

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INSTITUTE OF GENDER STUDIES**

**EARLY MARRIAGE AND PARENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS IN
PEASANT COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF GENDWABALANGEV AND
GEVAVASALJ PEASANT ASSOCIATIONS IN DEMBIA *WOREDA* OF NORTH
GONDAR, AMHARA REGION**

BY

DAMTE GASHU GUADIE

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Gender Studies**

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Table of Contents

Content	Page
Acknowledgements.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Tables.....	v
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	vi
Glossary of Local Terms.....	Vii
Abstract.....	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	5
1.3.1 General Objective.....	5
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	5
1.4 Research Question.....	5
1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study.....	5
1.5.1 Scope of the study.....	5
1.5.2 Limitation of the Study.....	6
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.7 Operational Definition of keyTerms.....	6
1.8 Organization of the Study.....	8
Chapter Two: Literature Review	
2.1 Overview of Early Marriage in the International and Regional Contexts.....	9
2.2 Prevalence of Early Marriage in Ethiopia.....	12
2.3 Types of Early Marriage Arrangements.....	114
2.4 Reasons for the Practice of Early Marriage.....	116
2.5 Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status.....	22
2.5.1 Economic Status.....	22

2.5.2 Early Marriage and Parents' Educational Level	24
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	
3.1 Description of the Study Area and Research Site Selection	26
3.2. Research Design	29
3.3 Sampling Procedure and Selection of Respondents	30
3.3.1 Sampling Procedure	30
3.3.2 Selection of Respondents	31
3.4 Data Sources	333
3.4.1 Primary Data	333
3.4.2 Secondary Data	333
3.5 Data Collection Instruments	33
3.6 Methods of Data Collection	34
3.6.1 Survey Method	34
3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews	35
3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion	35
3.6.4 Wealth Ranking	36
3.7 Methods of Data Analysis	37
3.8 Ethical Considerations	37
Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis	
4.1 Background Characteristics of Sample Respondents	38
4.2 Types, Prevalence and Reasons of Early Marriage and its Relation to Parents' Socio-Economic Status	41
4.2.1 Types and Processes of Early Marriage Arrangement in the Research Sites	41
4.2.1.1 Types of First Marriage Arrangements	42
4.2.1.2 Processes and Components of Wedding Ceremony for First Marriages	46
4.2.2 Prevalence of Early Marriage in the Research Sites	49
4.2.2.1 Mothers' and Daughters' Age at First Marriage	49
4.2.2.2 Daughters' and Sons' Mean Age at First Marriage by Parents' Wealth Status	50
4.2.2.3 Girls' Marriage without Consent	51
4.2.2.4 Brides' Conditions Immediately After Early Marriage	53
4.2.2.5 Knowledge of the Respondents about Legal Marriage Age	55

4.2.3 Early Marriage and Parents' Wealth Status.....	566
4.2.3.1 The Link between Daughters' Age at First Marriage and Parents' Wealth Status.....	56
4.2.3.2 Parents' Criteria for Selecting Marriage Partners for their Sons.....	58
4.2.3.3 Sources of Farmland to the New Weds.....	60
4.2.3.4 Types of Property Contributed to the New Weds by the Brides' Parents' Wealth Status.....	62
4.2.4 Early Marriage and Parents' Educational Background.....	63
4.2.5 Reasons for the Practice of Early Marriage.....	64
4.2.5.1 Reasons for Marrying off Both Daughters and Sons Early.....	65
4.2.5.2 Reasons for Marrying off Daughters Early.....	69
Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation	
5.1 Summary of Major Findings.....	72
5.2 Conclusion.....	74
5.3 Recommendations.....	74
Bibliography	76
Appendices :	
Appendix I: Questionnaire for Parents.....	79
Appendix II: Key Informant Interview Guides.....	86
Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guides.....	93
Appendix IV: Guideline for Wealth Ranking Exercise.....	95
Appendix V (1&2): Profiles of Key Informants and FGD Participants.....	96
Appendix VI: Location Maps (1 &2) of the Study Area.....	98

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1: Summary of Wealth Status Indicators	31
Table 2: Summary of Sample Household Heads	32
Table 3: Percent Distribution of Respondents by Sex, Marital Status and Household Heads	38
Table 4: Distribution of Parent Respondents by Age, Religion and Ethnicity	39
Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Background	39
Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation Type	40
Table 7: Respondents by Wealth Status and Study Sites.....	40
Table 8: Types of First Marriages of Daughters by Parent Respondents' Wealth Status	45
Table 9: Mothers' and Daughters' Age at First Marriage	49
Table 10: Children's Mean Age at First Marriage by Parents' Wealth Status	51
Table 11: Consent during Daughters' Marriage by Parents' Educational Background	53
Table 12: Percent of Married Daughters by Place of Stay after Early Marriage	54
Table 13: Respondents' Knowledge of the Legal Marriage Age by Research Sites	55
Table 14: Daughters' Age at First Marriage by Parents' Wealth Status	57
Table 15: Parents' Criteria for Selecting Marriage Partners for their Sons.....	60
Table 16: Source of Farmland when Parents Married off their Daughters.....	61
Table 17: Source of Farmland when Parents Married off their Sons	61
Table 18: Types of Property Contributed from the Brides' Parents to the Newly Married Couples by Parents' Wealth Status	63
Table 19: Daughters' Age at First Marriage by Parents' Educational Background	64
Table 20: Reasons of Early Marriage for Daughters and Sons by Parents' Wealth Status.....	68
Table 21: Reasons for Parents Worry if a Daughter is Late at Marriage by Parents' Wealth Status	71

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANRS : Amhara National Regional State

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRR: Center for Reproductive Rights

CSA: Central Statistical Authority

DA: Development Agent

DAs: Development Agents

DHS: Demographic and Health Survey

ECA: Economic Commission for Africa

EGLDAM: *Ye Ethiopia Goji Limadawi Dirgitoch Aswogaj Mahaber* (the former, NCTPE)

FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FGDs: Focus Group Discussions

HHH: Household Head

HHHS: Household Heads

HTP: Harmful Traditional Practice

HTPs: Harmful Traditional Practices

IRC: International Research Center

ICRW: International Center for Research on Women

MoH: Ministry of Health

NCTPE: National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia

NOP: National Office of Population

PA: Peasant Association

PAs: Peasant Associations

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund

UN: United Nations

Glossary of Local Terms

- Amach/Amachoch*: Singular/plural, the three trusted elderly men who are responsible for conducting marital negotiation and settling marital dissolutions in their locality
- Araqi*: Homemade (Local) Liquor
- Birr*: The currency unit of Ethiopian
- Dersalech*: Judgment about a girl that she reaches to manage her own home (in this usage)
- Derg*: The name of the Military government that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 – 1991 G.C
- Diba/Marda* : A type of jewelry or ornament used by children in the study area
- Enjera*: A type of local food mostly made from the grain, locally called *Teff*
- Gabicha*: Marriage
- Gelatbosh* : Marriage ceremony practiced by daughters' parents with low level of feast
- Getget*: The reciprocal feast invitation between marrying families, mostly practiced in the period of two weeks to eight months since the wedding of their daughter or son
- Got*: Village in the study area
- Kada*: Local measurement for farmland (1kada = about 0.25 hectare)
- '*Komaker*': "Unmarriageable", a stigma referring to a girl who remained unmarried after the age of 15 in the studied communities
- Madego*: A girl mostly, 5- 9 years
- '*Manteyekosh*': Derogatory saying or insulation to a girl when she is not yet asked for marriage at early age (before 14)
- Meleles*: The occasion in which a married girl stayed some months with her parents and for another time with parents-in-laws
- Mels*: When the bride's parents invite the groom and bride three days after the wedding day
- Mequaquamya Nibret*: gifts to the bride/groom from their parents when they establish their new home
- Serg*: Wedding ceremony with elaborate feast
- Teff*: A type of crop from which *Enjera* is prepared
- Tella*: Homemade (Local) beer
- Woreda*: District level administrative unit
- Yankelba gabicha*: Married of a female child who is still on the back of her mother and is fed her mother's breast
- Ye Marda/yediba*: marriage of a girl-child between the ages of one and four
- Yemadego Gabicha*: marriage of a girl-child between the ages of five and nine
- Yej Mensha*: A bridal gift in the form of money, i.e., the parent of the would- be-husband gives a fixed amount of money to the parents of the would- be-wife for buying her bridal clothes and ornaments
- Zone*: Government's administrative structure next to the region in Ethiopia

Abstract

The main objectives of this study were to identify and examine types, prevalence and causes of early marriage and to investigate the link between early marriage and parents' socio-economic status in two peasant communities in Dembia Woreda of North Gondar, Amhara Region. To achieve these objectives, both secondary and primary data sources were used.

A mixed study design was employed to collect primary data with a combination of survey, focus group discussion, and key informant interview methods. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used in selecting samples. The study Woreda and the two peasant associations were selected purposively. Survey respondents (186) were selected using stratified simple random sampling proportional to size, while focus group discussion participants and key informants were selected purposively based on the knowledge of the local language and culture.

Data collection instruments included questionnaire, focus group discussion and key informant interview guides. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were employed. Accordingly, survey results were analyzed using percentages, frequencies, means, and cross-tabulations, while data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews were organized by themes and described to supplement the quantitative data. Finally, the data gathered through various sources were analyzed thematically using triangulation to increase the reliability, credibility and validity of the research findings.

Pertaining to the major findings of the study, four types of early marriage arrangements were identified in the studied peasant associations. Regarding the prevalence of early marriage, 86% of daughters were married below the legal marriage age (18 years). More specifically, the degree of marrying early is differing among wealth groups. Accordingly, about 97.4% of 39 high and 93% of 71 middle wealth groups of sample parent respondents married off their daughters at an early adolescent age (below 15 years). Only about 39.6% of 58 lower wealth groups married off their daughters below 15 years. However, very low wealth group of parents did not married off their daughters below 15 years. The mean age at first marriage was 12.96 years for daughters and 20.36 years for sons. High, middle, lower and very low wealth groups of sample parent respondents married off their daughters in first marriage at a mean age of 10.4, 11.3, 15.2, and 18.7 years old, respectively.

The major reasons for marrying off daughters early differ among the different wealth groups of parent respondents. The major reasons for high and middle wealth categories of parents were: to form marriage alliance with land and cattle rich families, for honor, to avoid the stigma of being unmarriageable; to get their children married before the resource is getting low. For some lower and very low wealth group of parent respondents, fear of unwanted pregnancy before marriage is the major reason to marry off their daughters early.

Therefore, to reduce, if possible to stop, the practice of early marriage in the studied peasant communities of Dembia Woreda, specific intervention measures need to be developed based on socio-economic realities of rural peasant communities.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The concept of “early marriage” is defined as, “the marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18. It involves marriage under the legal age of 18 years, when the girl is not yet physically and emotionally mature enough to bear a child and take the social responsibility of a wife (UNICEF, 2005).

Many women in the developing world are subject to marriage at an early age. Most such women have little choice in the age at which they marry, or whom they marry. Women who marry young tend to have less education and begin child rearing earlier, and have less decision-making power in the household. They are also more likely to experience domestic violence (Caroline, 2003:9).

Early marriage of girls and boys impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually every one of their rights. The imposition of a marriage partner on children or adolescents who are in no way ready for married life, and whose marriage will deprive them of freedom, opportunity for personal development, and other rights including health and well-being, education and participation in civil life, nullifies the meaning of the child rights convention’s core protections for those concerned (UNICEF, 2005). In a net shell, early marriage is a violation of human rights in general and of girls’ rights in particular.

Because of the huge impact marriage has on the lives of women in particular, researchers, advocates and policy makers have increasingly sought to consider marriage through a human rights framework, especially with regard to issues of consent and age at marriage. For example, Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “marriage shall be entered into only with free and full consent of the intending spouses.” The 1979 convention on the ‘Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’ and the 1990 ‘African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child’ suggest a minimum age for marriage of 18 years, are consistent with the definition of childhood articulated in the ‘convention on the rights of the child’ (Caroline, 2003:9).

However, early marriage, adolescent marriage is widespread in developing countries. In many cultures, the tradition of marrying daughters at an early age is common. Female children, often undervalued, are regularly married too much older men. High rates of marriage of girls between 15 to 19 year old girls have been reported from, for example, Bangladesh (72%), Southeast Asia in general (54%) and Africa (44%) (NCTPE, 2003:136).

Africa, both historically and currently, features very early female marriage. For example, Ethiopia (61%), Senegal (55%), Mozambique (52%), Tanzania (38%), and Zambia (32%) girls marry 15-19 years old (NCTPE 2003:305).

On the other hand, Western Europe and North America had late marriage as early as the 16th century even when the society was agrarian and the family was the unit of production. Average age at first marriage for women was 24 years rising to 27 by the 18th century (NCTPE, 2003:136).

Ethiopia has one of the lowest ages at first marriage. A study in the early 1990s showed that almost all (97%) of girls were married by the age of 20, a much higher proportion than in any other country except Mali (92%) (NCTPE, 2003:137, 306).

In 29 out of 37 countries in Africa, especially south of the Sahara, in the late 1970s or 1980s more than 20% of women in age group 15-19 were ever married (UN, 1992:63). Similarly, in Ethiopia, more than three quarters (75.5%) of first marriage took place before girls attained the age of 18 years (NOP, 1999:20). These show that a significant proportion of women enter into marriage very early. In rural populations, early entry into child bearing due to early marriage is the most prevalent social phenomenon.

Early marriage is practiced in some degree in all regions of Ethiopia, but the prevalence differs from one region to another. This marriage custom is a major problem of Amhara, Tigray, and Gambella regions, and it is severely affecting women's health and their socio-economic conditions (MoH, 1997:12-13). In this regard, early marriage puts women as the most vulnerable section of the population.

NCTPE (1997, cited in Guday 2005: 44)'s national baseline survey results indicate the highest prevalence rate of early marriage in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia, where 82% of the female population have been married before 18 years of age.

A Survey Study conducted by SIDA/Amhara (2006) in East Gojjam and South Wollo also indicates that about 83% of women respondents were married below the legal age 18 years of marriage and nearly half (48.9%) of them married below the age of 15.

The NCTPE (1997)'s National Baseline Survey shows that early marriage is still prevalent among the highlands of Amhara and Tigray societies, compared to studies that were done several years before by Hoben (1973), McCann (1987), Bauer (1977) cited in NCTPE, 2003:139).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many reviewed studies show that early marriage in Central and Northern Ethiopia is widespread and causes harm on girls and women. As the baseline survey on harmful traditional practices demonstrates, early marriage is a deep-rooted age-old traditional practice mainly among peasant communities of Christian dominated and crop producing highlands of Central and Northern Ethiopia (NCTPE 1997, cited in NCTPE and UNICEF/Ethiopia 2004:15).

Pathfinder/Ethiopia (2006) also conducted a survey study in Amhara Region. The data shows that only 18.2% of the ever-married women were married within the legal age 18 and above. Moreover, about 44% of urban and 53% of rural ever-married women were married between 12 - 15 years of age. This shows that the practice of early marriage is widespread in the Amhara Region. Amhara is clearly a stronghold for early marriage. All studies have unequivocally documented the high incidence of the practice. Girls are promised for marriage in infancy, at 4-5 years (NCTPE, 2003:139).

The FDRE Revised Family code Proclamation (No 213/2000) and in the Amhara Regional State Family Code(79/2003), the minimum legal age of marriage for both girls and boys have been set 18 years and above. In addition to these, attempts have been made to prevent the practice of early marriage by using legal measures. However, people are continuing marrying off their daughters early in the Amhara Region in general, *Dambia Woreda* in particular.

In many parts of the world, parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children hoping that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially (UNICEF, 2005).

Studies in Ethiopia also show that, one of the motives for early marriage is economic reason. Therefore, any legal intervention against Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) has to consider the economic realities in the country in general and at community level in particular. The most important aspects from the HTPs perspective are the dominant position of peasant agriculture in the economy, and poverty (UNDP, cited in NCTPE 2003:19).

Many of reviewed literatures indicated that early marriage is the tradition of peasant communities. However, some of the previous studies conducted on early marriage generalized their findings based on the rural community irrespective of variation in households' wealth status, taking peasant households as homogeneous in wealth status. Though wealth stratification among the peasant community is not so much wide, even the small difference in wealth status will have impact on parents' decision on their household matters, including early marriage.

Why the people practice early marriage? Who mostly marry off their children early? The poor or the well- to -do? "The uneducated" or "educated"? These were the questions this research attempted to investigate. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the reason behind the practice of early marriage. Understanding local peoples' reasons for practice of early marriage, particularly in the peasant society, should be the first step to design locally appropriate strategy to reduce the problem of early marriage.

Very few studies examined the practice of early marriage from parents' socio-economic status. The nature of early marriage in relation to parents' socio-economic status is not well studied in North Gondar of Amahara region, particularly in Dembia *Woreda*. Thus, this study aims at investigating reasons leading to early marriage from the dimension of parents' socioeconomic status among selected peasant communities in Dembia *Woreda* of North Gondar. This dimension of early marriage needs to be studied, since the data would be the base for advocacy and local level intervention.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the link between early marriage and parents' socio-economic status with specific reference to some selected peasant associations in Dembia *Woreda* of North Gondar, Amhara Region.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To identify the dominant type of early marriage in the study area.
- To examine the nature and prevalence of early marriage in the study area.
- To investigate the link between early marriage and parents' socio-economic status.
- To identify and analyze the major reasons of early marriage in the study area.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the above-mentioned specific objectives of the study, the basic research questions are the following:

1. What is the dominant type of early marriage arrangement in the study area?
2. What is the nature and extent of early marriage practice in the study area?
3. To what extent parents' economic status (wealth stats) affects early marriage in the study area?
4. To what extent parents' social status (educational level) influences the practice of early marriage in the study area?
5. What are the major reasons of early marriage in the study area?

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

1.5.1 Scope of the Study

Early marriage is a wide issue, has many dimensions: health, culture, etc. In addition, its causes and consequences are varied and complex. Studying the practice of early marriage in all these dimensions could be above the scope of this study. Hence, this particular study is restricted to

investigate the link between early marriage and parents' wealth and education status with particular reference only to two selected Peasant Associations, namely, Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj in Dembia *Woreda* of North Gondar, Amhara Region.

1.5.2 Limitation of the Study

To examine early marriage and parents' wealth and education status, this study focused on selected major variables; including household's farmland size, house type and number of oxen and cow/heifer and as well as fathers' educational background. However, other secondary income sources are not included in this study due to time and financial constraints. Another limitation of this study is unavailability of theoretical concepts that explains early marriage and parents' socioeconomic status.

1.6 Significance of the Study

As to the knowledge of the thesis writer, there was no in-depth study on early marriage and parents' socio-economic status in peasant communities of Dembia *Woreda*. This study has attempted to investigate the link between parents' socioeconomic status and early marriage in selected peasant communities of Dembia *Woreda*. Since the study examined practice of early marriage based on a few variables and limited to only two peasant communities, the finding of this study may not be widely applicable across the various socioeconomic statuses of the peasant communities at large. Nevertheless, it is the thesis writer's belief that the study contributes better understanding of early marriage and parents' socio-economic status. The findings may useful for local level gender activists and policy implementers. Those individuals, who are interested to conduct further investigation can also benefit from this study. Above all, this study paves the way for further research on the issue at hand.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Early marriage: The term "early marriage" is understood as "child marriage", i.e. below the age of 18 years for both female and male as prescribed by the Federal and Amhara Regional State, Proclamation No.79/2003, Article 18(1) of the Family Law.

Parent: For the purpose of this study, “parent” means a father and/or mother or any caretaker of his or her own offspring. In this study, parent is either a husband or a wife. It also includes both female heads and male heads.

Study population: is defined as randomly selected parents who married off their children since 2008 in the two peasant communities of Dembia *Woreda*.

Socio-Economic Status (SES): In this study, socio-economic status is referred as wealth status and educational level of respondents.

Educational level: In this study, educational level refers to formal education from primary (grades 1-8th) to secondary (grades 9-12th) attainment. It also includes those who cannot read and write.

Wealth status: Relative difference among the surveyed HHHs based on farmland hold size, cattle holding, and house type in the study area.

High wealth group: Refers to parents who endowed/owned 4-5 oxen, 5-6 cows or heifers, 3.0-3.5 hectares (12-14 *kada*, local measurement) of farmland, and tin-corrugated and grass thatched houses in the studied sites of peasant communities.

Middle wealth group: refers to parents who endowed/owned 2-3 oxen, 3-4 cows or heifers, 2.25-2.75 hectares (9-11 *kada*) of farmland, and tin- corrugated and grass thatched houses in the study sites of peasant communities.

Lower wealth group: refers to parents who endowed/owned 1 ox, 1-2 cows or heifers, 1.5-2 hectares (6-8 *kada*) of farmland, and grass thatched houses in the studied sites of rural communities.

Very low wealth group: Refers to parents who endowed/owned neither oxen nor cows or heifers, but owns less than or equal to 1.25 hectares (≤ 5 *kada*) of farmland, and grass thatched houses in the study sites of peasant communities.

1.8 Organization of the Study

Following the introduction, chapter two presents a review of related literature. Chapter three is devoted to the study area, sampling procedure and methods of the study. Presentation and analysis is discussed in chapter four. The last part, chapter five contains the summary, conclusion and recommendation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Early Marriage in the International and Regional Contexts

A right-based approach to early marriage is found on the universal principles of human rights. Human rights are a set of common standards that every individual is entitled to enjoy by virtue of being human, because they are universal, indivisible, and independent and enriched in international conventions, agreements, and declarations (FMRWG 2003, cited in Guday 2005:28). This right is entitled for every individual both for women and men.

However, even in countries that have signed the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), there is a discrepancy between the legal minimum age of marriage and the actual age of marriage, due to “official tolerance of cultural, societal and customary norms that shape and govern the institution of marriage and family life (Center for Reproductive Rights, CRR 2000, cited in Guday 2005:28). When the fundamental human rights of people are violated and not protected, this not only represents an attack on human dignity, but also is likely to result in conflict, poverty and injustice (UN 2001).

For a majority of women in developing countries, marriage is not negotiable. For many, it occurs when truly girls are still children. If this is the case, it entrenches and deepens poverty. The young bride is put under great pressure to become a woman and a mother at a time when she is ill prepared for these multiple roles, lacking decision-making and negotiating skills and other assets and capabilities that would help her to develop, let alone ensure the development and well-being of her offspring (Naana and Sonita, 2003).

With specific reference to the situation of early marriage and women’s life cycle in Africa, the following statement reveals the actual reality:

In the traditional subsistence situation, early marriage is the norm for women and women’s life is closely oriented around her capacities to reproduce and provide for her family. Arduous involvement in child bearing and rearing and the economic and domestic activities required for the maintenance of children continues throughout life (Adepoju and Opping 1994, cited in Guday 2005:28).

When one considers the impact of early marriage on the lives of children, particularly girls, it is clear that the practice violates a range of human rights including those contained in the

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is opposed also to forced marriages at any age, where the notion of consent is non-existent and the views of the bride or the groom are ignored, particularly when those involved are under the age of 18.

Despite these various resolutions, corresponding national laws, and the efforts of various national and international organizations, many young women in the developing world are still subject to early marriage. Often, these young women have little choice over the age at which they, much less the partner they marry, because the marriage is typically arranged by the parents. Thus, the issue of early marriage and consent are often intertwined. Young persons are less capable of understanding the implications of long-term decisions and do not have the autonomy and independence or the mental and emotional maturity required for such decision-making. Therefore, early marriage, even when they occur with the seeming consent of the child, violate the basic rights of the child, since by legal definition a child cannot give consent (Caroline, 2003: 10).

Though international conventions and declarations are aimed at protecting girls from the harmful consequences of early marriage, in developing countries, including Ethiopia, girls are married early mainly for socio-cultural and economic reasons (Guday, 2005:29). Governments who have signed these conventions are obliged to ensure that these rights are fulfilled without cuts and must therefore take steps to prevent early marriage (ibid).

The right to 'free and full' consent to a marriage is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the recognition that consent cannot be 'free and full' when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner (UNICEF, 2005). In this case, both marriage partners need to be above the legal marriage age to ensure free and full consent.

Consent should be the corner stone of any marriage. Article 34(2) of the 1995 FDRE constitution provides that marriage should be based on the free and full consent of both spouses. In practice, we see today many children's lives are wrecked by forced early marriages (Original 2000, cited in Guday 2005:32).

The national law pertaining to the legal age of marriage in present-day Ethiopia, according to the new Ethiopian family law, the minimum age of marriage without parental consent is 18 years for both girls and boys. Nevertheless, parents, without the free consent of the would-be-spouses, early arrange most customary marriages among the rural majorities of Ethiopia. In this context, very young brides have little negotiating power to protect themselves from early-arranged marriage practices (Guday, 2005:33).

Child marriage is most common in the world's poorest countries and is often concentrated among the poorest households within those countries. It is closely linked with poverty and low levels of economic development. In families with limited resources, child marriage is often seen as a way to provide for their daughters future. However, girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and remain poor. Child marriage is highly prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa and in parts of South Asia, the two most impoverished regions of the world! More than half of the girls in Bangladesh, Mali, Mozambique, and Niger are married before age 18. In these same countries, more than 75% of people live on less than \$2 a day (ICRW).

Early marriage is also prevalent in Asian countries. For example, in the Indian state of Rajasthan, a 1993 survey of 5000 women revealed that 56% had married before age 15 and of these, 17% were married before they were 10 (UNICEF 2001). From the above figures, one can infer that early marriage is related with countries and societies of low social and economic development.

The Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) study, conducted on women aged 15-49 years, in 35 developing countries, shown that there remains a very high incidence of early marriage in the developing world (Caroline, 2003:16). Accordingly, the average age at first marriage is about 16 years in South Asia, 17.5 years in Sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa, 19 years in Near East and North Africa, and 20 years in South East Asia. These figures are below the average age at marriage for higher income countries: 26.2 years in Western Europe, 26.9 years in Northern Europe, and 28.1 in North America (UN World Marriage Tables 2000, cited in Caroline, 2003:11).

In the developing world, even within these regions there is a great deal of diversity of age at first marriage. For example, DHS data of 1950 to 1970 within West Africa, the average age at first marriage is as low as 15 years in Niger, and as high as 19 years in Ghana (Caroline 2003:12).

However, in Latin America, (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru) have average ages of 20 or above. At the end of the spectrum, in Bangladesh the average is only about 14(ibid).

According to this Demographic and Health Survey (1950-1970), there has been little overall change in average age at first marriage for most of the regions. The notable exceptions are the Near East and North Africa, where the average age at first marriage of married has increased by about a year over the two decades, and Latin America, where it has decreased by about a year(ibid).

The study (DHS) indicated that most countries in West Africa show almost no change in age at first marriage over this period, the average age has declined by about a year in Ghana and 0.75 years in Nigeria. However, five countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Egypt and Turkey) experienced increases in age at marriage of a year or more, over the two decades. By contrast, Ghana Mozambique, Guatemala, and Nicaragua have all experienced declines in age at marriage of about one year, with Bolivia and Brazil experienced declines of nearly a year and half (Caroline, 2003:12).

This DHS study also indicated the incidence of early marriage in the same developing regions. According to this study, as a region, the highest incidence of early marriage is found in South Asia, where 70-75% of women get married by age 18. This is followed by West Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa with an incidence of 50-60%, and then the Near East and North Africa, Latin America and South East Asia (30-40%) of women marrying before the age 18 (ibid).

2.2 Prevalence of Early Marriage in Ethiopia

Like other developing countries, early marriage can be found throughout Ethiopia. NCTPE (1998, cited in UNICEF/Ethiopia: 15) noted that marriage under 18 years of maturity age is pan-Ethiopian with the national prevalence of 54.6%. Marriage under early adolescent age of 15 years is prevalent in Amhara (61.8%), Tigray (53%) and Benshangul-Gumuz (50.1%). Mean age at first marriage is also low in these three regions: 14.5 for Amhara, 15.9 for Tigray and 16 for Benshangul Gumuz. This data indicates that in Amhara region, girls entered to marriage at early adolescent age. It is rather low when compared with the mean marriage age of 15.6 for the entire country, surveyed in 1990 (CSA, 1993:94).

Many studies indicate that in Amhara and Tigray regions parents married off their children at an early adolescent years (below 15 years). The Majority (62.2%) of parents married off their daughters at early adolescent years, following (17%) and (17.4%) as children and at late adolescent years, respectively (Haile Gabriel, 1994:44).

NCTPE (1997, in Guday 2005: 44)'s national baseline survey results indicated also the highest prevalence rate of early marriage in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia, where 82% of the female population have married before 18 years of age. In this region, according to NCTPE (1997) in Guday, 2005:44), at least four out of every five women were married young and in several other regions, nearly two-thirds of women wed early. However, the average age at first marriage in Ethiopia may mask the fact that early marriage may still prevail in some districts within the country or the region, where marriage agreements take place for girls as young as 4 to 5 years old and sometimes before birth (UNICEF 2002d, cited in Guday 2005:44).

In the Amhara Region studies indicated that mean age at first marriage is also lower compare to other regions: 14.5 for Amhara, 15.9 for Tigray and 16 for Benshangul-Gumuz (NCTPE 1998, cited in UNICEF/Ethiopia: 15). In Amhara Region, there is a difference on mean age at first marriage within *Zones* and *Woredas*. For example, at Mecha (10.8 years), Borena (14.7 years), Jeru (13.1 years) (Haile Gabriel, 1994:42).

Moreover, in some areas the mean age at marriage is too low than other *Zones* and *Woredas* of the Region's areas. For example, in West Gojjam, Mecha *Woreda*, the research result revealed that,

Almost all daughters (98.69%) got married between 80 days of birth to 9 years, whereas almost all mothers (99.71%) got married between the ages of 10 to 17. More specifically, the majority of mothers (51.71%) were married between the ages of 10 to 12, whereas the majority of daughters were married between the ages of 7 to 9 (46.71%). In short, the average age at first marriage for the mothers' generation is 11, whereas it is 8 years for the daughters' generation. This entails that the trend of the age at first marriage is getting down from 10 to 7 years and from 12 to 9 years in the studied peasant communities (Guday, 2005:137).

Another study done in East Gojjam, Machakel *Woreda*, by Alemante (2004) has confirmed the above result. According to his study, when we compare age at marriage of the Imperial and *Derg*

era with age at marriage with that of the present regime, girls' age at marriage is dropped from 12 years to 9 years and from 18 to 12 years for boys (Alemante, 2004:47).

In other side, the sample study (women aged 19-61years old) carried out by Haile Gabriel (1994:41), in five survey sites of Amhara and Tigray regions, indicated that parents married-off their children at first marriage, at a mean age, for daughters 13.3 years and for sons is 18.6 years. Another sample study carried out (women aged 12-49 years old) by Pathfinder, International/Ethiopia (2006: 22) in Amhara Region indicated that the mean age at first marriage was 14.46 years. In general, all the above empirical studies show that mean age at first marriage in Amhara Region is lower than the national average (15.6 years), surveyed in 1990 (CSA, 1993:94).

Regarding the trend of age at first marriage, some statistical figures show that age at marriage is increasing from time to time. In this regard, CSA (2001, cited in Alemante, 2004:24) stated that the medium age at first marriage among women in Ethiopia has risen slowly over the last two decades.

2.3 Types of Early Marriage Arrangements

NCTPE (2003:126) states that in Ethiopia, marriage arrangements and types of marriage vary greatly. Exchange marriage is still practiced (for example, Anyiwak, Gumuz, Mao, Sidama, and Wolayta). Marriage by inheritance (widow inheritance) is practiced in some Oromo areas and by some ethnic groups in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. Sororate marriage, i.e. marriage of younger sister in replacement of dead sister, is practiced in some areas, for example among Arsi Oromo. Among almost highland agricultural population (Amhara, Tigray, Oromo), marriage is usually arranged by parents. Where early marriage is frequent, the child, in particular the girl, is in no position to understand what is going on, let alone to participate in the decision about her marriage.

NCTPE (2002, cited in Alemante 2004:) pointed out that marriage arrangements through personal choices are common among Hamar, Tsemay, Sheka and marriage arrangement by parents are the characteristic feature of the highland agriculture population of Amhara, Tigray, Oromyia, etc.

In Ethiopia, in previous studies, some researchers identified four types; others identified six types of early and first marriage arrangements. For example, Haile Gabriel (1994:57) identified six types of customary marriages (*Semanya*) in selected study sites of Amhara and Tigray regions. It includes promissory marriage, child marriage, early adolescent marriage, late adolescent marriage, adult marriage and old marriage. It has been described as follows:

- **Promissory marriage:** whereby a speculation on marriage arrangement starts at the happy news of the mother's pregnancy. In case it would be a boy, parents would think of a family from which the father would request the hand of a daughter. If the child is a girl, parents will wait until a good offer comes. Definitely, a friendly family would show interest, as long as the girl's parents are responsible and of good standing in wealth and status.
- **Child marriage (under 9 years of age):** After birth, a girl can be wedded any time to a boy a little older than she can. The wedding is arranged without consummation of marriage. Children under ten years are wedded in two ways, in a form of *Madego* or *Meleles*, depending on the kind of agreement contracted between the two families, at the betrothal.
- **Early adolescent marriage (between 10-15 years):** A girl marry off when she reaches early adolescent age without any marriage proposal or agreement so far. If the family's material base is average or above by the community standards, interested family of a boy might show up, after making its own research on family background.
- **Late adolescent (between 16-20 years):** The process of wedding described under early adolescent applies also to late adolescence and adult marriages.
- **Old age marriage:** is a form of marriage practiced in many of areas the country that of elderly men marrying young girls. In such marriages, girls are marrying for the first time, while the men are marrying for the second time or more.

NCTPE and UNICEF/Ethiopia (2004:15) also identified four kinds of early marriage arrangements: Promissory marriage (before the birth of the child); Child marriage (usually under 10 years of age in a form of *Madego*, introduced to wife-hood under the custody of parents-in-law until she reaches puberty age); early adolescent marriage (between 10-14 years in a form of *Meleles*. The married girl may stay with her parents but periodically visits her parents-in-law);

late adolescent marriage (15-18 years of age). The first three types of early marriage under 15 years are mainly practiced in Central and Northern Ethiopia.

Based on the age characteristics, ECA (1997, cited in Alemante, 2004:21) identified also six types of early marriage in Ethiopia: promissory, child marriage, early adolescent, late adolescent, adult and girl to an elderly man whose age group ranges from yet born to new born, below ten years, 10-15 years, 16 to 20 years, above age 21 years, a young girl with a man of 50 or above years old, respectively.

In general, all the above-mentioned types of early marriage arrangements indicate the age range classification at which marriage is practiced. This will help to know at which age range children were get married in a specific society.

2.4 Reasons for the Practice of Early Marriage

Beyond bans and minimum age laws, it is also essential to focus on the underlying causes of early marriage. In doing so, it is important to recognize and understand the incentives, forces and constraints acting on both ‘supply’ side-that is, why parents marry their daughters at a young age, and the ‘demand’ side-that is, why men prefer younger brides. Both sides may be acting in ways that are ‘rational’, given the prevailing economic, social, health and political environment (Caroline, 2003:17).

On the supply side, parents may marry their daughters at young ages because of the high costs of raising children (food, clothing, education, and health care). This is particularly likely in contexts where fertility is high, and parents have many children. In this case, girls may be viewed as an economic burden, so parents may prefer to marry them off at an early age (ibid).

On the demand side, younger brides may be preferred for a number of reasons. Women who are younger have longer reproductive lives during which to have children. In regions where fertility is high, and/or infant mortality rates are high, there will be a stronger demand for younger brides. Men and their families may also view younger brides as more desirable because they are more easily controlled, and less assertive, because of their lack of physical, mental and emotional maturity (Caroline, 2003:18).

The reasons for the practice of early marriage can be varying nation to nation or culture to culture among developing countries. For example, UNICEF/India (2006) identifies the following reasons in Asian context for the practice of early marriage:

A girl child is generally considered as a burden, and traditionally the attitude of the society has been to get her married as early as possible; The demand for a younger bride creates an incentive for families to marry the girl child early and avoid high dowry payments for older girls; Early marriage is a way to ensure chastity and virginity of the bride; Parents see marriage as a way to secure the girl's future socially and economically; Lack of education and awareness about the consequences of child marriage are reasons for the continuation of child marriage UNICEF/INDIA(2006).

As stated above, one of the reasons for the practice of early marriage is the demand for a younger bride creates an incentive for families to marry the girl child early and avoid high dowry payment for older girls. This may be the reason for the Asian countries' socio-cultural context. As empirical evidences indicated, the rest of reasons stated above are also major reasons for the practice of early marriage in developing countries. When we come to Africa, for example, in Nigeria (among Ibibio society), the reasons for the practice of early marriage were identified as follows:

The reasons were, and still are, based on age-old customs and traditions. These are, conformity with tradition; gains from bride price; family honor and dignity; fear of premarital sex and pregnancy before marriage; wish to strengthen family and ethnic bonds; wish to see and carrying their grand children before they die are identified as reasons for the practice of early marriage (Caroline, 2003:72).

In Ibibio (Nigeria) culture, the groom (or his family) pays bride price to the bride's family. Traditionally, the bridal list includes cash, household goods, drinks, gifts for the bride's parents (like clothes, walking sticks, umbrellas, palm wine, bicycles, cattle, etc.). In these societies, most parents have calculated the gains and privileges to be derived from their daughters' marriages, long before the girls have matured. Therefore, among rural community poverty is a factor in perpetuating early marriage (Caroline, 2003:72).

UNICEF (2005)'s study also indicates that in traditional societies in sub-Saharan Africa, the bride's family may receive cattle from the groom, or the groom's family, as the bride price for their daughter. In many "tribal" systems, a man pays a bride price to the girl's family in order to marry her. In many parts of Africa, this payment, in cash, cattle, or other valuables, decreases as a girl gets older (Amie, 2009).

The reasons for the practice of early marriage in Ethiopia are also almost similar as identified in other developing countries. However, studies indicated that some differences might be observed. These include: beliefs in girl's virginity (Levine, 1963:101); conformity to the tradition, fear of social stigma for late marriage and guarantee for children before parents get old and die (NCTPE, 1999:8-18); parents feel obliged to arrange weddings as reciprocity for attended weddings of friends, relatives and neighbors.

Moreover, others marrying off their daughters early for prestigious reasons to gain fame by entertaining large number of guests in wedding feast (UNICEF/Ethiopia, 2004:17); ensuring the future of their children (because of uncertainties caused by man-made and natural calamities) (NCTPE, 2003) are some of suggested socio-cultural reasons that provoke people to marry off their children at early age.

As many literatures indicated, in Ethiopia parents urge to marry off their children early to secure their future life. This may stem from the subsistence level of peasant economy. In this connection, Haile Gabreil (1994:76) explain that parents' intention to give their children in marriage while they are still strong, healthy, and possess some wealth (resources) is also intended to attract a well-to-do in-law toward securing jointly the future of their children. In this study, 68.5% of respondents indicated that parents have the need to marry off their children early in order to establish a family and to secure their children's future before they die or get old.

Likewise, NCTPE (2003:150) noted that as in all marriages, an important reason in early marriage is to improve the economic situation of both families to the marriage transaction. When a family has a child, male in particular, they start looking for a family of the same or better economic status with which they could form alliance through marriage. The girl's family also has economic interests in seeing her married as soon as possible.

According to the ethnographic research result in Mecha *Woreda*, West Gojjam of Amhara Region, the economic motives behind early marriage and life insecurities contributing to this increasing were highlighted as follows:

Early marriage as a strategy to get a farm plot from the local peasant association; to maintain the existing family land holding; for forging an economic alliance between families; to forge marriage alliance with those in power; for reducing poor parents' economic vulnerability; for securing children's future; to have many children for family labor and parental social and economic security; and large family size and rural poverty (i.e. peasant families with many children use to arrange an early marriage for all of their children at the same time in order to avoid the problem of preparing wedding feasts for each of them (Guday, 2005: 139-141).

As empirical data above show, identified factors are intermingled economic and cultural reasons. In this regard, Alemante (2004:61) made a point that these variables may not exist as independent factors; rather they manifest themselves with respect to the prevailing political, economic and religious structure of the society. The practice of early marriage does not breach from these societal conditions. However, the reasons of early marriage vary from time to time and from society to society.

In Ethiopia, the economic dimension of the causes of early marriage was recent occurrence. In rural societies, economic factors like land and cattle are important explanatory factors that are directly linked with marriage arrangements. This condition is perhaps attached to land value (ibid: 65).

Evidences indicated that in Ethiopia, at different times in different forms of land reform, land has played a significant role in marriage arrangement. For instance, before 1975, "Theoretically any Amhara and Tigre could claim land in as many places as he could through different genealogical lines..." provided he or she can prove descent. In those earlier days, the interest to get access to farmland of in-laws played a major role in marriage arrangement (Pausewang 1983, cited in Haile Gabriel, 1994:104). Crummey (1983:208) suggests also that the complex land holding system in Central and Northern Ethiopia "fosters early marriage and rapid break up of family estate".

After the 1974 Revolution, land was nationalized. The proclamation following the revolution relatively gave peasants equal access to land. The Peasant Association had ultimate power to redistribute available land in rural areas. As soon as peasants come of age (i.e. reach 18 years) and establish their homestead, they became accepted as a head of a household, thus member of the peasant association (Alemante, 2004: 68).

Those peasants, who understood the condition were motivated to marry off early their children before 18 years old to enlist them as independent household. A person who established independent household got 1.5 hectare of land. In addition, as a dependent member of a household got 1 hectare of land. People were quiet conscious to weight the advantages from such criteria. In this case, it can be concluded that land distribution and legibility somehow push people to marry off their children at early age to get registration as an independent household unit (ibid).

Haile Gabriel (1994:105) noted also that usually parents marry off their children early in anticipation that wedded children would inherit property in case of their or that of the in-laws. Accordingly, 43.6% of the respondents believe that access to farmland is still considered as a motive to arrange marriage, 78.3% indicated, wealth in animals as an attraction to arrange marriage. Regional variations are, however, observed. At Borena (3.3%), Debre Markos (11.7), Mecha (84%) and Kemkem (85%) gave weight to land consideration at marriage.

Further, Haile Gabreil stated that although parents have little plot of land to pass to their children, the land redistribution measures boosted early marriage. Parents married off their children at an early age to establish a household to claim, as married couple, their share at land distribution. In some other cases, parents owing land in surplus married off, preferably a son, at an early age, and gave a portion of their farm land to avoid redistribution to others (ibid:106).

The above historical events noted that land played a major role in marriage transaction. However, it was differently performed depending on the type of land reform. During the Imperial period, the interest to get access to farmland of in-laws played a major role in marriage arrangement. During the *Derg* regime, parents were motivated to marry off their children before 18 years old to enlist them as independent household to get land.

Land redistribution was also conducted in 1997 in Amhara Region. Since then, land redistribution has been stopped to protect land fragmentation. Accordingly, Amhara Regional State Proclamation 133/2006 stated as follows:

Article 6(1) indicates that any person, who is 18 years old and above, residing in the region and in need of engaging in agricultural activity, shall have a right to freely acquire holding land. Article 7(a) further mentions conditions of acquiring land, Any person residing in the region and engaged or wants to be engaged in agricultural works shall have a right to acquire land, by distributions from the Kebele administering the land in which he regularly resides or wants to reside.

However, Article 8(1) stated that in any part of the region, land distribution and allotment should not be carried out since the coming into force of this proclamation. Under this article, 8(2): Notwithstanding the provision of sub-Article 1 of this article, where the land holders residing in one Kebele and where not less than 80% of them request the Authority in writing for land distribution, the land re-distribution may be carried out in accordance with a distinctive to be issued to implement this decision on the land where questions was submitted. Its application shall be only on holders who passed the decision.

Following this, Regulation 9(1) has stated: The right to get land will be practical when the people request redistribution; when there is extra land; when communal land is decided to be distributed to individuals; or when there is a land, which is not bequeathed.

Regarding the above statement(in proclamation), the investigator consulted additional explanation from the Amhara Regional Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Authority. The Land Administration expert explained as follows:

The population is increasing year to year, but the land is the same. At present peasants' land, size per household is small. Under this condition, if farmland would be redistributed, it would be more fragmented. Due to this reason, land redistribution is stopped. Instead, the authority proposes as the best solution to implement integrated rural development measures such as farm intensification, family planning, extending non farming activities, etc. are some of solutions to increase peasants' production or income (Land Management Expert, EPLAU Authority, March 2010).

As stated above, prohibiting land redistribution might help to protect land fragmentation. However, on the other hand, it might lead peasants to marry off their children early to form alliance with one who has land for the new weds. Hence, it is expected that as the value of land

increased in peasant community, competition to form marriage alliance with one who has land might be increased.

2.5 Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

Occupation, income, and educational backgrounds of the people are considered as the important socio-economic variables to assess the socio-economic status of the people in the society. These socio-economic differentials significantly affect the age of marriage (Reddy, 1998). Under this section, attempts have been made to review previous studies in relation to early marriage and parents' economic status and educational level. Some related studies are reviewed and discussed in the sub- sections below.

2.5.1 Economic Status

The reviewed empirical evidences indicate that the socio-economic status of a person does have major role in determining the age of marriage. However, there is lack of evidence that can show the relation between early marriage and rural parents' wealth and educational status. Many of the previous studies on early marriage at the international level are focused on rural- urban setting. Others also conducted their studies by considering the rural population as a homogeneous group.

Nevertheless, studies conducted in the rural settings of Ethiopia indicated that the practice of early marriage differs among rural communities based on their wealth status. In other words, early marriage is more practiced by better-endowed parents. In relation to this, Guday (2005:130) asserted that:

Many girls and boys in cattle and land-rich peasant families get married at an early age. In this context, early marriage is an economic reality related with parental wealth in terms of cattle and land. Such kind of early marriage arrangements are common, particularly for girls from "cattle-reach" families; whereas girls from "cattle- poor" families have no opportunities to get married early.

In the rural communities of Ethiopia, preparing elaborate wedding ceremonies is given high value and involves huge amount of expenses. Since better-endowed parents have a capacity to prepare feasts and are able to contribute resources for the new weds, it is likely that rich parents will marry-off their children early compared to lower wealth groups. In connection to this, Alemanate (2004:64) stated that the poor could only have alternatives to remain in celibacy or marry late

because marriage demands and involves economic resources that could usually be beyond the poor people.

Likewise, Haile Gabriel (1994:49-88) noted that at late adolescent age, an un-wedded daughter would be stigmatized as an “old maid” (*Komakerech*), which is embarrassing to the parents. They might also be labeled as poor, because poor families are not usually in a position to marry off their daughters at an early age. Further, he added that most farmers marry off their children before the age of twelve (i.e., before puberty). It is girls from poor families that marry after that age.

In the rural socio-economic context, age-old tradition of early marriage compel parents to marry off their daughters early and require parents to decide or commit to use their resources to make practical. Nevertheless, better-off parents could fulfill the requirement. In relation to this, Haile Gabreil (1994:60) made the following points:

When a girl reaches early adolescent age without any marriage proposal or agreement so far, it becomes a source of serious concern for the family and relatives. All show concern and privately search for a proper partner. The mother of the girl confidentially shares her concern to fellow women. The father might spread rumors, that he would contribute a piece of land or so many animals in case an interested family approaches him for the hand of his daughter.

This shows that the reasons for early marriage is not only cultural, it has also economic dimension. Parents practice early marriage not to lose the girl of the best family. Any farmer that has two pairs of oxen or more, some cows, donkeys, horses or mules, sheep, bee-hives, etc. and about two or more hectares of land and produces some surplus considered above average or rich. If such a family has a child and a good reputation, another family of similar status might seek a marriage agreement, before others take the initiative. Well-to-do families wed their children early not to lose the opportunity to others. All tend to side to the wealthy. If the girl is from a poor family, even though she resembles an angel, nobody approaches her family (Haile Gabriel, 1994:81-82).

Moreover, parents marry off their children early to secure the future life of the new weds. The interest to marry off a child of a better endowed family stems also from the expectation of parents

that each of them would contribute in a form of animals and a piece of land, to help establish the new couples as a viable family and member of the network of kinship relations (ibid). In connection to this, Guday (2005:129) noted that early marriage arrangements are primarily based on parental endowments, normally cattle, to the newlyweds. The size of endowments (gifts exchanged between the families) is strictly balanced and marriages are commonly between families of equal economic standing. Accordingly, the two marrying families give equal number of cattle to the newlyweds.

The would-be-husband's parents are also expected to give bridal gift, normally in terms of money. The amount of bridal gift ranges 60 to 100 Ethiopian *Birr* depending on the number of cattle endowed to the bride by her parents. Most of the time, the number of cattle given to the bride is two and in this case her bridal gift will be 100 *Birr*. If she is provided with one cattle, the bridal gift will be 50 or 60 *Birr* depending on the size of the cattle (ibid).

NCTPE (1993, cited in Alemante 2004:28) also indicated that bridal gift exerts families to marry off their children at younger age. In most rural population, marriage arrangements, including the transactions are the major contributions of the groom and/or bride's parents or relatives.

Not only does the type of marriage transaction differ but also the amounts of transactions vary across the socio-economic activities and socio-cultural practices of society. For example, NCTPE (2002, cited in Alemante 2004: 23) indicated that farm animals and land in agricultural societies and cattle in pastoral societies serve as marriage transactions. Many materials could be presented as bride price or dowry. However, manmade and natural calamities can influence the amount and the number of marriage transactions.

2.5.2 Early Marriage and Parents' Educational Level

Though the nature of early marriage is different from the developing countries, some evidences in developed countries indicated that parents' socio-economic status has influence on marital timing. The review of previous work on early marriage draws heavily upon Otto's (1979, cited in George and David 1984) implicit recursive model of social influences that shape the patterns of marital timing. Among antecedent influences to marital timing age "social origin effects"-the ascribed conditions of childhood-within which Otto has made three major conceptual divisions (George and David ,1984). Almost without exception, past research has included one or more of

the family-of-origin of socio-economic status variables (occupation, education, and/or income) either individually or in a combined form. In connection to this, (Burchinal, 1965, cited in Georg and David, 1984) found both lower parental education and occupational prestige associated with early marriage of children.

Longitudinal data from a national probability sample of American women reveal that the central influence of family background on the timing of marriages during high school ages (14-18 years). Families appear to influence marriage timing indirectly, through impact on school as an alternative to marriage (Elwood, 1979).

In Poor, countries and families have few resources to support healthy alternatives for girls, such as schooling. Recent research shows that house hold education status is a key factor in determining the timing of marriage for girls more likely to marry young (ICRW).

In India, the study indicates that lack of education of the family determines the timing of girls' marriage. It was found that less educated, more affected by rural culture, blindly follow the caste ethics, more protecting in nature and less exposure to mass- media (Vranjana, 2010).

According to Quisumbing and Kelly (2003), in their work on the six developing countries including Ethiopia, parental socio-economic characteristics are important determinants of age at marriage of the children. For example, mothers', fathers', or both schooling increase age at first marriage of children.

In Ethiopia also, some studies indicated that while there has been very little change in the age at first marriage over the last five years, age at first marriage does vary according to area of residence, education status, and region (MoH 2006:10) .

A survey study conducted in Addis Ababa indicated that father's education has significant impact on daughters' age at first marriage. Mean age at first marriage of women born from at least secondary education level father was highest (36 years) as compared women born from primary educational father(22.2 years) and women born from illiterate fathers(17.5 years), respectively (Alemu,2009:59). These previous findings show that parents' educational background directly or indirectly have determining role on timing of the children's at first marriage age.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The methodology part of the study included the study area and research site selection criteria, research design, sampling procedure and selection of respondents, sources of data, data collection instruments, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Description of the Study Area and Research Site Selection

This study on “early marriage and parents’ socio-economic status” was conducted in Dembia *Woreda* (see Appendix VI, location Maps 1, 2,), North Gondar *Zone* of Amhara Region. Amahara Regional State has 11 Administrative Zones. Among these, North Gondar is one of the Administrative zones that comprise 21 *Woredas*. Out of these *Woredas*, Dembia is the place where the study was conducted. In this *Woreda*, 40 peasant associations and 5 urban *kebeles* (Chuahit, Kolladiba, Gorgora, and Aymba) are established. Of these, Kolladiba has two urban *Kebeles*. Kolladiba, the administrative capital of the *Woreda*, is located 775 km away to the North West from Addis Ababa and 30 km South West of Gondar, the capital of the North Gondar *Zone*.

According to the Central Statistics Authority (2007), Dembia has a total population of 270,994 of whom 50.9% are males and 49.1% are females. Among the total population, 23,351 people (45.93% males and 54.07% females) were resided in small urban areas, where as about 247,643 people (51.43% males and 48.57% females) were resided in rural areas. According to CSA (2007), about 97% of the total populations are from Amhara ethnic group and about 97% of the total populations of Dembia *Woreda* are followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and only 1.95% was Muslims.

Since data collection, social services, particularly number of schools are increasing. According to the Dembia *Woreda* Education Office, at *Woreda* level, there are 98 alternative schools (all are in rural areas). Out of 57 primary first cycle schools (56 are in rural and 1 in urban area). Out of 44 primary second cycle schools (38 are in rural and 6 are in urban area). In addition, two junior secondary high schools and one vocational and comprehensive high school are established in the *Woreda*. Despite expansion of schools, access to existing children’s education remains a

challenge for various reasons including early marriage, economic and knowledge barriers for girls.

According to Agriculture and Rural Development Office, the *Woreda* has two climatic conditions, about 95% is mid-land and the rest covers lowland area. Mixed agriculture is the dominant activity in this *Woreda*. Dembia is suitable for crop cultivation (*Teff*, Maize, Sorghum, Chickpea and spice crops). This *Woreda* has also a potential for animal husbandry, including oxen, cows, goats, sheep, hen and bee keeping.

The study has deployed purposive sampling technique to select Dembia *Woreda* out of the 21 *Woreda* of the North Gondar *Zone*, mainly due to the following reasons:

First, the researcher was born and grown up in the West Gojjam *Zone* of Amhara region. Therefore, he knows the language and culture of the region in general and the study area in particular.

Second, the researcher has been working as a gender expert in the Amhara Region Women's Affairs Bureau for three years. Due to this opportunity, the researcher has the information about early marriage and its prevalence rate in Dembia *Woreda*.

Third, among the *Woredas* in the North Gondar *Zone*, Dembia is relatively remote area. Mostly, academic studies are likely to be rare in such remote areas. Hence, conducting the field-based study on early marriage in such areas would provide firsthand information for the local level advocates and gender activists in the study area.

These are the reasons that motivated the researcher to undertake the study in Dembia *Woreda*, although it is a long distance, 775km from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia where the researcher is pursuing his graduate studies.

Similarly, the study has used purposive sampling technique to select two peasant associations (research sites), namely Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj, out of 40 peasant associations of Dembia *Woreda*. In the selection process, first the researcher contacted the *Woreda* Women's Affairs Office Head. Then, the head, office workers and the researcher together have made some

discussions on how to select study PAs. The researcher has explained the objectives and purpose of the study to the participants.

The office workers already categorized the PAs by the prevalence rate of early marriage. Among 40 PAs in the *Woreda*, 9 are categorized as high, 17 as medium and the rest 14 as low levels in early marriage prevalence rate. They also explained that those PAs which are categorized as high prevalence areas are also relatively the remotest and far from Kolladiba, the capital town of the *Woreda*. Among 14 PAs (low prevalence area), the majority of them are located around urban areas. Having this information, Women's Affairs Office workers and the researcher have selected purposively two PAs based on the following criteria:

1. Variation in the prevalence rate of early marriage (one from the high prevalence area and the other from the relatively low rate in prevalence). The purpose was to collect representative data from these low and high early marriage prevalence areas.
2. Variation in proximity to the urban area (one from the remotest area and another from near to the *Woreda's* capital town). The intention was to collect representative data from the people who have different degree of access to information about legal marriage age.
3. The presence of rural formal schools. This was intended to collect qualitative data on types and reasons of early marriage from Early Marriage Protection School Clubs.

The study was conducted in two Peasant Associations (PAs), namely Gendwabalangev and Gebabasalj of Dembia *Woreda*. Gendwabalangev is located at about 25 km from Kolladiba, the Dembia *Woreda* administrative center. According to Gendwabalangev PA administrator, there are about 11,269 populations, among which 50.23% and 49.77% are males and females, respectively. Among the total population, 2,273 are household heads (1,916 male heads and 357 female heads). Under this PA, there are 19 villages (*gots*) and 19 representatives were assigned with the aim to facilitate PA's administration activities, behalf of the PA administrator.

The second research site, or peasant association, is Gebabasalj, which is located on average three kms away from Kolladiba, the Dembia *Woreda* Administrative center. This Peasant Association is adjacent to Kolladiba town. Therefore, it is expected that people may have better exposure to information including knowledge about legal marriage age than Gendwabalangev. According to the Gebabasalj PA administrator, there are about 5,334 populations of which, 57.37% were males

and 42.63% are females. Among these, 1,250 are household heads (1,022 male heads and 228 female heads). In this PA, there are four villages and in these villages, there are four representatives to facilitate PA's administrative issues. Village representatives are acting as PA Administrator at village level. They are assigned by the PA council to facilitate activities like protection of early marriage, managing conflicts, transferring messages from the PA Administrator to the people at village level, etc.

Regarding social services, in each peasant association, there are primary and secondary schools. In Gendwabalangev, one alternative; one grade 1-4; one grade 1- 8; whereas in Gevavasalj, two grade 1-4; one grade1-8. In both peasant associations, other public services are being accessed through agents include Development Agents (DAs), Land Administration Agents, Health Extension Agents and Police.

In both peasant associations, agriculture is the main source for the population. Gendwabalangev is characterized as mid-land, whereas Gebabasalj is characterized as relatively lowland climate condition, and both are suitable for agricultural production. Crops like *Teff*, sorghum, maize, chick pea and different spices are cultivated. Eucalyptus tree is also another source of income for the peasants in the community. According to the DAs information, almost all land is covered with crops and eucalyptus tree. Due to this reason, there is shortage of grazing land and cattle rearing are limited. According to Land Administration Agent, there is no reserve farmland for a new young household heads. This may be the reason that land demand is highly increased during marriage arrangement. Land is the most important asset in these PAs.

3.2 Research Design

For this study, retrospective study design was employed at household level. Kumar (2005:99) stated that retrospective studies investigate a phenomenon, situation, problem or issue that has happened in the past. He added that this type of study usually conducted either on the basis of the data available for that period or on the basis of respondents' recall of the situation. Therefore, this study design is suitable to collect the data about married children in the last two years (since 2008) by asking parent sample respondents.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Selection of Respondents

3.3.1 Sampling Procedure

In both PAs, sample respondents selection was performed passing through the following steps. To perform these activities 23 village representatives (*gots*) (19 men in Gendwabalangev and 4 men in Gevavasalj) were purposively selected and participated in helping to identify and categorize sample populations by wealth status. Village representatives were selected for the purpose that since they are the representatives of village they have the opportunity to know better about parents who married off their children and as well as their wealth status in their respective village.

First, village representatives were invited by the Peasant Administrator for a meeting at the PA office. The meeting was conducted separately in each PA turn by turn. The researcher explained the objectives and the purpose of the study to the meeting participants. Before starting of population identification, discussion was made among village representatives, PA office workers and the researcher. After the discussion, the researcher explained how to identify the study population based on the PA's list of household heads (HHHs).

The target populations for this study were parents who married off their children in the last two years (since 2008) in Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj peasant associations of Dembia *Woreda*. The purpose of targeting on the defined population was to assess the practice of early marriage based on recent socio-economic conditions of the study populations. As explained above, village representatives, the PA worker and the researcher together identified the study populations. When the PA worker mentioned the first person from the PA's list, village representatives were required to approve whether the household head has married off his/her children or not. After the representatives' approval, the researcher immediately recorded the name on the format (prepared in advance). Finally, 744 parents (502 from Gendwabalangev and 242 from Gevavasalj) who married off their children since 2008 were identified. Study participants were selected from this sampling frame.

After the study populations were identified, wealth ranking was performed with the help of village representatives in respective PAs. First, village representatives were asked to identify indicators to differentiate household heads (HHHs) in terms of wealth status. The researcher

made some discussions with village representatives on indicators of wealth ranking. After the discussion, participants agreed upon the major indicators, which differentiate household heads by wealth status. These indicators included farmland size, endowment of oxen, cows/heifer, and house type. Identified indicators are explained in Table1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Wealth Status Indicators

Wealth category	Wealth status indicators					
	Ox (number)	Cow/heifer (number)	Land (Kada)	House Type		
				Tin-corrugated Roof	Grass thatched roof	Both
Higher	4-5	5-6	12-14	√	√	√
Middle	2-3	3-4	9-11	√	√	√
Lower	1	1-2	6-8	-	√	-
very low	-	-	≤5	-	√	-

Source: Summarized based on Village Representatives' Discussion in Two PAs of Dembia Woreda (March2010) **Note:** 1Kada = about 0.25 hectare

According to village representatives (wealth ranking teams) explanation, landholding size, cattle holding size, and house type are the major indicators to differentiate wealth status among the households in the study sites. In recent years, land is coming to be the most important asset to peasants' livelihood. A peasant who has average land size can produce crops or can rear animals. Without land, no crop and animal production take place. The second important asset is cattle, particularly oxen, cow, and heifer. A peasant who have oxen, have capacity to plough his land, if it is not sufficient, he can rent and can produce grain. Therefore, without oxen he can do nothing. A peasant, who has both farmland and cattle, has capacity to generate significant income from agricultural activity. The third wealth indicator is house type. A peasant who owns sufficient land and cattle, have capacity to have tin corrugated house. Now a day the tin is expensive. Only well endowed households heads can afford to buy the tin for house construction. In addition, tin corrugated house is one of the statuses of wealth for the peasants.

Based on these indicators, 744 household heads were sorted out and categorized as higher, middle, lower and very low wealth groups.

3.3.2 Selection of Respondents

After the study populations were categorized by wealth groups, 25% of the sample was determined from each wealth group. Accordingly, 186 eligible sample parents (126 from Gendwabalangev and 60 from Gevavasalj) were selected from all wealth categories using

stratified random sampling proportionate to the size. The sample selection process is summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Sample HHHs

Peasant Association	Wealth status of HHHs	Population	Sample size (25%)
Gendwabalangev	Higher	119	30
	Middle	158	40
	Lower	168	42
	Very low	57	14
	Sub-total	502	126
Gevavasalj	Higher	37	9
	Middle	124	31
	Lower	65	16
	Very low	16	4
	Sub-total	242	60
Total		744	186

Source: Field work in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

For qualitative data collection, key informants and FGD participants were selected purposively from different groups of the people in the research sites and at *Woreda* level. Accordingly, 13 key informants (Appendix V-1) were selected. Among these 4 parents were selected purposively from different wealth groups based on survey data. The purpose was to collect data on reasons of early marriage from their wealth status perspectives. In addition, two Development Agents, two Early Marriage Protection school Club Leaders, and two religious leaders were selected purposively from each study sites. The purpose was to collect data on types and reasons of early marriage from the people who have contact with the people. These informants directly or indirectly have information about early marriage in their respective peasant associations. Moreover, three *Woreda* Officers (Women’s Affairs, Justice, and Police) were selected purposively. These are government institutions that are responsible to implement legal marriage age. Hence, it was intended to collect data on reasons of early marriage and the efforts they have made to reduce practice of early marriage.

The other qualitative data collection participants are FGD participants. For this data collection, 36 FGD participants (Appendix V-2) were selected purposively with the help of PA Administrators in each studied peasant association. Among these, 12 men are well experienced in traditional marriage facilitation. In addition, 24 participants (12 women from Women’s Association

members and 12 men from village representatives) were selected purposively from different villages in the studied peasant associations. The purpose was to collect data on types and reasons of early marriage from different village residents.

3.4 Data Sources

3.4.1 Primary Data

Household based survey was one of the sources for primary quantitative data. Quantitative data were collected from 186 parent respondents using structured questionnaire in two selected study sites/PAs. Another major sources of primary data were focus group discussants and key informants. In this regard, qualitative data were generated from 49 participants, of which 36 were FGD participants (traditional marriage negotiators, women and men representatives from different villages), while 13 were key informants (parents from different wealth groups, DAs, School clubs, religious leaders, Women's Affairs, Justice, and Police officers).

3.4.2 Secondary Data

In an effort to make this research more valid and worthy, all relevant secondary sources pertinent to the study were reviewed. These include: published and unpublished materials, such as books, journals, proclamation documents and Family Codes. More specifically, secondary data collection involved consultation of the written documents in the library of Addis Ababa university, from YEGLDAM (the former, NCTPE), from Amhara Regional Bureau of Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use, from Woreda offices include Women's Affairs, Justice, Education, and at community level, from the Peasant Association Offices, Development Agent Offices, and from rural schools in the study PAs.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Based on the reviewed literature, three types of data collection instruments were developed to collect both quantitative and qualitative information on early marriage and parents' socio-economic status. These included structured individual questionnaire, key informant interview guides and FGD guides. The questionnaire, which consists mostly structured questions, was used to collect quantitative data on the prevalence of early marriage. Prior to the fieldwork, the questionnaire was originally prepared in English (Appendix I) and then translated into Amharic

(the local language) for easy understanding by the collectors and respondents. The purpose of the questionnaire was to get statistical based information as to the practice of early marriage, involves marriage age and other variables and contributing factors for the practice of early marriage among the studied communities. The content covered in the questionnaire included: marriage age, the number of brides consented for their marriage, the amount of bridal gifts, the number of cattle and size of land allotted to the new weds, and responses to different early marriage practices.

The questionnaire was pre-tested among some respondents in the non-sampled PA before the actual data collection was conducted, to make sure that the questions were clear, relevant and could be understood by the respondents. As soon as pre-testing of the questionnaire was completed, the questions were rearranged (clarity, wording of items, and weakness) based on the feedback that was obtained from the respondents.

For this study, key informant interview guides (Appendix II) and FGD guides (Appendix III) were another data collection instruments.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

3.6.1 Survey Method

Household based survey was held in two selected peasant communities, namely Gendwabalagev and Gevavasalj. This method was employed to collect quantitative data on the prevalence of early marriage. In order to undertake the study, five enumerators (1 female and 4 male) were selected among Development Agents at PA level. In selecting the enumerators, the researcher consulted the *Woreda* Agriculture and Rural Development Office. The selection criteria were: at least 2 years work experience in the study site; good relation with the people in the study site; and the responsibility to carry out data collection. In addition, two research supervisors were selected among rural schoolteachers in respective PAs based on their mastery of the local language, culture and the area under study. Half day intensive training was provided to enumerators and supervisors on the objectives of the study and contents of the questionnaire.

A total of 186 household heads (175 male heads and 11 female heads) were participated from the two peasant communities. In a male headed -household, a husband or wife was interviewed by

tossing the coin. If one of them was not at home or around, the one who was at home was interviewed. From a female-headed household head, a woman was interviewed. Finally, a total of 186 parents (112 husbands, 63 wives, and 11 female-headed household heads) participated in responding to the questionnaire in a place where it was convenient for them, such as, at home, work place, at PA office, etc. House to house data collection was conducted by enumerators, under the supervision of the principal researcher. After the fieldwork, the filled questionnaires were checked to correct errors at the spot.

In addition to the survey method, the following qualitative methods were employed to substantiate and crosscheck (to cross-validate) the information obtained from the questionnaire.

3.6.2 Key Informant Interview

The researcher felt that qualitative data could offer important insight to investigate the type, process and causes of early marriage. Moreover, collecting information from different social groups and stakeholders are believed to increase the quality and reliability of the data. Accordingly, the interviews were conducted at two levels: at community and *Woreda* levels. At community level, interviews were conducted with parents from different wealth groups, Early Marriage Protection School Clubs, Development Agents, and Religious Leaders. The purpose was to gather data on types and reasons of early marriage from different people.

At *Woreda* level, interviews were conducted with Women's Affairs, Justice and Police officers. These are government organizations that are responsible to implement legal marriage age. Therefore, this method was selected for the purpose to collect data on the reasons of early marriage and the efforts been made by the implementers to reduce the practice of early marriage. This data collection was performed by the principal researcher by using the interview guides (Appendix II).

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion

To have a general knowledge about the social, economic and cultural dimension of early marriage, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with concerned and knowledgeable persons in the studied communities. This method was designed for supporting the data obtained from the household survey and key informants. In both study PAs, six groups (2 women and 4 men

groups) were arranged to conduct group discussions. Each group consisted of 6 parent participants. Out of the six groups, in four groups 12 parents (6 women and 6 men) were selected purposively from different villages and participated in the discussion. The purpose was to gather information from different village representatives. Women and men's group discussions were conducted separately, with the aim to give freedom for women when discussion is made.

The other two groups, which consisted of men only (6 participants in each PA), who have a great experience in traditional marriage arrangements, were participated in the discussion. The purpose was to understand the process, types and reasons of early marriage from well-experienced marriage negotiators in their locality. Hence, valuable and detailed information were collected from focus group discussants. Data collection from focus group discussions were conducted by the principal investigator through note taking using interview guides (Appendix III). After permission was ensured, sometimes the tape-recorder was used to save the time for note taking and to catch all discussion points. Finally, the researcher transcribed the reaction, organized notes, and wrote the qualitative information.

3.6.4 Wealth Ranking

It is essential to categorize the households into different wealth groups by involving the people themselves and ranking their own perceptions of wealth. This could be carried out by asking elderly people and knowledgeable residents in the site to name different wealth categories in the village, and define the characteristics of these wealth groups (Russell, 2005).

This method was employed to stratify household heads by their wealth status based on land size, cattle and housing condition. To perform this activity, village representatives participated in this exercise. The principal researcher facilitated the wealth ranking exercise using guides (Appendix IV). The purpose was to categorize parents by their wealth status and to investigate the link between parents' economic status and early marriage in the study communities. Using this method, first, parents were identified who married their children since 2008. Then, household heads were categorized into four major wealth groups, namely higher, middle, lower and very low wealth categories.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

The data, which were collected from the field, were analyzed using the following methods. Data collected from the survey were tallied, summarized, analyzed and described using simple statistical techniques including, frequencies, percentages, cross tabulations and means (average).

Data, which were collected through FGDs and key informant interviews ,were described in away to supplement the quantitative data. In this part, the main activities to be accomplished in organizing and analyzing the data were transcribed the information gathered from tape record interview and as well as notes taken by writing are translated the local language (Amharic) into English. In general, quantitative and qualitative information, collected from the field, have been analyzed using triangulation, combining more than one method to crosscheck the validity of the research results.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participants in real world studies may sometimes be involved without their knowledge. They may be misled about the true nature of the study or they may be faced with situations that cause stress or anxiety (Robson, 1993:65).Therefore, in order to avoid the misleading information and invading the privacy of the respondents that may arise from this ethical issue, some cautious measures have been taken.

At the beginning of the survey, the enumerators were trained and instructed to explain the purpose of the research to the respondents and to request their verbal consent before conducting the interview. An attempt was also made to ensure the confidentiality of the information that respondents are going to provide and their freedom of terminating the interview at any point and skipping any questions that they would not wish to respond to.

If the interviewees were not ready, the enumerators were instructed to request them for the time that is more convenient. In the field, there might be respondents who may get emotional with their problems. During this time, the enumerators were instructed to discontinue interviewing and just listen to what would they say. Lastly, respondents were also informed that any data they provide would be kept confidential as the analysis is made without mentioning names. All other sources of data and ideas are fully acknowledged.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of the data categorized into two sections. The first section shows the characteristics of the respondents and the second section deals with the analysis of the data obtained from different sources supported with discussion on important issues. Hence, in the second section, the major findings of this study have been discussed and analyzed.

4.1 Background Characteristics of Sample Respondents

From two peasant communities, 186 parent respondents who married off their children were included in this survey study. The background characteristics of sample respondents such as sex, marital status, household head, age, religion, ethnic background, educational status, occupation, and wealth status are described (in Table 3, 4, 5, 6,7) consecutively below.

Table 3: Percent Distribution of Respondents by Sex, Marital Status and Household Heads

Characteristics	Gendwabalangev		Gevavasalj		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Sex:						
Male	78	41.94	34	18.28	112	60.22
Female	48	25.8	26	13.98	74	39.78
Total	126	67.74	60	32.26	186	100
Marital status:						
Married	119	63.98	56	30.11	175	94.09
Divorced	2	1.08	0	0	2	1.08
Widowed	5	2.69	4	2.15	9	4.84
Total	126	67.75	60	32.26	186	100
Types of HHHs:						
Male-headed	119	63.98	56	30.11	175	94.09
Female-headed	7	3.76	4	2.15	11	5.91
Total	126	67.74	60	32.26	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010).

As presented in Table 3, regarding sex composition, 60.22% and 39.78% are male and female respondents, respectively. Among the respondents, 94.09% were married, only 4.84% and 1.08% were widowed and divorced, respectively. The frequency distribution of household types of respondents indicates that 94.09% were male-headed while 5.91 were female headed.

Table 4: Distribution of Parent Respondents by Age, Religion

Characteristics		Total	
		F	%
Age	39-43	22	11.83
	44-48	51	27.42
	49-53	32	17.2
	54-58	29	15.59
	59-63	27	14.52
	64-68	23	12.37
	69-73	2	1.08
	Total	186	100
Religion	Orthodox	186	100
Ethnicity	Amhara	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010).

As presented in Table 4, the age structures of respondents indicate that all respondents (100%) fall between 39-73 years. This suggests that respondents are adults with experience in life and are in a position to give opinion on early marriage practices.

As to religion, 100% of them are followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and are from Amhara ethnic group. Compared to 2007 Population and Housing Census, the pattern of the distribution by religion affiliation and ethnicity in the *Woreda* shows a similar pattern. As such, the practice of customary marriage experiences expressed in this study are mainly from Amhara ethnic group.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Background

Educational Category	Gendwabalangev		Gevavasalj		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Cannot read & write	96	51.61	23	12.37	119	63.98
1-8 th grade	24	12.9	32	17.2	56	30.1
9-12 th grade	6	3.23	5	2.69	11	5.92
Total	126	67.74	60	32.26	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As shown in Table 5, in both research peasant associations (Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj), 63.98% of the respondents could not read and write. Among the respondents, 30.1% and 5.92% had primary education (grades 1-8th) and secondary education (grades 9-12th), respectively. When

we see the difference between the two sites, 51.61% in Gendwabalangev and 12.37% in Gevavasalj of the respondents could not read and write. Conversely, those who have primary up to secondary education background (1-12th) in Gevavasalj are about 19.89%, whereas in Gendwabalangev, they are about 16.13%. This may be one of the reasons for the high prevalence of early marriage in Gendwabalangev compared to Gevavasalj. Educational level has a profound effect on parents' decision to marry off their children early or late; either formal or informal education has played a significant role on changing the attitude and behavior of parents on adhering the norm of early marriage.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation Type

Occupation type	F	%
Farming	117	62.9
Farming and small trade	3	1.61
House wife	63	33.88
Weaving	3	1.61
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it can be observed in Table 6, about 63% of the respondents are engaged in farming. Directly or indirectly, housewives are also engaged in farming. Therefore, about 96% of the respondents are engaged in agriculture. In addition to farming, a few numbers (1.61%) of them are engaged in farming and small trade while 1.61% is engaged in weaving. The above figures indicate that early marriage is prevalent in crop-producing communities of the central and northern highlands of Ethiopia.

Table 7: Respondents by Wealth Status and Study Sites

Wealth Category	Gendwabalangev		Gevavasalj		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Higher	30	16.13	9	4.84	39	20.97
Middle	40	21.5	31	16.67	71	38.17
Lower	42	22.58	16	8.6	58	31.18
Very low	14	7.53	4	2.15	18	9.68
Total	126	67.74	60	32.26	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is seen in Table 7, the proportion of survey respondents are about 21%, 38%, 31% and 10% are high, middle, lower and very lower wealth groups, respectively. Among four wealth groups, the majorities are represented from middle wealth groups, following lower wealth groups, accounts about 31%. The majority (67.7%) are represented from Gendwabalangev, where as about 32% were from Gevavasalj. This is because samples were selected by stratifying sampling proportional to the size.

4.2 Types, Prevalence and Reasons of Early Marriage and its Relation to Parents' Socio-Economic Status

4.2.1 Types and Processes of Early Marriage in the Research Sites

Identifying types of early marriage is one of the objectives of this study. Accordingly, types of customary first marriages are identified in Dembia *Woreda*, with particular reference to Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj Peasant Associations. Qualitative methods including, FGDs and key informant interviews were employed to understand types, processes and practices of first marriages in the studied peasant communities.

Previous studies indicated that promissory marriage was one of the types of marriage that has been practiced from not yet born to newborn. This type of marriage was common in Northern and Northwestern parts of the country, particularly in Amhara Region. FGD participants and key informants also explained that this type of marriage, promissory or *Yankelba* as well as marriages below 5 years (*Yemarda/Yediba Gabicha*) were practiced before ten-years in the study area. The name *Diba/Marda* was given from the practice that when the groom's father visits the bride's family, he will give to the bride some money to buy a jewel (*Diba*). Only children in the rural areas used this type of jewel.

However, FGD discussants and key informants reported that marriages below 5 years old have slowly been decreased up to 1991. Particularly, after 2004, they asserted that they do not have information on the practice of such type of marriage in the study area. Further, they explained that this type of marriage was stopped due to legal measures and expansion of rural schools. Nowadays, if such type of marriage is arranged or parents try to arrange, the local people easily disseminate the information to schoolteachers, PA officers, and *Woreda* Justice and Police officers. Therefore, the law will accuse parents and traditional marriage negotiators.

According to the FGD discussants, however, in the research sites, people incorrectly perceive that promissory marriage is considered as early marriage, whereas marriages of girls, 5 years and above, particularly, 10- 15 years old is not considered as early marriage, though the legal marriage age is 18 years. Nevertheless, FGDs, key informant interviews, and the survey data all show that early marriage is being practiced when girls are at six and above years old in the research sites.

4.2.1.1 Types of First Marriage Arrangements

Although there is no specific name for the type of first marriages, FGD participants and key informants identified four types of first marriage arrangements based on age ranges in the Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj Peasant Associations of Dembia *Woreda*.

I. Child Marriage (Less than 10 years old)

According to FGD participants and key informants, among four types of marriages, child marriage can be ranked at the third level in its prevalence in the research sites. This type of marriage is locally called *Meleles* (visiting parents and in-laws until the bride reaches around 12-14 years old). The name, *Meleles* was given based on its practice. As far as the bride is not matured physically and mentally to shoulder the responsibility of her own home, immediately after marriage, she will stay with her parents or parents' in-laws home. The wedding is arranged without the consummation of the marriage.

Immediately after the wedding ceremony, the bride will go to the groom's family. The bride is expected to stay for about 1-2 months at her parents in-laws' home and brought back to her parents' home. The bride and the bridegroom visit their in-laws frequently, until both parents decide the union. Such frequent visits results in endless festivities locally known as *Getget*.

Usually, *Getget* will take place after three days of the wedding. First, the bride's family invites the groom's family with preparation of local food (*Tella, Araqi, Enjera*, etc). On this feast, the groom's parents will come with two close relatives of the couples. In turn, the groom's family also invites in the same feast. This is one of the advantages (enjoyment) that parents are motivated to marry off their children early. According to FGD participants, mostly, such type of feast is practiced by higher and middle wealth groups of parents.

As explained above, after some months, the bride will be back to her parents' home. For the first round, the groom and the bride will go to the bride's family with one female and one male close friend. There, they will stay for about 3-4 days having festivities in the bride's family. Then the bride will stay with her parents, while the groom will come back to his parents' home.

In the second round, the groom will come alone to the bride's family because now he becomes experienced on the procedures and the rituals. This process (*Meleles*) will continue until both families decide to live spouses on their own home. In the way, the bride will stay for about one or two years. According to the local tradition, the bride is recommended to establish her own home at the age of 15-16 years. After the bride reaches around 14 years and above, the groom asks her parents to allow them establish their own home. To convince, he argues that, "now she has reached to manage her home please allow us to live in our own home independently. My mother will train her to household chores."

On the side of the bride's parents, particularly the mother also responds by saying, "She did not yet reach to manage her own home independently. Therefore, she must wait for some months with us. Anyway, please come back in another time". This indicates that parents are aware that their daughter is too small to marry and to establish her own home. However, the traditional norm compels them to marry off daughters early as any community members do.

Usually, under the girl child's marriage, parent in-laws have the responsibility to protect the bride from premature sexual advance of her young husband. Although this obligation exists, sometimes a problem is created due to the husband's irresponsibly assaults the bride sexually. This practice is not considered as harmful to the girl. Rather, it is considered as non-harm. Lastly, after agreement is reached between the families, the bride and the groom start to live in their new hut independently when the bride's age reaches around 15 years.

II. Early Adolescent Marriage (10-14 years old)

Meleles is also common at this type of marriage. According to FGD participants and key informants, at this age (in this type of early marriage) more girls are entering to marriage. Further, they explained that marriage at early adolescent age can be ranked first in its prevalence rate compared to other types of early marriages in the research sites. At this age, the girl is considered as eligible for marriage. According to the local tradition, unless she gets married at

this age (until the age of 14), she will be labeled as ‘*Komaker*’. One of the FGD participants (a 50 years old man) explicitly explained this situation as follows:

When the girl is late to marry, neighbors will start to talk by saying, “what is the reason that she has not been proposed for marriage? May her parents are from “lower” class? Or has she been seen with someone in relation to sexual matters? May her parents are infected with bad diseases (Eg.lepresy)?” Such rumors will make parents worry about their daughter’s marriage. The more the girl is late to marry, the more she becomes unmarriageable. Therefore, parents ought to marry their daughter to conform to the traditional norm, though they know the daughter is too young and early marriage has negative consequences (FGD participant, Gendwabalangev, March 2010).

This finding confirms the reviewed studies. In line with this, Corea and Rosalind (2003) revealed that where female genital mutilation is a traditional practice, women must “choose” for their young daughters between severe health risk and sexual loss on the one hand, and unmarriageable pariah status on the other. In the same vein, where early marriage is a traditional practice, parents must “choose” for their young daughters between severe physical and psychological risk and sexual loss on the one hand, and unmarriageable pariah status on the other. This is the situation in the studied peasant communities that compelling circumstances (traditional norms) push parents to marry off their daughters early although they are aware of its negative consequences.

III. Late Adolescent Marriage (15-18 years old)

In the research sites (PAs), females in this age range are expected to give birth. However, a girl who does not marry until this age is considered as ‘her marriage age has already passed’. According to FGD discussants, different derogatory names will be given for a girl who is late to marriage. People say in the form of jock, for example, *Manteyikosh* (no one asks you for marriage!). According to FGD participants, at this age, some low endowed parents marry off their children. In terms of prevalence, marriage within this range ranked at second level in the research sites.

IV. Adult Marriage (Greater than 19 years Old)

According to FGD discussants, marriage at this age is mostly the marriage of children from low-wealth status of parents. Children from poor family must work to collect assets to establish their own life. They ought to go where job is available. For example, men go to Metema to work at sesame harvesting to get money, whereas females go to towns, like Gondar and other small

towns. After they collect some amount of money, they will come back to their parents and form marriage with the family of equal status. If they collect more than the expected amount of money, they will have a chance to marry with families greater than they have. Some women marry while they are working as housemaid.

In this connection, the survey data (see Table 8) below shows distribution of age at first marriage. Accordingly, the majority (59.68%) of daughters get married at early adolescent age (10-15 years). This finding is more similar with the study carried out by Haile Gabriel (1994) in that 62.2% of 587 parent respondents married off their daughters at early adolescent years.

Table 8: Types of First Marriage of Daughters by Parents' Wealth Status

Types of marriages	Higher		Middle		Lower		Very low		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
As children ≤ 9	15	38.46	10	14.08	-	-	-	-	25	13.44
At early adolescent years(10_15)	23	58.97	56	78.87	32	55.17	-	-	111	59.68
At late adolescent years(16-20)	1	2.56	5	7.04	26	44.83	16	88.89	48	25.8
As an adult(≥ 21)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	11.11	2	1.08
Total Respondents	39	100	71	100	58		18	100	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

More specifically, about 38% and 14% of daughters get married at child age marriage (below 9 years old) from higher and middle wealth group of parents, respectively. However, daughters from lower and very low wealth groups get married at later age. Accordingly, about 44% of 58 lower and 88% of 18 very low wealth groups of respondents married off their daughters at late adolescent (16-20 years old). This is consistent with qualitative data explained above, “some low-endowed parents marry under this age (15-18 years old)” and “marriage at this age is mostly of children from low-wealth status of parents (greater than 19 years old)”. This shows that better endowed parents married off their daughters early compared to lower and very lower wealth groups.

4.2.1.2 Processes and Components of Wedding Ceremony for First Marriages

I. Processes of First Marriage

The following description of the process of customary first marriage currently practiced in the research sites is based on key informant interviews and focus group discussions, particularly with experienced traditional marriage negotiators (*Amachoch*).

Most people in the *Woreda* are predominantly followers of Orthodox Christian religion and the rural population of Dembia *Woreda* depends for its livelihood on agriculture.. Hence, agriculture based economic activity dictates marriage ceremony. Mostly wedding ceremony takes place at the end of the harvesting season and before the beginning of the big fasting season (Easter) or after the fasting, i.e. January and April are the most suitable months for wedding.

First, the marriage arrangement process starts with families of a male, researching the best of the family for his son using arrangement. According to my informants, during the Imperial periods, the criteria for selecting marriage partners include, cattle, social and political status, ethnicity, beauty of a girl, etc.

Nowadays, the major criteria are land and cattle. Based on these criteria, parents of a male would start to search before 3 - 6 months of the wedding time. Having general information (whether he is able to allot land or cattle), the father of a son sends an elder person, mostly a close friend for both parents, to submit marriage proposal. The daughters' father will not give immediate response until he discusses the issue with his relatives. Indirectly, this is the time to collect information whether the would- be- husband's parents fit to his criteria or not.

After some weeks, the negotiator comes again to hear the reaction. If the response is positive, appointment will be made for further discussion with both parents. Then, in the second meeting, in front of kin bond friends and relatives of both parties, hot discussion will be carried out on the amount of resource to be endowed for the new weds (land or cattle), locally called *Mequaquamya Nibret*. According to my informants, mostly the cattle or land contribution is equal from both families. At this meeting, all agreements, including endowments and obligations are written on a paper and provided to both parents and a copy would be documented at elders.

In the mean time, the amount of bridal gift (*Yej Mensha*) and lastly the date of wedding will be decided upon the agreement of both parties. The amount of bridal gift will be determined based on the amount of land or cattle endowed to the girl by her parents (from the girl's father). If the girl's father gives one heifer, bridal gift will be 200-400 *Birr*. If he allots 0.25 hectare (1 *Kada*) of land, 500- 700 *Birr*, and if 0.25 hectare of land and one cattle, it will reach 800-1000 *Birr*.

Next, according to their agreement, the wedding date will be decided and the necessary preparations will start on both parties. On the wedding date, both parents invite their neighbors and close relatives to participate in their ceremony. In a ceremony, local food and drinks would be served. On this day, the groom will come to the bride's parents with his friends and would be served local foods and drinks. After 4-5 hours stay at the bride's parents' home, the groom will be back to his parents' home with the bride and his best friends.

II. Types of Wedding Ceremonies

Based on the level of feast, there are two types of wedding ceremonies locally known as *Gelatbosh* and *Serg*. Both ceremonies will take place depending on parents' grain or financial capacity. If both marrying families have the capacity to prepare elaborated feast, they will prepare *Serg*. However, the bride's parents practice *Gelatbosh*. If the bride's parents encounter shortage of grain /or finance to prepare *Serg*, they ought to post pond the *Serg* to next year, instead *Gelatbosh*. However, the groom's parents can prepare *Serg* whether they encounter shortage of grain and finance or not. Detail description is presented below.

1. *Serg* Ceremony

Serg is a form of wedding ceremony in which its level of feast is higher than *Gelatbosh*. According to FGD participants, nowadays, such type of preparation is practiced by higher and middle level wealth groups. A parent, who has the capacity (having sufficient grain and finance) to prepare elaborated feast, prepares a wedding ceremony locally known as *Serg*. In this ceremony, relatively large amount of local drinks and food items will be prepared and provided to the people invited to the *Serg*.

According to the local tradition, all the invited guests will contribute 10 to 20 *Birr* depending on his/her financial capacity. The contribution is reciprocal, i.e. it will be paid back in turn when another person is preparing *Serg*. According to FGD participants, contribution of money is a recent practice, which may be imitated from the town. In this case, a person who does not prepare

Serg or does not marry off his child cannot get back his contribution. This is one of the compelling factors that push parents to marry off their children early to get back their previous contribution.

2. *Gelatbosh* Wedding Ceremony

This is another form of wedding ceremony in the research sites. Only the girl's parents practice *Gelatbosh*. Because, according to the local tradition, girl's parents ought to invite (*Mels Yeteral*) the groom three days after the marriage. If the daughter's parents encounter shortage of grain or finance to prepare *Serg* and to invite the groom (*Mels*), marriage will be undertaken with small amount of feast (two jars of *Tella* and about twenty *Enjera*). This is a temporary type of wedding ceremony, which is locally called *Gelatbosh*. The *Serg* ceremony will be prepared next year. However, all the processes of the marriage arrangement that performed before the wedding day are similar with that of the *Serg ceremony*. The difference is only the elaborateness of the feast.

As explained above, with the ceremony of *Gelatbosh*, the bride will go with her husband to her in-laws' home. After one or two years preparation (if parents harvest good grain), the bride's parents ought to prepare the *Serg* ceremony, preparing local drinks and foods (*Tella, Areqie, Enjera*) and in the meantime the bride and the groom will be invited at the ceremony (*Melse Yeterallu*). At this time, the elaborateness of the feast is equivalent to *Serg*. For this ceremony, the groom will come to his in-laws' home with two intimate friends. After 3 or 4 days stay, the groom and the bride will be back to the groom's parents' home.

According to FGD discussants' explanation, *Gelatbosh* ceremony is mostly practiced by lower wealth groups of parents and sometimes by very low wealth groups. From this explanation, we can understand that *Gelatbosh* is a form of wedding ceremony, which is practiced only by lower wealth groups of parents.

In this case, one side, parents want to conform to tradition (marrying off their daughters early). Another side, they are encountered with shortage of grain to prepare *Serg* and to invite the groom. From this situation, we can infer that because of lack of resource, lower and very low wealth groups of parents are forced to marry off their children late compared to higher and middle wealth groups.

4.2.2 Prevalence of Early Marriage in the Research Sites

Actual age at first marriage is the best indicator of the prevalence of early marriage in any area. In light of this, the survey was conducted to collect reliable information on age at first marriage in the research sites. Accordingly, the survey results are presented in Table 9 and 10 below under sub-sections.

4.2.2.1 Mothers' and Daughters' Age at First Marriage

In the research sites, focus group discussants and key informants repeatedly cited that the majority of marriages are practiced between the ages of 10-14 years. In support of the qualitative findings, the survey data also clearly indicates (see Table 8) that the majority of mothers (82.43%) and daughters (65.59%) get married between 9-14 years.

During the survey, the finding was focused on two questions. One, on at which age respondents themselves get married. In addition, they were asked at which age respondents married off their children. From the total sample respondents, 74 women were asked to indicate their own age at first marriage. The result found that the mean ages at first marriage for mothers were 11.13 years. This finding confirms the finding of Guday (2005) carried out in West Gojjam, which was 11 years for mothers' generation.

Table 9: Mothers' and Daughters' Age at First Marriage

Age group at first marriage	Mothers		Daughters	
	F	%	F	%
≤ 5 years	2	2.7	-	-
6-8	6	8.11	5	2.69
9-11	36	48.65	88	47.31
12-14	25	33.78	34	18.28
15-17	4	5.41	33	17.74
≥ 18	1	1.35	26	13.98
Total	74	100	186	100
Mean age	11.13	-	12.96	-

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs Dembia Woreda (March-April 2010)

As it is depicted in the table 9 above, about 98.65% of mothers and 86.02% of daughters have got married below 18 years (below the legal marriage age) which is much more than the national prevalence of 54.6%. This result is more similar with the findings of NCTPE (1997);

Sida/Amhara(2006); NOP (1999), which found out 83%, 82%, and 75.5% of the female population have got married before 18 years old, respectively. This shows that as in other areas of the Amhara region, a significant proportion of women enter into marriage very early in the Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj peasant associations of Dembia *Woreda*.

4.2.2.2 Daughters' and Sons' Mean Age at First Marriage by Parents Wealth Status

From the sample population of 186, all married-off daughters and 67 sons. Respondents were asked to indicate the age at which they married off their daughters and sons. It was found that the mean age for daughters is 12.96 years and for sons it is 20.36 years (Table 9 below).

Several studies conducted in Northern Ethiopia, also showed that mean age for daughters is below the national average. For instance, in West Gojam (Mecha *Woreda*) Guday (2005) found that the average age at first marriage for the daughters generation was 8 years. In East Gojam, Alemante (2004) found that the average age for the daughters generation was 9 years. Haile Gabriel (1994) also identified that a mean age for daughters was 13.3 years and for sons was 18.6 years in the study sites of Amhara and Tigray regions. A survey study carried out by Pathfinder, International/Ethiopia in 18 *Woredas* of the Amhara Region, indicated that the mean age at first marriage for daughters was 14.46 years. The above results are relatively different because it is found from different study *Woredas* and from the studies conducted at different times. Here, the important thing is that still parents married off their daughters at the early adolescent years (under 15). This is rather low when compared with the mean marriage age of 15.6 (CSA, 1993) for the entire country.

Moreover, this study attempts to investigate age at first marriage in relation to parents' wealth status. Based on the data collected, mean age at first marriage of daughters and sons' has computed and the result is presented below in Table 10.

Table 10: Children’s Mean Age at First Marriage by Parents’ Wealth Status

	Mean age at first marriage			
	Daughters		Sons	
	Number	Mean Age	Number	Mean Age
Higher	39	10.41	20	19.45
Middle	71	11.28	30	19.47
Lower	58	15.17	14	22.29
Very low	18	18.67	3	25
Total	186	-	67	-
Mean age	-	12.96	-	20.36

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is displayed in Table 9, significant differences are observed among wealth groups in mean age at which they married off their children. Parents from higher, middle, lower and very low wealth groups married off their daughters at a mean age of 10.4, 12.2, 15.1, and 18.6 years, respectively. This is a clear testimony that higher and middle wealth groups married off their daughters early compared to lower and very low wealth groups in the research peasant associations of Dembia *Woreda*.

4.2.2.3 Girls’ Marriage without Consent

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is opposed to forced marriages at any age, where the notion of consent is non-existent and the views of the bride or groom are ignored, particularly when those involved are under the age of 18. According to the FDRE and the Amhara Regional State Family law, the minimum age of marriage without parental consent is 18 years for both girls and boys.

Nevertheless, in the research sites, parents arrange early marriage for their daughters without their consent. According to FGD discussants and Early Marriage Protection School Club interviewees, there are two reasons for ignoring the consent. One, in the previous years and still, consent was ignored for the reason that children are not in a position to decide on their marriage. Instead, parents used to arrange marriage for their children.

In addition to the above reason, nowadays, consent has been ignored for the reason that girls, particularly schoolchildren, strongly oppose their parents for their marriage though they are still children. Not only opposition, they themselves also report to schools, Peasant Administration or

Police. Because of this, most parents do not want to consent their daughters on their marriage. During the interviews, a 45 years old woman stated as follows:

My husband has passed away. In Consultation with my grandfather, I was arranging marriage for my daughter while she was grade three. I did not ask her consent. I completed all the required process. My daughter did not hear what was going on. Then, before a few weeks of her wedding, I informed her. As soon as she heard it, she shouts on me and became angry. She warned me, if you continue the marriage process, first let us go to Dembia (meaning- to the Justice). At this time, I asked her, don't you obey me? If so, you are out of my control. The daughter replied, my mother, I am not out of your control. However, I have to decide on my marriage. At this time I was surprised, I did not expect such reply from my child. Due to this opposition, I forced to stop the process. Hence, the marriage arrangement process was interrupted. Then, I paid back 300 Birr, Yejmensha (the money paid from the groom's family to the bride's family) to the groom's father. Now, she is a 5th grade student at Gendwabalangev Gabriel school (Parent Interviewee, Gendwabalangev, Dembia Woreda, March 2010).

In this case, parents still did not consider the necessity of asking consent. Patriarchal thinking (women and children's issue should be decided by parents) persists in the area. Consent is not a right to daughters to decide on their marriage matters in the study area. Instead, parents and relatives are the decision makers. However, in the research sites, some schoolgirls are challenging the practice of early marriage. This may be the effect of the expansion of rural schools and the awareness creation work by Early Marriage Protection Clubs in rural schools.

According to FGD participants, parents just for the sake of their advantages, including honors, feasts, establishing alliances between families, etc, arrange early marriage. As of their explanation, a marriage arranged by parents without the consent of their daughter, is likely to be dissolved when she reaches around 15 years old. Particularly, those girls who married while they are attending formal school, when they reach late adolescent age, they start to evaluate the condition and strongly challenge not to continue on the arranged marriage. However, many of non-schoolchildren are forced to marry by parents' decision and interest in the study PAs.

In addition to the qualitative data, this study also posed the question to respondents, "did you ask the consent of your daughter when you married off her? The survey data (Table 11 below) discloses how consent is ignored in the research sites of peasant community.

Table11: Consent during Daughters' Marriage by Parents' Educational Background

Parents' educational background	Did you ask consent your daughter during her first marriage?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Cannot read and write	5	2.69	114	61.29	119	63.98
1-8 th grade	6	3.23	50	26.88	56	30.11
9 -12 th grades	8	4.3	3	1.61	11	5.91
Total	19	10.22	167	89.78	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is seen in Table above, irrespective of educational background, 89.78% of the sample respondents responded that they did not ask their consent when they married off their daughters. Only 10.22% of the respondents replied that they asked their consent when they married off their daughters. This result confirms the previous finding. Guday (2005) stated that most customary marriages among the rural majorities of Ethiopia are early arranged by parents, without the free consent of the would-be-spouses. In this context, very young brides have little negotiating power to protect themselves from early-arranged marriage practices.

When we see the frequency of response by parents' educational background, a relative difference was observed between those who cannot read and write and those who have secondary education (grades 9-12th). Accordingly, 4.3% of the total respondents who have secondary education have asked their consent during the first marriage of their daughters.

However, there is no a significance difference in asking the daughters' consent during marriage between respondents who cannot read and write and those with primary education (grades 1-8th). Accordingly, 2.69% and 3.23% of the total respondents asked the consent of their daughters during their first marriage, respectively. In short, parents who have secondary education (grades 9-12th) are better in asking consent compared to those who cannot read and write as well as of those with primary education (grades 1-8th).

4.2.2.4 Brides' Condition Immediately After Early Marriage

In the Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj peasant associations of Dembia *Woreda*, marriage of female children under 18 (legal marriage age) is a common practice. Because of the fact that brides are not matured enough physically and mentally to manage their own home after marriage,

they stayed either with their parents or with parents' in-laws' depending on the agreement of both families. For the question, “with whom did your daughter reside immediately after her first marriage?” the survey result is presented below in the table below.

Table 12: Percent of Married Daughters by place of Stay after Early Marriage

Married daughters by age range	Responses							
	Stayed with her parents		Stayed with her parents in-law		In her home with her husband		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6-8	5	2.69	-	-	-	-	5	2.69
9-11	17	9.14	-	-	-	-	17	9.14
12-14	38	20.43	24	12.9	-	-	62	33.33
15-17	-	-	23	12.37	34	18.28	57	30.65
≥18 years	-	-	-	-	45	24.19	45	24.19
Total	60	32.26	47	25.27	79	42.47	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is seen in Table 12, about 32.2% and 25.3% of parents reported that their daughters resided with their parents and in-laws immediate after marriage, respectively. Surprisingly, among the daughters who stayed with parents and in-laws, about 45.16% of the respondents married off their daughters while their ages were below 14 years old. This shows that a large number of females get married at early age in the study sites.

In other words, they ought to reside with parents or parents' in-laws because they are not physically and mentally matured enough to manage their home and to lead their life independently. For the question, “what is the reason that the bride is staying with her parents and/or parents' in-laws?” The response was just to make her adapt to the new situation.

The reason was also crosschecked by conducting detail discussion during qualitative data collection. According to FGD discussants, “since the girl is too young, she will leave away if she would directly sent to her husband immediately after marriage. Therefore, for 1-2 years, the bride is staying for some time with her parents and for another time with her parents' in-laws. Through this process, it is assumed as: the bride will adapt the new situation, learn household chores and skills and then slowly transfer from her parents to in-laws and to her own home.

This finding is further confirmed by Naana and Sonita (2003) by which they noted that, for the majority of women in developing countries, marriage is not negotiable. For many, it occurs when they truly are still children. The young bride is put under great pressure to become a woman and mother at a time when she is ill prepared for these multiple roles.

4.2.2.5 Knowledge of the Respondents about Legal Marriage Age

Lack of awareness about legal marriage age contributes to the prevalence and persistent of early marriage practices. Assessing the level of awareness of parents on the legal marriage age will help to evaluate the relation between the knowledge and the prevalence rate. If societies have low knowledge about legal marriage age, it is expected that people are still stitched to the knowledge of tradition; as a result prevalence rate will be high. Low level of awareness could be one of the reasons for the persistent of early marriage. Hence, during survey, this study asks respondents about the legal marriage age. Accordingly, the finding is presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Respondents' Knowledge of the Legal Marriage Age by Research Sites

Research Sites	What is the minimum legal age for first marriage for females and males?					
	15 years for females and 20 years for males		18 years for both sexes		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Gendwabalangev	82	44.08	44	23.66	126	67.74
Gevavasalj	14	7.53	46	24.73	60	32.26
Total	96	51.61	90	48.39	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is shown in Table 13, only below fifty percent of the respondents (48.39%) are able to identify correctly the legal age at first marriage, whereas about 51.61% of the respondents are not aware of the legal age at first marriage. The result obtained from key informants (Orthodox religion leaders) was similar with those who said “15 for female and 20 years for male” which was incorrect identification. This shows that people in the study sites still hold the traditional knowledge about the age at first marriage. In other words, the majority of the respondents are not aware of the legal marriage age. This shows that lack of knowledge contributes for the persistent of early marriage in the study sites.

When we see the awareness rate between the two survey PAs, about 44% and 7.5% of the respondents identified the legal marriage age as 15 and 20 years in Gendwabalangev (far from the central town) and Gevavasalj (nearby the town), respectively. This may be the reason that early marriage is relatively higher in Gendwabalangev than Gevavasalj.

4.2.3 Early Marriage and Parents' Wealth Status

The major focus of this study is to investigate the link between early marriage and parents' wealth status. It is agreed that early marriage is the tradition of rural communities and one of the reasons is poverty. Some of the previous studies on early marriage generalized their findings based on the rural community irrespective of parents' wealth status, taking households as homogeneous in wealth status. Though wealth stratification among the peasant communities is not so much wide, even the small difference in wealth status will have differential impact on parents' decision on their household matters, including early marriage.

4.2.3.1 The Link between Daughters' Age at First Marriage and Parents' Wealth Status

The qualitative data collected through FGDs and key informant interviews revealed that early marriage is practiced more by higher and middle wealth groups of parents compared to lower and very low wealth groups. According to my informants' explanation, "any marriage preparation involves expense in kind and cash. Such expense is affordable by better-endowed groups than lower and very low wealth groups. In the research sites, marrying their children early makes parents mentally satisfied. In fact, almost all members of the community accept the traditional norm (marrying off children early). However, higher and middle level wealth group of parents have the capacity to make their interest practical, i.e., marrying their children early". This explanation shows that early marriage is more practiced by better-endowed parents.

In support of the above qualitative findings, survey data (Table 14 below) revealed that better-endowed parents (higher and middle wealth groups) marry off their daughters early than lower and very low wealth groups. The degree of marrying off early daughters is different among wealth groups of parents. Accordingly, 100% of 39 high, 95.7% of 71 middle, 87% of 58 low and 11% of 18 very low wealth groups married off their daughters below the legal marriage age.

Table 14: Daughters' Age at First Marriage by Parents' Wealth Status

Daughters' age range at first marriage	Higher		Middle		Lower		Very low		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6- 8	3	7.69	2	2.82	-	-	-	-	5	2.69
9- 11	29	74.36	54	76.05	5	8.62	-	-	88	47.31
12-14	6	15.39	10	14.08	18	31.03	-	-	34	18.28
15-17	1	2.56	2	2.82	28	48.28	2	11.11	33	17.74
≥ 18	-	-	3	4.23	7	12.07	16	88.89	26	13.98
Total	39	100	71	100	58	100	18	100	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As we can see in the Table above, the results exhibited that the majority (74.3%) of 39 higher, and the majority (76%) of 71 middle wealth groups of parents, married-off their daughters at the age range of 9-11 years old, which is very low marriage age. In other side, when we see the lower and very low wealth groups, it is quite different in terms of age at which their daughters were married-off. In this case, out of 58 lower wealth groups of sample parents, the majority (48.28%) of them married off their daughters at the age range of 15-17 years old. Regarding very low wealth group, out of 18 sample parents, the majority (88.89%) of them married off their daughters at 18 and above (at the legal marriage age and above). This shows that higher and middle wealth groups married off their daughters early compared to lower and very low wealth groups of parents.

As it is seen in the Table 14 above, among the four wealth groups, higher and middle wealth groups of parents married- off their daughters at the age range of 6-8 years old, which is 7.69% and 2.82%, respectively. In conclusion, higher and middle wealth groups of sample parents married off their daughters early compared to lower and very low wealth groups. This finding is in accordance with the study conducted in rural areas of Amhara Region. Guday (2005) identified that many girls and boys in cattle and land-rich peasant families get married at an early age. Based on the study conducted in Mecha, Kemkem, Borena, Jeru and Axsum rural communities of Amhara and Tigray regions, Haile Gabriel (1994) stated that most farmers marry off their daughters before the age of twelve (i.e., before puberty). It is girls from poor families that marry after that age.

In conclusion, the above data revealed that better endowed wealth groups married off their daughters at at early age compared to lower and very low wealth groups in the Gendwabalangev

and Gevavasalj peasant communities of Dembia *Woreda*. In addition, this finding is also triangulated by asking the same question to FGD participants and key informants. For the question asked, which group is marrying their daughters at early age among higher, middle, lower, and very low wealth group? The qualitative data also supported this finding. In this connection, one FGD participant, a 46 years woman explained the issue as follows:

When their daughters reach around 13 and above years old, parents would think about their daughter's marriage. Parents do not want their daughter to be victim of "Komakerech". Hence, irrespective of wealth status, every parent wants to marry-off his/her daughter early. However, the rich can fulfill all the requirements for the time to prepare wedding, and are able to allot land or contribute cattle for the new weds. Hence, girls from rich family are more likely to be asked early for marriage. No one would like to ask for marriage a girl from a poor family, even she is beautiful. Poor parents can neither send their daughters to school nor marry off them early (even cannot conform the norm). For their daughters, the only alternative is working as housemaid in rich households or go to the town to search for work. This forces them to marry late. If she comes back to her parents with some money, immediately she will be asked for marriage (FGD Participant, Woman, Gevavasalj, and March 2010).

The previous finding conducted in the Amhara Region also supports this finding. Haile Gabriel (1994) stated, "If a wealthy family is available, an agreement might take place even at pregnancy. Then, there is a rush to such a family. All tend to side to the wealthy. If the girl is from a poor family, even though she resembles an angel, nobody approaches her family". In general, the above qualitative and quantitative data clearly indicated that well-endowed parents married off their daughters early compared to lower and very low wealth groups in the study sites.

4.2.3.2 Parents' Criteria for Selecting Marriage Partners for their Sons

According to my informants, when parents feel to search a wife for their sons, the primary issue to be given due attention is the type of asset to be allotted for the new weds from both sides of parents. The purpose is to secure their children's future life. In rural community, cattle and land are the most reliable assets for peasants for their livelihood.

From this situation, it is possible to infer that early marriage is taken as a strategy to protect economic insecurity in peasant communities. As far as the traditional norm allows proposing, the

grooms' father has a better chance to select the best of the well-to-do family and can alter his proposal when he does not get the best family.

According to FGD discussants and key informants, nowadays, particularly in the last 5-10 years, land becomes the most preferred asset in marriage transaction compared to cattle. Further, they explain that cattle are not preferred due to scarcity of grazing land. Cattle do not get sufficient feed, and they are likely to be susceptible for different kinds of disease and will die. However, land is free from such risks; also, its value is increasing and is the best source of income. Due to this reason, parents give high priority to land when they search a wife for their sons. Regarding the role of land in marriage, a 60 years old man (FGD participant) stated as follows:

Many years back cattle was preferred. Now, particularly, since last ten years, land is the most preferable asset in marriage transactions. If a parent sends rumor to his friends as he wants to allot land for his daughter or if one assumed somebody as he can allot land for his daughter, within a week a negotiator person, locally called Amach will be send to a girl's father to submit the marriage proposal (Lejhen Lelije) as well as land requisition through the mediator. If a daughter's parent does not want to give land, he hesitates to process marriage and search another family who will allot land. Hence, most parents are compelled to allot a piece of land to marry off their daughters early. If they are able to access, parents and their daughters could be free from the unmarriageable stigma (Komakerech) (FGD Participant, Gendwabalangev, March 2010).

In short, the above explanation informs us that to avoid the stigma of unmarriageability, well-endowed parents are using their wealth to attract marrying families. This finding confirms to the previous studies in that Haile Gabriel (1994) stated that, "The father might spread rumors, that he would contribute a piece of land or so many animals in case an interested family approaches him for the hand of his daughter."

According to FGD discussants, during marriage, allotting land to the new weds, on the side of the bride's parents is performed in three forms. One, the bride's father allots the groom a piece of land (usually 0.25 hectare) to cultivate crop with minimum amount of grain sharing, while the entitlement of the land is under the bride's father. This is being widely practiced. Second, the bride's father allots the groom to cultivate crop without grain sharing. Third, he completely transforms a piece of land to the new weds. This one is being practiced at a minimum level. In

this case, if divorce occurs, both parties take back the amount of land they contributed/allotted to the new weds.

In the research area of the communities, because of land demand is increasing, there is competition for a girl from land rich family. As one informant explained, “not only the land rich family, if there is a widowed woman with land, parents compete to request her daughter for marriage. The assumption is a woman cannot plough the land so she might allot it to the groom through marriage”.

Besides, to the qualitative information, the following survey data indicates the demand for land and cattle for marriage transactions.

Table 15: Parents’ Criteria for Selecting Marriage Partner for their Sons

Criteria	Yes	
	F	%
One who can allot land and contribute cattle to the new weds	58	31.18
One who can contribute cattle for the new weds	40	21.5
One who can allot land to the new weds	48	25.81
Family of good conduct	26	13.98
Beauty of the girl	14	7.53
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is seen in Table 15 above, 31.18%, 25.81%, and 21.5% of the respondents, were preferred to land and cattle, land only, and cattle only as criteria to select marrying family, respectively. This shows that land is more demanded than cattle in the marriage transaction. In this case, those who have land (higher and middle wealth groups) are likely to marry off their children early since the demand for land is increasing. As a result, because they are better endowed, they are also able to conform to the traditional norm (marrying off their children early).

4.2.3.3 Sources of Farmland to the New Weds

Traditionally groom’s parents are responsible to allot farmland to the new weds. However, in recent years, bride’s parents are also allot farmland to the new weds. Survey data in Table 16 shows source of farmland.

Table 16: Source of Farmland when parents Married off their Daughters

Sources farmland	When parents married off their daughters	
	F	%
Allotted from both sides of marrying families	52	27.96
Allotted only from the bride's parents	1	0.54
Allotted only from the groom's parents	97	52.15
From the PA Office	9	4.84
Gift from relatives	2	1.08
Rent from individuals	25	13.44
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is shown in Table 15, parents are responsible to allot a piece of land to the new weds from both sides. Accordingly, when they married off their daughters, the majority (52.15%) of the respondents replied that land was allotted from the groom's parents, and the second source was from both sides (27.96 %). Only about 4.84% of the respondents indicated that the source was from the Peasant Administration Office. This shows that the main sources of land for the new weds are their parents. The provision of land from the Peasant Administration for the new weds is very limited. This might lead parents to compete for establishing marriage alliance with the land-rich; as a result, it may push parents to marry off their daughters early.

In the same way, when parents married off their sons, parents are the main source of farmland to the new weds. The survey data is exhibited in the Table 17 below.

Table 17: Source of Farmland when Parents married off their Sons

Sources of farmland	When sons married off	
	F	%
Allotted from both sides of marrying families	14	20.9
Allotted only from the bride's parents	-	-
Allotted only from the groom's parents	38	56.72
From the PA Office	4	5.97
Gift from relatives	1	1.49
Rent from individuals	10	14.93
Total	67	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is seen above in Table 17, about 56.7% and 20.9% of the respondents allotted land to the groom's parents and from both sides, respectively. The proportion of the source from the PA was only 5.97%. In general, the main sources of land for the new weds are from their parents. According to Amhara Regional Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Authority proclamation, Peasant Associations have the right to provide farmland to those who do not have land when there is extra land in their community. However, farmland is scarce in the research sites. According to the Peasant Administration Offices' explanation, due to lack of reserve farmland in the PA, the office cannot provide land for the new weds or new household heads. From this data, it can be concluded that parents may be pushed to practice early marriage to compete to form marriage alliance with land-rich parents who can allot land for the new weds. To understand allotment from the aspect of wealth status, this study also attempted to collect quantitative data from the survey study. The response is presented in Table 18.

4.2.3.4 Types of Property Contributed to the New Weds by the Brides' Parents'

Wealth Status

In the study sites, cattle and farmland are the major assets to be endowed to the new wed. According to FGD participants and key informants, it is common that both marrying families are responsible to contribute cattle to the new weds. The contribution of cattle in the previous and still now is equal based. In the previous times, culturally, the provision of farmland to the new weds was the responsibility of only groom's father. Nevertheless, nowadays, allotting of farmland to the new weds is also from both marrying families.

As to their explanation, there are different forms of land accessing to the new weds from both families. On the side of groom's parent, contribution of farmland is complete transfer. On the side of bride's parents, allotting of farmland to the new weds have three forms. One, the bride's father allows the groom a piece of land (usually 0.25 hectare) to cultivate crop with minimum amount of grain sharing while the entitlement of the land is under the bride's father. This is being widely practiced. Second, the bride's father allows the groom to cultivate crop without grain sharing. Third, completely transform a piece of land to the new weds. This one is being practiced at a minimum level. In this case, if divorce is occurs, both parties take back the amount of land they allotted. According to FGD participants, allotting land to the new weds by the bride's

parents is a recent practice. The survey result (Table 18) also shows allotted farmland and contributed cattle by the bride's parents.

Table 18: Types of Property Contributed from the Brides' Parents to the Newly Married Couples by Parents' Wealth Status

Parents by Wealth Status	Assets contributed/allotted									
	Cattle		Land		Cattle and land		Other		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Higher	15	38.46	10	25.64	14	35.9	-	-	39	100
Middle	47	66.2	11	15.49	13	18.31	-	-	71	100
Lower	21	36.21	5	8.62	-	-	32	55.17	58	100
Very low	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	100	18	100
% from Total	83	44.62	26	13.98	27	14.52	50	26.88	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As it is seen in Table 18 above, 44.6%, 14.5% and 13.9% of the respondents contributed cattle, land and cattle and land, respectively, when they married off their daughters early at first marriage. About 26.8% of them contributed other different materials (small amount of money, cooking dishes, local grinding mills, axes, etc).

As it is shown in the above table, more specifically, when we see the types of endowment, it is different among wealth groups. Accordingly, among 39 higher wealth groups of parents, the majority (35.9%) of them contributed cattle and land. Conversely, out of 18 very low and 58 lower wealth groups, 100% and 41.3% of them contributed other materials, respectively. This shows that better endowed parents have the capacity to endow to the new weds and likely to marry off their daughters early compared to lower and very low wealth groups of parents.

4.2.4 Early Marriage and Parents' Educational Background

In this section, an attempt was made to assess the practice of early marriage in connection to parents' educational background. During qualitative data collection, focus group participants and key informants noted that parents who do not have educational background are more inclined to marry off their children early compared to those who have some education. The survey result also indicates the same result below in Table 19.

Table 19: Daughters' Age at First Marriage by Parents' Educational Background

Daughters' age range at first marriage	Percent of response by Educational Level							
	Cannot read and write		Primary education (grades 1-8 th)		Secondary education (grades 9-12 th)		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6-8	4	3.36	1	1.79	-	-	5	2.69
9-11	33	27.73	22	39.29	-	-	55	29.57
12-14	47	39.5	18	32.14	2	18.18	67	36.02
15-17	21	17.65	7	12.5	5	45.45	33	17.74
≥ 18	14	11.76	8	14.29	4	36.36	26	13.98
Total	119	63.98	56	30.11	11	5.92	186	100

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

As observed in Table 19, out of 119 who cannot read and write, about 88.2% of them married off their daughters below the legal marriage age (less than 18 years). Out of 56 respondents who have primary education background (grades 1-8th), 85.7% of them married off their daughters below the legal marriage age. Nevertheless, out of 11 respondents who have secondary education background (grades 9-12th), 63.6% of them married off their daughters below the legal marriage age. In general, almost all groups married off their daughters below the legal age. However, as the data indicates above in the table, comparatively those parents who have secondary education(grades 9-12th) are better, at least 36.4% of them married off their daughters within the legal marriage age (18 or above years).

In conclusion, the majority of parents who could not read and write married off their children early compare to who have secondary education (grades 9-12th). A survey study conducted in Addis Ababa indicated that father's education has significant impact on daughters' age at first marriage. Mean age at first marriage of women born from at least secondary education level father was highest (36 years) as compared to women born from primary educational fathers (22.2 years) and women born from illiterate fathers (17.5 years), respectively (Alemu, 2009:59). Burchinal (1965) noted also that both lower parental education and occupational prestige are associated with early marriage of children.

4.2.5 Reasons for the Practice of Early Marriage

On this issue, thirty-six FGD participants and thirteen key informants have given several reasons for the causes of early marriage in the study sites. In addition to the qualitative data, during the

survey, 186 respondents were also asked to indicate why they married off their children at an early age. For this purpose, six points (Table 20) and five points (Table 21) were listed on a multiple answer scale. Respondents indicated their major reasons corresponding to the list of reasons. Accordingly, data collected from FGDs, key informant interviews and survey results are presented and discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.2.5.1 Reasons for Marrying off Both Daughters and Sons Early

I. Unable to Cover Expenses to Educate all Children

During the key informant interview, some parents, particularly, low and very low wealth groups explained that they could not cover educational expenses for their children. Hence, they tend to marry off their children. One of the interviewees said, “I know the importance of educating children. Nevertheless, nowadays, everything is expense; it is hard to educate even one child. Hence, marrying off children early is an alternative to me.” In this aspect, poverty forces parents to marry off their children early. The survey data also showed that the majority of lower and very low wealth groups also indicate this reason as the main compelling factor to marry off their children early.

As it is presented (in Table 20, page 68), 66.6% of 18 very low and 68.9% of 58 lower wealth groups of respondents responded that, “unable to cover expenses to educate all children” is the primary reason to marry off their children early. This reason may be taken not only for marrying early but the reason may be understood as generally as unable to educate their children due to poverty. However, only 20.5% of 39 higher and 28.2% of 71 middle wealth groups indicated it as the reason to marry off their children early.

II. To get back my Material or Financial Contributions in others' Wedding Feasts

Focus groups discussants explain that one family alone does not perform marriage ceremony so relatives as well as neighbors are involved in the ceremony by contributing financially or materially. According to my informants, before twenty and thirty years, invited guests used to contribute in kind and in labor, whereas nowadays, in addition to material and labor contribution, there is financial contribution, i.e., 10-20 *Birr* will be contributed to parents preparing *Serg wedding* ceremony. Further, they explained that the contribution is mostly reciprocal. Hence, some parents inclined to marry off their children early in order to get back their contribution in

others' wedding feast. One of the FGD participants (PA Council member), a 39 years old woman stated what she observed as follows:

On a day, we received a report that informs a parent is arranging Serg ceremony to marry off his child daughter in a village. We (PA council members) have gone to home where the ceremony was prepared. As we arrived at, we found a parent with marriage negotiators (Amachoch). We assured that actually there was the marriage arrangement process. Then we gave choice to a parent, either to interrupt the marriage process or to go to court. The parent replied, this ceremony was very important to me. I was planning to get back my financial contributions, but cannot achieve it. I know who reported to you, the enemy is my neighbor (FGD Participant, Gendwabalangev, Dembia Woreda, and March 2010).

The case explained above indicated that parents are motivated to marry off their children early to get back financial contributions. Regarding this reason, during the survey study, parents were asked to indicate if this factor pushes them to marry their children. Survey result (Table 20, page 68) showed that the majority (53.5%) of 71 middle and the majority (51.3%) of 39 higher wealth groups indicated that this reason leads led them to practice early marriage. However, the responses are very limited from very low and lower wealth groups. This may be because the contribution is reciprocal and it may be above their capacity to contribute for wedding ceremony.

III. To get my Children Married/Settled before my resource is getting low

On this reason, detail information was generated from key informants and FGD participants. According to discussants, higher and middle wealth group parents feel the urgency to utilize their immediate capacity to establish a family for their children as early as possible and secure their future before their resource is getting low. In fact, lower and very lower wealth groups also want to marry early to secure the future life of their children. However, recently most marriages are linked with resource contributions for the new weds.

The survey data (Table 20, page 68) shows that 76.9% of 39 higher and 78.8% of 71 middle wealth groups have the need to marry off their children early in order to establish a family and to secure their children's future before their resource is getting low. Nevertheless, only 8.6% of 58 lower wealth group respondents indicated this as the reason to marry off their children early. This may be the reason because they are low endowed so that this does push them to marry off their children early.

IV. To Form Alliance with Marrying Families

This is another reason to practice early marriage in the research sites. This reason is considered more by higher and middle wealth groups. According to FGD participants and key informants, higher and middle wealth groups wanted to form marriage alliance with another equal status family to enlarge social networks and to keep on their relatively higher status. Further, they explained that since the alliance is based on their endowments, this type of marriage alliance is practiced by higher and middle wealth group parents compared to lower and very low wealth groups.

In addition to the above qualitative data, this question was forwarded to respondents during the survey study. The result is presented in Table 20 below. Accordingly, 74.4% of 39 higher and 71.8% of 71 middle wealth groups indicated that they wanted to marry off their children early to form alliance with marrying families. As the data in the table show, only 13.8% of 58 lower and 5.56% of 18 very low wealth groups indicated it as a pushing factor to marry off their children early. This may be the reason that less holding size of land and cattle endowment does not allow them to form marriage alliance with those cattle and land rich parents.

V. For Honor/Prestige

According to FGD participants and key informants, to high and middle wealth groups, marrying off their children early is the symbol of high status. Further, my informants explained that nowadays preparing elaborated feast for wedding is not easy. Only better endowed farmers can have the capacity to do this. These parents marry off their children early for prestigious reasons to gain fame by entertaining large number of guests in the wedding feast. The survey data (Table 20) showed that the majority (82%) of 39 high and 70% of 71 middle wealth groups indicated it as one of the reasons to marry off their children early. However, lower and very lower wealth groups did not indicate this reason. Because low and very low wealth groups are not well endowed, as such, they cannot prepare elaborated feast. Hence, this reason may not be a compelling reason to marry off their children.

VI. To Form Marriage Alliance with Land Rich Families

Focus group discussants and key informants repeatedly noted that land is becoming the most important mediator in marriage transaction. According to FGD participants and key informants,

mostly marriage alliance is formed among equally endowed parents. According to their explanation, a girl from a poor family (who do not have land and cattle), is not asked for marriage. However, if rumor is heard from the bride's father as he is going to allot land to the new weds, the requisition will be immediately forwarded through marriage negotiators.

In confirming the qualitative data, the survey result (Table 20) also revealed that the majority (92.3%) of 39 high and majority (92.9%) of middle wealth groups indicated that they marry off their children early to form alliance with land rich families. Only 3.45% of the lower wealth groups indicated this reason whereas very low wealth groups did not indicate it as a pushing factor to marry off their children early. This may be because low and very low wealth groups do not have as large farmland size as other wealth groups to form marriage alliances.

Table 20: Reasons of Early Marriage for Daughters and Sons by Parents' Wealth Status

Reasons	Response	Higher (N=39)		Middle (N=71)		Lower (N=58)		Very low (N=18)		Total (N=186)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Unable to cover expenses to educate all children	Yes	8	20.51	20	28.17	40	68.97	12	66.67	80	43.01
	No	31	79.49	51	71.83	18	31.03	6	33.33	106	56.99
To get back my material or financial contributions in others' wedding feast	Yes	20	51.28	38	53.52	5	8.62	-	-	63	33.87
	No	19	48.72	33	46.48	53	91.38	18	100	123	66.13
To get my children married before the resource is getting low	yes	30	76.92	56	78.87	5	8.62	-	-	91	48.92
	No	9	23.1	15	21.13	53	91.38	18	100	95	51.08
To form alliance with marrying families	Yes	29	74.36	51	71.83	8	13.79	1	5.56	89	47.85
	No	10	25.64	20	28.17	50	86.21	17	94.44	98	52.15
For honor/prestige	Yes	32	82.05	50	70.42	-	-	-	-	82	44.09
	No	7	17.95	21	29.58	58	100	18	100	104	55.91
To form alliance with land rich families to the new weds	Yes	36	92.31	66	92.96	2	3.45	-	-	104	55.91
	No	3	7.69	5	7.04	56	96.55	18	100	82	44.09

. **Source:** Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

From the above finding, it can be concluded that compelling factors do not equally push parents from all wealth groups. As it is clearly seen above in the table, respondents are prioritizing their reasons. For example, “being unable to cover expenses to educate all children” is the major reason to low and very lower wealth groups.

However, for higher and middle wealth groups, “form alliance with land rich families to contribute for the new weds, “forming alliance with marrying families” and “for honor or prestige are the pushing factors to marry off their children early.

The thesis writers’ reflection is, thus, in relative terms, the reason for early marriage is not the same for all wealth groups, rather it differs based on their wealth status. As it has been explained by FGD participants and key informants, early marriage is a traditional norm to the peasants in the research sites. However, only better endowed parents can conform to the tradition (marrying off their children early). Although lower and very low wealth groups wanted to conform to the norm, they are forced to marry off their children late. It is not because they are aware of its negative consequences, but marriage is highly based on contribution of cattle or allotting land to the new weds, which is beyond their capacity.

4.2.5.2 Reasons for Marrying off Daughters Early

Further, efforts were made to find out justification why parents marry off their daughters early. Qualitative data was collected from FGD participants and key informants. In addition, the survey result was presented in Table 20.

I. Fear of Unwanted Pregnancy before Marriage

This is one of the reasons that lead parents to marry off their daughters early. According to the FGD participants and key informants, parents are urged to marry off their daughters early because they fear unwanted pregnancy before marriage. Although all parents fear unwanted pregnancy, according to FGD participants, unwanted pregnancy is hard to particularly, lower and very low wealth groups of parents because it is beyond their capacity to raise the grandchild.

In a group discussion, a 42 years old woman described as follows:

It was good that legal age for first marriage is decided as 18 years and above. However, in our community it has its own impact. Girls at adolescent age, particularly, pupils aged 16-18 years were observed getting pregnant. Because it is not a legal marriage, the male partner ignores the newborn, whereas a girl leaves the child to her parents. This is an additional expense to her parents; particularly it is hard to a poor parent to raise a grandchild. Due to this reason, parents wanted to marry off their daughters early (FGD Participant, Gevavasalj, Dembia Woreda, March 2010).

The survey result (Table 21, page 71) also showed unwanted pregnancy before marriage is indicated as one of the reason for lower and very low wealth groups to marry off their daughters early. Accordingly, 72.2% of 18 very low and 70.6% of 58 lower wealth group of respondents indicated “fear of unwanted pregnancy.” As it is seen from the response, lower and very low wealth groups are worried more than higher wealth group if their daughter is getting pregnant before marriage. Because, as it has been explained during FGD discussion, behind fear of “unwanted pregnancy” there is fear of an additional expense to raise the child.

II. Fear of Loss of Girls’ Virginit

FGD participants indicated that parents marry off their daughters early to avoid premarital sex resulting in loss of virginit, which is considered as a great shame for the family and the daughter. Patriarchal subordination of women and girls places high value on girls’ virginit towards marriage and makes early marriage mainly a female child issue. Because of the high demand for girls’ virginit, particularly from young priests it forces them to marry off daughters at an early age.

During the survey, parents were also asked to indicate whether “fear of loss of virginit” pushes parents to marry off their daughters early. As the data (Table 21, page 71) exhibited below, 51.2% of 39 higher and 50.7% of 71 middle, 24% of 58 and 11% of 18 wealth groups of respondents responded that “fear of loss of virginit” pushes them to marry off their daughters early.

III. To Avoid the Stigma of being Unmarriageable

According to FGD participants and key informants, almost all parents wanted to conform to the traditional norm (marrying off their children early). However, wedding ceremony requires involvement of expenses. Higher and middle wealth groups can afford this elaborated wedding feast. Therefore, higher and middle wealth groups practice early marriage more than lower and very low wealth groups. In other words, they married their daughters early because they wanted to conform to the tradition (marrying off early).

In Table 20 below, the survey result also indicated that 82% of 39 higher and 81.6% of 71 middle wealth groups responded that they married off their daughters early because of “fear of the stigma of unmarriageable status”. However, here also the response of lower and destitute group is very

low. This may be the reason that since they do not have sufficient resource (grain, cattle, land) they cannot marry off their daughters early. Therefore, “Stigma of being unmarriageable” does not make them worry.

IV. Assuming that Daughters cannot be as successful as Sons in Formal Education

According to FGD participants and key informants, this reason is not given weight as the cause of early marriage in the study area. In the same way, the survey data also showed it as rated low (less than 13% for all wealth groups (Table 21) below.

V. Lack of Job Opportunity for Daughters

According to focus group discussants and key informants, this reason is also not considered as a pushing factor for early marriage. As explained from FGD discussants, in order to get job first daughters should acquire knowledge. Without education, there could not be job. In the same way, the survey result (Table 21) shows also ranked low (less than 21% for all wealth groups).

Table 21: Reasons for Parents Worry if a Daughter is Late at Marriage by Parents’ Wealth Status

Reasons	Response	Higher (N=39)		Middle (N=71)		Lower (N=58)		Very low (N=18)		Total (186)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Fear of Unwanted pregnancy before marriage	Yes	16	41.03	30	42.25	41	70.69	13	72.22	100	53.76
	No	23	58.97	41	57.75	17	29.31	5	27.78	86	46.24
Fear of loss of girls’ virginity	Yes	20	51.28	36	50.7	14	24.14	2	11.11	72	38.71
	No	19	48.72	35	49.3	44	75.86	16	88.89	114	61.29
To avoid the stigma of being unmarriageable	yes	32	82.05	58	81.69	25	43.1	1	5.56	116	62.37
	No	7	17.95	13	18.31	33	56.9	17	94.44	70	37.63
Assuming that daughters cannot successful as sons in formal education	Yes	5	12.82	3	4.23	4	6.9	1	5.56	13	6.99
	No	34	87.18	68	95.77	54	93.1	17	94.44	173	93.01
Lack of Job opportunity for daughters	yes	4	10.26	3	4.23	8	13.79	3	16.67	18	9.68
	No	35	89.74	68	95.77	46	79.31	15	83.33	168	90.32

Source: Field Survey in Two PAs of Dembia *Woreda* (March-April 2010)

Although “fear of unwanted pregnancy before marriage” is shame to all parents, in addition, it is harder to lower and very low wealth groups, because they are relatively poor and cannot afford expense to take care of grandchild.

In other side, majority of higher and middle wealth groups indicated that “to avoid the stigma of being unmarriageable” is the priority reason to marry off their daughters early.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

This study was conducted with the broad objective to investigate the link between early marriage and parents' socio economic status in rural communities of Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj of Dembia *Woreda*, in North Gondar *Zone*, Amhara Region. In order to attain this objective, primary data were gathered from 186 sampled household heads, 36 focus discussants, and 13 key informants, residing in the studied peasant associations. Data were gathered through the structured household questionnaire that was further supplemented by group discussions and key informant interviews. In due courses, data related to household background characteristics, types, prevalence and reasons of early marriage and its link to parents' socio-economic status were captured. The data collected were also organized, discussed and presented using descriptive statistics (percents, frequencies, and means, cross tabulations) and qualitative data were analyzed by organizing in themes and describing to supplement quantitative data. The summary of the main findings are presented hereunder.

Based on age range, four types of early marriage arrangements were identified in the studied PAs, namely child marriage, early adolescent marriage, late adolescent marriage, and adult marriage. Among these, the majority of daughters get married under early adolescent age (10-14 years). Regarding the prevalence of early marriage, 86% of daughters were married off below the legal marriage age (18 years old). Early marriage is significantly related with parents' wealth status. This finding has identified that about 97.4% of 39 high and 93% of 71 middle wealth groups of parents married off their daughters at an early adolescent age (10-14 years). However, only about 39.6% of lower wealth groups married off their daughters below 15 years old. This study also found that very low wealth groups of parents did not married off their daughters below 15 years. From the aspect of the legal marriage age, the degree of marrying early is differing among wealth groups. Accordingly, 100% of 39 higher, 95.8% of 71 middle and 87% of 58 low and 11% of 18 very low wealth groups married off their daughters below the legal marriage age. This shows that early marriage is practiced more by well endowed compared to low endowed wealth groups. The mean age at first marriage was 11.13 years for mothers, 12.96 years for daughters and 20.36 years for sons. More specifically, the survey results also revealed that low marriage age is found

among relatively better-endowed wealth groups of parents compared to their counter parts. Accordingly, high wealth groups married off their daughters at a mean age (10.4 years), middle wealth groups(11.2 years), lower wealth groups(15.1 years) and very low wealth groups (18.6 years old).This clearly indicated that marrying off their daughters early is more adhered by better-endowed wealth groups. The degree of marrying early is also differing according to parents' educational background. Accordingly, about 70.6% of 119 parents who don't have education, 73.2% of 56 who have primary education(grades1-8th) and 18.2% of 11 who have secondary education(grades9-12th) married off their daughters at child age, below 14 years old(see Table).

This study has also investigated whether consent was ensured when parents married off their daughters. The survey result showed that about 89.78% of parents married off their daughters without asking their consent (see table 11). Immediately after early marriage, about 57.53% of daughters stayed with parents and parents-in-laws before they start to live in their own home (see table 12).

The major reasons for the practice of early marriage among the peasant communities of Gendwabalangev and gevavasalj of Dembia *Woreda* differ according to wealth status of parents. Of course, the majority of the parents in the studied PAs commonly accept the traditional norm i.e. marrying off their children below the age 15 years. In addition to this, due to shortage of farmland, the new weds cannot get farmland from other sources other than their parents. The major sources of farmland for the new weds are the grooms' parent and /or both marrying families. Hence, the marriage transaction is largely depending on allotting land and contributing cattle for the new weds from both sides of marrying families. In this case, better-endowed parents have the capacity to allot farmland and contribute cattle for the new weds. Therefore, high and middle wealth groups of parents married off their daughters early compared to lower and very low wealth groups.

Furthermore, this study found the major reasons why parents married off their children early. The reasons are differ among different wealth groups of parents. Accordingly, high and middle wealth groups of parents married off their daughters early for the following major reasons: forming marriage alliance with land rich marrying families, for honor, to avoid the stigma of being unmarriageable, to get their children married before the resource is getting low are the major

ones. However, for lower and very low wealth groups, the major compelling reason to marry off their daughters early is “fear of unwanted pregnancy before marriage.”

5.2 Conclusion

The study of investigation of early marriage and parents’ socio-economic status in Gendwabalangev and Gevavasalj Peasant Associations of Dembia *Woreda* showed that the practice of early marriage is more adhered by higher and middle wealth groups of parents compared to lower and very low wealth groups of parents. In the research sites, early marriage is the accepted traditional norm. Behind this traditional norm, the practice of early marriage is largely depending on parents’ endowments (economic status) for the new weds when they establish their hut. In this case, high and middle wealth groups (land and cattle rich parents) have better capacity to conform to the traditional norm, i.e. marrying off their children early. In relation to this, shortage of farmland reinforces the persistent of early marriage in the studied communities. Parents wanted to marry off their daughters early so that they would free from ‘unmarriageable stigma’. Hence, to attract groom’s family, high and middle wealth groups of parents of daughters show interest to allot land and contribute cattle. This created competition among groom’s parents to form marriage alliance with land rich bride’s parent. In this case, both marrying families wanted to form alliance based on equal contribution of cattle or/and allotment of land for the new weds. This situation leads better-endowed parents to marry off their daughters early compared to lower wealth groups.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed.

- Early marriage is not only individual family affairs but it is also community affairs. Communities impose standard behavior upon individuals. For example, “unmarriageable stigma” is one of the reasons that forced parents to marry off their daughters early. Hence, any government organization or non-government organization that committed to fight the practice of early marriage are recommended to use community level conversation, dialogue and sensitization that could bring behavioral change.

- A single institution could not solve the problem of early marriage alone. Hence, those institutions that are working for the rural people (e.g. Agriculture, Education, Health, Land management, Justice, Women's Affairs and others should come together to develop integrated development plan/measure to reduce the prevalence of early marriage, rather than separately.
- When awareness creation campaign is conducted, parents' wealth status should be taken into consideration. Because their needs and problems are different among wealth categories.
- Introducing of legal marriage age should be strengthened through community conversation, rural School Clubs, radio and other Medias.
- Since a large number of child girls are affected by early marriage, and reasons are varied, further research in other peasant communities is paramount to reduce or eradicate the problem

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Appendix I: Questionnaire for Parents

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status in Dembia *Woreda* of North Gondar *Zone*, Amhara Region.

For the successful completion of the study, your genuine, honest, and kind response is very important. The information, which will be obtained from the responses of this questionnaire, will be used only for the research purpose. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you in advance for your time and kind cooperation!

Direction for the Enumerator: The following questions are prepared for parents. Write the necessary information replied by the respondent (parent) in the given blank space, by encircling the appropriate answer or by putting the mark (√) in the appropriate place.

Part One: Identification of the Area of the Respondent

- 1.1 *Woreda* _____
1.2 Peasant Association _____

Part Two: Background Information of the Respondent

- 2.1 Sex: 1. Male 2. Female
- 2.2 Age _____ years.
- 2.3 Religion: 1. Orthodox 2. Muslim 3. Other (specify) _____
- 2.4 Ethnic background: 1. Amhara 2. Other (specify) _____
- 2.5 Educational level:
1. Cannot read and write
 2. Primary education (1st- 6th grade)
 3. Junior secondary education (7th- 8th grade)
 4. Senior secondary education (9th- 12th grade)
 5. Other (specify) _____
- 2.6 Marital status (current):
1. Married 2. Divorced 3. Widowed 4. Separated
- 2.7 If you are married or ever married, what is your wife's/husband's educational level?
1. Cannot read and write
 2. Primary education (1st- 6th grade)
 3. Junior secondary education (7th- 8th grade)
 4. Senior secondary education (9th- 12th grade)
 5. Other (specify) _____
- 2.8 Family size including parents:
1. Total _____
 2. Daughters _____
 3. Sons _____
 4. Others (relatives) female _____ male _____
- 2.9 What is your occupation?
- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1. House wife | 5. Blacksmith |
| 2. Farming | 6. Weaving |
| 3. Trading | 7. Other (specify) _____ |
| 4. Pottery | |

Part Three: General Questions Related to Early Marriage

3.1 Why do you think about parents you know let their children (daughters and sons) marry off at an early age or below 18 years? Please put the mark (√) below in the table.

No	Reasons	Yes	No
1	To get back the money or material they had been contributing over the years for the wedding of their relatives or neighbors' children		
2	Because parents want their children to be married before their resource is getting low		
3	To form alliance between the marrying families		
4	For prestige		
5	Unable to cover expenses to educate all children		
6	To form marriage alliance with land-rich family		
7	Other (specify)		

3.2 Would not parents get the above benefits (under Q3.1) by marrying of their children after 18 years old?
 1. Yes 2. No

If your answer to Q.3.2 is No, how?

3.3 What worries parents if a daughter is late in marriage (above 18 years)? Please put the mark (√) below in the table.

No	Reasons	Yes	No
1	Fear of their daughter might loss of girls' virginity if not married early		
2	Fear of the "qoma kir" stigma if she is not married at the appropriate age		
3	Lack of job opportunity for girls in the vicinity		
4	Parents' assumption that 'girls can not be as successful as boys in education		
5	Fear of unwanted pregnancy before marriage		
6	Other (specify)		

3.4 Put in order of importance the criteria parents use when they consider marrying of their children.

1. More wealthier than themselves
2. Equal status in wealth
3. More educated than themselves
4. Equal status in education
5. Other (specify) _____

3.5 Which of the following group of parents adhere to the value of early marriage (before 18 years) for their daughters nowadays? Put the mark (√) below in the table.

No	Categories	Estimated number of parents who desire to marry off their daughters early			
		Few	Many	Very many	Don't know
3.5.1	Wealth status:				
	1. Higher groups				
	2. Middle groups				
	3. Lower groups				
	4. Very low				
	5. No difference				
3.5.2	Educational status:				
	1. Cannot read & write				
	2. 1 st – 8 th grade				
	3. 9 th – 12 th grade				
	5. No difference				

Part Four: Questions Related to Parents' First Marriage

4.1 What was your age at your first marriage? (Different from Q.2.2 above). Help, if he/she does not know the year, probe by asking, "How many years ago?"

1. Five years or below
2. ____ years old (6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17)
3. Eighteen years or above

4.2 Did you know your wife's/husband's age at your first marriage?

1. Yes, _____ years old
2. No

4.3 Did you give your consent on your first marriage?

1. Yes
2. No

4.4 If your answer to question 4.3 is Yes, when did you give your consent?

1. Before two months of my wedding
2. Before one month of my wedding
3. Before two weeks of my wedding
4. Before one week of my wedding
5. I heard only at my wedding date
6. Other (specify) _____

4.5 With whom did you reside immediately after your first marriage? (Only for women)

1. With husband's parents
2. With my parents
3. With my husband in our home

4.6 If you stayed with your parents'-in-laws, why?

4.7 If you stayed with your parents, why?

4.8 If you stayed with your husband's parents, for how long did you stay there? (For women only)

1. Less than one year
2. One to two years
3. Two to three years
4. Three to four years
5. More than five years

Part Five: Questions Related to their Daughters' First Marriage since 2008

- 5.1 Since 2008, did you marry-off your daughter?
 1. Yes 2. No
- 5.2 If your answer to Q.5.1 is Yes, at what age you married-off your daughter? (List only one daughter's marriage).
 1. Daughter's age at first marriage was _____ years old
 2. Her husband's age at first marriage was _____ years old
- 5.3 When you married off your daughter, did you ask her consent about her marriage?
 1. Yes 2. No
- 5.4 IF your answer to Q.5.3 is no, what was the reason?

- 5.5 If your answer to Q.5.4 is Yes, at what period did you ask her consent?
 1. Before two months
 2. Before one month
 3. Before two weeks
 4. Before one week
 5. At the wedding date
- 5.6 With whom did your daughter reside immediately after her first marriage?
 1. With her parents' - in laws 2. With us (her parents) 3. With her husband in their own home
- 5.7 If she stayed with her parents' in-laws, what was the reason?

- 5.8 If she stayed with you (her parents), what was the reason?

- 5.9 If your answer to Q.5.6 is with her parents' in-laws, for how long did your daughter stay them?
 1. Less than one year 3. Three to four years.
 2. One to two years 4. More than four years
- 5.10 When you arranged the first marriage to your daughter, what types of endowments were you requested to contribute?
 1. Land 2. Cattle 3. Land and cattle 4. If other, specify _____
- 5.11 When you married off your daughter at first marriage, what types and how many of endowments were contributed from both marrying families? Give your answer below in the table.

Source	Endowments			
	Ox (in number)	Cow (in number)	Heifer (in number)	Other
Contributed from her parents				
Contributed from her husband's parents				

- 5.12 When you married off your daughter at first marriage, where does she get farmland? Put the mark (√) below in the table.

Sources of farmland	Yes	No
Allotted from both sides of marrying families		
Allotted only from brides' parent		
Allotted only from the grooms' parent		
From PA office		
Gift from relative		
Rent from individual		
Other (specify)		

- 5.13 How much bridal gifts did you receive from groom's family during the first marriage of your daughter?
1. Less than or equal to 500 Birr
 2. 501-1000 Birr
 3. 1001-1500 Birr
 4. Greater 1500 Birr
- 5.14 Whom do you prefer to marry off early (below 18 years) among your children?
1. Daughters
 2. Sons
- 5.15 If your answer to Q.5.14 is daughters, what is your reason?
-

Part Six: Questions Related to their Sons' First Marriage, Since 2008

- 6.1 Since 2008, did you marry off your son?
1. Yes
 2. No
- 6.2 If your answer to Q.6.1 is Yes, at what age you married-off your son? (List only one son's marriage).
1. Son's age at first marriage was _____ years old
 2. His wife's age at first marriage was _____ years old
- 6.3 When you married off your son, did you ask his consent about his marriage?
1. Yes
 2. No
- 6.4 If your answer to Q.6.3 is no, what was the reason?
-
- 6.5 When you arranged first marriage what criteria you considered while you were searching marriage partner for your Son?
1. One who can allot farmland for the new weds
 2. One who can contribute cattle for the new weds
 3. One who can allot farmland and contribute cattle for the new weds
 4. Family of good conduct
 5. Beauty of the girl
 6. Other (specify) _____
- 6.6 When you arranged first marriage for your children, do contribution of endowments were equal ?
1. Equal
 2. Not equal
- 6.7 When you married off your son at first marriage, what types and how many of endowments (gifts) were contributed from both sides to the newly weds? Give your answer below in the table.

Source	Endowments			
	Ox (in number)	Cow (in number)	Heifer (in number)	Other
Contributed from his parents				
Contributed from his wife's parents				

- 6.8 When you married off your son at first marriage, where does he get farmland?
Put the mark (√) below in the table.

Sources of farm land	Yes	No
Allotted from both sides of marrying families		
Allotted only from brides' parent		
Allotted only from the grooms' parent		
From PA office		
Gift from relative		
Rent from individual		
Other (specify) _____		

6.9 How much bridal gifts did you pay to bride's family during the first marriage of your son?

1. Less than or equal to 500 Birr
2. 501-1000 Birr
3. 1001-1500 Birr
4. Greater 1500 Birr

6.10 What were the reasons for marrying-off your daughters and sons early (below 18 years old)? Please put the mark (✓) in the table below.

Reasons	Yes	No
Unable to cover expenses to educate all children		
To get back my material or financial contributions in others' wedding feast		
To get my children married/settled before the resource is getting low		
To form alliance with marrying families		
For honor/prestige		
To form marriage alliance with land rich families to the new weds		
Other (specify)		

6.11 What were the reasons for marrying-off your daughters early (below 18 years old)? Please put the mark (✓) below in the table

Reasons	Yes	No
Fear of loss of girls' virginity if she is not married early		
Fear of the "qomo kir" stigma if she is not married at the appropriate age		
Fear of unwanted pregnancy before marriage		
Lack of job opportunity for girls in the vicinity		
I assume that 'girls can not be as successful as boys' in education		
Other (specify)		

6.12 Would you please tell me the minimum marriage age for girls and boys?

1. For female _____ years
2. For male _____ years

Part Seven: Questions Related to Parents' Wealth Status

7.1 Would you please tell me how many cattle you own?

Oxen _____ Cows _____ Heifers _____

7.2 Total farm land holding (arable and non-arable). Write the answer in the space given below:

In Kada _____ in hectare _____

7.3 House type: 1. Grass 2. Iron sheet corrugated 3. Both

8. Remarks (if any additional points related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status)

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

Enumerator's Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____ Place _____

Researcher's Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____ Place _____

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Appendix II: Key informant Interview Guides

The purpose of this interview is to gather information related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status in *Dembia Woreda* of *North Gondar Zone*, Amhara Region. The data to be collected from this interview will be used only for educational research purpose. Your responses will be kept confidential. Therefore, I kindly request you to participate in this study voluntarily. The quality of this study depends on your genuine response. I would also like to ask your voluntariness to record your voice through tape recorder because it is hard to jot down your responses.

Thank you in advance for your time and kind cooperation!

2.1. Interview Guide for Parents

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. *Woreda*_____
2. Peasant Association_____
3. Name _____
4. Sex _____
5. Age_____
6. Marital status_____
7. Educational level_____
8. Occupation _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-economic Status

1. What type of first marriage arrangement is most dominant in this peasant association? Please list them according to their prevalence rate?
2. At what age is most first marriages are arranged in this peasant association? (Probe: for girls/boys?)
3. Is the prevalence of early marriage decreasing or increasing? If decreasing, how? If increasing, why?
4. What are parents' reasons to marry-off their female children below the age of 18 years? Please enumerate the major ones?
5. What benefits do parents gain by marrying off their female children at their early age (below 18 years)?
6. Does poverty lead parents to marry-off their female children? Is early marriage perceived as coping mechanism for poor parents?
7. Which wealth category (higher, middle, lower, very low) is most practicing early marriage in this peasant association?

8. Which educational category (cannot read & write, 1st-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, above 12th grade) is most practicing early marriage in this peasant association?
9. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this peasant association?
10. Would you please explain the process of first marriage arrangements from the start to the end in this peasant association?
11. What are parents' criteria to form marriage alliance with other families?
12. What are parents' criteria to select wife/husband for their children?
13. Can your daughter give her consent on her marriage? If she can't, why? Who decides about her marriage?
14. After wedding, with whom do the newly weds reside? (With parents' in-laws? In their own home? Until when the bride will stay with her parents?) If such practice exists, what is the reason to stay with parents-in-law? What is the reason for staying with her parents?
15. To arrange first marriage for their children, what type and how many number of cattle (E.g cows, oxen, heifer, etc) is given to the groom and the bride by their parents? Is it a must to contribute equal or does it depend on the wealth of the parents?
16. How much bridal gift is paid to the bride for her parents? Bridal gift amount is determined by what criteria?
17. Is the bridal gift increasing or decreasing? If it is increasing, why? If it is decreasing, why?
18. What is the purpose of the bridal gift?
19. About how many people are/will be invited for the wedding ceremony?
20. Are there relatives who volunteer to help the groom's and bride's parents by contributing local food for the wedding? Is it payable in return or not?
21. Is there any gift to be given to the groom/ bride at the wedding date? What is the type of the gift? Who is expected to give it? What is the purpose of this gift?
22. Is there any gift to be given for groom's/ bride's parents at the wedding date? What is the type of the gift? Who is expected to give it? What is the purpose of this gift?
23. If the newly weds are to be farmers, where do they get farm land?
24. If the newlyweds are to be engaged in other types of business, where do they get financial or material support to start their new life?
25. Is there any practice of helping each other between the groom's and the bride's families at the time of crisis? Is the help based on equal exchange or does it depend on the wealth of the parents?
26. What measures should be taken to reduce early marriage in your locality? Who are partners in reducing early marriage? Are the people aware of the legal minimum age at first marriage?
27. What do you suggest to reduce early marriage in your locality?
28. Any additional points related to early marriage and parents socio economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

2.2. Interview Guide for Agricultural Development Agents

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. *Woreda* _____
2. Peasant Association _____
3. Name _____
4. Sex _____
5. Age _____
6. Marital status _____
7. Educational level _____
8. Qualification _____
9. Position _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

1. What types of first marriage arrangements are most dominant in this peasant association? Please list them according to their prevalence rate?
2. What is the most common age for first marriage arrangements in this peasant association? For girls? For boys?
3. What are parents' major reasons to marry-off their daughters below the age of 18? Please enumerate them?
4. Which wealth category (higher, middle, lower, and very low) is most practicing early marriage in this Peasant Association?
5. Which educational category (cannot read & write, 1st-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, above 12th grade) is most practicing early marriage in this Peasant Association?
6. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this peasant association?
7. What do you suggest to reduce early marriage in your locality?
8. Any additional points related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

2.3. Interview Guide for Early Marriage Protection School Club Committee Representatives/Teachers/School Principals

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. *Woreda* _____
2. Peasant Association _____
3. Name of the school _____
4. Name _____
5. Sex _____
6. Age _____
7. Marital status _____
8. Educational level _____
9. Occupation _____
10. Specific role related to girls' education and early marriage in this school _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

1. Are there any married students in your school? Male? Female? If so, how does early marriage influence schooling? Boys? Girls?
2. Which wealth category (higher, middle, lower, and very low) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
3. Which educational category (cannot read & write, 1st-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, above 12th grade) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
4. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
5. Is there Female Students' Advisory Committee in this school?
6. What strategies have been employed to stop early marriage in your school and surroundings? How far it was effective? What challenges did you encounter?
7. Any additional points related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

2.4. Interview Guide for Religious Leaders

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. Woreda _____
2. Peasant Association _____
3. Name _____
4. Sex _____
5. Age _____
6. Marital status _____
7. Religious educational level _____
8. Religion status/role _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

1. What types of first marriage arrangements are most dominant in this locality? Please list them according to their prevalence rate?
2. What is the most common age for first marriage arrangements in this locality? For girls? For boys?
3. What are parents' major reasons to marry-off their daughters below the age of 18 in this locality? Please enumerate them?
4. Which wealth category (higher, middle, lower, and very low) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
5. Which educational category (cannot read & write, 1st-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, above 12th grade) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
6. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
7. What is the age allowed to marry for the girls and boys according to your religion? Is this age limit taught as a lesson to the followers?
8. What do you suggest to stop early marriage practices in your locality among the followers of your religion?
9. Any additional points on early marriage and parents' socio-economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

2.5. Interview Guide for *Woreda* Justice or Police Officers/ Representatives

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participant

1. *Woreda* _____
2. Name _____
3. Sex _____
4. Age _____
5. Marital status _____
6. Educational level _____
7. Qualification _____
8. Position _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

1. Do you have reported cases of early marriage? If yes, describe the cases?
2. Do you have dissolved illegal early marriages? If so, how many girls/ boys? What was the age of those girls/ boys whose marriage was canceled?
3. What types of first marriage arrangements are most dominant in this *Woreda*? Please list them according to their prevalence rate?
4. What is the most common age for first marriage arrangements in this *Woreda*? For girls? For boys?
5. Which wealth category (higher, middle, lower, and very low) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
6. Which educational category (cannot read & write, 1st-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, above 12th grade) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
7. Which setting (rural, urban) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
8. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
9. What are parents' major reasons to marry-off their daughters below the age of 18 in this *Woreda*? Please enumerate them?
10. What are the measures taken by your office to prevent or stop early marriage?
11. What strategies have been employed to reduce/stop early marriage in this *Woreda*? How far it was effective? What challenges did you encounter?
12. What do you suggest to reduce early marriage in this *Woreda*?
13. Any additional points related to early marriage and parents' socio economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

2.6. Interview Guide for *Woreda* Women's Affairs Officers/ Representatives

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. *Woreda* _____
2. Name _____
3. Sex _____
4. Age _____
5. Marital status _____
6. Educational level _____
7. Qualification _____
8. Position _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

1. Is early marriage prevalent in this *Woreda*? For whom is it more prevalent? For girls or for boys? Why?
2. What types of first marriage arrangements are most common in this *Woreda*? Please list them according to their prevalence rate?
3. Do you have reported cases of early marriage practices in this *Woreda*?
4. Do you have dissolved illegal early marriages? How many girls/ boys? What was the age of those girls/ boys whose marriage was canceled?
5. What benefits do parents gain by marrying-off their female children at their early age (below 18 years)?
6. Does poverty lead parents to marry-off their female children? Is early marriage perceived as a coping mechanism for poor parents?
7. Which wealth category (higher, middle, lower, and very low) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
8. Which educational category (cannot read & write 1st- 8th grade, 9th -12th grade, above 12th grade tertiary) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
9. Which setting (rural, urban) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
10. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this *Woreda*?
11. What are parents' major reasons to marry off their female children below the age of 18? Please list them according to their importance?
12. What are the measures taken by your office to prevent or stop early marriage?
13. What strategies have been employed to stop early marriage in this *Woreda*? How far it was effective? What challenges did you encounter?
14. What do you suggest to reduce early marriage in this *Woreda*?
15. Any additional points related to early marriage and parents' socio economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

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Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guides for Community Leaders and Traditional Marriage Negotiators

The purpose of the FGD is to gather information related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status in Dembia *Woreda* of North Gondar *Zone*, Amhara Region. The data to be collected from this FGD will be used only for educational research purpose. Your responses will be kept confidential. So, I kindly request you to participate in this study voluntarily. The quality of this study depends on your genuine response. I would also like to ask your consent to record your voice through tape recorder because it is hard to jot down your discussions.

Thank you in advance for your time and kind cooperation!

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. *Woreda* _____
2. Peasant Association _____
4. Name _____
5. Sex _____
6. Age _____
7. Marital status _____
8. Educational level _____
9. Qualification _____
10. Position/Role in the Community _____

Part Two: General Questions Related to Early Marriage and Parents' Socio-Economic Status

1. What types of first marriage arrangements are most dominant in this locality? Please list them according to their prevalence rate?
2. At what age is most first marriages are arranged in this locality? (Probe: for girls? For boys?)
3. Is the prevalence of early marriage decreasing or increasing? If decreasing, how? If increasing, why?
4. What are parents' reasons to marry-off their daughters below the age of 18? Please enumerate the major ones?
5. What benefits do parents gain by marrying-off their daughters at their early age (below 18)?
6. Does poverty lead parents to marry-off their daughters? Is early marriage perceived as a coping mechanism for poor parents?
7. Which wealth category (higher, middle, and lower, and very lower) is most practicing early marriage in this area?

8. Which educational category (cannot read & write 1st-8th grade, 9th-12th grade, above 12th grade) is most practicing early marriage in this area?
9. Which type of family size (five or less than five, greater than five) is most practicing early marriage in this locality?
10. Would you please explain the process of first marriage arrangements from the start to the end in this locality?
11. What are parents' criteria to form marriage alliance with other families?
12. What are parents' criteria to select wife/husband for their children?
13. Can the girl child give her consent on her marriage? If no, why not? Who decides about her marriage?
14. After wedding, with whom do the newly weds reside? With parents' in-laws? In their own home? Until when the bride will stay with her parents? If such practice exists, what is the reason for staying with her parents? What is the reason for staying with her parents'-in-laws?
15. To arrange first marriage for their children, what type and how many number of cattle (E.g cows, oxen, heifer, etc) is given to the groom and the bride by their parents? Is it a must to contribute equal or does it depend on the wealth of the parents?
16. How much bridal gift is paid to the bride for her parents? Bridal gift amount is determined by what criteria?
17. Is the bridal gift increasing or decreasing? If it is increasing, why? If it is decreasing, why?
18. What is the purpose of the bridal gift?
19. About how many people are/will be invited for the wedding ceremony?
20. Are there relatives who volunteer to help the groom's and the bride's parents by providing local food for the wedding participants? Is it payable in return or not?
21. Is there any gift to be given to the groom/bride at the wedding date? What is the type of the gift? Who is expected to give it? What is the purpose of this gift?
22. Is there any gift to be given for the groom's /bride's parents at the wedding date? What is the type of the gift? Who is expected to give it? What is the purpose of this gift?
23. If the newly weds are to be farmers, where do they get farmland?
24. If the newly weds are to be engaged in other types of business, where do they get financial or material support to start their new life?
25. Is there any practice of helping each other between the groom's and the bride's families at the time of crisis? Is the help based on equal exchange or does it depend on the wealth of the parents?
26. What measures should be taken to reduce early marriage in your locality? Who are partners in reducing early marriage? Are the people aware of the legal minimum age at first marriage?
27. What do you suggest to reduce early marriage in your locality?
28. Any additional points related to early marriage and parents socio-economic status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

Appendix IV: Guides for Wealth Ranking Exercise

The purpose of the wealth ranking is to gather information related to early marriage and parents' socio-economic status in Dembia *Woreda* of North Gondar *Zone*, Amhara Region. The data to be collected from this wealth ranking team will be used only for educational research purpose. I kindly request you to participate in this exercise voluntarily.

Thank you in advance for your time and kind cooperation!

Part One: Research Site Identification and Background of Participants

1. *Woreda* _____
2. Peasant Association _____
3. Village _____
4. Name _____
5. Sex _____
6. Age _____
7. Marital status _____
8. Educational level _____
9. Qualification _____
10. Position/Role in the Community _____

Part Two: Guiding questions to exercise wealth ranking

1. Would you please identify parents who married off their children at first marriage since 2008? After they finished identification, ask them to categorize parents (household heads) by wealth status.
2. Would you please categorize these selected parents (household heads) according to their wealth status? What are the terms used to describe each wealth group?
3. What are the indicators of wealth in your locality?
4. What are the characteristics of each wealth group?
5. What are the differences among them?
6. Which type of indicators are the major to differentiate parents (household heads) by their wealth status?

Thank you very much for your valuable information!

Appendix V: Profiles of Key Informants and FGD Participants

Appendix V-1: Profiles of Key informants

Peasant Association (Studied PAs)	Village	Participants	Edu. Level	Age	Sex			
					Male	Female	Total	
		Parents from different wealth groups:					4	
Gendwabalangev	Sakirna	From higher wealth group	4 th	56	1		1	
Gevavasalj	Chilo	From middle wealth group	NO*	59	1		1	
Gevavasalj	Salj	From lower wealth group	NO*	49		1	1	
Gendwabalangev	Qulqual	From very low wealth group	NO*	45		1	1	
		Early Marriage Protection School Clubs					2	
Gendwabalangev	Gendwa Gabreil school	Club Leader	Diploma	51	1		1	
Gevavasalj	Gevava Kidane Miheret School	School Principal	Diploma	52	1		1	
		Development Agents					2	
Gendwabalangev		DA Team Leader	Diploma	38	1		1	
Gevavasalj		DA Team Leader	Diploma	42	1		1	
		Religious Leaders					2	
Gendwabalangev		Priest		57	1		1	
Gevavasalj		Priest		54	1		1	
		Woreda Officers					3	
		Woreda Women's Affairs Head	Diploma	43		1	1	
		Woreda Justice(women's & child affairs expert)	Diploma	41		1	1	
		Woreda Police(women's & child Affairs expert)	12+6	51		1	1	
Total Number of Participants						8	5	13

Note: NO*=No Education (Cannot Read and Write)

AppendixV-2: Profiles of Focus Group Discussion Participants

Peasant Association (Studied PAs)	Village	Participants	Male			Female			Total
			Num.	Edu. Level	Age	Num.	Edu. Level	Age	
		Traditional Marriage Negotiators							12
Gendwabalangev	Dewaameshne		1	NO*	52				1
	Gelash		1	2 nd	49				1
	Selange		1	NO*	60				1
	Atsdba		1	NO*	59				1
	Wanzagi		1	3 rd	48				1
	Debzige		1	NO*	62				1
Gevavasalj	Salj		1	5 th	47				1
	Chillo		1	NO*	62				1
	Salj		1	NO*	59				1
	Dembesge		1	3 rd	49				1
	Gevava		1	2 nd	50				1
	Gevava		1	NO*	64				1
		Village Representatives							24
Gendwabalangev	Debirzurya		1	NO*	50	1	NO	49	2
	Ozazirge		1	3 rd	51	1	NO	50	2
	Zemaryam		1	1 st	54	1	NO	54	2
	Mersha		1	NO*	66	1	11 th	39	2
	Tachfikre		1	NO*	62	1	NO	52	2
	Layfikre		1	4 th	49	1	10 th	51	2
	Laygedana		1	NO*	60	1	NO	56	2
	Tachgedana		1	NO*	65	1	NO	57	2
	Felashye		1	5 th	50	1	NO	49	2
Gevavasalj	Dembosge		1	6 th	50	1	NO	46	2
	Salj		1	NO*	67	1	2 nd	42	2
	Gevava		1	3 rd	53	1	No	48	2
Total Number of Participants			24			12			36

Note: NO*=No Education (Cannot Read and Write)

Declaration

I declare that this Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the Thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Damte Gashu _____

Student

Signature

Date

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

Guday Emirie (PhD) _____

Advisor

Signature

Date