

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**GENDER AND EDUCATION: THE CASE  
OF SHEBEL- BERENTA *WOREDA* IN  
EAST GOJJAM**

**By:**

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**July 2007**

**Addis Ababa**

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**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF  
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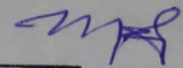
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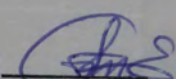
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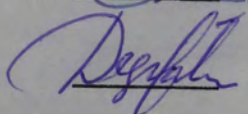
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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Shebel-Berenta *Woreda* of East Gojjam Administrative Zone, Northwestern Ethiopia. The primary goal of this study is to explore the socio-economic factors that aggravate the gender gap in education. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to generate the data. Besides, different types of written materials were reviewed.

This study mainly focused on the impact of gender on females' education. In the study area, females' education is highly influenced by different factors such as parental educational and economic background and socio-cultural factors.

Education needs the active involvement of students to achieve its objectives. The study examined how these factors influence the educational participation and academic performance of female students in selected schools of Berenta *Woreda*.

The study also investigated the gender-specific impact of poverty on education. Lack of educational facilities and parental financial constraints play a negative role in hindering females' education in the study area. In addition to poverty, economic decision-making power and control over resources at the household level are examined.

The education of females is affected by different factors. Among these factors, early marriage is the major one. Early marriage is the most common practice in the study area. The reasons for the practice of early marriage are depicted in the study.

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## **ACRONYMS**

**GER: Gross Enrolment Rate**

**NER: Net Enrollment Rate**

**ESDP I: The First Education Sector Development Program**

**ESDP II: The Second Education Sector Development Program**

**ESDP III : The Third Education Sector Development Program III**

**MOE : Ministry of Education**

**FDRE : Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

**GPI : Gender Parity Index**

**DHS: Demographic and Health Survey**

**TGE: Transitional Government of Ethiopia**

**NCTPE: National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices of Ethiopia**

## PREFACE

The thesis is organized in to six chapters. The first chapter deals with the background of the study. The introduction part, the problem of the study and its objectives are outlined. The methodology and the field work experience are briefly stated. In chapter two, related literatures are reviewed. The theoretical orientations are also explained.

Chapter three deals with different factors that affect gender, particularly females' education in the schools.

Chapter four assesses poverty and its impact on females' education. In this chapter economic decision making and control over renounces are also treated.

Chapter five describes early marriage and its effect on education; the causes and measures taken to alleviate the problem of early marriage are explained.

Finally, in chapter six the conclusion of the study is stated.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Gender is a social construction and codification of differences between the sexes and social relationships between women and men. Historical, ideological, cultural, religious, ethnic and economic factors - that can be changed largely in the course of time - influence the society's attitude towards gender. It is well known that "women's status" - depending by many aspects and many female roles - is a multi-dimensional concept and has a complex influence on the demographic behavior (Oppong 1983; Mason 1984; Mahmud and Johnston, 1994 as cited in Ahmed, et al, 2001).

Many developing countries including Ethiopia exhibit considerable gender inequality in education, employment and health outcomes. For example there are large discrepancies in education between the sexes in South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, employment opportunities and pay differ greatly by gender in most developing regions. When assessing the importance of these inequalities, one has to distinguish between intrinsic and instrumental concerns. If our concern is with aggregate well being, then we should view the important capabilities of longevity and education as critical constituent elements in well being (Sen 1999).

Thus, any reduced achievements for women in these capabilities are intrinsically problematic. Apart from the intrinsic problems of gender inequality, one may be concerned about instrumental effects of gender bias. Gender inequality may have adverse impacts on a number of valuable development goals. The major impacts are:

- **First**, gender inequality in education and access to resources may prevent a reduction of child mortality, of fertility, and an expansion of education on the next generation. To the extent that these linkages exist, gender bias in education may thus generate instrumental problems for development policy-makers as it compromises progress in other important development goals.

- **Secondly**, it may be the case that gender inequalities reduce economic growth. This is an important issue to the extent that economic growth furthers the improvement in well-being (Klasen 1999, cited in Ahmed, et.al.: 2001).

It is generally true that women in economically developed countries are in a better condition than those in the less developed ones. Throughout the developing countries, the position of women, relative to men, is lower in all of the main indicators such as level of literacy, years of schooling, nutritional status and level of income. The typical woman in the Third World has a triple burden of work in child rearing, in maintaining the home and in food production. Compared to men, women work much longer hours for a smaller income. Especially in predominantly agrarian societies like in Ethiopia, envisaged improvements in the livelihood of women are highly dependent on the efficiency of the economic performance of the country.

In the framework of the General Conferences held in Cairo (1994) and in Beijing (1995), and to the aim of making recommendations to remove all the obstacles to gender equalities, to sustainable development, and to demographic transition, the integration of gender issue into the general development plan and into the program of the country is an unavoidable step and needs to get proper attention by the Governments.

Development does not concern merely an increase of income and of welfare, but what is equally important is the social setting into which these desirable outcomes are obtained. Women's development, as currently defined by the majority of the development agencies, entails ensuring that women are equally the participants and beneficiaries in the development process.

The different roles, responsibilities and expectations of women and men in societies and cultures, affect their ability and initiative to participate in development projects, and consequently lead to a different project impact for women and men. These roles, which are learned, change overtime and vary widely within and between cultures.

Ethiopia is amongst the poorest and most educationally disadvantaged countries in the world. Based on 1993/94 data when the primary gross enrolment ratio (GER) was just 30

percent for boys and 19 percent for girls, it was predicted that 'in spite of recent enrolment increases, with no other changes to admission rates or to progression rates within the system, by 2008/09 almost two-thirds of the school-aged population would still remain out of primary school, and the gender gap would worsen' (Rose et al 1997: 136). Since this time, considerable efforts have been made to improve access to schooling and, in particular, to target girls' enrolment. In addition, political will at the highest level has been evident, an important ingredient to ensure the success of gender interventions in education. However, despite on-going efforts, the gender gap has not narrowed, although there are hopeful signs for improvement over the next decade.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Anthropological research has had a major impact on understanding of the effect of economic change on gender relations. Feminist anthropologists not only have provided ethnographic accounts of this, they have also developed various analytic tools (the division of labor, production and reproduction and the household) to illuminate why development tends to have such different effects on men and women (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 64).

By misunderstanding the sexual division of labor, access to resources in the household and women's double burden of productive and reproductive work, development planning and projects frequently lead to the marginalization of women. This is because of both pre-existing gender relations and the patriarchal assumptions of planners (Ibid 1996: 64).

The human resource is the most important resource for material production. Human beings have always been improving themselves to utilize the available natural resources. By improving the skill of the people one can raise their productive capacity for the welfare of the society. Therefore, education is one of the important factors that are molding human mind and skill for economic, social and political development of a nation (Abebe 1987: 2).

In 1990, in Jomtien, Thailand, at the world conference on education for all, world leaders agreed that the most urgent priority was to ensure access to, and improve the quality of

education for girls and women and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. A deadline was set: universal access to, and completion of primary education should be achieved by the year 2000 (Wallace and March 1991).

By the year 2000, this urgent priority had not been realized. In the World Education Forum held that year in Dakar, new deadlines were fixed: all children should complete compulsory primary education of good quality of education in 2015, and participants once again expressed specific concern about gender disparities in education, pledging to eliminate them by 2015. At the UN's Millennium summit, heads of the states adopted these targets as two of the eight-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for reducing world poverty (Ibid 1991).

In developing countries, including Ethiopia, economic, social, and cultural factors, in complex interaction, play their part in determining access to and success in education, both for boys and girls. However, the impact of these factors is greater on girls than on boys in most contexts. A useful way to look at these different dimensions of the problem is to divide them into 'supply side' and 'demand side' factors (Guday 2005:5).

The supply side factors include: shortage of places and poor physical infrastructure, poor quality of education, and lack of female teachers. Shortage of school places, the remoteness of rural schools and poor physical infrastructure are major problems in many developing countries. Such deficiencies are often due to lack of resources. Girls tend to suffer more than boys from such deficiencies. Girls are often disadvantaged because of well-founded concerns about their physical security. The poor quality of school facilities in the developing world also militates against girls' attendance. In societies, which ascribe to female 'modesty', simply a lack of toilet facilities can make school environments inhospitable to girls and deter parents from sending their daughters to school. The quality of education offered in developing countries is often very poor. This is particularly so for girls, with curricula and textbooks frequently reinforcing limiting and demeaning stereotypes about women's roles. Studies show that girls often have to spend more time than boys doing non-formal educational "house-keeping" tasks. Where there are little educational benefits to be gained, it is not surprising of poverty- stricken

parent decide that it is not worth incurring the costs of sending a girl to school (UNICEF 2002a, UNESCO 2001, Synder 2001, cited in Guday 2005:5).

Furthermore, studies in sub-Saharan Africa show that the lack of female teachers as role models is discouraging the girls and can prevent them from doing well at school.

The demand-side factors include: Socio-cultural attitudes, and direct and indirect costs. In many developing countries, a woman's role is still defined in terms of marriage and child rearing, and girls' education is seen as less important than boys. Other cultural features also have strong effect on girls' education. For instance, in patrilocal societies, including Ethiopia, a young girl moves into her husband's family on marriage, so it is her husband's family rather than her birth family that reaps the rewards of her education. In such societies, parents look to sons to take care of them in old age, which is another incentive for parents to educate sons rather than daughters (Genet 1991:89; Guday 2005: 5).

In most African countries enrolment and participation in education is characterized by gender disparities. The number of female students enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary education is lower than the number of boys. Many girls and women dropout before they complete their primary and secondary school. Those who prefer to pursue vocations traditionally regarded by society as women's. These include nursing, home economics and secretarial skills. Ethiopian women's pattern of enrolment and participation in education is similar to that of other African women (Genet 1991:89). Female enrollment at the primary school level has been characterized by a difference along the urban-rural split. The urban girl has a much better opportunity to attend school than the rural one (Seyoum 1991: 99).

Gender-gap in education is a prevalent feature in Ethiopia. According to the Annual Statistical Report of Ministry of Education of 1997 E.C (2004/05), the Gender Parity Index (GPI) is **0.81** at national level indicating that girls' participation is lower than boys. This is true for all regions except Addis Ababa (1.13) and Tigray (1.0). Somali, which have a GPI of 0.66, have the largest disparity index between boys and girls (MOE 2004/05: 10-11).

The study attempted to explore the socio-economic factors that aggravate gender-gap in education by selecting Shebel-Berenta *Woreda* as an ethnographic site for the study. The *woreda* like the rest parts of Ethiopia is affected by different factors such as poverty, early marriage and gender-based division of labor.

In general, the available literature on factors affecting girls' education provides us with the effects of social, cultural, economic and political factors at a macro-level. In short, many scholars have looked into economic and socio-cultural barriers to girls' access and success in education at the macro-level. However, the reviewed studies lack an in-depth anthropological investigation of issues surrounding gender and its effect on girls' education at the local socio-cultural and economic environment. Therefore, this study is aimed at filling this gap through an ethnographic research and it will add some input to the existing knowledge of gender and education.

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

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The study tries to explore the socio-economic factors that aggravate the gender-gap in education through an ethnographic study of the Berenta community in East-Gojjam, north-western Ethiopia.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The study tries to achieve the following specific objectives. It attempts to:

- Examine the impact of gender on education in the study area;
- Explore the impact of poverty on females' education in the study area;
- Examine the effect of traditional practices on female education in the study area.

### **1.4 The Study Area, Site Selection, Methods and Fieldwork Experiences**

#### **1.4.1 Overview of the Study Area**

The study area is located 283 kilometers (km) north west of Addis Ababa. The Shebel-Berenta *Woreda* covers an area of 85,499 hectare and its population is estimated to be about 111,461. Of this, 54,370 are males and 57,091 are females. Therefore, the female population is 51.2%, whereas the male population is 48.8%. The number of females

exceeds the number of males. 97% of the population lives in the rural parts of the *Woreda*. Only 3% of the population has settled in the town (The *Woreda's* Information Office).

Shebel-Berenta's neighboring zones and *woredas* are: South- Wollo (in the east), Enemay (in the west), Dajan (in the south) and North- Shoa (in the south- west). Most of its area is located in the Abay gorge.

When we observe the climate of the *Woreda*, it is mainly dominated by *Woina Dega* (semi-temperate) and *Kolla* (semi-arid) climatic condition. The amount of rainfall ranges between 400-1000 mm/year. In altitude, the *Woreda* is 1500-2443m above sea level and the average annual temperature measures between 18-23<sup>0</sup>c.

In my first ethnographic fieldwork, I gathered information about the area. I got information from the Information Office of the Shebel-Berenta *Woreda*. I also interviewed some elders about the historical background of the area.

According to my informants, the names of Berenta and Shebel were named from the name of individuals. Initially, the Shebel-Berenta *Woreda* was divided into three sub-*Woredas*; namely Shebel, Berenta and Tuti. Before the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasie, the *Woreda* was administered by *mislane* (district governor). Later, during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellasie, in the post-liberation period, the three *Woredas* united together and named as Shebel-Berenta *Woreda*. During the *Derg* regime, the *Woreda* town was shifted from Yeduha to Mojjen. After the overthrow of the *Derg* in 1991, the *Woreda* town shifted from Mojjen to Yeduha.

Concerning its name there are different opinions provided by the local people. Some of my informants said that "Yeduha" means "place of worship." They tried to describe its naming with some historical justification. They stated that at one time, Muslims from south Wollo crossed the Abay gorge and settled at Yeduha. They gathered together and worshipped there. They were delighted by the site of the place and named it Yeduha (place of worship). Other informants do not agree on this. They tried to associate its name with the description of Geez and Amharic version. In the literature of Geez, Ed (አድ)

means “hand”, and Wuha (ዉሃ) means “water.” So, “Yeduha” means “the water which is used to wash the hand.”

The economic activity of the *Woreda* is highly dominated by agriculture. Some of the crops that are produced in the *Woreda* are: *teff*, sorghum, wheat, chick-pea, oil seed and nut. Incense is also produced well. Animals are reared in the *Woreda* including cattle, goat and sheep.

#### 1.4.2. Rationale for Selecting the Study Site

I have three reasons to select the site for the study.

- The first reason is **my familiarity to the study area**. Ten years ago, I served as a teacher in Berenta *Woreda* for four years. At that moment, I observed the influence of gender on education. Most of the female students were not willing to participate well in comparison with that of their male classmates. Their participation was low when I compared with that of males.
- The second reason is **easy access to information for the study**. Since I worked there I can contact with the local people easily. This creates conducive environment for me to gather any data related to the study from my informants, focus group participants and respondents easily.
- The third reason is **my familiarity to the language of the local people**. The local people are Amharic speakers. This makes my communication with the local people easier and smooth.

#### 1.4.3 Methods of Data Collection

I used different data collection techniques for the study. To materialize the objectives of the study, I used mainly qualitative methods. Among the 22 schools of the *Woreda*, I selected 5 schools for my study. With the help of tape-recorder, I attempted to gather the necessary information through in-depth personal interview and Focus Group Discussion.

To generate the primary data, I conducted interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and non-participant observation as major sources of the qualitative data in my study.

Questionnaire was administered to supplement the necessary information from informants and focus group participants in the study. Tape-recording and photographing were also used to gather audio-visual data in the field.

**1.4.3.1 Interviews** – Both structured and unstructured interviews have been used in gathering the data. I interviewed 30 informants in the study area with the help of tape recorder. The interviewees were selected from different sections of the society within the study site. I also interviewed key informants to gain the historical development of the *Woreda*. Concerning the profile of the study area, I got invaluable information from the *Woreda's* Information Office.

**1.4.3.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** – Three FGDs were organized to collect data. The range of the FGD participants was 8-12 in number. I conducted two focus group discussions with grade 9 and grade 10 female students respectively. Within a group 8 students were participated. With the help of tape-recorder, the necessary data were gathered properly. Again, another Focus Group Discussion was conducted with primary school female teachers.

**1.4.3.3 Questionnaire** – Questionnaire<sup>1</sup> was also administered to gather the necessary information from the respondents. I selected female students from primary second cycle (Grades 7-8) level and from secondary first cycle (Grades 9-10) level based on their academic performance. I used purposive sampling technique based on the student population in the *Woreda*. Purposive sampling technique was used for the following two major reasons:

- i) **For the proper implementation of the questionnaire** -- I selected female students who are matured in their age and active within the classroom environment. I didn't distribute the questionnaire for students from Grades 1-6 due to their less maturity level and less life exposure to the problem.
- ii) **For better conceptualization of the questionnaire** -- Unless the respondent understands the questions, the questionnaire doesn't achieve its expected

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<sup>1</sup> The Amharic Translation of the English Questionnaire (see Appendix I).

outcome. The respondents need to conceptualize the questions for better elaboration and explanation of his/her opinion.

Because of the above two reasons, I selected students only from Grades 7-10 to administer the questionnaire. Within the range of 2-4 female students were represented from each grade level in the study. The following table describes the number of samples taken from each selected grade.

**Table 1: Sample Representation of the Study (Grades 7-10)**

Grade	Number of Sections	Number of Respondents
Grade 7	6	21
Grade 8	7	28
Grade 9	10	24
Grade 10	10	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>99</b>

**1.4.3.4 Non-participant observation-** I attempted to observe the living conditions of the people and recorded my observation in the study site. In my observation, particular attention was given to factors affecting female students' participation and academic performance in the study area.

**1.4.3.5 Archival sources** – I gathered different documents from different institutions in order to assess the gender influence on education. Published and unpublished sources were consulted. The relevant locally available sources were also used to supplement the ethnographic descriptions of the study area. Documentary sources were gathered from the offices in the *Woreda*. I gathered the students' population statistics from the *Woreda's* Education Office and some relevant information about the *Woreda* was also gathered from key informants from the Information Office and the Women's Affairs Office of the *Woreda*.

**1.4.3.6. Photographing** – More than 10 photographs of the respondents, participants and interviewees of the study were taken to make the data more vivid (see Appendix III).

#### **1.4.4. Fieldwork Experience**

Anthropological research and fieldwork are inseparable concepts in the field of

Anthropology. When we discuss about anthropological research we discuss also about fieldwork. Fieldwork has an important role in an ethnographic research. Without proper implementation of the fieldwork, anthropological research couldn't achieve its objective. Hence, I attempted to investigate the problem of the study by involving myself in the fieldwork.

My fieldwork experiences are divided into the following three phases:

- **Phase I (December 5-10, 2006):** I went to the study site and I gathered the necessary information from December 5-10, 2006. I interviewed key informants in different offices at Yeduha (the capital town of Berenta *Woreda*). The informants provided me with necessary information for my further investigation of the problem. I took the map of the *Woreda* from Capacity Building Office and the number of students' population from the *Woreda's* Education Office.
- **Phase II (January 17-28, 2006):** From the Office of Education, I took the legal attachment letter to the selected schools for my study. Among the 22 schools of the *Woreda*, I selected 5 schools for the study. Five attachment letters were written to the schools. During this period, I gathered the necessary information through interviews and Focus Group Discussions in the selected schools with the help of a tape-recorder.
- **Phase III (February 20 - March 5, 2007):** I prepared a questionnaire and moved to the study site. Female students from Grades 7-10 were selected based on their academic performance. With the help of the principals of the schools, the questionnaire was administered properly. I also interviewed primary and secondary school female teachers and female students.

Most of the data collection process was completed within the above mentioned phases.

Generally, most of my fieldwork was conducted with full cooperation of the people. In each office that I enter, I got complete willingness in providing me with the necessary cooperation. However, there were some problems during my interview with female teachers. They were highly engaged in their teaching and school-related activities.

Particularly, it was difficult to arrange focus group discussions with female teachers and female students. They had no extra time to discuss with me. Despite these difficulties, I accomplished my tasks properly in the field.

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

The gender-gap in education is the living reality of the developing world, including Ethiopia. At least half of the Ethiopia's population is estimated to be women. However, their disclosure to political, economic and social affairs is minimal when we compare them with that of men. Education is an important instrument to empower females' participation in different affairs of the society. Unless females are empowered in the overall life of the society, we can't achieve the developmental goals that the society needs to achieve.

Concerning the influence of gender on education, there is a gap in gender studies in Ethiopia. Therefore, the study attempts to fill the gap concerning gender and its influence on education in the study area, Berenta *Woreda* of Amhara Region. In particular, the Amhara Region of Ethiopia needs further investigation on the issue at hand.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study has its own microscopic focus. It mainly focuses on one of the *Woredas* of East Gojjam Administrative Zone of the Amhara Region. Among the *Woredas* of East Gojjam particular attention is given to the sub-*Woreda* called Berenta. Among the twenty-two schools found in the *Woreda*, the study focused mainly on five schools (four primary schools and one secondary school). Due to shortage of time, money and the problem of security, I didn't appraise the other schools in the *Woreda*. So, the findings of this study are valid only to the selected study area.

Concerning sources of data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, I focused mainly on female teachers and female students. I attempted to take information from some key male informants. However, it is not enough to assess the problem from males' perspective. Therefore, it lacks comparative analysis of male and female informants to make the study comprehensive.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Historical Overview of the Feminist Anthropology

Feminist Anthropology can be divided into three approximate temporal categories. The first division is from **1850 to 1920** and is also referred to as the first wave or suffrage feminism. Up to this point primarily men for men in general had done ethnographies and many researches. It also assumed that biological sex determined the individual's roles in society. What the first wave feminist sought to do was include women's voices in ethnography and also to give a female perspective to events. The leading figure of this movement was Elsie Clews Parsons. Her insightful notions of feminism and concepts of what determines social and cultural norms are issues that are still being debated today. Through her travels with male anthropological colleagues to the south - west, she sought to break the restrictions placed on men and women working together (Deacon 1997).

The other prominent figures of first wave feminists were Alice Fletcher and Phyllis Kayberry. Alice Fletcher was an activist and a reformer, but her interest rested mainly with American Indians. She was also interested in suffrage and helped found the Association for Advancement of Women (Winter 1991; Fletcher 1877).

Phyllis Kayberry pioneered anthropological research on women in their social contexts. Her work examined both men and women and their relationships, especially focusing on their religion. She is responsible for the development of a systemic study of gender relationships (Winter 1991).

Second wave feminism stretched from approximately **1920-1980**. These feminists separated sex and gender as descriptive categories previously they had been used interchangeably. Sex is defined more as determined by biology and in turn effecting biology. Gender was, therefore, culturally shaped. Anthropologists tended to write as if all women had the same experiences and problems. Additionally, concepts were

frequently set up as opposing dichotomies, i.e., sex/culture, men/women, work/home. The main initiators of this movement were: Margaret Mead, Eleanor Leacock, Lucy Slocum, Michel Rosaldo, Louise Lamphere and others (McGee and Warms 1996; Morgen 1989; and Lamphere 1997).

In third wave feminism, Anthropologists had been “haunted” by biological determinism, which suggested that gender was a straightforward cause and effect phenomenon from physiological differences. The dichotomies stressed by second wave feminists were problematic at times because it was too hard to separate women from men and other factors such as class. Furthermore, being categorized as women no longer supersedes other distinctions and roles. Class, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, etc. are also recognized as important characteristics that diversify the category of women; in other words it is acknowledged that all women do not have the same universal needs and experiences. Feminism in the 1980s and 1990s has centered on production and work, reproduction and sexuality, and gender and the state (Lamphere 1997; Morgen 1989). In the 1990s women’s studies would be changed to gender studies, reflecting a more comprehensive perspective.

## **2.2 Definitions of “Gender” and “Education”**

### **2.2.1 Definitions of “Gender”**

The conceptual distinction between sex and gender developed by Anne Oakley (1972) is a useful analytical tool to clarify ideas and has now been almost universally taken up. According to this distinction sex is connected with biology, whereas the gender identity of men and women in any given society is socially and psychologically determined (Wallace and March(ed), 1991).

Biological and certain physical conditions lead to the determination of male or female sex. To determine gender, however, social and cultural perceptions of masculine and feminine traits and roles must be taken into account. There is considerable, but not total, correlation between female sex and feminine gender, and male sex and masculine gender (Wallace and March (ed), 1991: 2).

Gender is learnt through a process of socialization and through the culture of the particular society concerned. Children learn their gender from birth. They learn how they should behave in order to be perceived by others, and themselves, as either masculine or feminine. Throughout their life parents, teachers, peers, their culture and society reinforce this (Almaz 1991: 2).

Gender is an analytical term to help distinguish between the biological dimension (sex) and the cultural one (gender). Traditionally, society assumes that there are observable differences between the sexes. However, we know that personality, behavior or abilities are the result of differential socialization (Ibid).

A recent approach of using “gender” rather than women as a basis of analysis and understanding how women and men define their roles, has stressed the need to redress and consider systematically the different roles of women and men as they engage in, and are affected by, development activities. This is a shift from the purely economic to the social variables, and to analyzing gender issues in development. In this context “development” is seen as having at its core a commitment to breaking down the structures of gender inequality and subordination and a vision for women as full and equal participants at all levels of social life. Development is seen as social reformation to foster women’s definition and to spell out the strategies of self-actualization and empowerment (Almaz 1991: 2; Gunday 2005).

The definition of gender is analyzed in the following way:

***a) Gender as a Cultural Construct***

If you were born a male instead of a female, or a female instead of a male, how would your life be different? This question is essential about gender, since gender can be understood as the meaning that a particular society gives to the physical or biological traits that differentiate males and females. These meanings provide members of a society with ideas about how to act, what to believe, and how to make sense of their experiences (Mascia-Lees and Black 2000: 1). Defining gender is a cultural construct suggests that

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gender is largely due to nurture or cultural practices and ideas, not to “nature” or biological causes. The nature/nurture controversy of gender has been elaborated well by Sherry Ortner. She tries to summarize her ideas into two main arguments. First, woman’s physiology and her specialized reproductive functions make her come into sight closer to nature, men, unlike women, have to seek cultural means of creation-technology, symbols-while women’s creativity is naturally fulfilled through the process of giving birth (Ortner 1974: 77; Moore 1988: 15). The second argument is women’s social roles are seen as closer to nature because their involvement in reproduction has tended to limit them to certain social functions, which are also seen as closer to nature. Here, Ortner is referring to women’s confinement within the domestic domain (Ortner 1974: 78).

However, the argument of nature/nurture controversy is not accepted by Mascia – Lees and Black (2000). They state their claims as follow:

Biological determinists’ arguments, whether about liberals and conservatives or men and women, greatly oversimplify the complex set of factors that influence human behaviors. Nonetheless, many people are eager to accept them because simple explanations offer a certainty that makes negotiating our complex world seems easier (Mascia-Lees & Black 2002: 4).

### ***b) Gender as a Social Role***

It is an interesting fact that scholars who maintain that women’s subordination is not universal tend to approach the problem of gender relations through a consideration of what women and men do, rather than through an analysis of the symbolic valuations given to women and men in any society. They are usually concerned, therefore, with more sociological explanations of gender as social relationship (Macia-Lees and Black 2000:3). Eleanor Leacock asserts her idea as follows. Women in all societies make a substantial economic contribution; and that, contrary to the assertions of some feminist anthropologist, women’s status is dependent, neither on their role as mothers nor on their confinement to a ‘domestic’ sphere, but on whether or not they control to:

- a) Resources,
- b) The conditions of their work, and
- c) The distributions of the products of their labor (Leacock 1978: 152).

### **2.2.2 Definition of “Education”**

Education is defined by different scholars in a different way. Education in its broadest sense is a mechanism of socialization (Odetolla and Ademola 1985; Zanolli 1971; Spindler 1963; Banda 2002 cited in Guday 2005). Any society has the mechanism of introducing norms and values into the new members of it. Without some processes of socialization the society itself would cease to persist.

Education involves both formal and informal education (schooling). Informal education is implemented in the family groups, its agents are not specified and it may occur at any time and at any place. Formal education, on the other hand, is entirely organized, its agents are trained teachers and it is carried out at specified time and place (Zanolli 1971:64). Both formal and informal education systems play a crucial role in shaping the attitude, knowledge and skill of the children.

Anthropologists and sociologists define education in terms of their disciplinary perspective. It is defined as the imparting of culture from generation to generation. From an anthropological point of view education is defined as the shared products of human learning (Singleton 1974:69).

Based on the above definition of “gender” and “education”, the study explores gender-specific cases in relation to education in Berenta *Woreda*.

### **2.3 Approaches and Theories of Gender**

Theoretical orientations are based on a set of assumptions and accepted principles that provide a broad frame of reference for researchers and a general context for their investigations. Theoretical orientations guide researchers in choosing a subject, conceptualizing a problem, framing questions, investigating a topic, and interpreting and presenting results. Concerning gender, there are different approaches and theories, which have been recommended by different scholars (Mascia – Lees & Black 2000: 13-14).

According to Mascia-Lees and Black (2000), there are two approaches:

### Approach I – Biosocial Approach

Biosocial investigators theorized that men are naturally more aggressive than women. The theoretical orientation within which they work assumes that complex human behaviors can be explained through the principle of natural selection.

### Approach II – Social Learning Theorists

They began their opposite premise in opposite to biosocial investigators. They argue that biological explanations cannot account for the high degree of variation found in male aggressiveness in societies around the world. They focus on how children learn gender role behaviors and argue that male aggression, like other human behaviors acquired through a process of socialization that prepares children for their adult roles. Parents, educators, peers and popular culture all reinforce what they see as proper gender behaviors for boys and girls, leading children to imitate those of the appropriate sex, thriving on the rewards they get for doing so (Mascia-Lees and Black 2000:14).

There are four theories or lines of thinking that have influenced feminist anthropology over the last 18 years. The theories are practice theory, positionality theory, performance theory and queer theory.

**2.3.1 Practice Theory** – the idea is borrowed from Marx's suggestion that all social activity comes down to practice. It is about how people behave not about a quality they possess. Feminist practice is about real people do real things; culture is therefore deliberate (Conkey and Gero 1997).

Practice theory is a vibrant and promising framework for social science researchers attempting to describe how individuals shape, and are shaped by, the cultural worlds in which they live. It attempts to articulate the ways in which identity and individual agency rely on and produce cultural forms (Colloquium, 2004).

Practice theory focuses on individuals' expression and use of shared meanings in personal activity and identity construction, and on how these shared meanings are produced and reproduced through personal action and interaction. Researchers working within this framework may explore a wide breadth of contexts: from examining the dynamics of small groups with highly specialized shared knowledge to describing how ubiquitous structures such as gender and ethnicity are expressed in large organizations. Practice theory provides a powerful lens into the on-going dialectic between daily life and persistent shared meaning, i.e., culture (Colloquium, 2004).

**2.3.2 Positionality Theory** – developed as a reaction against cultural feminism and deconstruction. The latter is an essential view, which suggests that there is a female essence and that female values should be validated. In other words women should not be putting on business suits and entering men's worlds, but that they should be promoting females' essence as positive characteristics (e.g. nurturing). In other words they can play by their own rules. Major proponents of this include Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich (Alcoff, 1994).

**2.3.3 Performance Theory** – is an extension of the anti-structuralists of the 1970s. It defines "gender as the effect of discourse, and sex as the effect of gender. The theory is characterized by a concern with the productive force rather than the meaning of discourse and by its privileging of ambiguity and indeterminacy". The proponents of this theory are Bourdieu, de Certeau, and Sahlins (Morris 1995:567).

One of the essential attributes assigned to the feminine or the female is her passivity. In "Femininity," Sigmund Freud demonstrates that this passivity is demonstrated to be the result of women's sexuality:

It is perhaps the case that in a woman, on the basis of her share in the sexual function, a preference for passive behavior and passive aims is carried over in her life to a greater or lesser extent, in proportion to the limits, restricted or far-reaching, within which her sexual life thus serves as a model (115-16).

Another attribute assigned to the female is our close link to society, or rather society's close link to the female. More often than not, society is seen as the female against which the male (hero) will seek to free himself. Individuality (another attribute valued under the current system of patriarchy as it dictates man's withdrawal from his dependence on women, or here, on society) is thus asserted when they are able to be free from the restraints of a society—certainly female—that imprison them. Here is Nina Baym demonstrating how this works:

It seems to be a fact of life that we all—women and men alike—experience social conventions and responsibilities and obligations first in the persons of women, since women are entrusted by society with the task of rearing young children . . . . And although not all women are engaged in socializing the young, the young do not encounter women who are not. So from the point of view of the young man, the only kinds of women who exist are entrappers and domesticators (72-73).

And the task that faces men and women living in this society is to be as free as possible from these restraints, and since women epitomize these restraints, it is women who are to be fought against.

Similarly, nature is seen as female, which needs to be conquered by the male. As society, in its depiction as female, becomes an enemy that needs to be overcome, so nature becomes another enemy to the individual whose livelihood depends on his freedom from the restraints imposed on him by nature and his ability to overcome these restraints.

Baym explains again:

Landscape is deeply imbued with female qualities, as society is; but where society is menacing and destructive, landscape is compliant and supportive. It has the attribute simultaneously of a virginal bride and a no threatening mother (75).

Nature bears a negative connotation, therefore, when it exists as a deterrent to man's individuality and freedom, and although recognized as benefit to this same man, nature is nevertheless a possible threat when it refuses to yield to man's molding. And as an enemy, nature becomes imbued with feminine connotations; hence it is "Mother Nature:"

The will to annihilate the other through a false incorporation can be detected in every language sign that tends, by its ever-widening scope of

encompassment, to be taken for granted . . . . No conflict exists between what has conventionally been called Father Culture and Mother Nature, except when the pair are thought of as opposite to each other (instead of different from each other) so that Mother becomes a male-fashioned Mother exiled from culture, which is tantamount to saying Father Culture versus Father Nature (Trinh 67).

The list goes on with attributes and qualities assigned to the female side and which man must revolt against, hence the revolt against passivity, society, and nature. As a result, in order for women to escape from being associated with this negativity, they will need to reject all these attributes that are assigned to them. For the woman to be equal in value to man, she has to throw away her feminine characteristics (whether or not these characteristics are innate) or else her experiences will be considered of no value and her beliefs will be of no importance. A good writer thus needs to throw away her feminine attributes and acquire masculine ones, or be forever branded not good enough:

What is implied here is her capability to write and think differently from other women who, wallowing in confessions and in personal, narcissistic, or neurotic accounts, are held to be hopelessly inept for either objective, subjective, or universal—that is to say accurate—thinking. Remember, the minority's voice is always personal; that of the majority, always impersonal. Logic dictates. Man thinks, woman feels. . . . Old stereotypes deriving from well-defined differences (the apartheid type of difference) govern our thought. Our province, we hear, is the heart, not the mind, which many of us has come to loathe and despise, for we believe it has a sex, a male one however, for reasons of (in) security (Trinh 28).

So in order to be heard, women, being a minority (in terms of power rather than numbers), have to shed their feelings and beliefs on the basis of their being personal and of no value to the whole.

This dilemma suggests that if women are to reclaim their value they will need to throw away their femininity and to reject their links to passion, nature, society, or passivity. Women thus are rendered silent if they are to comply with the system that leaves them little room to maneuver because if their speech is to be heard it must become masculine speech. According to man's logic, then, if woman is to speak she can only do that through silence, or through the silencing of her real femininity.

**2.3.4 Queer Theory** – defines itself in opposition against the concept of “normalcy” not just heterosexuality, and it questions socialization. It attempts to cut across gender traditions. It was highly influenced by Foucault and constructionalist theory and contemporary writers include Judith Mayne, Judith Butler, and Diana Fuss in addition to a number of people in French Feminism including Monique Witting (Warner 1993).

Among the four theories that have been stated above I will focus mainly on the two theories of **Practice and performance**. I will try to investigate these two theories in my ethnographic work. These two theories have great implications for the problem that I select for my study.

## **2.4 International Conventions and Laws Concerning Gender Equality**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, further elaborated the scope of human rights. Article 1 summarizes all of the subsequent articles and succeeding treaties and conventions when it says, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." In some matters, such as marriage rights, the declaration goes into some detail in specifying the ways in which men and women should be treated. It pacifies that “men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948)

More than 20 years after adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community agreed on two covenants spelling out in more detail the rights embodied in the declaration. These were the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (often referred to as the political covenant) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (often referred to as the economic rights covenant). Both entered into effect in 1976. These are legally binding on states that have ratified them. However, many member states have not done so, and many others have done so only with substantial reservations. (States can make reservations to treaty articles that

they do not wish to be bound by, as long as these are not contrary to the meaning of the treaty (Ahmed et.al, 2001).

Both covenants incorporated understandings based on the declaration, many of which have important implications with regard to gender and reproductive rights; these include the right of women to be free of all forms of discrimination, the right of freedom of assembly and association, and family rights. The political covenant, among other things, recognizes the rights to "liberty and security of the person" (Article 9) and "freedom of expression", including "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds" (Article 19); and affirms that "no marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses" (Article 23) (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

## **2.5 Gender and Education in the Ethiopian context**

The importance of educating girls is entering public consciousness globally. The education of girls is a stimulus for social change and human development. Studies consistently document that girls' education enhances the welfare of the population and increases the country's economic productivity (UNESCO 2000b cited in Guday 2005).

Researchers have mapped out the relationship between women's education and development. These include: The increased participation of women in productive activities, reduced reproductive burdens, improved maternal and family health, and increased opportunities for the education of children, especially daughters. Researchers also highlight the empowering role of education that is the crucial role it plays in measuring women's self-esteem and personal fulfillment through the dissemination of information, knowledge and skills (Emebet 1999, cited in Guday 2005).

As Guday states it, the gender-gap in education is a prevalent feature.

The limited participation of girls in the Ethiopian Education system is linked to the historical development of education in the country. Education in its traditional form has a long history in Ethiopia. Originally, the educational system was predominantly religion-oriented to serve the man power needs of the church, the mosque and the state. Since women were not allowed to assume

responsibilities in the institutions, the exclusion of women from the teaching activities was their main feature (Guday 2005:2).

It is also important to recognize the considerable diversity in access to schooling in different parts of Ethiopia. Under-enrolment is very much a rural phenomenon, with a GER (Gross Enrollment Rate) of over 100 percent for both boys and girls in urban areas, although only three-quarters of school-aged children are enrolled (Table 2). Thus, there is no gender-gap in enrolment in urban areas. Enrolment for both boys and girls is considerably lower in rural areas and a gender-gap is evident, with only one-quarter of school-aged girls enrolled in primary school compared with 31 percent of boys (Table 2). Furthermore, it is estimated that a mere one percent of girls and 1.6 percent of boys in rural Ethiopia completed the eight-year primary cycle in 2000. The two regions which are predominantly pastoralist (Somali and Afar) exhibit the lowest primary gross enrolment rates (11 percent and 7 percent, respectively in 1995/96), while the rate for pastoralist girls is estimated to be below one percent (World Bank 1998). Moreover, the GER in Somali region has remained unchanged over the past five years. The achievement of enrolment and gender equity targets is, therefore, to a large extent dependent on improvements occurring in the two pastoralist regions, as well as in rural areas more generally.

**Table 2: Rural/Urban Enrolment (Grades 1-6), 1999/2000 <sup>2</sup>**

Sex	GER		NER <sup>1</sup>	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Male	103.1	62.7	74.1	30.7
Female	107.6	41.4	74.8	25.2

Source: FDRE 2002c

Since only a small proportion of children complete the primary cycle, the transition to secondary schooling is relatively high (95 percent of boys and 86 percent of girls who complete primary school continue to the secondary level) (MOE statistics, cited in Yelfign 2003). However, only a gradual increase in secondary enrolment is evident,

<sup>1</sup> NER Net Enrolment Rate

compared with a considerably faster rate of change at the primary level. A similar pattern to the primary level of a widening of the gender-gap as overall enrolment increases is also apparent at the secondary level (Table 3). Furthermore, the secondary sector is receiving limited attention given the focus placed on primary as a means to achieve poverty alleviation goals. ESDP II even proposes a reduction in secondary education sector (FDRE 2002a). As a result, the net enrolment rate remains low, at just 9.8 percent for boys and 7.5 percent for girls (Table 3). However, improvements in secondary will also be necessary to ensure a skilled workforce, consisting of both males and females, is available for the future.

**Table 3: Primary and Secondary GER and NER by Gender, 1993/94-2000/01**

Year	Primary				Secondary			
	GER		NER		GER		NER	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1993/94	31.3	20.4	20.7	14.7	7.7	6.9	5.6	5.6
1994/95	37.1	22.8	25.7	17.4	7.4	5.7	6.2	5.5
1995/96	43.0	26.0	32.3	21.5	9.2	7.0	6.8	5.8
1996/97	52.0	31.2	43.4	28.0	9.9	7.0	7.3	5.8
1997/98	55.9	35.3	47	31.9	10.3	7.4	8.0	6.0
1998/99	60.9	40.7	51.2	36.6	11.3	8.0	8.3	6.5
1999/00	67.3	47.0	55.7	41.7	12.0	8.5	8.8	7.0
2000/01	71.7	51.2	59.0	45.2	14.8	10.9	9.8	7.5

Source: MOE data (cited in Yelfign 2003)

Female enrolment at the tertiary level has comprised a very small proportion of total enrolment at the undergraduate level (only 16 percent in 2001/02), and the number of female postgraduates is negligible, with only 99 females enrolled for a postgraduate program in 2001/02 compared with 1248 males (MOE statistics, cited in Yelfign 2003). On the one hand, the very small numbers of females progressing to higher levels of education is likely to be partly due to a time lag given the historical small numbers of females in lower levels of the education system. On the other hand, the limited number of highly educated females means that female role models will continue to be in short supply for the foreseeable future. The low numbers of female role models is also evident

in the education system itself, with fewer female than male teachers even at the primary level. One-third of female teachers are teaching in grades 1-4 in urban areas (where they comprise half of total teachers), while female teachers only make up 11 percent of all teachers in grades 5-8 in rural areas (MOE statistics, cited in Yelfign 2003).

Of course, increasing enrolment and persistence for both boys and girls is not enough. It is also important to ensure that the learning environment is conducive once children are in school (which will also help to ensure they stay). Approaches to improving the relevance of primary schooling has occurred in the latter part of the 1990s in particular by changing the primary cycle from six years to two cycles of 1-4 and 5-8, while reducing the number of subjects taught. Available evidence suggests that achievement is slightly higher for boys than girls by grade 4, although a wider gender gap is apparent for mathematics compared with other subjects (See below Table 4). It is reported that there are some regions in which female performance is greater than males (implying that the reverse is true in other areas) (Yelfign 2003). Given that enrolment disparities are most apparent in rural areas, it would be useful to explore whether there are gender differences between rural and urban areas.

**Table 4: National Baseline Learning Assessment Results for Grade 4, 1999/2000**

Subjects	Mean scores (percent)	
	Male	Female
Basic Reading Comprehension	65.2	62.7
English Language	42.3	38.2
Mathematics	41.7	36.5
Environmental Science	49.9	46.0

**Source:** National Organization for Examination 2001 Ethiopian National Baseline Assessment on Grade Four Student Achievement, cited in Yelfign 2003

The gender gap in achievement widens as children progress through the education system, simultaneous with a widening of the gender gap in enrolment. In 2000/01, only 29 percent of girls passed the grade 10 examination compared with 53 percent of boys; and 46 percent and 67 percent, respectively, passed the grade 12 examination (MOE

statistics, cited in Yelfign 2003). This suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to the gendered nature of the learning environment as children get older.

### **2.5.1 Policy Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality in the Ethiopian System Education**

In line with international targets, Ethiopia's Education and Training Strategy placed emphasis on achieving universal primary Education by 2015 (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1994a). It is apparent that the country has been striving to achieve this goal, with considerable progress occurring in recent years. Furthermore, it is very evident that gender issues have received high priority in Education policy in Ethiopia since the new government came to power in the early 1990s. One of the specific objectives of the Education and Training Strategy was to use Education to change attitudes towards the role of women in development. This included giving attention to gender issues in curriculum design, placing special emphasis upon the recruitment, training and assignment of female teachers, and giving financial support to raising the participation of women in. Education The Education of girls was also supported by a number of other government policies. The National Policy for Ethiopian Women (Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1994b) specified strategies to ensure that women received vocational guidance at all institutions of, Education had access to the same curricula as men, and were free to choose their field of study. Other strategies included encouraging women to take up jobs in the civil service and to perform public functions, including participation in decision-making at both community and national levels. In addition, communities were to be informed about the harm done by some traditional practices, such as circumcision and marriage of girls before they reach puberty. In support of this, the government's Population and Social Policy aim to increase the minimum age at marriage for girls from the current age of 15 to 18 years (equal to that of boys). It also emphasizes the importance of giving special support to the Education of women, and of ensuring equal employment opportunities (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1994c). If implemented effectively, all of these measures should help to increase the demand for the schooling of girls.

Building on the a Education and Training Strategy, the Ethiopia Education Sector Development Program (ESDP I 1997/98-2002/03) provides an important example of a sector-wide approach that has attempted to integrate gender issues across all aspects of the Education system. Women's affairs officers were involved in the planning process and an international consultant (sponsored by the Forum for African Women Educationalists) was included amongst the team of international consultants with the specific role of ensuring that gender issues were taken into consideration in different aspects of ESDP I. This resulted in commitment to ensuring the inclusion of gender disaggregated data in regional program of ESDP I, as well as considering strategies to address gender disparities at both the regional and national level. The need for on-going commitment was recognized in the plan, with a proposal that gender sensitivity should continue to be mainstreamed in all ESDP activities, which would be undertaken by women's affairs offices. As a result of efforts made, the ESDP I target of increasing the primary GER from 30 percent in 1995/96 to 50 percent by 2002/03 was already exceeded by 1999/00. However, the target for increasing the proportion of girls enrolled to 45 percent of the total was not achieved (with girls only comprising 40.8 percent of total primary enrolment by 2001/02). This can partly be attributed to factors constraining full implementation of gender strategies in regional and national plans - including diminishing political commitment to reform at lower levels of the decentralized system; lack of commitment of resources to support the strategies; and limited capacity of women's affairs officers, who are responsible for their implementation, particularly at regional and district levels. Furthermore, as highlighted in the following section, many constraints to girls' enrolment are related to deep-rooted attitudes and practices which could take a considerable time and effort to change.

Gender continues to receive a focus in ESDP II which provides a useful analysis of lessons learnt since ESDP I. This suggests that:

'Lack of meaningful local actions to surmount social and cultural barriers to access to Education of girls and members of minority communities and their completion of a given level of schooling has been one of the contributing factors to Gender and regional disparities' (FDRE 2002a: 21).

ESDP II proposes a modest, but perhaps realistic, target of increasing the primary GER from 57 percent in 2000/01 to 65 percent by 2004/05, and increasing the proportion of girls enrolled from 40.8 percent to 43.3 percent of total enrolment. Strategies to address the gender gap include training teachers to introduce them to gender -sensitive learning approaches, and introducing village schools with multi-grade teaching to improve access for children, especially girls, who are unable to attend primary schools because of distance. At the secondary level, there is a rather vague proposal to increase the participation rate of girls in secondary school without any suggestion of how this might be achieved, other than introduction of counseling and educational support systems for female students. At the technical and vocational level, it is suggested that special attention will be given to increase the participation of girls and disadvantaged groups by improving the content and structure of the curriculum to meet their special needs, although there is no elaboration of what these needs might be. Special mention of addressing the gender disparity is made under non-formal Education

‘Specific approach for enhancing participation of girls include location of learning centers closer to home or communities, recruiting female instructors where ever possible, develop curriculum and learning materials that are more responsive to special needs of girls, encourage advocacy and social mobilization and supporting multiple delivery system in involving the use of communication media’ (FDRE 2002a: 39).

While relying on the non-formal sector to address problems faced by girls might be advantageous in offering more flexible and relevant, Education it might also marginalize them further from the mainstream system. However, in line with **Action Aid’s** approach, ESDP II notes the need to develop a link between the first cycle of the formal system and alternative non-formal Education programs.

ESDP II also includes a separate section on gender as a cross-cutting issue (along with HIV/AIDS – although this does not consider gender issues, as well as NGOs and the private sector). The gender section suggests the need for:

‘locally relevant measures...To this end, community leaders and members of women’s groups will be oriented to create awareness on

the importance of educating girls, and to bring about changes in attitudes, values and practices at the family and community level' (FDRE 2002a: 32).

This is an important strategy and, as the example of USAID illustrates, can have positive results (although it is doubtful that the reduction in dropout could be attributed to USAID's intervention alone, as claimed in the example). However, this initiative places the onus on community members who themselves are likely to exhibit the attitudes and values that they are expected to change. It is also apparent that, while the need for increased community ownership is mentioned in ESDP II, an important reason for the promotion of community involvement is the mobilization of resources in a context where school fees have been abolished, with communities expected to commit themselves to supporting 5-10 percent of government expenditure on construction and running costs of schools (FDRE 2002a). There is, however, no recognition of the possible negative equity effects of relying on community contributions.

ESDP II also highlights the need not only to ensure that girls enroll in school, but also that they are able to learn in a safe, supportive and appropriate learning environment. It, therefore, suggests the need for greater gender sensitive curricula, textbooks and teachers, as well as gender awareness campaigns and training for parents, teachers, Education managers and students, with the establishment of girls' Education enhancement committees. Girl-friendly facilities are promoted, including separate latrines for girls and boys. It also mentions that the curricula and textbooks should be reviewed for gender bias. Furthermore, it suggests that role models are important so measures will be taken to increase the number of female teachers, head teachers and managers in the system. Moreover, girls will be encouraged to take non-traditional subjects in technical and vocational schools, with support packages of tutorial support, guidance and counseling, and assertive training made available (FDRE 2002a).

This cross-cutting section on gender is repeated as a separate section in the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) draft country proposal (FDRE 2002b). While all these strategies are likely to be important, there is no indication of how they will be achieved or by whom. Furthermore, although the FTI document acknowledges gender gaps in educational

opportunities, it neither includes targets for moving towards gender equity, nor provides cost projections to support the initiatives despite its focus on financing. Importantly, the template for assessing the FTI plan does not mention any of the gender issues. This is largely because the focus of the FTI is on the indicative framework as outlined by the World Bank, which also does not take into consideration gender issues (see Rose 2003). This is again an indication of policy evaporation of gender strategies before they even reach implementation stage.

The analysis of ESDP II is closely related to the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (PRSP) which repeats the target of a GER of 65 percent by 2004/05. Although the Education section in the PRSP includes issues of construction, teacher training, syllabi and textbooks, and assessment and quality, there are no gender-related strategies included in the Education section of the paper for the primary, technical and vocational, adult Education and non-formal, special needs or Education tertiary sectors. The PRSP makes the same vague proposal as ESDP II of increasing female participation at the secondary level. Despite the extremely low participation of girls in technical and vocational and tertiary levels, no proposals are included for addressing this.

Some aspects of the Education sector are, however, mentioned in a separate section on gender 'and development'. These tend to place the responsibility for change on community members, in particular females, who may neither have the capacity nor be the ones creating obstacles to girls' educational opportunities so are unlikely to be in a position to facilitate change. They also rely on the involvement of NGOs' provision of non-formal Education which, as mentioned, can tend to marginalize girls from the mainstream Education system. Furthermore, no budgetary allocation is provided for any of the gender initiatives and, given that they are not incorporated within the Education sector strategies, it is not clear who would take responsibility for their implementation. Although no doubt a variety of factors have influenced the prominence or otherwise of gender issues in the various policies and plans, it is interesting to note that no women were represented on the PRSP secretariat, and all heads of departments in all government organizations who were invited to attend were men, with even the Women's Affairs Office represented by a man (Haregewoin Cherinet and Emebet Mulugeta 2002).

Enrolment continues to remain extremely low in the pastoralist regions, where the widest gender gaps are also reported, attention is needed to address the particular constraints faced. The different plans recognize this, and propose building boarding facilities in these areas. However, evidence indicates that boarding facilities will not be popular amongst pastoralist communities who will be particularly unwilling to leave their daughters in them for security reasons. Experience of mobile schools piloted in the Oromiya region is also being drawn upon which could provide more appropriate (including gender - sensitive) approaches to Education for pastoralist communities, although these continue to meet with resistance in policy circles in Ethiopia.

The success in addressing gender issues in policy terms can be partly attributed to strong leadership at the highest level – with the long-time serving Minister of Education, H.E. Gennet Zewdie (former Chair of the Forum for African Women Educationalists, 1993-1999, and Minister of Education since 1992) committed to incorporating gender into Education policy. This has also meant that processes are in place to try and ensure that gender issues are addressed at all levels of the system, with women's affairs officers appointed in the central as well as regional (and sometimes also district) Education offices. However, policy evaporation has been a recurrent theme since the 1994 policy commitments to addressing gender inequities in Education. This is largely due to insufficient clarity about responsibilities for implementing and monitoring gender and Education strategies and a lack of budgetary allocation. As such, the gender strategies proposed appear as a token recognition of the problem but continue to be marginalized from, rather than mainstreamed into, the planning and implementation process.

### 2.5.2 Continued Constraints to Achieving Gender Equality in Education

The preceding analysis suggests, on the one hand, that there can be some optimism that the gender gap could narrow over the next decade if the recent success of improving admission rates into primary school continues. On the other hand, there is some cause for concern that this will not be achieved unless the identified constraints are dealt with more adequately. An important aspect of this is to ensure that commitment at the highest level has an influence on other parts of the system so that the strategies proposed are translated into progress in narrowing the gender gap. The continuation of the gender gap also raises

questions about whether the proposed policies and strategies are appropriate and/or sufficient for addressing the constraints, which have been identified in the Ethiopian setting.

Colclough, Rose and Tembon (2000) propose a framework for analyzing constraints to education by gender. This identifies barriers related to poverty at both the level of the state and the household, which are reinforced by gender relations in society, labor markets, households and schools resulting in a perpetuation of under-enrolment of girls relative to boys unless the constraints are addressed. The reasons for girls' under-enrolment and achievement in Ethiopia which reflect aspects of this framework are well documented (Rose et al 1997, and Rose and Al-Samarrai 2001). Poverty in Ethiopia clearly has an important role to play in influencing the enrolment of boys and girls. As mentioned, Ethiopia GDP per capita remains amongst the lowest in the world with a GDP per capita of approximately US\$110. The government places a high priority on, Education and primary schooling in particular, in terms of its spending (with public recurrent spending as a proportion of public recurrent discretionary spending at 16.2 percent, 59 percent of which is spent on primary Education) (FDRE 2002b). Despite continued poverty, some success in increasing the number of school places is apparent, with the number of primary schools increasing at an annual rate of 3.2 percent per annum between 1997/98-2000/01 (the period of ESDP 1). However, this is significantly below the target set in ESDP 1 – with 1,364 schools built compared with a target of 2,423 (FDRE 2002a). Thus, the increase barely kept pace with the growth of the school-aged population. Since enrolment increased dramatically over this period, over-crowding was increasingly evident particularly in the lower grades. In addition, primary unit costs remain high due in particular to the relatively high level of primary school teacher salaries, which stands at 7.8 times GDP per capita. While an average for teacher salaries of 3.5 times GDP per capita has been calculated for high performing, low-income countries (Bruns, Mingat, and Rakatomalala 2003), these countries have on average higher levels of GDP per capita than Ethiopia with well over 80 per cent of the working population engaged in agricultural activities, and only 54 per cent of the population of

working age, those engaged in formal employment are a small minority of the population.

A further constraint to the supply of Education in the Ethiopian context is disruption to Education services due to continued conflict in some parts of the country. This has resulted in budgets being diverted, and some school facilities being used for other purposes. Furthermore, children who should be in school having been displaced (World Bank 1999). Although during the intensified period of conflict in the late 1980s resulted in declining enrolments, particularly for boys who feared conscription from school premises (Rose et al 1997), it appears that a commitment to Education has been maintained with enrolments continuing to increase. However, the Education prospects of some children are undoubtedly being affected. In addition, donor funds have been irregular due to concern about the conflict and, therefore, use of their resources (FDRE 2002a).

Rationing is partly determined by demand for, Education which is seriously affected by poverty at the household level. Approximately 45 percent of people in Ethiopia are estimated to be living below the poverty line (based on estimates of real consumption per adult), the majority of whom live in rural areas (World Bank 1999). It is not surprising, therefore, that poverty at the household level is also a constraint to boys and girls attending and staying in school. For the highest income group, the gender gap in primary enrolment discriminates against boys (with a primary GER of 49 percent for boys and 55 percent for girls). However, the opposite is the case for lower income groups, with girls' GER in the lowest income group only 15 percent, compared with 26 percent for boys (World Bank 1998).

While factors related to poverty influence the schooling opportunities of boys and girls, a number of inter-related factors suggest that it is likely to disproportionately affect girls. The impact of the recent abolition of fees was less significant compared with the experience in countries such as Malawi and Uganda, suggesting that other constraints continue to influence the demand for schooling. At the household level, although direct costs of schooling are similar for boys and girls, research examining the effects of

household wealth on the probability of a child attending and completing school revealed that an increase in a wealth index by one unit improved a boy's chances of attending school by 16 per cent, compared to 41 per cent for girls suggesting that girls' enrolment is more susceptible to poverty than boys (Rose and Al-Samarrai 2001). One reason why boys are less affected by household poverty is that they are in a better position to earn money through petty trading to pay for their own school expenses. Furthermore, poorer households are more likely to require children to work for longer hours, and the gender division of labor tends to have an adverse effect on girls' enrolment in particular. Although both boys and girls are involved in activities outside of school time, girls take on more domestic responsibilities in which they are involved for longer hours than boys. In addition, in one area in Ethiopia pupils and teachers noted that the work performed by boys is not necessarily incompatible with school work: they could study whilst in the fields looking after cattle, whereas girls were unable to do so while performing their household chores (Rose et al 1997).

In terms of the labor market, the vast majority (89 percent) of men and women are engaged in agricultural activities. Formal employment opportunities continue to favor men, with women comprising only 30 percent of government employees. Within the civil service, women are most evident amongst the lower paid group (41.9 percent of total employees earning 105-199 Birr per month were women in 1998) with only 7.2 percent of women amongst the highest wage group (1800 Birr and over) (Federal Civil Service Commission statistics, cited in JICA 1999). Furthermore, while women make up half of clerical workers in the civil service, they are only 11.9 percent of the total number of professional and scientific employees (ibid).

Societal attitudes towards pregnancy and marriage continue to mean that some girls do not complete school. Despite the recent change in policy increasing the official age of marriage of girls to 18 years, in some parts of Ethiopia girls still get married when they are below 10 years of age. Thus, some girls are married before they have the chance of attending school. In some areas girls sometimes get 'kidnapped' on their way to school, or even from within the school compound itself, by the parents of boys, for marriage to their sons (Rose et al 1997). As a result of this risk, some parents refuse to send their

daughters to school. Yelfign (2003) gives examples of girls who were married before the age of 10, after which they moved to their in-laws household. These girls managed to leave their husbands and continue with their schooling. Unfortunately, such examples continue to be the exception. However, girls' advisory committees have had some success in providing support to girls who otherwise would be expected to marry early, as well as ones who have faced harassment, including rape and abduction occurring in the school environment

Pregnancy is another important reason for girls dropping out of school after reaching puberty. However, there is no government policy towards the re-admission of pregnant school girls since this is considered to imply encouragement of pregnancy amongst young girls. Furthermore, while there is an apparent commitment in the Education policy and plans to increase the proportion of female teachers, it is reported that female trainees in some institutes have to take a pregnancy test. If they are pregnant, they will not be accepted and it is unlikely that they will re-apply after giving birth (Yelfign 2003).

Moreover, at the school level, continued commitment to eliminating gender stereotypes in textbooks, which are, now prepared within regions has been successful in minimizing gender bias, with some pictures showing boys and girls involved in similar activities. Furthermore, the social studies curriculum includes topics on women's rights and harmful cultural practices. However, some stereotypes remain. For example, an English textbook describes a rich farmer leaving all his property to his sons, with no mention of his daughters (Yelfign 2003).

In general, while policy commitment to reducing gender disparities is apparent and some success in implementing reforms is evident, attitudes, which adversely influence girls' educational opportunities, are deep rooted. On the one hand, a fundamental transformation in gender relations has not yet occurred, so it is likely that gender disparities in educational opportunities will continue for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, the increasing numbers of females who are now progressing through the system could in the longer term have an impact on changing societal attitudes, which, in turn, will assist in moving towards removing gender disparities in Education.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE IMPACT OF GENDER ON EDUCATION

#### 3. Students' Primary and Secondary School Enrolment and Gender Parity Index in the Study Area

Most scholars agree that gender has influence on education. This influence is indicated in many ways. In this study, I attempted to investigate the influence of gender on education. Initially, I gathered the total number of the student population from the *Woreda's* Education Office. In the *Woreda*, there are 22 primary schools. Among these, 19 schools are at the 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle of Primary (Grades 1-4) Level and 3 schools are at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle of Primary (Grades 5-8) Level. The total number of students at both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of primary level is 10,182. Among these students, 4,577 are males and 5,607 are females. This entails that the number of female students' exceeds the number of male students at the primary level. When we assess the Gender Parity Index (GPI<sup>3</sup>) at the primary level, it is 1.23. Therefore, the female students' gross enrollment at primary school in the study area is greater than the national GPI (0.81).

In 2004/05, a new 1<sup>st</sup> cycle secondary school (Grades 9-10) is established in the *Woreda*. At this level, 1,425 students (737 males and 688 females) are enrolled. The GPI at the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle secondary level is **0.93**, which is less than GPI (**1.23**) at primary level in the study area. This entails that female students' enrolment at the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle secondary school is less than that of the primary level.

The following table indicates students' enrolment at the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle secondary level in Berenta *Woreda* during the 2006/07 academic year.

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<sup>3</sup> GPI refers to the ratio of female to male enrolment rates.

**Table 5: Students' Enrollment in 2006/07 at Secondary (Grades 9-10) Level**

Grade Level	Sex		GPI
	Male	Female	
Grade 9	455	445	0.98
Grade 10	282	243	0.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>0.93</b>

Source: The *Shebel-Berenta Woreda's* Education Office

### **3.1 Factors Affecting Females' Participation in Primary and Secondary Schools**

In the above discussion, the study attempts to investigate the enrollment of both male and female students at primary and 1<sup>st</sup> cycle secondary levels. In my ethnographic study, I focused mainly on examining problems of female students and factors affecting females' success in education in the study area.

According to my key informants gender has its own influence on participation and success in education. As a result there is a gender disparity between males and females in terms of participation and success in education.

The female teacher informants further elaborated factors affecting females' participation and academic performance. According to them, the following factors are the major ones:

- a) **Cultural Influence** – The community mainly encourages females to be shy and submissive. Female students are not ready to provide answers for questions raised from their teachers even though they know the answers very well. Within a class the lesson is mainly dominated by males' active participation. There are very few female students who participate well in the class.
- b) **Fear of Colleague Students** – Most female students fear not to make errors when they provide answers for questions raised from their teachers. When they make errors their classmates laughed at them. As a result, they are not willing to provide answers to the questions.

c) **The Work-load** – Females are double burdened in the society. Female students’ labor is more time consuming than male students’ labor at the family level. Most mothers need the help of their daughters at home rather than their sons. When I interviewed female students at Yeduha Secondary School (Grades 9-10), one of my informants described her work-load at home as follows:

My brother and I go to school together. We learn together and we return home together. After we return, I prepare food for him and for me. My brother has extra time to study his lesson. I am engaged in different activities at home. Even when he is required to look after cattle, he can read in the field.

From the above description, we can understand that female students are always involved in domestic activities before and after school. As a result, their academic performance is less than their male counter parts.

### 3.2 Factors Affecting Females’ Classroom Participation in Primary and Secondary Schools

My ethnographic study indicates that females’ classroom participation is very low compared to their male counter parts.

Based on the questionnaire results (see Appendix I), the major factors affecting females’ classroom participation in both primary and secondary schools of the study area are summarized in the following table.

**Table 6: Major Factors Affecting Females’ Classroom Participation in Primary and Secondary Schools of Berenta Woreda**

Factors	Responses					Total
	1*	2**	3***	4****	5*****	
Fear of making errors	13	15	4	46	15	93
Gender influence	12	13	5	47	16	93
Parental educational background	11	10	5	37	29	92
Cultural influence	19	14	10	27	17	87
Lack of background knowledge	31	34	8	18	6	97
Religious influence	41	26	9	4	5	85
Peer group influence	22	22	12	26	4	86

Source: Fieldwork Survey Result

**N.B**

- \* Strongly disagree
- \*\* Disagree
- \*\*\* Undecided
- \*\*\*\* Agree
- \*\*\*\*\* Strongly agree

As we can see from the above table, the first four factors (**lack of background knowledge, fear of making errors, parental educational background, and gender influence**) strongly influence females' classroom participation in both primary and secondary education.

On the basis of information gathered through a questionnaire, focus group participants and informants (female students and teachers), the following four major factors are strongly affecting females' participation in education.

#### **a) Parental Educational Background**

Parents have great role in determining the life of their children. Parental educational background (literate or illiterate) has great impact on female students' participation in education.

As we can see from the above table (table 6), among 92 respondents, 66 female students agreed that their parents' educational background has impact on their participation in education. However, 26 female students disagreed on the issue at hand.

My focus group participants also confirmed that parental educational background has a strong impact on females' participation in education. They pointed out that female students with educated parental background have better participation in education compared to female students with uneducated parental background. They further explained that female students who have educated parents are encouraged to focus on their formal education, whereas female students from uneducated parental background are not motivated to focus on formal education since uneducated parents have negative attitude towards female education being highly influenced by traditional social values and norms about what is to be a "good" woman. For these parents, the socially appropriate role of a woman is to be a wife and a mother. As a result, they prefer to arrange early marriage for their daughters so that they can get social value in their community. They are also interested in their daughters being involved in different activities at home so that they can assist their mother as well as they can learn feminine values.

My informants have also raised similar points to the issue at hand. In this regard, one of my female student informants says:

There are many obstacles that I face in my life due to my parents' lack of exposure to formal education. I have a brother who attends school with me. He has extra time to study the subject matter that he learnt in the school. However, I have no extra time to read my exercise books at home. My mother is more interested to assist her in the household activities well. Since she is uneducated, she doesn't worry about my education because she lacks awareness about the value of female education.

From the above description, we can understand that parental educational background has its own impact on female students' participation in education.

#### **b) Gender Influence (Patriarchal Ideology)**

Researches conducted in Ethiopia indicate that the Ethiopian society is a patriarchal society, where male dominance is prevalent in every aspect of life. Females are exposed to different problems, including low participation in education, due to their subordinate position or low status in the society.

The gender influence (the patriarchal ideology) is clearly observed in my ethnographic study area, like other parts of Ethiopia. The ethnographic data gathered through questionnaire, interview and FGD assert that the gender ideology has a strong influence on females' participation in education.

Among the 93 respondents of the questionnaire, 63 female students agreed that the gender ideology has its influence on females' participation in education. Most of my informants also agreed that gender ideology has a significant effect on females' participation in education. According to the informants, provided that the number of male and female children is equal in the family, parents prefer to send the male child to school rather than the female one.

### **c) Fear of Making Errors**

As a result of the subordinate position of women in the society, submissiveness is encouraged in the study area. Among 93 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 61 (66%) of them agreed that fear of making errors in the class has influenced females' participation in education.

The hindrance of this factor is also articulated well by focus group participants and informants of the study. During the focus group discussion with grades 9-10 female students, the participants consolidated the contribution of this factor in hindering females' classroom participation. They described their fear of making errors in the classroom environment is a common feature. One of my informants from grade 9 described her own problem as follows: "I am interested to provide answers for the questions raised by the teacher, even though I know the answer. I regret not to respond the answer due to fear of making errors."

### **d) Cultural Influence**

Gender is the outcome of the cultural construction of the society. So, culture influences females' education either positively or negatively. As we can see from the responses of female students, out of 87 respondents, 44 (51%) respondents agreed that culture has its own influence on females' low participation in education.

Most of my informants also confirmed that cultural influence (*yebahil tetsino*) has a significant role in influencing females' participation in formal education.

## **3.3 Factors Influencing Females' Academic Performance and Success in Primary and Secondary Education**

Gender has its own impact on education. The role that has been assigned for males and females has its own influence on success in education. Most of my informants agreed that being a female in the society has its own constraints on academic performance and success in education. The family is more interested to educate males rather than females. There are different reasons that have been provided by parents and community members for not further educating females. For them, it is enough to educate females until the

primary level because they assumed that educating females beyond this level poses different problems due to various reasons. Some of the major reasons are discussed below.

### **1) Fear of sexual intercourse and pregnancy before marriage**

In my ethnographic field work, I asked some parents for the elaboration of the reason for females' low academic performance in schools. One of the parents states it as follow:

I wanted to be a respected person in the community. If my daughter does sexual intercourse with someone and becomes pregnant before marriage, it is a humiliation to me. I will be ostracized by the society. I prefer to interrupt her education and to get her married to someone. So, I am not willing to educate my daughter during the age of puberty.

As we can understand from the above explanation, fear of sexual intercourse and pregnancy before marriage is one of the major reasons for female students being unable to continue their education beyond the primary level.

### **2) Less expectation of females' education in the society**

My interviewees' response is almost similar concerning the value of educating females in the society. There is less value towards the education of females by the society. Even though this attitude is now changing, due to the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations and the media, there is still one common saying in the society: "*set lij temira yetim atdersim.*" which means, "even though females are educated, they couldn't succeed better in life." This shows that the society is patriarchal where men are the final decision-makers.

As a reflection of the society's less value to female education, parents prefer to educate males rather than females. Nowadays, this attitude is relatively changing. The female teacher informants stated the reasons for the change differently. Some of them described that the major reason is the scarcity of land which is the most common problem in the *Woreda* due to population pressure. Previously, females were considered as a source of wealth when they got married. However, nowadays the size of the family' landholding is reduced so that parents are opted for sending the female children to school rather than arranging marriage for them.

Other female teacher informants didn't agree with the above argument for the following reason. Parents in the society are not aware of the long-term benefits of educating females parallel to educating males. They simply try to analyze their daughters' short-term advantage in their day-to-day activities. As all of us know mothers have great burdens in the household activities. Thus, they need to share their workload with their daughters at home. As soon as they return home, females get engaged in different activities by supporting their mothers. As a result, school attending female students couldn't achieve better in their education due to parental imposition. The mothers also play a role in hindering female education at home.

Males' burden is minimal when we compare it to that of females. The fathers are decision-makers to send the children to school. Males may accomplish different tasks outside the home. They would look after cattle. They would gather crops during harvesting period. As these activities are mainly done during in the morning or afternoon, they have an ample time to study and enjoy themselves in the evenings.

When we look at the activities of females, they are engaged in different activities from morning to midnight. In the morning, they prepare food for the family with their mothers. In the evening again they prepare dinner for the family. Finally, they will be tired and fall a sleep. They can't do their home work and other school related activities well at home. They wouldn't be active in the classroom environment. The final outcome of all this is low academic performance and then less success in their education.

### **3) Low classroom participation**

Females' low academic performance and success in education is related with their classroom participation. In this connection, most of my informants argued that females' classroom participation both in primary and secondary school is low. According to my female teacher informants from three primary schools, only about 5 or 6 female students out of 100 students participate actively in class from discussions. On the contrary, my female teacher informants from the other two primary schools reported that females participate equally with males, which is true only for the two primary schools. Based on my observation, the relatively better participation of female students in the two primary

schools seems to be due to the presence of relatively many female teachers as positive role models.

However, females' classroom participation in the secondary school (Grades 9-10) is generally low due to other reasons. My female student informants and FGD participants from grades 9-10 stated the following two major reasons for their less participation in the class.

**i) Fear of making errors**– During the focus group discussion, most of the participants agreed that fear of making errors when they provide answers to questions is a major factor. One of my FGD participants said: “I am interested to provide answers for questions. However, I am less confident to express my opinion in the classroom environment. Even though I know the answer, I will hesitate to respond due to fear of making errors.”

**ii) Lack of background knowledge** – Among the FGD participants, some stated that their lack of background knowledge has influenced their participation within the classroom environment. They didn't attend their lesson well in the previous grades, which created a gap to understand the present lesson. Of course, they will not participate well in the lesson if they don't understand it. They also stated the necessity of getting help from male colleagues concerning educational issues. However, there is the problem of perceiving their relationship in sexual terms. Accordingly, if one female student establishes a close relationship with her male classmate, others will interpret it as if the two have a sexual relationship. Due to this wrong perception of their colleagues, female students are not interested in discussing their lesson with their male colleagues.

In addition to the above reasons given by my informants and FGD participants, I also observed that secondary school female students lack female teachers as positive role models. This, in turn, has an influence on female students' classroom participation at this level.

### 3.4 The School Environment and Its Conduciveness to Female Students

Out of the total of 93 respondents, 65 of them stated that the school environment is conducive to the teaching-learning process for both males and females. The rest of them (28 respondents) described that the school lacks a conducive environment for females in the teaching-learning process at all.

The following table describes the school environment and its suitability for female students.

**Table 7: The School Environment and Its Conduciveness to Female Students**

Activities	Sufficient	Insufficient	None	Total
A. Arrangement of tutorial program	32	40	13	85
B. Exercise of responsibility	37	30	19	86
C. Special training on gender issues for students	15	22	48	85
D. Special training on gender issues for parents	7	19	60	86
E. Empowerment of female students	28	26	32	86
F. Girls' club	4	13	69	86
G. Female students' active participation in co-curricular activities	31	37	18	86

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

**A) Arrangement of the tutorial program** – As we can see from the above table, the respondents agree that the tutorial program is provided in the schools. However, its implementation is not effective. The focus group participants also consolidated the respondents' idea. The tutorial program is mainly arranged for females to provide them with the necessary support in the schools. However, male students also attend the tutorial program together with female students. One of my female participants discussed the issue as follows:

The tutorial program is arranged for us (females). However, our male classmates learn together in the program. When the tutor asks questions, males participate actively rather than females. The tutor assumes as we understand the lesson and passes to the next topic of the lesson. So, we haven't benefited a lot from the tutorial program.

**B) Exercise of Responsibility** – Even though the teachers attempt to encourage females to exercise power within the classroom environment, the female students themselves

lack commitment to take responsibilities as monitor of the class. The opportunity is provided for both males and females. The opportunity is not properly utilized by the representative female students due to lack of confidence to take responsibility as monitor of the class.

- C) Special Training on Gender Issues for Students** – More than half of the respondents stated that there is no special training on gender issues for students. However, there are some attempts to create awareness about gender by the *Woreda's* Women Affairs Office, which is established a year ago. Within this short period, it is not expected to manage the problems effectively which have been deep rooted for a long period of time in the study area.
- D) Special Training on Gender Issues for parents** – The majority of the respondents described that there are no special trainings on gender issues provided to the parents of students in the study area. Special concern is not provided to raise the level of awareness of parents about the education of their female children. Raising the awareness level of the parents of female students plays a vital role for the betterment of females' academic performance and participation in the schools.
- E) Empowerment of Female Students** – There are some attempts to empower females in the schools. However, it is not well-organized to achieve its purpose. The *Woreda's* Women's Affairs Office attempts to organize females on this issue. The head of the Women's Affairs Office states her opinion as follows: "The Office of the Women's Affairs tries to assess the problem of female students in the teaching-learning process. The office has a plan to construct special dormitories for secondary school female students to study their lesson well. This will be done with the assistance of SIDA and the World Bank."
- F) Girls' Club** – In the schools, Girls' club is organized and led by the school female teachers. Female students gather together and elect their chair-person and secretary based on majority vote. Through their club, female students raise an issue to the concerned body through their representatives. Different issues are raised by the

female students and are discussed in detail by the students themselves. However, it lacks commitment and bold decisions to change into actions.

**G) Female Students' Active Participation in Co-curricular Activities** – Both male and female students participate in different committees and clubs of the schools based on their interest. Female students, as members of different school clubs, participate in different co-curricular activities. However, their decision-making power is insignificant. Most of the leadership role is played by males. Females are passive participants in the co-curricular activities.

### **3.5 Summary of Factors Hindering Females' Primary and Secondary Education in Berenta *Woreda***

Based on my ethnographic data gathered through structured questionnaire, key informants, interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observation, the major problems that hinder females' education in the study area are the following:

- i) Early marriage,
- ii) Gender-based division of labor,
- iii) Parents' illiteracy, and
- iv) Societal negative attitude towards female education.

The above mentioned four factors hindering females' education in the study area indicates that the problem of female education is multi-dimensional. The respondents, informants and focus group participants repeatedly mentioned that early marriage and gender-based division of labor as the major factors' hindering females' participation in education in the study area. These factors are briefly discussed as follows:

**i) Early marriage** –According to the Woreda's Information Office, the average age of marriage for girls in the *Woreda* is 13 years, which has its own impact on females' education. Of course, there are married male students who managed to proceed with their education after they got married. However, married female students have less probability to continue their education due to pregnancy probably soon after the marriage and child birth. After the married female student gave birth, she is

responsible to nourish and take care of her child at home. Therefore, her education will be forgotten. We will discuss this in detail in Chapter Five.

**ii) Gender-based division of labor**– In the study area, division of labor is mainly based on gender. Demand for both male and female child labor is very high in the study area, where the majority of the population lives in a rural setting. Starting in their early ages (as early as seven years) both male and female children get engaged in the field to look after the cattle, assisting their parents in preparing the land for farm activity and in harvesting the crop during harvesting period. When we come to the females, their burden becomes double. They prepare food for the family together with their mothers. They would also help their fathers during harvesting period. Most of my respondents described that female students have double burden in the family. As they returned home, they are engaged in different activities. They assist their mothers at home. They also assist their fathers outside home. Particularly, during harvesting time, they are engaged in the activities of the farmland. When I interviewed a grade 4 female student at Tebet primary school, she described her involvement in field activities as follows: “As I return home from the school, I go to our farmland to uproot the chick-pea (*shimbra nekela*) and I return home in the evening.”

Generally, from the above discussions, we can conclude that factors hindering females' involvement in education are immense. However, in the study area the problems revolve around poverty and traditional practices. Hence, the next chapter attempts to investigate poverty and its impact on education in general and female education in particular.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON FEMALES' EDUCATION

#### 4.1 Poverty and Its Gender-Specific Impact on Education

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to World Fact Book (2005), approximately 81 percent of its population lives on less than US \$2 a day and life expectancy fell to 49 years, mainly due to the growing HIV epidemic. Women disproportionately bear the burden of poverty in Ethiopia. This is mainly a result of the gender based division of labor and lack of access and control over resources prescribed not only by tradition and culture, but also reiterated in the law. Women are responsible for all the household chores in addition to the support they provide in agriculture and livestock production. The state of the environment and lack of appropriate technology increases the burden of women and decreases the opportunity for income generating activities. This in turn limits their participation in development sectors. A recent participatory rural appraisal indicates that women not only are turning themselves to a number of income generating activities to sustain or supplement their family income, but are doing so without any technical or financial support (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>).

The ethnographic data on poverty and its gender-specific impact on education in the study are described as follows.

Among the 90 respondents, 65 of them asserted that poverty has gender-specific impact on education. Even though poverty plays a hindering role on both male and female education, its negative impact is severe particularly on female education. This is due to the gender-based division of labor and the subordinate position of women in the society.

The following table clearly indicates the impacts of poverty on female education in the study area based on the response of the questionnaire respondents.

**Table 8: Impacts of Poverty on Female Education in Berenta Woreda (March 2007)**

Impacts of Poverty on Female Education	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Parental financial constraints to cover the expenses of educational and other facilities	27	42%
Female students' work load	13	20%
Reinforcing early marriage	10	16%
Aggravating prostitution	5	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

### **1) Parental Financial Constraints to Cover the Expenses of Educational and Other Facilities**

Basic educational facilities such as exercise books, pens, pencils, textbooks and other materials are necessary for better educational achievement. In the study area, among 65 respondents, 27 of them reported that lack of educational facilities have negative impacts on female education.

In addition to the need to buy basic educational facilities, secondary school students from the rural areas of the *Woreda* need to rent dormitories in the *Woreda's* town (Yeduha). The rent is an additional expense to the students' parents. Most parents have no the capacity to cover the expenses of both basic educational facilities and the dormitory rent for their secondary school attending children, particularly daughters. This financial constraint leads female students to dropout from secondary school. One of the female secondary school FGD participants described the impact of parental financial constraints on female education as follows: "My parents need certain reason to discontinue my education. Poverty provides a chance to create the challenge against me. እንዲያውም ሲያሻኝ ጭስ ወጋኝ (meaning I got a reason when I wish to do it)." This explains parents' unwillingness to support their daughter education. So, poverty aggravates the situation.

### **2) Female Students' Heavy Work-load**

Female students from poor families are exposed to heavy workload. In the study area, 13 out of 65 female respondents described that female students are highly exposed to heavy

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### **2) Female Students' Heavy Work-load**

Female students from poor families are exposed to heavy workload. In the study area, 13 out of 65 female respondents described that female students are highly exposed to heavy

work load due to family poverty. I have also observed that secondary school female students from poor rural families are engaged in hired daily labor and other domestic activities to fulfill their basic needs. This has negative impacts on their academic performance and success in education.

### **3) Reinforcing Early Marriage**

Poverty is reinforcing early marriage in the study area. Since poor parents cannot fulfill the basic necessities of both male and female children, they prefer to arrange early marriage for their daughters rather than allowing them to continue their formal education.

### **4) Aggravating Prostitution**

Early marriage, which is reinforced by poverty in the study area, aggravates prostitution. Unhappy early married females leave their home and move to the nearby towns or cities for better life. However, the towns or cities are not favorable places for them because they are vulnerable to prostitution, which has negative social, psychological and health consequences.

## **4.2 Economic Decision-Making and Its Gender-Specific Impact on Education**

Although there is gender-based division of labor in Ethiopia, women tend to work longer hours and shoulder larger responsibilities than men do. An average day for a woman starts at dawn and continues through dusk. Apart from the burden of feeding the family, women have to take care of children and the elderly. Despite their contributions, they are often seen and considered as weak and invisible in development projects. Their role in the overall development endeavors of the country is either misunderstood or totally underestimated. They are minority in decision making processes and had no voice in matters that even concern their own lives at the household level (Ahmed, et.al, 2001).

The ethnographic data on economic decision making power and gender-specific impacts on education at the household level in the study area are described as follows.

Out of a total of 97 female student respondents, 54 responded that both the mother and the father have joint economic decision-making power in the family. 42 out of 97 respondents responded that only the father has economic decision making power in the family. Whereas only 1 out of 97 respondents responded that only the mother has economic decision-making power in the family. The following table shows the percentage of gender-specific economic decision-making at the family level.

**Table 9: Gender-Specific Economic Decision-Making at the Family Level in Berenta Woreda (March 2007)**

<b>Economic Decision-Maker</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mother and father	54	56%
Mother	1	1%
Father	42	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

The above table clearly indicates that the majority of economic decisions in the family are mainly made by the father (husband). This implies the father (husband) with a dominant economic decision-power can play a dominant role in making decisions about children's, particularly sons' education.

#### **4.2.1 Reasons for Male Dominance in Economic Decision-Making**

Possible reasons for male dominance in economic decision making at the family level, based on respondents' responses in the study area, are described as follows.

1. **Females' subordinate position in the family-** 21 respondents pointed out that male dominance in economic decision making in the family is the result of males' superior position in the family. Among these, 10 respondents underline males' superior position in the family is the major factor for male dominance on economic matters. They argued that females' subordinate position in the family is the reasons for their lack of economic decision-making power in the family.
2. **Males' control over family resources** – 6 respondents, among 21, explained that males' control over family resources provided males with the power to make economic decisions. This, in turn, gives them great opportunity to make decision on children's, particularly sons' education.

3. **Considering males as responsible individuals** - 4 out of 21 respondents stated male domination on economic decision-making as a reason for considering males as responsible individuals. In the study area, males are commonly considered as the right people to control and manage family resources/property well, which is a socially appropriate role for males in the study area.

Generally, the above stated reasons demonstrate why males dominate the economic decision making power at a household level. This, in turn, has a negative impact on females' education in the study area because males with economic decision power in a resource/income poor family give priority to males' education, which is a commonly observed practice in the study area.

#### 4.2.2 Control over Resources and Its Gender-Specific Impact on Education at the Family Level

Among 96 respondents of the questionnaire on control over resources at the family level, 60 respondents reported that both the father and the mother have control over resources at the family level. While 26 respondents pointed out that only the father has control over resources at the family level. In contrast only 10 respondents reported that the mother has control over resources at the family level. The following table shows the percentage of gender-specific control over resources at the household level in the study area.

**Table 10: Gender-Specific Control Over Resources at the Family Level in Berenta Woreda (March 2007)**

Resource Controller	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Both Father and Mother	60	63%
Father	26	27%
Mother	10	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

According to the above table, males have a relatively greater control over household resources. This entails that fathers in a resource shortage household prefer to educate male children rather than females.

### 4.2.3 Reasons for Gender-Specific Control over Family Resources

Based on the respondents' responses, the possible reasons for males' control over Family resources are stated as follows:

- 1) **Females' subordinate position in the society**– Females are considered as they have no power to decide on economic matters due to their subordinate position in the society. Accordingly, 17 among 26 respondents asserted that males' control over household resources is the result of this societal view, which is supported well by the following sayings: (1) “ሴት ወደ ማጀት ወንድ ወደ ችሎት” (Literally, the domestic for females; the public domain for males); and (2) “ሴት ብታውቅ በወንድ ያልቅ” (Literally, no matter how knowledgeable a woman is, it is the man who can decide). The above sayings consolidate well the decision-making power of males over crucial matters. If the decision-making power of males exceeds that of the females, the educational access of females is also decided by the good will of their fathers.
- 2) **Confinement of females in the domestic sphere**- 4 out of 27 respondents stated that females are expected to be confined to the home. They are not encouraged to discuss and decide over the resources outside the domestic sphere.
- 3) **Considering males as more knowledgeable than females**– Males are considered as more knowledgeable than in social, economic and political affairs. It is believed that if females have access to and control over resources, they couldn't manage the resources properly due to lack of knowledge. As a result, the society encourages males to control family resources.

In contrast to the above justifications for males' dominance in control over family resources, 10 respondents, out of 96, argued that females' have dominance in control over family resources based on the following reasons.

- a) **Proper allocation of family resources** – 6 among 10 respondents stated that females have dominance in control over household resources because of the extravagant nature of some males. They further explained that females exactly know the internal demands of their homes so that they can allocate the resources properly. As males do not exactly know the actual needs of their home, they cannot allocate the resources well.

**b) Understanding family problems** – Women as they have better knowledge are highly engaged about the domestic affairs than men. This situation provides them with an opportunity to know the domestic affairs well. Hence, for proper management of family resources and educating both male and female children, women take the responsibility of controlling resources well.

Generally, females have access to resources but their control over resources is minimal compared with that of males. The responses that have been obtained from the respondents consolidate this fact. When we analyze, the overall situation for male domination, it is related with culture. The reasons that have been stated by respondents indicate the link between the socially assigned gender roles and education.

### 4.3 Gender-Specific Decision-Making Power in Sending Children to School

The following table shows the decision-maker with regard to sending children to school at the household level in the study area.

**Table 11: Gender-Specific Decision-Making Power in Sending Children to School at the Family Level in Berenta Woreda (March 2007)**

Decision-Maker	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Both Father and Mother	68	71%
Father	23	24%
Mother	5	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

As we can see from the above table, 68 out of 96 respondents stated that the authority of sending children to school mainly rests on the good will of both parents. 23 among 96 respondents reported that the father has the decision-making power to send children to school, whereas only 5 out of 96 respondents reported that the mother has the power to send children to school.

The above questionnaire results were consolidated more by the focus group participants and informants. Female teacher participants described the situation as follows:

When students are absent from the school, we go to the home of the absentee student. We ask the father why the student is absent from the class. The father says 'I am willing to send him/her to the school.' But his /her mother is not willing to send the child to school. The father tries to pass the

problem to the mother, and the mother again back to the father. Therefore, unless the two parents are willing to educate their children, students' participation in the school will not be effective.

My FGD participants further explained that the father has more authority to send his children to school than the mother due to the following reasons:

- First, most of the mothers in the study area have no right to own family resources. The father, the breadwinner, has the authority to send or not to send his children to school.
- Second, the initial decision maker to send children to school is the father even though the mother has the facilitating role in children's schooling. In other words, if the father is unwilling in educating the children, he has the veto power in the family. In this connection, one of my informants says:

I attended my secondary education by renting a dorm at Yeduha. My parents' home is about 15kms from Yeduha. I go to my home once a week. My father pays the house rent for me. My mother prepares food which is enough for a week. However, the continuation of my further education is based on the good will of my father.

The above discussion points indicate that females' opportunities for education have an economic ground. Poverty plays its own role in hindering females' education in the study area. At the family level, the economic decision-making power plays a crucial role in determining females' access to education.

Generally, access to resources and control over resources have significant role in determining gender relations in the study area. This, in turn, has its own impact on females' education.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE EFFECT OF TRADITIONAL PRACTICES ON FEMALE EDUCATION

### 5. An Overview of Traditional Practices Affecting Female Education

Traditional practices reflect values and beliefs held by members of a community for periods often spanning generations. Every social grouping in the world has specific traditional practices and beliefs. Some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful to a specific group such as women. These harmful traditional practices include: *early marriage, gender-based division of labor, son preference, female infanticide, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, nutritional taboos, traditional birth practices* and others (Guday 2004).

There is a growing international awareness that some traditional practices which are considered as harmful act as root causes for discrimination and violence against girls and women. Several studies attest the fact that gender-specific traditional practices are systemic and universal. Anthropologists are interested in examining how and why traditional practices affecting girls and women are practiced in a society. With specific reference to early marriage, Moore (1988:106-10) attempts to explore why early marriage is practiced in Muslim society in relation to honor as follows:

One of the key values in Muslim society is that of honor, and family honor depends most critically on the modest, chaste and discreet sexual conduct of daughters, sisters and wives. Honor is a basic social principle, and family's reputation and status in the community depend upon its vigilant maintenance. The principle of honor structures gender and kinship relationships and it is the guiding principle behind the behavioral restrictions on Muslim women. The concern with honor and sexual behavior favors early marriage and it also favors female seclusion after the age of puberty. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that few girls continue at school after the age of 15 years, and that the members of young single women employed outside the home in Muslim countries are very small.

The ethnographic data reveal three major traditional practices affecting female education in the study area. These are: (1) Early marriage; (2) Gender-based division of labor; and (3) Son preference for schooling.

## **5.1. Early Marriage and Its Effect on Female Education**

### ***5.1.1 Early Marriage and its Conceptual Framework***

The study on early marriage indicates that there is no universally accepted definition of early marriage. To analyze the concept of early marriage it is important to consider two central questions:

- a) What constitutes marriage?
- b) What constitutes early marriage?

The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (FMRWG 2003:39, cited in Guday 2005) defines marriage as it exists in all societies and as a “formalized of relationship with legal or social standing between men and women, in which sexual relations are legitimized and as an area for reproduction and child rearing which has state recognition.”

Concerning early marriage international organizations defined the concept as follows:

- “Early marriage” refers to the practice of marriage before or during adolescence” (UNICEF 2001a cited in Guday 2005).
- “Early marriage” refers to any form of marriage that takes place before a child has reached 18 years (FMRWG 2003:39, cited in Guday 2005).

Based on the above conceptual framework the study analyzes the overall prevalence of early marriage in Ethiopia and its major causes and specific effects on female education in the study area.

### ***5.1.2 The Prevalence of Early Marriage***

A study by the National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices of Ethiopia (NCTPE) estimated the proportion of girls who get married before the age of 15 is 57 percent. The same study shows that the practice occurs in its most extreme form in northern Ethiopia, where girls get married as young as eight years of age. In some instances, they are even pledged at birth. Although early marriage is widely practiced in many parts of the country, its prevalence rates in Amhara and Tigray Regions are much higher than the national average (82 percent in Amhara, 79 percent in Tigray, 64 percent

in Benishangul, 64 percent in Gambella and 46 percent in Afar) (NCTPE 2003). A recent study conducted in two *Woredas* of the Amhara region also shows that 14 percent of girls were married before the age of 10; 39 percent before the age of 15; and 56 percent before the age of 18 (Population Council 2004 cited in Pathfinder International/ Ethiopia 2006).

According to Article 7 of the Revised Family Code 2000 (cited in Pathfinder international/ Ethiopia 2006), the legal marital age for both boys and girls is eighteen years. Despite this law, the country is known for one of the most severe crises of child marriage in the world. The Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2005) reports that 13 percent of girls in Ethiopia are married at the age of 15 (a slight decline from 14 percent reported by DHS 2000), but those married before 18 years of age remained as high as 66 percent. The median age also remained at about 16 years for the nation and 15 for the Amhara Region (Pathfinder International/Ethiopia 2006).

### ***5.1.3 Causes of Early Marriage***

In Ethiopia, early marriage is seen as a way to improve the economic status of the family, to strengthen ties between families, to ensure that girls are virgin when they marry, and to avoid the possibility of a girl reaching an age where she is no longer desirable as a wife (“*Komo Ker*”). The practice of early marriage is now (for a while) understood to have very harmful effects on the health, psychological, physiological and socio-economic well-being of young girls (as well as for the newborns). However, this knowledge is not broadly shared across most of the population.

Wedding girls in their early age is the most common feature of the study area which usually starts with the age of 7. Females get married by the agreement of their parents. When I interviewed the people from different offices of the *Woreda* (such as Women’s Affairs Office and Information Office) support their ideas with documented evidences. This problem is a sensitive issue in the *Woreda*. Females get married between the ages of 7-13. This is the living reality of the study area.

Early marriage has great impact in creating obstacles against female education. The principal of Tebet Primary School, one of the male informants, consolidated this practice well. According to his explanation, most female students do not attend school above

grade 4. According to my key informants and FGD participants, parents prefer to arrange early marriage for their daughters due the following major factors.

**a) Economic factors**

The *Woreda*'s main economic activity is agriculture. The society is an agrarian society. Their existence is dependent on agricultural products. When we discuss agriculture, we are discussing land. Due to population growth land is scarce in the *Woreda*. Family planning is not practiced well in the study area. One family may produce birth up to 5-8 children on average. However, families have no the capacity to nourish, feed and educate their children properly. Therefore, as a survival strategy, they would prefer marriage for their daughters at an early age without their consent.

Furthermore, in the study area children are considered as wealth (*lij habt naw*) so that parents prefer to maximize the number of their children through early marriage arrangements.

**b) Social factors**

The need to create alliance between the marrying families has also contribution to the practice of early marriage in the study area. When parents prefer to consolidate their relationship with another family, they promise to create alliance through the marriage of their children (*Lijhin le lije*).

Another social reason is to alleviate disputes which occur between two families. In the *Woreda*, there is one common problem which worsens relationships in the society, i.e., the act of killing one another (feud system), i.e., if a person kills the member of a family, the revenge is implemented by following the blood line of the killer's family. This is a harsh measure which is taken by the victim's family. It is named as *dam mamalalas* (which means literally direct revenge). To resolve this problem, the elders mediate the two conflicting families through early marriage arrangements between these families. Thus, early marriage is considered as a better conflict resolving mechanism in the study area. It is named as *dam madrekia* (Literally, forgetting the revenge).

The other social factor is fear of pre-marital sex and pregnancy before marriage. Parents want to avoid the problem of sexual intercourse and pregnancy before marriage. In order to avoid this problem, early marriage is the preferred mechanism in the society. In this connection, my female informants from Yeduha Secondary School repeatedly raise this issue as a major factor for female students' dropout after grade 8. The family is mainly worried about the virginity and dignity of their daughters rather than their further education. In this regard, there is one common saying in the community, *simen tastefalech* (my name will be spoiled due to my daughter's loss of virginity and pregnancy before marriage). This is one of the major factors hindering females' education in the Berenta *Woreda*.

The following table shows the respondents' response to the possible reasons for the practice of early marriage in the study area.

**Table 12: Possible Reasons for the Practice of Early Marriage (March 2007)**

Rank	Possible Reasons for Early Marriage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Lack of awareness about problem of early marriage	22	40%
2	Parents' desire to see the marriage of their children before they pass away ( <i>ye lijen adugna liyi</i> )	15	27%
3	Parents' desire for social prestige	4	7%
4	Parents' concern for virginity	3	6%
5	Fear of girls' unmarriageable status beyond the age of 14 ( <i>komo ker</i> )	3	6%
6	Repayment for attending others' wedding feasts	3	6%
7	Alliance formation	2	4%
8	Family influence	1	4%
9	Disagreement between parents	1	2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

Based on the above table, the possible reasons for early marriage are briefly discussed as follows:

- **Lack of awareness about the problem of early marriage:** This aggravates the prevalence of early marriage practices in the study area. This is reported by the majority (40%) of the respondents.

- **Parents' desire to see the marriage of their children before they pass away**, which is locally termed as “ሳልሞት የልጅን አበባ ልይ” (*salmot ye lijen abeba liy*, which means I shall see the happiness of my daughter wedding ceremony before I pass away). This is reported by 15 (27%) respondents out of 55.
- **Parents' desire for social prestige**, i.e., if parents prepare an elaborative wedding ceremony, they will be appreciated by the community for their feast, which would increase their social prestige in the community. This was reported by 4 (7%) respondents out of 55.
- **Parents' concern for their daughter's virginity**. If the girl is married in her early age, it is possible to preserve her virginity. The family considers this situation as the source of honor in the society. To gain this honor, the family prefers to arrange early marriage at her early age. If she gets pregnant before marriage, the family considers the act shameful or defeat in the eyes of the community. Her parents would say, “በሷ ምክንያት ስሜ ጠፋ” (meaning due to her loss of virginity my name is spoiled). Due to fear of pregnancy before marriage, parents are in favor of the practice of early marriage in the study area. This is reported by 3 (6%) respondents out of 55.
- **Fear of girls' unmarriageable status beyond the age of 15 “(komo ker) (ቆሞቀር)”**- Means those girls who entered the age of adolescence (beyond the age of 13) with no marriage arrangement. No one is interested to marry the girl who is more than 14 years of age. This reinforces the practice of early marriage in the study area. This is reported by 3 (6%) respondents out of 55.

#### 5.1.4 Consequences of Early Marriage and Its Effect on Females' Education

Pathfinder International (2006) identified the following consequences of early marriage in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia:

- **Instability of Marriage:** The region is characterized by high incidence of marriage instability (the rate of divorce was 27 percent in urban and 19 percent in rural), and the main reason is often attributed to early marriage. In 38 percent of the cases “too young for marriage” was cited as the reason for dissolution of the first marriage.

- **Poor Health:** 8.4 percent of women who were married under the age of 14 reported to problems of poor reproductive health.
- **Fistula and Related Problems:** Almost all respondents in the qualitative survey reported knowing of at least one case of fistula in their lifetime; some reported knowing of up to five fistula cases.
- **Too Many Children:** Women married before age 15 have an average of 5 children, those who married between 15 and 17 years have 4.2, and women who married after age 18 have 3.1.
- **Main Reason for School Dropout and Less Education:** Over 78 percent of girls who didn't marry under the age of 24 are attending school, as compared to the 8.9 percent of the currently married girls. Among those out of school, 28 percent cited marriage and 19 percent cited child bearing as the main reason for not attending school.
- **Impact on the Well-Being of Children:** Early marriage is detrimental to the health of children when the mother is neither psychologically nor physiologically ready to care for her children.
- **Women's Inequality:** Early marriage limits female educational opportunity, thereby reducing their employment opportunity and economic independence. The study has further confirmed that victims of early marriage are vulnerable to gender based violence, high fertility, marital instabilities, and to reproductive health related complications. Women's lack of decision-making power in their families and communities is exacerbated by the inherent power imbalance between a young girl and her husband, who is often older by 10 years or more.

The above described consequences of early marriage are also reported by almost all respondents (96 out of 97) of the study. Most female students are vulnerable to different health and psychological problems. Those who are exposed to early marriage are suffering from fistula now. During my interview, the female teachers even stated the victims by name. Most of the FGD participants agree that equivalent measures have not been taken for the problem.

Almost all respondents confirmed that the practice of early marriage in the study area negatively affects females' education. It is also one of the major reasons for female students' dropout beyond the second cycle of primary level (beyond grade 8).

My informants also stated that early marriage is the major hindering factor for females' education in the *Woreda*. My informants agree that the average age of marriage is 13 years in the study area. It is also well consolidated by one of my secondary school female student participants. She described her own problem as follows:

I married at the age of 14. My education is interrupted due to my marriage. However, my husband completed his secondary school education and became a teacher. After he became a teacher, I resumed my education after 6 years of withdrawal from the school. Early marriage has great impact on female education.

#### ***5.1.5. Measures Taken to Alleviate the Problem of Early Marriage***

The following information has been gathered from the Women's Affairs of the *Woreda*. I raised different questions on factors that affect females' participation in education in the study area. Among the factors, early marriage takes the first rank. Some attempts are made to solve the problem in the study area through a committee which is named as *Ye Gojji Limad Aswegajji* Committee (Committee for the Eradication of Harmful Traditional Practices), which is organized from the *kebele* to the *Woreda* level. The committee has 12 members who are composed of religious leaders, Youth Association, Women's Affairs, School Teachers, and other concerned bodies from each *kebele* of the *Woreda*.

Information is gathered through the committee members and reported to the *Woreda Gojji Limad Aswegajji* committee and also to the Women's Affairs Office. Advice is given to the parents who arrange early marriage for their children. If they are not willing to postpone the marriage, the age of the girl is estimated by the health professionals at the Health Center. The nurse approves whether her (the would-be-bride) age is appropriate for marriage or not. If her age is not appropriate, the parents are informed to postpone the marriage until their daughter's age reaches 18. If her age is proper to marriage, the health professionals approve the age. The marriage is practiced after HIV Blood test has been done for the would-be wife and husband. If the family is reluctant to attend the

procedures, the committee will take the case to the court. Hence, a legal measure is taken to deter early marriage.

However, when we come to the real situation, it is not practical for various reasons. Some of the reasons are:

a) **Lack of Commitment** - The committee members are reluctant for the effective implementation of the law against early marriage. They lack devotion and commitment to stop the practice of early marriage. Even the committee members themselves are engaged in the practice. They also lack coordinated efforts to stop the practice of early marriage.

b) **Lack of Coordination** - Proper measures are not in place even though the reports have been sent to the concerned bodies. The Women's Affairs officers describe the ineffective legal enforcement of the practice of early marriage due to two major reasons:

- **First**; awareness creation should come before legal enforcement. If the parents are arrested, their children would be exposed to different problems. So, creating awareness is the crucial issue even though the problem is sensitive.
- **Second**, the use of legal enforcement will not provide permanent solution to the problem. After awareness legal enforcement should be the next step to stop the problem. Though, the above stated solution is taken as positive one, it doesn't go further to alleviate the problem well. When I interviewed female teachers in the schools that they teach, they consider the problem as an aggravating factor for female dropouts after grade 4. Among the five schools that I selected for the study, teachers at Yeduha primary school informed me that only 33 female students dropped out of their education due to early marriage within a year.

## **5.2 Gender-Based Division of Labor and Its Effect on Females' Education**

Both male and female children are engaged in different activities in the rural parts of Ethiopia. Particularly, female children are involved in both field and domestic activities at the household level in the agricultural communities of Ethiopia.

In my ethnographic fieldwork, I have observed that female children are overburdened with both field and domestic activities. My female informants from primary schools informed me that gender-based division of labor hinders females' education.

Female students' in the study area not only help their family by harvesting crops on the farm-land but also support their mothers in the preparation of food for the household. As I have stated (Chapter Four above), females have double burden at the household level in the study area. Female students share the double burdens of their mothers at home. Mothers again prefer to provide order for female students rather than males. So, female students are highly involved in the household activities. They couldn't get time to study at home. It aggravates the problem of low academic performance of female students. Therefore, gender-based division of labor has great impact on females' education in the study area.

## **5.3. Son Preference for Schooling**

The socializing processes observed for boys and girls are designed and rigorously applied to instill a feeling of superiority to boys while girls are groomed to accept subjugation and inferiority with apathy. This established patriarchal system has long endured the passage of time cutting across geographical boundaries as well as religious and class differences. While this unfortunate situation is universal, the manifestations of expression of discrimination and the degrees of violence against girls vary from society to society (The Youth Forum 2000).

In the ethnographic study area, I attempted to check parents' attitude towards females' education in comparison with that of males. 76 out of 96 respondents reported that there is no equal opportunity or access to education for females and males. Only 20 out of 96

respondents reported that there is equal opportunity for both males and females. The following table shows the respondents' reasons for male preference for schooling.

**Table 13: Possible Reasons for Male Preference to Schooling (March 2007)**

Possible Reasons	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1) Negative attitude towards female education	42	58%
2) Females' heavy work load	18	25%
3) Early marriage	10	14%
4) Fear of premarital sex and pregnancy before marriage	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Fieldwork Survey Result**

Based on the above table, the possible reasons for male preference to schooling in the study area are briefly described below.

**1) Negative Attitude towards Female Education**

42 respondents out of 72 reported that negative attitude towards female education is a reason for giving priority to males. Some of the responses are described as follows:

- “ሴት ልጅ ተምራ የትም አትደርስም”- meaning the education of females doesn't go beyond the domestic sphere.
- “ሴት ልጅ ተምራ አገር አታቀናም”- meaning the education of females doesn't contribute for the development of a country.

Providing less concern for the value of females' education is one of the major factors for the preference of educating males. The idea of restricting females' at home is one of the socially constructed principles in the community. There is no belief in further education for females in the study area, where the ability to know how to read and write is considered satisfactory for females.

**2) Females' Heavy Work load**

18 respondents out of 72 described the need for females' labor at home is another factor for the preference of educating males rather than females. Females have double burdens in the community. Mothers need the assistance of their daughters to manage the house properly. When the mother prepares food, the daughter takes care of younger siblings and

collects firewood or fetches water from the river. So, if there is a son and a daughter in a family; parents' prefer to send the son to school rather than the daughter. This is done due to the need for the daughter's labor at home.

### **3) *Early Marriage***

10 out of 72 respondents stated that the preference of males for schooling is mainly due to parents desire to arrange early marriage for their daughters.

### **4) *Fear of Premarital Sex and Pregnancy before Marriage***

Virginity gets social respect or prestige in the study area. Most parents consider loss of virginity before marriage as a shameful defeat in their life. If the female student becomes pregnant before marriage, the issue will be considered as the worst defeat in the family. To avoid the problem, parents of female students do not allow their daughters to continue schooling at the age of puberty. This is one of the reasons why the number of female students is lower than that of male students at secondary level of education.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Gender plays a significant role in determining the role of males and females in the society. The way they behave and act is determined by the socially accepted norms and standards. This, in turn, affects the participation of males and females in social, political and economic life of the society.

The study attempted to explore the influence of gender on education. Education is an instrument to change the societal life at all levels. Its importance is enormous for the development of human beings. Lack of equal opportunity and access to education creates variations between men and women in the society. Men have better access to education than women. Male preference is a socially constructed principle in the society.

The findings of the research considered the influence of gender, parental background and culture as decisive factors in aggravating the gender-gap in education in the study area. The data gathered from informants, FGD participants and respondents clearly revealed the influences of these factors on females' education. The gender-specific socially assigned roles and tasks have great impact in shaping the attitudes of the society towards the education of females and males. Historically, females are in a disadvantageous position, even though this attitude is changing now. The community mainly socializes females to confine themselves to home. It has its own influence on females' formal schooling. Submissiveness is encouraged by the community as a good female character. This, in turn, has its own impact on excluding females from public arena.

The parents' educational background is another factor for females' low participation and academic performance in formal education. In the study area, most parents are illiterate so that they are not motivated to educate their children properly. Particularly, they couldn't understand the value of female education. As a result, parental educational background has its impact on children's education in general and females' education in particular.

The other factor is culture. Culture plays an immense role in shaping the attitude of the community towards masculinity and femininity. The symbols, expressions and ideas which have been raised and practiced by the community are socially constructed. As it is defined by different anthropologists, culture is a complex concept. It touches the whole life of males and females in one or another way. Female students, being socialized in the society, are influenced by the society's gender values and norms. The study attempted to investigate the influence of these factors on education. The findings mainly focused on analyzing the gender-specific impacts of these factors on education. The finding revealed that the participation and academic performance of female students gets lower as the grade level increases.

The study further investigated the gender-specific influence of poverty on education. Poverty aggravates the problem of schooling for both males and females in the study area. However, it has particular impact on females' education. Due to family poverty, female students are vulnerable to educational and social problems. Poor parents couldn't fulfill the basic educational facilities for both males and females. At this moment they preferred to educate males than females. Females' access to and success in education is influenced by family poverty. In the study area, family poverty also aggravates female students' vulnerability to different social and economic problems such as early marriage and prostitution.

The study also explored gender-specific economic issues in relation to education. Particular attention is given to control over resources and economic decision making power at the household level. The society is a patriarchal society. The father is both the resource manager and decision maker in the study area. This, in turn, affects females' education due to male preference for education. Hence, control over resources and economic decision-making power at the household level has its own influence on females' education in the study area.

Finally, the study examined the effect of early marriage on females' education in the study area. Early marriage is the most common practice in the study area due to social and economic reasons. Socially, parents promote early marriage for forming social

alliance between marrying families, for gaining social prestige, and for avoiding pre-marital sex and pregnancy before the marriage of their daughters.

The economic base of the society is agriculture, where land is the major means of production and demand for child labor is very high. Family planning is not largely practiced in the study area. The size of agricultural land is reduced due to the increment of family size. The parents can't nourish and educate all their children properly. Particularly, parents prefer to arrange marriage for female students at their early age rather than allowing them to continue their education. As a result of early marriage the life of female students are affected in many ways. They are vulnerable to health problems such as fistula. Concerning education, the number of dropout female students is multiplied.

Under the leadership of Women's Affairs Office, there are attempts to alleviate the problem of early marriage in the study area. A committee is organized from *Woreda* to *Kebele* level. However, it is not effective due to lack of commitment and co-ordination.

Generally, the study explored gender and its influence on females' education from different perspectives. Particular attention is given to factors affecting females' education. However; it lacks a comparative analysis of factors affecting male and female education. Thus, this calls for further research on the subject under consideration.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: Research Tools

### I.1: Interview Questions

#### Dear Informant!

The major concern of this interview is to gather data about gender and its influence on education in our day to day activities. Your experiences, attitudes and suggestions are invaluable for the study. I'm accountable and responsible not to expose your personal identity and your opinion. I appreciate your full cooperation in responding the questions that you are asked.

Thank you!

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) How could you assess the role of gender on education?
- 2) What are the major roles assigned to females in the family?
- 3) Could you describe the impacts of these roles on girls' education?
- 4) Who have a better access to education? Males or females? Why?
- 5) Who would be preferred for education in your family? Males or females? Or both? State your reason.
- 6) When you observe your family who has access to the resources in your household? Your father or mother? Or both?
- 7) Who would control the resources in your family? Why?
- 8) Who makes decision in sending and educating girls to the school? The father or the mother? Why?
- 9) How could you evaluate the participation of girls in the classroom environment?
- 10) How could you evaluate their academic performance in the school?
- 11) Whom teacher would you prefer for your teaching-learning process? Male or female? Why?

- 12) What should be the role of male or female teachers in promoting girls' education in the school?
- 13) What are the problems or factors that hinder females' participation on education?
- 14) How could you state the difference between educated and uneducated women?
- 15) What are the major problems that you face when you come to the school?
- 16) What are the socio-economic factors that aggravate the gender-gap in education in your locality?
- 17) How could you state socio-economic influence in relation to girls' education in the school?
- 18) Does it have impact being female on education in your locality? Why?
- 19) Do you think that the factors that affect females' education have economic ground?
- 20) Does poverty have impact on females' education?
- 21) How would you treat the impact of poverty on females' education?
- 22) Why do people become poor in your locality? Could you state some of the reasons briefly?
- 23) For question 22, if your answer is "yes", how they affect females' education?
- 24) What are the major local cultural traditional practices that influence girls' education practiced in your locality?
- 25) How could you state their influence on education particularly to girls' education?
- 26) Could you elaborate your ideas with the help of examples?
- 27) How do the traditional practices shape the attitude of the people towards females?
- 28) Why the people practice the traditional practices in your community?
- 29) What are the possible solutions for the problems in the school and outside the school?

## **I.2: Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

### **Dear Participants!**

The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of gender on education. Your experiences, attitudes and suggestions are crucial for the study. I'm accountable and responsible not to expose your personal identification. Its major concern is to gather relevant data for the preparation of the research paper. I appreciate your cooperation in responding the question genuinely.

### ***Thank You!***

- 1) How could you state the attitude of your family towards girls' education? Is it positive or negative?
- 2) Could you state the role of female teachers in promoting girls' education rather than male teachers?
- 3) What are the major problems that affect female students not to attend well their education?
- 4) What is the major difference between the educated families from the uneducated ones?
- 5) Could you describe some of the traditional practices that hinder female education?
- 6) How could you state the role of religion in promoting girls' education?
- 7) What are the economic factors that hinder females' education in the society?
- 8) How could you state the role of poverty in hindering girls' education?
- 9) Who have the power of economic decision-making in your family? The husband or wife? Why?
- 10) Is the number of dropouts of females is greater or lesser than males? Why?
- 11) Could you state the major reasons why females are not encouraged to go to schools?
- 12) What are the major social factors that hinder girls' education? How?

## I.3: Questionnaire

### Dear Respondents!

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify or assess the influence of gender on education in our life. You are requested to respond the questions from your observations and based on your life experience in the community. Your experiences, attitudes and suggestions are essential for the study. I appreciate your genuine explanation and effort to fill the questionnaire.

*Thank you!*

### Direction I

Please give short and brief answer for each item provided on the paper. Put "X" mark for items requiring selection on the space provided. No need to write your name on the questionnaire paper.

### I. General Information

1.1. Sex:-                      A) Male                       B) Female

1.2. Age Range

A) 12 – 16 years

B) 17 – 21 years

C) 22 and above

1.3 Grade level

A) 7<sup>th</sup>

B) 8<sup>th</sup>

C) 9<sup>th</sup>

D) 10<sup>th</sup>

**II. What are the factors that affect females' participation in the classroom environment?**

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement by putting "X" mark on the space provided. The numbers indicate the level of your agreement on the given factors.

- 1 = Strongly disagree                      4 = Agree  
 2 = Disagree                                      5 = strongly agree  
 3 = Undecided

No.	Possible factors that affect females' participation in the school	1	2	3	4	5
2.1	Lack of background knowledge					
2.2	Fear of committing mistakes					
2.3	Family background					
2.4	Cultural influence					
2.5	Religious influence					
2.6	Gender influence					
2.7	Peer influence					

**III. Choose your own answer from the given alternatives and circle it the letter of your choice that you are expected as an answer and write your answer for those which need writing.**

1. What are the major factors that hinder female education in your locality?

- A) Early marriage                      B) Child labor  
 C) Illiteracy of the family        D) Negative attitude of the people towards female  
 E) All    education

2. Who does achieve better academically in your class?

- A) Female                      B) Male                      C) Both

3. Based on your choice for No. 2, state your reason briefly \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is early marriage hinders female education in your community?

- A) Yes        B) No

5. If your answer is "Yes," State some of the reasons why early marriage is exercised in your locality.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Who is the decision maker in your family in economic affair?

- A) Father                      B) Mother                      C) Both

7. If your answer is either "A" or "B", state your reason

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8. Who does control the resources in your family?

- A) Father                      B) Mother                      C) Both

9. If your answer is either "A" or "B", state your reason

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10. Who plays a great role in sending children to school?

- A) Father                      B) Mother                      C) Both

11. Is there equal treatment for both boys and girls concerning education in your family?

- A) Yes                      B) No

12. If your answer is "NO", state your reasons briefly

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13. Does poverty influence females' education in your locality?

- A) Yes                      B) No

14. If your answer is "Yes", state your reasons briefly

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16. Does the school adjust conducive environment for girls' education in the school?

- A) Yes                      B) No

17. Based on the response that you provide for the above question No. 14, answer the following statements by writing

- Sufficient = If it is well done
- Insufficient = If it is done partially
- None = If it is not done at all

- A) Tutorial program is arranged
- B) Female students elected to monitor the class
- C) Special workshops carried out to develop the awareness level of the females
- D) Special education is provided to the parents to raise their level of awareness about gender
- E) Empowerment of female students is encouraged in the school
- F) Female students are organized to discuss over their own matter.
- G) Female students are actively participating on co-curricular activities.

The Map of Shebel-Berenta Woreda and The location of Schools.



KEY

- - SCHOOL
- - Alternative Schools
- \* - Cluster Center School
- - River

Appendix II: Map of the Study Area

### Appendix III: Plates

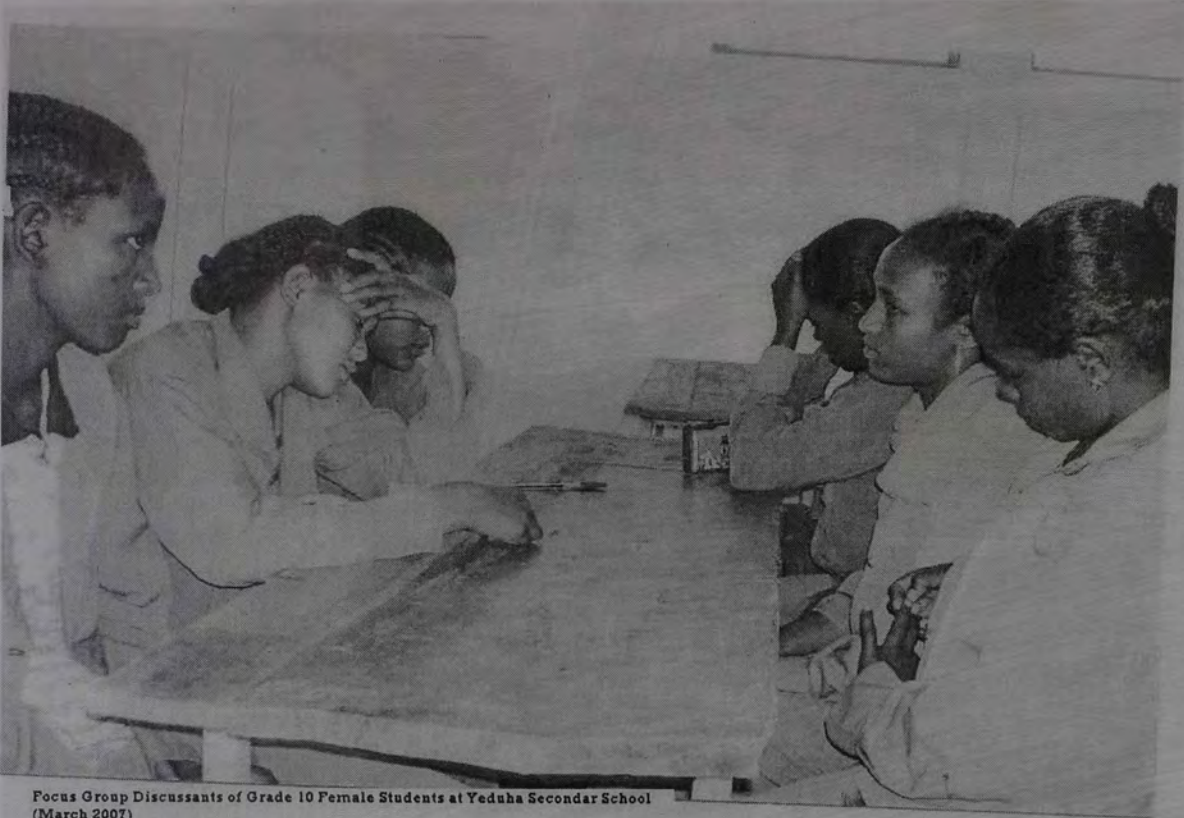


The Researcher with one of Female Teacher Key Informants at Yeduha Primary School (February 2007)



Focus Group Discussion with Grade 10 Female Students at Yeduha Secondary School (February 2007)

The Researcher with One of the Key Informants and Focus Group Discussion with Female Students at Yeduha Secondary School (February 2007)



Focus Group Discussants of Grade 10 Female Students at Yeduha Secondary School (March 2007)

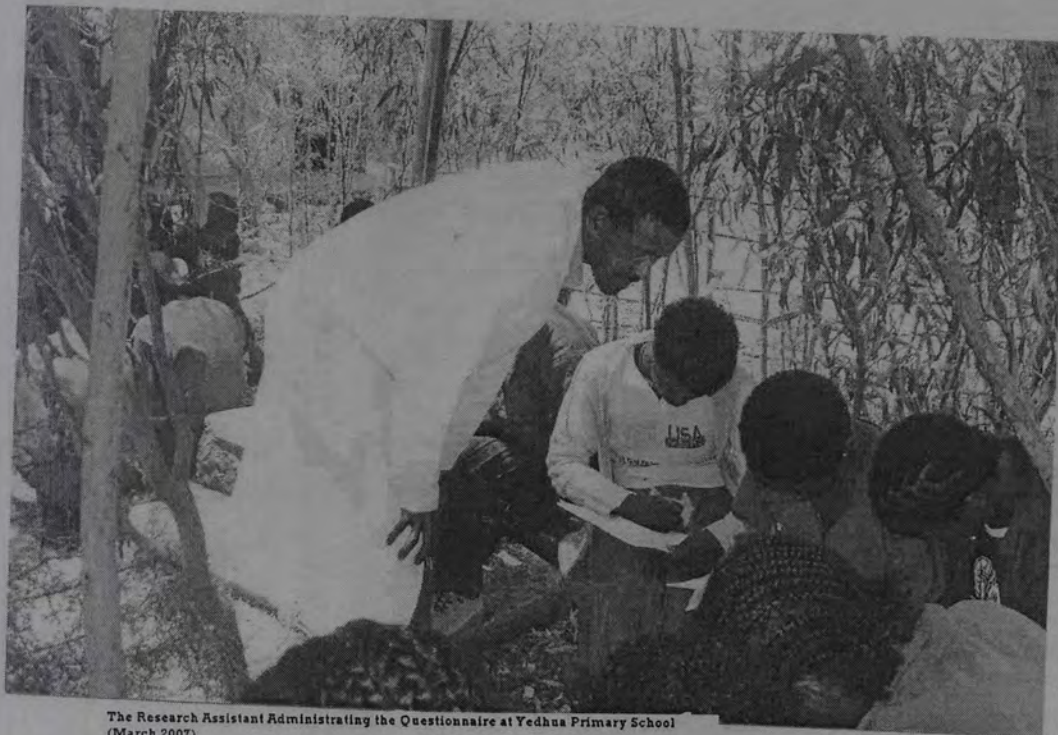


Focus Group Discussants of Female Teachers at Yeduha Primary School (March 2007)

Focus Group Participants of Female Students and Female Teachers at Yeduha Secondary and Primary Schools Respectively (March 2007)

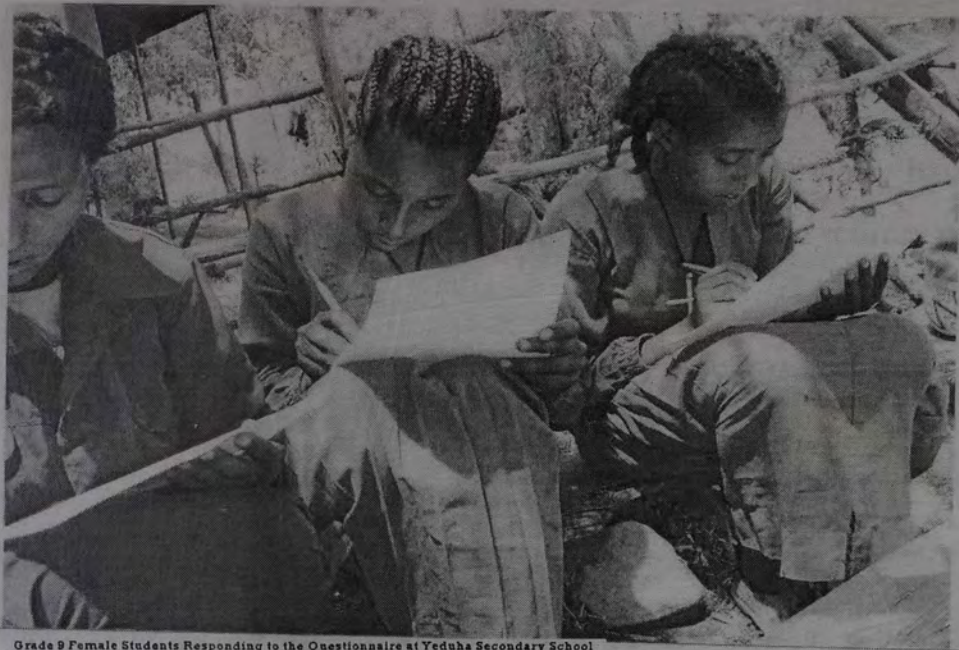


Grade 7 and 8 Female Students Responding to the Questionnaire at Yedhua Primary School (March 2007)

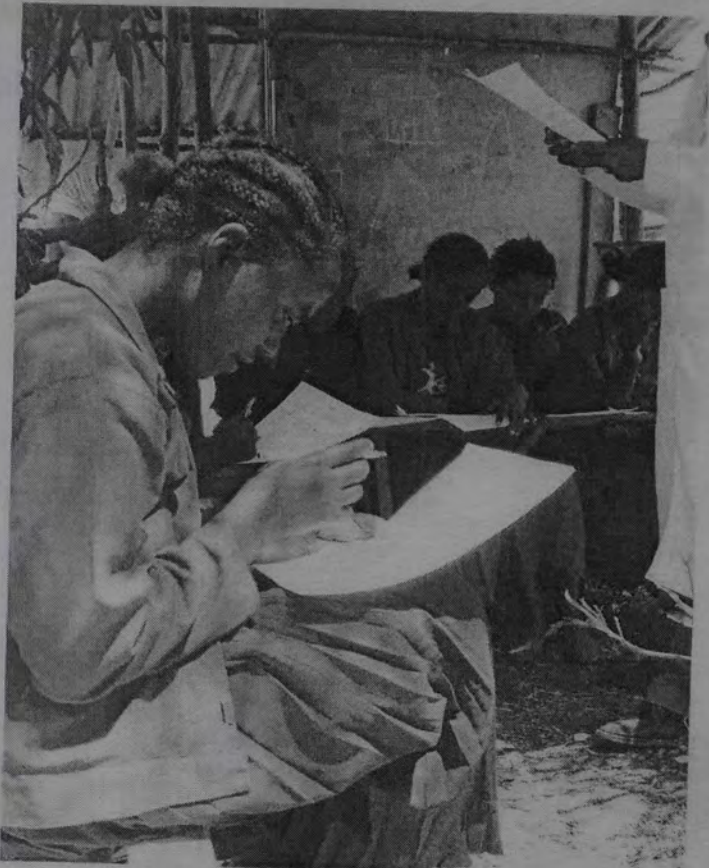


The Research Assistant Adminstrating the Questionnaire at Yedhua Primary School (March 2007)

Grade 7 and 8 Female Students Responding To the Questionnaire at Yeduha Primary School (March 2007)



Grade 9 Female Students Responding to the Questionnaire at Yeduha Secondary School (March 2007)



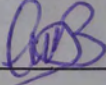
Some of Grade 7 Female Students Responding to the Questionnaire at Yeduha Primary School (March 2007)

Some of the Students Who Responded To the Questionnaire

# Declaration

I, the under signed, declared that the Thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a Degree in any other University and that all the sources of material used for the Thesis have duly acknowledged.

Name: Girma Belachew Alemayehu

Signature: 

Place: Addis Ababa

Date of Submission: July 2007