# Gara Godo site-specific topic: Women’s property rights

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**Women who have land registration certificates**

The respondent is 45 years old and illiterate. She is middle in wealth status. She is a party member and she has 6 children.

### Communal grazing land policy

She has 2 sheep. She uses communal grazing land. The grazing land size is reducing as part has been taken by farmers. Kebele official know the problem, but they do not take any measures against the famers. She uses free grazing of the land. Communal grazing land is used equally.

### Land registration

She had a land registration certificate 6 years ago. She inherited the land from her deceased husband. She wanted to pay tax on the land in her name. She applied to the kebele for the registration and it was approved by the kebele. The kebele did not create a problem in the registration process. It was not biased. She gave half a hectare to a person in a contract for 10 years, but he acquired the land in his name. Since he had land registration certificates, she did nothing.

### Factors that contribute women’s property right violations?

Economic problems and lack of confidence in woman are the major factors that contribute to women’s property right violations.

## A woman who has livestock

The respondent is 45 years old. She is illiterate and middle in her wealth status. She is a party member. She has 4 children, 1 male and 3 female.

### Communal grazing land policy

She has an ox and a milk cow. She uses both communal and household grazing land. The size of grazing land has decreased. Some parts of the grazing land have been included in the nearby farm land by farmers. They have acted illegally, but the kebele did not take any measures to stop them. The community uses free grazing on the communal gazing land. All use it equally and she has not faced any problem.

### Land registration

She got a land registration certificate 4 years ago. She inherited from her husband. She applied to the kebele and it approved her inheritance right. They are not biased.

### Factors that contribute to women’s property right violations?

Women do not know their rights. Culture also has its own influence on women. These are the major factors that contribute to women’s property right violations.

## Divorced woman

The respondent is 45 years old. She is illiterate and rich in her wealth status. She is a party member.

### Communal grazing land policy

She has an ox and a milk cow. She uses mostly household grazing land; sometimes she cuts and carries grass from communal grazing land. Both the communal gazing land and household grazing land are decreasing, because people use it for farming. No one has prevented farmers from taking communal grazing land. She does not know why they are not stopped. All persons who have livestock use communal land equally. There is no problem.

### Divorced women’s law

She married in 1985. She has 7 children, 5 male and 2 female. All are living with her. She initiated divorce, because her husband did not support the household and did not cover the cost of children’s schooling, food, clothing etc. She applied to the kebele for the divorce. He denied the marriage and told the kebele she was not his wife. The kebele sent the case to the wereda court. The wereda court confirmed that she was his wife. The court accepted the divorce and decided on an equal share of property. He appealed to the zone court. The decision has not been applied because the case is in process, but before the property was shared he took away property. He took away property for his second wife. He also applied to take the house, but she is living in it. Elders were biased to him when they decided on the property between us. They gave 5 cattle to him (4 oxen and a milk cow) and 3 cattle (an ox and 2 milk cows) to her. Out of one hectare farm land they decided to give her only 0.25 hectare.

### Factors that contribute to women’s property right violations?

Financial problems and lack of support are the major problems. Women also lost their hope as elders were biased and with cultural influences the culture of polygamy supports men. These are among the major factors that contributed to women’s property right violations.

## Widow

The respondent is 40 years old. She is illiterate and poor. She is a party member.

### Communal grazing land policy

She has livestock. The communal grazing land has decreased since the farming land is small; some farmers took part of the communal grazing land and uses it as farming land. All use what is left equally.

### Widow’s law

Her husband died in 2005 from natural causes. She has 6 children and all are living with her. She decided herself to acquire all properties including the farm land. She applied to the kebele to have a land registration certificate in her own name. The kebele accepted her request and gave her the certificate. She has got all other property except the farm land. When her husband was alive he inherited 0.25 hectare land from his father. After the death of her husband his father took the land because of her having no male child. All her children are females, but she has taken the remaining farm land. When his father took 0.25 hectare land from her she wanted to apply to the court, but she did not because at that time her husband’s brother was a judge in the court. Since she did not expect an unbiased decision from the court, she dropped the case. Some people in the area were not happy with his father’s decision and his reason for taking the land.

### Factors that contribute to women’s property right violations?

Lack of awareness about the rights of women, financial problems, cultural influences of biased elders and women’s lack of explanatory skill are among the major factors that contribute to women’s property right violations.

## Inheritance

The respondent is 35 years old, illiterate and poor. She is not a party member.

### Communal grazing land policy

She has no livestock. Communal grazing land size is decreasing due to some farmers including part of the grazing land in their farm land illegally. The kebele officials did not take legal measures against the illegal farmers. All community members use communal grazing land equally. They use cut and carry mechanisms in the hot season (winter) and free grazing in the summer (rainy season).

### Inheritance law

She got a land registration certificate 4 years ago in 2007 from the kebele. She inherited the house and the land from her mother. She inherited the land with her sister, but her sister did not share the land and let her use and register it in her name. The registration was approved by the kebele officials. She did not face any problem, but ten years ago her mother died and she was accused by her mother’s stepson. He said that since the land was his father’s own land he asked for his share of inherited land; however, the land was not his father’s. As her mother was blind the interviewee applied to the kebele and wereda courts instead of her mother. She provided evidence and a witness also testified for her mother. Finally the wereda court decided in favour of her mother.

### Factors that contribute to women’s property right violations?

Financial problems and lack of knowledge are the major factors that contribute to women’s property right violations.

## Research officer comments

Women’s property rights are their rights to own or acquire through purchase, gift or inheritance. It is an important aspect of social stability and development. It is also important within the fight against HIV/AIDS. Violation of these rights makes women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and speeds their death when their homes, land and other assets are taken. Women’s property rights in the Gara-Godo kebele are not applied properly. Low levels of awareness of their rights, the time expense of pursuing claims and the social stigma of being considering greedy or traitors of the culture if they assert their rights are among the factors that contribute to the violation of women’s property rights. Furthermore the implementation problems of the law, the customs of the area, such as inheriting only to males and not inheriting to a woman who has no son, not rejecting elders’ decisions, biased attitudes, and unresponsive authorities also among the major factors that contribute to women’s property right violations.

The following points are recommended in order to stop or reduce women’s property right violations:

* Improving women’s awareness about their rights through training, women’s organisation meetings, and school education.
* Empowering women economically by creating access to credit, providing training in business skills and organising different business packages.
* Improving the implementation level of the law; by organising the court into a better special court for women, staffing it with skilled human power.
* Reducing the influence of culture, customs and traditions that contribute to the violation of women’s property rights through community conversation.
* Finally, integrating the efforts of individuals, community, government organisation and NGOs.