on mutual support and respect. From him, I had seven children. I was a loving mother and wife. I loved my husband and children as if there is nothing that deserves to be loved besides them.

With the decree of God, during the famine of 77, I have lost four of my children due to hunger and Cholera and the rest through time due to natural death. Till recently (before 2 years), I had one kid survived but latter died through malaria. Then I became hopeless begun to blame God. On the contrary, my husband, instead of sharing my sorrows with me he started blaming me for the death our children. I became infertile and cannot give him a child again and in addition, I started developing a back pain in my bones. Having realized all these things, my husband left me alone and divorced me without giving me a food to eat even for a day. He took all the possessions, the land including our Gojo Mewcha that we have been given by my father. I reported the case time and again to the local elders, they answered me that if he is not willing to share you so, we have nothing to do further.

Now I am a woman living alone in an empty house, leading a life of misery dwelling

with my agony with no one to take care of me. I have no one even to take me to the clinic a husband and children to share them what I have deep inside. Had my children been here with me today, I would have not been like this. Even the kebele officials, thought to be the legal bodies turned their face out of me knowing that I am the needy. They even denied me to get me registered in the safety net program. By know I am living by the leftovers of my neighbors.

The story of the lady written above has got a substantial merit to disclose partially some of the prevalent factors affecting women's access and ownership to land registration and other household's property. The story depicts and emphasized that infertility has enormous contribution and base in altering women's land access and ownership as well as other productive assets within the household as '*infertility*' is one of the predominant cause of divorce in between spouses in the locality. In addition, the story divulges the fact that local customary laws and customs in general believed that land ownership and entitlement belongs to the male and the only right women possess during her marital life is only in direct access upon it and sometimes use right.

In support of my finding the Secretary General's report of the United Nations underlined that although rural women may have *de jure* rights, they do not have *de facto* rights (2001: 6).

Acquiring land through *leasing* is a noble concept in the locality according to my personal participatory observation and individuals interviewed in both kebeles. As to those who have acquired land through government distribution, the told to the researcher that the acquired it during the dergue regime and by now they have lost control and benefit.

Despite the fact that the land is registered the name of the women the real issue frequently ignored and never been realized are the issues of real control, use and benefit issues. Entitlement and registration without a practical access to use and benefit over the asset owned and with the absence of a legitimate decision making role which is practical and applicable over the resource

owned has no value besides counting numbers for a mere statistical purpose and report. Behind and under those statistics there are a dozen of individuals oppressed and denied access and benefit over their own belonging and property while others are playing the game at the expense of the oppressed.

Enslaved by the local customs and traditions, many respondents of still believe that what is going on is right. In contemplation to the literatures reviewed in this paper reflecting the views of feminists what ever their nature and group could be they all emphasized on the role of women in development and making women visible, the findings of this work in this regard shows that there is a huge gap between understanding their role, bringing them to the development sector and empowering them economically, politically, and socially.

The realities of women on the ground as witnessed in this and similar corresponding researches showed that the majority of them were not actual owners of their produce. The different paradigms within gender analysis, which this research classified as falling on rhetorical, political and realist dimensions, in different ways recommend that gender mainstreaming and empowerment are keys to addressing the problem of women control over resources.

While in communal land tenure systems, women had significant indirect access and rights to use communal resources through their roles as household managers, they were further excluded when land tenure was individualized and invariably adjudicated and registered in the name of “heads of households” or men. Without legal protection, women are at risk of suddenly becoming landless, as has happened in the many cases where the husband sells the family land. Upon divorce, women still have to prove their contribution to the marital home in court. Upon the death of the husband, the marital home is included in the deceased husband’s estate and is divided among his heirs. Many succession laws only entitle widows to a temporary use right of the marital home. If the marital home had been registered jointly, it would not become part of the estate upon the death of any spouse, and instead the widow would remain registered right holder of the land and house with the authority to sell, mortgage or carry out any other transaction.

4.4 Securing women's rights to land: *factors affecting women's right to inheritance*

"Women of Africa toil all their lives on land that they do not own, to produce what they do not control, and at the end of their marriage, through divorce or death, they can be sent away empty handed" President Julius Nyerere, Third World Conference on Women, 1985

4.4.1 *Inheritance*

Analysis of local patrilineal system of inheritance shows that most of the times rights to land are mostly, though not exclusively awarded to men under local laws and that women's right are usually tenuous and derivatives. This condition is exacerbating women's latent pain as they have already been deprived of numerous productive assets essential to boost up their personal economic development and there by contribute to the family.

Cultural or local prohibitions against women's ownership of land are often more powerful than written laws that allow women to own land. These norms may determine which rights to land a woman can exercise freely: for example, women may have the right to use a parcel of land or the right to gather fruit from it but not the right to bequeath it through inheritance, a right limited to their brothers and husbands. A woman's land-related rights are usually tied to her place in her ancestral family and her husband's family; here rights to land are viewed within the context of the distribution of wealth within the extended family. Legislative intervention alone cannot provide women with independent and effective land rights if they are not accepted and enforced culturally and socially.

Box three (case story 3)

Zeineba is 28 year old lady, a lady who has no kids. We found Zeineba sitting by the get of her house. A house which seems left with a few days to fall upon her. She sat by the get bowing her necks down in dejection stirring the ground with a piece of stick. Zeineba told us her story as follows;

I am the third daughter of my family. I've been born and raised up with a family lived with them till the moment of my marriage. We were six among which two of us are females and the rest four males. A few years before my marriage, my father passed away without seeing the situation of my marriage. In those few years of my marriage, I experienced the most grievous torture and penalties and enforced to slaking my thirst with water of agony and hardship. My husband always insulted me and beats me saying that I am like a mule, a mule that doesn't give birth. As you can see, his problem emerges from my infertility. I tried hard to give him children. I went to various places and knocked the doors of almost all witchdoctors in the locality in search of a panacea, no matter hard I tried I couldn't found a solution. One night, he came home in the middle of the night and he awaked me up yelling at me saying whether I am going to give him child or not. He kept on saying till I gave him the answer. I begun to tremble and said to him that I am not God capable of molding children and give him over night. He spits on me and beats me hard till my hand is broken. He left home that night came back at dawn to tell me that he has a wife in secret for about two years and now she is pregnant and this proves you are a barren and I am not. Then he warned me to call the local elders and my agent tomorrow morning for divorce, saying that he is not obliged to live with a mule. He divorced me with the approval of the local elders without any share of the property except that of two quintals of sorghum as a penalty for the broken hand of mine. The local elders judged without any sense of humor and humanity. Had the judgment at least passed in accordance with Islamic Sheria (Islamic law) as it has been practiced by some groups of peoples in the neighboring kebeles, I would rather have half of the property as an exit option. But here, the judgment is passed in accordance with the

local customs which doesn't give a priority to oppressed woman rather to male sections of the community. The elders said to me that I don't have a right to share because the land is his own, registered by his name and further I don't have any children. I went to the police station a few kilometers away from my village and explained them the case, shame on them, they told me to go back to the local elders and claim the case again and if they pass the same judgment upon me go to the court. I became down hearted and decided to resign my case on the spot with tears in my eyes and hunger in my belly. I told to my self where am I suppose to flea. I've no home to shelter, a food to eat, a marriage to lean on and a family near by to dry up my tears.

I went to my father's home, a walk for half a day. My mother married another man and the property (the land, home, etc) split and divided upon my brothers and my mother married with her share. I told my family that I am a divorced woman have no where to shelter and have nothing to begin my life with and I deserve to inherit from the leftovers. They pushed me away from my fathers home saying that I am a woman and does not deserve a share and plus my place of marriage is too far out of theirs and difficult to send a messenger during the time of split. I cried out loud saying that I deserve to have a share. My brothers brought an axe told me to stay away from their property and warned me not to come again and raise this question. I left the house and roam around the place aimlessly for a couple of weeks. After sometimes, I found a home empty that formerly belong to a lady who had almost the same story like me as I have been told by her relatives later. They allowed me to live here, the place where I am by now. Some people gave me a motive to accuse my X-husband and bring him to justice and have my share back. I did like what they tell me to do with their support. By now, I am here in this empty house waiting for my next appointment in the court and relatively optimistic that justice will prevail.

The story above has got a lot to say about the multitude of predicaments women are facing in every angle when we come to access and control issues. The substance of the case story shows the extent to which women family members are despised and rejected. The customary traditional norms and values privilege concern and ultimate priority to the male during inheritance. Having children in marriage yields women a relatively secured use right upon the households' property if not control and ownership than a childless marriage. It is to say that children prolong marriage contract and the forced eviction of women than the other extreme. The above story also revealed that parents in any case give priority of inheritance to their sons, i.e. the patrilineal form of inheritance is central and predominant. A woman has no guaranty of inheritance from parents no matter how hard her situation is as it has been perceived by the society a married woman has already secured her share upon her marriage while the reality is the reciprocal. In times of divorce, a woman is evicted away and pushed aside from claiming a share of properties and land as an exit option as it has been thought that land belongs to the husband and up to him to decide and no rival as far as it is concerned. The local customary rules never provide an option for women to decide in times marriage break up. They are extremely biased beyond measures in a favor of the male.

As the story depicts, women's limited or no acquaintance to the modern statutory laws of the government and their limited access to it is one of the most debilitating challenges leaving women with no option of alternatives of judgment than the local ones.

Despite international declaration like the Beijing Declaration and BPFA, under Strategic Objective A.2 (b) in line with CEDAW Article 3, urges governments to undertake all the necessary administrative and legislative reforms to give women *equal and full access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property and credit* and to revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property (Strategic Objective F2; 165.e.) and the Ethiopian nation wide declaration on the constitution regarding women's access to and control over productive assets on women's equal right of inheritance, due to failure of implementing the law, and launching a special support service for women to have a relatively substantial knowledge, power of their legal rights and for so many other structural problems as

mentioned above and in the topics to come, the local women are still been deprived of their right of inheritance regardless of the declaration regarding women's right of inheritance and access to various productive assets.

Settlement after marriage

Where women settle after marriage appears to be a crucial factor determining the legal status of women for various productive assets. If women continue to live with or near families, they in most cases possess a right to land than move far away from their own families. Women living far away from their family usually unable to assert any inheritance rights they may have.

Through various focus group discussions sessions and interviews in between and within women and exclusive interviews with other besides the key informants it is found out that the place where most women settle after marriage has been frequently mentioned to the researcher as an impediment that sidetrack women's right to land inheritance including other properties besides marriage it self, as it has also been made a mention of by the respondents as an issue of loss of land access.

Marriage by it self, according to the interviewees and the discussants, denied them access to inheritance from parents and families. According to the response obtained from the kebele leader and the development workers of the area as to how and why marriage is mentioned as a stumbling block for women's share of assets through inheritance, it has been asserted that the moment a woman leaves home due to marriage, her right for inheritance from the family will also depart with her as it has been believed by the society that a women has got her share from her married husband. As long as he is capable of feeding her no more is required. Despite this, there are some parents provide their daughter with a share out compassion.

Regarding the issue how settlement after marriage affects inheritance discussants put a light that due to the local traditional custom and perceptions that a married women residing a little bit distant from her families home considered to be as if she is no more be part and parcel of the family and doesn't deserve to inherit.

The researcher both from the informants and from personal participatory observation and through various informal contacts within and from the local people have witnessed the finding

that in most cases what a woman (a married one) is allowed to inherit and frequently given in the form of inheritance from parents is only a grain or a flour that last only for a few days of consumption or things that are of a cheaper value like, poultry.

Forced evictions and exclusion

Alarming numbers of cases are reported of in-laws having evicted widows upon the death of their husband. A widow is not considered to be part of the clan and is expected to return to her parents and/or fend for herself also face eviction from the marital home, when their husband takes a second (or third) wife and cannot afford to support both his wives. Very rarely can a woman in such cases return to her parent's land. When a man sells the family land and leaves for the city, women and children are often also left landless (UNHCS, 2002).

Fault based divorce

There are various reasons for marriage to break up as compiled by the researcher through focus group discussion and individual interview. The following are mentioned as a fault based divorce.

- a. Sex (adultery) [wushima, warsa, and etc]): Unlawful and illegal engagement in sexual activities .i.e. sexual assault is one of the causes for marriage break up. As it has been investigated during the case study, sexual scandal in any forms is not tolerable but often times due to women's meager security after divorce, most women tolerate the case even they've been informed about the sexual cases of their husbands. On the contrary, If a woman is caught red handed while committing it so, husbands never provide the women divorce alone as a way out, but also a very sever physical torture to the extent of physically disabling her.
- b. Money (Failure to support spouse Disposition of assets without consultation): Sale of grains and cattle without the due substantial knowledge of the wife and leaving the family with nothing to live by is also one of the reasons women claim divorce at last.
- c. Childless marriage: As it has been shown in the case story (Box 3) above, being barren or incapability of a woman to give her husband a child is one of the frequently reported case for a fault based marriage.

- d. Work (Laziness, failure to perform household chores): The wife's pure or frequent indulgence and engagement only on those in door activities of the household while leaving the out doors agricultural activities during reaping and the time of harvest or sometimes a failure of the wife perform the household basic chores .i.e. failure to cook food on time and etc will lead to divorce.
- e. Attitude: Attitude of the husband including Drunkness, spouse beating leads to divorce though tolerated by women in most of the times.
- f. Sickness:
- g. Loss of virginity:

During the researchers stay in those kebeles the woreda officials revealed the fact that as a result of marriage break up without any kind of exit option so many women are indulging themselves in a forced prostitution by migrating to the near by towns and they are becoming victims of HIV/AIDS.

4.4.2 Women under legal pluralism

According to the literatures reviewed for this thesis, in most developing countries, however, rights are derived from one legal system but from several concurrently. The legal system of women vis-à-vis productive assets is governed by a situation of legal pluralism in which statutory law, local law and frequently religious laws simultaneously applicable.

Statutory laws

Articles 35/1 and 35/7 of the FDRE constitution states women have equal rights with men and should enjoy equal treatment with men with respect to the inheritance of property.

In a situation where both statutory and customary laws on land tenure are implemented side by side, women are in the guardianship of their fathers before marriage. After marrying, the guardianship is transferred to the husbands without the right to inherit a share in their matrimonial homes. In case of widowhood, the first son of the family inherits the properties, while the mother remains a holder of the land without full control or decision-making power

over the usage of the properties. The mother loses control over the land as soon as the son is old enough to take the responsibility of the property.

As per the data acquired from key informants regarding their legal status, level of use and acquaintance of the statutory laws of the country it has been found out that due to inaccessibility of the formal statutory law and limited acquaintances about how it works and due to inadequate support from social as well as administrative mechanisms women are not able to benefit from the statutory laws. The reluctance of the concerned government officials to inculcating the local people about their rights and obligation and the legal issue in general and the failure of those officials to introduce the newly designed rule of land ownership and entitlement in the form of *spousal joint registration* is preventing women access to the legal services besides the customary one.

Local laws

The role of customary laws and traditional perceptions have taken the lion's share in the play ground as to women's access to and control over land as a major determinant. Besides the traditional local customary laws, the statutory laws have undeniable jeopardizing role in exacerbating the situation.

Because of their limited access or no and meager acquaintance about the statutory laws the only option they are left is the customary law which is extremely biased in favor of the male. The local laws are not written with clear principles and guide line about the dos and don'ts, rather they are orally said rules entailing various regulations decided based upon commonsense which are subject to manipulation.

In times of the researcher's stay, the researcher attended two cases of marital negotiations uninvited, in both kebeles. The first case was about a women proposing divorce from her husband with share of properties because of a marriage upon marriage case (polygamy). *The husband asked by the local elders about the case and he admitted because his wife is aged and infertile and not capable of giving him children. At the end of the day, they (elders) decided that what he did is for the right reason and if the wife still needs the divorce she will be given three goats with three quintals of sorghum. The elders didn't take the land issue into consideration*

saying that it belongs to the husband. Finally having realized about her share she changed her mind agreed to restore her marriage.

The above case shows to what extent women of the area are deprived of dignity and self esteem and running out of appropriate choice of legal system on which they would like to be judged according to. Justice is passed in line with the male's preference and this is a clear manifestation of the fact that local customary laws are erected to safeguard the interest of the male sections without a due substantial consideration of the women's interest. Women are always subject to accepting every judgment passed unto no matter how the judgment is. In which ever way you look at it, women's access to and control over various household productive assets of a nominal character. Although women have equal rights to land ownership in theory, in practice women only have control over the usage of the land, which is owned by their families or husbands.

The researcher, during his contact with the local government policemen in light of their exposure with victim women in need of legal support and assistance during marital share of property during divorce and inheritance case in general. According to them they have numerous exposures almost on a daily basis though they are ordered to have no mandate into marital cases. Their mandate is on those who are physically abused or raped women and girls. As they are ordered by the woreda officials, what they are supposed to do is referring the case back to the elders for negotiation and settle it their as the woreda has given the mandate and authority for those local elders for those marital cases and if it is found to be beyond the legitimate capacity of the local elders to settling the case through customary law, the court will be taken as the final resort, which is the impossible and the nominally said.

Religious law

According to the literatures reviewed for this research, religious laws usually entitle women to inherit, but the share of inheritance is invariably smaller and there is an emphasis on access rather than ownership rights. The above explanation is a general explanation of the role of religious laws in case of inheritance not the specific mention of religious laws. In most cases, like the literature mentioned above religious laws grants women a little or insignificant share of

property and inheritance right, even there are religions that totally deny women’s access to and control over productive assets though those religions are not practiced in our country, Ethiopia.

According to the research findings in the area, besides the local laws, where almost all peoples are judged accordingly, though few in number, a group of people amongst the same community employ *Islamic Sheri ‘a* (Islamic law) as a means of settling down affairs. Through a closer contact with those religious leaders, the researcher found out that there are some group of people who are ‘Practicing Muslims’, judged in accordance with Islamic jurisdiction in every affairs, especially during marriage cases and marital division of property and ownership. Unlike the local law which is orally said without any kind legitimate concrete prove, Islamic law on the contrary has got a written rulings in each nooks and corners of everyday affairs and routines.

Despite the fact that the latter, which is the Sheri ‘a has got a clearly written rulings and principles, according to whom the researcher asked their preference, male spouses doesn’t prefer to be judged in accordance with the Sheri ‘a, while women are crying to it on the contrary. The reason this is because it awards and allows women to have an equal share of property including the land tenure. Also in case of inheritance from family’s and deceased husbands, it has rulings like the above mentioned. According to those whom the researcher asked their preference of laws they would like to be judged accordingly the researcher summarized *by table 4.2*.

Table 4.2 Researcher’s own Survey result in Argoba

Type of law	Sex		Percentage(%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Customary/local law	25	19	32.21%	26.76%
Religious law	9	17	12.67%	23.64%
Statutory law	0	5	0	7.042%
<i>Total</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>47.88%</i>	<i>57.75%</i>

Table 4.2 shows the relative preference of laws upon which women and men would like to be judged. Majority of the male are in a substantial favor of the local law. The reason is clear the local laws have got a special privilege for male than female. Unlike the local laws which provide maximum preference for male the religious laws and statutory laws (though not applicable) allowed female sections an equal share of properties. The reverse holds true for the other case of female respondents.

As it has been seen from the findings, among other things, women are granted a secondary rights to land use if not ownership and benefit through marriage. Divorce for women means loss of all the above indirect grants of those resources by their husbands upon marriage. To restore and regain those rights back, re marrying if possible, is taken as incumbent in most cases and that is why most women refrain from breaking up their marriage regardless of those tortures and threats by their husbands.

During the researcher's engagement in focus group discussion with a group of women, the discussants told to the researcher the same thing that supports the above explanation saying that they prefer to remain silent despite those threats and physical violence. When the researcher asked a woman about what she is doing in times of quarrel and physical abuse by her husband and she answered that;

'at the early stage of her marital life, she used to go to her family home to express her disappointment for what her husband did to her (kubilela) and to asking her family to escorting her to a place of security and marriage termination. Contrary to her appeal, her family enforced her to go back to her husband's home saying that "do you want to stay as kumoker (without a husband)?" the lady further said she cannot make any difference and no matter how hard the situation is the only option left to her is staying home. 'Whenever I go back to my parent's home, they send me back to my husband without my personal free will as if I'm his property. It doesn't make any difference except strengthening the threats and severity of my punishment as my husband also knows that limitation.'

In conclusion the major stumbling blocks in women's land rights as seen in the findings are the following;

- Modern land laws conflict with traditional and religious land regimes and do not reflect local realities
- Cultural norms and practices, as well as government policies that exclude or marginalize women in land allocation
- Gender-biased application of gender-neutral laws, which negatively impact on women's access to land and security of tenure
- Lack of knowledge and awareness about the existence of laws granting women rights to land

4.5 Women's access to financial services

4.5.1 Women's access to credit facilities

According to the literatures reviewed for this work, empowering women economically and making sure that they are taking benefits has a substantial contribution to yield towards the move to alleviating women's financial and economic dependency. It uplifts the status of the family upon which a woman is entitled to in particular and for sustainable development flourish nation wide.

Securing and thereby ensuring women's economic empowerment requires a radical commitment both from development planners and policy makers as a positive non-gender blind look and mental set up from the society. Policy makers should critically think of designing a favorable policy climate for women to have opportunities to credit scheme and financial facilities vis-à-vis appropriate consultation on how to use the credit is of a paramount importance.

Down is the summary of the researcher's findings regarding women's access to credit facilities and their engagement in various income generating activities collectively and individually. Decision making roles upon the money they earned through their engagement on various income generating activities as well as their role on various household income allocation will also be summarized.

Gender restrictions on women's mobility in many cultures and the gender-discriminatory pattern of most rural development mean that women are likely to have less access than men to markets and infrastructure and greater limitations on the types of economic activity that they can undertake.

The other constraint as mentioned by those women emerges from the local drudgery. They are over burdened with lots of responsibilities that they cannot delegate. The household reproductive activities including all those unpaid communal activities making women too busy to undertaking further productive activities. Time related constraint can equally be mentioned as an important constraint like others.

The other most prominent impediment mentioned as a stumbling block by the respondents' is their lack of access to rural finance and credit facilities to engage in various profitable businesses or at least to scale up and capitalize on what they already started. The gender dimensions of those constraints to rural finance mentioned earlier affect women's access to finance and the degree to which they benefit and led them to be prone to the feminization of poverty.

Information obtained from discussants and the interviewees, including local women's representative and the kebele officials confirmed the fact that access to credit facilities to women is theoretical. As they have said it, they've been promised by the woreda officials that a new credit scheme for women will be launched though they are not up to their words.

The researcher interviewed those woreda officials exclusively about the promise they made regarding exclusive credit scheme for women, and they responded that The Amhara saving and credit institution have not yet started providing credit facilities due to unknown structural problems.

During the focus group discussion with women discussants, they divulged that due to their lack of finance and shortage of funds, they lean on some potential local money lenders (arata abedary) through the system of usury paying two fold of the money they have borrowed during a month period of time if not, it kept on replicating the interest.

Most women bear the main responsibility for household subsistence. Women thus may have more interest in seasonally specific strategies to diversify their livelihoods, decrease household

vulnerability, and maintain consumption levels in lean times, and less incentive and ability to take risks on economic activities that may yield a higher income.

The absence of rural credit and financial support is making the life of those women and the household vulnerable to hunger and starvation.

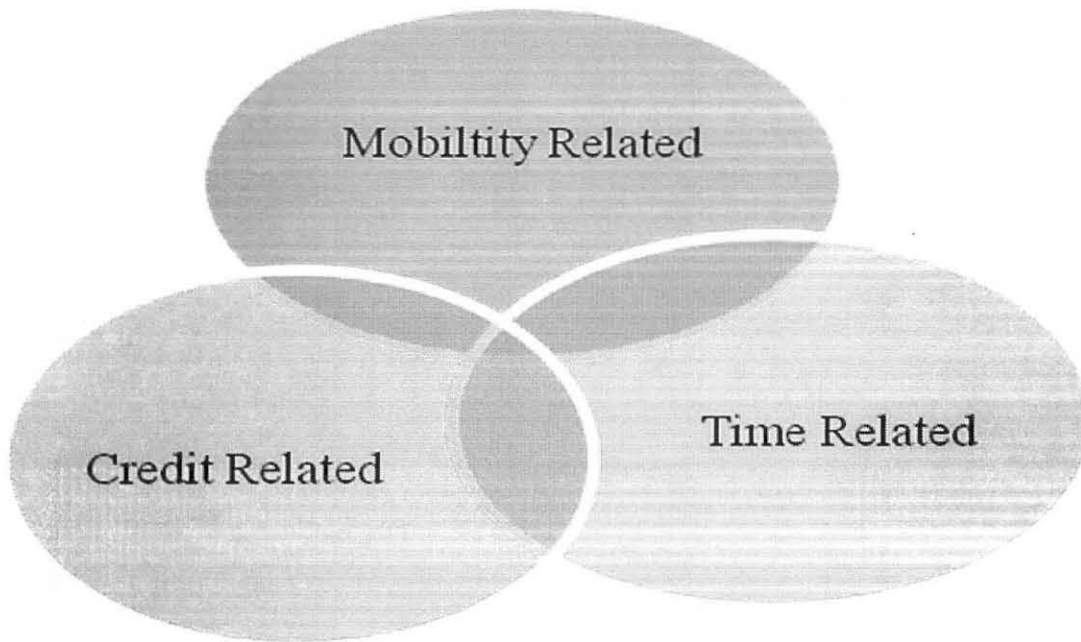


Figure 4.1 depicts the overlapping relationships between the major constraints inhibiting women's active engagement in income generating activities.

In conclusion, the findings of this thesis, when evaluated in contemplation with the feminist economic methodology found to be inconsistent. Women's access to and control over productive assets has been antagonized in accordance with the view point of the arguments of efficiency, empowerment and welfare argument. As per the yardstick employed as a theoretical framework, which is the feminist economics methodology, the findings are in support of the traditional economic thought. Women are found to be dependent on families without any kind of economic security. Unlike the arguments of the feminist's, which says economic development; particularly in developing countries largely depend on gender equitable laws on ownership and inheritance and provision of gender sensitive sectoral policies, women in Argoba are despised and rejected as a result of lack of gender equitable laws. Though a statutory law exists with a proclamation of

allowing women to have access, control, entitlement and equal share upon every resource of household, inability of the government officials to implement and execute the rules as well as to inculcate women and men about their human and political rights is exacerbating the latent wounds of women.

Human agency methodology is one of the methodologies feminist's attempts to look into women's relationships within a given system, their relationship with people and institutions. When the situation of women of Argoba evaluated in light of this methodology, they are found to be voiceless and desperate. They do not have a share from the decision making power at the household as well as from a communal level at large. Everything is rather based on a patriarchal form of ideology that down sizes and underestimate the female.

According to feminist economists farm activities are outcomes of household decision-making processes although women and men farmers do not always have the same needs and interests. Women and men have different influences in the decision-making process. In contemplation to the methodologies of the feminists, the finding in Argoba revealed that, women's role in the household decision making process regarding farming, allocation of household resources, and what crops to produce is found to be tenuous and subtle. According to feminists to get out of the Ivory tower, the situation needs a more actor oriented approaches to incorporate women's roles in economic analysis and to address their issues effectively.

4.6 Women in the eyes of the traditional sayings and their self image

The societal norms and values bestowed women a relatively inferior status and a diminished position in every aspects of life in spite of their central role within every community. Those paralyzed thought that underestimates women's status within the community is also shaping women to think like others against themselves enslaved by the ideological and normative thoughts that sidetracks them. The following case story (4) shows to what extent women are shaped and molded by the social norms and values.

Box four (case story 4)

Self-Image [Whom do you like to be?]

During the session of my individual interview, I met a woman named Kedija, and asked her question: who is better, a male or female? She got surprised and answered to me saying, "a male is definitely better than a female!"; reasoning that "a woman has nothing to do in times of calamities and crises except crying, but a male does not do that, he reacts directly and as for him no need to cry. We females are born to give birth".

I asked: Then, whom do you like to be if you are given a chance to be born again? She replied: "My child, it cannot be!" I continued, "what if, say for the sake of argument?" Then, she said "If that is so, I prefer to be born as a male! Even the eagles become happy when a male baby is born." She concluded, however:

But do not forget that we, females, are the most essential and the creators beneath to God. Look at your self you are from a female, and look at kings and soldiers, they are all from us. Thus, there is no reason for me to be born as a male. I regret for what I have said above, and I am happy and proud of being a female.

As the above case study shows, those traditional norms and perceptions that present and portray woman as inferior and an emblem of weakness while elevating the male as a sign of bravery and leader made women adhere willingly that of course she is a failure and inferior. Those generational ill-favored imitations and paralyzed traditional conceptions about the status and rank women in a given society, shaping and molding women themselves to think and judge against themselves that they are of course what they have been portrayed to be. During the case of this study, though women admitted that they are inferior and being a male is preferable, most of the women finally accepted that they are not of course a failure and an emblem of weakness rather an icon of strength.

As regards women's rights, there are many beliefs that undermine women's right and directly or indirectly shape women's attitude to their suffering and that are also related to their reproductive and productive and community management roles (*Soetan, 2001*).

The traditional sayings and folks have also contributed a lot for a woman to bow her neck in dejection and ignominy. The folks and sayings, having a deep rooted base through generations, framed the society even women themselves think like they've a limited role in the developmental spheres and are incapable of contributing to the development discourse. The following are some of the discouraging sayings to indicating the inferior positions and role of women;

The following are some of the traditional sayings that discourage women. These sayings are compiled from Kalu and Argoba woreda of south Wollo. The researcher tried to interpret some of them;

1. Women and Mule are never to be trusted (can abandon and dispose any one in the middle of nowhere)
2. Women are children with long legs (Divulging that regardless of age and size, women are always children and needs guidance and cannot stand alone upright and decide upon something)
3. Never show your purse to your wife (denotes women are extravagant and spoil all what you have in vain and cannot be trusted)
4. Women and donkey are ruled by beating (Beating is the only ultimate solution to subdue women like beasts)
5. Women and donkey are created for burden (Showing the role of women as a beast of burden not any other)
6. Women have a breast not a heart (Indicating that women are like animals without rationality and free will and peoples of emotion and can easily be deceived)
7. Don't submit to a mule and women
8. The Share of a woman is only a bed (indicating that their sole role is sexual gratification)

CHAPTER V: SUMMAARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary and conclusion

The Research is carried out with the aim of scrutinizing the major Socio-Cultural stumbling blocks altering women's access to and control of productive assets and their impact on their personal economic development and then to forward a matured intellectual recommendation as a way forward.

The researcher, in an effort of undertaking this research employed qualitative orientation through basic qualitative survey techniques. Focus group discussion, individual interview, and participatory observation had been involved as a means of gathering primary data supplemented by guide checklist and published and unpublished documents for secondary information. Case stories are the central part of this work.

As the findings of this thesis revealed women's access to and control over resources is shaped by complex systems of social, cultural, psychological and political factors. The practice and perception of a woman's position in the household, family and community affects to what extent women can exercise their rights. The following are the brief summaries some the research findings and prevalent underlying causes related to women's lack of access to and control over productive assets.

Underlying causes;

Customary laws and practices; It has been found out that Customary laws and practices do have long years of foundation and roots deep into the ground where societies are immersed to it as if there is no way out. Even where statutory national laws recognize women's rights to land, housing and property, "traditional" values prevail amongst judges, police officers, local councilors and land officials. They often interpret statutory laws in what at present are understood to be "customary ways", as a result of which women are deprived of the rights they should enjoy under statutory law.

Registration of land in name of husband- The finding revealed that land is registered in the name of the husband as it has been thought to be by the local peoples. They are excluded when

land tenure was individualized and invariably adjudicated and registered in the name of “heads of households” or men. Without legal protection, women are at risk of suddenly becoming landless, as has happened in the many cases where the husband sells the family land.

Discriminatory laws and policies; The findings of this work has shown manifested that women are evicted away from their own tenure and property due to those unjust discriminatory traditional perceptions and customary rules

Mobility related constraints; As found out because of the presence of so many traditional die-hards possessed by those traditional norms and values, husbands are hardly willing to give their wives permission to move from one kebele to the other for their engagements on those petty trading/marketing activities.

Credit related; The finding of thus work witnessed that women doesn't have an access to credit scheme. The absence and poor implementation of policies regarding financial services to women is also another problem doubling the burden of women's problem.

Time related constraints; Due to the ill favored cultural norms and thoughts as saying goes “women are created for burden” is further over burdening local women with lots of responsibilities that they cannot delegate. Most of the responsibilities are domestic household unpaid tasks. In their move to engage in paid productive tasks, their lack of time, because of their large scale engagement in those domestic drudgeries, debilitating their current situation.

Forced evictions and exclusion; The findings revealed that alarming numbers of cases are reported of in-laws having evicted widows upon the death of their husband. Spousal joint registration is missing and this absence of joint registration is resulting tremendous problems including loss of exit option during divorce, and eviction during the death of the husband.

In conclusion, as findings revealed that when a closer look at of women's plights and predicaments is taken, it is found to be multi faceted emerging from the interplay of social, cultural, economic, political, psychological and ideological versions of analogy which needs an integrated policy approach for each piece of problems as they are intertwined systems of the whole. Engineering a panacea for a single dimension of the whole in particular while excluding other dimensions of the system never settle the calamity dabbed on the shoulders of women on a

sustainable fashion rather it needs an all inclusive treatment from various disciplines of life. A social science Research on those various disciplines of the gender dimensions should be carried out via various multi-disciplinary teams with a closer look at of all the components.

5.2 Recommendations

Ensuring women's economic empowerment and access to and control over resources requires an integrated approach to growth and development, focused on gender-responsive employment promotion and informed by the interdependency between economic and social development. Social objectives need to be incorporated into economic policies. Economic growth strategies should give attention to the real economy and focus on creating a gender sensitive macroeconomic environment, full employment and decent work, access to land, property and other productive resources as well as financial services, and full coverage of social protection measures. Women face additional hurdles to empowerment, such as their status within the household and community, where they are often excluded from decision-making, and their status under customary and/or statutory law.

There is a clear need to define the roles of customary and statutory laws. In many countries, customary laws continue to overrule statutory laws, a situation that usually leaves women without independent economic security. Cultural values are often considered as a stagnant system of customs, to be preserved, nurtured and left untouched.

To this end, more research should be carried out on the relationship between the right to housing and land, property rights, with a view to better determining how the right to housing (one of the most developed economic and social rights at the international level) might be used to support women's rights to land, housing and property.

Identifying joint tenure types that improve women's security of tenure and mechanisms to increase independent registration of land and housing in women's names;

While it is important to respect cultural values, sound and critical review is needed as to which values are essential for preserving the cultural diversity in the world, and which values are causing the societies to drop off the global train. Gender inequality and disregard for human rights is a serious constraint for economic as well as social development as it leaves half of the

population in the working age in the outskirts of economies. Hence, it is important that women's access to resources is given attention and is protected by an effective legal system.

Government policy makers and development practitioners are strongly urged to put effort into reducing the administrative load of registering properties or of claiming individual rights. It is reported in many cases that even if women are aware of their rights and are willing to demand them, there is either no system or lack of clarity on how to do it. The laws are not effectively implemented and the individual cases are often lost in the administrative jungle due to complicated and time-consuming procedures or excessive registering costs.

While governments as policymakers and legislative bodies hold the cards in their hands to ensure women's access to land and credit, much tighter cooperation with NGOs is recommended to further strengthen women's economic security. There are great resources in the NGO sector but the organizations are less powerful without government support. It is of utmost importance that the political environment not only supports, but also builds partnerships with NGOs, while taking the lead in developing national strategies to further strengthen women's access to resources.

The institutional mechanisms should be further strengthened by training and adequate funds allocation. The purpose of institutional mechanisms is to support government as well as the rest of the society, and to follow up and evaluate country performance in ensuring women's access to resources.

All sectors of society - women, men, governmental officials, legislators, judges, lawyers, grassroots, community based and non-governmental organizations, educators – must receive international human rights education with a focus on women's rights and on economic, social and cultural rights including women's rights to land, housing and property. Where appropriate, human rights education should also focus on local, national, regional and international legal and other mechanisms to enforce these rights.

Bridging the gap of gender responsive budgeting to the local level and implementation of gender sensitive policies in relation to local custom and values to enhance and up lift the existing status of women to the better as well as inculcating the local elders who are in charge of passing

judgment during property share and partition and the government should launch a mechanism where both local laws and the statutory ones can work in hand to hand fashion.

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counter parts.

2. Interviewing female headed households, widows and divorced women about their exclusive access to various productive assets and related facilities, (for example, like access to credit services, access to market, land, health and extension services) and their exclusive autonomy in making use of and decision upon them.
3. Interviewing women of different groups about their roles and responsibilities and the consideration of consent in decision-making process under various social gatherings and what do their traditions says about it.
4. Interviewing women their informed consent about the major bottle-necks jeopardizing their active involvement and engagement in various developmental discourse of their locality such as; social, political, and economic circles of life

(C) A guide for participant observation

During participant observation the researcher has planned to undertake the following activities and follow them as a procedure to be followed chronologically.

1. Determine the activities in light of the research purpose and objective before hand.
2. Determine the population(s) to be observed.
3. Consider the accessibility of the population(s) and the venues in which you would like to observe them.
4. Investigate possible sites for participant observation.
5. Select the site(s), time(s) of day, and date(s), and anticipate how long you will collect participant observation data on each occasion.
6. Decide how field staff will divide up or pair off to cover all sites most effectively.
7. Consider how you will present yourself, both in terms of appearance and how you will explain your Purpose to others if necessary.
8. Plan how and if you will take notes during the participant observation activity.
9. Remember to take your field notebook and a pen.

DECLARATION

I the undersigned declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for the degree in other university and that all sources of materials used in this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Getachew Shambel Endris

Signature 

Date 19-07-10

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

Name of Advisor: Dr. Ignatius Mberengwa

Signature _____

Date of Approval _____

