# Luqa site-specific topic: Gender-based violence

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Knowledgeable women FGD (younger and older)

*What are the gender relationships that describe the economic and social status of men and women?*

Economically, men are the source of livelihood as they keep livestock, they farm and they do some livestock-trading; whereas women help at doing the farm work and keeping some goats. Indeed, there is some kind of change since the last 5-6 years in that women have started to be engaged in doing some petty trade, like selling farm crops, *shefero*, local drinks, etc. And the idea that women can have a significant economic role in the community seems to be improving although men’s economic role is still predominant.

The social role of men is more of participating in great social occasions and performing social rituals. The community has given the responsibility to lead meetings, to resolve disputes, to represent the community at government places, to perform religious rituals, to lead the family and so on to men. Men, in the history of the community are the ones who migrate from place to place to find means for the survival of the rest of the family members, they fight with enemies to keep their family members safe and they face many other challenges. This has been considered as an important role of men in the community which has placed them in a higher social status. Thus, they have the right to marry as many women as they want, to own land, to make decisions on their family property, etc.

On the other hand, women control more of the domestic work which has been given value less than the social role of men. Women have very limited participation in the social affairs that bind the whole community. Thus, they are supposed to prioritise benefits of the male members of the family/the community. Despite their role in socialising children and creating a conducive home environment, the already established patriarchal norms and values of the community still keep them down.

*What is the gender based division of labour?*

Women: prepare food, borde (local drink), prepare materials for brewing, fetch fuelwood and water, and clean the house/compound.

Men: carry big water, make *“das”* (shelter) where the guests sit, they give food and borde to guests; see if everybody is having drink and food. They keep beehives in the forest, bring honey, plough the land, and slaughter livestock.

Women: women can’t milk cows, if they do, the cow is slaughtered and is given to them by men. Though after Protestantism this has been changed.

The hair dressing (traditional) is painted with brown colour made every time. It is taboo to wash the hair; but men wash their hair and body. Women after marriage can’t wash their reproductive body. This makes women feel discomfort and less active in the community.

Men’s role:

* Keeping livestock
* Farming with oxen
* Fencing
* Keeping beehives
* May do “Glo”
* Participating in public meetings, conflict resolution and religious rituals
* Ordering and supervising wives and children

Women’s role at home:

* All domestic work
* Assisting in farming
* Collecting harvest
* Grinding grain manually or with the grinding mill machine
* Marketing (buying and selling items)
* Taking care of children
* Looking after goats
* Participating in conflict resolution (for women).

*What domestic violence are there against women and against men?*

In towns - men don’t explain their salary to women, don’t tell them their salary. In rural areas:

* Women are dependent on men economically,
* Lack of property ownership
* Lack of personal hygiene, especially during delivery. She doesn’t go out, no washing until 4 months (among Tsemay) till the Glo is done.
* The pressure is more among Benna than among Tsemay
* A woman who reports a GBV case is discriminated against and lives outside of the community
* Cases are forced to be solved by community elders rather than by formal laws
* Most of the time women don’t get solution at the court, there is corruption. Double marriage still prevails dominantly among the Benna. In Tsemay it is inheritance marriage (awalko)
* Divorce by the initiation of women is not possible because of Koyta. Engagement is since childhood and a lot of bridewealth is paid

Men do beat their wives frequently. A woman can’t get divorce unless her husband is willing. She has to continue living [with him] whether she like or not. But if a man doesn’t want her, he can divorce her at any time or he can keep her at home and marry other women as much as he wants. The woman can’t decide over her divorce because her husband pays bridewealth. When the man doesn’t want to divorce her but his family members want her, one of them sleeps with her and may have children. But these newly born children are considered as the husband’s children. She may have to feed herself and her brother-in-law only.

There still is abduction marriage. Although the girl might shout for help, nobody dares to help, because it is normal practice that a girl who refuses marriage is likely to be abducted. She is beaten if she tries to escape and she is chained till she gives birth. She is raped the first night when she is abducted.

A woman married/unmarried, whenever she is alone is raped, when she is along the way to or from farm land, to school or to fetch fuel wood and water. Girls as young as 10 years are raped and those offenders are sent to jail. Last year, there were two cases of rape reported to have 10-12 years in jail. A father after becoming drunk raped his daughter and was sent to jail for 15 years. Another man raped his daughter-in-law who was 10 years old. An old brother raped his young brother’s wife while his brother was alive. And it is taboo to sleep with the wife of a young brother.

A woman is supposed to eat after she makes sure that her husband and children are full. Her husband might come with guests and his friends to eat food. She has to be ready for this too.

The participants in the FGD noted that there are wives who insult their husbands, who do not complete their daily domestic chores and do not treat their family members properly. These kinds of women shouldn’t complain if their husbands beat them because they are too lazy to work and because they are not good wives. But no violence against a husband was reported in the FGD.

*How does GBV affect the life of women and men in the community?*

After rape the young girls have physical pain and excessive bleeding. There was a case of death after a girl of about 10 years was raped by an old/adult man in about 2010. There is a rumour that students at the hostel are raped when they go to fetch wood.

Abduction: The families of the girl fight and may shoot the man. But he must send gifts and messengers as soon as possible.

There are a lot of women who die from being harshly beaten by their husbands. Beating is also harshly applied to children.

* The tradition doesn’t allow women to keep their personal hygiene which exposes them to diseases
* Not getting what she wants, not enough food
* Workload
* Most women lose hope and accept the norm

*What changes are there to eliminate domestic violence?*

There is no change in beating and rape. Very slow change is there in abduction. This is because the wereda women’s affairs come here to teach and to punish people, and community elders go to the wereda to teach about this. Beating a wife is acceptable behaviour especially by men because they think that women must be beaten to be obedient and because they have no better way of communicating, and don’t discuss issues at home. They think that they have to make sure they subordinate the family as much as possible.

Customary Law: A husband who ignores advice given by elders is beaten by customary law, chained by his hand at the back. A man that rapes is beaten about 20 strokes and more/ he is naked and is beaten by a number of people lining up in opposite lines. Then he must prepare “borde” and slaughter an ox for the community to forgive his deed.

Now, abduction is reducing, girls escape to town, family members follow up the case and the court follows up.

* In distant kebeles it still prevails.

Problems:

* Administrators still believe in traditional practices, they have not enough/ adequate training. For example, a wereda militia officer was dismissed from his authority because he was not able to listen women’s GBV cases (corruption).
* Rape is occurring in rarer cases than in the past.
* There is FGM among the Arbore.
* Men and women don’t accept the teachings by experts to keep personal hygiene of women.
* Underage marriage, e.g. in Muckecha, the kebele manager is worried.
* Weak law enforcement, 13 year old girls are raped.

The women’s representative, the kebele chairman, and community representatives have been trained about the HTPs including GBV. It is provided by the wereda women’s and children’s affairs office 1-2 times a year.

The women are reporting their cases to the kebele manager about what happens to them. Some women have started to dare accusing their husbands at the wereda court.

The community elders advise their members to prevent GBV and community members are now collaborating with militia and the kebele to report cases. Girls’ club in the school sensitises the students about GBV and other HTPs.

Although women may report to the wereda court, there is no female investigator at the court; this situation challenges the women to explain their problems freely

Suggestion:

* Teaching/ advising husbands and wives separately and later together.
* Intensive community awareness work (very hard work).
* Experts should live together with the community to show a better way of living.

Government has to teach the community about the:

* Rights of women in marriage.
* HTPs and ideas. People have to learn about the supremacy of law and should respect human rights.

## Women’s affairs office

The women’s affairs head at the kebele said that there are all kinds of domestic violence against women. The common ones are beating the wife, letting the wife wait to eat until after the man eats, avoiding sex for a long time, bias to other wives, refusing to accept divorce proposed by the wife, underestimating the value of the wife as something which is bought by bridewealth, etc. Although community mobilisations and education are given to men and women, the problem still prevails.

Women don’t have experience or knowledge of reporting cases to legal bodies. No case of GBV is reported to formal institutions. But they tell their close family members and that is a mother. The family members report to the local elders who might have to follow up the case. If the case is beyond the capacity of the local elders (for example, a case of murder), it is reported to the militia/police. The kebele peace and security sector take measures to resolve such cases.

The kebele women’s and children’s affairs head also hears cases of violence and she assists women to present their cases to the kebele community police. She guides women who want to report their cases to formal legal institutions and provides them advice on how better they can get justice.

There are women whose hand is cut with knife, are blinded, mentally sick (she had headache after her husband beat her on the head with a shoe), and pregnant women have stillbirths because their husbands beat them on their womb (unconsciously). Women die after they are beaten on their womb. A lot of women complain of having pain in the uterus, in the backbone, being stressed, handicapped, and being deaf and blind. The first action of a man when he wants to abduct a woman is slapping her on her two ears (both sides), strongly, and leaving her unconscious (fainted). Some husbands get scared when their wife gets faint after being beaten too much, and they slaughter a goat to give her blood to drink. The soup of meat and fresh blood is given to her. There is no differentiating whether the woman is pregnant or not. Women run away to their fathers’ house for relief but should get back soon to their husbands’ house who paid a lot of wealth to the fathers. A woman shouldn’t refuse sex even 3-4 days after delivery. If she refuses, she might be beaten. Women are not allowed to untie their traditional skin wear (among the followers of the traditional religion) and it can’t be washed until the time of death. Moreover, women don’t have any mechanism by which they could cope with their monthly menstruation. They just have to sit at home and isolate themselves from family and social interactions.

The issue of GBV is always raised at public meetings and kebele council meetings. Although the situation seems to be better than in the past, all types of domestic violence still prevail. There is no change about the practices of polygamous marriage and marriage by inheritance. One of the main causes to these practices is the economic dependency of women on men. Women still do not own land and cattle. These resources need to be managed by men. Women have not yet practiced other sources of livelihood. Job opportunities for women are none. Thus, the only choice they have is to depend on men’s sources of livelihood.

Despite this, there are young women who, especially having been to school, have better awareness about their legal rights. There are a very few cases of reporting to the head of the women’s affairs and to the local elders when domestic violence occurs. Women have started to talk about their problem at least to the person, friend or family members. There are news and rumours from the neighbouring kebeles and nearby towns that women escape and save their lives by reporting to the police and the court. Many young student girls escape to hide themselves at the hostel.

There is the Goji Limadawi Dirgitoch Aswegaje Committee (Ant HTP Committee) which was formed at wereda level. Its main task is to work in reducing, and gradually eradicating all HTPs, which include GBV in the community. This committee has been working hard in the weredas of South Omo Zone including the Benna Tsemay wereda. It has been possible to identify 71 types of HTP and prohibit about 48 types of HTP legally. Accordingly, the committee have been acting to sensitise the community about the legal sanctions against the harmful practices through the women and children’s affairs office which has a structure at the kebele level and through the customary as well as the formal legal institutions. In Luqa, the Anti HTP Committee members have been trained repeatedly by the wereda Anti HTP committee and by the wereda women and children’s office. It has started its work since three years onwards. It has members from community leaders, and those elders who are known for performing glos (traditional rituals), women representatives and religious leaders. Indeed, the kebele anti HTP committee have worked hard to minimise some practices such as killing Mingi children (children who are born to unmarried girls and to women before they have completed the ritual after they give birth), to reduce rape and abduction. They take legal actions to impose sanctions on those people who kill these kinds of children. As a result, many children have survived.

They have been informing the community about the traditional practices that have been considered as crimes against human rights under the Ethiopian constitution, about the practices against the right to live, the right to choose a marriage partner, the right to go to school, the rights of marriage and divorce, the right to get enough food, the right to participate in social, economic and political activities of the community, etc. Nevertheless, the community has not yet stopped practices against women. This is because some members of the Anti HTP committee are not active in teaching the community and the committee itself has been weak to put strong sanctions against individuals who violate the rules. Moreover, there is some kind of tolerance by the committee as well as the formal institutions to punish offenders because the awareness of the community still is very low. It is necessary first to provide intensive education and awareness raising programmes to the community.

Moreover, the community’s awareness about the legal bodies that are responsible to hear cases of GBV is very low, victim women have less information about where to report and who can help them to report their cases. They may know only the local elders who might not encourage them to get justice.

In other kebeles of the wereda, the women’s association, the women’s league and federation, the youth association, and the youth league and federation have a great role to support women who are harassed to get legal justice. Raped girls get medical treatment and counselling services. Women are also encouraged to interact with these bodies freely and have trust in them. In Luqa, however, there is no women’s association, no league or federation to assist women. No support is given to harassed women and girls except some guidance on how to report and get legal solutions.

As men have better opportunity to participate in public meetings, different trainings and community discussions, they have better awareness about what the law says to women concerning domestic violence. Besides, men have the chance to listen to radio programmes and get knowledge of the law and the harmful practices. They interact with different people at market places and have a chance to exchange information. They attend some community awareness raising programmes at the market places and public meetings. Men also participate in dispute resolution processes and learn lessons.

Women, on the other hand have very limited information to understand how the HTPs affect their life and how the law might help them respecting their rights. Women, most of the time, do not participate in public meetings (traditionally, it is taboo for a woman to sit next to men in a meeting). Women spend most of their time at home or at doing some farm activities with women’s groups. They have very limited chance to attend community awareness raising programmes. If they go to the market, their interaction is more with the women’s groups who don’t have better experience.

Despite this, men don’t like to accept the facts and they want to continue with the traditional practices. They are not happy to share these facts with women’s groups. They think that they are going to be subordinated to women if they start to exercise women’s rights. They feel like some part of the law is biased towards women because a lot of the practices have been accepted by both men and women in the community. They think that the customary practices have brought no harm to the community; instead, they have helped it to survive as a community till this time so there is no reason to change them and the government shouldn’t interfere with them. Many of the men, who, for example, beat their wives, think that that is the proper way to make sure that they (men) hold the husband’s status and that they have been accepted as superior head of the family. Otherwise, they think that unbeaten wives would insult their husbands in public, and would cause the man to have low acceptance in the community. Besides, the attitude of men to women is like women can’t, naturally, make decisions about themselves so that the fathers and husbands have to assist them by forcing them to follow some norms and values.

Although, the trend from the past (7-8 years ago) is better in that there are different occasions prepared for women so that they get better confidence to participate in economic and political affairs, it has not yet enabled women to change their attitudes about domestic violence. The number of women who feel that they are harassed by their husbands or by males and report to legal bodies is very few.

Most of the thoughts and attitudes of women are influenced by the attitude of their male family members. Some women think that some of the practices that might be considered as harassments are normal practices that every woman in the community should expect. Many women’s attitudes about domestic violence is that it is how women live in the community and there is no better way of living for them. As divorce is not a solution for women, married life with all its consequences is preferable. Even if there is a woman who would choose divorce, it will not be acceptable by the customary law if the husband is not willing. Furthermore, a man is considered as the most important part of the community while a woman is considered as something that can be changeable, that can be bought to serve a man and someone who is created to serve man. Thus, they wouldn’t dare to say that the behaviour/action of their husbands is harassment. This is also because women grow up seeing their fathers beating their mothers, and still the mother do/say nothing. At times of worst conflict, if a woman shouts for help, she is considered as having no respect for her husband and will await further punishment for that. So, she is expected to keep it inside as much as possible. If she cries, that means, she will have much more beating (traditionally, it is believed that if a woman shouts for help when her husband beats her, the husband will die). If she talks to close elder/s in her neighbourhood, they would insist she should keep quiet and it is not expected from her to say that she is harassed by her husband because it is one of the challenges that a good wife should face. So, she should be so quiet and tolerant for the sake of her children and her own life.

* The community should learn through different channels of communication to understand about the consequences of the harassment on the physical, mental and social life of men and how it affects the children and the community as a whole.
* It is suggested that there has to be very strong law enforcement and people who are found to harass women have to get strong punishment according to what the law states. As other practises such as mingi have reduced, women’s harassment can be minimised if the elders believe in and be willing to work for it.
* There should be strong organisations of women, such as women’s association, and an increase in the number of women in the youth association, women’s league and federation, etc. that assist women and girls to learn about their rights.

## Educated females

### Female Teacher

The community here is a highly patriarchal society where women have no say to decide about property owning and about sending/ not sending children to school. When teachers supervise the parents, women say that they don’t have any idea why their children get absent and say it is the father that can answer the question. Women eat food after the males have enough; eating priority is given to the father because he is considered to be the head, and the powerful one in the house.

According to the respondent, there is no violence committed by women against men.

The Koyta culture is still strongly practiced to give rights of beating a wife. Once the man marries a woman by paying brideprice, he is tolerated by the neighbours, family of the woman and the community to beat his wife as much as he wants. There is no acceptance of divorce proposed by wife in the community. Besides, women have no awareness and courage to go to report to the kebele officials. Even the officials would like to resolve her case through the customary way. Men do what they want to do to their wives. Almost all the traditional religion following men have 2 and above wives. So, they spent their nights wherever they choose; but all wives are expected to wait for their husband, preparing “cheka” and food. They are not supposed to eat before it is too late in the evening and the husband doesn’t come.

Women who are harassed first call neighbours or tell family members. These people would help them to report to community elders who would resolve the case through customary ways. The first decision of these elders is to decide that the offender should marry her. If he refuses, he is punished by having to slaughter an ox and provide “borde”(local drink) to the local community for reconciliation. The respondent said that the girl who might be raped is compensated by giving cattle from the man (the number is decided by the elders).

Those young girls who live around the central part of the kebele and those who are students report the case to kebele chairman or kebele manager. But the common action is that it is reported to the community elders. If a rape case is to a woman who is already married, it is kept silent, because her husband might divorce her or may cause further threat to her. Besides, it could cause her and the man who raped her to be killed. So she tells nobody else. But if rape is done to unmarried girls, the girls can tell close family members or they shout so that people come to help.

Physically, many women are harmed when they are beaten by their husbands; young girls are beaten by their fathers and brothers. At this time, there are women who have lost their teeth, their eyes, and get sick.

Psychologically, they are always stressed to watch the unhappy face of their husbands.

Sexually: many men have multiple sexual partners. And they may avoid sex for more than one year with one of their wives. A wife’s sexual life is decided by the interest of her husband. He may force her to have sex when the woman is not willing. There is no negotiation. Women who try to appeal on their cases to the kebele or wereda court (if they think that the final decision given by the elders was not fair), are discriminated against by the community because they tried to go out of the social norms and for not accepting the final decision of the community elders.

The cases of abduction are decreasing; but may occur hidden at the sub-kebeles. H(Community leader of the Benna who is well known for working against HTPs, especially against *mingi of children*) and other community leaders are trained about HTPs by the women’s affairs at wereda and about the legal rights of women. This has helped in minimising the action.

The respondent said that the occurrence of rape is decreasing in parallel; but she has been only for 4 months in the kebele so that she couldn’t get exact features of the problem. There are sayings to indicate that women are not created as equal to men, and there is no need to send a girl to school.

The family, community elders, kebele peace and security, kebele women’s affairs and wereda court are all responsible bodies to prevent GBVs. Women first contact their family members or relatives when they are harassed. These family members or relatives report to the kebele peace and security office which in turn follows the legal process of the case.

The young children learn about the supremacy of the man and subordination of the woman. This is also reflected among the male and female students in school. Males laugh at a girl student who may fail to answer a question but they don’t do that to a male student who fails to answer a question. Male students have no equal obedience to female teacher as they do to male teachers. Most of the time, the male students of a male teacher do what the teachers say; but the male students of a class with a female teachers don’t. Even female students don’t have equal perceptions of male and female teachers. They are biased to obey and respect male teachers more than female teachers.

Female teachers should sensitise female and male students about HTPs including GBV. Plus, the constitutional rights of women should be strongly advocated at community level.

The wereda women and children’s office should come down to the kebele and strengthen their structure at community level to prevent GBV by teaching men and women about the law and sanctions following each type of GBV.

Women have to participate in different public meetings, and social occasions, and should listen to what is being said and what is being done. They have to open their eyes to see their opportunities for having a better life. They have to dare to report their problems on time to people in charge. They have to be active to seek help and support each other.

### Girls' club leader in school

It is normal behaviour for a father to beat his children and wife because he thinks that it is the way to discipline his family members. Parents have no habit to take time with their young children to discuss issues peacefully. The father wants always to be feared by his children. Thus, children get low self-confidence to express their ideas and seek solutions to their problems. Culturally, fathers are the owners of land and other family property. When they get old, they give these properties and land to their male children. Female children have no right (traditionally) to inherit their parent’s property. For females to benefit from farm land or from livestock, they must get married.

Besides, fathers have a strong say about their children’s marriage. For females, fathers negotiate with other men about how much bridewealth those men can pay. They seek the best market to sell their daughters through the culture of *koyta*. They are happy to have more daughters because they will bring wealth to the family when they marry. Thus, they are in a rush to send their daughters for marriage.

Although, fathers also show strong interest in deciding about the marriage of their sons, they don’t put as much pressure as they do on their female daughters.

At school, male students look down on female students. They always want to sit at the front and to be seen first. They laugh at active female students just to demoralise them. They beat them if the females say something against them. They frighten females along their way from and to school.

Female students are raped along their way from and to school when they are alone. They tell nobody else unless it causes pregnancy. Some female students drop out of school because of unwanted pregnancy. Female students are also abducted along their way to or from school by other men (not going to school).

The girls’ club leader said that there is no harassment by male teachers of female students.

There is a girls’ reproductive health club in the school which has 22 members. All the members are girls who have interest to know about girl’s reproductive rights and other gender issues. The club was formed by the initiative of former female teachers and school director in the school. The club members are guided and supervised by a female teacher. They have weekly meetings in which they discuss certain issues in gender and reproductive health. They share their experiences and they entertain by poems and short essays.

The girls’ club has an objective of enhancing the capacity of female students to participate actively in the schools’ curricular and extra-curricular activities. This will in turn motivate them to discover new things in their talents and develop their skills and knowledge. It aims to build the self-esteem of girls and make them feel proud of their dignity by explaining the natural process of maturity, the natural distinctions between men and women and the cultural barriers that hinder a female’s natural growth and performance. It also aims to sensitise female students to learn about their equal rights with males and give them courage to exercise those rights.

Members of the club try to encourage female students to explain their ideas by written materials and enhance their confidence to present their poems in front of their classmates. It strives to bring girls to the front stage to talk about their rights to learn and their reproductive health rights. The club members are also motivated to prepare dramss and present them on parents’ day occasions. This also intends to encourage female students who might be harassed by males to report their problem to female teachers, school director, and girls’ club leader or to the kebele manager as soon as possible.

So, far, although there is active participation of the girls in the club, there is no report of GBV against the club leader.

The girls’ club leaders suggested that:

* Parents have to know their duties to encourage and help their female children to go to school. They have to give them time at home to study and to do their homework. They have to allow their daughters to go for tutorial classes during the weekends. They have also to treat them as equal to their male children at home. They have to support them in completing their domestic work. There are some parents who do not want to accept the deviant behaviour of the male children at school and tend to frighten teachers who beat those students. Instead, they have to go to school and discuss the problem with their children.
* The community have to avoid traditional practices such as early marriage, giving less value to girls’ education and not punishing men who harass females. The community elders and the kebele officials have responsibility to advocate for girls’ education. They have to support the teachers and the students in the teaching-learning process. The community should discourage disturbing students that create problem at the school.
* The girls have to participate in girls’ clubs and should learn properly. They have to work hard and perform best in their academic assignments. They shouldn’t lose hope and they shouldn’t feel fear to say no to actions against their education. They have to feel free to discuss their problems with their female teachers and club members.
* Teachers should also initiate programmes and activities that help girls improve their participation. They have to use different teaching techniques to support the girls. They have to call the parents frequently and teach them about the importance of girls’ education to the families as well as to the community.

## Woman experiencing GBV Case 1

EL is in her mid-20s and her marriage was arranged by her parents. She had strongly resisted the marriage because she wanted to marry her boyfriend and because the husband was an old man. So she tried to escape from the marriage repeatedly. Her father was not willing to understand her and told her that it is a must she was going to marry that man whom he chose for her. He said he already had accepted the gift and he couldn’t cancel the marriage. She cried and cried but her father couldn’t cancel the marriage. Then she decided to escape to the forest thinking that it was better to be eaten by wild animals than to live with an old man whom she doesn’t love. One early morning, she went to the forest and hid herself inside a hole. She could hear no noise and she was sure that nobody would find her there. But she was afraid what would be next. She had no idea what would happen when the dark night came. Suddenly, she heard a bullet that was shot over her head. She was very scared. She didn’t know what it was and who he was. Again the gun shot at her and she put herself down the hole. Then, she heard somebody coming close to her. She kept silent. She saw the man was a hunter standing having his gun over her head. When she saw him, she was very scared that he was going to kill her. She said she tried to tell him that she did nothing wrong. He asked her who she was and why she did hide herself there. She kept quiet. He said he was to kill her because he thought that it was an antelope and he politely asked her problem. She told the name of her family and told him that she refused to marry. He went away and told her parents that she was hiding in the forest. Before it was too late evening, her brother came and pushed her out of the hole to take her home. She went back and her father did beat her a lot with a stick. She was chained for two days and she refused to take any food for the two days. She knew that she was left only for four days to her wedding. She again decided to escape and to commit suicide. She took a rope and went to the forest. She tied it to the tree making it ready to hang round her neck. She tried to make sure that the rope had been on a proper place to hang up her neck, she saw a snake was climbing down on the rope, approaching towards her hand. She had to decide whether she waited to be eaten by the snake or ran away. So, she ran away to fall down on the ground. She was very scared of the length and physical appearance of the snake. She felt her body was shaking. She ran away and started to walk without knowing her destination. She walked a long distance for many hours. Then, she sat down under the shadow of a tree. After some minutes she saw an old woman was coming close to her. The old woman had shorka (traditional cup for drinking) with water. She came close, staring at her. She greeted her and gave her the water to drink. Dula accepted and drank because she was thirsty. The woman asked her where she was from and why she was alone there. Dula didn’t want to tell her anything and she kept quiet. The woman insisted she should stay at her house for the night because the wild animals might be along her way to harm her. She convinced her that she could continue her way the next day. She agreed and she went to the house. She met a man inside the house but she didn’t recognise him. After she some minutes the man went away and she slept at the house with the old woman. The next morning, she didn’t know that she stayed at her aunt-in-law’s until the man who she saw in the night came to the house with her father. Her father was very sad with her deeds but he was not as cruel as he used to be. He took her back home. She had nowhere to go and to report. Nobody was around to help her emotionally. Everybody at her family and neighbourhood was forcing her to accept the marriage because refusing the marriage would cause further damage to her family. Her father would die to pay back all the bridewealth he already had accepted from the man. Then, the day for her wedding came and she went to her parents-in-law.

After her marriage, she was not happy with her life. She lost four of her children by death. She said that was because she didn’t love her husband and because her husband was beating her day and night. She said there was no time when her husband didn’t beat her. Then, she asked for divorce. Her husband was not willing to divorce her. She applied to the community elders and to her father for divorce. They all said that was not possible because the husband didn’t want divorce. Then, she escaped to Key Afer to seek justice at the wereda. She sued her husband for not allowing her to divorce. At the middle of this, a group of elders came to the court and said that they would resolve the case by reconciliation. The court allowed the case to be seen first by the elders before it gave a final decision. So, the case went back despite her refusal. The elders advised her and convinced her to get back home. Her husband continued beating her. She told the elders who tried to advise him and reconcile them. In between she gave birth to children; but she was thinking of going back to the wereda court to facilitate the process of her divorce. But when she had three healthy births, she started to think about her children. Her concentration was diverted to taking care of the children and sharing love with them. When the fourth child was born, she said, she totally started to forget about the ‘evil’ behaviour of her husband.

She said that the gender based violence in the community is wide and has been deeply rooted in the minds of men and women and has become not easy to solve. A lot of women in the community face the same challenge like her. A lot have also died by committing suicide or by harsh physical harassment from their husbands and their fathers. Some have been physically disabled and mentally tortured.

For the future she wants to de her best so that her three daughters will not face the same challenge. She is sending them to school and believes she will help them till they graduate and get jobs. She is trying to economically liberate herself by selling local drinks and injera. She wants to grow her business and divorce her husband if he continues to harass her. He has been given final warning and he has no chance to continue to live with her. She is now using contraceptives to limit her family size. Her brother has given her a room along the roadside where she sells the local drink and injera.

She believes that as long as women can support themselves, they shouldn’t feel fear to talk about their domestic problems and they shouldn’t feel fear to liberate themselves from various types of harassment. Women have to play role model to their female children that they can work, they can learn and they can survive as equal to men. She believes that she can teach many other women about her bad experiences that she faced and the community’s wrong attitude towards the choice of women.

## Knowledgeable woman

A man has better social, economic and political status than a woman in the community. He is the source of income, he does rituals, and he owns and decides about property. A woman acts according to the will of the man; but she can’t participate in “Gilo” ceremonies and other social gatherings without the permission of her husband.

Woman: wakes up at 6am prepares coffee, cleans compound and goats’ house, accepts guests, prepares lunch, helps husband in the farm, comes back home, fetches water and fuel wood, and prepares dinner for the family. She works 14 hours/day.

* For breakfast: 6am-9am
* Farming: 9am-5pm
* Pounding grain: 6pm-7pm
* Dinner: 7pm-8pm
* Prepares (baking): “Borde”

Man: wakes up at 7am- drinks coffee, goes to the farm, comes back home at 5pm. It depends on harvest season. When it is not harvest season, he spends most of his time in the drink house, enjoying feasts and keeping cattle

Gender based violence affects women both physically and mentally. They get physically disabled and some may die if they are pregnant. Mentally, they feel tension and always worry what the man could do the next day. They lead an unhappy life and hate themselves. They isolate themselves from the social activities because they think that they are hated by their husbands and so do the other community members

Since 2-3 years onwards, the government/kebele officials are trying to advise the people who harass women and take measures to protect women’s rights. There are a lot of meetings done to sensitise the community about the legal sanctions that could follow after GBV is committed. Indeed, there is significant change in awareness of the community; but many people are still harassing women. There are also women who don’t think that they have to report to legal institutions. There are the kebele administration, the women’s affairs head, the police, the wereda court and the wereda women’s’ and children’s office who can follow up reported cases of GBV. A lot has to be done to minimise GBV.