

Youth transitions to adulthood and the role of interventions

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Introduction

Ethiopia has a youthful population. In 2007, according to the national census, roughly 41% of the rural population (25.2 million) were aged between 10 and 29 (CSA 2010). In 2015 almost half the total population (49 per cent) was under the age of 18, and over a third (34 per cent) in the 5-18 age bracket.² Over the next decade the size of the youthful population will continue to increase though the proportion will decline somewhat. By 2032, the numbers aged 5-18 are projected to increase by 18 per cent, though the proportion will decline to 29 per cent (Cleland et al. forthcoming). Issues relating to harnessing the potential of the ‘demographic dividend’ will therefore remain central concerns in the near future (Teller and Hailemariam 2011).

Policy issues regarding youth tend to focus on addressing the transition for young men from education to work and the risks of un(der)employment, and for young women on child marriage and reducing fertility. However, in this chapter I argue that productive roles of young women and reproductive roles of young men are also important. Moreover, the transitions to adulthood of young men and women are interlinked through the formation of new households through marriage. In considering policy interventions I suggest that the dynamics between changing cultural values and economic realities need to be understood in relation to a range of variations in types of society.

This chapter is divided into six sections following this introduction. In conceptualizing transitions I adopt the framework proposed by Bevan (2011), which identifies 15 transitions comprising two broad categories of personal and social, with the latter further divided into family, work and community. Transitions can also be considered from a top-down sectoral perspective as well as a bottom up approach looking at how specific interventions affect particular transitions. The rest of the chapter follows on from the categorizations in the framework. The second section on personal transitions, focuses on puberty, circumcision and sexual initiation. In the third section I discuss family-related transitions, concentrating on early and child marriage. The fourth section deals with work transitions, including home related work careers, income-generating work strategies and gaining economic independence. The fifth section addresses community transitions with a focus on involvement of youth in associations and religion. The final section draws out the main conclusions and relates these to potential policy considerations.

Conceptualising transitions

Youth tend to be thought of in terms of young men, with less attention given to young women. Furthermore, in interventions for young people, young women’s issues tend to focus on reproduction issues and young men on production, often neglecting the productive role of young women, and the reproductive roles of young men, although there are signs of some changes which will be discussed. Moreover, youth transitions tend to consider young men and young women separately and are often not considered in gender terms involving the formation of new households, with couples establishing joint livelihoods and families.

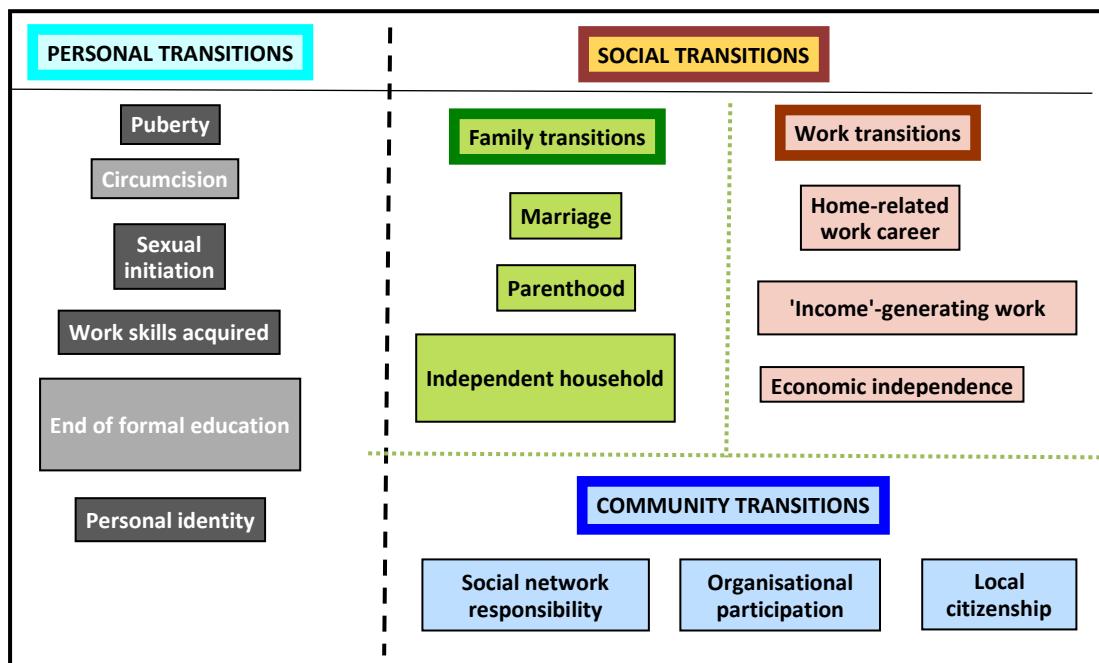
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² See projections from CSA data in Cleland, et al. (forthcoming).

This chapter follows the framework for youth transitions set out by Bevan (2011) according to which transitions to adulthood can be conceptualized in terms of two broad categories: personal and social and four types: personal, social and community transitions, with important gender and age dimensions.

Passages to adulthood in rural Ethiopia involve between thirteen and fifteen personal and social transitions or boundary-crossings of varying types and durations.

Fig. 1: Gendered youth passages to adulthood in rural Ethiopia: 13-15 boundary-crossings



Adapted from Bevan 2011:21

There are six **Personal transitions**. These are: 1) physical maturation (mostly considered in relation to puberty), 2) youth circumcision in some cultures but not present in others, 3) sexual initiation, 4) acquiring of work skills, 5) the end of formal education if any, and the 6) development of a personal/social identity.

There are two types of social transitions: three of these are **Family-related transitions**: 1) getting married, 2) establishing an independent household, and 3) having children. The three **Work-related transitions** for both sexes include, though with different emphases, 1) establishing home-related work careers, 2) 'income' generating work strategies and 3) gaining economic independence.

Finally there are three **Community transitions**, which depend on the crossing of the other boundaries, and involve community recognition as a social adult. For those who stay in the community, or return to settle after migration, this includes participation in 1) social network exchanges and 2) community-initiated organisations and accepting 3) the duties and rights attached to local religious and political 'citizenship'. The fifteen transitions lead to a final status as adult within the community. Each of the transitions involve milestones or boundary crossings with differences by sex and age. Culturally many of the transitions typically occur earlier for women than men (see Table 1 in annex).

There are complex linkages between genders in transitions. For example sexual initiation generally depends on relationships between men and women. A young man cannot set up an independent household unless he has a house, a reliable source of livelihood and is married. A young woman who

gets the ordering of child and marriage the wrong way round will often find it hard to get married at all. If large proportions of young men take a long time to be in positions to set up independent households young women may marry older men (Bevan 2011).

Changes affecting transitions and the desired and real shapes of rural youth passages are related to wider transformations in rural communities associated with modernisation processes. These include a considerable increase in public investment, some aid-funded, in infrastructure, economic and human development, social protection, gender equity and wereda level governance structures.

Some of these development interventions have been designed to bring changes to specific transitions, for example the raising of the age of marriage to 18 and the push for universal primary education. These interventions are likely to have had unanticipated consequences for other transitions in the passage to adulthood. As we shall see, in some sites the ban on circumcision led to the strategy of performing it in hiding earlier than was customary whereas the delaying of early marriage due to the ban led to circumcisions taking place later than was traditional in one site. Other interventions, designed to meet objectives not specifically related to youth, such as the consolidation of land 'ownership' and the increasing availability of contraceptives, are likely to have had unanticipated consequences for youth passages, as some WIDE evidence suggests.

There are complex interactions between interventions and youth transitions some of which are direct and other contributory. Interventions can be analysed in terms of who implements them where and what activities are involved. The relations between transitions and interventions can be considered from both "top down" and "bottom up" perspectives (see tables 2 and 3 in the Annex). The former views ways in which broadly defined sectoral interventions for instance in education, health, agriculture, food security, poverty reduction, governance etc. relate to the major categories of transitions, and the latter looks at specific transitions and what forms of interventions affect them. Interventions may have a direct or contributory impact on transitions. Interventions are somewhat more common in the personal, work and family transitions, in the latter case regarding early marriage, than in the community ones. Certain sectors may only influence or only directly certain types of transitions. So for instance the health sector has direct influences on personal transitions. In contrast gender equity and poverty reduction have impacts on all four types of transition though these may only be contributory for work transitions. The biggest areas of focus of interventions are on education completion, with some promotion of youth development packages, and for women on the prevention of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs), notably Female Genital Cutting/ Circumcision (FGC) and child marriage.

Personal transitions

Among the six personal transitions the area that has been subject to the greatest intervention is the completion of education (see chapter on education). In this chapter I focus primarily on the issue of circumcision that is particularly important for the Government's HTP Strategy (MoWCYA 2014), with short sections on puberty and sexual initiation, complementing the approach in the chapter by Bevan on reproductive health of girls. The transitions relating to identity formation and learning work skills will not be covered here as there is limited data on the former (Bevan 2011), the latter is dealt with to some extent later in this chapter under work transitions, and both have not been subject to significant interventions. However, it is important to note that personal transitions are foundations for family, work and eventually community transitions.

Puberty

This topic has not been a focus of WIDE research. Respondents in Yetmen talked of the 'age of fire', which brought mood swings and unpredictable behaviour. Otherwise we found no direct references in our data in 2013 from communities, government or donors (Bevan 2011). However, we did collect some data in the six stage 3 sites on girls' first experience of menstruation and initiatives to provide sanitary materials. The picture was mixed: in one site (Sirba in Oromia) there were emergency but

not regular provisions by the school and in two sites (Somodo and Oda Dawata also both in Oromia) girls were contributing monthly payments for distributions through the school by teachers or girls clubs; in the second site this was a recent measure with contributions of one birr per month. There was no provision in other three stage 3 sites, although in the Kormargefia there was mention of pads being provided in a nearby secondary school where a girls' club organised the distribution with girls contributing 50 cents.

Development-relevant issues relating to puberty include nutritional needs related to growth spurts,³ where PSNP and emergency aid can have an important role, availability of sanitary materials and privacy at school for girls starting menstruation, as noted above, and sex education by teachers and parents. The promotion of latrines to improve sanitation has been a major focus of the health extension programme, access to sanitation has improved in rural areas,⁴ and there has been an emphasis in schools on building separate toilets for girls.

Circumcision

Circumcision is not a necessary boundary crossing for everybody in all communities due to cultural diversity and modernisation processes. However, both male and female circumcision are common in most parts of Ethiopia. While the latter has been officially banned, the former has received some tacit encouragement, often on the justification of presumed health benefits.

Male circumcision

Male circumcision is prevalent throughout much of the country. In some Ethiopian cultures male circumcision takes place during infancy; in others it is a milestone to adulthood involving ritual and ceremony, and in yet others it is part of initiation into age-sets. Nationally 92% of men aged 15-49 were said to be circumcised (EDHS 2011). The proportion circumcised increased with age, ranging from 88% of men age 15-19 to 95% of men age 40-49, and was higher in urban (98%) than rural areas (90), and higher among Orthodox Christians and Muslims (96% each) than other religions.

Some studies have suggested that male circumcision may reduce the risk of contracting STDs including HIV, and as a result voluntary male circumcision has been promoted in Gambella.⁵ Risks of infections can be a problem (EGLDAM 2008:84).

In the WIDE sites male circumcision was part of the cultural repertoire in all but two sites in SNNP: Adado in Gedeo Zone and Luqa in South Omo Zone, in both of which female circumcision was also not carried out. In Luqa cutting of the foreskin was considered taboo but sap of a cactus was applied to the penis instead to achieve the same effect (Pankhurst 2013b)

There were regional differences in the timing of the operation. In the North male circumcision took place in infancy shortly after birth; in Oromo societies the age could vary since traditionally it was linked to the Gada age set system carried out collectively when a new age set came to power, and was therefore not related to biological age since boys and men of different ages would join the age set together depending on when their fathers had been initiated.

However, this practice seems to have become less common and was not reported except in two sites in Eastern Oromia, Gelcha, the Karrayu site and Sirba near Bishoftu. In the latter site a respondent suggested that when a member of the Folea youth group held a feast elders would inspect whether he was circumcised and if not apparently would arrange for the procedure. In Oda

³ There is increasing interest in adolescent nutrition since the nutrition of teenage mothers during pregnancy and even prior to conception is considered to be crucial for their babies' health. See for instance D. Thurnham 2013, F. Branca et al. 2015, and Aurino et al. 2017.

⁴ See for instance Young Lives Ethiopia fact sheet "Nutrition and Health: Round 4 Preliminary Findings".<http://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/Ethiopia-Nutrition-Factsheet.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.etharc.org/news/insidescoop/item/584-male-circumcision-for-hiv-prevention?tmpl=component&print=1#.Ve1qzfmqqko>

Haro in Western Oromia circumcision of boys was said to take place when they were ‘very young’ with the household holding a ceremony and feast, while in Adele Keke in Eastern Oromia there were variations, some practicing it when boys were 2-3 months old and others when they were 7-8 years old.

Interventions and responses

Interventions relating to male circumcision involved promoting four approaches, all with a health rationale: 1) carrying out the circumcision in health facilities rather than at home; 2) carrying it out when boys are infants rather than adults; 3) avoiding HIV risks of group circumcisions; and 4) persuading groups not doing so to perform circumcisions.

The rationale for carrying out circumcisions in health facilities was the risk of infections in the home. This was promoted actively in four sites in different regions. In Harresaw in Tigray the Health Extension Worker (HEW) even suggested circumcision should be banned at home. In Shumsheha in Amhara the wereda officials were promoting it being performed in hospitals. In Adele Keke in Oromia wereda health officials suggested that a campaign was needed to institutionalise it. In Doma in SNNP, where it tended to be carried out around the age of 20, the HEW was advocating carrying out circumcisions in infancy.

In Gelcha in Karrayu there were concerns expressed by the wereda that the collective gada circumcisions held every seven years could spread HIV infections, so a health worker was assigned to carry out the circumcision at the event, though the practice was replaced with a minor symbolic cutting (Pankhurst 2013a). There was a difference of opinion between on the one hand conservatives and the older generation who wished to maintain the tradition of gada-related group circumcisions, and on the other the younger generation with a modern outlook wanting to carry out circumcisions at the health centre. Some youth had organised their own circumcisions at the health centre and in one family older boys did so after their father, who wanted to wait for the traditional ceremony, had died.

Reactions to interventions did lead to some change, but there was also evidence of resistance, and traditions remained fairly strong. Regarding institutional circumcision, in Haressaw in Tigray there was said to be greater awareness of the risks. One woman who had circumcised all her sons said that if she had any more she would take them to the health centre since two neighbours’ sons had allegedly died after circumcision. However, apparently so far all the circumcisions had been carried out at home and some mentioned the constraint of cost of transport to go to town as a justification. Likewise, in Shumsheha in Amhara, despite the promotion of hospital circumcision, it was carried mainly at home. In Adele Keke in Oromia it was also performed mainly at home, though one woman was said to have had her son circumcised at a health centre in Harar. In Aze Debo'a and Gara Godo, both in SNNP, there were some families circumcising sons at home and others in the health centre, and in the latter some in a private clinic. One woman suggested that the health centre did not perform the circumcision at the time parents wanted it. In Do'oma, also in SNNP, following the campaign, the age of circumcision was said to have declined from about 20 to about 10. However, people were resistant to the HEW’s promotion of infant circumcision on the grounds that it was more risky and that it would be more difficult for them to recover. In Sirba in Oromia some religious leaders were said to oppose the custom of youth circumcision, but they did not have contacts with the youth and there was no open conflict.

Female circumcision

Female circumcision or genital cutting, which through the campaigns to eradicate it has come to be termed Female Genital Mutilation, has been an important part of the cultural repertoire in much of Ethiopia. It has been considered a pre-requisite for the transition to adulthood and was generally

believed to be required for womanhood and marriage; in some cultures it is carried out shortly before marriage, in others in preparation or anticipation of puberty, and yet others in infancy.

The national context

A baseline survey of Harmful Traditional Practices gathered evidence on 66 out of 83 ethnic groups and found it was practiced in 46 groups but not in 19 others (NCTPE 1998). The latest data from the Welfare Monitoring Survey (2011) suggested a prevalence of a little less than one woman in four nationally, although there were considerable urban/rural and regional differences. There were three forms of circumcision in Ethiopia: cliterodectomy, excision and infibulation with clear regional patterns. (Boyden et al. 2013). The age of female circumcision varied, with two basic patterns involving a dichotomy between the north and the south. In northern Ethiopia it tended to be carried out shortly after birth, whereas in southern Ethiopia it was usually linked to marriage. In the north, cliterodectomy and/or labiectomy were a cultural norm, traditionally performed on the seventh day in Tigray and on the fifth, seventh, or fifteenth day in different part of Amhara. Female circumcision was thus carried out in infancy, before the child was given an identity, on a prescribed number of days after birth and was therefore by definition not a group matter, but rather a private, household affair. In contrast in southern Ethiopia among Oromo and some southern Ethiopian peoples the procedure took place prior to puberty or shortly before marriage. Only in parts of Oromia influenced by Amhara or Muslim traditions was the girl circumcised at infancy (Boyden et al. 2013, see also chapter on young health). There were variations in terms of whether circumcision of men and women was performed at the same time and whether it was a collective rite of passage, as in parts of the South, or a household event, which was more common in the North. Moreover, the identity of the circumcisers, and whether they were specialists varied; in some cases in Southern Ethiopia they were 'caste-like' marginalised groups (Pankhurst 1999, 2003).

The WIDE data

Out of the 20 wide sites female circumcision was not part of the cultural repertoire in two SNNP sites: Adado in Gedeo and Luqa in Tsemay, in both of which there was also no male circumcision. In Tigray the practice was eradicated during the TPLF period. As with the national data, there were different regional patterns with north/south differences. In Amhara (and in the past in Tigray) circumcision was carried out in the fortnight after birth (7-11 days), whereas elsewhere it was later, either around puberty, prior to and as a necessary prelude to marriage, or somewhat earlier in the pre-teen pre-puberty years. There was a suggestion in two sites: Oda Haro in Western Oromia and Aze Debo'a in SNNP, that to avoid the ban it was taking place a bit earlier (previously around 14-15 years and recently around 7-8). In contrast in Gara Godo also in SNNP, it was said that the practice was taking place later as marriages were being delayed given the ban on early marriage.

Cultural and social rationales

Most rationales for the practice were expressed in negative terms about what would happen to uncircumcised girls. The idea that circumcision was related to cleanliness and purity was found in some sites in all three regions. In Dinki in Amhara it was said that without it girls would be considered unclean, or exposed to disease; in Kormargefia, also in Amhara, boys were said to consider uncircumcised girls as being 'dirty'. Similar ideas were expressed in in Aze Debo'a in SNNP and in Oda Haro and Somodo in Oromia, where the Muslim notion nejasa, 'impure', or 'unclean' was mentioned.

A general notion that not being circumcised was against the culture and therefore taboo was strongly expressed in five sites, four in Oromia and in one in SNNP. In Adele Keke not being circumcised was considered haram, the Muslim term for 'prohibited' or 'taboo', or the reverse, being circumcised 'sacred'. In Somodo a successful farmer said: "not circumcising girls is against our culture. Our daughters may not get a husband as being uncircumcised is considered as taboo in our

community". In Gelcha in Karrayu the terms saalfi and qaani⁶ both denoting shame and the former loose morality were used. In Oda Haro the community believed that it was an integral part of their culture and should be practised without intervention from external bodies including the government; one rich farmer even called it "one of the golden cultures of our people". In Do'oma one woman said: "The government intervention to ban female circumcision is not acceptable to the community. We want to maintain our culture. We could not believe circumcision has a bad effect on women's health".

The notion that uncircumcised girls faced behavioural problems, more specifically that they were clumsy and broke utensils was expressed in two sites in SNNP (Aze Debo'a and Gara Godo) and in one site in Oromia (Oda Haro) and was common in other parts of the south (Pankhurst 2003).

The idea that circumcision was necessary for aesthetic reasons was mentioned in three sites in different regions. In Oda Haro in Oromia circumcision was said to be part of a woman's beauty. In Girar one woman said being uncircumcised did not look good when the woman was giving birth and it was not attractive to see her uncircumcised vagina. In Aze Debo'a, the cutting was seen as removing an extra organ; girls who were not circumcised were referred to "as having a prickle, a comb or with three legs".

The view that uncircumcised women would face a number of problems growing up was expressed in several sites. These included that they would have problems having sex, mentioned in two sites in Amhara. A woman in Yetmen said they would not be able to have intercourse and male respondents in Kormargefia said they would become tincha 'hard like rock', and therefore 'penetration' would be difficult. Uncircumcised women were also said to have difficulty conceiving and giving birth in three sites, Turufe and Oda Haro in Oromia, and Dinki in Amhara. In Turufe a woman said that labour would be painful and protracted. In Dinki a woman said "if the government insists on stopping the practice it would have to stop, but if women experience difficulties giving birth it will have to resume". Another woman said "an uncircumcised woman will not find a husband and become barren". This rationale may be in part a reaction against the modern repertoire arguing that circumcision results in difficult labour, since women in some sites argued that they and their foremothers have given birth successfully over the generations despite being circumcised.

Uncircumcised women were said to face marriageability problems and difficulties finding a husband in six sites in three regions (Dinki in Amhara, Turufe, Oda Dawata, Oda Haro and Somodo in Oromia, and Aze Debo'a in SNNP). In Turufe a male respondent added that this was because she would have a bad reputation.

The idea that circumcision would restrain women's sexual urges was common in four sites, three in Oromia and one in SNNP. In Adele Keke and Aze Debo'a it was said to be important to avoid pre-marital sex. A wereda official said that people believe that "uncircumcised girls will not control their feelings and will start premarital sex and get aggressive". In Oda Haro and Aze Debo'a circumcision was said to prevent women having extra-marital relations. In Aze Debo'a uncircumcised women were referred to as 'an untrained mare' or 'jumping like a horse', referring to the notion that they were considered unable to be loyal to their husband. An NGO worker stated that circumcision was required for a woman "to prevent her from becoming over sexy or to restrain her sexual desire. Otherwise, she may seek extra-marital sex for satisfaction". Likewise, in Gelcha it was said to avoid women having multiple partners; one man stated that "if women are not circumcised they develop excessive sexual urges that make them want to have relations with many men".

A broader notion of controlling and subduing women was expressed in two sites, one in Oromia and the other in SNNP. In Sirba older men believed that "circumcision helps to control girls and make them polite and decent". In Aze Debo'a an NGO worker rationalised this saying that "an

⁶ *Salfi* or *Salpaa* has a connotation of shame and being morally loose and *Qaanii / Kana* ashamed, embarrassed, shy (Tilahun 1989:363,514; Gragg 1982:310,351)

uncircumcised girl will be disobedient, uncontrollable, insubordinate, powerful, untamed, uncouth, and ill mannered”.

The idea that uncircumcised women would face insults and stigma was expressed in five sites, four in SNNP and one in Amhara. In Gara Godo, Girar and Do’oma fear of stigma was mentioned as a major reason for families wanting to continue to circumcise their girls. In Do’oma one woman said: “I want my daughters and granddaughters to be self-confident in the community. Those women and girls who are not circumcised are discriminated against and insulted by other community members including young men and women”. In Dinki young men considering uncircumcised girls as ‘dirty’ were said to insult them.

Although most of the rationales were expressed in terms of the risks of not being circumcised some also expressed the positive sense that being circumcised offered women respect within the community. This was mentioned in two sites in Oromia and one in SNNP. In Sirba a 16 year old girl said that if she had not been circumcised, the community would not respect her and would think that she was not mentally normal. Likewise, a 13 year old girl in Oda Haro said that circumcision ensured girls were respected by the community. Similarly, in Aze Debo’a gaining respect from the community and their family was mentioned as one reason why girls were circumcised. In addition to the respect for the woman herself, the idea that circumcision gave dignity to mothers and the family was mentioned by a farmer in Oda Haro who said that “it is part and parcel of the beauty of the girls and provides great dignity for their mothers”.

Interventions against FGC

Four categories of actors have played roles in intervening to try to prevent female circumcision: 1) Government, 2) NGOs and international organisations, 3) religious groups and 4) local organisations and institutions. Generally, the campaigns have been integrated, with the government taking the lead, though in some cases, particularly in SNNP, NGOs and Churches have been more active. In addition to media programmes through the radio and TV, Government actors were involved in four sectors through the extension programmes. The main interventions came from the wereda Bureau of Women’s, Children and Youth Affairs, which involved the kebele women’s affairs representative. In some cases the women’s affairs offices worked with the justice sector, including the wereda and community police and courts. In the health sector HEWs were involved in campaigns at health posts and in home visits; in some sites they worked with health committees or with health volunteers. In the education sector schools have been the locus for a variety of clubs including girls’ clubs, virgins’ clubs, and even specifically anti-FGM clubs, and in some cases mixed clubs with boys.

Non-government organisations intervened mainly in Oromia and SNNP, apart from the Orthodox Church in two Amhara sites. These included UNICEF, two international NGOs and two local NGOs; Protestant churches in three SNNP sites, and the Orthodox church in three sites in Amhara and two in Oromia; Muslim sheikhs preached against the practice in one site in Oromia, whereas in contrast in other sites some traditional leaders claimed the practice was sanctioned by Islam. Customary institutions including iddiris in three sites and a clan leader in Girar in the Gurage area of SNNP also condemned the practice.

There were a range of interventions that tended to be combined often involving several actors. The three main formsl were: 1) awareness raising campaigns, carried out through the wereda and kebele women’s and children’s affairs, women’s associations, schools with girls’, virgins’ or anti-FGM clubs, and HEWs involving health committees, visiting homes and schools, sometimes with the involvement of NGO, missions and iddiris; 2) legislative and judicial measures; exceptionally in Gara Godo the Wereda Council actually banned FGC. Elsewhere, measures involved ‘trainings’ for circumcisers to avoid the practice, and warnings and prosecutions of circumcisers and families, although actual prosecutions of circumcisers and especially families were rare, and 3) holding up non-circumcised girls as role models, promoted in Aze Debo’a by the NGO KMG which provided support for education of poor girls on the understanding that they remained uncircumcised, and by

the wereda in Turufe where they were selected to be witnesses “that childbearing was easier since they had not been circumcised”.

Reactions to interventions

Reactions to interventions seeking to end the practice depended on a number of factors including: 1) the extent to which the custom was culturally salient and part of the cultural repertoire; 2) regional approaches to HTPs and the relative importance given to FGC; 3) whether cultural, ethnic or religious identities and symbolism were articulated in opposition; 4) the types of interventions, the extent to which they were pursued, and the integration of approaches; and 5) the linkages with other interventions in other sectors. However, in almost all communities rather than a single view held by all, cultural repertoires in opposition to the ban and modern repertoires in favour competed and views were divided. The degree of consensus or divergence sometimes varied along lines of gender-age, education and status, often with women and older people being more conservative and wishing to maintain the custom, whereas younger men and women, the more educated youth and Protestant followers tended to be more in opposition.

In terms of cultural salience the North/South difference in the age of circumcision and the stronger link with marriage in the South and West has meant that the issue received more cultural emphasis and affirmation in the South, with ceremonies and collective rites in some SNNP societies, than in Amhara where it was more of a household affair and where girls had no recollection of their circumcision as infants. Regarding regional and cultural factors FGC was no longer even discussed in the Tigray sites. In Amhara although it was part of the cultural repertoire and taken for granted, it tended to be overshadowed by the discourse surrounding early/child marriage. In Oromia it was an integral part of the cultural repertoire; however, in some sites local administrators seemed not to have prioritised interventions relating to circumcisions, and abduction was often seen as a more important issue. In two sites in western Oromia, Oda Haro and Somodo, it was strongly linked with Oromo identity, whereas in two sites in Eastern Oromia, Korodegaga and Gelcha, cultural notions linked to Islam seemed to be an important part of the rationale. In SNNP sites the link with purity and the role of the ‘castes’ of circumcisers who were considered impure (Pankhurst 2003) was an important factor in opposition to the ban.

It may not be easy to ascertain which approaches were most successful as there was often a combination including awareness raising campaigns, the involvement of schools and HEWs, threats of punishment and sometimes actual punitive measures, and the measures were carried out by a range of different actors including government, NGOs and local institutions. Moreover, there was some evidence of the practice having gone underground, and some answers may have reflected what respondents assumed the interviewer wanted to hear or for fear that expressing views that were against the ban could be dangerous. However, combined approaches may well have had greater effects. It is also possible that the linking of female circumcision to discourses surrounding HTPs, and more broadly women’s and girls’ rights and empowerment may have been significant.

The extent of change

Understanding the extent of change and decline of the practice is complex and complicated by the fact that, since the practice is illegal, it is difficult to obtain clear evidence, and because the research was carried out in three stages from 2010 to 2013. However, there were important differences between and within regions in the strength of the cultural traditions, the enforcement measures and the degree of change, which seems to depend on an interplay between the strength of cultural customs, the extent, strength and integration of interventions, regional logics, remoteness and the time lag between the stages of the research (see also chapter on young women’s health and wellbeing).

We have seen that in the two Tigray sites female circumcision was eliminated during the TPLF rule, and was no longer an issue and may not even have been part of the cultural repertoire in Harresaw.

Among the four sites in Amhara the custom was a fairly strong part of local customary practices and the ban has been enforced probably with increasing attention over time. Remoteness and timing of the study may have influenced the extent of change. In Dinki, there had not been much intervention at the time of the study in 2010, and the ban was contested, especially by the Muslim Argobba with their distinct conservative traditions. However, it is also noteworthy that the site is fairly remote. In the other three sites there were stronger interventions and some reduction though the practice was continued by some in secret. Among these three sites the interventions were more limited in Yetmen, studied in 2010, and stronger with threats of prosecution in Shumsheha studied in 2011 and Kormargefia in 2013.

Among the SNNP sites, circumcision was not part of the cultural repertoire in two sites, but was integral and important to cultural traditions in the four other sites. In all of these there were strong interventions with the Protestant church actively against the practice in the three southern sites in Kambata, Wolayta and Gofa. NGOs played a key role in the first two (Aze Debo'a and Gara Godo) and campaigns were integrated with involvement of government, schools and HEWs. In the Gurage site, Girar, the campaign involved the widest range of stakeholders including government, UNICEF, clan leaders, and iddiris. There has clearly been a reduction in all four sites, though there has also been some resistance and underground opposition, the extent of which is difficult to ascertain. Opposition to the ban was most clearly voiced in Do'oma, the remotest site, where there was no NGO involvement and less enforcement of the ban.

The biggest differences were found among the eight sites in Oromia. In five of these the interventions were not or no longer strongly enforced, but for different reasons and with different outcomes. In four sites in Eastern Oromia there was less strong enforcement than there had been earlier. In Oda Dawata it was suggested that the practice was greatly reduced and therefore strong measures were no longer required. Likewise, in Korodegaga there seemed to be some reduction and acceptance of the ban, though there was evidence of covert resistance. In contrast in Gelcha and Adele Keke there was fairly open opposition linked with both cultural (Karayu and Oromo) and religious (Muslim) justifications. In Gelcha campaigns seemed to have been reduced whereas in Adele Keke they never were very strong. In two sites in western Oromia there was fairly strong resistance, justified in Oda Haro in terms of Oromo and Muslim ideologies, and where the leadership did not seem to want to impose the ban, whereas in Somodo there was a strong coordinated campaign involving the church and the mosque, as well as an NGO and iddiris resulting in some apparent reduction. Finally, in Sirba and Turufe, both sites that are close to towns and urban influences strong coordinated campaigns involving NGOs as well as the government seemed to have led to considerable reduction, despite some covert resistance, particularly in Turufe among migrants from the South.

Sexual initiation

Sexual initiation is a personal transition but intersects with family transitions given the issues surrounding the link with marriage and especially child or early marriage. It also by definition involves relations between the sexes (at least in heterosexual relations) and therefore raises questions of gender relations, and in particular violence against women. Likewise, it is also related to issues of abduction and in some cases rape. In policy terms there are also the links with contraception, pre-marital pregnancy, abortion, child-bearing and HIV/AIDS. In this section I consider the evidence on the age of sexual debut and youth reproductive health education, contraception availability and the constraints on adolescent access, the issue of pre-marital pregnancies and abortions, and finally abduction, rape and 'voluntary' abduction. These topics are covered more fully in Bevan's chapter on young women's reproductive health.

Age of sexual debut and pre-marital sex

The evidence on sexual debut is limited, sensitive and difficult to interpret, and the data were collected in three stages over three years. For the stage 1 sites in 2010 we only have indirect

evidence of pre-marital sex through references to secondary school girls becoming pregnant, having children and becoming dependent on their parents in four of the six sites: Geblen, Girar, Turufe and Yetmen. Although we did enquire about this in stages 2 and 3 in interviews with teenagers, the issue being sensitive, when the teenagers mentioned having boyfriends or girlfriends it was not always clear whether they were involved in pre-marital sex. However, we do have evidence of some instances of youth mentioning that they did have pre-marital sex in six of the 14 sites for teenage boys and five sites for teenage girls. For example a rich young man in Do'oma said he had a girlfriend from the age of 15 and first had sex with her at 17 and married her at 20, and in the same site the HEW who was 25 said she first had sex with her boyfriend at the age of 17.

It was often suggested that the fact that girls and boys now go to school or work together and mix more, including in youth or church groups, increases the likelihood of pre-marital sex. For instance this was expressed as follows in Aze Debo'a: "nowadays there are more opportunities for young people of both sexes to meet openly, notably as young girls can move around which was uncommon in the past. Young people meet on market places, at school, during youth meetings, funeral and mourning ceremonies, at spiritual conferences and at Sunday church programmes". In Kormargefia a woman heading a household said that "abstinence before marriage was becoming old-fashioned in the community".

However, there were also a number of teenagers who said they did not want and had not had pre-marital sex for a range of reasons, including for some boys that they were too shy and/or did not have a girlfriend, others wanted to concentrate on their education and feared relationships would endanger that, some wanted to wait to marry their girlfriend, or wanted to have a secure livelihood first, or were waiting for their parents to choose a partner, and others due to religious prohibition. There were also instances of teenage respondents saying they first had sex on their wedding night, such as a 17 year old girl in Adele Keke who was married at 14, and a 16 year old boy in Do'oma.

In a number of cases respondents did not talk about their own situation but were more comfortable mentioning that other teenagers were involved in sex, or cited cases of premarital pregnancies in their site. The only site where pre-marital sex seemed to be culturally acceptable was Luqa, where it was expected that teenagers would experiment with sex, often after the ivangadi dances. However, whereas pre-marital sex was considered normal and expected to happen, birth-giving was not sanctioned and children born before marriage were considered mingi or taboo and were to be abandoned, a custom that became the subject of interventions involving the churches and NGOs and which is often cited as a Harmful Traditional Practice (EGLDAM 2008). Elsewhere there was more tolerance of male than female pre-marital sex and there was serious concern that losing their virginity would affect girls' marriage prospects. One rationale for abducted girls marrying their abductors was that, having been raped, they would no longer find men wanting to marry them. In two of the southern Protestant sites, Adado and Aze Debo'a, there was a strong sense expressed by teenagers that the Protestant church prohibited pre-marital sex and they would abide by this and wait till they got married.

Youth reproductive health education

Education about reproductive health was provided in schools and through HEWs. This was mentioned as taking place in secondary schools and even in primary schools in Gara Godo, from grades 7-8 in Shumsheha and even in grade 5 in Do'oma. In Shumsheha "both female and male students are provided with family planning education and males are provided with condom use education (though there are a few who do not accept it)". In Harresaw "students in the anti-HIV/AIDS club invite tabia officials and the HEWs to give them information on the different contraception means". The only site where it was specifically mentioned that education about contraceptives was not provided in schools was in Gelcha on the grounds that "children in primary school are not considered mature enough for this".

In some sites the HEWs work with the schools. In Aze Debo'a the HEWs go house to house as well as giving education in schools and the NGO KMG was also active in promoting reproductive health education, and in Oda Haro the HEWs have an awareness-raising programme in the school. In Adele Keke it was said that "nurses from health centres and HEWs provide health education about contraceptives services and promote and distribute condoms at preparatory, general secondary and primary schools, across 26 schools in total in the wereda. Both male and female students get this education but fewer female students attend the awareness raising education. In the main school there are 15 volunteers who with teachers get training on health extension packages and every Friday education about HIV and contraceptives is provided by HEWs and volunteers to the students. There is no condom distribution but the HEWs show grade six students how condoms are used".

Contraception availability and use

Contraception availability, types, access and use varied considerably by site. In theory unmarried teenagers could get access to contraceptives in many sites from the health post or health centre but in practice they often could not. Adolescents were said to be able to access contraceptives in Dinki, in Adado, where girls who were single could get contraceptives at the health centre, and in Harresaw, where a few girls who were students came to the health post, "though these were rare cases". The only site where there was clearly significant teenage contraception use was Shumsheha, which is relatively close to Lalibela town. Elsewhere, although it may be fairly widely available, there were serious constraints on adolescents and especially girls obtaining contraception, and often they were not able or willing to get them from the local health centre for fear of being seen or reported by health workers. HEWs may also be unwilling to provide contraceptives to unmarried women either because of their own beliefs or for fear of social opprobrium. In Oda Dawata unmarried women did not come to the health post to get contraception but obtained it in nearby urban areas. Some respondents explained that in fact HEWs gave a lot of different options for married women but to unmarried women they recommended abstinence. However, they provided condoms and sometimes post-sex pills for emergency cases. Condom access in some sites may be easier for teenage men than contraception for teenage women. However, there was also the fear, as expressed by respondents in Adele Keke, that condom availability may promote pre-marital sex, with assumed negative consequences.

Pre-marital pregnancies, abortions and child-bearing

There was a concern about premarital pregnancies being a problem and on the increase, with school-girls becoming pregnant and having children, then becoming dependent on their parents and dropping out of school. This was mentioned in eight sites, one each in Tigray and SNNP, two in Amhara, and four in Oromia, with examples in the following box.

Box 1: Teenage pregnancies

- **Geblen:** a 19-year old became pregnant in Grade 9 but did not marry the father who was a student at the school. She was living in with her parents and baby doing domestic work and working on the PSNP.
- **Yetmen:** pre-marital pregnancy was said to be increasing among 15-20 years. Young women may get pregnant while attending secondary school outside Yetmen and the numbers doing this have increased.
- **Shumsheha:** A number of young women said many young people are having children out of wedlock, and the responsibility for the children usually falls on the mothers since young men are not independent before marriage.
- **Turufe:** an FGD of younger men said that there were a lot of young pregnant girls in the kebele and that childbirth was getting very common among the youth. In cases of pre-marital pregnancy some males denied their involvement and the girl became dependent on her family. Some couples got married to avoid the insult *digalaweledech* ‘she gave birth to a bastard’ and they mostly dropped out of school. The marriage would probably be unstable and end in divorce.
- **Adele Keke:** a 17 year old girl said that a number of girls get pregnant and do not complete school. She mentioned that two girls she knew became pregnant and the man refused to marry them.
- **Sirba:** the rich 13-year-old said that there are girls who are not going to school but have boyfriends and get unexpected pregnancies. She knows two girls who got pregnant before they were married. Both now do not go to school and stay at home doing domestic work. The poor 19-year-old believes that pre-marital pregnancies are very common in the community because girls and boys start sexual relations at 14 or 15.
- **Oda Dawata:** There were examples in the community of young females who became pregnant and had the child and continued to live with their parents.
- **Adado:** The wife of the middle-wealth farmer said that there are some cases of pregnancies before marriage. This is not a big problem because it is not traditionally accepted and women restrain themselves. If it happens they go to other places and deliver the child or abort. The wife of the successful businessman said that in case of pregnancy before marriage mostly the girl gets married. There is a problem only if the man refuses.

Information about abortions was sensitive, but there was some evidence in 13 sites (see also chapter on young women’s reproductive health). In Harresaw a 17 year old woman said “though unwanted pregnancies are rare since contraception is widespread there were a few cases where the woman went to Atsbi or Mekelle but this was not openly talked about as abortion is not acceptable”. In Oda Dawata since the topic was taboo most girls had not heard of it, but one 13 year old heard a rumour of a girl “who completed 10th grade and went to Addis Ababa for work, but people said she had had an abortion due to the change in her appearance”.

In many sites women used various means of abortion including herbs in Yetmen, the endod plant in Kormargefia, coca cola and Ampicillin antibiotics in Adele Keke; sometimes this involved the woman ‘self-aborting’ as in Do’oma where one HIV positive woman took ten ampicillin and then got treated by the health officer at the health centre; alternatively women went to traditional practitioners, as in Shumsheha, Kormargefia and Sirba.

There were reports of cases of abortion-related deaths in Yetmen, Adele Keke, Gara Godo, and Shumsheha. Sometimes women first used traditional means and, when this failed or they faced infections, they sought help from the health services, as was reported in Do’oma, Gara Godo and Kormargefia.

There were variations in the extent to which modern reproductive health services were available and whether youth could access them, but in many sites women had to go to towns, which involved costs as mentioned in Oda Haro and Sirba, so that only those who could afford it were able to go. In a few sites, especially closer to towns such as Sirba, some women went to private clinics in the towns. In Aze Debo’a and Adado respondents said there was no service available in the site. In Do’oma the wereda officials suggested there was a high demand and ‘students take the lion’s share of the services’. However, there was a shortage of professionals and instruments. In Girar concerns

were expressed about privacy since a nurse went to discuss the case of a girl in a boarding school with the dormitory head.

Abduction and rape

Forced abduction is a risk particular to adolescent girls, except in the case of customary abduction of a deceased wife's sister mentioned in Gelcha. Abducted girls were generally raped unless it was a voluntary abduction (see below). However, rape outside abduction and even in marriage often concerned older women. Nonetheless there were also specific risks of rape of girls without abduction, including rare cases of small girls, such as "an old guy with a five year old girl" in Girar, and greater risks for poor and powerless women especially domestic workers, many of whom were adolescents, with cases mentioned in Turufe and Kormargefia (see also chapter on young women's reproductive health). Girls who had refused their parents' arranged marriages were said to be particularly vulnerable to abduction in Oda Dawata.

Marriage by forced abduction was a customary way for a young man to get a wife when he was unwilling or unable to do so through the accepted institutions, for example due to poverty. A young woman would be chosen, kidnapped and, if unwilling, raped. Occasions for such abductions arose when the girl/woman was fetching water or en route to school or market. She was usually taken to the abductor's home, and in Oromo cultures would be circumcised in anticipation of the marriage. In most cases in the mid-2000s the parents and girl eventually accepted what had happened and, with the help of elders, appropriate local arrangements with regard to exchanges between the families and gifts to the couple were made. Parental views about forced abduction depended on whether they were considering their sons or daughters, accepting a son's involvement and often being forced to accept abduction of a daughter. (Bevan 2011).

In the 2005 DHS survey 7.8% of women had been married by abduction. Figures for the youth cohorts were aged 15-19 = 2.5%; aged 20-24 = 7.3%; and aged 25-29 = 9.5%. There were significant regional differences with the highest proportions in SNNP and Oromia and the lowest in Tigray and Amhara where there is no bride wealth, which is an incentive for abduction (Bevan 2011).

Abduction was considered a customary form of marriage in WIDE sites in all four regions. It was common in several Oromo sites, called Butta in Turufe, and Weltensa in Adele Keke, and was also considered 'normal' in Sirba. It was also common in several sites in SNNP, notably in Adado and Do'oma, where a wereda official said there had been more than 12 cases in 2010. In Tigray in Harresaw according to one informant in the past "rape and abduction were considered 'heroic' actions and were common occurrences". It was also considered one form of marriage in Amhara as mentioned in Shumsheha, leading to the acceptance of a marriage proposal. Likewise, in Kormargefia abduction was customary and continued to present a serious risk for girls. There was mention of a girl abducted on the way to school and becoming pregnant and another grade 8 girl on the way back from school abducted by men from a nearby kebele. She told them she wanted to collect her clothes and left for Addis Ababa. There was no mention of prosecutions, and in the second instance, the police dropped the case as the man was from a different kebele. Young women therefore only went to school or market with siblings, friends or parents and the time they spent outside the house was limited especially at night. There have been important interventions to try to stop abduction backed by the Family Code (FDRE 2000) and the Criminal Code (FDRE 2005) with cases of punishments mentioned in three sites, two in SNNP and one in Oromia.

Box 2: Cases of punishment for abduction

- In Aze Deboa the head of the women's affairs office mentioned a case of a sentence of 15 years in 2002. The NGO KMG was also involved in helping abducted women take their cases to court leading to a claim of 'complete eradication'.
- In Do'oma two young men from Wacha town were caught red-handed; one escaped and the other tried to marry the girl but is still in prison.
- In Adele Keke in 2009 an abductor and his supporter were caught by the police and imprisoned for 3 years. and the girl went back to school.

However, in most cases the sentences were far less than the law allows. For instance in Do'oma a wereda official suggested that generally the courts decided on three months' imprisonment whereas the penal code allows for 18 to 20 years. In Gelcha when a man abducted the young sister of his deceased wife according to custom, she reported the case to the women's affairs office and the administrator sent the police but were threatened with guns and backed down. One respondent blamed the administrator who is Karrayu suggesting he did not want to take serious action as he supported traditional practices.

In a number of sites there was pressure by elders to arrange marriages after abductions. For instance in Adado two cases were mentioned, one which was brought before the elders and led to marriage even though the girl did not want this. In another case a girl was convinced to say that she was consenting. This practice was justified on the grounds that even if the cases were taken to court and the abductors were imprisoned no one would want to marry the girls who were no longer virgins. In both cases the girls dropped out of school. Likewise in Oda Dawata a case was mentioned where elders tried to get a girl and her parents to accept marriage.

Abduction was said to have declined in most sites, at least this was the official view. This reduction was generally attributed both by officials and community respondents to the strong measures against abductors. In Adele Keke the head of the women's affairs suggested it was "on the verge of disappearing". In Harresaw it was said that abduction "is no longer an issue". In Luqa one wereda official suggested that 'abduction is getting to be history'. In Somodo a wereda official said that it was "a thing of the past". In Sirba a wereda respondent suggested that closer access to services reduced risks for girls. He said: "in the past girls were abducted when they were alone, fetching water, wood, going to marketplaces and to school. In recent years, schools have been opened much closer to residential areas than in the past. Also, water boreholes, wells and water pumps are all over the villages and so the risk of abduction has greatly reduced".

However, abduction was still a serious risk for girls in at least the following six sites in three regions: Adado, Do'oma, and Luqa in SNNP, Oda Haro and Sirba in Oromia and Kormargefia in Amhara. There were suggestions that the practice still persisted, despite claims that it was disappearing. In Do'oma a wereda official suggested that men tend to convince abducted girls to get married and they fear the cultural stigma and prefer to live with the man. In Luqa though the wereda administrator suggested there were "only 1 or 2 cases a year", a women's affairs official suggested there was "an average of 2-4 cases reported each week". In Adado, although wereda officials and some male respondents claimed that, as a result of strong penalties, abduction was no longer an important issue, two recent cases led to the woman having been persuaded or coerced into marrying her abductor. In Oda Haro one farmer moved his daughter to a primary school in town as a man had been trying to abduct her. When he continued to stalk her she dropped out of 6th grade and was sent to join her sisters in Ambo town to continue her education there. In Sirba one case was reported to the women's affairs last year, but the girl was convinced by her parents and the abductor to arrange a marriage. However, an important positive change as a result of government interventions was that some elders reported refusing to negotiate abduction cases and refer cases to the law (see also Pankhurst 2009).

'Voluntary' abduction

Voluntary abduction, or elopement, sometimes referred to as ‘consensus marriage’, was on the increase recently in at least eight sites, five of which are in Oromia: Turufe, Korodegaga, Adele Keke, Oda Haro, Somodo, the rest being one in each of the other regions: Harresaw in Tigray, Adado in SNNP and Kormargefia in Amhara. In Oromo sites, notably Turufe, Oda Haro and Adele Keke, it was seen as one way of avoiding bridewealth payments. In Adele Keke it was suggested that there has been a transformation from forced abduction to the voluntary kind that reduced wedding costs, therefore making getting married cheaper for poorer men and providing young people more choice. In Korodegaga and Oda Haro the parents usually accepted the fact, and, in due course, arranged a ceremony at the bride’s house. In Shumsheha in one case a rich man had sex with a young woman living with her poor grandmother, and they eloped when his parents refused to accept the marriage, and he only came back when they accepted the marriage and gave him land. In Gelcha, though not common, abduction was said to happen if a girl was to be married to someone she did not want to get married to and instead she would elope with a boy she liked.

In many cases ‘voluntary abduction’ provides girls with the possibility of choosing partners against the wish of their parents. In Harresaw if the parents accuse the boy of abduction, but the girl denies this the parents have no choice but ‘to be reconciled’. In Kormargefia a woman of 20 was abducted, but when her parents took the matter to the social court, she said it was voluntary. Another 17 year old girl in grade 5 confirmed to elders that she liked the man who abducted her and wanted to live with him. In Sirba parents reported the case of an abduction of their daughter on the way back from school saying she was underage. However, the girl said she wanted to get married and was not underage. When the parents provided a school certificate as evidence she claimed her age was deliberately reduced when she was registered so that the school would not refuse her for being ‘overage’ in grade 1.

However, officials and parents expressed concerns about voluntary abduction in four sites, three in Oromia and one in SNNP. In Oda Haro some argued that, though it provided girls more choice, it also encouraged young girls to drop out of school, and was therefore considered a problem. Wereda officials in Somodo suggested that the girl might not really have wanted to get married and that a couple getting married without a plan, assets or means of livelihood were likely to face economic problems and the marriage was likely to end in divorce. A woman’s affairs officer suggested that, once the girl ‘gets convinced’ by elders and the parents on both sides discuss and ‘solve the case’ through elders, there was nothing the police can do, and, even if the case had been taken to the police, if the parents convince the girl to say she consented, the police cannot punish the man.

There is often a fine line between forced and voluntary abduction, and some officials and parents expressed misgivings about voluntary abduction. In Kormargefia a man in town told a 16 year old girl he would buy her a mobile phone if she lived with him; though she agreed the kebele fined him 200 birr as she was underage but the marriage agreement was negotiated and went ahead. In Kormargefia and Oda Haro some parents would like the government to take action against voluntary abduction, as they question whether it can be voluntary since girls were often misled by men. One woman in Kormargefia went so far as to argue that “It is very shameful for women to be abducted voluntarily. Rather I prefer forced abduction because it shows at least the worthiness of the girl to the man and the community”. In Adado the wereda women’s affairs officer also saw this as a problem and suggested that the government was raising awareness regarding voluntary as well as forced abduction. In Oda Dawata officials said the law was difficult to implement given the difficulty to differentiate between forced and voluntary abduction, especially since girls were pressurized to say they consented.

Family-related transitions

Among the three family transitions the focus of this chapter is on getting married as the area that has been the subject of most interventions and greater policy interest. Establishing an independent households is largely covered in the later work transitions section in relation to gaining economic

independence. The issue of having children is dealt with in the chapter on mothers' and infants' wellbeing. This section comprises five parts. I start by outlining the local cultural repertoires concerning marriage, variations in different regions and incoming modern ideologies. This is followed by a review of the rationales for early marriage, and relations with wealth, poverty, shocks and schooling. I then consider the evidence and reasons for a reduction in early marriage as well as cases where early marriage is continuing and even said to be increasing. The fourth part reviews interventions and reactions to them. In the final section I address the debates around choice of marriage partner, generational change and girls' agency which may be considered a more central concern for girls' rights than the age of marriage per se.

Early and child marriage and partner choice

The policy concern about early marriage has focused on child or underage marriage, meaning marriage under the legal age of 18 which generally concerns girls as, for the most part, boys marry somewhat later. This tends to neglect differences between early, middle and late teen marriage, and does not address the particular vulnerabilities of younger teenager and concerns of older teenagers (aged 18-19), who may face similar problems to 'under-age' girls.

Different forms of early marriage may be distinguished (Berihun and Aspen, 2009: 1001):

"Promissory marriage: is an oral agreement between two families to give their children in marriage to one during childhood sometimes other before or right after the birth of the children. Child marriage: is usually arranged for girls under 10 years of age and the bride is usually placed under the custody of in-laws. Early Adolescent Marriage: it is contracted between the ages of 10 and 14. It is the most common marriage for the majority of rural girls. The bridegroom is usually within the late adolescent age bracket. Adolescent marriage: generally takes place when the bride is around the age of 15 years. Late Adolescent marriage: indicates marriage for girls after the age of 15 years".

Dividing child and early marriage into age brackets is somewhat artificial since often a girl's physical maturity, notably whether she has developed breasts, and reaching puberty are what is often what is considered locally relevant. However, the distinction between child marriage and adolescent marriage, and within the latter early teen (13-15), mid teen (16-17) and late teen marriage (18-19) is useful especially since the extent of girls' involvement and agency is related to their increasing age (Pankhurst et al. 2016).

Local cultural repertoires and rationales

Customary marriage repertoires varied to some extent by culture, including ethnicity, sub-regional and localized cultural practices and religious ideologies. In a context of the prohibition of early marriage under the age of 18, several rationales were mentioned by parents in favour of marrying their daughters early. Most of these related to risks girls could face by not getting married. This included the risk of abduction, involvement in pre-marital sex, loss of virginity, early pregnancies, abortion, and raising children out of wedlock (Dinki, Harresaw, Shumsheha). Respondents in some sites pointed out that girls and boys have started interacting earlier in the context of schools, and parents feared they would have pre-marital sex, get pregnant and "into trouble" (Somodo). This could then lead them to "becoming a burden on their parents" (Gelcha). They may also be at risk of early exposure to STDs (Shumsheha). In the Orthodox Church in Tigray, deacons were expected to marry virgins leading to a desire to marry younger girls who would not have been involved in pre-marital sex (Harresaw). Girls who had been involved in pre-marital sex may also no longer be able to find suitable partners (Dinki), and may worry that they would become too old to marry (Kormargefia). Girls may also drop out of school and have nothing to do if they cannot get married and therefore may want to marry early (Do'oma).

Regional differences

In Tigray adolescent marriage from about the age of 14 was customary and involved dowry *gezmi* endowments provided by the bride's family for the bride and given to the newly-wed couple. In Amhara region, child marriage, including pre-teen and especially early teen marriage was common, with differences in sub-regional traditions. This included promissory marriage and pre-teen child marriage in Yetmen (Gojjam), and early teen marriage in Northern Wello (Shumsheha) and Northern Shewa (Kormargefia, Dinki). Marriage payments tended to involve gifts of land, livestock, and/or utensils from both the groom's family and the bride's family to the couple, sometimes involving an ideology of matching gifts, traditionally leading to marriage alliances between families of similar wealth status. Large wedding ceremonies were said to have decreased in Kormargefia, and recently young people married with a small wedding or even none, although those who moved to town were said to have to follow the urban tendency of larger feasts. In Amhara culture divorce was acceptable and early marriages not infrequently ended in divorce, often followed by remarriages (Pankhurst 1992). In Oromia early marriage including middle teen marriage from about 15 years was customary whereas pre-teen child and promissory marriages were not. Marriage by abduction and polygyny were also customary though only carried out by a few. The payment of brideprice mainly in the form of cattle was customary, though the amounts have been decreasing. In SNNP child and early teen marriage was not customary, and marriage below the age of 15 was rare, though from about the age of 16 it was more common. Cultural gifts in Gara Godo have tended to be replaced with modern household utensils, and costly wedding ceremonies have been discouraged by the Protestant Churches. In Aze Debo'a migrants living in South Africa, were providing high brideprices of 60,000 to 80,000 birr, leading to young women aspiring to marry them, some obtaining visas to join them in South Africa.

Overall, marriage for girls in middle to late adolescence can be said to have been considered customary in most parts of the country, but pre-teen or early teen marriage was much rarer except in Amhara.

Perhaps more importantly than the age of marriage was the way in which customarily marriages were arranged by the parents, with the mediation of elders and therefore generally not involving the spouses in the decision-making.

However, as the initiative for wedding proposals was generally from the side of the groom there was more likelihood that he would be consulted.



Voluntary marriage, Oda Haro

Differences between and within communities: wealth and poverty, remoteness and education

However, not all households and/or children decided on early marriage, and there were differences within communities about who married early. We find two contrasting patterns, one associated with wealth and the other with poverty. In addition there was an association with dropping out of school which may also be linked with the issue of resources and poverty. Another factor was said to be remoteness and being able to evade the ban on early marriage. Finally, there were sites where girls and boys decided they wanted to marry early, either with parental endorsement or in defiance of parental wishes and interests, sometimes by eloping.

In some cases differences within sites were mentioned. In Yetmen respondents said there was reduction in the town area, but less so in rural areas and among the wealthy. The rationale of girls

from richer families marrying early was linked to them being able to attract husbands with land and was explained as follows in Kormargefia: “Girls from rich families are more likely to get married earlier because they will receive gifts from their parents to help establish their own household. In contrast, it is difficult for girls from poor families to get married because boys with an independent livelihood do not want to propose to poor girls because they know that it is unlikely that the girl’s parents will be able to donate land to the new couple”.

Similarly in Sirba several of the young men said that it was easier to find a wife if you were rich, and that it was very difficult for the poor and the landless. In particular, it was very hard to convince a girl’s parents to agree to marriage if the boy was landless. Likewise, in Gara Godo (Wolayta) it was said that only men from wealthy families dare to get married early as those from poorer families lacked the resources. In Adele Keke it was said that in more remote areas some girls were still being married off at around 15 to 17 years old.

In contrast early marriage may also be more likely among the poor (Aze Debo’ a), “out of economic necessity” (Oda Haro), “as a matter of survival” (Oda Dawata), particularly if the families could not afford to send their daughters to continue their education in secondary school due to the distance, and the cost of transport, rent and living in town (Oda Dawata). Poor families may also want or agree to marry off their daughters due to possible gifts (Somodo). Furthermore, poor female headed households may want the support of their daughter’s husband with “male activities” such as ploughing the land (Harresaw). An example from Aze Debo’ a illustrates how families facing shocks may choose to marry off their daughters. A woman in her 30s who now lives in a middle wealth household recalled: “when my parents decided to return to Aze Debo’ a in 2006 after a few years of unsuccessful resettlement, I was forced to drop out of school due to economic problems and got married in the same year”.

A link with poor performance and dropping out of school was mentioned in several sites in Oromia (Oda Dawata, Oda Haro, Somodo), SNNP (Do’oma) and Amhara (Kormargefia). In the latter it was said that “Girls who are not doing well in education tend to get married, perhaps as early as 15 or 16, whereas those who are doing well delay the age of marriage until they are at least 20.” Though dropping out of school was said to be common for most girls in Do’oma, one respondent also suggested that girls “with good looks” were more likely to attract a husband and marry early.

Girls may be bullied, coerced or convinced into early marriage because their parents want and arrange it, and some may agree “out of respect for their parents” as one 16 year-old girl from a wealthy family in Oda Dawata said about her sister whom her parents married off at 15. However, in some cases girls themselves may want to get married prior to the age of 18, and may elope to avoid the ban, sometimes with their parents’ assent, but in other cases against their wishes. In Oda Haro some girls were said to want to get married to escape domestic responsibilities. In Adado young partners may agree in secret and may get married elsewhere. In Luqa some parents complained that girls wanted to get married early despite their parents’ opposition and could do so given the government’s emphasis on girls being able to choose their own partners.

We have seen that the rationales for early marriage can vary and may include wealth and parental endowments, poverty and shocks, dropping out of school, parental coercion, wishing to escape from parental control and domestic work, or simply wanting the freedom to get married to a man they fell in love with. Though certain rationales may be stronger in some cultures and sites, several different reasons may be found within the same site, as the community reports from the following two sites in Oromia suggest:

The young women interviewed felt that those who married earlier either did so out of choice (often to escape domestic responsibilities at home or because they were struggling at school) or due to economic necessity. Therefore they felt that underage marriage was more common amongst the poor and often happened as a result of voluntary or forced abduction (Oda Haro)

Poor girls who could not afford to continue education, and whose families found sending hem secondary school more difficult (due to distance, rent, cost) were more likely to marry early. Some rich girls were married off by parents, and more men were seeking them for their wealth. For some poor girls it was a matter of survival to get married (middle 16). Those who chose would delay to 20s. Some married late due to education and migration (Oda Dawata)

Evidence of and reasons for a reduction in early marriage

In most sites there was evidence of some reduction in the extent of early marriage. In Harresaw the age of marriage of girls that used to be about 15 to 16 was said to have increased to above 18, with a corresponding increase in the age of marriage for young men from about 18 to about 22. In Gelcha interviews with nine women, three each of different wealth categories in their 30s, 20s and teens suggests an increase:

"Among the three women in their 30s two got married at 14 and one at 18 based on their families' decisions. Among the women in their 20s the rich woman was married at 18; the middle wealth woman is engaged to her boyfriend who is a DA; and the poor woman married the man who was her boyfriend from the age of 16 after he sent elders to her mother. None of the teenagers aged 16-17 are yet married".

In some sites there were disagreements about whether early marriage was decreasing. In Dinki some women suggested that there was a reduction in early marriage, though some men expressed doubts. In contrast in Kormargefia, a husband suggested there were only a few cases of early marriage while his wife suggested that the practice continued with 15 and 16 year old girls lying about their ages when they marry.

In some cases differences within sites were mentioned. In Yetmen and Somodo respondents said there was reduction in the town area, but less so in rural areas and among the wealthy. Likewise, in Adele Keke it was said that in more remote areas some girls were still being married off at around 15 to 17 years old.

There are a number of reasons why early marriage has been decreasing, including the implementation of the law, parents' and children's education, work and migration aspirations, broader shifts in agency of girls and the younger generation, and economic problems associated with land shortage, lack of employment opportunities, increasing living costs and difficulties for the youth to establish independent livelihoods.

Concerns about marrying without having an economic base and the risks that this may lead to an early divorce was expressed by youth and officials in a number of sites for at least the following five sets of reasons.

First, knowledge about the law on the legal age of 18 and threats or enforcement of the law no doubt have played a major part, as we shall see in looking at interventions and responses to them. Second, the school environment has changed girls' aspirations, as was mentioned in most sites.⁷ It was not just the aspirations of the girls themselves to be educated, but also that of their parents for them that mattered as was emphasized in Harresaw, Sirba, and Oda Haro, where parents wanted girls at least to complete primary school. In Aze Debo'a poor girls who had scholarships from an NGO said this would be incompatible with marriage and they aspired to go to university.

⁷Adado, Aze Debo'a, Gelcha, Harresaw, Kormargefia, Oda Dawata, Oda Haro, Sirba, Somodo and Yetmen.

In a few sites (Harresaw, Somodo, Oda Dawata, Adado) there was also a new shift of expecting girls not simply to be educated but also to have an income rather than simply get married. In Harresaw not just men but also women wanted to earn income before marriage, often by migrating. In Somodo there was an emerging sense that young women too should endeavour to get some economic independence and have some means of income before marrying, and parents wished to enable their daughters to establish their own livelihood; as the following case suggests.

Girls get lessons about the harmful effects of getting married early and nowadays parents do not influence their daughters in the same way and most girls want to pursue their education as much as they can. That is why two of my daughters have not yet married and instead they are thinking on how to engage in some work so as to lead their future life. But I got married when I was very young. There has been a great change in terms of the age that girls get married (successful farmer's wife).

I will not let my daughters to get married at an early age. This is also one reason why I let my youngest daughter to live in Jimma as it is a big town and there is no case of early marriage unlike in the rural areas (wife of the poor farmer).

Third, a broader sense of greater awareness of girls' rights was also mentioned as contributing to a reduction in early marriage (Oda Dawata). The fact that marriage was no longer arranged completely by the parents and there tends to be mutual consent by the couple was also said to reduce incidents of early marriage (Oda Haro). Less risk of pregnancy with girls being able to access contraception was likewise said to reduce that concern (Gara Godo).

Fourth, in several sites girls aspired to migrate rather than get married especially if they had not done well in school (Haressaw, Kormargefia, Aze Debo'a, Oda Dawata, Somodo). In some sites girls decided to migrate to towns rather than marry (Kormargefia), whereas in others they migrated to the Middle East (Oda Dawata). Some parents were not able to afford to send girls to secondary school and viewed migration as a better option than marriage (Oda Haro). The poor female head interviewed in Somodo sent her eldest daughter to Sudan to earn income, which she would not have imagined doing herself. However, in Harresaw some couples got married and then the husband migrated.

Fifth, economic constraints on couples setting up an independent livelihood were mentioned in most sites.⁸ This was often because since men could not establish themselves they would delay marriage in order to save money, leading to girls receiving marriage proposals later (Kormargefia). In some sites this was often mainly a question of land shortage for households to be able to provide a son with land to set up a household (Aze Debo'a, Kormargefia, Yetmen). The changes in the cultural logic with land shortage was explained as follows in Kormargefia:

"In order to marry, a man is expected to have a source of livelihood, the materials to build a house and enough grain for a year's consumption. In most cases, young men have access to only a small amount of land, if any, and must work for a long time to save these reserves. As a result, most now marry in their mid twenties. In most cases, married couples live with the husband's parents for several months after marriage, and they may continue to depend on them for several years after that. One female respondent said that elders will not allow a boy to get married unless he has farmland of his own."

In Somodo if young men cannot get land they have to find other ways of earning an income. It is now commonly expected that young people and especially young men would not marry without having first some livelihood means. Yet at the same time it is no longer common for them to get land before they marry except in rare cases so they have to find other ways of building their economic independence. As this takes time, young men marry later than before (after reaching 22-25 according to the male youth)."

⁸ Notably Adado, Aze Debo'a, Gara Godo, Harresaw, Kormargefia, Oda Haro, Sirba, Somodo and Yetmen.

In addition to lack of land increasing costs of living and lack of resources more generally were mentioned in some sites, notably in SNNP (Adado, Gara Godo). In other sites unemployment and lack of jobs, resulting in men being dependent on their families and unable to marry, was also mentioned (Sirba).

In Aze Debo'a a new trend was for increasing numbers of men still not married in their 20s to decide to get married and live in a separate house but use parental land and delay having a first child. In Somodo one change appeared to be that unlike in the past, young couples strived to, and were expected to establish an independent household immediately, or as soon as possible after being married. Some of the female youth found this better as it meant that the young couple was not subject to interference by the husband's parents.

Concerns about marrying without having an economic base and the risks that this may lead to an early divorce were expressed by youth and officials in a number of sites. In Sirba several respondents noted that a danger of getting married too early was that the new couple would not be able to support their household and they might suffer as a result. In Kormargefia a 19 year-old young man said he believed that getting married and establishing a new household before having saved enough to maintain it would result in divorce. A wereda official in Somodo argued for the need for parental guidance to avoid girls getting married unwisely to a man without a secure livelihood:

"If a man who has nothing to establish an independent livelihood wants to marry a young woman it is better if she first discusses the case with her parents before she agrees. Because if her parents notice the man's economic status they can tell her that she will face difficulty to establish an independent livelihood, she might then reject the man's offer and be saved from the divorce which could result from the economic problems that they would face".

Continued early marriage

Although in most sites there was a belief and some evidence that early marriage was declining,⁹ there were also widespread suggestions in many sites that early marriage does still continue to some extent. In Oda Dawata cases as young as 15 years old were mentioned by the young girls interviewed and there seemed not to be any punishment enforced for parents who pushed their children to marry young.

However, early marriage was also often initiated by the younger generation, with young women and men making their own decisions to get married among older teenagers. In Adado some young partners would agree in secret sometimes going to other places. In Somodo a middle wealth farmer's wife recalled the case of his own family where his daughter decided to get married without consulting her parents.

"The community knows... but still some young girls get married early. For instance, my eldest daughter got married in 2003 EC by dropping out from grade 8 when she was 17 years old. She did not consult us and moved away with the man out of her own interest. What could we do? After this, we followed the usual procedure and prepared a marriage ceremony. There are other similar cases".

In Sirba one woman even questioned the appropriateness of the concept of underage marriage.

"Underage marriage still occurs since many people still believe that 16-year-olds are old enough to get married. Indeed, the successful female household head said that underage marriage is not possible since girls only get married when they are considered old enough to do so. In many cases this might be at 16 or 17".

Some evidence of increase in early marriage?

⁹ For discussions of the national and regional changes and trends see Bevan 2011, Boyden *et al.* 2013 and Pankhurst *et al.* 2016.

Despite a general sense that early marriage is declining, in three sites there was even the suggestion by some that early marriage was increasing. In Adele Keke, whereas the age of marriage was customarily from 17 years onwards, some now got married at 15 or 16, and elders said girls grow faster and mature earlier since they were eating better, and became sexually active earlier, and young men were marrying from 18 to 20 years instead of 20 to 22. In Aze Debo'a one parent argued that the decrease in the age of marriage was due to opportunities that youth now had for 'unsupervised contact' in schools, markets, churches, ceremonies etc.

"In the former time, unmarried girls were not allowed to go to markets and funeral ceremonies whether the place was in walking distance or far away. Moreover, there was no unsupervised contact between adolescents except when they presented "Zararut" (a flower) to their neighbours during Masaala and when they collected firewood. Currently, there are many occasions for both sexes to be together and meet openly such as at market places, schools, youth meetings, funeral and mourning ceremonies, spiritual conferences and Sunday church programmes in the neighbourhood or in distant places".

In Luqa youngsters who wished to marry would elope and send elders for reconciliation to which the parents had to agree. kebele officials noted a contradiction with the government "opposing itself" since it allowed couple to "exercise their democratic right to make their own choices to marry" but did not allow them to marry under the age of 18; one man complained that two of his daughters had married at the age of 16, "violating the government attempt to stop early marriage". However, some suggested there was community resistance to the attempt to ban early marriage as they felt adolescent girls were mature enough to get married.

Interventions to stop early marriage

The incoming ideologies based on international notions of raising the age of marriage to 18 were implemented following the promulgation of the Family Code introduced in 2001 and the Criminal Code with severe penalties added in 2005, which criminalised child marriage and abduction. Interventions to try to stop early marriage range from awareness training and teaching in schools, through medical checks of girls to ascertain their age before marriage, to taking parents and elders involved in marriage negotiations to court and even imprisonment. Interventions have generally been coordinated by the wereda office of women and children affairs involving kebele women's and children's representatives, schools and in some cases HEWs. If legal action was decided this could involve the police and the courts. The extent of the interventions depended on a number of factors including regional policy and directives, the perceived seriousness of the problem in the region and the area, and the time of the research.

In all sites there were some awareness raising meetings or trainings carried out by the wereda office of women and children's affairs. Often campaigns were carried out with schools. For instance in Sirba these involved girls' clubs, virgins' clubs and HIV/AIDS clubs set up in schools. Likewise, in Somodo in each school there was a girls' club that played a role along with teachers in preventing early marriages in coordination with the women's affairs and the law.

"Students get educations and prepare drama and music about harmful traditional practices including underage marriage. In this way students are well aware of the bad consequences of underage marriage, and whenever they suspect a case of underage marriage they report to their teacher. The teacher reports to wereda education office which in turn reports to the wereda children and women affairs office for follow-up. The police, women and child affairs' officers and public prosecutors work in collaboration to follow-up suspected or reported cases and take action".

HEWs were involved in a few sites (Adele Keke, Aze Debo'a, Do'oma). In Aze Debo'a the HEWs focused on teaching about the risks of giving birth before the age of 18.

In almost all sites interventions were carried out by the government. However, in two sites, Gelcha and Somodo, NGOs reportedly were also involved. In Gelcha NGOs provided training about early

marriage alongside other HTPs. In Somodo Plan International collaborated with the Women's affairs office in six kebeles in the wereda (though not Somodo itself) providing education about the negative consequences of early marriage; they also set up a mechanism for the community itself to punish those who practiced underage marriage. In Gara Godo the issue was introduced in public conferences as "a serious crime", and this was the only site where the wereda planned to use customary organisations in this campaign on the grounds that they are involved and are trusted by the community.

Comparing the extent of interventions across regions, the issue of early marriage has been considered more of a priority in Amhara region where it was more prevalent. In Oromia abduction and to some extent FGM/C, which was also a major concern in SNNP, were the Harmful Traditional Practices that were prioritized. In Girar in SNNP, following the regional Family Code in 2006, there was less of a focus on early marriage per se than on the law allowing choice of partner. In Tigray the issue was thought by wereda officials to have been resolved in Geblen. However, in Harresaw the wereda suggested it was still a problem particularly in areas bordering Afar, and it was raised in Women's Association meetings alongside other problems such as migration and maternal health. Early marriage was seen as related to other problems girls face, to be addressed as part of other measures to empower girls such as tutorials and affirmative action in employment.

Within Amhara the intensity of the focus varied, with more attention to the issue in Yetmen (in Gojjam) and Shumsheha (in Lasta) than in Dinki and Kormargefia (both in Northern Shewa), where the problem was not considered as serious as in other parts of Amhara and consequently interventions were limited. However, within Northern Shewa there were more interventions in Kormargefia than Dinki which might be partly due to the former being close to the town of Debre Berhan and the latter more remote, but also since the research was carried out in 2010 in Dinki and in 2013 in Kormargefia, by when the campaign was more advanced. In three of the Amhara sites and in one Tigray site there was mention of the practice of medical checks to ascertain girls' ages in hospitals.

In practice in most sites interventions have been limited to awareness raising, and legal measures were only taken in six sites: three in Oromia, two in Amhara and one in Tigray. Reasons for limited action were often related to the wereda not wanting to create conflicts. For instance in Gelcha it was reported that the government had not taken serious actions against offenders since they were reluctant to enforce the rules and laws for fear of conflicts. In Aze Debo'a it was mentioned that once the couple were married there was not much that could be done, and in Adele Keke respondents said it was difficult to go against the girls' wishes if they wanted to marry.

In two of the Oromia sites, instances of court cases were reported. Near Somodo in Yebu, the case of a girl for whom a marriage celebration was being prepared was reported by one of her friends to the women affairs' office which managed to stop it. In another case in one rural kebele, in 2013 a teacher brought a young girl who was about to be married to the women's affairs office and the plans were cancelled. In Oda Dawata the wereda women's and children affairs office coordinated with schools, health office, police and kebele. The office had seven members each following up on three kebeles. However, last year only one case came to the office and was referred to the court, "as people do not inform the office when marriages are arranged". In Korodegaga a girl who learned that her parents had made an agreement with the parents of a potential husband, told the school director who informed the wereda police. The police warned her family not to force her to marry and the marriage was cancelled. However, later she agreed and married the proposed groom.

In Amhara and Tigray measures included taking parents to court, checking girls' ages in hospital, and punishing elders involved in marriage negotiations. In Harresaw the wereda officials said that they can impose fines of up to 800 birr and in theory six months' imprisonment for parents. Moreover, if the Tabia officials suspect a case they can demand that the girl's age was checked in Mekele; this had apparently happened in the wereda though not in Harresaw. However, there was a report of

one young girl who told her teacher when her mother wanted to force her to marry. Her mother was stopped from doing so, and she continued with her education and wanted to go to university.

In Kormargefia there was a recent case of a 13 year-old girl whose mother was sent to prison for a year and her father for three years; however, there were also allegations of problems of corruption and fear of appearing in court as an eyewitness. An elder said that the first thing he would do if asked to broker a marriage was to find out whether both have been tested for HIV/AIDS and whether the girl had been medically examined to verify her age, as this was a requirement. He added that in community discussions it was agreed that both parents and elders would be punished if the girl was underage.

Box 3: Early marriage prevention in Shumsheha

When the girl is found to be underage the kebele sends a letter to the justice office to get a letter of permission to stop the wedding. Rumours of underage marriages are reported to the children's committee (established in 2007/8 with 20 members (1 male) who meet every month); a council member and a teacher will go to the girl's house to talk with the parents and according to the gravity of the case, there are measures from police arrest to advocacy.

The Kebele began to require seeing the girl who was to be married and as some families sent older sisters, a system of requiring photographs of brides to be and a stamp on the girl's hand was instituted.

The kebele chairman said that the gender issues and youth affairs office is now working with the kebele to identify underage marriages. The kebele get the community to bring their daughter's photograph to identify who is ready to get marry and they put a stamp on the hand of the girl to identify that she has passed the criteria. This trial is becoming successful and the number of female students who want to check their age is increasing.

Shumsheha was the site where the most stringent interventions were imposed. The process was explained as follows in the community report (Carter 2013):

The wereda reported that a number of cases were identified each year and some were successfully prevented.

There were four reports of suspected underage marriage in 2010/11 and normally six cases a year are stopped by the authorities. Two cases where the marriages were stopped are: a 14 year old girl was supposed to marry and on the eve of the ceremonies with all the food and drinks prepared, the police and the teachers prohibited the family from holding the ceremony. Currently she is an 8th grade student. A 14 year old teenage girl, a 4th grade student, was supposed to be married off by her parents (particularly by her father) but her marriage was cancelled after the investigation by the teachers and student committee. There are also some other cases that are not successful in being controlled, and as a result the girls dropped out of school.

In another case a girl managed to stop her marriage with the help of teachers on the eve of the wedding

A 47 year old illiterate poor man (the peace and security affairs administrator) prepared a very small wedding feast ceremony to marry off his 14 year old daughter in 2010/11 because she couldn't live with her stepmother fairly and the family could not be in peace with their quarrelling every day and night, and because as he is poor he cannot manage the family with his income. He reported to the authorities that his daughter was above 18 but did not send her for the age examination. However, as the girl was a student she reported to the school through her friends by saying that her age is not 18 and she didn't want to get married. Then the school committee went to his home on the eve of the wedding and stopped the arrangement. Now the girl is living with relatives and attending grade four.

In some cases an age screening process in Lalibela hospital was apparently instituted although this was often not considered reliable and led to a lot of resentment. The process was described as follows:

In an attempt to stop underage marriages, girls now have to take an age examination at the hospital: the kebele sends an authentication document to the wereda and the wereda passes the case to the hospital for the medical age examination. The hospital examines the girl by checking her physical appearance and sends a recommendation letter to the wereda and kebele office. However, they may get the age wrong based on physical appearance, and doctors may wrongly decide they were underage by looking to see if her breasts are too small, if she is thin, or small.

The following three stories illustrate some of the potentially comic and tragic consequences of this practice.

A rich man in his 30s said that his female relative was going to get married last year so she went to Lalibela for age inspection, but the doctors decided she was under marriage age; he said the decision was laughable as the girl had sexual affairs, and had already willingly lost her virginity to the would-be spouse

In a neighbouring kebele called Nekutoleab, a mother went to a hospital with her daughter to verify the accuracy of the physical examination. Both of them were examined by the assessor and surprisingly the mother failed the examination and her daughter passed. Hence, the mother told the examiner by showing her breasts and said, "I am the mother of the lucky girl who has successfully passed for the age of legal marriage".

A mother sent her daughter to a hospital with her uncle to examine her age for the purpose of legal marriage. However, she was found to be raped by her own uncle and became pregnant and unofficially HIV positive. Consequently, when her mother found out the case she died of a heart attack. The fugitive is nowhere to be found. The victim is currently living with her stepfather, as her biological father passed away many years ago.

Resistance to the ban on underage marriage

A number of strategies of avoiding the ban on underage marriage were reported. In some sites officials suggested that people agreed with the ban in public but continued to practice early marriage in secret (Gelcha, Kormargefia, Dinki). In Shumsheha a 17 year old girl from a poor family said:

"The law protects girls but it is not working because the community tradition is dominant, and in meetings or awareness creation programmes each farmer seems very welcoming to the entire government programme but in practice they contradict or deny it".

In several sites parents, sometimes having persuaded their daughters or in collusion with them, would lie about their daughters' age claiming they were older (Dinki, Harresaw, Kormargefia). In Shumsheha some families would hold the wedding under the guise of a death ceremony or a religious mahiber ceremony. In Adele Keke the girls would try to appear older than 17. In Gelcha households may organise the weddings during the rainy season school break to avoid interference from teachers, and two cases were reported from the previous rainy season.

When medical tests were imposed in Shumsheha some families apparently sent older daughters or other older female relatives for tests when they were planning to marry off their 13-17 year old daughters. This led the kebele to insist on photographs and stamping the girl's arm. In some cases people resented what they saw as government interference. As one wereda court expert mentioned: "when the wereda gives education to the community, the community says 'what the hell has the government got to do with our children'". In Adado there were allegations that police investigating the case sometimes received bribes and that the courts may not take cases seriously. One respondent said: "They make the evidence incomplete or put together wrong evidence. They

hide the right information by making an agreement with the family". The same respondent also suggested that the courts may not take cases seriously: "The attorney also sometimes does not interpret the law in the right way. They sentence a guilty person with eight or ten years of imprisonment while the law foresees a longer imprisonment time". Moreover, if the girl and her parents agree there may be little the courts can do. "There is also a problem that arises from the girl's family. They cheat the court by increasing the girl's age. When a girl also cheats on her age, then the office does no longer have a basis for the case and it gets dismissed".

In some cases respondents argued that imprisonment was not an answer and may even harm the girl, which is why community members do not report underage marriages. In Adado a woman leader said: "There is nothing to be done after marriage. If the case is taken to court and the husband is taken to prison, there will be no one to marry the girl. For these reasons the community does not report underage marriages."

Moreover, in some sites young couples chose to elope and go elsewhere and then return to negotiate with their parents. In Yetmen people sought ways of adapting to the ban while keeping to the tradition of arranged marriages. Some families apparently still entered an agreement while their children were young so that their offspring would get married but now waited till the girl was 18. In Shumsheha some argued that the ban had a negative effect on girls who were unable to find marriage partners as men cannot marry early due to lack of land. A poor young man in his 30s suggested that the number of young females living alone has greatly increased "as their marriage age passed, because no one would want to marry them once they lost their virginity and had multiple sex partners".

Choice of marriage partner

Although much of the policy discourse and concern centres around age of marriage, arguably a more fundamental question is the decision-making around choice of marriage partner, and the fact that arranged marriages were often enforced without the consent of the girl. The customary repertoire everywhere expected parents to arrange marriages, in some cases with the groom more aware of the plans or asking his parents to send elders to a prospective bride's family, often without her knowing about it.

Reliance on parental support for brideprice in cultures where that was expected, however, does constrain a young man's choice. In Sirba several young male respondents said that they expected to be able to decide who they marry with relatively little input from their parents, though the parents were more likely to have a say when the children needed their parents' help to get married and establish a household. The middle wealth 16-year-old expects his parents to decide whom he should marry, as they had already guided his older brothers who were already married. In Kormargefia, although a few young men said that they intended to choose their wife alone, most accepted some role for their parents in choosing their wives. The middle wealth 19-year-old said he was willing to marry whomever his parents chose for him. In Aze Debo'a boys recently needed parental support even more since the brideprice had gone up with migrants from abroad particularly South Africa offering higher prices. The young men could only avoid this with the girls' consent and eloping.

There has also been a change with many girls more involved in the process, although they had less room for manoeuvre than boys, and some were still pressurised into early marriage. There seems to be evidence that arranged marriages without the knowledge of the girl and without at least asking for her consent was declining, although girls may come under a lot of pressure to assent. In Dinki it was said that "most girls do not reject parents' suggestions as it remains their second home". In Kormargefia girls increasingly had a say on who they married. "Elders bringing marriage proposals now give the parents a chance to consult their daughter before giving a response and the girl may also be able to refuse their parents' choice. Nonetheless, a friend of one of the respondents was forced by her parents to get married at the age of 16." Likewise in Yetmen most girls' marriages were initiated by parents but depended on the consent of the youth and there was a tendency for

the couple to get to know each other before the wedding. However, there were still some girls who were married to a man they had never met. In some sites girls may face strong pressure from parents to comply. In Do'oma, it was reported that some parents might refuse to cover their daughter's schooling as a punishment if she ignored their marriage partner choice. To counter this girls sought to have an independent income and some covered their schooling expenses themselves through trading.

The increasing trend of young men and women deciding on marriage through mutual consent was said to be relatively new and to be more common among educated youth (Geblen, Yetmen). In Turufe this trend of the couple agreeing to get married without parental consent was referred to as Hewata. In Gara Godo some couples made the decision on their own but still asked for parental consent. "A rich woman said she had a daughter married this year at age of 18. The couple arranged the marriage by their own will and then sent elder people to the bride's family for confirmation. Though the family recognised their engagement, the couple married without any ceremony before the day fixed for the wedding." The Protestant churches have had a role in giving the youth more say in deciding on their marriage partners. In Oda Dawata girls now had a greater right to choose their husbands though parents could influence and organize wedding. However, in practice girls tended to be chosen by boys, and parents would intervene only if their wealth status did not match.

In Somodo a wereda woman's affairs officer suggested that in the last four years, parental influence on their children's choice of a marriage partner was highly reduced. Young men chose their marriage partner, but although young women had the same right, usually young women did not speak out about this due to cultural influence. However, the officer argued that "some form of parental influence is important, because the youth may not consider possible future problems when they rush to marry".

Work transitions

Young People's transitions to work can be understood in terms of opportunities for them to establish home-related work careers, income generating activities and gaining economic independence. Home related activities refer to their domestic work responsibilities. Income generating activities including either jobs or own business initiatives, were means by which young people started to engage in work to earn their own livings. Young men's opportunities for economic independence were related to their access to land, start-up capital and education. Women often gained economic independence through marriage which entitled them to co-own farmland if their husbands had any. The primary policy response to improve the livelihood of young people in the study areas was the establishment of youth cooperatives, albeit with fairly limited success considering the enormous need and challenges. However, there was also a new initiative reported in 2013 referred to locally as "creating rural job opportunities" to provide loans to small groups of youth who were able to save twenty percent of the capital needed, although some young women were unable to join due to this requirement (Somodo).

Establishing home-related work careers

Home-related work careers involved learning skills mainly by young women relating to domestic and reproductive work for the household both inside and outside the house. The customary division of labour generally assigned most domestic and reproductive work to girls and women. Often girls from poorer households had greater responsibilities notably for care work (see chapter on inequalities). In a number of drought prone sites girls had to walk long distances often for over an hour to fetch water, which was sometimes exacerbated by drought (notably in Geblen). Domestic work for girls often required them to work after school and at the weekends, and caring for siblings sometimes meant girls were late for school (e.g. in Adele Keke). Girls were involved within the house in a wide range of domestic work including cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and child care, as well as outside the house collecting wood and fetching water, going to the grinding mill and to market. In most sites they were also involved in work on family farms, notably during weeding and harvesting,

in some sites looking after cattle, and in many sites in trading and family businesses, sometimes making and selling drinks with their mothers. The expansion of grinding mills was mentioned as reducing the need for girls and young women to spend time grinding grain manually at home.

There was evidence of certain minor changes in the sexual division of labour notably in the food secure sites. Some boys were engaged in outdoor activities customarily carried out mainly by girls such as collecting wood and fetching water (Oda Dawata, Sirba, Somodo, Kormargefia) taking grain to the mill and shopping (Sirba). Boys' involvement in indoor activities was less common unless they did not have sisters of the right age, although there were cases of boys washing clothes, cleaning the house and cooking (Sirba, Oda Dawata), and even assisting mothers with making areqe (Oda Dawata) (see chapter on women's economic participation)

Income generating work strategies and productive roles

In addition to household work for the family, boys and girls in many sites were increasingly involved, mainly from their early teens, in income generating and older children and youth increasingly in employment. The evidence suggests that non-agricultural work options were becoming more significant, particularly in the sites with greater market integration and proximity to towns.

Small business activities carried out by young men, sometimes with assistance from their families, included trade in agricultural produce, notably grain (especially in Yetmen and Do'oma), livestock (particularly in Aze Debo'a, Gelcha, Do'oma), coffee (Aze Debo'a, Somodo), chat (Adele Keke, Somodo), and production and sale of wood, straw and charcoal (Kormargefia, Girar). They were also involved in trade, including selling clothing (Aze Debo'a, Gelcha, Harresaw), medicines and insecticides and livestock drugs (Gelcha).

Some engaged in services providing transport with carts and motorbikes (Adado, Gara Godo, Yetmen, Aze Debo'a), working as drivers' assistants and loading and unloading goods (Yetmen), as brokers in selling agricultural produce (Turufe), in shoe-shining and renting table tennis tables or table football (Gara Godo).

In some cases enterprising young men with family support and/or access to capital were able to engage in more lucrative businesses such as setting up grinding mills or shops (Luqa) or teashops and cafeterias in containers (Girar). Young men from poorer households often had less opportunities to engage in business activities due to lack of capital and the need to work to support their families (see chapter on inequalities).

Employment opportunities for young men within sites were rare and often involved commuting or migration to towns. A few found work in government offices (Somodo, Turufe), or as teachers and DAs (e.g. Turufe). Some wage labour opportunities were related to road construction (for instance in Adele Keke and Sirba), water development (such as in Geblen and Adele Keke), factory construction (a beer factory in Kormargefia, a flour factory in Oda Dawata). However, it was more common for young men to find wage work in the informal sector such as loading and unloading from trucks (Yetmen, Sirba, Korodegaga) as drivers' assistants (e.g. in Yetmen), in house construction (as in Sirba). Often young men from poorer households were under greater pressure to engage in wage labour to earn income to support their families (see chapter on inequalities).



Boys playing table football in Garagodo

Business activities by young women were mainly in petty trade, particularly of grain, vegetables, fruits, livestock, especially poultry, in some sites coffee, and in many sites cooked food and alcoholic drinks (see chapter on women's economic participation). In a few sites young women were able to open businesses such as hairdressing (e.g. Turufe and Somodo). Girls from poorer households were often under greater pressure to generate income through petty trade, producing and selling alcoholic drinks and engaging in wage labour to support their families (see chapters on inequalities and women's economic participation).

In the food insecure sites young women often were engaged in petty trade and animal rearing. In Aze Debo'a, young women seemed to be mostly involved in small-scale fruits and coffee trade as well as livestock rearing. The location of a new coffee washing plant in the kebele had also created employment opportunities for young women. In Do'oma, many girls and young women earned money through petty trade. In Gelcha, some young women had done relatively well in trade and livestock fattening. In Shumsheha, young women who lived in the town were becoming independent by selling tella and tea. Local beverages and petty trade were the major businesses in which girls became involved.

Employment opportunities for young women in the formal sector were less common, though in flower farms young women were preferred to young men (e.g. in Sirba), and many young women in one site worked in a coffee washing plant (Aze Debo'a). There were opportunities for young women to work in agricultural wage labour in some sites. For instance, in Harresaw girls could obtain 30 birr per day and women 50 birr in peak seasons. For many young women wage labour and employment opportunities was becoming more common and involved migrating to local or regional towns, large cities or abroad, generally to work as domestic workers or in the service sector notably in bars or in construction work (see chapter on migration). Occupational specialization of women potters was found in the Gurage site Girar, with some young women combining pottery with school and farming. In some sites, such as Turufe, girls earned income from hairdressing.

Gender and parental economic status affected young people's involvement in various non-farm economic activities. Poor young people were often unable to start their own business or trade because they lacked capital. Young men and women from relatively rich families had the advantage of reinvesting their profits in their business while the poor often had to support their families. In Oda Haro, for example, some young girls from poor households were expected to engage in income-generating activities at home such as producing alcoholic drinks (tella and areqe).

Diversification of activities was generally more meaningful for women and girls as well as youth and children from richer and middle families as compared to the poor. In Oda Dawata, "most of the poor young and adult men engage in wage labour in addition to their farm work at home in order to get by. Most young women and girls from poor households would also be expected to do wage labour and help with the making of local drinks for sale." In Sirba, "the flower farms tend to employ more women than men, while the Chinese road construction project hires more men than women."

Gaining economic independence

The ability of youth to manage the transition to economic independence was often related with their parents' economic status, and especially land holdings. Limited access to land for farm and even for non-farm activities was recurrently mentioned as a major challenge for young men in all sites.

Gaining access to land from parents was becoming more difficult with decreasing land holdings. With the pressure on land increasing, more and more parents were said to have become reluctant to transfer part of their farmland as was expected according to custom. This had led to increasing inter-generational tensions and sibling rivalries, as young men were no longer able to set up independent households as was culturally expected of them, and this sometimes led to delaying marriage and household formation, with many youth working for the parental household or migrating. Lack of access to land was more severe for young men from poor backgrounds, who

more often had to resort to sharecropping, wage labour or migration (see chapters on inequalities and migration).

Government redistributions during the Derg and in 1997 in Amhara and some distribution in Sirba in Oromia in the 1980s benefitted the previous generation. More recent redistributions were carried out only in very few sites to groups of youth, sometimes giving them access to communal grazing land for farming (Girar, Korodegaga, Somodo), forest development or hillside rehabilitation (Turufe, Luqa, Do'oma, Oda Haro). However, redistribution was resisted by the older generation in a number of sites (notably in Yetmen and Korodegaga). The problem of land shortage was blamed for causing migration, intra-family and community conflicts as well as delays in economic independence and marriage for young people in all of the sites.

Young women's access to land was mostly limited to the recent inclusion of wives' names in land certificates, which enabled women to have in theory equal share with their husbands but in practice only on divorce. Even then gender discrimination by elders involved in divorce settlements and sometimes even the kebele administration, compounded by the fact that, following customary virilocal post-marriage residence rules, women often moved to marry in their husband's community and did not have kin to support them or access to male labour to plough the land, meant that they often were unable to obtain or use a fair share of the land (see chapter on inequalities). There were rare instances of girls inheriting from their fathers. However, in Turufe a few women were part of the youth association that obtained land. In the two sites in Tigray there was a plan that, should redistribution take place, women and demobilized soldiers would be prioritized.

The inability of young men who had benefitted from some education to find jobs has led to a disillusionment with education (see chapter on education). There has been a concern expressed in many communities that young men who had been to school no longer wanted to engage in farming.¹⁰ Limited opportunities for youth locally also led to concerns about young men 'sitting idle' or becoming engaged in 'bad habits', including addiction to alcohol or chat, theft and/or violence.

For the few young people - and far more often men than women - who were able to continue with secondary school, education was an alternative means by which a few of those who were successful tried to attain economic independence (see chapter on education). However, since covering the costs of secondary or tertiary education often entailed continued parental support, it sometimes led to delayed economic independence and marriage. The problem was further compounded because many young men could not get jobs even after they finished school.

While men attained their independence by obtaining access to land or selling their labour, women's primary means of becoming independent from their parental household was through marriage, generally transferring their dependence to their husbands. However, as we have seen young women also participated in non-farm activities, petty trade, food and drink production and wage labour to earn income, but generally either under their natal or their husband's household unless they were divorced (see chapter on women's economic participation). The delay in the process of achieving economic independence negatively affected both young men's and young women's readiness for marriage and may have put further pressure on young women to accept propositions from older men.

Interventions to promote youth work transitions

Youth cooperatives were promoted in 14 sites. They were set up for a range of activities including farming (Korodegaga, Girar, Turufe), often involving irrigation (Korodegaga, Turufe, Gelcha, Somodo, Kormargefia), loading and unloading agricultural produce (Korodegaga), livestock fattening and trade (Luqa, Girar), sand and stone crushing (Korodegaga, Shumsheha, Oda Dawata, Sirba, Somodo), forest and hillside conservation and development (Turufe, Do'oma, Oda Haro), incense production (Luqa),

¹⁰ See Yisak Tafere and Tasew Woldehanna 2012.

and honey production (Shumsheha). Furthermore, in a few sites co-operatives were set up in the local towns for teashops and cafeterias, handicrafts and metalwork and woodwork (Girar), and for shops, trading and house construction (Geblen).

However, in several sites the cooperatives were not very active or disbanded, or the land they were allocated was taken back by the kebele and allocated to investors (Korodegaga, Somodo). There were tensions in some sites between the youth wanting to obtain communal land for farming and the older generation wishing to protect communal grazing land (Yetmen, Dinki, Geblen), and there was skepticism about youth cooperatives using land effectively (Yetmen). Many of the agricultural cooperatives were not successful and some shifted to other activities. For instance one cooperative in Girar moved from farming to livestock fattening. In Somodo many members abandoned the cooperative and some complained that they did not have enough capital to manage the work; the land was taken back by the kebele and partly given to investors and partly kept as communal grazing. However, some irrigation cooperatives, and others for sand and stone extraction and cobble stone production in small towns, where urban construction fuelled demand, fared better.

There were a whole range of problems associated with youth cooperatives, including issues to do with management, leadership, and competition from unlicensed individuals, market potential and integration, and the legacy of indebtedness. The government in some cases provided training, loans for equipment such as pumps and credit, though repayment of loans was often a problem, and lack or delay of repayments affected the potential to establish new cooperatives. In some sites there were complaints that the government was not helping youth to organize themselves in cooperatives (Adado).

Young women's involvement in youth cooperatives was minimal and some complained about not being included (Oda Dawata, Sirba, Somodo). In Luqa a multi-purpose service cooperative was established by the youth association which had 26 member of whom four were women, and a livestock trading youth cooperative with 24 members had two women. In Kormargefia a youth cooperative for irrigation had 42 members of whom four were women. There were no cooperatives exclusively for young women although some young women were involved in women's cooperatives sponsored by NGOs and were able to obtain credit (Gelcha), and a spinning cooperative was established mainly by young women in Yetmen. However, in general women's cooperatives were seen as catering for married or divorced women. Moreover, young women were often not able to become involved in the new schemes for rural youth opportunity creation, especially given the need to have savings to obtain loans. This suggests that younger unmarried women are a category who tend to benefit neither from economic interventions addressing the needs of youth nor from those targeting women (see chapter on women's economic participation).

Community transitions

In this section I consider young people's participation in social networks for which there are limited data and focus on youth involvement in community-initiated and government-initiated associations and religious organizations. The concept of local citizenship the final transition in the framework is difficult to interpret locally and is not addressed in this chapter, though other WIDE reports have considered the involvement of youth in local elections (Bevan et al. 2010).

Overall, there were limited data on young peoples' participation in informal social networks. There was clearly an increase in social interaction between teenage boys and girls in school and work environments, sometime resulting, as we have seen, in worries by the parental generation that this would lead to teenage sex with potentially negative consequences. Sometimes parents also worried about changes in youth behaviour such as girls wearing jeans and sneakers in Girar, and in several sites some young men becoming addicted to chat and alcohol. In a couple of sites in Eastern Oromia young men were involved in clan groups. In Korodegaga these sometimes acted as gangs. Overall, in most sites there was an increase in interaction with and influences from urban areas as a result of migration for secondary school and work (See chapters on education and on migration).

There was some evidence of young men joining community-initiated organisations, notably iqquub saving associations in a few sites, especially Adele Keke and Aze Debo'a, though participation was more common among those above the age of 30 and those earning better income. For instance in Aze Debo'a a rich young man in his mid-20s did not have land, but participated in an iqquub of 22 members to which he contributed 103 birr per week. However, a poor young man in his late teens in the same site said he had been a member of an iqquub but had stopped participating as there was little benefit. Since iddir funeral associations are household-based, only youth that had married and established households became members, although young men would help at funerals, weddings, and work groups as noted in Do'oma.

Young men's involvement in community affairs was said to be limited partly since landless youth had less interest in community activities, such as conservation work on land of farmers, and since decision-making involved household heads. This was partly since many did not have access to land and were not paying taxes. In Gara Godo a young man of 25 said there was still a tradition that excluded teenagers from community decision-making processes "as they were considered to be [too] immature to be involved in public matters". However, views of older adults about youth participation varied even within the same site. For instance in Kormargefia some claimed that youth were fairly active in meetings voicing their opinions, joining the militia and public works. However, others claimed youth were disinterested in community affairs, or suggested "they were ignored by the kebele as they were ignorant". However, in many sites older adults felt the youth were not much involved. A successful farmer in Oda Haro said: "Young men rarely participate in kebele affairs, but when they do they are respected". In some sites such as in Oda Dawata respondents blamed the kebele for not involving the youth more.

Nonetheless, some young men were involved in kebele leadership and development committees, and others in public works and volunteer work, such as repairing roads and cleaning springs, and a few joined the militia. For instance in Shumsheha one older man said that "young people participate in committees, village savings associations, beekeeping cooperatives and public meetings more than in my time". In Sirba the youth were influential in getting the primary school expanded to grades 9 and 10, while an iddir mobilised resources and the kebele invested in communal resources. In Do'oma young men cooperated in community-initiated activities such as house construction, work parties, helping at funerals and weddings, but most were not interested in political engagement, although some tried to claim rights to land, obtain credit etc. A poor man aged 33 said he participated in all community activities except elders' and kebele meetings. It seems that the involvement of young men in activities organized by the kebele was greater in the stage 2 sites which are dependent on aid and where public works were a more common requirement than in the stage 3 sites with more independent economies.

Young women's involvement was further constrained by their domestic roles, looking after babies, gender discrimination and lack of interest and encouragement, although there have been some changes. In Do'oma a rich woman aged 30 said "when I was an adolescent, girls were not free to attend church programmes because they feared male attacks, but now they attend services regularly". Likewise, in Gara Godo a rich woman aged 30 said "when I was young unmarried girls were not allowed to participate in wedding or burial ceremonies but that has changed". However, participation of adolescents in politics was still limited. In Shumsheha, while a 17 year old woman said that adolescent girls' participation in the community had increased, a woman of 22 said she did not see much change in political participation. More generally, though there was signs of improvement in women's economic empowerment, their involvement in political affairs remained fairly limited (see chapter on women's economic participation).

Married young women sometimes were not confident in their new roles, and many married women tended to defer to their husbands in relations with the kebele. In Aze Debo'a a woman in her mid-20s from a middle-wealth household said that "since I am a woman and newly married I have no role in any cooperative or government intervention". Likewise, in Harresaw two women in their 20s both

said that they did not have any community role since they were not yet well established as wives in their own households. However, they both participated in mandatory labour work and paid membership fees of the women's association. Similarly, in Shumsheha young women contributed labour and cash to community campaigns.

Nonetheless, a few young women had positions or jobs as health promoters, HEWs, vets, DAs or teachers, and as representatives in the kebele for women's affairs and sometimes other positions. For instance, in Aze Debo'a the kebele secretary was a young woman with a diploma who seems to be fairly influential in kebele affairs. In Harresaw a woman who completed grade 10 had been a health promoter and became a pre-school teacher.

Youth involvement in formal associations

The participation of the youth in government-initiated formal associations was fairly limited. Distinctions between the three youth organisations: Youth Associations, Leagues and Federations were sometimes unclear with overlapping leaderships. Many respondents, even some among the leadership, were unable to clarify the distinctions. Youth Associations have been around longer but many youth did not participate, and Leagues and Federations were more recent and had a more political role, and only members of the EPRDF were supposed to be League members. The Leagues often had closer links with the weredas which provided them with Party newspapers to organize political education and discussions for members. In Shumsheha the Federation did not have a separate leadership but coordinated activities of the Association and League.

The size of youth organisation membership varied considerably; in a few sites these were not active or even non-existent, and reporting of numbers of active members was sometimes inconsistent among different respondents.¹¹ Membership in Youth Associations varied with the highest number of 750 in Yetmen; in several sites there were between 100 and 300 (290 in Harresaw, 264 in Aze Debo'a, 250 in Gara Godo, 185 in Geblen, 150 in Shumsheha). There were under 100 members in several other sites (97 in Do'oma, 65 in Luqa, and 28 in Girar). Where figures were provided for League membership these were much lower (a maximum of 149 in Shumsheha, 50 in Harresaw, 40 in Gelcha, and 34 in Aze Debo'a). Federation numbers were only mentioned in a couple of sites and were far smaller (30 in Gelcha and 5 in Gara Godo).

Many youth were disillusioned with the formal organisations for hardly providing any economic opportunities. Youth Associations were constrained by lack of credit, training and limited support from weredas. In Shumsheha the Association which had 151 members was dissolved in 2011; the leader said that they could not achieve anything since they had no budget.

Young women's involvement in formal youth organisations was very limited, and they were far outnumbered by young men and under-represented in leadership positions. For most sites gender breakdowns were not available, and where they were it is clear that there were far less women. In Gara Godo youth association there were said to be 150 men and 100 women, and in Luqa 55 men and 10 women. The Youth League in Shumsheha had 110 men and 39 women, the one in Gelcha had 30 men and two women and the one in Aze Debo'a 27 men and seven women. Youth leagues in Gelcha had 18 men and 12 women and in Gara Godo four men and one woman. In some sites young women preferred to join women's associations that were more active and had better resources, though often women's associations involved predominantly if not exclusively married women. In Harresaw woreda officials suggested that young women shifted from the youth association to the women's association "as the latter was stronger and got more resources for training, credit etc."

¹¹For example, in Gara Godo, different Kebele sources gave different number of participants in the youth Association: 62 (52 males and 10 females), 250 (150 male and 100 females) and 60 (45 male and 15 females). Similarly in Luqa, the Youth Association was said by one respondent to have 65 members of whom 55 were male and 10 female, while another mentioned 50 members of whom 8 were female, and added that they did not meet regularly.

Youth involvement in religion

In contrast to limited involvement in associations, youth were more engaged in religious activities. This was particularly the case in the sites in the south where Protestant churches were very active and replacing traditional religious beliefs, and in some sites the younger generation became converts. For instance in Gara Godo, it had become more acceptable for young men and women to abandon customary religion and join Protestant Churches. In some sites where conversion to Protestantism was taking place there were tensions. For instance in Turufe some young people had been attracted to Protestantism creating tension in Oromo Muslim families. The trend worried Muslim leaders so much that they asked Protestant leaders to hold talks to which the latter refused.

Young people were involved in leadership positions in churches, and teen participation in church activities was often encouraged. In Gara Godo a young man of 25 said: "Families prefer teen involvement in religious affairs to other recreation as it leads to better behaviour". Similarly in Aze Debo'a and Do'oma young men were actively involved in church affairs and attended regularly. Young migrants also sent money for church buildings, for instance for the construction of a bigger hall and purchasing musical instruments in Aze Debo'a, and for a generator in Harresaw.

Though the trend of youth involvement in religion was strongest in the Southern sites with Protestant majorities, there was also some evidence in the Orthodox Christian and to a lesser extent the Muslim sites. In Shumsheha in Amhara both boys and girls were said to be more involved in attending church on Sundays and saints' days than they used to be, and some said more so than older adults. In Gelcha in Oromia, youth involvement in Muslim religious activities was said to have increased. In Adele Kele contributions for the construction of a mosque was said to be greater from younger members of households. However, a rich woman said that it was "more the older people who were involved in religious affairs" and a poor man said that "while most young men are involved, some are not involved as they have been influenced by modern values".

Young women's involvement in religion was less visible, apart from in some of the Protestant sites such as Aze Debo'a and Do'oma. In the former, young women were said to play an active role in church activities. In the latter it was said that young women in the past feared the possibility of violence and abduction on the way to churches which were far away, but that now they attended regularly; a girl aged 17 said girls were also interested in going to church. In the Orthodox Christian sites young women began to participate in mahiber once married. However, some young women in Shumsheha suggested that young women's participation in religion had not changed. In Harresaw a teenage girl from a rich family explained that teenagers participate in the community festivities and in religious activities. But the middle wealth teenager disagreed and said that "there are some young men who participate in community and religious activities; but most do not have active participation". In the Muslim sites, however, young women like older women were much less involved in public religious activities. The only mention was in Adele Keke of one woman age 31 who said she participated in labour to build a religious school.

Conclusions and policy considerations

In this chapter I have made use of Bevan's framework on youth transitions involving 15 gendered transitions divided into six personal, three family, three work and three community transitions, with the focus mainly on transitions that have been subject to interventions. Transitions to adulthood for girls tend to happen earlier than for boys and certain youth transitions, such as circumcision and child marriage, are subject to considerable cultural variation in the timing and procedures involved.

Youth tend to be thought of as young men, and less attention was given to young women except about early marriage. This would suggest that there is a need for more promotion of young women's productive roles, young men's reproductive roles, and enabling couples to establish independent livelihoods. Furthermore, interventions to improve youth transitions need to address not just productive and reproductive issues facing the youth but also cultural values.

Interventions affecting girls' transitions have focused on child marriage and stopping FGM/C. There has been a tendency to impose the bans rather than understanding the rationales, convincing people of the need for change, and avoiding the potential risks arising from imposing change. WIDE data show that there has been resistance in many communities from parents and adolescents. Some early marriages continue to take place in most communities and ways of avoiding the ban are commonplace. Female circumcision continues to be practiced secretly in some communities, potentially becoming more dangerous. A mix of interventions seems to be more successful, involving a range of stakeholders and integrating approaches including community and customary leaders, parents, schools, HEWs, and especially girls as well as boys.

Interventions on ending child marriage have tended to focus on raising the legal age of marriage; however, there are clear differences between pre-teen, early-teen marriage and mid-teen marriage prior to the legal age especially with regard to the degree of parental imposition of marriage, with younger teenagers more vulnerable, while teenagers above the legal age may face similar problems as those underage. A more important consideration is the question of girls' agency, and interventions should focus more on consent to avoid forced marriages, and promoting birth registration which can eventually resolve ambiguities about girls' ages.

There have been initiatives to introduce sex education and separate girls' toilets in schools and in some sites to provide them with sanitary materials, which should be further promoted. However, there has been less attention to broader reproductive health issues facing adolescent girls and boys. Adolescent girls' nutritional needs, separate toilets and sanitary materials, and sex education through schools and parents, should build on examples of good practice.

Older adolescent girls who are sexually active face problems accessing contraception, often leading to unsafe abortions in cases of pregnancy. Regarding abortion the 2004 Criminal Code (FDRE, 2005) permits abortion in a number of circumstances, including for minors who are physically or psychologically unprepared to raise a child. This legislation should be made better known and appropriate provisions made available.

Teenage girls having children often face denial of paternity by the father or unwillingness to provide support, and may face ostracism from their families and difficulties raising their child. Support for teenage mothers, particularly with child care to enable them to work or study, should be considered. Encouraging married teenagers and mothers to return to school despite the stigma should be promoted as noted in the chapter on education.

Given that some older teenagers choose to get married when they do not have preferable options, special dispensations for 16-17 years olds allow them to get married, as happens in a number of western countries, could be envisaged with oversight by appropriate institutions. In fact the Revised Family Code of 2000 does allow for such possibilities with oversight by the Ministry of Justice, although this is not well known,¹² and this provision should be publicized.

In enforcing the law, abduction should be distinguished from 'voluntary abduction' or 'consensual marriage', which is sometimes a way for young couples to make their own choices and avoid parentally imposed marriages or escape family problems such as abusive step-parents, and the costs of customary marriage payments.

The key issues facing adolescent girls go beyond FGC, child marriage and reproductive health and have more to do with education, training, employment, enterprise, and migration. Girls' education has been promoted largely in primary education, with some support in secondary education.

¹² Chapter 1, article 7.2 states: 'the Minister of Justice may, on the application of the future spouses, or the parents or guardian of one of them, for serious cause, grant dispensation of not more than two years' (FDRE, 2000).

However, there has been limited attention to options for training, skills development and employment schemes for older adolescent girls as alternatives to early marriage. More broadly, options for young women's productive roles should be given more attention, including access to credit, their greater involvement in both youth and women's cooperatives from which they tend to be excluded, and promotion of their involvement in business and enterprise.

Youth work transitions are affected by limited land access and un(der)employment. However, in practice youth are involved in a wide range of income-generating activities. Non-agricultural youth cooperatives have been more successful than agricultural ones, and many youth cooperatives have faced problems of credit, training, leadership, management and competition. Learning from best practices and success cases, especially in the non-agricultural cooperatives, could be built into improving the design of cooperative expansion.

Youth community transitions are constrained due to control of resources by the older generation and limited opportunities for employment and income generation. Youth organisations have focused on political mobilisation with limited promotion of economic opportunities, often leading to disenchantment among the youth, who in some sites have become more involved in religion and less in community affairs.

Young women's involvement in youth cooperatives, associations and community affairs was constrained by gender norms and lack of promotion. Young women often find themselves excluded from both youth cooperatives, controlled and dominated by young men, and women's cooperatives often for and managed by married women. Greater involvement of younger women in both youth and women's associations and cooperatives should be prioritised.

As mentioned in several other chapters, Micro and Small Scale Enterprises could be expanded through small towns and kebele centres to rural areas, and individual and group entrepreneurship of young men and young women, where there were already signs of considerable enterprise, should be promoted. More generally, greater involvement of youth groups in economic activities, and support to young women's participation, could enhance the role of youth in community affairs and facilitate their successful transitions to adulthood.

Annex Tables

Table 1: The passage to adulthood in rural Ethiopia: transitions and boundary crossings

	<i>Transitions/milestones/boundary crossings</i>	<i>Female: potential ages of transition</i>	<i>Male: potential ages of transition</i>
<i>Personal (embodied) transitions</i>	<i>Puberty</i>	<i>10/11 to 15/17*</i>	<i>12/13 to 16/18*</i>
	<i>Identity formation - emotional & social maturity</i>	<i>17 up</i>	<i>19 up</i>
	<i>Circumcision</i>	<i>Amhara at birth; Oromo before marriage; some Southern groups about 9</i>	<i>Amhara at birth; others Don't Know</i>
	<i>Sexual initiation</i>	<i>13ish and up</i>	<i>Possibly 14ish and up</i>
	<i>School education (if any) completed</i>	<i>Probably before 30</i>	<i>Probably before 30</i>
	<i>Work skill learning completed</i>	<i>Domestic work – around 11</i>	<i>Agricultural work – around 14</i>
<i>Work-related transitions</i>	<i>Long-term productive work role(s) in place</i>		<i>14 up</i>
	<i>Long-term home-related work role in place</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
	<i>Economic independence from household of origin</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
<i>Family-related</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
	<i>Independent home and household</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>

	<i>Transitions/milestones/boundary crossings</i>	<i>Female: potential ages of transition</i>	<i>Male: potential ages of transition</i>
<i>transitions</i>	<i>Child(ren) - legitimate</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
<i>Community-related transitions</i>	<i>Adult social network participation</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
	<i>Organisational participation</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
	<i>National 'citizenship'</i>	<i>13 up</i>	<i>17 up</i>
<i>Community-related passage</i>	<i>To full adult status in the community</i>	<i>The 15 transitions completed</i>	

* 'typical ages' which may be affected by nutrition. Source: Bevan 2011.

Table 2: Interventions and youth transitions ("top down")

Broad area	Additional/details	Personal transitions	Work transitions	Family transitions	Community transitions
Health	Water sanitation, nutrition	Direct			
Education	Primary, secondary, TVET universities	Direct	Contributory	Contributory	
Agriculture	land access, extension advice, packages – seeds, fertiliser, credit	Contributory	Direct		
Other rural livelihoods	Food for Work, land access, credit	Direct	Direct		
Infrastructure	Roads, electricity, communications, <i>kebele</i> buildings	Contributory	Direct		
Ideas-related	Meetings, media, promote youth involvement in community affairs	Direct		Contributory	Contributory
Gender equity	HTPs	Direct	Contributory	Direct	Direct
Poverty reduction	Food aid, Safety net, FFW, health land access	Direct	Contributory	Contributory	Direct
Governance	Security, justice, <i>kebele</i> organisation, cooperatives, women's & youth organisations	Contributory	Contributory		Direct

Table 3: Transitions and interventions ("bottom up")

Type	No.	Transitions/milestones	Interventions	Who?	Where?	What?
Personal (embodied) transitions	1	Puberty (links to 4)	In schools for girls menstruation	MoE; NGOs; HEWs going to schools	Secondary and some primary schools	Provision of sanitary materials, separate toilets for girls
	2	Identity formation - emotional & social	Party and Youth movement involvement	Party cadres	All sites	Meetings and membership drives

Type	No.	Transitions/ milestones	Interventions	Who?	Where?	What?
Key transitions		maturity (links to 13 and 14)	Religious proselytising	Protestant and Orthodox and Islam	Orthodox North, Protestant South, Islam mainly 'East and West	Youth church groups, Behaviour change Protestant and Muslim no alcohol, Muslim women's clothing, prayer
	3	Circumcision (some links to 4 and 10)	Campaign to abolish female circumcision –	M/BoWCYA, HEP/HEWs, M/BoE/schools Police/courts NGOs, Missions, local organisations	All regions except Tigray no longer issue, and 2 sites in SNNP where not part of culture	Meetings and trainings, school clubs, HEWs, Prosecution of circumcisers and families, promotion of model uncut women
			some promotion of male circumcision against HIV	MoH + donor projects NGOs	Gambella	Circumcision promotion
	4	Sexual initiation (links to 10)	Reproductive Health, contraception and abortion for youth Preventing underage marriage Preventing violence against women, abduction and rape Preventing HIV transmission	HEP/HEWs M/BoWCYA School/school clubs HEWs in schools Police/Courts NGOs missions, local organisations	All sites	Awareness-raising, provision of contraceptive and abortion services, legal aid and justice services
	5	School education (if any) completed	Promotion of primary and especially secondary and TVET, and tertiary	Expansion of education services, All levels of education Promotion of girls education Women's affairs	All sites Pastoralist girls	Boarding schools, scholarships
	6	Work skill learning completed	skills development	MoA/DAs	All sites	
	7	Long-term productive work role(s) in place	Youth coops, MSEs, rural job creation from 2013	MoA/DAs	All sites	Provision of credit
	8	Long-term home-related work role in place	Domestic technologies	MoA, NGOs	All sites	Grinding mills
	9	Economic independence from household of origin	Access to land, irrigated land, credit for businesses	MoA/DAs, <i>wereda</i> and <i>kebele</i> administrations	All sites	Land provision, credit
Family-related transitions	10	Marriage	Campaign against child marriage Land access by young couples Support for divorced women	M/BoWCYA, M/BoE/schools Police/courts NGOs, Missions, local organisations	All sites	Prohibitions, legal measures

Type	No.	Transitions/ milestones	Interventions	Who?	Where?	What?
	11	Independent home and household	Inheritance and property transfers Daughters' rights	Women's affairs at different levels	All sites	Legal provisions and cases
	12	Child(ren) - legitimate	Reproductive health, antenatal care	MoH	All sites	Supplementary feeding
Community-related transitions	13	Adult social network participation	Policies towards local institutions – <i>iddir mahibers</i>	<i>kebele</i> administrations, NGOs and missions	All sites	
	14	Organisational participation	Youth associations, leagues, federations	Party Structure	All sites	Promotion, provision of credit
	15	National 'citizenship'	Policies on vital registration Civic education in schools, TVET colleges, one-to-five in schools	Federal and regional policies	All sites	education
	16	To full adult status in the community	Policies and traditional <i>gada</i> ceremonies	<i>Wereda</i> administrations	Oromia Gelcha	promotion

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